

James Locker The Duality of Fate

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JAMES LOCKER THE DUALITY OF FATE

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Chapter 1 A new detective



1.1 Prologue

Crime Inspector James Locker was lying awake in his bed sweating. He had been off his anti-depressants for a while which was a necessary step to feel anything at all and go back to a healthy life. James Locker was thinking about her, and he still could not comprehend what had happened that fateful day seven months ago. He and Emily Luong had had a massive fight. Why had they fought? His memory was so blurry on the subject; that he now in retrospect could not understand it. She had left with \$ 20,000 of their savings and a day later he had received a text; that she despised him and she never wanted to see him again. Of course, he could have filed a police report with the stolen property department as it technically was his money she had taken. But he never bothered about this, money was not an issue for him, and his primary concern was to understand what had happened so he could avoid it happening again. Getting his revenge by turning her in, to his colleagues and having her deported to some third world hellhole; well he just loved her too much to do that even though she had broken his heart. He thought about calling her, but he did not.

Ironically his career had never been going as well as it had the last seven months. He had been able to solve some high-profile cases through his intelligence and dedication to his work. Not feeling anything in particular and walking in an emotional desert was apparently a good thing when it came to solving murder cases, and he had been promoted to police inspector a few months ago and seemed to be first in line to further promotions if the legendary Crime Detective Michael Fuller was to resign. Not that he thought that would happen anytime soon though as Michael Fuller had 9 years until retirement and was a man who was actually living for his work; probably due to lack of other areas of joy in his life. In this way, the current situation of James Locker and Michael Fuller were pretty similar.

James Locker's nightstand clock showed 3 AM which was 5 hours to go before he and his colleagues and best friends Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith were heading to the airport for a month of travel in Asia. They have persuaded him to join them for a crazy month of trips, adventures, boozing, and banging. Or as Adam Smith had put it *"Hey look, James, I know it's been tough for you with this Emily thing, but it's time to man up and meet some other girls. Let's go to Asia, and hook you up with at least ten girls so you can finally feel attractive enough to find the awesome girl we both know is out there for you"* James Locker smiled realising that his friends would probably pay some local talent to pretend to be genuinely interested in him and then sleep with him to build up his self-esteem. He decided to go for the plan with the motivation *"Why not, it can only work better than the talk about my childhood crap that my psychologist has charged me an arm and a leg for in the last seven months."* If his friends, however, did not intend to pull this off, he would not visit prostitutes on his own. Not because he had any strong moral objections to paid sexual services, but merely because he was not very turned on by the impersonality and dirtiness of the whole business. James Locker took a shower, made himself some breakfast and enjoyed it in front of the TV while waiting for his friends. In spite of his insomnia, he felt relaxed knowing that he would probably fall asleep on the plane and thus have more energy than his friends once they reached the destination. The date was the 17th of July 2013.

1.2 A past case summarised at the police station

AS THREE BROKEN, BUT happy heroes James Locker, Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson came back to the police station a month later. To their great joy, the impressive Michael Fuller had solved another challenging, high-profile case while drinking whiskey in his bathtub at a record pace giving them at least a few quiet days before the heat started again. The police policy was rewarding the staff for solving a case quickly and correctly as this encouraged staff to work a lot of overtime in the critical first days of a murder case. Since the police department lacked the funds to give performance bonuses, the staff members were rewarded with the cases being divided equally between the different murder investigation teams. Since Michael Fuller was an

incredibly dedicated detective, this usually meant they would have to work very hard for the first few days until the solution just magically popped in to Michael Fuller's head, often while he was drinking whiskey in his bathtub. It was an internal joke in the department that if they gave Michael Fuller a tub and a whiskey bar in his office, he would never need to go home, and the rest of the staff would never need to go to work. This joke was of course not entirely accurate as it sometimes happened that James Locker solved a case or two, especially since his break up from Emily Luong. Michael Fuller also needed the rest of the staff to find the clues he then would use to get the full picture; required to apprehend the perpetrator and put him or her behind bars. What was true was that Michael Fuller was an exceptional talent and that more than 90 % of the cases assigned to his team ended up with conviction.

Michael Fuller greeted the talented trio:

- Good day mates, how great it is to see you all. Due to my brilliant brain, I solved another tricky case last Friday, so this won't be the worst return to work for you. Let's go to the lunch room and have a chat about your holiday and my latest case!

They went into the lunch room, and each had a cookie. James Locker started the talking:

- Hey, Michael, I can't get how you solved that last case so fast. To me, the situation seemed completely psycho, from what I read in the newspaper over the internet.

Thomas Anderson interrupted the conversation:

- Sorry guys for not reading the newspaper while enjoying my life 8000 kilometres away, what was the case?

Michael Fuller

- It was the Father Walker case; a senior Anglican priest was killed and found horribly mutilated.

Adam Smith

- Yeah, we get those cases sometimes, what was the full story?

Michael Fuller

- We found the priest tied to the altar. His genitals were first corroded away by boiling sulphuric acid, and then half his face was burnt away by the use of a blow torch. After that, the numbers 666 were tattooed on his forehead, and finally, a sharpened crucifix was driven straight through his heart.

Thomas Anderson

- That's psychotic, how did you solve it, through looking for an escaped patient from a mental institution?

Michael Fuller

- Not really, you see this act took a lot of planning; firstly the perpetrator would have to sedate the priest to get him tied up on the altar. Secondly getting all this equipment mentioned would be complicated for a person with a mental health condition chased by the government to acquire and thirdly I got a feeling this case was very personal against this specific man and not just aimed at any priest.

James Locker

- Yeah, I agree with all these claims but yet I don't fully understand how you could get this Agnes Montecristo woman that quickly, I mean after all they had not met in seven years.

Michael Fuller

- Because I am better than you are mate, I am more experienced, and I have a wealth of knowledge. You see in contrary to your be-

lief I am not only lying alone in my bathtub listening to classical music and drinking excellent Scotch. The bath and whiskey, indeed help my thought process, but to have a method of reflection a man also needs input from the outside. No a lot of the time I read, and I can honestly say at the age of 56 that I have probably read all the literature even remotely related to my field as a crime detective.

James Locker

- I see. What source of ancient wisdom were you applying this time?

Michael Fuller

- I found the solution in the third amendment to the Anglican religious law written by the Archbishop Humphrey Godspeed during the witch hunts in 1734...

- In this book, I found out that the murder entirely resembled an execution method for one, particularly horrible crime.

Adam Smith

- So the priest was a child molester then? That seems like an old story these days.

Michael Fuller

- Not exactly, the punishment was for a man who raped his sister and the outcome was a demonic child, in a modern speech a child suffering from incest-related diseases

James Locker

- So you found his sister then?

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, but it was not easy since no sister existed in father Walkers family history. But I realised one thing, the perpetrator must be a woman in father Walkers past. I asked the church administrator for the names of formerly devout churchgoers who just suddenly stopped going. That how Agnes Montecristo's name came up. After checking the registry, she indeed had a daughter born approximately nine months after she stopped going to church. These events took place, as I said earlier, seven years ago.

Adam Smith:

- So how did you proceed?

Michael Fuller

- I just confronted her with what I knew, and as I expected, she broke down immediately. But don't worry even if she changes her mind we have a lot of evidence against her now! If you are interested, you can read about in the report when it's time for her trial.

James Locker:

- I am sure I will, but until then I just have one question, why did she act the way she did?

Michael Fuller:

- Well. She was very religious, and abortion was out of the question. So to protect her unborn baby from the truth, she just left and kept the secret for herself. She did pretty well; she moved to the USA and set up a religious bookshop, which was flourishing. All of this changed a year ago when her daughter got sick, and the hospital deemed it was due to incest-related diseases. The social services took custody of her child, and this scattered her life. She

decided to go back to Australia and get revenge on the man who ruined her life.

Thomas Anderson:

- A truly tragic and scary story

Adam Smith:

- Indeed but let's now focus on something genuinely uplifting and inspiring instead: let us tell you the great story of our wonderful month in Asia!

1.3 An awesome month in Asia.

SINCE THEY WERE NOT very busy, they went out to buy some excellent and massively overpriced coffee at the local coffee shop and then brought it back to Michael's office to have a chat about their holiday. Due to clumsiness Adam, unfortunately, managed to turn on the microphone to the intercom which led to the rest of the Central Sydney Murder Investigation Department hearing their conversation.

Thomas Anderson:

- Woo, how strange this coffee tastes? I can't remember when I last had a non-alcoholic drink, apart from water that is.

Michael Fuller

- So you did not drink coffee at all in Asia? The caffeine withdrawal must have been killing you?

Thomas Anderson:

- We drank heaps of coffees boss, just that all of the coffees were of the Irish variety

- The problem with drinking Irish coffee in Thailand, however, is that you have to get it mixed with the local Thai Whiskey which has a rancid taste. But since they charge an arm and a leg for real Scotch over there, we just had to suck it up and drink it anyway. The effect is the same, and after a few drinks your tastebuds numb off, and it all tastes the same.

Michael Fuller:

- Yeah, so say the aboriginal goon drinkers as well. Although I am a well-paid man with sophisticated taste, so I only drink whiskeys that come at around \$100 a litre.

Adam Smith:

- Oh anyway, the lousy whiskey had an impressive effect on James who managed to outperform even the highly set hunting goals we had in mind for him. For the first time since Emily came into his life, he was back to being the master hunter we all know he is.

Michael Fuller:

- Hunting goals? Let me get this straight you guys set up a goal for how many women James should have sex with?

Adam Smith:

- That is correct sir. You see, according to Neil Strauss in the Game, the best way to get over an ex-girlfriend is to hook up with ten random women. Since we have been listening to him whining about Emily for seven months, we thought it was time to get him laid to end the whining once and for all! And how he did it 12 women in a month! Master Hunter is back.

Michael Fuller:

- So you guys bought prostitutes in Asia, and now you brag about it? How lame is that?

James Locker:

- To be fair Adams story is not accurate. I did date the same woman for most of my time in Asia, and she was awesome, but sadly I did not feel that she was what I am looking for. I might have had sex with two other women, but that is far from the man-whore Adam describes me as.

Adam Smith:

- I stand corrected. To be fair since I did not put a spy cam in James' hotel room; I don't know what he did with the women he brought there. He did, however, bring 12 women to his rooms during our holiday. To me it seems highly illogical to bring a lot of women to your room without enjoying the spoils of your conquest, but if that's what he likes who am I to object?

- But he is right about the women not being prostitutes. His cover story about going to a third world hellhole to find true love, also known as buying a wife, worked out just fine. Since he is only 32, have a fit body and a hot face he was a lot more attractive than the other wife buyers over there that were generally over 45, fat and ugly. I must say...

Adam Smith was interrupted when the newest addition to the team Samantha Robinson entered the room. She was 22 years old and fresh from the academy. Samantha was around 170 cm tall weighing around 60 kilos. She had the perfect mix of strength and physique as well as femineity. Samantha was all in all a beautiful policewoman and would probably have won "the hottest policewoman of the year" competition provided of course that the Sydney police department promoted such a contest, which they did not. She smiled at Adam Smith with a very sarcastic smile.

Samantha Robinson:

- Great to have you back guys, and it's even greater that you are sharing the best of your stories via the intercom.

Adam Smith panicked and turned off the intercom, and the other guys did not feel at ease either.

Samantha Robinson:

- Don't worry guys Adams voice is the only one that I could hear, probably due to him sitting closest to the microphone.

The other guys looked relieved while Adam Smith looked like he was getting close to a panic attack.

Samantha Robinson

- On and don't worry about me reporting you to HR. I don't mind you sharing your hunting stories, although it would probably be better if you did so at the pub during after-work drinks than on the CSMI intercom.

- Oh and Adam I bet you a hundred bucks that the BITCH is angry with you right now.

The BITCH was the commonly used nickname of Barry Itch, the head of The Central Sydney Murder Investigation Department. He had received his nickname the following way: The E-mail addresses in the CSMI department was in the format initial+lastname@CSMI.gov.au which lead to the E-mail Address of Barry was bitch@CSMI.gov.au

He was a very tedious and annoying person who through his strive for political correctness and antidiscrimination policies was the de-facto dictator of the department. This dictatorship was because of his rigid interpretation of anti-discrimination policies where most things could somehow be considered to be offensive to someone. Barry Itch was the most easily offended person ever so most of the time anyone in the department felt offended it was Barry Itch who was behind the report. He was thoroughly disliked, and there were two disparate theories in place as for why he acted the way he did.

- Michael Fuller and James locker thought he acted the way he did to overcompensate for how he acted when off duty. From this point of view, they believed that he was living in a Sado-masochistic relationship with his wife, and thus acted overly politically correct to cover this up as he lived in shame of his real behaviour. Since both Michael Fuller and James Locker disliked people who they believed were beating up their wives, they disliked Barry Itch thoroughly

- Adam and Thomas, on the other hand, saw Barry Itch as whiny fucker who was too whipped by his wife Wanda Itch also known as the Witch. They both felt that Barry Itch was making their lives difficult and his focus on promoting "*values*" instead of results had cost them both well-deserved promotions and pay raises. They were both stuck on their entry-level salary even though they had six and four years of work experience in their field. They hated his guts.

Adam Smith swallowed his frustration over his mistake and also the anger he felt inside while thinking about Barry Itch and sighed
Adam Smith:

- Well, I guess I better go to his office and apologise before the fucker has had time to sharpen his knives. See you later.

Adam Smith left the room, and Thomas Anderson who had a long-time crush on Samantha Robinson felt compelled to say something.
Thomas Anderson

- Hey, Samantha, just so that you know I don't share Adams values and I don't like the way he speaks about women in general

Samantha Robinson

- Why is that? You are after all his best friend, and you hang out with him all the time, you can't honestly think, that I believe you; when you claim that you don't share values.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well yes but there is more to me than that, please have dinner with me sometimes so I can show you my better sides.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well sadly Thomas this is the saddest attempt ever for two reasons:

1. If you are doing this because you are afraid of me reporting you to HR, you are wasting your time and money. I have no intention whatsoever to report you in for any of that antidiscrimination bullshit. I have a full understanding that you are discussing your "*conquests*" with your friends, I do that as well, although in a classier setting than the CSMI HQ over the intercom.
2. If you are doing it because you have a crush on me, you should not hit on me by pretending to be someone else. I like MEN and WOMEN, but I don't want an insecure boy who is afraid to be who he is and are lying to get into my pants. I am sick of women at the moment so if you can prove to be a MAN to me; you may take me out to dinner and maybe get lucky. Oh and I kind of like Adam so don't pretend to be different from him, if you are making a move in the future. Unlike Adam, you are also good looking.

Thomas Anderson was left speechless by Samantha Robinson's speech. She studied him for a while and then shook her head and left the room. After a while, Thomas Anderson found his words.

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh my god, she is so hot, I think I am in love.

Michael Fuller

- Well Mate, don't sweat yourself. Playtime is over, time to get back to work!

1.4 Michael Fuller gets busted

MICHAEL FULLER WAS working on the report for the Montecristo case. The whole concept of report writing bored him a lot. The police report before a murder trial could easily span over a total of 1500 pages, and in a lot of the cases, the report writing for the court took more time and resources than actually apprehending the perpetrator. Luckily for Michael Fuller, Barry Itch had implemented a procedure where ghostwriter wrote most of the police reports, which gave more time for Michael Fuller to do what he enjoyed doing and was good at, namely solving murder cases and apprehending criminals. Having said this, it still took a lot of effort to make a report since he had to review the works of the ghost-writers and come with necessary input to make the police report consistent with the actual case. Anyway Michael Fuller was happy that Barry Itch had implemented the system with ghost-writers as it at least gave him some more freedom.

While reviewing the report, Michael Fuller started daydreaming about his coming holiday. In a few weeks, he would be on a plane to The British Isles where he would attend the "*Castles and Whiskeys*" tour. The tour consisted of three weeks in Great Britain and Ireland, and during this time Michael would stay at 14 different castles and enjoy the local's specialties when it came to whiskey. It would be truly remarkable to see some of the places where they made his favourite brands, and he could not wait to taste them in their natural environments. The only thing that made him sad was the fact that he had to go on this tour alone. All of his friends were either busy with their families or in the cases where their children had reached adulthood; they usually had a wife who did not approve of them spending all of their annual leave going to Great Britain for a whiskey tour.

When thinking about this, he felt sad that he was not close to his 21-year-old daughter Rebecca from a failed marriage. He had asked her if she wanted to join him at his expense, but she had responded that whiskeys and

castles were not her things. The problem with this, of course, was not that she did not like whiskey, but rather the distance between them. She had accused him of being distant to her and focusing too much on his work during her childhood, an accusation he could agree on, but what to do about it now? *"Oh well, she is graduating from police academy next year, so maybe she will understand by then,"* he thought to himself. He was interrupted in his daydreaming by a phone call from Barry Itch telling him to come by his office immediately *"Oh well, no point in beating around the bush"* he thought and headed over.

Michael Fuller entered Barry Itch's impeccably clean and orderly office, which to Michael Fuller signalled that apart from being tedious and annoying Barry Itch also had a slight hint of OCD in his personality.

Barry Itch

- Welcome Michael, please have a seat

Michael Fuller

- Thank you, Barry. Is this about the intercom incident earlier today? Because I agree with you that Adams' behaviour earlier today was inappropriate.

Barry Itch

- Great to have your support on this Michael, although I find surprising that you agree with me and still as his superior did not interrupt him. Nevertheless, this incident will only affect Adam's career prospects, and it seems likely that he will not receive any pay rise this year either.

- I surely hope he will enjoy unpaid participation in five days long Workplace Equality seminars held by my wife Wanda Itch on Saturdays.

Barry Itch smiled grimly while Michael Fuller sat in silence.

Barry Itch continued talking:

- No the reason I called you over is the Lopez case, I hope you recall it?

Michael Fuller

- Yes, of course, it was only six weeks ago, and it got pretty massive media coverage. How would I forget, I am not THAT old! From an investigation point of view, it's dead though with the killer being dead and all. I am sure you remember that we handed it over to the Organized Crime department since the high command was of the opinion that there was nothing more we could do from our end.

Barry Itch:

- Yes, that case was a real disgrace for the entire police department with two airport police officers sent to the Intensive Care Unit with severe injuries and the hired gunman Angelo Ramirez shot at the airport. Sad for the city's reputation

Michael Fuller:

- I seriously don't follow you. We got a picture of the killer face from a hidden CCTV camera that Mauricio Lopez had that showed us the whole chain of events. Of course, we matched the description with our database of suspected hitmen. Anything else would be negligence of duty. Furthermore, once we identified him, we found out that he just had passed the passport checkpoint at the airport and we had to have the airport police arrest him as we could not get there in time ourselves, all done by the book.

Barry Itch:

- You are missing the serious point of this. The CCTV feed shows a suitcase on a desk at the time of the murder. We can see that Angelo Ramirez was not taking the bag while leaving. A bit after the

killing, the CCTV feed ends, and in your report, there is no suitcase mentioned.

Michael Fuller

- Because there was none! I don't know what happened in between the killing and the time we got there. And I have not put it to any thought as the case was handed over to the Organized Crime department.

Barry Itch

- Well here is the problem. The Organized Crime department has been following up on this, and they got an anonymous tip about you being in possession of illegal drugs that you stole from the crime scene.

Michael Fuller

- That's preposterous, why would I steal the drugs?

Barry Itch

- Because of the street value of at least \$100,000. Look; we can do this in two ways. Either I contact the internal investigations, with you detained in a holding cell, meanwhile your entire life is turned upside down. Or you can just stay in my office, while two men from a private security company I am cooperating with to search your house. You see I don't want the reputation of this department sullied down by your supposedly criminal activities. If you do agree to have your home searched by the company Sydney True Blue Security Inc., please sign this indemnification form, and all their findings will be between you and me.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I don't want my life turned upside down by internal investigation guys, Please let me sign the contract and here are my house keys.

Barry Itch

- Great. Just sit tight, and we'll search your house in no time.

At 8 PM after three hours of tensioned waiting in Barry Itch's office, two men in suits came in.

Greg Bloom:

- Sir, we found this bag containing 3.5 kilos of cocaine in Michael's basement. It's full of Michael's fingerprints and also some DNA which we believe is his. Furthermore, we have taken pictures of where we found it. How do we proceed?

Barry Itch:

- That's a great question. Michael, how do we proceed?

Michael Fuller got pale from fear and shock

- You set me up, that is not my cocaine I have never seen it before!

Barry Itch:

- Well, that's your version of course. But facts remain the bag disappeared from YOUR crime scene, It was found in YOUR house, and it's full of YOUR fingerprints. But rest assured, I have no interest in ruining the reputation of this department, and it's most famous co-worker, so here is the deal. I overlook this event, and in return, you sign your immediate resignation stating health reasons. That way you can live a retiree's life while the reputation of this department stands firm. Do you agree?

Michael Fuller realised that he somehow had been set up. But by whom, why would Barry Itch set him up? He quickly decided that he did not want to take his chances with a long-term prison term at stake to keep his job.

Michael Fuller:

- I accept and sign my resignation immediately, how do we proceed?

Barry Itch:

- Well, you hand over your gun and police ID. Furthermore, you go to my toilet, open the bag and flush down the cocaine; I want nothing to do with it!

Michael Fuller did as instructed.

Barry Itch shook his hand and said:

- Sorry things ended this way; you were the best we have ever had. Not turning you in, was the least I could do for you. I hope you find something positive to do with your life.

Michael Fuller said nothing and left the station.

1.5 James Locker has a twisted dream.

JAMES LOCKER WOKE UP in the middle of the night. The nightstand clock showed 3.00 am. How long had he been asleep? From what he remembered he came home around 6 pm and crashed instantaneously. It felt like he had been asleep for an eternity and that the sleep had been deep and dreamed free until the last five minutes before he woke up. He had dreamt about her for the first time in over a month. Emily Luong had looked so different in this dream compared to what she did, in the dreams he had before he went to Asia. In those old dreams, she always looked beautiful like a paradise long gone, in this dream; however, the essential features were the same, but the magic was gone, and the loving smile had twisted into an empty shell. Was that somehow fear he had seen in her blank gaze or was it something else, was

it the gaze of a person that was dead inside or even physically dead? He had to get the picture out of his head somehow.

He sat up on the bed. Even though it was an August night and his room was pretty cold he was sweating enormously. His hands were shaking pretty roughly, and his vision was blurred. He had seen these symptoms in a lot of people the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. *"Well I guess that's what a month of heavy drinking do to you,"* he thought. He did not intend to end up as an alcoholic though so he would just have to live with the physical symptoms until they disappeared.

He thought about what his friends had said about getting rid of the memory of a loved one by hooking up with random women. In this case, it seemed this process had not removed the memory but rather twisted it to a worse one. He considered the option of what was the worst:

- Have a very positive memory that nothing in your everyday life can compare with so your daily life becomes dull and pointless
- Have a very negative memory that comes back and haunt you in your nightmares.

"Oh well they are both curses" was his conclusion. Now all he needed was to stabilise his emotional life and get rid of his anxiety. He took one of the antidepressants for the first time in six weeks, and he soon fell asleep to a dreamless unemotional sleep.

1.6 James Locker gets promoted

BARRY ITCH WAS CONTEMPLATING his options on how to proceed. Since Michael Fuller resigned, the team needed a new detective. Looking at the length of service and chain of command the natural officer to promote would be John Dean, who had always been close to Michael Fuller and had a lot of experience since he had been serving in the team for 15 years. But Barry Itch had some objections to this natural order of promotion. First of all, he did not want to promote John Dean since he considered it likely that John Dean had been an accomplice or at least known something about the cocaine scandal involving Michael Fuller. Secondly, he did not feel that John

Dean was a natural leader at all. It's one thing being the right-hand man of a genius who solves most of the cases singlehandedly and an entirely different thing being the one in charge presuming responsibility. Third and finally he had never liked John Dean on a personal level.

Another option would be to promote someone from another team to lead this team. Barry did not enjoy this idea either as there had been no-one who had stood out positively in the other groups. In the best of worlds, he would get an outstanding detective to transfer from another metropolitan area, Brisbane had a few good ones, for instance, so the CSMI got in some new blood and some fresh ideas. This plan would take some time, however.

Barry Itch looked at James Locker's file. James Locker had had an unusual and bizarre development. On the one hand, James Locker had suffered from severe depression for several months medicated with heavy antidepressants. On the contrary and this was the great contradiction during this period James Locker had had an outstanding track record, outperforming even Michael Fuller. Barry Itch finally found the solution: He would offer James Locker a three-month amendment to his contract where he was serving as a provisional detective for the team. If he turned out to be a great detective, he could always be offered the position permanently afterwards and if not, well then the official version would be that James Locker was only intended for the temporary position and it was always Barry Itch's intent to get the replacement from another metropolitan area.

Barry Itch called James Locker to come over to his office, and a few minutes later James Locker entered the office

James Locker:

- Good day sir. What gives me this great pleasure?

Barry Itch:

- It's about Michael; he suffered from some severe liver problems yesterday, and will probably be away for at least six months, provided that he makes it. I told him that the most sensible thing to do would be to resign considering his age which makes him ap-

plicable for sick leave pension if we look at his liver condition as a work-related issue.

James Locker:

- Oh my god, this is a tremendous loss for this team, Michael is the best detective Sydney has ever seen.

Barry Itch:

- Yes and that's why I called you here, but first I need to know. How is your depression going?

James Locker:

- Oh, it has improved a lot, most of the nights I make it through without my antidepressants and I have not experienced any day-time issues for over two months, and that's why I am cutting down.

Barry Itch:

- That's great to hear. Well, I have some good news for you. I have reviewed all the police inspectors at the CSMI, and you are the one with the best results over the last six months. You even superseded Michael Fuller in performance which is outstanding

James Locker:

- I am delighted to hear you say that sir.

Barry Itch:

- As am I to see such advancements among my subordinates. And that's why I called you over. You know, I plan to hire an outstanding detective from another metropolitan area to take command of the team. But since it will take time to find and recruit the

right candidate the team will need a provisional detective for three months, and that's where you come into the picture. Would you be interested in this opportunity

James Locker:

- Well, sir. I must say this came much unexpected and I have not considered the option until now. But of course, it's a fascinating opportunity. Since one does not make progress by rejecting it, I will accept your offer.

Barry Itch:

- Great, please sign this contract then. Your first assignment as a detective will be to hold a speech on the team meeting I am setting up this afternoon. Godspeed Detective.

James Locker:

- Thank you, sir, see you this afternoon.

1.7 James, Adam & Thomas having lunch at the expensive pizza place

LATER THAT DAY JAMES had lunch with Adam Smith & Thomas Anderson at the costly pizza place close to the police station.

Adam Smith:

- So, James, we get an E-mail from the BITCH about a team meeting this afternoon, and you seem so happy, so you offer both of us pizza at this expensive pizza place, where the pizzas are \$25 each. Can these two be related? Are you guys getting married?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, Adam you, if someone would know that gay marriage, is not allowed in Australia yet.

Adam Smith:

- Don't worry Thomas; I am not going to marry you anyways. And I am sure there is some country where gay marriage is legal if you ever find the man in your life.

James Locker:

- Guys, I hope you realise that it's this kind of talk that gets your "values" rating at rock bottom every performance review? You would make a lot of money from just cutting it out.

Thomas Anderson:

- I am sure we'll be alright as long as Adam stops tampering with intercom... But tell me James, what's the occasion?

James Locker:

- Oh, it's great news, you'll find out at the team meeting in a couple of hours.

Adam Smith

- Okay, sounds good

James Locker:

- Hey, guys, you are my best friends, are you not a bit curious?

Adam Smith:

- *"Hey James this talk makes me so curious, I am dying to know before everyone else."*

James Locker:

- Less sarcasm, please! Oh anyway, the great news is that Michaels' liver finally shut down after all the whiskey in his bathtub, so he had to resign immediately due to liver problems. I will be the one sitting in his office and cashing in his fat paycheck for the next three months. Agent Smith, you might start calling me detective Locker!

Thomas Anderson:

- Cheers to that detective!

James Locker:

- Wait a sec, Mr Anderson, you are not drinking coke? Why are you saying cheers with non-alcoholic beverages? That's bad luck I reckon!

Thomas Anderson:

- Well I guess about 80 per cent of my drink is coke so let's say I am. I don't know about you, but my alcohol withdrawal has been horrible, so I have decided to cut it down step by step instead of going for a full stop straight away. And I am still 30 years younger than Michael, so my liver should make it for a while longer.

James Locker:

- Yeah, mine withdrawal has been rough as well, but I prefer riding it out. Oh well, let's head back to the station.

1.8 James Lockers inauguration speech

AT 4 PM THE TEAM WAS gathering in the meeting room of CSMI. The room was dull and boring. If one were focusing on an unusual angle, that person could see a glimpse of the sun and the harbour. From every other corner, however, the only thing visible was the grey concrete fundament of the highway. The entire team had gathered including Barry Itch who was the director

of CSMI. The group in full consisted of James Locker provisional Head Detective for CSMI team 1, John Dean police inspector, Adam Smith, Police assistant, Thomas Anderson, Police Assistant, and Samantha Robinson Police Assistant. It also consisted of the following four other police representatives named Johnson, Baker, Chung, and Lee. All in all, there were nine team members in the room which was logical since a team supposedly consisted of ten members and Michael Fuller had resigned.

Barry Itch opened the meeting.

- Dear Fellow officers. The reason you are here today is the sudden and sad resignation of Michael Fuller who had to resign effective immediately yesterday due to health issues. Michael was one of the greatest detectives of all times in The CSMI, and he will be impossible to replace entirely. It's my long-term ambition to hire a prominent detective from another Metropolitan area as I believe that this team needs fresh blood from the outside after being led by Michael for the last fifteen years. For the next three months, however, you will be led by James Locker who is appointed provisional detective effective immediately. James, it is your turn to speak.

James Locker went to the podium and looked out over the team he was supposed to lead. From what he could see most of them were favourable towards him although many of them seemed shocked by the fact that they had lost the man who had been their patriarch for all these years. From John Dean, however, he received another signal, the signal of a cold, hateful gaze. James Locker cleared his throat and started his short speech.

James Locker:

- Dear Team members. Due to health issues, Michael Fuller has resigned from his position. Losing Michael leaves us in a troubled position as we sadly had no time to make a handover of his duties. Furthermore, we have lost access to one of the sharpest minds in

crime investigation that this department has ever seen. However, I implore you to see this as a time of opportunities instead of seeing a time of troubles ahead. You know, I have identified a severe flaw in Michael's leadership that it is my ambition to remedy.

- Michael had a lot of faith in his ability which is usually a good thing. From my point of view, however, he sometimes took it too far and refused to seek the counsel of his colleagues. By doing this, Michael has inhibited some of you from reaching your full potential. I intend to be a lot more open while seeking counsel from you all and hopefully this will empower you and stimulate you to grow as humans and as police officers.

- So to summarise this change has taken our strongest link away from the team, but hopefully, a new more open approach to teamwork will make us stronger and even better than before.

The team members were applauding, and they addressed a series of minor issues before Barry Itch declared the meeting finished and everyone could go home.

1.9 Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith discusses the events at the gym

SINCE NEITHER THOMAS Anderson nor Adam Smith liked the prospects of becoming alcoholics, they turned down their usual Tuesday night pastime which was an offer at the local Bowling place where they received one free game of bowling for every drink they bought. Since they were both competitive and they both liked alcohol and bowling this usually turned out to be heavy drinking. This night however since they were already sweating from their alcohol withdrawal they reckoned it would be an excellent idea to double the sweating through a hellish hour of boxing at the gym. Afterwards, they chilled out in the Sauna drinking various recovery drinks, and they started discussing the prior two days events.

Thomas Anderson:

- Such a strange day, I wonder what happened with Michael, no-one finishes like that bang boom because of health reasons.

Adam Smith

- I hear you mate. I reckon that the BITCH is covering something up. Question is what and should we be bothered? I say we should not.

Thomas Anderson:

- Don't you get curious then?

Adam Smith:

- Well, of course, I get curious, but then again we have done enough of corrupt things during our years in the team. We should not put our noses in other people's business. And anyway, are you going to miss Michael, as for myself I am not going to miss him!

Thomas Anderson:

- Well he was condescending at times, and I was not close to a raise or promotion for the entire time I was working under him, so I guess you are right.

Adam Smith:

- Of course, I am right, and now we have James in control of the team, this could be perfect for us. A lot better than if John Dean had got the promotion for sure.

Thomas Anderson:

- True that there is, however, a few things that freak me out when it comes to James.

Adam Smith:

- Oh really? I think he is awesome most of the time. Except when he is whining about some shit. He is paying a psychologist to listen to that whining, isn't he? Why does he have to "share" it with me?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, I sincerely did not mean that at all, but one thing freaked me out yesterday...

Adam Smith:

- What is that?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well you know when he denied your story about all the chicks he banged during our time in Thailand and instead told Michael the story about how he dated the same girl for most of the time

Adam Smith:

- Yeah, that was lame, but who cares if he can't stand up for being a man-whore, sleeping around, after all, he is he a career oriented and telling your superior inappropriate details regarding one's sex life has not paid off for any of us.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, it might be unverified cold reading techniques, which I learned as part of my game to get laid with chicks, but what I read from James at that moment was that he was retelling from memory and not lying.

Adam Smith:

- I am not following you...

Thomas Anderson:

- Well if my read is right, James believes that he dated the same girl for a month in Thailand.

1.10 Michael Fuller seeks an ally on the Inside

MICHAEL FULLER WAS sitting on his couch listening to classical music on high volume. The music was composed by a famous French composer and to honour this fact Michael Fuller was drinking brandy instead of Scotch. And besides a Scotch on the rocks was his particular way of focusing his mind while lying in the bathtub and trying to puzzle together the pieces of a criminal case. Tonight, however, the circumstances were different as the case was regarding him. He emptied the glass, sighed and summarised the facts to himself.

The facts on hand made no sense to him at this stage. Someone tipped Barry Itch off regarding drugs placed in his house at some stage. The same person had probably planted the drugs there as well. But how had they gotten Michael Fuller's fingerprints on the bag? And if the Cocaine indeed was from the Lopez case, why had the one setting him up waited until now? And what would be the motive? Michael Fuller wrote down a list of people who would potentially want to set him up. Since Michael Fuller had put a lot of lowlifes behind bars the last decades the list, of course, became pretty extensive, for this story, however, the following names stood out on the list

Barry Itch:

Speaking for it was that Barry Itch had the means to do it. His suspicious looking thugs from that security firm could easily have placed the cocaine in his house and then claim to have found it there to get leverage against him

Speaking against it was that Barry Itch had absolutely nothing to gain from setting him up. Also, the fact that he had him threw out the cocaine in the toilet. Why would anyone corrupt with ties to the organised crime syndicates throw away 3.5 kilos of cocaine just to have someone resign? There were cheaper and easier ways to achieve this.

John Dean

Speaking for it; had the means and the motive to do it. He had been at the Lopez crime scene before Michael Fuller, and he also had been to Michael Fuller's house a lot of times. The last time he came by was only a few weeks ago. He also had a motive as he was the likely successor to crime detective position of the team

Speaking against it; John Dean had been his friend for ages, and he had never shown any sign of corruption. Besides only a total psychopath would frame his friend for a crime that could give several years in prison just to get a promotion.

James Locker:

Speaking for it; he and Michael had had their disagreements in the past. James Locker was very ambitious, and Michael Fuller felt that he could be ruthless at times.

Speaking against it; James Locker was not involved in the Mauricio Lopez case. Furthermore, James Locker was not the natural successor to Michael Fuller in the team so there would be no distinct advantage for James Locker in getting rid of him

Antonio DiMaestro: Owned the warehouse where Mauricio Lopez was killed. Since it was uncommon that people working for legitimate businesses got shot at work by a hitman in the middle of the night, Michael Fuller suspected that Antonio DiMaestro's business was a front for cocaine smuggling. The nationality of the murder victim and the killer, where both were Colombian, strengthened this theory. It did not get better by the fact that the high command transferred the case to organised crime straight after the hitman Angelo Ramirez, was shot dead after resisting arrest at Kingsford Smith airport in Sydney. Michael Fuller had been deeply unsatisfied with this investigation and had made enquiries about the case even after having it transferred, but as time had passed, he got assigned the Father Walker case and had just not had the time needed to pursue it further. He kept thinking about the Antonio DiMaestro connection. Antonio DiMaestro for sure had both the means and the motive to get rid of him; after all, it was cheaper and easier for a mobster to sacrifice some cocaine to set a crime detective up, than hiring a hitman to kill him and this way create a lot of unwanted attention.

Michael Fuller decided that to investigate the DiMaestro connection; he needed an ally in the police force. Sadly the only partners that were worth-

while might also be the ones who set him up. Michael Fuller decided to take his chances and called John Dean.

Michael Fuller:

- Hi, John. It's Michael we need to talk.

John Dean

- Hi, Michael. Are you drunk? You should seriously not be drinking now with your liver condition and all.

Michael Fuller:

- Without saying too much I can assure you that my liver health, is the least of my concerns, I am calling to see if you can refresh my memory on Antonio DiMaestro and if possible send me some information about him.

John Dean

- Well mate, I am not sure honestly, I am not allowed to hand out information on ongoing cases to former team members. Besides, I don't have much since the case was transferred to Organized Crime.

Michael Fuller:

- I know that, but please meet up with tonight so that I can tell you my case. There is something rotten in this mess, and I want to investigate it thoroughly.

John Dean:

- Well, I am not sure I am following you, but I can hear you out for sure. Sadly I am busy tonight what about tomorrow night?

Michael Fuller:

- Great see you at the sports bar in your neighbourhood tomorrow night. Oh, another thing can you at least give me the address to DiMaestro Mansion? I can't remember it right now.

John Dean

- Well, I strongly advise you against confronting him yourself, but I can't prevent you. The address is The DiMaestro Mansion, The Esplanade, Mosman, 2088, NSW.

Michael Fuller:

- Thank you, John, see you tomorrow!

Drunk and against better judgment Michael Fuller opened a can of energy drink to refresh. Then he took his car keys and went to his vehicle. "*Now let's see what this bastard has to say for himself*" he muttered before entering his car for the 45 minutes' drive to Mosman. He checked his watch, it was the Tuesday the 20th of August 2013 and the time was 09.15 PM.

Chapter 2: The Miranda DiMaestro murder



2.1 An Unpleasant phone call

Miranda DiMaestro finished the phone call and tried shaking of the discomfort it had caused her. It was indeed an unpleasant event. At 10 PM a drunk and rude person called on the intercom and claimed to be a police detective requesting to talk with Antonio DiMaestro. She had told him that Antonio DiMaestro had been away for five weeks conducting business with his import-export company. The person had spit out some curses over the intercom, and she had seen no option but to tell him to buzz off or she would call the security company. She decided to call them anyway just as a precaution. They arrived ten minutes later just to make sure that the drunken man who had offended her had not somehow entered the residence or was lingering in the neighbourhood.

Once they had left, she felt relieved and happy knowing that she would finally see Antonio DiMaestro tonight. She had offered to meet him at the airport, but he had declined the offer stating he had to take care of business first and it would be a lot greater pleasure for him to come home to see and enjoy her to the full extent of her beauty.

She watched herself in the mirror. She smiled as she indeed was beautiful. To her great grief, her beauty had not given her the happiness she wanted from life yet. Working as a barmaid in Bogota she had not lived a very glamorous life, and what's worse she never felt safe in her home city. She had been living a dream when Antonio DiMaestro first started courting her, and she had been over the moon when he married her on her 20th birthday, two years ago. She had also felt thrilled the first time in Sydney living in his mansion, but it was around here somewhere her unhappiness had returned. When they first met, she had believed him when he said he was a legitimate businessman doing exports/imports with Australia. After all, the market for canned kangaroo meat was blooming in Colombia, and he had explained the fact that

he was hiring Colombians on working visas within the construction sector in Sydney with the fact that a lot of people preferred doing business with people from their own culture. Since there was a large group of South Americans in Sydney, it did make sense to have a construction company by South Americans for South Americans. But after a while, the facade, of course, fell apart. She was no dimwit, and she realised that a legitimate businessman did not store hundreds of thousands of dollars cash at his home. Furthermore, all the secrecy seemed utterly unnecessary for the kind of business he was supposedly doing.

There were also other factors about their relationship that made her unhappy but contrary to some of her friends' beliefs; the fact that he was 18 years older than she was was not one of them. On the contrary, she found it very attractive that he had experienced so much more than her and had so many stories to tell and so much to teach her. No, what bothered her was his lack of presence both when he was physically missing due to long "*business trips*" but also the lack of presence she felt when he was actually with her. It seemed to her that he had lost most of his interest in her once they got married and that he nowadays merely saw her as a possession to use as he pleased. There was, of course, days when he proved her wrong but these days were too few to change her general impression.

What was the worst, however, was his jealous and controlling nature. She had felt very relieved at first when he told her that he wanted to bring her to Australia to be his housewife in his Mosman Mansion. After all being a beautiful woman working in a bar in Bogota was no child play with all the overconfident and arrogant cokeheads hanging around. But after a while in Australia, she had started to feel frustrated just passing the time, not carrying her weight and always being dependent on her husband's money. Keeping her off the work market was, of course, his way of keeping track of her, but she still had not rebelled against his attitude. It was not fear that had made her not bringing it up but rather a feeling of a debt of gratitude towards him. After all, he had improved her life a lot compared to how it had been before and the last thing she wanted, was to let him down. She received a text from Antonio DiMaestro "*I will be home in an hour, words can't describe how much I have missed you these last five weeks, you are my Venus, my only love, my every-*

thing kisses Antonio" Miranda smiled to herself. No need to think about life tonight, since tonight was the time to enjoy the best of it.

She prepared the romantic surprise she had made for her husband. The time was reaching midnight.

2.2 From the Killers point of view

THE KILLER WAS SITTING in a car watching Miranda via a laptop. Fortunately, the DiMaestro Mansion was full of security cameras so he could follow every step she made. Or should he call them "security" cameras as they were counteracting their purpose in this case? The person who installed the cameras did an outstanding job in keeping them hidden from someone who was actually in the room but also did a very sloppy job when it came to protecting them from computer hackers via the Internet. The consequence of this was that it would be a straightforward task to get back and forth to the house unnoticed.

He wondered who had been calling on the intercom, which had upset Miranda in a way that made her have the premises searched by the security guards. *"A good thing I did not decide to strike earlier,"* he thought to himself. The Killer had not managed to access the intercom as it contrary to the security cameras was a pretty secure system. *"Well I would probably have been able to break the encryption if I needed to,"* he thought to himself, but he did not need the intercom.

Now he was in a dilemma. Was he going to watch Miranda in her sexy lingerie and enjoy himself or just finish her off right now? Most of all he wanted to fuck her. Oh, he damned himself over how much he wanted to fuck her. He brought himself together knowing that if he did fuck her, he would leave his DNA all over the place which would be a nightmare in the long run.

He thought about the killing part, which he did not enjoy it at all. He was not an animal like his enemy, and he did not appreciate the concept of killing at all. But he had a critical mission, a mission that would ultimately bring him freedom and full control of his own life. To aid him in the killing he picked what he thought would be the most comfortable weapon to kill with a .22 calibre revolver equipped with a silencer. On the bright side, he

would have no problem with the recoil and shells spreading around the crime scene. From a negative point of view, he would have to shoot several shots to ensure the kill since a .22 gun with a silencer would have a little punching power, this was however not a major issue since he reckoned the first shot would be the only difficult one. He felt some severe discomfort: even though he technically had killed before this still felt like the first time, and he wondered how losing his murder virginity would feel.

His watch showed a quarter past midnight. If he struck now, the timing would be perfect, and his message would be sent the way he planned. If he did not move now, he would fall behind schedule as he had to wait until tomorrow night, which meant both an increased risk of detection and the risk of a chain reaction of delays. He was not THAT eager to watch her in her lingerie anymore.

He prepared to strike. First, he sent a text to Miranda DiMaestro with the words *"I have lost my keys, can you please open the back door so that I can sneak in. I am looking forward to playing some sexy hide & seek"* then he followed her on the security camera when she opened the back door. It was time to proceed; the killer disabled all the security systems in the building via his computer. Then he grabbed his gun and jumped over the wall to the DiMaestro Mansion from the back alley direction. *"Sexy hide & seek, how fun,"* he thought. But he knew where she was going to hide. He walked into the master bedroom which was heavily scented with roses and cinnamon. He met her gaze filled with horror. She was lying in bed in a suggestive pose. *"I am sorry,"* he said and raised his gun, and shot her, one shot to the head and five to the chest. Miranda DiMaestro fell off the bed, dead within seconds.

The Killer went back to his car. The Time was 1230. He smiled, he was right on schedule. He logged into the mansions security system and activated the intruder alert. He started his car and drove away from the scene.

Chapter 3: The police work around the Miranda DiMaestro murder



3.1 A 3 am phone call

James Locker woke up with a twitch as his phone rang in the middle of the night. He watched his nightstand clock which showed the time 3.00 am. He reached for his phone and somehow managed to press the respond button. It was John Dean on the other line.

John Dean:

- Good Morning sunshine time for some heat in your first assignment as a detective.

James Locker:

- What the fuck? Why can't criminals work in the day? It would be a lot better for my rhythm! How comes the local police called you before they called me by the way?

John Dean:

- Well, they haven't updated their staff listing, so they called me when they could not reach Michael Fuller, its simple logic my friend and also ironic that they by mistake called the right person.

James Locker:

- Yeah, I could tell by your reaction at the staff meeting that you were disgruntled, but don't let that shit affect your work, because Barry set the chain of command after all.

John Dean

- Just saying detective, oh well the crime scene is at the DiMaestro mansion at the Esplanade in Mosman. Come as quickly as possible; I will assemble the team.

James Locker took a shower and made himself a strong coffee. He felt nauseous from sleep deprivation. Today was going to be a long day he thought as he steered his car towards Mosman.

3.2 At the murder scene

JAMES LOCKER ARRIVED on the site of the crime at 4.30AM. His arrival was later than protocol stated as he should be on the death scene within an hour from the time he received the call. He had however felt very nauseous when taking his shower, so sick so he at a point had decided to stick his fingers in his throat and throw up, in the toilet. After this not very healthy way of waking up from severe nausea he had felt a bit better but had still decided to drive slow to avoid an accident even though the roads were empty since it was in the middle of the night.

The entire team was there, and Adam Smith greeted James.

Adam Smith:

- Good morning James you are late, and you don't look very well, did you get stuck with your thing in a Glory Hole on Oxford Street?

James Locker

- Still working hard to keep your "values" rating at a minimum I hear. No, to be honest, it's the alcohol withdrawal that's killing me.

Adam Smith

- That's a shame; you should have joined Thomas and me for the gym last night, an excellent way to sweat out some of the bad stuff.

James Locker

- I guess so, but I did not get your call last night. Oh anyway, where is John Dean, he was the one who got me here.

Adam Smith

- He is in the master bedroom, where the murder took place, you should meet him there.

James Locker went through the door to the mansion. Even though he was no Ace on the property market, he estimated that a house like this would be sold for at least \$5 million and probably a lot more. "*Oh, even the rich people kill each other*" James muttered before proceeding down the hall. All of a sudden he stopped staring at a painting. He had never been to this house before, and yet the art seemed so familiar almost like he had seen the lady it depicted previously. She was staring into his soul and whispering to him, but he could not understand what she was saying since she was speaking a foreign tongue. Thomas Anderson approached him.

Thomas Anderson:

- What's the matter boss you look like you're a seeing a ghost?

James Locker:

- Almost! That painting it looks so familiar, I am sure I have seen it before.

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh, I did not know you were a big fan of art?! Well, you might have, provided it's stolen and a famous piece. You remember that lecture Barry sent us to two months ago about the new app we would use to identify stolen art quickly?

James Locker:

- Vaguely, but I am not the technician of this team, so I did not pay very much attention.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well but I am a technician for this team, so I remember the lecture quite well. They were showing some famous pieces of missing art and how to use the app. Now can be the right time to put this application into action.

The stolen art cell phone app was the latest step by Interpol to identify stolen high-value art quickly. Instead of taking pictures and bouncing these around for an eternity between the departments until they finally were recognised like had been the case in the past, the app simply used face recognition software used by anti-terrorist agencies for ages and applied this technique on paintings. Thomas took a high definition picture of the artwork and uploaded it onto the Interpol database. A few minutes later he got a match, for a piece stolen from an Australian collector a few years ago.

Thomas Anderson

- Great vision sir, I am sure the stolen property team will be overjoyed, and this could help us as well, now go and see John, I am sure he is eager to see you.

James Locker continued walking down the hall and finally entered the Master bedroom where two members of the forensics department were looking for traces, and John Dean was leading them with directions. John Dean turned around and started speaking with James.

John Dean looked at James with a crooked smile and said

- Oh, look who is here. Cinderella finally woke up from her beauty sleep.

James Locker did not like the arrogant tone of John Dean who no doubt was still upset about not getting the promotion. He decided to bite back in a similar tone.

James Locker

- I arrived a while ago, and I have already discovered that this mansion contains stolen art. Considering how much longer you have been at the scene, why is the killer not apprehended?

John Dean:

- Let us both calm down and focus on work, shall we?

James Locker

- Since you are my subordinate, I would appreciate that behaviour from you, a lot more.

John Dean blushed up in and second and turned red from anger, and he struggled for a while to keep his composure before continuing speaking.

- Well as to why we have not captured the killer yet, the killer did not stay here and wait for the police, and it's difficult to catch an unknown man in a city of 5 million souls. However, from what we know this far, we can make some assumptions.

James Locker:

- Hit me!

John Dean:

- Well, first of all, there was no sign of forced entry into the building. So whoever the killer was, the murdered woman Miranda Di-Maestro let him in willingly or he had access to keys and alarm codes. Secondly, the bedroom is decorated with roses, an ice bucket with champagne bottles and live candles, so she was expecting a romantic encounter. Third of all, the way she died implies a hit-man and not a crime of passion.

James Locker:

- Well, that's a great start. Let's gather the team for a briefing. I am starving let's meet up at the coffee shop just down the road.

The team gathered, and they headed for the cafeteria just down the road. The time was 5.30 am, and it would still take some time before the sun would rise and spread some warmth this crisp August night.

3.3 Team Briefing at the local coffee shop

THE TEAM GATHERED AT the posh but still friendly and welcoming Mosman cafe. Even though they were alone when they arrived, the group had asked for a back room usually aimed at functions for their meeting, so they would not be disturbed and also to make sure no sensitive matters leaked. The entire team was present, and James Locker started the talking

James Locker

- Okay, so this is what we know at the moment. Miranda DiMaestro, Colombian National with Australian Permanent Residency, the wife of the businessman Antonio DiMaestro is found dead in her Mosman mansion. From the way she was killed, it looks like we are dealing with a professional killer. It appears she was waiting for someone for a romantic encounter, and there was no sign of a break-in, so we assume the killer was let in by Miranda or had the keys and access codes to the building. In the mansion, we found stolen art and the stolen goods department will be called in to assess if there is anything else in the house reported stolen. Any suggestions on what would be our first step?

Adam Smith:

- Well, finding her husband Antonio DiMaestro seems to be our first step. Fortunately, due to the stolen art, that we discovered in the house, we have increased authority and can request to have him arrested on sight.

James Locker:

- Very well that's your task

John Dean:

- Speaking with the security company would be a priority. After all, it was a security guard who found her after someone, most likely the perpetrator setting off the alarm.

James Locker:

- I leave that to you mate.

Thomas Anderson

- I will look through her computer and phone to see if there are any clues there as who would want her dead.

James Locker:

- Great! Well to the rest of you I implore you to knock doors in the neighbourhood to see if anything interesting comes up. I will move to my office and work like a chain of command. Please update me continuously with your findings. Please meet up at the CSMI building at 3 pm for our daily staff meeting. We should have received a report from the forensics team by then so we'll take it from there.

The team split up, and James headed straight to his office. He would need to take a nap if he was to make it through the day. James turned down the blinds and locked the door. He was to brief the BITCH at 11 am and hold the team-meeting at 3 pm and a press conference at 5 PM. "*I hope no one calls me before my nap is over,*" he thought before he closed his eyes and fell asleep to a light sleep full of vivid warm dreams.

3.4 John Dean faces troubling circumstances

JOHN DEAN'S TASK FOR the day was to contact Mosman Scrooge Security (MSS), the security company responsible for the safety of the DiMaestro Mansion. He called the company and reached the voicemail referring him to an emergency number. He called that number and was referred to a third number since helping the police with an ongoing murder investigation was apparently not considered an emergency by MSS's standards. He looked at his watch. It showed 7 am and the office of MSS would probably open at 10 am. John was contemplating his options. He could either call around for hours picking arguments with the endless list of reference numbers, or he could simply go home, have breakfast with his family, have a short nap and then walk in at the MSS office and most likely get the help he needed easily and without further ado. John decided to choose the easy and diplomatic "wait for business hours" approach well aware that the delay risked letting the suspect out of the country. *"Well in that case, at least there won't be any more shootouts at the airport,"* he said to himself as the reassurance he needed to motivate his decision.

At 10 am John Dean walked in at the office and met with the public affairs manager of MSS, Richard Monroe. Richard Monroe turned out to be very helpful, and the following conversation took place:

John Dean:

- I guess you know why I am here, the murder at the DiMaestro mansion

Richard Monroe:

- Yes, I have apparently heard about it, as it was our team that reported the crime to the police. It is a great tragedy to one of our best customers no doubt.

John Dean

- Well, I understand. How come your security guards appeared at the scene so quickly did the killer set off an alarm?

Richard Monroe

- We are unsure about this. Because an alarm went off and when the alarm goes off this cause all the concealed and visible security cameras to send a live feed to our command central, this feed is also recorded. But when the feed went on Miranda DiMaestro was already murdered, and the perpetrator is not seen on these feeds.

John Dean

- Interesting, any theories on how this happened?

Richard Monroe

- Well, either the cameras were broken, or the guy who did this knew what he was doing. It would seem he remotely deactivated all of our security, killed MRS. DiMaestro, and then left unnoticed.

John Dean

- I see how could this be done exactly?

Richard Monroe

- Well, no system is stronger than its weakest link. Since the security systems by design and as ordered by Antonio DiMaestro are possible to control remotely, it could be done by just guessing the right password. A lot of people are not very good at picking a good password.

John Dean:

- I see, so why was the alarm activated then?

Richard Monroe

- We are investigating this at the moment. It was either activated by the same person who deactivated the system, or by a glitch in the system. We'll have to make an internal investigation and get back to you this afternoon.

John Dean:

- Please do; here is my card. Anything else to add?

Richard Monroe:

- Yes, there was an incident earlier that evening with a drunken man threatening the victim, Miranda DiMaestro, via the intercom, so she felt compelled to call security. This event activated the camera feed for ten minutes until our men turned the feed off. Please take this USB stick with that video.

John Dean:

- Thank you. You have been very helpful; please call me later today when your analysis is complete.

Richard Monroe

- Will do sir, good luck with the investigation

After this conversation, John went back to his car to watch the video from the earlier incident at the DiMaestro Mansion last night. He could see a drunken man on the street cursing and kicking an empty plastic bottle. John immediately recognised the man "*Oh my god it's Michael Fuller!*" he said to himself, before falling back into his chair struggling with severe decision anxiety on how to proceed.

3.5 Thomas Anderson finds some contradictory evidence

MEANWHILE, THOMAS ANDERSON was searching the house for any technological pieces of data that might hint the team in the right direction. He did find a few pieces of very counter-intuitive evidence. Apparently, Antonio DiMaestro had sent a series of threatening E-mails to Miranda DiMaestro over the last few months, and from this correspondence, it was clear that their relationship was stormy. On the other hand, in the latest text messages found in Miranda DiMaestro's phone, the tone was completely different. Apparently, it had been Antonio DiMaestro that she was setting up a romantic night for when she interrupted by her murderer who effectively spoilt all her plans for an excellent evening, as well as any other plans she might have for the future. Since Thomas Anderson was not an expert on stormy relationships or any relationships for that matter he decided to take this contradictory evidence to the perpetrator profiling support function of the CSMI. What he also put on his to-do list was to check the technical integrity of the inbox and the Cell phone to check if these messages were sent the time the timestamps claimed.

While investigating the house, he also found some of the concealed security cameras in the building. Sadly all of the wirings led to a locked room, and Thomas did not feel like tampering with the crime scene by picking a lock without discussing the matter with the rest of his team. Thomas kept looking for clues but was unable to find any. A bit later during the day the stolen property department had done their review of the items in the building and had concluded that four of the paintings were on their list of stolen goods.

Thomas Anderson decided to call James Locker:

James Locker (half asleep):

- Hi, Thomas, what are your findings?

Thomas Anderson:

- Seriously mate, were you sleeping?

James Locker:

- Of course not, what are your findings?

Thomas Anderson

- Well, several; apparently Antonio sent a lot of threatening E-mail messages to Miranda and yet it seems like he was the one she was setting up a romantic evening for. What would you make of that?

James Locker:

- Well, that does not necessarily mean more than that they were fighting, and now they were trying to reconcile. What else?

Thomas Anderson:

- Apparently, the place is full of concealed security cameras. They are all wired to the same locked room. I decided to not pick the lock until after having discussed it at the team meeting. Oh, and Stolen property team was here. They found that four of the paintings were registered as stolen, you had a sharp eye on that one.

James Locker:

- This discovery is significant; possessing high value stolen art is among the things you can send an international arrest order through Interpol. Finding this Antonio DiMaestro guy must be our top priority in this case. I will handle it with Barry.

Thomas Anderson:

- Excellent, and one more thing, can you request a trace for Antonio's phone last night?

James Locker:

- Of course, leave it to me and the BITCH. See you at 3 pm.

3.6 The 21st August 3 PM staff meeting

AT 3 PM THE SAME DAY the team gathered to recapitulate their findings and decide on how to move on. They were all gathered in the same depressing room that James Locker had held his inauguration speech in the day before, well everyone except for Barry Itch who was not directly involved in daily work and meetings of the separate teams. James Locker looking exhausted started the talking

James Locker:

- Well, let's summarise the case this far. We have a murdered woman Miranda DiMaestro. We have her shady husband Antonio DiMaestro who was supposed to meet up with her on a romantic encounter last night. What we know is that they did not meet for a romantic meeting at least. Furthermore, the killer entered the mansion and bypassed the security system surpassed only by high-level government agencies, unnoticed. E-mail correspondence states that they had been fighting lately. Antonio's phone was in the neighbourhood at the time of the crime. In the mansion, we have found four pieces of high valued stolen art. The case is clear, Antonio must be our man.

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah obviously what you are saying is pointing in that direction, but there are several issues in this case that don't feel right to me.

James Locker:

- I see. Can you please share your thoughts with the group on this matter? Oh and while you are at it, what were your findings? The only one who called in and reported before the meeting was Thomas.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, my issues with the case are this:

- The murderers choice of weapon and killing method. This kill was a calculated murder, done by a professional, and not a crime of passion. If Antonio killed his wife due to calculated reasons why would he text her and ask her to set up a romantic evening? The smartest would be to get an alibi and let a hitman do it while he was far away.

- If he chooses to kill her and has the mental presence to deactivate all the buildings security before doing so, why on earth would he have his phone turned on. If he somehow was unaware that cell phones act as a 24-hour tracking device, why would he shut down the phone shortly after leaving the scene?

- As for my findings; well I was talking to the neighbours accompanied by Assistant Johnson and Baker. What we found out was that no-one heard any gunshots. Considering Miranda was shot six times, this most likely indicates the use of a silenced weapon. One neighbour, however, spoke about a drunken man standing outside the house swearing and muttering for at least 10 minutes before finally leaving. The Neighbour called the security company, Mosman Scrooge Security, to have the nuisance removed from the neighbourhood. They had already received a call on this matter however and said they were on their way.

James Locker:

- Okay, the communication with MSS is John's responsibility, so don't worry about that. As for your issue with Antonio DiMaestro being the killer, what is your theory?

Samantha Robinson:

- That someone with vast resources is trying to set him up, perhaps a rival who has been unable to get to him.

James Locker:

- And the stolen art?

Samantha Robinson

- Well, those pieces seem to have been there for a long time; Antonio is probably guilty of this.

James Locker:

- Interesting, Well I guess you should be talking with the organised crime department, they might know if Antonio had any enemies. Oh, and can you contact Miranda's relatives and friends back in Colombia? Your file says you are the best Spanish speaker in the team.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I am not fluent in any way, but I'll give it a shot.

James Locker:

- Moving on, Thomas you have already reported your findings to me. What's new?

Thomas Anderson:

- Nothing. I was unable to pick the lock to the locked secure room of the mansion. Some of the guys from the forensics team also tried and also failed. Whatever is hidden in there it must worth a lot to make all that effort keeping it safe. We'll get back there in due time and blow the lock off with explosives, but we can't-do that until we swept the house for evidence. Will probably be tomorrow afternoon or Friday morning.

James Locker:

- Well, we certainly don't want to ruin the evidence and have this Antonio guy getting cleared by a technicality, proceed when you are finished with the forensics. Moving on to Adam; how is the search for Antonio going?

Adam Smith

- Pretty bad, unfortunately. At first, the organised crime department refused to help me because I don't have clearance to access their investigations. So I asked Barry for permission, but considering our frosty relation, he was stalling it and questioned why I even needed approval for the file. Instead, I visited the reception of Antonio's import/export business. They told me he was still abroad; apparently, he has not felt any interest in assisting us in the Lopez investigation.

James Locker:

- The Lopez investigation?

Adam Smith:

- Oh yeah, you were not part of that case as you were home "sick." The last case we had before our Asia trip. A professional killer killing a guy in a warehouse owned by Antonio DiMaestro's company. Unfortunately for our killer, the place had video surveillance. Even more unfortunate for him he was unable to dodge bullets when he tried a Matrix shootout when starting a firefight with the airport police. He got shot several times and died on the way to the hospital. With the suspected killer dead, we transferred the case to the organised crime department.

James Locker:

- I see; Antonio only gets more and more interesting! So you have not been able to find out about his whereabouts then?

Adam Smith:

- That's correct, even after I got clearance from Barry to access the DiMaestro file, I got nowhere. The last observation The Organized Crime department have of him is more than five weeks old.

James Locker:

- I see. Well since both you and Samantha have business with the OC department go there together. Two brains are better than one.

- Oh well, we have been saving the best for last, John what's your findings.

John Dean had been sitting all the way through the meeting fearing for when it was his turn to speak. He could not decide on how to act with information and evidence that Michael Fuller was outside the DiMaestro drunk and threatening Miranda via the intercom. If John destroyed the evidence, he could be charged with evidence tampering which at the least would lead to immediate dismissal and at worst could lead to some serious jail time. If he, however, told them about Michael Fuller's behaviour and it turned out that Michael Fuller was innocent he could have led the investigation in the wrong direction. He decided to at least confront Michael Fuller with the facts before sharing it with the team.

John Dean:

- Well, I spoke with Richard Monroe, manager of public affairs, at Mosman Scrooge Security. He was a helpful fellow, but as it seems to me the facts he provides us with makes this investigation more complicated.

James Locker:

- Well, complexity is a part of the job, the reality is never easy, but it's our job to put complicated facts together into a smooth case.

John Dean:

- Okay here is the deal. The killer apparently knew how to deactivate all of the security systems remotely, so there is no trace of him at the surveillance tapes.

James Locker:

- Disabling the cameras remotely would be a very natural way to act if Antonio DiMaestro indeed is the killer. He for sure must have the access codes to the remote access of his house's security.

John Dean:

- Oh, I am sure he does, but here is the strange thing, straight after the killer left the house, he remotely activated the alarm. The security company could see the corpse of Miranda on their screens but no trace of the murderer. It's as he wanted the body found as quickly as possible.

James Locker:

- Strange indeed, what about the drunken man who threatened Miranda over the intercom earlier, any trace of him?

John Dean:

- Well MSS activated the feed to all the cameras and thus their recording function straight after Miranda's call I am still looking through all of the feeds, but as for now, I have not had any vision of the threatening man.

James Locker:

- Keep looking; his identity is indeed necessary to verify.

James Locker:

- That's it for now unless anyone has any objections, I will go out with a press conference in an hour giving some minor details to the media and stating that our primary suspect at this time is Antonio DiMaestro but that we are also looking at other undisclosed solutions to the case. Does anyone have any objections to this plan?

As the procedure seemed reasonable to the group, no one had any objections. They agreed to hold a daily meeting at the same time every day for the time being, and the meeting was over.

3.7 Michael Fuller & John Dean form an alliance

MICHAEL FULLER HAD spent the whole day drinking and listening to music. Because of this, he was blissfully unaware of Miranda DiMaestro's death. Michael was pretty vegetating and was not aware of much at all when John Dean called to remind him about their planned meeting. "*Damn what he sounded upset,*" Michael thought for himself before checking his watch. It was 4 PM, and John had requested a meeting at the local pub near John Dean's house at 7 pm. Michael realised that he better sleep for a while and have a shower before meeting with John Dean as it would be hard to convince someone to help him while he was stinking of alcohol and his eyes were blood red. He set his alarm for 6 pm and went to bed for a nap.

Before he fell asleep, he was considering the option just to walk away and let things be. Financially it would not be a big deal. He had lots of money from working at a high position as well as all the annual leaves he had saved up that would get paid out now that he had quit his job. Furthermore, his house was worth a lot of money since he had inherited it from his parents who in turn had bought it long before the property bubble had hit Sydney. If he sold his house, he could comfortably live an excellent life somewhere else and still leave an inheritance to his daughter when it was time to check out. Oh yes, his daughter if he just stepped down now he could finally have the time to at least try repairing their relationship. But then he got his resolve back, he had been wrongfully accused and had lost what he loved the most

in the world. He would find the person behind this bullshit and have him hanged! Satisfied with his resolve he fell into a few hours of slumber.

Meanwhile, John Dean sat at his office and felt much stressed. Officially he was working on reviewing all the surveillance tapes to see if he could identify anything leading to the identity of the unknown drunken man who had threatened Miranda DiMaestro just before the murder. Knowing this man was his former boss and friend Michael Fuller put him in a terrible mood. He would somehow have to deliver the videos with commentary at the staff meeting the day after, but if he was sure about Michael's innocence, he could tamper with the videos a bit, so they became too blurry for precise identification. Doing this was a pretty safe procedure, but it would only buy him time since blurry videos could be sent to a technician subcontractor who was an expert in getting a clear picture. *"However since they seem pretty locked on Antonio DiMaestro, they might overlook the option to have the picture made clear,"* he thought and decided to go with that option.

In his family life, he also suffered from a lot of stress. His daughter had epilepsy and had seizures regularly. Either he or his wife had to stay home with her during these periods which cost them money and career opportunities. His wife had stayed home with his daughter a vast majority of the seizures in the later years as he had assured her that he was in the frontline of getting a promotion to a detective's rank and thus get a sizeable well-needed pay raise. Now that he so clearly had been sidestepped and not even asked to be the provisional detective, it became apparent for the Dean spouses that his career opportunities were dull and his wife was upset over having forsaken her career for his failed ambitions.

John Dean finally stopped struggling with himself and made up his mind. He had decided on a course of action which not was in line with his ambitions or morals, but his struggling finances and the disappointment over being sidestepped had dulled his senses. John decided that if Michael Fuller wanted help from him, he would have to pay for it, handsomely. He copied all the data he had available on Antonio DiMaestro to a USB memory stick. There was a lot of data at this stage since the Central Sydney Organized Crime department, CSOC, had opened up their files on Antonio DiMaestro for the CSMI during the ongoing murder investigation. John Dean also

copied all the data on the Miranda DiMaestro murder as well as the video of Michael Fuller outside the DiMaestro mansion the same night.

They met at the sports bar near John Dean's house, and John Dean started the conversation.

John Dean:

- You look like shit mate, how much have you been drinking the last few days?

Michael Fuller:

- I have had a few...
- ...bottles of...
- ...Whiskey.
- You don't look that well either?!

John Dean:

- That's correct I was called up at 230 this morning by Mosman local police due to murder, and what is worse is that you are somehow involved.

Michael Fuller:

- Me? How on earth would I be involved?!

John Dean:

- Well, you called on the murder victim's intercom and threatened her. A few hours later she was found dead, shot with six bullets...

Michael Fuller:

- What are you talking about?
- I was looking for Antonio DiMaestro. Some woman at his house responded via the intercom. She was speaking poor English so

I might have got annoyed, but I did not threaten her. Someone murdered her?!

John Dean:

- Yes, that was Miranda DiMaestro, the wife of Antonio DiMaestro. Furthermore, I did a trace on your phone for the actual night, and you were staying in Mosman until 1230. How do you explain that?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I had a drink at the local pub watching a game, was it 1230? It feels like I left at 11 pm.

John Dean:

- Well, your phone connected to the base station that connects the DiMaestro mansion until 1230. The estimated time of the Miranda DiMaestro murder is 1215. You better give me a reasonable explanation on why you contacted the DiMaestro mansion in the first place.

Michael Fuller:

- Okay wait a sec; I just need to go to the bathroom.

Michael Fuller went to the bathroom; he was sweating heavily, and panic spread like a plague across his body. He had been drinking heavily for almost 48 hours straight with little or no sleep. His vision was fading, and Michael saw the shadows around him moving. He could hear the dark voices around him speaking in a foreign demonic tongue. *"This is why I need my job back, to keep me from drinking too much and giving my life a purpose,"* he thought. Without a purpose his life was void and black, he had been alone for so long, so he even forgot how it felt actually to feel something for another human being. On a level, he loved his daughter, but it's been so long since they hung out and did something meaningful and connecting, so he had forgotten how

that love felt. Now he could feel how the shadows tried to claim his soul, but he would not let them, he would fight back. He stuck his fingers down his throat and vomited heavily down the toilet. Afterwards, he took a gulp of mouthwash he always had in a miniature bottle in his jacket pocket. He threw it away after use; he had decided that he would not need it again. He went back to the table where John Dean was drinking a beer to pass the time.

Michael Fuller:

- Sorry about that, could you please put away that beer?

John was looking at Michael for a second and realised that this was not his battle to fight, so he complied and left the almost full schooner of beer at the bar.

Michael Fuller:

- Thank you, I just realised that I needed to get my alcohol problems in check.

- Oh well anyway to describe my real reason for going to the DiMaestro mansion, you need to know the actual reason for my resignation.

- I did not resign because of liver problems but because I was set up by someone...

- Barry got tipped off that I was storing large quantities of cocaine at my house, cocaine that I would supposedly have stolen from the crime scene of the Lopez murder. Antonio DiMaestro owns the warehouse where Lopez was killed, and I have been making inquiries about him on my spare time as I am not at all satisfied about the case being handed over to OC after the alleged killer, Angelo Ramirez, was killed at the airport.

- Apparently, I asked too many questions and was causing troubles as someone found it a good idea to waste a lot of cocaine to set me up.

- Barry then got tipped off by someone and sent two guys he apparently knows from some shady security company. They found the cocaine, 3.5 kilos to be exact, in my house with my fingerprints on it, and they gave me two options: Either signing my resignation or facing charges in court. I decided to sign my resignation. Barry then handed me the cocaine told me to destroy it in his private bathroom, which I did.

John Dean:

- Fascinating story Michael, but sadly alcohol-induced paranoia. There is no chance you would get away with such a crime if Barry was not part of a conspiracy against you and wanted to cover up his role in it. If Barry were a part of a plot against you, he would not let you destroy 3.5 kilos of cocaine.

- If Barry, however, were an honest cop, he would have let this case run via internal investigations, and you would be facing a long-term jail penalty.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, Barry also known as the bitch is a very particular person. For him, appearance is everything, and the image of the CSMI is his baby, and he loves it more than anything. Barry does not care particularly for either justice or truth as long as everything looks good. That's why he chose to cover it up. You do realise what a shame it would be for the department if it's leading and the most famous detective was charged with serious drug charges?

John Dean:

- Well, you might be right; Barry is indeed a fucking retard so what you say makes some sense. However, I am not convinced. I might, however, help you for old friendship's sake on one condition...

Michael Fuller:

- I am listening.

John Dean:

- I am broke, my marriage is crumbling, and my daughter's condition is getting worse. I need money Michael, and I know you are rich.

Michael Fuller turned red of anger and disappointment. His certainly did not feel like his life as a sober alcoholic had turned out for the better during the ten minutes he had tried it. Michael felt desperate for a drink, he could see the bottles in the bar, and they were calling his name. He regained his composure and replied.

Michael Fuller:

- John, this is outrageous! I thought you were my friend during all these years, and now you do not believe in me at all. Still, you are selling out and offer me help in return for money. You have indeed fallen deeply from the man I used to know.

John Dean:

- Well, I guess we both have. Any man, even a great one, can fall if the winds of fate blow in that direction. But this changes nothing. I need money, \$10,000 to be specific that will keep me floating for a while. Don't see it as a bribe; see it as helping a friend in need. If the winds change I promise to pay you back.

Michael Fuller:

- And if I don't pay?

John Dean:

- Well then this meeting never took place, I won't turn you in, but I won't help you either.

Michael Fuller was contemplating his options. They were dire indeed. The facts against him in the Miranda DiMaestro case was not enough for a conviction at present, but god knows what other proofs could be fabricated against him if the conspiracy indeed was within the CSMI. John Dean was acting a bit suspicious Michael Fuller reckoned; could he be the one behind it all? Well, it seemed unlikely. Because if John Dean were actually in it for the money, he would make a lot more from selling the stolen cocaine himself, than from blackmailing Michael Fuller for ten grand. Money was not an issue for Michael Fuller either as he owned a large beach house near Palm Beach. The house was over-dimensioned for his needs, and he rarely went to the beach anyway. If he sold the house and settled into a smaller apartment, he could make millions of dollars, was it then really worth the hassle of not being able to clear himself for \$10,000? He decided to accept John Dean's offer.

Michael Fuller:

- Okay, I accept your offer, should I transfer the money right now?

John Dean:

- No that would be traceable if our connection is discovered, I'll come by your house tomorrow afternoon with the files, make sure to have the money ready in cash.

They agreed to meet up at 5 pm the following day, and they separated for the evening. John Dean had severe anxiety while travelling home. For sure his economy was saved for at least six months if he got the money. He could finally get back on track with his mortgage and even have enough over to do things he liked. But how would explain this sudden influx of money to his wife? And what if he got caught? Most of all he was worried about his human development and his downward spiral down into the darkness he had spent all his life trying to fight in society. He had seen a lot of police officers join the force for all the wrong reasons. Some had enlisted for

the lust of violence, and they regularly used excessive force when making arrests. Some had joined for the desire for power and authority, and they routinely harassed and threatened people for the rush of it. Finally, some officers had joined to get a badge and a *carte blanche* to skim the other criminals for money. He suspected that both Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith were in the latter category and used their badges to get free drugs and hookers. Of course, he could not prove it; he had never even tried. John Dean reckoned that they probably only did drugs when they had a few days off work as there were random drug tests in place among police officers, but his opinion about them was clear; there was just something about them that wreaked corruption. Now he might place himself in the same category as Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith or even worse. Because something had been severely wrong with Michael Fuller's behaviour this night, and chances were that if he was left unchecked, he could and would do a lot worse things than stealing drugs.

3.8 Adam Smith and James Locker playing video games at Adam Smith's place

IT WAS THURSDAY EVENING, and James Locker and Adam Smith were meeting up at Adam's place to play the yearly instalment of the Aussie Rules Football game. From a gameplay perspective, the game was utterly rubbish most likely due to the considerably lower budget a game aimed at the limited Australian market would have. As both Adam Smith and James Locker were pretty hard-core AFL fans though they still saw the game as an excellent opportunity to experience those massive victories over their rivals, they would never experience if they tried playing Aussie Rules Football in reality. Since Adam Smith, in general, was the far better video games player of the two he beat James Locker big every game, which brought him great joy, but also a bit of frustration.

Adam Smith:

- Hey, mate; you better start focusing! It takes half the pleasure of beating you when you are not even trying!

James Locker:

- Oh sorry man, I am a bit off my game today, I guess I am overthinking things.

Adam Smith:

- I see. Awesome thoughts, lame thoughts or plain strange ideas?

James Locker:

- Well, I was considering the option to change my name to get a new start in life.

Adam Smith:

- But why on earth would you be unsatisfied with life and wanting a new start?

- You just landed a promotion, you fucked half Asia during your holiday, and in spite of being over 30 you are still neither fat nor ugly. You lead a remarkable life I reckon. Learn from me and be awesome as well.

James Locker:

- So you are happy with life then?

Adam Smith:

- Yes of course! I get fed, paid and laid what is there to whine about?

James Locker:

- Well, you might want to get loved and appreciated for who you are?

Adam Smith:

- Look if I wanted to listen to emotional whining when playing video games, I would get a girlfriend and play with her.
- Here are two shots of absinthe bottom up and harden up James.

After sculling the shots, James Locker realised that Adam Smith was probably not the right person to share his complex inner thought with, which in a way was good as Adam Smith undoubtedly had a point. Sometimes it was better just to keep things simple. Fuelled by this insight James Locker spent all of his focus and the rest of the evening trying to beat Adam Smith in that damn video game!

3.9 Friday afternoon and the Antonio DiMaestro still at large

THE LAST STAFF MEETING of the week took place on Friday afternoon. A few new pieces of evidence came up, but James Locker reckoned that none of the new pieces of evidence was of such value that it was motivated for the team into working overtime during the weekend. The report from the forensics team stated that they had found DNA from four different people in the mansion, two males, and two females. The two women DNA were identified as the housekeepers, Kim-Ji-Wo who worked in the estate three times a week, and the late Miranda DiMaestro. The housekeeper had a sound alibi for the evening and also no apparent motive for suddenly killing her employer so James Locker decided that no additional resources should be allocated to keep her under surveillance.

The two male DNA was a more significant issue. One of them was from Antonio DiMaestro which proved neither his guilt nor his innocence as it's natural that a forensics team find DNA from the man who is supposedly living in the house. The second Male DNA was a more significant issue, however. It could be from the killer if Antonio was not the killer or it could just be from whoever visited the house in the last few days.

Fortunately, they had managed to get access to the security room of the building with the mainframe of the safety of the building. The investigators also found a large sum of money there as well a minor amount of cocaine,

clearly indicating what kind of business Antonio DiMaestro was doing. As expected all of the feeds showcasing the actual murder had been remotely deactivated, but apart from that, there were security feeds for a long time back. The group decided that these feeds were of importance and the work to go through them was assigned to Samantha Robinson and Thomas Anderson, a task they both seemed happy to receive.

Considering the DNA from the unknown man Adam Smith and John Dean were assigned to find alternative killers. The main priority was to identify the man who called on the intercom earlier that evening and threatened Miranda DiMaestro, but they were also to make inquiries among Antonio DiMaestro's business contacts to find out if he could have any enemies who wanted to set him up. John Dean had been paid by Michael Fuller not to disclose that Michael Fuller was the one who called on the intercom and was also in the neighbourhood at the time of the murder.

3.10 Friday Night equals Laser tag night

SINCE THE WORK WEEK was over, Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith decided to spend their Friday night playing Laser tag. They did this now and then and tonight's session was of great importance to get their skills up for the Central Sydney Laser tag championship held the following week. Friday nights were the best nights to play they reckoned as it was \$15 for an unlimited number of games and a lot of people playing. Accompanying them this week was Samantha Robinson who Thomas Anderson had persuaded to join their team for the upcoming championship. Since they did not want any team members, who sucked they decided to give her the necessary training before the games that mattered.

After three games they decided to take a break, and they had the following conversation.

Adam Smith:

- Three games: three first places; I am indeed still the king of Laser tag.

Samantha Robinson

- Oh, Adam, you are so sexy, I am getting all wet.

Adam Smith

- Uh really?

Samantha Robinson

- Yeah, not from you, but from sweat. Running around with a toy gun thing you are doing is more fun than I imagined. Next week will be awesome.

Adam Smith:

- Yeah, you are better than I thought, I feared we would be stuck with a feeder just because Thomas wanted to make a lame pickup attempt, but you might get better than him.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hum, I did not bring her as a lame pickup attempt, I brought her because we need four players for the championship next week so that it will be you and I, Samantha and James.

Adam Smith:

- James??! He sucks worst player I have seen!

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that's because of his colour blindness, James can only play well when he knows the people he is playing with, he does not function at all in mixed teams.

Adam Smith

- We'll see about that. I got to go; I am getting laid tonight!

Adam Smith smiled with a huge smile.

Thomas Anderson

- No, you are not. You are just making up an excuse so you can leave with three consecutive first places, I am not buying that one, we'll keep playing my stamina is better than yours.

Adam Smith:

- Oh really? Look at this text!

Adam Smith handed over the phone to Thomas to show an SMS conversation he had with a woman. The entire dialogue consisted of different smileys, question marks, and exclamation marks. Not many words were written. The last message from the woman was a question mark, followed by Adam's response an exclamation mark

Thomas Anderson:

- What the fuck is this? It looks completely retarded, and how does this means you are getting laid tonight?!

Adam Smith:

- Well, mate, she is a psychologist, so she listens to people whining about their feelings and stuff all day long. So when the urge comes all she wants is sex; and I am happy to provide.

Thomas Anderson:

- That is beyond retarded. Do you...

Samantha Robinson interrupted Thomas Anderson:

- Oh god! Thomas, why do you even bother if this woman exists or not? But yeah you can't leave yet, Adam, We'll have to play a final game to determine the winner of tonight, and I am going to show you both some girl power if you are up for it?!

Adam Smith:

- Tough words indeed, I accept your challenge!

They went in, to play a last fifteen minutes round before Adam Smith had to leave to meet his supposed booty call. To his big surprise, he got massively beaten by Samantha Robinson who smashed him big time. Thomas Anderson finished second with a small margin, and Adam Smith got by his standards a humiliating third place.

Thomas Anderson:

- Ha-ha psyche out. The Great Master of Lasertag beaten big time by a girl. How does it feel?

Adam Smith who was red in his face both from the physical strain and frustration yelled:

- Shut up! You suck nine out of ten games, and besides, she beat you too!

Adam Smith cooled down for a while and then added

- Anyway, I am leaving now; I am getting laid tonight, good luck with that one.

After this minor turmoil that caused all the people in the vicinity to look at him; Adam Smith quickly left the venue.

Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson decided to have another drink and went to a couch to have a chat. After a while, she leaned her head towards him and said:

Samantha Robinson:

- You know he was right about one thing; you do suck at Lasertag.

Thomas Anderson looked at her with sad eyes and said nothing.
Samantha Robinson:

- But he was also wrong about one thing...

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay, and what would that be?

Samantha Robinson smiled at him and then she said:

- Well, you are getting laid tonight.

She pulled the surprised Thomas Anderson towards her, and they kissed passionately.

3.11 Friday night and insight into the killer's mind.

THE KILLER WAS LYING in bed looking at the sleeping woman next to him. She was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life. When she touched him all the pain in his mind, all the horrible things he had seen and experienced felt cured, and she made him feel like a whole man. They would be the perfect couple, maybe even start a family someday. But there was a big problem, which was the reason things would probably not end that way. He was not free, he was a slave, and although he tried his best to control his destiny, he just could not. For instance, this was the first time in weeks he had been able to be with her. All because of another man who decided his fate and played with his life like he was a mere puppet. He hated that man above all else, but for now, the man was out of his reach.

The Killer looked at his watch. He would soon have to leave her. Again! How he dreaded the fact that he could never spend the whole night with her, and wake up to see her smile. She had accepted his explanations for why he could never spend the night with her. It was always work-related, and she said she understood. Which of course she did not at all, as the reason was not work-related. Oh if it only were work-related reasons, he would quit his job tomorrow just to wake up to see her smile.

The Killer got dressed and contemplated his options. He knew that if he smothered his mistress while she was asleep, he would finally be free of the bondage and the strong connection he felt to her. Who knows, he might

even get to come by the following day and see her corpse. She would indeed be the most beautiful corpse he had ever seen. But he struck the thought away, it was not the concept of killing that disgusted him, he was after all getting used to the feeling, but he felt appalled by the thought of never being able to see her wake up with a smile on her face with the morning sun reflecting on her hair. Experiencing this was his biggest dream and the thing that kept him going. Without this dream he might as well put the gun, he had used to kill Miranda DiMaestro to his head and blow his brains out. He smiled when thinking about how shocked everyone would. Sadly he would not be able to see it himself which took most of the fun out of it.

He decided to neither kill her nor himself tonight and instead he chose to leave her a note to explain why he had to get off this time. It read "*Dear Rebecca; it breaks my heart to not being able to see you wake up with the morning sun in your hair today either. Sadly bad things came up; bad things that I don't want to trouble you with. Rest assured that I have a plan for how to sort my fate out so it can be you and I together forever. I love you and hope that you someday will feel the same for me. Your's Forever JP*"

He left the apartment and faced his fate of yet another day of tormenting captivity, unsure of when he would be free to see her again.

3.12 Boozing at James Lockers house

IT WAS SATURDAY THE 24th of August 2013 and James Locker decided that it was time to get drunk. He had felt the urge for a drink and the alcohol withdrawal all week, but today he was energised and could not see any reason why he should not drink. He decided to call his friends Thomas and Adam to come over as it felt better to drink in a group, and they had a lot of talking points since their Asian holiday. He started off by calling Thomas Anderson.

James Locker:

- Hey, mate, how are you doing? Up for some boozing and hunting tonight?

Thomas Anderson:

- I don't know mate; I am seeing this awesome girl, I don't want to go after any other women for the time being...

James Locker:

- Seriously? You have been back in Sydney for one week, and you have been working long shifts, how did you manage to meet someone?

Thomas Anderson:

- Fate has its ways; anyway, I don't want to speak about it at this stage since I don't know where it's going.

James Locker:

- Fair enough. So are you seeing this mysterious woman tonight, and if not, does she mind if you go out boozing with your friends?

Thomas Anderson

- I am not seeing her tonight, and I don't think she minds if I hang out with you guys.

James Locker:

- Ha-ha, that's because she does not know Adam. Oh, anyway my place at 7 PM. I have already bought the drinks and the snacks, a man got to celebrate promotion after all.

They hung up, and James Locker contacted Adam Smith who did not need any form of persuasion for a Saturday night Boozing and hunting session. Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson arrived at James Locker's place at 7 pm, and they realised that he was already pretty drunk. James drunkenness could hurt their hunting prospects as all the pubs in New South Wales had alcohol restrictions that were just one step lighter than those in Muslim countries. One was allowed to drink, but as soon as the alcohol had its natur-

al effect on the drinker, the person was thrown out from the pub due to being drunk without otherwise misbehaving.

Adam Smith:

- Dammit, James! How are you supposed to go out boozing and hunting in this state with the Responsible Service of Alcohol rules being in place?

James Locker:

- Well mate, my plans for tonight is a lot more awesome than going to RSA licensed venues. You know exactly what I am talking about.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that's Adam territory, and since when do you do drugs?

James Locker:

- Are you kidding me? I am drinking alcohol which evidently is more dangerous than most illegal drugs you'll find lying around. And besides these antidepressants, I am pushing would be classified as class A narcotics if they were not backed by doctors and wealthy pharmaceutical companies.

Adam Smith:

- That's my man! Bitter, believing in conspiracies and a party animal at the same time! Can it get better? Pour me a big one!

With these words said a few hours of excessive drinking commenced. They were playing video games where the loser was forced to drink a double shot of absinthe. Considering the shock the body experiences after consuming 60 ml of a beverage with an alcohol content of 70 % in one gulp Thomas Anderson who was the least alcoholic of the three could not handle his round, so he went to the bathroom where the poison came out the same way

it came in. When he returned, James Locker was looking at him with crazy eyes and began to talk.

James Locker:

- Hey, Thomas, Have you ever thought about how it would feel to get shot? I have...

Thomas Anderson:

- Probably a highly unpleasant experience and possibly lethal, I prefer ignorance.

James Locker:

- Well, the pursuit of knowledge and freedom is essential for me, and I only feel free when living on the edge.

While saying this; James Locker handed the slightly shocked Thomas Anderson a pistol. James Locker continued to speak:

James Locker

- You see I have always wondered how it feels to be shot, but I just can't make myself shot myself and that's where you come into the picture. You have a gun I want YOU to shoot me.

Thomas Anderson:

- Are you fucking insane?! I won't do that; you might die.

James Locker:

- I might, but it's not likely since I am wearing body armour. As long as you are relatively steady on your aim, we'll both be fine.

Thomas Anderson:

- You are crazy; there is no way I am doing that, no matter what you say.

James Locker pulled forth a second gun from his pocket and aimed it at Thomas Anderson.

James Locker

- Well sadly mate; it's either you or I. Since I am wearing body armour I would prefer to be shot, then shoot you.

Thomas Anderson was at this stage sweating heavily, and the panic caught a black grip over his mind. He perceived James Locker as deadly serious, and he did not want to risk his life by turning his back to James Locker and disobey his request. Thomas decided to go ahead and shoot. He lifted his gun and focused his aim before firing. The bullet was stopped by James Locker' body armour, but the force was still enough to knock James to the ground for a while. Thomas Anderson's and Adam Smith's eyes met, and they both felt shocked and terrible from the event that had just occurred. Suddenly James Locker jumped up and laughed:

James Locker

- Ha-ha fooled you guys! Thomas, you just shot me with a blank bullet; you did not think I was supposed to let you shoot me for real?

Thomas Anderson:

- No, I wasn't; look at your body armour there is a hole in it!

James Locker looked perplexed putting his finger in the hole of his body armour; he grew pale for a while before regaining his composure. Finally, he spoke.

James Locker:

- Holy shit! You are right; I better stop drinking! But the night is young and no sense going to bed yet, Adam can you get us some free cocaine, I know you have sources...

Adam Smith felt very uncomfortable when James Locker brought up the topic. He was not supposed to know about this; as this was a thing between Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson. But it was true however as owning a police ID was a great way of getting an occasional bag of free cocaine, ecstasy, weed or whatever they fancied for the night. It was all about knowing about the environment and not becoming too greedy. He and Adam Smith had settled for asking for freebies once or twice a month. It was the perfect equilibrium between police and drug lord he reckoned. If they asked for too much, they would become a liability and probably have an "accident." If they were strict and did their jobs; they would turn the drug dealers in and maybe get a minor staff appraisal, but that was worth far less to them than having free drugs whenever they liked. Neither Adam Smith nor Thomas Anderson were addicts anyway so an occasional gram of coke every now and then was enough to fill their needs. Adam Smith was unsure of how to respond to James Locker. There was a possibility that James Locker was only testing them and knew nothing about their drug habit and how they acquired their drugs. In that case, it would be stupid to expose them. If he, however, knew everything it would just be silly to pretend to be a saint; and if James knew and wanted in on the business why not? Adam Smith decided for an approach and started talking:

Adam Smith:

- What you are suggesting is an interesting idea, James. I did not know you were using cocaine but if you could recommend a way for us to get it for free; it would indeed bring an extra dimension to our party tonight?

James Locker:

- Oh Adam, please! I am not an expert on how to get free cocaine from drug barons, but I suppose you ask all of them for a small cut to look away. So here is what we do: the principal drug lords in Sydney are Antonio DiMaestro, Salvador Allende, and Miguel Vasquez.

- I suppose none of you knows where Antonio DiMaestro is since he is wanted for murder and you probably would not be stupid enough to take bribes from him when his operations are in the spotlight.

- This leaves us with Allende and Vasquez. Who do you think has the best girls and the best cocaine?

Adam Smith:

- Well, we have not spoken to Vasquez in months so he would be the one that is most inclined to help without seriously considering hurting us.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well none of them is dealing with prostitution though. I mean why would they? Prostitution is legal and highly regulated in Australia, not exactly what a mobster would aim to work with.

James Locker:

- Hey, mates get real! Don't you think any drug baron with self-respect would perform this kind of operation without having an array of girls available? The fact that they are not prostitutes just make them hotter I reckon. Who does not dream about a hot night with a Latin American femme fatale?

Adam Smith:

- Woo. It sounds awesome mate! But how would we convince them to let us sully their girls? I mean we don't have that much on them.

James Locker:

- Don't worry about that I'll sort it out! Just point me in the direction of their place, and I'll lead the way.

Adam Smith:

- Well, I know Vasquez has a place at Potts Point, but we better get a cab there it would be stupid of us going down for drunk driving.

James Locker

- Awesome! Let's go!

3.13 Corruption at Kings Cross

THE GANG ARRIVED AT Kings Cross around midnight. It was a chilly and rainy evening not suitable for a real party, but since it was a Saturday night, there was still a lot of action around them. Kings Cross had always been the heart of corruption of Sydney and since humans usually drink or use other drugs to experience the fun and joy corruption could bring this was the number one party spot in the Sydney Metropolitan area. Even though the primary drug of choice for most of the visitors was ethanol, one of the most dangerous drugs ever known to man, most of the people in this area would wake up with a hangover the day after hopefully recapitulating the memories of an excellent night of partying. Some, however, would not wake up either as an effect of the malicious nature of violence that ethanol, induced into some individuals making them commit unforgivable crimes or by the purely toxicological effects of the substance. The three musketeers, however, had already had their fair share of ethanol, and now they wanted something else. Something that according to government propaganda was a lot more dangerous than alcohol but in reality probably was on about the same level, this something was cocaine.

James Locker sometimes thought about the bizarre realities of the legal system and how the governments of men needed an enemy either real or constructed as a way to legitimate their power. In the specifics of in the war against drugs the government was victimising a group of people because they were committing a victimless crime, the crime of using a product that in the

long run might be harmful to them and reduce their value as citizens. But the main issue was that for most users the concept of being arrested and getting a criminal record was a far worse liability for his or her future career prospects than the usage itself brought to them. If someone got caught using drugs which in many cases were less harmful than alcohol that individual would get branded by the government to be a scourge on the society respected on the same level as a murderer or a rapist.

Apparently, James Locker and his friends did not share the legislators' opinions on drugs, but ironically they and the organised crime were the only ones who profited from the current state of affairs. The organised crime earned a lot of tax-free benefits possible only possible due to the legislation, and corrupt police officers were making money as they could have a slice of the pie without upsetting the balance too much.

After a short walk, they arrived at the Vasquez venue which looked very inconspicuous from the outside. For those who knew about the place, it was the place to go for anyone wanting to buy anything illegal ranging from various drugs, weapons, and chemicals used for bomb making. Adam Smith called on the intercom, and two very rough looking guards came out. One of them was known as Marko, and Adam Smith had been interacting with him in the past.

Marko started speaking:

- Puta de Madre! What are you fuckers doing here, and who is that guy?

Adam Smith:

- This is James, and he has a special request for you tonight.

Marko:

- Fuck off; you are getting nothing from us, now scram!

For the second time, this evening James Locker shocked his friends with his behaviour as he instead of saying something pulled his gun and hit Marko

in the head with it thus breaking his nose. He quickly turned around and aimed the gun at the head of the other guard.

James Locker:

- Okay, that's step one of creating understanding. Adam and Thomas: Disarm them.

Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson decided to do as directed. As it turned out both the thugs had firearms. These firearms were most likely unlicensed ones as Australia was not like the USA when it came to gun laws.

James Locker spoke again:

- What do we have here? Illegal guns?! More than enough to have you imprisoned for a while and then kick you head first out of the country. Provided of course that we can't link any of your guns to any serious crimes in which case I can assure you that your stay in Australia will be extended and unpleasant!

- However I only care about this kind of behaviour when I am grumpy, so provide me with some free cocaine and some awesome Latina pussy, and I'll let it pass for now.

Marko lying on the ground with a broken nose realised that James Locker was a man not to be trifled with but he was unsure of how to keep this psychopath cop happy. For sure he had the approval of his bosses to give minor handouts to people that were causing minor trouble as long as the donations were far less than the cost and effort of just silencing the person. So if some bum junky came by and thought he would get something for free by blackmailing them all he would get was a portion of lead. With police officers, it was different however as a dead policeman was terrible for everyone's business and his organisation was not robust enough to wage a full-scale war against the police. He swallowed some blood from his broken nose and started talking.

Marko:

- You sure got some nerve fucker. Oh well, have some cocaine. I guess it's the only way for you to feel that you some balls, you fucking maricon. As for girls, there is a brothel around the corner, I know because I fucked your mum there last week.

Marko handed a bag containing five grams of cocaine to James. James smiled at him and started to talk.

James Locker:

- Oh, how happy I am to get half of what I asked for finally. You were not very courteous or service-minded though so I give you an F for presentation. And this I give you for your comment about my mum.

James kicked Marko with full force in the face smashing some teeth out and knocking the Colombian unconscious. He turned to the other thugs who was sitting down with a gun to his head and started speaking

James Locker:

- You see, that what's happening if you don't give me excellent customer service with a smile.

- Now as for your friend, if one is pathetic enough to imply that his only way of getting laid is to pay a 58 years old woman for sex, he is better off without balls.

- I'll let your buddy keep his balls for now, but you better be more customer service orientated.

Fabio Swallowed and said nothing while James Locker continued speaking.

James Locker:

- I know you don't keep women here. But I also knew your boss has access to some smoking hot women. So if you provide us with

these women as well as cigars, fine liquors and a spa I will surely praise your excellent customer service.

- Now call your boss and let me talk to him.

Fabio was not very eager to call his boss about problems in the middle of the night. Miguel Vasquez was a severe cokehead who was always close to anger when his henchmen bothered him with unpleasant news. He has been particularly prone to violence when he was orchestrating large coke filled orgies at his mansion in Watsons Bay, a short trip away. For situations like this, however, with his buddy lying unconscious pretty roughed up, he preferred disturbing the foul-tempered cokehead over the phone than the drunken psycho standing next to him with a gun pointed at his head. Fabio grabbed his phone and called the number that Miguel Vasquez had told him to only call in case of an emergency. After a few signals, Miguel Vasquez picked up the phone.

Miguel Vasquez:

- Who the fuck is this, why are you calling, and how did you get this number?

Fabio:

- It's Fabio sir. It's an emergency at the Potts Point warehouse. Some drunken psychos who claim to be cops are here, they knocked Marko unconscious, and they require talking to you about women and fine liquors.

Miguel Vasquez:

- Are you fucking kidding me? What clowns, are these people? We are not even dealing with the ladies or fine liquors.

Fabio:

- I told them, but they wanted access to your private stash, Marko argued, and they beat him to pieces...

Miguel Vasquez

- You should tell them to shoot you; you fucking coward! Would save me the hassle!

- Ah, fuck it put them through.

James Locker:

- So I finally get to talk to the big boss huh?

Miguel Vasquez:

- Who the fuck is this, and what the hell do you want?

James Locker

- Yet again the same bad language and lack of customer service approach. You guys need to improve on those parts.

- Well, to answer your questions I am James Pierce from the CS-MI. We are investigating the murder of Miranda DiMaestro which to some can appear as mob related.

Miguel Vasquez:

- Yeah, I have heard about it. But that shit has nothing to with us, we are at peace with DiMaestro cartel, and Miranda was a worthless bimbo that meant nothing to their organisation anyways.

James Locker:

- That's true. Although I am sure, Antonio would not agree...

Miguel Vasquez:

- That fucking wimp just got her to show up to the public. To create an image of being legit. He fucks everything that moves from

what I have heard, even though from the latest I have found out he's been away for a long time presumed dead. Anyway, what the fuck do you want?

James Locker:

- Straight to the point I see. Well, what I want is simple. I want in on the high life of organised crime. I don't give a shit about money, but I want some great booze and some awesome Latina pussy on my dick tonight. I have heard you are arranging massive freakin' orgies in your mansion on Saturday nights.

Miguel Vasquez:

- I see. What if I just choose to kill you and have the problem solved?

James Locker:

- Well, you are welcome to try, but if you succeed it would only cause you more problems. Or contemplate this: three police officers from the CSMI go to the mansion of an alleged drug lord and go missing while investigating a mob-related murder. Not very good for business.

- So yeah enough of this bullshit. We'll swing by your place in 30 minutes. Have the girls and the good stuff ready.

Miguel Vasquez:

- You indeed have cojones; I like that. Prepare yourself for the freakiest night of your lives!

Using his persuasion skills, James managed to get Fabio to drive them to the Vasquez mansion. About the same time, Marko woke up from his beating with the worst headache of his life, having learned the lesson that one should never mess with James Locker!

3.14 A tired reflection by James Locker

AFTER THE CRAZIEST night of his life, James was finally home at his place at 3 pm the day after. His headache was horrible, and he knew that he would most likely not be very productive in the following days. James felt ashamed over his behaviour, and he feared what had happened to him. For sure he had some crazy nights in his youth, but at 32 and with a great career a man should advance other values than promiscuity and bizarre sex games.

For sure it had been an adventure and an experience beyond everything he had ever experienced before. But it was the darkest and most twisted paths of human nature he had encountered. It was the proof that everything in humanity could be perverted in the most twisted way. The extended sex orgies of last night were so far away from the love between two humans as it could be. He thought about the famous expression by German philosopher Nietzsche *"When you stare into the abyss the abyss also stares into you."*

How had this happened to him? A year ago he had been living with his love, planned a wedding and very bright normal life far away from the perversion of darkness. Less attractive in many ways but also a lot happier as ignorance of the dark is bliss. After Emily Luong had disappeared with some of his money never to be seen again his whole world had fallen apart. What had happened that fateful night? What clues to the mystery had he been unable to see even in retrospect? He did not know the answers to this. Since he would probably never find the solution, he should move on with his life.

James felt exhausted and was shaking from the hangover from last night. He was thinking about how his friends must have perceived him. It cannot be pretty. His memory was very vague from the evening, but he glimpses at some points of getting shot and beating someone up. He could however not have been shot as an untreated gunshot wound would have killed him, and he was alive with no visible injuries except a sore foot and a bruise on the right shoulder.

James realised that he would get no answers today and all he wanted was to sleep a lot to wake up feeling a lot better the day after hopefully. He went to the bathroom and had some of the pills his psychologist had prescribed him. After a while, he felt very sleepy and fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

3.15 An unwelcome visitor in the night.

IT WAS A CHILLY EVENING, and the killer was having a conflict of interest. He knew that his enemy; the man who stood between him and his dream of freedom, James Locker was sleeping very deep in his bedroom. He could see him from his position outside the bedroom window. But what would he do? The Killer knew he could easily just break in there put some bullets in the head of his sleeping enemy and it would be over. But did he want it to end that way? Did he want to kill a man who was oblivious of why he had to die and what he had done? It hardly seemed ideal.

He thought about Rebecca. She was the most beautiful human being he had ever met. The light in her eyes when their eyes met. Her sparkling teeth when she smiled at him. How their hearts were beating at the same pace when they made love. She was the definition of heaven for him, and he would do anything to live in that world knowing that it would last. Realistically he was aware that this could never happen, he could never tell her what he had done and expect her to understand or forgive. But if he could forgive himself and complete what he had to do; he could be candid and forthcoming to her about things in the future.

This dream of a different future was worth more than anything else to him but to make it happen he would have to make James Locker disappear; permanently. He picked the lock to the door and made it to James Locker's room. He was looking at his enemy, who was sleeping heavily and almost seemed unconscious. Hah, that fool is so afraid of what he is and his dreams that he uses heavy drugs to get a dreamless sleep. The way the Killer saw James Locker, killing him would be an act of mercy. A man that is so afraid of his inner self that he sedates himself heavily just to get away from his dreams is more dead than alive anyway. By killing off his spiritual world and his thoughts, he was a walking dead. For sure very efficient at his job but a dead man who would never find happiness.

The killer aimed his gun at James Locker. But he could not take the shot. Not now, not under these circumstances. He must know before he dies. He must face what he had done before going down into the abyss! He would leave a message, however! He went to the bathroom and painted the follow-

ing message on the mirror using blood. *"I am watching you! / JP!"* Then he left the building and vanished into the night.

3.16 A discomfoting Monday morning.

WHEN JAMES LOCKER WOKE up in the morning, he saw the blood-stained writing on his bathroom window and freaked out. Not really knowing how to react he walked around confused in his house for a while losing all grip of time and room. James was awoken from this state by Barry Itch who called him to find out where he was since he missed out the Monday morning detective's briefing. He told Barry Itch what had happened and soon the entire team was there to document the crime scene and find any trace in regards to the perpetrator. James Locker suddenly felt a lot of discomfort over the fact that the team was there. In case this was related to his still very blurry memories of the weekend, he could be deep in trouble if they discovered the truth about his mafia connections. Why had he even taken those steps last weekend it was an awful idea, and it could cost him everything.

As his manager, Barry Itch took James Locker apart for a quick chat.

Barry Itch:

- Such a wretched way to wake up in the morning. Do you think this is a real threat just a very sick joke?

James Locker was considering his options and decided that honesty was probably not the best way of action. After all, coming out clean about drug use and beating up mobsters during the weekend was not the best way to improve one's career opportunities.

James Locker:

- I have no idea, sir. I have not received any threats on my life or wellbeing being in danger before this event. I have not had any conflicts for a long time.

Barry Itch:

- Okay. Do you think it could have a connection to your current case?

James Locker:

- Would not make any sense, would it? Why would the DiMaestro murderer, be it Antonio DiMaestro or someone else, be going after me? I know nothing in this case that is not common knowledge.

Barry Itch:

- Well whoever the perpetrator is, he or she does not necessarily know about your lack of knowledge. How would you like to proceed?

James Locker:

- Let's do nothing for now; hopefully, the techs will help us by finding some valuable clues.

Barry Itch:

- If that's your wish, although I would prefer taking threats to our officers more seriously.

James Locker:

- I see your point, but let's put it this way: Whoever did this shall not succeed in taking our focus away from what's important; which is getting justice for the victims and putting the bad guys behind bars!

Barry Itch:

- I guess you are right. Will you hold the meeting this afternoon instead?

James Locker:

- Yeah no worries, it takes more than a sick joke to get my focus broken!

When Barry Itch left James Locker's house, James Locker took Thomas Anderson to a separate room for a private chat on how to proceed.

James Locker:

- Hey, Thomas, can I ask you for a favour? A favour that we will keep between ourselves.

Thomas Anderson:

- I don't see why; but sure why not? What do you need?

James Locker:

- Can I ask you to install two hidden security cameras in my house and don't tell anyone but me of their existence and location?

Thomas Anderson:

- Sure I guess, but why keep it a secret?

James Locker:

- Well because I have a feeling that whoever did this will do something similar in the future, and I want to have documented who did it.

Thomas Anderson:

- So you think it's someone on the team?

James Locker:

- Not really but I don't want to rule anyone out

Thomas Anderson:

- Fair enough. I will install them later this afternoon when the last tech has gone home. Do you want the remote access as well?

James Locker:

- Yes, that is my plan.

Thomas Anderson:

- Sure you'll have full access to the systems tonight. Do we meet at the team meeting this afternoon?

James Locker:

- Yes. Let's go to the station right away, so we don't disturb the techs.

They were walking towards the exit when one of the technicians on the team, Police assistant Vinnie Chung, approached James.

Vinnie Chung:

- Sir do you want us to check the basement as well? It's apparently locked, and the lock has no signs of being picked.

James Locker:

- Don't worry about that, I lost the key over eight months ago, and I have not been there since. Nothing of interest down there anyway and no reason to force the door open.

Vinnie Chung:

- Understood sir. You'll get the report by the 3 PM staff meeting.

After this conversation, James Locker and Thomas Anderson went to the office to commence with their respective tasks in the DiMaestro case.

3.17 Michael Fuller follows a lead

MICHAEL FULLER HAD not been passive since his meeting with John Dean a few days earlier. From his many years of service in the police force, he had acquired many contacts, which he knew could fill him in on the latest news from the underground of Sydney. Most of the connections were pretty hostile and needed particular persuasion. Sadly as a civil person without authority, he did not have much bargaining power over these individuals. A few of his contacts, however, had had their lives saved by the quick and efficient work of Michael Fuller and those people were forever grateful even though they had been on different sides of the law for most of their lives. From one of these contacts, Michael learned that Antonio DiMaestro had met an escort named Jessica Hall a few years ago and that Antonio was so emotionally attached to her that he had made her his protégé/hired her as his private escort. The contact did not think this was due to love but more an example of the possessive nature of Antonio DiMaestro; the man disliked sharing. When it came to taste in women however the contact praised Antonio as Jessica Hall apparently was an extraordinarily beautiful woman.

Michael Fuller decided to contact John Dean to ask why he had not been informed about Antonio DiMaestro's mistress after all John Dean had been handsomely paid to provide him with information.

Michael Fuller:

- Hi, John. Something new to tell me?

John Dean:

- Yes, there is. Someone broke into James Locker's house and left a pretty scary message.

- I quote "I am watching you/ JP" written in blood on his bathroom mirror.

Michael Fuller:

- Woo. That seems strange and scary. Do you have any clue on who did it?

John Dean

- None as of yet. But it did have an impact on James; he has been even more cloudy and distant than last week. I seriously doubt his leadership as well.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, you might be right, but there is nothing any of us can do about it now. Any more clues on Antonio DiMaestro?

John Dean:

- No, but I gave you all I had yesterday so I can't see why you are calling again?

Michael Fuller:

- Because you missed mentioning that Antonio DiMaestro had a paid mistress, Jessica Hall, she seems quite relevant to the investigation, both as a witness and as a suspect.

John Dean:

- Thank you mate, this comes as news to me. But this information can be quite helpful for our investigation. Who is my source?

Michael Fuller:

- Forget about it man. Is no-one doing their job under James? I will contact her myself she might help me out better than you do.

John Dean:

- Is that wise, considering your current situation?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I had to resign due to "health reasons." What is the BITCH going to do?

John Dean:

- Don't say I did not warn you. Oh anyway, talk to you later.

Michael Fuller was in an awful mood when he thought about the news he got from his old team. What was going on with James Locker? How could such a sharp mind miss out the fact that Antonio DiMaestro had a mistress? What about the break-in at James Locker's place? Michael Fuller could not help but think that something was seriously wrong with James Locker and he made a mental note that he should look into it as soon as possible. After all, he was convinced that someone in the team or Antonio DiMaestro had set him up, or most likely someone in the group in conspiracy with Antonio DiMaestro.

Michael felt very sick from the alcohol withdrawal, and he could not see anything anymore. *"So much for not drinking to keep a clear head,"* he muttered to himself. But after speaking to that gold digging bitch Jessica Hall, he should have some drinks. One of his favourite bars in Sydney was on the same street as her apartment, and they had some whiskey blends to die for. Last time he went there he thought for a second that he had met his soul mate. Sobering up next to her the day after he had realised this had not been the case. Still, it was a good memory and since he had no obligations anymore, why should he not be drinking all night and wish for the best!

Chapter 4: The Jessica Hall murder



4.1 An unexpected text message

The time was around 1130 pm on Monday the 26th of August 2013. Jessica Hall was lying in the bathtub when she got a text message. She struck the foam away from her perfectly symmetrical face to be able to read it better. It was an SMS from Antonio DiMaestro. The word was that he had been missing her a lot and he wanted to see her tonight. She was shivering from the idea. Just a couple of hours ago she had been visited by a very unpleasant and rude man who identified himself as Michael Fuller; Police detective from Central Sydney Murder Investigation department. He had looked old and ragged, but the news he brought and the questions he had asked were a lot more intimidating. Apparently, Antonio DiMaestro's wife was killed a few days ago in her home in a way that resembled a mafia hit. The ragged old man had wanted to know what she knew which was nothing and then he had been flaming her with a variety of accusations. *"What right did that bitter old man have to judge her?!"* She got outraged when she thought about it.

To be honest, she did not know that much about Antonio DiMaestro. She had arrived in Sydney two years ago from the small outback city of Tamworth after graduating high school to either make it or break it. Her dream was to break through in media or acting, and she had been attending an acting school since she first came to Sydney. At first, she had been living a decent life doing some occasional modelling gigs and also some shifts as a waitress. She had dreaded the concept of serving drunken idiots to make tiny scraps of money though so she had quickly started looking for another line of work which could utilise her two strengths her great physical beauty and her elegance/ sense of fashion. She had soon decided to go into escorting to use her strengths fully. She had worked for a high-end escort agency, and her dreams had been to meet well-versed gentlemen who could appreciate her

beauty and entertain her with their charming tales. She had quickly been disappointed though as most of her clients were drunk and rude assholes who just happened to be rich. They were never attractive to her neither in a physical or personal way. Making up to \$1000 a night before tax however she had acquired expensive tastes and did not see how she could go back to a regular job. She had felt like a prisoner in a golden cage.

One day however her life had turned for the better. That was the night she had met Antonio DiMaestro. He had been the perfect gentleman, and after having an excellent dinner full of charming tales, she had felt a strong connection to him and enjoyed the prospect of having sex with him. Later that night they had gone to his suite at a 5-star hotel nearby, had some more champagne and then made love all night. For the first time since she started as an escort, she had enjoyed sex, and he gave her multiple orgasms that night. What she liked even more and would never forget was the day after when he had surprised her by serving breakfast and told her how beautiful and unique she was. She had been very moved by this gesture and started crying. He had comforted her and said that her days as an escort could be over and he would love to help her if she wanted to take the step.

The deal had been \$2,000 tax-free per week and a free centrally located apartment. Antonios only conditions were that she was always available when he needed her and that she never contacted him or asked him things about his life. Furthermore, she was not allowed to see someone else as long as the contract was in place. After a while she had seen the not so pleasant sides of Antonio, as a matter of fact, she was now of the opinion that he probably was a psychopath and the sweet things he said while he was in the mood was just empty talk. Still, she followed the contract instead of walking away or second-guessing his motives as this suited her a lot better. She could live without love as she had never experienced it, and it was better to have lots of money and occasional steaming hot sex than to live with some average annoying man.

But receiving his text now was very unsettling. Jessica had not heard from him in six weeks and since she was fond of him and felt a lot of gratitude towards him she had dearly wondered where he might be. She knew the rules of their relationship though, but it had been challenging for her not to contact him to find out his whereabouts as she had missed him a lot. Now when she

was supposed to meet him, she was terrified. If what the police said was true he might be coming to hurt or even kill her. Then again the man who had visited her had been an alcoholic as she could tell he had severe withdrawal symptoms. She would not betray the man who had done so much for her just because of some disgusting old alcoholic. She put on his favourite clothes opened a box of high-quality chocolate and then lie in bed waiting for him to sneak up on her. Doing this was his favourite game, and gosh she wanted to play with him tonight!

4.2 From the Killers point of view

THE KILLER FELT A GREAT joy when he finally managed to hack and disable the security cameras in the building where Jessica Hall lived. Since he did not have the code for the system, this had proven to be a difficult task, but he had managed to nail it with a particular computer virus that made security cameras overwrite their current view with a later picture. So if The Killer chose to strike at 1 am the virus would make sure that a subsequent taping overwrote this film at his discretion. If he elected to let the 1:30 AM feed replace the 1 am feed for instance then the police would undoubtedly be shocked finding out that Jessica Hall was killed although the security camera did not show anyone entering the apartment. Sure if they were smart they would eventually notice that movie was identical at 1 AM and 1:30 AM but then again what did that proves except that the perpetrator was a genius?

The Killer was a bit disappointed that there was no security camera in the apartment of Jessica Hall. He had thirty minutes to kill before it was time to strike and he would love to watch her last thirty minutes alive. He was considering the option to talk with her before he killed her. Would that be difficult? He had chosen not to say anything when it came to Miranda DiMaestro, but it had hurt him a bit that she never knew why he killed her. Then again since he did not believe in life after death what use would his victims have, for that extra knowledge since they would lose it and everything else just a short while later? Besides, there was another reason to do it quickly when it came to Jessica Hall; if she realised he was going to kill her, she would probably scream her lungs out which would alert the entire neighbourhood of his presence.

How did he feel when it came to killing Jessica Hall then? Before the killing, the prospect felt good. With Miranda DiMaestro he had felt mixed feelings as she seemed to be a more naïve woman who believed in the good of her husband. When it came to women like Jessica Hall however the killer saw her as the source of all corruption and evil in the world. She was not the greatest of sinners, but she was the kind of vice that nurtured the other ones. As long as there were women like her who served as the prize for evil deeds the spirit of evil would never die. Would men still turn to darkness and do horrendous crimes if they this would lead to them never feeling the touch a woman again? Most of them would not! But as long as there were women like Jessica Hall who indirectly glorified evil and corruption through gladly the accepting the spoils without asking questions, evil deeds would always seem to appeal to a lot of people. She would die tonight as a symbol for the damage her egoistical behaviour was creating in the world!

He started the engines of his car and drove to the garage of the building block. He used a swipe key to get in and then parked the car close to the elevator in the building. He took the package he had prepared for her and holstered his silenced revolver under his coat. The lift would be the critical part he thought. If someone saw him in the elevator on the way up, he would just have to cancel his plan for tonight and proceed another night. If someone saw him when he was going down on the other hand..

The thought made him shiver. However, since he chose the time 1 AM as the time to strike he would most likely not encounter anyone in the elevator on a Monday night. He entered the elevator, and he realised his plan was working. He pressed "27" and took the ride up. The hallway of the compound was quiet and empty. He unlocked the door to Jessica's apartment. He snuck in and moved like a shadow. When he came into her room, he could hear Jessica Hall say.

- Oh, Antonio so you finally came, please come and warm me up.

The winter has been so cold and lonely without you

When the killer heard Jessica Hall's voice, he decided to change his plan and tell her everything before she died. He flicked the switch on the lights in the room and before she could make a sound he shoot her twice in the throat

ruining her vocal cords as well as her ability to fight him. She would probably be unconscious shortly, but the killer decided to tell the petrified Jessica Hall his story anyways. When he finished talking, he said:

- "From the bright side; you will at least die rich."

He then put the package on top of her chest put her arms around the container and shot her in the head with one bullet, while placing the three remaining bullets in her chest. He left the apartment door open so she would be found soon and left the apartment complex undetected. When driving away from the compound, he realised that the time was 1.32 AM. He had fucked up; he certainly hoped that the cameras had not been able to detect him.

4.3 Michael Fuller decides to confront Jessica Hall

IT WAS 2 AM, AND THE whiskey bar was closing. In his ethanol-induced mindset, Michael Fuller felt the very frustrated feeling that everyone was plotting against him. He could understand why the corrupted mafia was against him, after all, he had been incorruptible in his quest to find the truth and bring justice to the murder victims. But why had his former colleagues turned their back on him, and most importantly who had been the mastermind behind setting him up? The questions were many, but he knew what he needed to do to get a resolution; find Antonio DiMaestro.

Michael Fuller had the trait that once his intuition gave him a direction, he would follow it until the end with the highest level of resolve. He knew that his disinterest in listening to other opinions than his own made him somewhat unpopular among his colleagues; but why would he change? Why would the officer with the best track record in the history of Sydney give in to mediocrity? The talk about him being arrogant and never listening was incorrect though. After all, at the beginning of a new case, he needed input and was more than eager to hear to anyone, who would bring him relevant information.

Now his intuition told him that he should confront Jessica Hall as she was the key to finding Antonio DiMaestro. She had been withholding infor-

mation, he could swear on it, but he had been unable to figure out exactly what she was hiding from him. He thanked God that he had chosen to drink at the pub next to her apartment as he was in no condition to drive. As he approached the elevator to Jessica Hall's residence, he met two officers from the local district. He knew that he had met them before, but there were working a lot of police officers in Sydney so he could not place them. Due to his fame within the force, they knew him, however, so they started talking.

Officer Mason:

- Hi, Michael. You are having a good night from what I can see. What are you up to?

Michael Fuller

- Yeah, I can't complain, it has been a good night, and now I am meeting up with a friend.

Officer Johnson:

- Okay. Well, have fun. I heard you quit the force by the way? May I ask why?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I realised that I was rich and felt like doing something else. If you had a lot of money and been doing the same job for 20 years, you might want a new start in life. What are you doing in this apartment building by the way?

Officer Mason:

- An old woman heard some suspicious noises from a neighbouring apartment, and she decided to check what was going on. The door was open, but no-one answered when she shouted. She did not like the concept of going in there herself, so she called the police to establish contact.

Officer Johnson:

- Whining Oldies if you ask me.

Michael Fuller:

- It is good thinking I say, but she should have walked in there herself. Someone might be dying in there from a heart attack right now for instance, and what good is a police patrol to deal with illnesses?

Officer Mason:

- You are right Michael

- Well we better hurry then, this is our floor. See you, Detective.

Michael Fuller followed the police officers with his gaze as they walked down the corridor. They entered an apartment; the apartment where he had met Jessica Hall a few hours earlier. Michael Fuller realised that if something had happened to her, he would have a lot of explaining to do if they found out he had met her earlier during the evening. He pressed the "ground" button on the elevator panel and quickly left the building.

Chapter 5: Gentlemen: we got a serial killer



5.1 John Dean arrives at the crime scene.

At 250 AM John Dean arrived at the crime scene. He did not feel pleased with the fact that he was dragged up in the middle of the night. To be honest, John did not feel very comfortable at all at the moment since his wife had given him a hard time explaining how he had acquired the \$10 000 they needed to solve their debt crisis. He had assured her that the money was a loan from Michael Fuller who was wealthy and did not mind helping them out. But she had had several questions on this. Questions like: Why could he not show her the copy of the promissory? Why had he received the money in cash and not via bank transfer? Her suspicions were even worse for him to bear since he highly doubted the course he had chosen to take when he decided to sell out his integrity as a police officer to Michael Fuller.

When he arrived, he was approached by Officer Mason.

Officer Mason:

- Good day, sir, the crime scene has been secured how would you like to proceed?

John Dean:

- Well, I guess you guys are not specialised in crime scene forensics so the best course of action would be for you just to guard the place until my team arrives.

Officer Mason:

- Understood sir. Oh and one more thing. There was a bizarre coincidence in the elevator on the way up here.

John Dean:

- Okay, tell me.

Officer Mason

- We met Michael Fuller who supposedly was meeting a friend in the building in the elevator. He was blind drunk. Didn't he resign immediately due to health reasons?

John Dean:

- Well officially I am not supposed to say anything, but his alcoholism WAS the health reason. Now if you excuse me.

John Dean entered the room where Jessica Hall was lying dead. The entire bed was soaked with blood which John Dean knew was an indication that the heart of the victim had been pumping for quite some while before she finally passed away. The heart pumping for a while seemed strange to him as he could count multiple bullet wounds on her severed body where one of them was in the head. As John realised that he would probably get an explanation after the autopsy, he searched her belongings for an ID card. He found one stating that she was born on the 26th of August 1993 and thus she had been killed on her birthday. "Hell of a birthday," he thought, but then he saw something that was interesting; her name. "Jessica Hall, why does that name ring a bell?" He thought for a while and then he realised the connection which made him very uncomfortable.

5.2 "Rise and shine Cinderella."

JAMES LOCKER WOKE UP from his slumber by someone banging on his front door. Considering the break-in the night before, his first reaction was fear, and he reached for his gun which he was keeping in his bedside drawer. Why had he turned down Barry Itch's offer regarding police protection? It seemed like a dumb choice considering the circumstances, but somehow he did not want to appear weak in front of his peers. Startled by the noise

of someone banging on his door however it would indeed be an excellent choice to have someone protecting him. Then again what would it help? If whoever threatening him wanted him dead, he would be dead already so it must just be someone fucking with his mind. Then he heard Adam Smith's voice calling his name, and he felt relieved. He checked his nightstand watch. It showed 3.00 AM with an intense glowing light, almost like the time had some magical feeling to it? Hadn't he seen this exact time on the clock not too long ago? Then again he knew that the human brain was programmed to see patterns, and if someone were looking too much for a pattern, they would see a pattern that did not exist. This trait was usually called paranoia, and James knew that he should try avoiding it as much as possible.

James Locker put on his pants, holstered his gun and went to open the door. He saw Adam Smith who looked puzzled.

Adam Smith:

- Finally! Rise and Shine Cinderella!

James Locker:

- Hey, Adam. What's going on? Why are you knocking on my door in the middle of the night?

Adam Smith:

- That question is closely related to my question; why are you not answering your phone? We have been trying to reach you for 50 minutes.

James Locker:

- Really?

Adam Smith:

- Yeah really. And I have been knocking on your door for 10 minutes as well. I was even considering breaking in, to check you out,

but then I remembered your "*please shoot me*" incident from this Saturday and decided not to.

James Locker:

- That night is blurry to me. What the fuck happened.

Adam Smith:

- Well, you were drunk, and you insisted that either Thomas should shoot you or you would shoot him. So he shot you in the shoulder, and you played dead for a while. Then you jumped up unhurt because you were very wearing body armour all along.

James Locker:

- Oh shit, I better stay off the piss. Oh well, where are we going?

Adam Smith

- To the Central Business District.

James Locker:

- I see, why was this case assigned to our team? We already have a case.

Adam Smith:

- Well either because of Murphy's Law as I had some crazy sex with my psychologist booty call or because Central Command thinks this case is connected with the one we already have. Pick one!

James Locker:

- Got it. Oh well give me a second, and I'll be good to go.

Having said this James Locker got dressed, and they commuted to the crime scene in Adam Smith's car as James Locker felt he had too bad of a headache to be able to drive. He had considered the option to use some of the leftover cocaine from the weekend that passed to clear his mind up, but he realised that once someone followed that path most of the time, it would just lead downhill. James Locker checked his phone, and as Adam Smith had told him, there were a lot of missed calls on his display. How could he not have been awoken by any of those calls? And even more strange why did he stay asleep for ten minutes with Adam Smith banging on the door? Could it be the antidepressants he was using that put him in too deep sleep? James for sure had needed them to regain his energy after the heavy partying the weekend that had passed, but was it worth the side effects? He must have been sleeping for nine hours straight and yet he was exhausted. After this thought James Locker fell asleep and slept for the rest of the drive.

5.3 James Locker arrives at the murder scene

AS THE LAST MEMBERS of the team James Locker and Adam Smith arrived at the crime scene. James Locker was surprised that a very young single female could afford a place like, as it was a luxurious two bedroom unit in the CBD overlooking The Sydney Harbour. John Dean greeted them as they arrived.

John Dean:

- Hello, gentlemen, running a bit late are we?

Adam Smith:

- Well someone had to wake Cinderella up, not the easiest of tasks.

James Locker:

- Well, and I had some trouble sleeping, so I consumed a sleeping pill. But hey we are here now, safe and sound, so let's waste no more time on Snitchy remarks, so we have more time to solve the case.

John Dean:

- Well, you better stay alert James. It's the second time you have been late to a crime scene in one week. Protocol states.

James Locker

- Well, the contract says a lot of things; for starters that a subordinate should focus on his work and not the time management skills of his boss. I know I am late and I don't need you to whine about it at every moment.

John Dean:

- Understood sir!

James Locker

- So now, show me what you have and tell me what you know.

They walked into the bedroom where the corpse of Jessica Hall was. James Locker felt a sense of shock when his gaze met her cold dead gaze. He knew this girl from somewhere he had met her before. But from where and when did James meet her? His headache was killing him, and he could not focus. All of a sudden he felt very nauseous and went to the toilet to throw up.

Adam Smith approached Thomas Anderson.

- I wonder what's wrong with James, first the Cinderella thing and then the concept of throwing up when seeing a corpse. He has been in this job for what? Eight years? He should be able to handle it by now, and by the way, this is a relatively clean crime scene.

Thomas Anderson:

- Valid point. A real waste of such a beauty though. Quite strange though this is the second young and wealthy female gunshot victim we have had in a week.

- Considering the demographics of murder victims and how they are killed. This seems like a highly unlikely event.

Adam Smith:

- Yeah it does not look like there was any struggle either, do you think it's the same killer?

Thomas Anderson:

- I prefer to not say more until I got all the facts but central command seems to think so as our team they dispatched our team to the site although we already have one case.

- What troubles me was James reaction; I saw recognition in his eyes. He must have met this girl before.

Adam Smith:

- I find it troubling that you overanalyse people's eye movements. But let's say you are right, what's the problem?

- Oh, here he comes let's ask him.

Thomas Anderson

- Hey, James! Are you alright? Have not seen you vomit after witnessing a murder victim before. Was anything special with this one?

James Locker:

- I don't know. Her face seemed familiar, but I can't tell from where. What do you know about her?

Thomas Anderson:

- Her name was Jessica Hall, and she was 20 years old. She was initially from Tamworth, but after taking her High School Certificate, she moved to Sydney.

- Oh, and her taxed income and assets were meagre, so there is something fishy about her staying in an apartment like this.

James Locker:

- Oh, Tamworth. That makes sense my sister moved out there some years ago when she married that farmer guy. I have been there a few times since when visiting my sister. I must have seen this woman there somewhere.

After having said that James remembered where he had seen the Jessica Hall before. It had been in a school theatre play in Tamworth three years ago. She was a stunning beauty at the stage in that lousy play, and he had felt double shame for feeling attracted to her. Partly because she was so much younger than him but also since he was engaged to Emily Luong at the time. He knew that he should not have felt any shame at the time since he did not act on his feelings. And biologically there was nothing strange about him being attracted to 17 years old as she was a fully matured at the time. When thinking back at that event, James Locker realised that most humans would always be trapped between on the one side mixing their genes with others people that attracted them and on the other hand staying faithful to the person in his or her heart. Hearing the voice of Adam Smith awoke James from his thoughts.

Adam Smith:

- Look what I found! A couple of thousand dollars is just lying around in cash hidden among her underwear. I think this woman was an escort, the kind that is out of our sorry police salary range.

Samantha Robinson joined in on the conversation

- I would beg to differ. Most of the clothing in the wardrobes are very conservative and not very sexy. Why would an escort have that much traditional dresses?

Adam Smith:

- Hey, Sammy, remember that you are the only woman working in the unit, so don't expect any useful input on your latest fashion statements.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well from a man who has worked for five years and never received a raise I would not expect any beneficial input at all. What do you think about it, Thomas?

Thomas Anderson:

- I think your sense of fashion is excellent and you are by far the most attractive person in this room.

Samantha Robinson:

- Thank you, Thomas. It's a relief to me that you are not into necrophilia either.

James Locker:

- Okay. Enough of this. I am heading to the Office and will be coordinating our efforts from there. John, you will check the videos and surveillance systems of this building. I saw a key card panel when I got here so that one would register anyone entering or exiting the building. Thomas, you do what you do the best check all the computers and electronic media for clues. The rest of you. Knock doors in the building ask everyone, and I mean everyone if they have seen or noticed anything suspicious the last few days. Oh, and I need a volunteer to go to Tamworth and question Jessi-

ca Hall's family and friends to see if anyone has heard any reason as to why someone would want to have her killed.

Adam Smith:

- Okay, I'll go. Will give me a chance to see James' sister again. Yummy!

James Locker:

- Okay, but no inappropriate ideas, otherwise I am quite sure her husband will shove a pitchfork up your ass.

Adam Smith:

- Yippy! A freaky threesome with some creepy farmers! Can almost be better than the weekend that passed. See you in a couple of days.

James Locker:

- I am not even going to comment on that.

After finishing at the crime scene, James Locker started walking towards the police station. The crimes he had at hand were impossible to understand. It was highly uncommon that women were killed in this fashion, most of the time he had a female murder victim, the killer was a jealous and impulsive partner or ex-partner. If it indeed was the same killer as with Miranda DiMaestro the killer certainly did not fit the typical wife killer profile. Antonio DiMaestro was still the primary suspect in the Miranda DiMaestro case, but the man was nowhere to be found. Organized crime had been looking for him for almost two months now since the Lopez case, and they had come up empty-handed. With suspected drug barons the problem was not usually finding them but connecting them to the crime so why and where was Antonio DiMaestro hiding?

James Locker yet again felt that his headache was preventing him from thinking clearly and decided to have a nap at his office as soon as he got there.

In a way, he felt ashamed over, sleeping at work but one the other hand he was not useful to anyone as long as his headache was this bad.

5.4 Trouble with the Bitch

JAMES LOCKER HAD BEEN sleeping a long a dreamless sleep when he woke up by a twitch. Someone was knocking on his office door. He checked his wristwatch which indicated that the time was 8 AM and thus he had been sleeping four hours straight since he entered his room. On the bright side, his headache was gone, and he felt a lot better, and on the not so bright side he had severely shirked his duties and was far behind schedule. James Locker realised however that since no-one had called him, he could blame his lack of progress on the fact that he was still waiting for information. He opened the door and faced Barry Itch. James Locker's first feeling was not shamed but annoyed. The meeting with the BITCH was supposed to be eight hours after each new murder case, and yet here he was less than five hours after James had left the crime scene. From Barry Itch's body language James Locker understood that this was not going to be a pleasant meeting even before the talking had begun.

Barry Itch:

- How are the cases going? You won't catch many criminals as long as you sit here, rolling your thumbs.

James Locker:

- Um, that is correct sir, but someone has to coordinate the team. I reckoned that since we are working on two cases simultaneously we needed to divide our resources and someone needs to organise our resources. That someone is me. Why are we working on two different cases by the way? I mean we don't know that the cases are connected yet.

Barry Itch:

- Well to answer your question. The reason you got assigned this second case is that high command is convinced we are looking for a serial killer. After all, considering how uncommon it is that young women are killed point blank with several gunshot wounds and no sexual violence, it must be a serial killer. But the reason I am coming by is that I question your reason for being in your office. That is weak leadership, and since no-one is working on the DiMaestro case during the night, you don't need to go here, when you are much more useful on site.

James Locker:

- Understood. I am still very new to the leadership and responsibility aspect of police work. Michael Fuller was a great detective, but he was not the kind of person that made other individuals grow.

Barry Itch:

- I know how Michael Fuller was. Although I did not agree with his leadership principles at all, he achieved excellent results, better than anyone else has ever produced.

- Now it's time to step up a level James. I want my eight-hour report in two hours!

After Barry Itch had left the office, James felt the panic and the shame take his grip on him. Summarising eight hours work in two hours was not an easy task even though it was doable as the initial crime scene report was not an extensive report anyway. He could not understand for himself what made him this tired all the time? After all, he had taken sleeping pills every night the last week early on to get a good night's sleep. Most of the nights he slept like a baby and some of the nights he woke up around 3 am. But even those nights he would objectively get enough sleep if he went to bed at 8 PM? Maybe it was the performance anxiety that drove him crazy, after all leading a crime unit had been his dream ever since he joined the force and

now it could slip out of his fingers if he did not improve his performance. After thinking about this for a while, James Locker realised that if it indeed were the performance anxiety that was weighing him down, the best option would be to not think about it all, but instead carry on performing the duties he performed as Police Inspector under Michael Fuller. After all, that was a role where he had prevailed.

After finishing his train of thought, James Locker felt confident that this day would be a day to shine. Feeling this way he started making the necessary phone calls to acquire the information needed to compile the eight-hour report.

5.5 Lunchtime chat between Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith

AFTER MANY HOURS OF dedicated work, the dynamic duo Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith decided to go for lunch. Since they had been without food for a long time they decided to go for a buffet and since they had been unable to get any raise since the two of them started in the unit; they were going to a cheap Asian diner. After stilling their worst hunger, they began talking.

Thomas Anderson:

- You look extremely tired Adam. It's like you have not slept in days. How do I know that you are not the one who killed Jessica Hall? It would explain the bags under your eyes...

Adam Smith:

- Now I feel very insulted! You can't honestly think that I would kill such a beauty? Such a waste for the sake of mankind. I would much rather fuck her.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, a girl like that would not even consider fucking you. That would be your motive.

Adam Smith:

- Well true as that may be, there was still no sign of sexual violence. Why would I kill someone for getting rejected and don't fuck her afterwards?!

- Oh, this sounds wrong even to me, I am not into necrophilia, after all, I fucked two women that were alive and kicking this weekend, and one of them last night.

- You, on the other hand, seem to get nothing. Do you have any confessions to make Thomas? I am sure James would appreciate if you gave his career a boost by turning yourself in.

Thomas Anderson

- I've told you several times already. I made passionate love with a remarkable woman I liked last Friday.

Adam Smith:

- Picture or it did not happen!?

Thomas Anderson:

- Goddammit. I am not going to tell you who it is until I know where it's going!

Adam Smith:

- I see. "I respect that" Anyway here is the picture of the psychologist and me.

Thomas Anderson:

- What the fuck? A picture of a hand, dick, and pussy. What the hell is this?

Adam Smith:

- I would call it proof. As you can see it's my lower arm with my watch on it and my penis; as you can guess it's the pussy of my date.

Thomas Anderson:

- I can't understand why I am always hanging out with you. Where is the picture of her face?

Adam Smith:

- Why would I have a picture of her face? What would that prove?

Thomas Anderson sighed loudly and then commenced the conversation

- About proof. Did you see the test results from the blood on James' mirror?

Adam Smith:

- Yep, I saw it. A great relief. It was the same DNA as one of the two male samples in the DiMaestro mansion. At first, I thought it might have something to do with the way we handled the Vasquez cartel last weekend, so this was a great relief.

Thomas Anderson:

- You might call me crazy, but what if James Locker has finally snapped and is the killer? I mean why would the killer otherwise come by James' house paint the bathroom with his blood but otherwise do nothing?

Adam Smith:

- Well, I am buying tickets for the lottery dreaming about the jackpot even though the chance is 1 in 72 million. So I am not going to call you crazy...

- But your theory seems highly unlikely and anyway how would you check it out? By going to the BITCH and telling him about your insane theory and requesting to have James DNA tested? It's undoubtedly more likely to get you fired than solving the case.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hmm...

- I know a better way. ..

- Considering the amount of blood we found in the bathroom in the vicinity of the mirror, whoever it belongs to must have a pretty big cut on his body. So if James indeed is the killer, he would have a pretty big cut somewhere. The easiest way to find out would be to make him come along to the gym, and that way check out his body in the sauna afterwards.

Adam Smith:

- Let's do it. If nothing else to beat that lazy bastard; I have not seen him at the gym for ages!

Thomas Anderson:

- Great, I figure out some great reason to have him tag along. Let's head to work now; I have some things to prepare for the 3 PM meeting.

Adam Smith:

- Great make sure to tell me what you find; I am heading to the airport for my flight to the Tamworth region now.

- It will be great. Hitting on some outback women and “solving” the case.

Thomas Anderson:

- "I am sure you will succeed."

Having finished their meal and their conversation the Thomas Anderson headed back to the station to complete his tasks for 3 PM meeting, while Adam Smith headed for Sydney Domestic Airport.

5.6 A dilemma for James Locker

IN TWO STRESSFUL HOURS, James Locker managed to compile a satisfactory eight hours report to send to Barry Itch and the high command. He was not satisfied with the result as the language and grammar carried the specific characteristics of something done in a hurry. Still, he figured that the most critical task at hand was to get the report out; so the continued police work had a direction that was imperative for the first 24 hours of a case. After all the stories would be rewritten and audited several times before going up to court.

James Locker checked his E-mail and found a new piece of evidence that was both a relief and posed him with a dilemma. Apparently, the blood of the person that broke into his house and painted his mirror with blood was one of the two males who had left DNA traces at the DiMaestro mansion. The relief for him in this was that he indeed was just looking for one man. If the one threatening him had been another person, he would need to find two separate perpetrators, which would divide his attention. The dilemma was to find this man. Theoretically, it could be someone from the Vasquez cartel who wanted to send him a message because of his behaviour against them the weekend that passed. By chance, this person could also be the killer he was looking for. But he could not follow up on this thread since he did not want his colleagues and superiors to know that he beat up at mafia thug to get free hookers and cocaine. That would be a severe breach of protocol which in the best case scenario would lead to his dismissal and in the worst case scenario would put him behind bars.

When thinking about his behaviour the weekend that passed James Locker was angry with himself. Why had he put himself in this situation? He was so close to obtaining his career goal at the age of 32, and now that his feelings for Emily Luong finally were fading he knew that he would have excellent prospects of finding a new love. Still, he was risking all of this for a crazy night out; and he could not for his life understand why?

James Locker thought of the second possible scenario for why the killer had broken into his home; that there was a connection between him and the murders, and the killer wanted to send him a message. This scenario made him very uncomfortable. He could not understand how and why he connected to any of this. He had never met Miranda DiMaestro before, and as for Jessica Hall he had seen her once before but never spoken to her. As for the principal suspect Antonio DiMaestro, he knew that this man had been of interest for another murder investigation a while ago, but James Locker had been sick at the time and had never even participated in that investigation. All in all, he could not figure how any of this connected to him, but the thought of the killer somehow being after him was a petrifying thought indeed.

Finally brushing these thoughts aside, he prepared himself for the 3 PM staff meeting.

5.7 The 27th August 3 PM team meeting

THE TIME HAD COME FOR another staff meeting, and as usual, the first session after a new case was crucial as the whole team needed a general idea of where the case was heading to know how to proceed. Every member of the group was present except Adam Smith who was on the flight to the Tamworth region where he was supposed to find out if Jessica Hall had any noteworthy enemies from the past. With everyone present, James Locker decided to start the meeting.

James Locker:

- Good afternoon everyone, thank you for coming.

- After discussion with Barry and the High Command, we have decided to focus on the theory that this murder and the murder of Miranda DiMaestro are connected. I am sure you will understand why when you hear what you hear about your colleagues finding so with no further ado, let's start with you, John.

John Dean had feared all day for how he would react on the staff meeting, but he managed to keep his composure. After all, he was in big trouble if someone found out the extent to which he had been sabotaging the investigation. First of all, John had been handling Michael Fuller sensitive information. Furthermore, he had not been sharing his well-founded suspicions against Michael Fuller and finally he had stolen money from the crime scene. Since it was too late to come out clean, however, he had to continue on the path he had chosen, and the corruption within manifested in his body by making him feeling very nauseous and sick. John Dean realised he had been stuck in his thoughts for too long when James Locker spoke to him again.

James Locker:

- John? Are you okay? Say something.

John Dean:

- Sorry, sir. Just feeling very tired with all this stress and my daughter being sick and all.

- Anyway, I have not found out much. We believe the killing must have taken place between 1230 and 2 am. Most likely closer to the latter as the neighbours heard noises around 130 and that was the reason the police got there in the first place.

- But here is the catch. There are security cameras in the building where one of them is overlooking the corridor on level 27 where Jessica Hall's apartment is situated. But no-one is seen entering or leaving Jessica's apartment during this period.

James Locker:

- I see. Are there alternative ways of getting to the apartment?

John Dean:

- Not from the outside. There is a fire ladder down the corridor, but if the killer entered that way he or she would still be visible on the surveillance tape. Theoretically one would be able to get into the apartment via the ventilation shaft, but that is a very long shot as that would be implying the suspect was climbing from another level just to reach her apartment undetected.

James Locker:

- It could also imply that the killer is one of her neighbours as they would have a much easier route to climb. Still, I agree that it's unlikely but check it up anyway.

- How do you know that the cameras were not turned off by the way? After all, that was the procedure of the DiMaestro murder.

John Dean:

- Well, that would create a black spot on the surveillance tape, but I did not see any. Besides the security officer for the building would be alerted if all the cameras went down.

James Locker:

- Well, I guess you are right. Well keep looking through the feeds and see if you can find any discrepancies. Oh and have another chat with the security officer. He might have seen something.

- Moving on, Samantha what do you have to report?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, two interesting things.

- First of all, I went around the building talking to the neighbours. No one had seen anything, but one of them had heard Jessica Hall argue with a drunken man a couple of hours earlier. Or well they don't if he was drunk as they did not see him but he sounded drunk.

James Locker:

- This testimony is very compelling since Miranda DiMaestro also argued with a drunken man a few hours before her death. If this alcoholic is in fact not Antonio DiMaestro, this could be another lead.

- Samantha, can you go back to the neighbours and ask how the conversation sounded? I believe there would be a different tone when you argue with a stranger compared to when you argue with someone you know.

Samantha Robinson:

- Sure sounds like a plan boss.

James Locker:

- Great, what was the second point of interest?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, the killer left a package at the crime scene, on top of Jessica Hall's corpse. We opened it and found an exclusive piece of jewellery inside. I took the jewellery to a jeweller, and he estimated its worth to at least \$100,000. Considering how expensive the article is I reckon we should be able to trace whoever ordered it as there are only a few jewel shops that deal in this price range.

James Locker:

- Samantha. You are indeed a dream to have as an employee. Take a picture of the piece and leave the original in an evidence locker. I am sure you know better what jewel shops to visit than I would.

- Moving on to Thomas, what do you have to report?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, quite a few things:

- The building manager indicated that Antonio DiMaestro owns Jessica Hall's apartment. A text message on Jessica's mobile phone shows that she was expecting Antonio to come, the night she was killed. Furthermore, I have checked the electronic swipe key log to the building. Antonio entered the building via the garage at 0101am and left the building at 0129am. I have requested the location of Antonio's phone from the telephone company, but they are yet to get back to me.

James Locker:

- Damn that we don't have the same resources and rights as the Federal Police. Then we could just trace his phone and find him in no time!

- No matter, I am sure the fucking snake was there, but where is he now? We need to find him fast.

Thomas Anderson:

- We don't know James; the man is a ghost no-one seems to have seen him for over a month.

Samantha Robinson:

- Sorry to interrupt, but to me, it appears that Antonio is unlikely to be the killer. If he were the killer why would he make all this ef-

fort not to be seen by the security cameras, just to walk in using his swipe key with his mobile phone turned on?

James Locker:

- Well, you do have a point, but he is still our only clue unless we find the mysterious drunken man.

- Anyway, this concludes our meeting keep on working on your tasks. I will contact the federal police to see if we can get a permanent trace on Antonio DiMaestro's and his associates' mobile phones.

- Now let's wrap this off and get back to work.

5.8 Barry Itch feels frustrated

BARRY ITCH PUT DOWN the eight-hour report he received from James Locker and felt the frustration overwhelm him. Such a sloppy work! It was not the findings per se that disturbed him but the presentation. To Barry a perfect performance was everything, and he expected clean results every time. He had been frustrated with Michael Fuller's sloppy works for ages, and he had hoped for improvement now that he finally got rid of Michael but instead what he received from James Locker was even worse. It was like the report was written by someone fresh off the ship and the level of the writing was entirely unacceptable for Barry Itch.

Barry Itch reflected over the entire Michael Fuller story again. He wondered if he had done the right thing when he investigated the cocaine theft charges against Michael Fuller and then let him go without severe consequences when it turned out that the suspicions were correct. For sure Michael Fuller had to resign. Officially Michael Fuller had left due to health reasons. Letting Michael off the hook was a very lenient treatment, and he hoped that Michael Fuller would not do anything stupid now that he had received this favour. Barry Itch had had some thoughts about whether it was morally correct to let Michael Fuller go, but morality was less critical than

perfection, and at least the reputation of the department and Michael Fuller seemed to go unsullied.

Barry Itch was thinking about his past relationship with Michael Fuller. It has a far as he remembered always been mostly negative. Barry Itch was seriously upset by the fact that Michael Fuller would not adapt to his standards of perfection and often delivered sloppy reports or showed up with a hang-over. Barry had on several occasions reassigned the worst employees from the other murder investigation teams to undermine Michael Fuller's performance so he could get rid of him. But Michael Fuller had just kept performing in spite of having the far worst team members of all the groups. In a way, Barry Itch was genuinely fascinated by this performance in spite of his other objections.

Barry Itch looked down on James Locker's report again. Barry decided to go easy on him for now. James Locker was not a star like Michael Fuller and with incompetent misfits like Adam Smith, Elias Baker, Elliot Johnson, Vinnie Chung and Oscar Lee in his team, to expect excellent results from James Locker would be to expect too much. Besides Barry Itch was well aware that he was known as the BITCH to his subordinates and he did not want to grow that myth more than necessary!

5.9 Muscle flashing in the sauna.

THE TIME WAS 8 PM, and James Locker and Thomas Anderson had just finished a boxing class at the gym, and they were now sitting in the sauna. James Locker had been a bit hesitant about going to the gym since he had not been working out for a long time. Thomas Anderson, however, convinced him with the motivation that he was seeing his mysterious date later tonight and wanted to look pumped up for the occasion. Thomas Anderson was thinking about his conversation with Adam Smith and the theory that James Locker might be the one who wrote on his own bathroom mirror with blood. Thomas Anderson needed a way to see all of James's body to figure out if he had any significant wounds that all that blood could come from. Thomas Anderson decided to start off with some idle chatter.

Thomas Anderson:

- Look how fit I look today; I hope it will be good enough for my date...

James Locker:

- Feeling a bit needy today, are you?

- Your body is toned. I am sure that your reason for failure if you fail, will be something else.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well... Thank you, I guess.

James Locker:

- Yeah. Why do you keep it a secret by the way? There is only one woman it can be, Samantha Robinson. A good catch if you ask me

Thomas Anderson:

- Hmm, why would you think it's Samantha?

James Locker:

- Well, partly intuition of course but it's quite easy. You see I know you well enough to realise that fact you won't say who it is, means that it's someone I know; otherwise it would be easy just to say the name and show a picture.

- Secondly, I know you have a crush on her.

- Thirdly I know you are picky and the other single women I know... Well, they are not that attractive.

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay then! You are right I am seeing Samantha.

- I guess that intuition is the reason you got promoted in the first place...

- But please don't tell the others. I want to tell them myself when the time is right.

James Locker:

- No worries mate. Your secret is safe with me. `

- Besides, it will be a lot of fun seeing how frustrated Adam will get before he figures out whom you are seeing. Sure he will claim not to care, but I am telling you his inquisitiveness will keep him awake at night.

Thomas Anderson:

- Great you should get on the horse as well! Show me your muscles big fella.

James Locker:

- Okay. You mean like this.

James Locker flexed his arms chest and core. He was still in decent shape although he felt that he had crashed a lot in the last year while being absent from training. James was by no means a wreck, but his body no longer gave him an advantage on the dating scene either. On the other side if he could keep his current position that would be a lot more important for his prospects than the question if he had a six pack or not.

Thomas Anderson:

- That's a great body man; a lot of people would crash a lot from such a long absence of training. Now flex your legs, back, and bum.

James Locker:

- Okay... That seems a bit strange...

Thomas Anderson:

- Don't worry mate. See it as a great opportunity to get input and feedback. I am as good as a personal trainer but a lot cheaper.

James Locker:

- Okay, I guess it can't hurt to show it all off. Well, don't expect to see my erected penis though I am not into that kind of stuff.

Thomas Anderson:

- I am happy to hear that. Well looks good, A month of hard training and we'll have you back on the dating scene again!

James Locker:

- Thanks. Yeah, it would be a good idea, the "dating" in Asia felt very fake. Maybe some more training can help me sleep as well

Thomas Anderson:

- Great.

They sat silently enjoying the heat of the steam sauna cleaning the pores of their bodies. Thomas Anderson noticed that James Locker looked like he was in profound thoughts and decided to find out what was on his friend's mind.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hey, James, you seem like you are in serious reflections, what are you reflecting over?

James Locker:

- Yeah, it a thing that has been bothering me for a while.

- Thomas, can I ask you something?

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah sure what's on your mind

James Locker:

- How do you feel when you stand in front of a mirror?

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh, I don't think very much at all. I am happy with my looks.

- What about you?

James Locker:

- Oh, I have thought about it for a while. Sometimes mirrors make me very uncomfortable. It's like an obsession, a splinter of my mind and the world feels unreal. It like I am watching my reflection, and I see another person. And sometimes when our eyes meet, I can see into his soul. And I can feel it's very dark and ugly

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay, James, I am not sure what to say to that. I guess it's natural to be unsatisfied with one's looks if one has been alone or felt lonely for a long time...

- But see it this way; you are definitely above the 50 per cent mark if we compare your looks to the entire population. So your looks are not an issue for you it's an asset.

- You are hotter than Adam Smith, and he gets laid all the time when the latest time was this weekend. Oh and so did you, so you are worrying for nothing.

- To me you also have a great personality; otherwise, I would not want to hang out with you. So don't worry, mate the right one will come your way once again.

James Locker was not satisfied with the answer he got from Thomas Anderson as his looks were not the issue to him. Then again it was hard for him to describe the problem so Thomas Anderson would understand as he was not able to put the finger on it himself. James Locker decided to just go for the positive things Thomas Anderson had said and quit the negative thought patterns for now. After all, what he had been thinking about were issues that were impossible to get answered. Asking questions that could not be explained only lead man to insanity or religion which in significant parts where two sides of the same coin. They finished their session, and James Locker headed home while Thomas Anderson headed to Samantha Robinson's place.

5.10 John Dean gives Michael Fuller a time frame

JOHN DEAN WAS SITTING at the pub drinking and contemplating his options. He knew his wife would not be happy as she perceived his frequent pub visits as an escape from sorting out their relationship problems. In the past, it probably had been, but for the last weeks, the pub visits had been imperative for him since he had involved himself with Michael Fuller. John Dean knew with all his heart that he was not in this for the truth or justice but merely because he had fallen for the temptation to take money from Michael Fuller to help him. Now he was in this however and had no choice but to keep supporting Michael Fuller even though he seriously doubted Michael Fuller's intentions and sanity.

Michael Fuller showed up thirty minutes late unshaven and wreaking of booze. John Dean realised that it would be difficult making any sense with him, but he decided to try anyway. Since he knew Michael Fuller for a long time, John knew that he would have to keep a friendly but decisive approach if he wanted his message to be received especially in Michael's present condition

John Dean:

- Hi, Michael, Great you could make it. Are you having a good night?

Michael Fuller:

- Yeah definitely, I was talking to a foxy lady down at my favourite waterhole, and then I realised I had to see you as well. Oh well, I got her number, and you are married, so I guess you won't be here all night?

John Dean:

- Well, it'd be nice if we could avoid it.
- I might as well be straight to the point; a problem has arisen...

Michael Fuller:

- Yeah, I have heard...
- The gold digging bitch is dead.
- Will be hard to find Antonio now...

John Dean

- Well, that complication is the least of our problems. What is worse is the fact that you were threatening her at 9 PM and the lingered in the area until 2 AM when you decided to go to the apartment block apparently to pick another fight with her but left instead when you realised the shit had hit the fan.

- What do you have to say about that?

Michael Fuller:

- That you should stop monitoring my phone, you don't have the rights.

John Dean

- I am sure I don't have the right to hand out information from our investigation and covering up for you either, but still, I am. So now tell me the truth what were you doing there?

Michael Fuller:

- Okay, relax. You know that I told you that I followed up on the lead with Antonio DiMaestro's mistress?

- Well, that bitch Jessica Hall was his mistress. She even lived in a flat owned by him. And she must have seen him pretty recently because why would he otherwise let her live there?

- But yeah she got offended, and we argued but no threats involved.

- After that, I went to my favourite whiskey bar in the city. Maybe I drank a few too many, and I felt angry...

- So I decided to confront the bitch for real, but yeah when I saw Mason & Johnson stepping off on the same floor walking towards the open apartment door of Jessica I realised that something was wrong, so I panicked and went home.

John Dean:

- Well, there is a complication. Security cameras filmed you arguing/threatening her at 9 pm. The picture is too bright for me to blur it out this time, so I can't help you when Samantha or James decides to follow up on the lead...

- And once you become a suspect, they will most likely require a trace on your phone, and we are both in trouble!

Michael Fuller:

- God dammit can't you do anything?!

John Dean:

- Well, I can stall as much as possible. Here is my plan. I lock down the video files with a biometric password. Then I will get an urgent message saying that my daughter got an epileptic attack. Then I am unreachable on the phone for a while.

- Should give you until Monday considering how bad things are running at the moment.

Michael Fuller:

- Great John. Appreciate it; you are such a great friend.

John Dean:

- Of course Michael, that's who I am.

- Oh, and a tip to get you in the right direction. The blood we found at James Locker's house matched one of the male DNA-s we found at DiMaestro Mansion.

- Oh, and I have some more files for you to read through. Make sure to delete them as soon as you have read them; it's not beneficial for either of us if they are found on your computer.

Michael Fuller:

- Hmm, interesting thank you.

- Well, my foxy lady friend better waits for another night then. Now that I have another lead I better stay sober for a while.

After Michael Fuller left, John Dean sat for a while thinking about if he made the right choice sharing his suspicions about James Locker' supposed break-in. Chances were that Michael Fuller would do something even stupider than confronting the mistress of Antonio DiMaestro who then turned

out to show up dead a couple of hours later. And John Dean was still unsure of Michael Fuller's innocence. The only thing that indicated that the killer was someone else was the fact that Michael Fuller had been drunk at 9 PM according to the neighbours and also drunk at 2 AM according to Officer Mason and Johnson. To bypass all the security of the building the killer must have been sober an hour earlier. Then again Michael Fuller was an alcoholic, and he was no doubt a genius so if anyone could pull off these killings while drunk it would be Michael Fuller. John Dean realised that he had to help Michael Fuller regardless if he was innocent or not, if Michael Fuller went down he would take John Dean with him in the fall, and that scenario was not appealing at all...

5.11 Bedside talk between Samantha Robinson and Thomas Anderson.

THOMAS ANDERSON LIED next to Samantha Robinson and was stunned by the moment. Samantha was so beautiful, and he had dreamt about this time for so long. For sure he had been equally satisfied last weekend waking up next to her, but this time it felt even better as this was the second time. Thomas Anderson felt that anyone could get lucky once but being with her for the second time was a seal of approval showing that they were heading in the right direction. But had he pleased her enough, he did not feel he got her all the way, and that feeling was discomfoting. As if she could read her mind she started speaking.

Samantha Robinson:

- Don't worry Thomas you were pretty good for a man.

Thomas Anderson:

- For a man?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I guess you know I am bisexual?

- It's a mixed feeling really because I am a lot more sexually attracted to women, but at the same time, I am a lot more drawn to the concept of a relationship with a man.

Thomas Anderson:

- Interesting. Never heard anyone say that before...

Samantha Robinson:

- Does it put you off?

Thomas Anderson:

- Nope, we are both adults, and I don't mind you having a sexual past. But what you are saying is fascinating to me, please tell me more.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay... Here is the deal

- My best friend Rebecca and I were best friends for a long time. Eventually, we could not resist each other any longer, and we became a couple. No-one has ever touched me as she did and I have never felt those heights of sexual pleasure with anyone else.

- But we never loved each other; it's only friendship and an extreme attraction.

- Anyway, we realised that we both wanted children and families in our future and since we are both bisexual men are the way to go.

- Besides I have a pretty heterosexual mindset, it's just that the attraction to her is so strong.

- And finally, I don't like the gay scene at all. I don't think people should categorise me to like transsexuals and specific music and

fashion just because I am attracted to my best friend. That is just not me.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that's interesting. I never thought about it that way. I just assumed that all gay people liked the same things as if it was genetically predisposed.

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah but anyway I want to take it slow with you, for now, Thomas because I like you, but Rebecca needs me as well. She has fallen for some Jerk who calls himself JP. I have told her to dump him as he seems to be away for weeks at the time but she claims he is a wonderful man in spite of this. And what do I know? But I like to be able to comfort her in any way, and that means sexually as well.

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay, I understand... Thank you for being so open with me. Hopefully, my jealousy will not come in the way.

The conversation kept Thomas Anderson sleepless for a long while. He was confused and did not know what to do or how to react. He was aware that he had never felt this way for a woman before. For sure he had had a few relationships in the past, but those had been pretty short and mainly based on convenience and not on strong emotions, at least on his part. Here he had the first woman in his life that it felt magical with and she was a lot more attracted to her friend, than she was to him. On the other hand, Thomas thought that they had an excellent connection and if he could only look past his ego and valour what they had and could have in the future it would be worth it? Thomas decided that he would pursue a relationship with Samantha Robinson and happy with his decision he fell into a cozy sleep.

5.12 The Killer feels the hunger and the monster within

THE KILLER HEARD HIS phone buzz. It was a text message from Rebecca. The message was *“Hey JP, Sorry but I cannot see you tonight. I am not feeling too well, and it would be a shame to spread my germs. See you some other night”* The killer put down his phone. He just knew she was lying. That bitch he loved her and still, she was fucking other guys. He could feel his vision pumping and the anger raging all over his body. She should pay. She should pay dearly! Then he felt a shock that stroke straight through his body. It was the shock of reason, that took over, and he saw things clearly again.

When reason prevailed, the Killer realised several things. For starters, he realised that it was not sure that Rebecca was lying in the first place even though statistically it was more probable that she was with another guy than her being sick. But even if she was with another man who was he to blame her? After all, he was always away and distant telling her lies about his life to fill the gaps. He would love to be honest with her, but after all, he could not entrust her or anyone else with his secret. And he was sure that she preferred to think that he was having sex with other women than knowing what he was doing most nights.

The Killer realised that even when it came to faithfulness, he was failing Rebecca miserably. Since they first started seeing each other, he had had sex with several other women. The killer could not feel any guilt on this matter though as these actions had not been his choice. He would never choose to be with another woman than Rebecca; she was his everything, and yet he had been. This behaviour was a consequence of his problem that he was not free, and he hoped that he soon would be. What if his plan would fail and it would not bring him freedom? Well, he would not live the rest of life as a prisoner so soon he would be free in some way, even if it would be the freedom of death. The Killer assured himself however that his plan was fail-proof and continued with the next step off it.

He turned on his computer and hacked into the CSMI networks. He would like to know how their investigation was proceeding. As it looked in their files, everyone was oblivious to his existence and part in the killings. Their ignorance was both satisfying for the Killer as it proved that he had

made the perfect crimes but also very uninspiring as it took the entire thrill out of the game he was playing. He opened the file of James Locker. That fool would need to pay the ultimate price, but he had to go last. The Killer wanted James Locker to realise why he had to die, all of this would be pointless otherwise. The Killer suddenly felt very frustrated as he thought James Locker should be onto him by now and could not understand why this was not the case. After all the messages he had left, was pretty clear and a sharp mind should be able to comprehend who his enemy was.

The killer made up his mind. He would leave the police another hint and then he would wait a few days before moving on his next target. This was as he actually felt pretty sorry for his next target that in his opinion had done nothing to deserve to die. Because of this he would leave her a few more days to live and maybe fate would ensure her survival this way. The killer created a new entry in the police case file and wrote the following text *“Great work officers, I know everything you know now. Good luck with finding me! /the Killer”*. After doing this, the killer felt thrilled and satisfied at the same time, and he felt great satisfaction as he went to bed.

5.13 Breakfast talk between Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson

AFTER A NIGHT OF PASSION Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson decided to have breakfast at Samantha's favourite café on the way to the police station. She noticed that he was in deep thoughts and felt very curious about what he might be thinking about. As Samantha Robinson had an inquisitive personality and was not a big fan of beating around the bush, she decided to ask him.

Samantha Robinson:

- You seem to be in deep thoughts this morning? May I ask what's on your mind?

Thomas Anderson:

- Sure by all means.

- It's a thing about the case. I have been thinking about it a lot, and I feel a bit ashamed.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay. Why is that?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, this is the thing, the two best officers I have seen in my career, Michael and James both told me that the key to solving a murder case is to follow one's intuition when it points in a particular direction.

- In most of our cases, my intuition leads nowhere, I just do the tasks that I am assigned to and let the other's solve the case.

- But yesterday my intuition pointed me in one direction, and it was incorrect, and now I feel ashamed of my thoughts.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, you don't need to feel ashamed just because you were wrong. Trial and error is the most common scientific method, and most hypotheses turn out to be incorrect. But even being wrong can often lead to progress as long as one acknowledges being wrong.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, I am not ashamed because I was wrong but because I suspected one of my closest friends. I suspected James Locker of being involved as it made no sense to me that the killer would break into his place to leave a threatening message but nothing else.

- So I reckoned this. James Locker has had problems with his mental health, so I thought he might have hurt himself in a bout of

insanity. This theory would explain all the blood and the message on his bathroom mirror.

- But to lose all that blood one has to get a pretty big wound and when I checked James' body in the sauna yesterday, I could not see any injuries at all.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I understand why you feel ashamed over suspecting one of your closest friends, but I must admit I find James' behaviour suspicious as well.

- But I find a lot of facts in this case very strange. The killer seems to be a calculating genius who bypasses security systems and kills with precision while at the same time being psychotic painting a room with blood. A very hard tricky person to get a profile on I reckon.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well yeah seeing it from that point of view James' could never be the one we are looking for anyway. The killer is obviously very sharp when it comes to computers while James would hardly be able to change the time on his mobile phone without getting assistance.

Samantha Robinson:

- Oh, I did not know of James' technological dyslexia. Is he so terrible?

Thomas Anderson:

- No, I was exaggerating of course, but still, he would not be able to outsmart me and the security systems at the crime scenes.

- Oh anyway let's head to work, we are getting late.

5.14 Michael Fuller breaks into James Locker's house

MICHAEL FULLER SAT in his car outside James Locker's house. He wondered for himself why he had driven all this way and what he would hope to achieve through breaking in and examining the house. The way John Dean had described the earlier break-in at James Locker's home had seemed very suspicious, and Michael felt a need to check out the place himself to get the big picture. But then Michael considered the downsides of such a plan. As his situation was right now all he had done, was visiting the murder victims looking for Antonio DiMaestro. He could explain this to a court if he became a suspect in the killings. But how would he justify breaking into James Locker's house? It was apparently a felony as he had no business being there. Could John Dean be trying to set him up and if so what would his motive be? Michael Fuller could see no reason whatsoever as to why John Dean would be trying to set him up, as he had everything to lose in that scenario.

Michael Fuller suddenly felt the alcohol withdrawal kick in with full force. He became extraordinarily restless and felt how his mind was all over the place. Since he realised that he would not be able to make a rational decision in his current situation, he decided to go with his gut feeling. His gut feeling was excellent and what had made him the most successful detective of all times at the CSMI. Now his gut feeling told him that answers were to be found inside James Locker's house. What kind of solutions were uncertain but any clue that would bring him forward in the case, and would be an excellent respite for him which would help him in his battle against the booze as well.

Michael Fuller went in through picking the lock of the back door of the building. Although Michael Fuller by no means was an expert at lock picking, it was easy to pick the lock, and Michael was amazed that James Locker had taken no means to tighten security since his last break in a few days earlier. He went in and walked towards the bathroom. He could tell that the bathroom had been thoroughly investigated as it was immaculately clean a lot cleaner than the rest of the house. This realisation came as a disappoint-

ment to Michael Fuller as it was a lot harder for him to get an intuitive feeling for a room once someone else has worked through it. His intuition was the reason he always wanted to be the first on a crime scene if possible to see it in its rawest form. Seeing pictures or reconstructed scenarios did not have the same effect on his mind at all. Michael Fuller went back to the lounge room of the house. This room had also been swept for evidence but as there was no indication that whoever broke in actually visited the lounge room it had not been as thoroughly done. Michael Fuller had found this pattern very interesting. Why had the intruder gone through the backdoor straight the bathroom to leave a message without even checking the other rooms? As the intruder most likely was the killer this was an armed and very dangerous man; judging from all the blood in the bathroom also borderline psychotic. Why was a man like this afraid to check out all of the rooms and why didn't he kill James Locker as he did with Jessica Hall and Miranda DiMaestro? Michael Fuller walked towards the hall again. He tried opening the door to the basement, -but it was locked. Michael Fuller remembered this from the report from the break-in had read earlier during the day. *"James Locker told us he could not find the key, but the basement would not be relevant to the investigation as he had not been down there for ages."* Michael Fuller saw something very naïve in this formulation. For all, they know the basement might be the solution, and Michael Fuller was curious about WHY they were unable to find the key. After all, there was a chance that whoever broke in went down to the basement and then brought the key with him by mistake. If that were the case, the basement would be the room where Michael Fuller's intuition would work the best as the basement were still raw and untouched in opposite to the rest of the house. Michael Fuller picked up his lock pick set and was just about to start picking the basement door lock when he heard a voice and footsteps outside heading towards the back door. It sounded like a discussion, but he could only hear one of the voices possible due to the conversation being over the phone. Michael Fuller did not recognise the voice but realised that whoever it was, it would not be a good idea for him to be there in case the person entered the building. Michael was unarmed and if the person he heard talking were the killer his life would be in danger. It could also be a neighbour or someone from a security company, and then he would be in trouble as he had no business being in James Locker's house. Michael Fuller moved as quickly

and silently as he could and exited the building via the bedroom window. He then got into his car and drove away, knowing that he had been very close to a very problematic situation. While driving home, he got stuck on a detail from the conversation he overheard "*Hi Rebecca! It is JP speaking. How are you today?*" Rebecca was the name of his daughter. It was also a pretty common name, but still, he could not get the connection out his mind. Who the hell was this guy JP, what was he doing outside James Locker's house and what did he want with Michael Fuller's daughter? It blackened for Michael Fuller's eyes for a few seconds, and once he got back to his senses, he was driving off the road heading towards a tree. He braked as hard as he could, but it was not enough to avoid the collision. The car crashed into the tree, and Michael Fuller was knocked unconscious in the accident.

5.15 Phone Call between the Killer and Rebecca

THE KILLER WAS SITTING at home full of anticipation. He had spoken to Rebecca a few hours earlier, and tonight they were catching up. He had swallowed his disappointment from the night before, and all the rage and anger he felt back then was now gone, and he could feel the butterflies tingling in his stomach. This love was indeed way better than any drug he had ever tried, and he had tried them all. Obviously not every psychoactive substance is known to man, as that would account for thousands of different drugs, but he had tried all the major ones. He saw a mental picture of Rebecca's smile and knew that if his plan succeeded he would be able to see it on a much more regular basis. His daydreaming was interrupted by a phone call. It was Rebecca on the other line.

Rebecca:

- Hey, JP. I am so sorry I'll have to cancel our date tonight as well. My dad just crashed his car and got a severe concussion. I'll just have to go and visit him in the hospital.

The Killer

- Oh god. That's horrible, how and where did this happen?

Rebecca:

- I don't know how, but I suspect it has to do with my father's alcoholism. Damn him I've told him a lot of times never to drive drunk! He is a police officer goddammit he should know better!

- Oh sorry for getting that angry, it's not appropriate I guess

The Killer:

- That's alright. You have told me enough about how absent and uninterested he was during your upbringing I understand your anger towards him. What hospital is he at?

Rebecca:

- He is at Auburn Hospital; he crashed against a tree at Olympic Park. I am heading there now.

The Killer:

- Okay. I am close to that location at the moment. Tell you what I can drive you home after your hospital visit. It can be tough for you getting back home with public transport after such severe event.

Rebecca:

- Thank you, JP. That's very thoughtful of you. But it will probably take some time before I am done, you don't mind waiting there?

The Killer:

- Don't worry about it. I'll just stay at the pub watching a game. And for your safety, I'll drink soft drinks tonight.

Rebecca:

- Thanks. You are the best. I'll call you later then.

After hanging up, the Killer felt confused and disappointed. Disappointed over the fact that his excellent evening plans with Rebecca were ruined for something as depressing as driving her home from the hospital and comforting her in case her father's concussion had left any permanent damage. No-one had forced him to give her this offer of course, but it had been the right thing to do. Partly because he believed that this was something a regular guy would do but also since it was a way for him to find out if she was honest with him or not. After all, she was highly unlikely to go on a date with some guy at a hospital cafeteria, so if he picked her up at the hospital, she must be going there to see someone who got suddenly injured. In that case, it seemed likely the injured one is her dad. So all in all the Killer felt that he had picked the right course of action for the evening, giving the sad circumstances.

But the killer also felt confused. He knew that Rebecca's dad was Michael Fuller. But what had he done in the Olympic Park area of the city? That would be at least one hour drive from Michael Fuller's house in Palm Beach, and no-one is going on such a long ride without reason. The Killer suddenly felt very frustrated that Michael Fuller was not behind bars. He really should be in jail considering the cocaine and everything. Michael Fuller was a loose cannon, he was unpredictable, and it was impossible to know what he knew since he was not filing anything. On the other hand, Michael Fuller added some valuable tension to the game, so his existence was highly welcome in that sense. Still, the Killer was dying to know why Michael Fuller was in the neighbourhood today. Both James Locker and Adam Smith were living close to Olympic Park, but it seemed highly unlikely that Michael Fuller would have any voluntary contact with any of them. Unless... Michael Fuller was investigating the nightly visit James Locker received on Sunday night and decided to check it. If so Michael Fuller was signing his own arrest warrant and the plan was working even better than the killer ever imagined that it would. There could be a complication, however; if Michael Fuller saw him outside James Locker's house earlier during the day. The Killer decided that this was not a real problem as Michael Fuller would have a harder time explaining what he was doing out there than he would.

5.16 Rebecca visits Michael Fuller at the hospital

MICHAEL FULLER WOKE up a few hours later in the intensive care unit of Auburn Hospital. The first thing he saw was Rebecca who was holding his hand. Michael's had a severe headache, and he could not remember what had happened. As he did not know what date it was he realised he must have hit his head pretty badly in some way; But how? Michael realised he would get to know soon enough, so he opened his eyes again and started talking.

Michael Fuller:

- Hi, Rebecca, it's so good to see you. Where am I, and what happened to me?

Rebecca Bell:

- Well, I am listed as your emergency contact...

- You are at Auburn Hospital you had a pretty rough car accident where you crashed your car into a tree at Olympic Park.

Michael Fuller:

- Oh yeah, I was following up a lead out there, can't remember which now.

Rebecca Bell:

- Following up on a lead? Samantha told me you resigned over a week ago stating health reasons. The talk at the station was apparently that everyone thinks the management paid you a redundancy package to get rid of you due to your alcohol problems.

Michael Fuller stopped the urge in him that wanted to tell her about the cocaine set up where someone set him up by placing cocaine in his house. After all, the last thing he wanted to do was to involve Rebecca in his troubles. He loved her even though it felt like she disowned him by changing to her mother's maiden name as soon as she turned 18. Telling her the truth in re-

gards to his dismissal could never be a good thing. Either she would see him as delusional, and their relationship would take a turn for the worse or she would believe him, and that might put her life in danger. After all Michael Fuller felt that he was up against a powerful adversary and he was lucky to not be in custody at present. With this in mind, Michael Fuller decided to admit his alcoholism and withhold the actual reason for him leaving the police force.

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, you are right. My alcoholism was in the way of my career, but it's still a shame what happened because I was always the best detective at the department in spite of my alcohol abuse. Also, my job was the only thing that kept my alcoholism at bay.

Rebecca Bell

- Well, it's a shame you valued your job that much. Both I and mum needed you at home back then you know. But no point lingering in the past I will try to forgive you someday.

Michael Fuller:

- Thank you. It's a shame you did not want to join me on my upcoming trip to Scotland; it would be an excellent opportunity for us to catch up and get to know each other better.

Rebecca Bell:

- Well. This event with you in the hospital has made me doubt that decision. Maybe I should go away on a trip with you to get to know you better. I mean you could have died today and life is too short to carry a grudge...

Michael Fuller:

- Let's hope you still feel that way when I get better, so something good comes out of this mess.

- I am feeling exhausted now; can you get me a nurse so I can get some sedatives?

Rebecca Bell:

- Yeah sure. Please get better see you soon.

As Rebecca Bell left Michael Fuller started thinking about what she had said about him always putting work first and neglecting his family and everyone around him. His dedication to his work was like a curse for him and even though he had had the best of intentions it had all ended up in mystery. He had dedicated all of his life to fighting evil and crime but now when his career was most likely over he doubted that he had made any difference. It seemed clear to him now that the opposing force to evil was not vindictiveness and duty but love to the people who meant the most to him. In his successful crusade against corruption, he had failed to achieve what mattered the most, making the people closest to him feel loved and happy. Because of this, his life was a failure in spite of his successful career. Now that his career had gone down the drain he could make a choice. Either he would choose the alcohol raddled path he had opted for the last decade trying desperately to restore his career, or he could choose another way where he focused all his energy and will on making people around him feel appreciated and happy. Michael Fuller decided to go for the latter. It would feel bizarre for a time when adapting to it, but it was the only way to go if he ever wanted to find peace and happiness. Happy with his decision Michael Fuller fell into a blissful morphine based state of mind before finally falling asleep.

5.17 Adam Smith meets up with Janelle Wynyard in Tamworth

ADAM SMITH YAWNED. His day up in Tamworth had neither been exciting nor given anything valuable to the investigation. Or so he thought, but he could not be sure as it was not up to his judgment to evaluate the information he had received this day. His tactic for the day had been to announce the murder of Jessica Hall in the local radio station and that everyone that could

leave any useful information was welcome to come to the local pub/diner to share this information with him. The problem was that Tamworth was such a small and uneventful town so a broadcast like this just made everyone come by and hand in more or less useless statements just for the thrill of meeting one of the big city policemen. Doing this would have been okay for Adam Smith if it was not for the fact that every interview would have to be transcribed and put into a file since he was not trusted to make decisions on what information to follow up on.

He had during the day got a clearer picture of how Jessica Hall was. He also received a few old pictures where she looked considerably better than she had done dead in her apartment. She was hot, and with all the information Adam had on hand he would have a distinct advantage if he ever tried to woo her. This information was useless now, however, and all he found out was that she was an escort/gold digger/prostitute who had passed away far too young. Since this information was just a confirmation of what they already knew Adam felt that his visit to Tamworth seemed like a waste.

For a while, Adam Smith fantasised about if he should ask for a trip to Colombia to so he could investigate the life of Miranda DiMaestro in search for clues as well. This trip would be awesome; he would do shitloads of cocaine and hit on every hot South American woman passing by! The problem was that the high command would never approve of the time and travel expenses that such a venture would consume and besides Adam Smith could not speak Spanish. Samantha Robinson had made a few inquiries over the phone though so they probably had roughly as clear pictures of the lives of both the murder victims; with Jessica Hall, they merely had more sources telling the same things.

Adam Smith kept philosophising about life and different trades one could pick and how the occupation was perceived. Adam noticed that two different risky trades were viewed opposite in the ordinary perception; the trades of prostitutes and soldiers. Both of these occupations had increased risk of death and injury, when it came to prostitutes, the most significant threats were sexually transmitted diseases and serial killers while soldiers faced the danger of getting shot in battle. Adam Smith would enjoy both of these trades, and for him, prostitution would be pretty safe, as it was unheard of female serial killers who targeted male prostitutes and Adam would nev-

er have sex with a man. Sadly the market for male prostitutes targeting the female market was tiny, and he just did not have what it took. Being a soldier, on the other hand, seemed like a viable option but apart from the killing people aspect, he could get those kicks from being a police officer in Sydney. As a policeman, he could get laid more and did not need to stay in a barrack with 15 other sweaty guys most of the time. When it came to the perception of the trades Adam Smith could not understand why prostitutes had such a bad reputation. After all, they provided a service for a lot of lonely men who would not get laid otherwise, sure it was a dangerous job, and he would not want his offspring to pursue it, but it was still an essential part of society. Soldiers, on the other hand, were glorified with public holidays and stuff but all they did was to go third world hellholes bombing the shit out of the natives using superior weaponry. Adam Smith reckoned that would be a lot of fun to do this, but he could not see the glory in it, or why the government spent billions of dollars on this annually as it did nothing to improve the lives of its everyday citizens.

With 15 minutes left of the workday, Adam Smith saw Janelle Wynyard, the sister of James Locker, coming into the pub. He could feel the blood flowing to his lower regions as she was still really hot. The fact that she was the sister of James Locker made her even hotter as Adam had fantasised countless times of being getting to know a relative of James Locker on a deeper personal level. Adam Smith did not know what it was in the concept of banging the sister of a friend that was so hot, but he guessed it was the replay value. If Adam fucked Janelle Wynyard, he would be reminded of her every time he saw James Locker which was more or less every day. For the same reason, it would be a terrible idea to have sex with someone's ugly sister as he did not need those reminders. She walked towards him and started speaking to him.

Janelle Wynyard:

- Hi, Adam! Long-time no see. How are things with you and James these days?

Adam Smith:

- Well at the moment I am bored as hell, this place is a shithole!
But in general, life is good.

- With James, things seem to be picking up. We finally got him
laid, and he even landed a promotion.

Janelle Wynyard:

- Oh, that's great to hear. So he is a detective now then? Who is
this woman anyway?

Adam Smith:

- Yes, Detective James Locker. It's a lot of women, not just one he
has been ploughing like a king lately!

Janelle Wynyard:

- Okay, that seems unlike James, but I will keep my judgment to
myself.

Adam Smith:

- Well, he finally learned from the Master. Speaking of which
when are we banging? Still married to the farmer?

Janelle Wynyard:

- Well, there is a higher chance you will win the \$50 million OZ
Lotto jackpot than I will sleep with you...

Adam Smith:

- I see, well I will get back to you when I have done that. Would be
so awesome to bang the sister of James'!

- But hey I need something to write in my transcript, so James
knew we met today. What can you tell me about Jessica Hall?

Janelle Wynyard:

- Well, probably the same that everyone else. An incredible physical beauty but a very vain and shallow personality. Not a personal favourite, but I guess the world would be boring if everyone were down to earth.

Adam Smith:

- Okay, so nothing new then...
- But you know what. I have a perfect solution for you, me and James.

Janelle Wynyard:

- Okay, and what is that?

Adam Smith:

- Simple. You confess the killings of Miranda DiMaestro and Jessica Hall. You'll be imprisoned in Sydney so you'll finally get out of here. James will keep his promotion as he solved the case. I'll get the opportunity to come to the prison to have sex with you. We'll all win!

Janelle Wynyard:

- Oh my god, the same old bizarre Adam. So retarded so it's funny. Oh well, I will consider it, after all, who would not sacrifice a great marriage and a good life, for a life in prison and having sex with you?!

Adam Smith:

- Thanks! Always nice seeing you. I am leaving for Sydney now, but you should come by and party someday. We are stepping things up a level; last weekend was legendary!

Having said this Adam Smith left the bar and drove towards the airport for his flight to Sydney.

5.18 Thomas Anderson requests technical assistance

IT WAS THURSDAY THE 29th of August 2013, and Thomas Anderson entered the office of Barry Itch. He was going to require from Barry that they enlisted one of his former university friends as a resource for the case. The reason for this was that hacking of the CSMI computers that the killer performed the night before. While Thomas Anderson did not like to request help as Information Technology was his specialty in the team he still felt compelled to do so as it was better for him to acknowledge he could not match the skills of the killer now, than failing and letting his failure come at a steep price. Thomas Anderson had been speaking to the most skilled IT person he knew, Wayne Bruce, who recently had sold his social network company to Facebook for \$1 billion. Having sold his company Wayne Bruce was not busy at the moment, and he had been intrigued when Thomas Anderson had described the case. Since money was not an issue for Wayne Bruce, Thomas Anderson had persuaded him to help out for free instead of the excessive consultancy fee a man in his position could otherwise require. Now all Thomas Anderson had to do was to sell this concept to Barry Itch.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hi, Barry. Thank you for seeing me. I have special request to make to you in regards to the hacking of our systems that we discovered earlier today.

Barry Itch:

- Hi, Thomas. I don't know if I should applaud your initiative or complain about the fact that you are not following the chain of command. As you know, James Locker is your supervisor, and I prefer if the detectives make the requests for their specific teams.

Would be too many people running back and forth to my office if every employee went straight to me.

Thomas Anderson:

- I know that, but the reason I am going through you is that I don't want to use the official channels as whoever we are dealing with has access to everything we got.

- Whoever we are up against are very skilled with computers as he managed to outsmart the security systems at the crime scenes and also managed to hack into our systems. I honestly have to say that he is way better than I am and that's why I am suggesting a different solution.

- Have you ever heard about Wayne Bruce?

Barry Itch:

- Well, the name rings a bell. Is that the IT billionaire who was in the newspapers last month?

Thomas Anderson:

- Exactly. I described the case summarily without giving out any classified details. He was intrigued and is happy to help out for free as he does not need money but needs something to do for a while.

- But the thing is... since whoever we are up against will probably try wiping out his trace if he knows we are after him this has to be unofficial. So what I need is you to get approval by the head of police to do an undercover operation where Wayne Bruce is given access to our files and clearance to do whatever it takes to identify the killer.

Barry Itch:

- Well, Thomas, I don't like what you are proposing, but I can still see that you have a point. However, I don't trust people before I have met them. Can you ask your friend to come by my office later today? I will make my decision then.

Thomas Anderson:

- Thank you, sir. I'll give him your contact details and tell him to call you straight away.

Thomas Anderson left the room with a feeling of relief and frustration at the same time. It was indeed a great thing that Barry Itch was considering what he was proposing instead of just giving his usual rabble about official channels and line of command. These were exceptional circumstances, and particular circumstances required specialised solutions. But what worried Thomas Anderson was that the rumours would start spreading at the station when the chief of CSMI meets up with a famous IT billionaire the day after the police system was hacked. This meeting gave clear implications on what they would be discussing, and if the killer somehow got to know about this meeting, he would understand the purpose of it. Anyway, this was partly a victory for Thomas Anderson no matter what, and now all he could hope for was that the killer would not know about the meeting and that Barry Itch would be sensible enough to realise that Wayne Bruce was the real deal when it came to solving difficult IT problems.

5.19 James Locker facing insomnia

JAMES LOCKER WAS SITTING on his couch looking at a televised Rugby League game. He was not highly involved in this game as he was not a fan of either of the teams nor had he bet any money on the match. So instead his thoughts drifted away. They had been unable to figure out the identity of the drunken man due to a strange move by John Dean. For some reason he had password protected the video showing the corridor outside Jessica Hall's apartment with a biometric password. The biometric password would not have been any problem if John Dean was actually in the office to unlock the file but sadly his daughter had one of her epileptic seizures, so John Dean had

been forced to take a carer's leave to be with her. James Locker was contemplating the situation: he was unsure whether it was possible to open a password with a biometric lock without the person being there. After all, a fingerprint would be difficult just to call and ask for. Maybe Thomas Anderson knew a way to bypass a biometric password, but that would only show everyone that he did not trust John Dean which would create tensions within the team. John Dean had promised to be back by Monday and considering James Locker was not planning to put in any work during the weekend. Leaving things unresolved and blaming John Dean for not progressing on the drunken man clue suited him pretty well actually. He decided to leave things at that.

When it came to his work, some other things bothered James Locker, for instance, the hacking of their network or the message that was left to them supposedly by the killer. What kind of a person would leave such a message and make that much effort just to mess with their minds? Most killers did everything they could to get as far away from the police as possible, but this one seemed to want their attention which was very strange considering how the killings took place. Killers who wished to get attention would usually kill their victims in a very conspicuous way to make the media take a keen interest in the case. For sure these cases had had some media attention but not at all as much as they could have if the killer murdered with the intention of getting media attention. Or was the message personal and aimed at someone of them? Whoever that person might be he or she had hidden it very well during the briefing today, and James Locker had not seen any sign of someone feeling connected to the message. On another topic who was the man who came by Barry Itch's office in the afternoon? He could be some computer consultant hired to investigate the intrusion into their systems but if that was the case why had not James Locker been involved in this process? Didn't Barry Itch trust him or what would the problem otherwise be in briefing him.

Knowing he could not resolve his work-based issues now, James Locker changed scope to his more personal problems namely his sleeping issues. He was considering his options when it came to his anti-depressant as he usually called them which was a positive paraphrasing to their real purpose as anti-psychotics. The problem for him was that either he took the pill slept like a rock and woke up around 3 AM in the night still tired although he had slept

enough, or he did not take them and had insomnia all night. He was unsure which was to prefer but he reckoned there has to be a middle ground, and he would discuss it with his psychologist at his next planned meeting which was next week. James Locker had a pretty severe aversion towards these meetings as he thought it was only a lot of expensive talking that just made him feel bad about himself. Or like the analogy, Adam Smith had come up with "*Going to a psychologist is like going on an expensive date, with an ugly woman, who does not want to fuck.*" The issue with the pills, however, was a real one and James Locker would take it up next week. James Locker took up one of the pills from the jar and studied it for a while. To him, it somehow seemed that the tablet looked different than before. He could not put the finger on what's the difference was, but his intuition told him that something was strange with the pill. For a second he considered bringing the medicines to work to ask someone, but it was a risky move as he partly did not want his colleagues to know he was taking antipsychotics and partly it seemed very delusional asking around if someone could see anything strange with his pills.

Knowing that he would not be able to sleep tonight, James Locker felt very restless and wanted to do something. The problem was Thomas Anderson had not picked up the phone, and James Locker did not fancy the concept of hanging out with Adam Smith only either. Since James Locker had lived in Sydney all of his life he had other friends in the vicinity as well, but since most people in his age had settled down and reproduced there was not anyone who he would imagine to be interested in going out a Thursday night. It did not matter that much though as James Locker realised that he could not drink every time he felt bored or lonely as that would be the end of him and that was not how he pictured how his future should be. Lacking better things to do, he decided to do something intuitive and new; he decided to visit the police station gym at 9 PM. His gym session with Thomas Anderson the other night had been inspiring, and maybe the solution to better mental health was better physical health? Happy with his decision James Locker left his house for a drive towards the police station.

5.20 Adam Smith stumbles across a clue

IT WAS FRIDAY THE 30th of August, and Adam Smith was watching sports at a bar in the Central Business District close to the police station. He was annoyed by the fact that neither Thomas Anderson nor James Locker wanted to join him. Tonight was a big game as it was the 23rd and final round of the AFL deciding whether Sydney Swans would reach the finals or not. Not that Adam Smith was a great fan of any team, but he was a great fan of drinking and tonight it was a 50/50 chance that it would be an awesome party and that was odds he liked.

Adam Smith was reflecting on the reasons the others had given not to join this party. Apparently, James Locker had been at the gym four hours straight last night before he finally collapsed from exhaustion. A four-hour gym session seemed like a bizarre thing to do between 9 PM and 1 AM, but since James Locker had assured him of his presence in the Central Sydney Laser Tag championship the following day, Adam Smith did not worry too much about this. But when it came to Thomas Anderson who apparently was hanging out with his mysterious hookup, Adam Smith could not stop thinking about it, and it drove him crazy that he did not know who he/she/it was.

In Adam Smith's world there could be three reasons why Thomas Anderson was refusing to tell with whom he was exchanging bodily fluids:

1. Thomas Anderson had finally converted to homosexuality. In many ways, this made sense as Thomas Anderson was a bit frail and feminine/ metrosexual. It was not a good scenario though because if Thomas Anderson converted to gayism, he would probably want to hang out at gay bars. This situation was terrible as gay bars were lame! Instead of promoting themselves with cheap drinks and big screen TV-s with a variety of sporting events they were promoting themselves with male strippers or trannies singing. The drinks were also costly. All in all, Adam Smith saw no reason why he would want to hang out in gay bars so in case of Thomas Anderson had converted he would have to find a replacement which was a bummer since Thomas Anderson was his best friend.
2. Thomas Anderson was seeing some ugly woman and motivating it

to himself with her having an awesome personality or some other crap. This scenario was promising as it meant Adam Smith could have a lot of fun on Thomas Anderson's expense once he came to his senses and stopped dating the whale. Before that promising future, however, he would probably have to listen to a lot of moralising bullshit about that he should not judge people by the way they look and so on. Adam Smith did not like people who claimed to be non-judgemental as these people usually were hypocrites who just made their own and other peoples' lives difficult by sugar-coating their opinions to an extent where it was impossible to understand what they meant. It was, after all, a lot more humane to tell someone "*I don't want to see you because you are fat*" as the overweight at least was a problem that could they could remedy. Anyway, this scenario was less likely than the conversion to homosexuality scenario as Adam Smith perceived Thomas Anderson to be too picky at times. When in a dry spell, the primary objective would be to get out of it and not to find the love of your life. Once out of the dry period the latter would be easier to obtain as well.

3. Thomas Anderson was not seeing anyone and was using the mysterious lover excuse to be lame and sit at home jacking off instead of being awesome partying and hunting with Adam Smith. This was the best scenario for Adam Smith's sake as Thomas Anderson most likely would find it boring sitting at home in a few weeks time. Until then, however, Adam Smith needed a replacement, as he was living in a shithole and found no pleasure in sitting at home during the weekend.

Adam Smith was thankfully interrupted from reflecting further when Officer Mason came up to his table.

Officer Mason:

- Hey, Adam, how have you been? I heard you pissed off the BITCH pretty severely recently?

Adam Smith:

- Hey, mate! Yeah, that's correct. The punishment he gave me should be reported to the United Nations Human Rights department as a cruel and unusual punishment! Five daylong sessions with Barry's wife Wanda Itch AKA the WITCH.

Officer Mason:

- Hmm... Five sessions at the workplace equality seminar sound like the typical punishment for sexism in the workplace?

Adam Smith:

- Well, it's still a cruel and unusual punishment I reckon! Anyway, I will get drunk tonight since tomorrow is going to be woeful anyway.

Officer Mason:

- Don't get Michael Fuller drunk though, because then you will never make it out of bed tomorrow.

Adam Smith:

- What about him?

Officer Mason:

- Oh, nothing in particular. I just saw him blind drunk the other day. In the elevator when we headed to your latest crime scene. I told John Dean about it, but he did not seem to care.

Adam Smith:

- Well, no-one cares about Michael Fuller he is an arrogant prick! Good riddance I'd say.

- By the way, what's your first name Officer Mason? Have I never heard you say it?

Officer Mason

- That's because I always use Officer Mason. It works wonders, with the ladies!

Adam Smith:

- Great do you want to be my wingman for tonight?

Officer Mason:

- I would be honoured to Agent Smith!

A few hours later Sydney Swans had won the game and qualified for the finals. Adam Smith and Officer Mason celebrated this with an epic night of boozing and hunting, a night that is not covered by this story.

5.21 The Killer experiences an unplanned delay.

THE KILLER SAT IN FRONT of his computer, bored and a bit frustrated. Since he was planning to frame Michael Fuller for the killings, his convalescence in the hospital was bad news that forced the Killer to postpone his plans. In theory, this would be the best time to plant all the evidence against Michael Fuller as his house was unoccupied and he would not be able to do anything from his sickbed when the police came for him. But the Killer was not finished with his plans, and he had not yet achieved what he needed to reach his goal which would finally give him freedom. James Locker was his final target, but he felt no satisfaction in killing James Locker as long as he did not understand why he had to die.

The Killer was looking at the file he had made for his next victim. He did not enjoy the prospect of killing her. But it had to be done, as it would send the message for James Locker so that he would finally understand. Once he finally realised it would be a pure pleasure to kill him, but it was an essential part of the plan. The Killer could not put the finger on why it was vital for him that James Locker understood who he was, but it was just the way things

had to go, it was an obsession he had, and the only way to get rid of it was to follow it to the end.

The Killer was thinking about Rebecca. She was hanging out with her friend Samantha Robinson, from the Police Academy, tonight. The Killer had a feeling that they had been more than friends once from the way Rebecca spoke about her. He did not feel compelled to find out which however as he did not mind if she had romantic connections in the past. Even though he was considerably older than her, she was still 21 years old and probably had several romantic relationships from her past that he neither felt need nor interest in finding out more about. From what Rebecca had told him she was playing Lasertag with her Samantha Robinson, which seemed like an odd thing for two girls to do a Friday night but the killer did not mind. He would love to join them, but sadly it was too dangerous. He knew that Samantha Robinson was one of the police officers that were investigating his murders and it would be a great thrill to stand face to face with her while she was oblivious to whom he was. But it would be too dangerous, as the excitement might go to his head and blow his cover. He could not risk all that for having fun.

Finally, the Killer decided to just have a rest for a couple of days. He would need to gather all the energy he could muster for the grand finale where his plans would unfold, and he had been up a lot lately so he could use the rest. He went to bed and immediately fell asleep.

5.22 A very vivid dream

JAMES LOCKER WOKE UP and felt excited and nervous at the same time. For the first time in nine months, he was going on a proper date. James had been a bit sceptical about online dating, but Thomas Anderson had persuaded him that it was a great way of seeing people and getting to know them in a relaxed environment one on one. The woman he saw today was named Vanessa Ward and was almost a perfect manifestation of all his dreams and desires in a woman. Would he find a woman so perfectly matched for him and would he be a good match for her?

He picked her up at her place, and they drove south to a deserted beach in the Royal National Park south of the city. It was late August, so the beach

was empty, but it was a sunny and pleasant day. They spoke for hours, and James Locker felt how their souls connected when he held her hand. When the sun set they rose up, and he kissed her. It was a truly magical moment. He spoke to her:

James Locker:

- Oh, Vanessa, this day has been so beautiful. I can't wait to see you again.

Vanessa Ward:

- James, I would love to be with you as well. But I can't.

James Locker:

- But we are perfect for each other why are you turning me down.

Vanessa Ward:

- You know why.

James Locker:

- You... Don't Exist?

She disappeared in front of James Locker's eyes and all of a sudden he recalled a phrase from the Matrix *"Have you ever had a dream that you were sure were real? What if you were unable to wake up from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?"* The phrase felt very authentic to him at this moment when he woke up alone at a beach and could not understand how the day had only been a dream.

5.23 Pre-Talk before the Central Sydney Lasertag Championship

JAMES LOCKER ARRIVED at the Lasertag arena in Darling Harbour 30 minutes late. He found his friends and Adam Smith immediately approached.

Adam Smith:

- Hey, mate you are late a damn good thing I anticipated something like this happening and picked our meeting time an hour early.

James Locker:

- Well, a good thing I predicted you doing something like that, so I did not come here too soon...

- No, but I am sorry mate I went to a beach in Royal National Park and completely lost track of time.

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh yeah the date from the online dating site, how did that go?

James Locker froze for a second when Thomas Anderson asked him about the date. When had he told Thomas Anderson about it and what had he said to him? James Locker decided to play along for the time being.

James Locker:

- Well as it turned out, she was not at all as I expected her. I guess my mind created fake feelings towards a woman I never met. I should learn not to have as high expectations.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, we all live to learn, I understand why you feel that way though, you showed me her profile and pictures. The profile was

like it was written towards you and the images. Damn, they were hot.

Samantha Robinson felt a bit jealous when Thomas Anderson was speaking like that about another woman. Most of all she felt curious though and decided to join in on the conversation with a positive approach.

Samantha Robinson:

- Hey, Guys that chick sounds incredible. Can I have a look at her as well?

Thomas Anderson:

- Of course, she can, right James?

- Check it here on my phone.

Samantha Robinson checked the profile thoroughly. She did not put much emphasis on the written text as she did not know James Locker well enough to determine whether the person described would be a good match for him or. But she looked carefully at the pictures. There was something wrong with them, but she could not put the finger on what the matter was. Somehow the person in them seemed familiar to her. She decided to not mention anything about her feelings to the group for now but instead have a talk with Thomas Anderson about it later.

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah, she looks hot, sorry it did not work out for you. But looking at it positively if you can get dates with a hot chick like that you are still an attractive man James, so don't let I push you down.

Adam Smith:

- Yeah, there is a particular sound to the title Detective Locker isn't there. But fuck this; it's annoying to talk about chicks no-one of us managed to bang. Let's talk Lasertag tactics.

Samantha Robinson:

- But I already know everything about the tactics for this arena; I went here with Thomas and my friend Rebecca last night.

Adam Smith:

- Seriously? A hot friend? And you did not invite me?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, she's attractive and taken, so that's why we did not invite you to come along.

Adam Smith:

- Seriously? So you are banging Samantha's hot friend? Strange development considering how much you fancied Samantha before.

Samantha Robinson:

- Oh please, Adam; you are the only one who would draw that conclusion.

Adam Smith:

- Oh yeah, I am special and so on...

- That used to be a compliment right? These days you are supposed to use the word "special" when talking about retards and stuff! I would be offended if someone said I was special to them...

James Locker:

- Oh well, Adam, I am sure you don't need to worry about being called special by someone for a while. But please share your unique Lasertag tactics with us.

After this Adam Smith spent 5 minutes explaining various Lasertag tactics to the group. They sounded advanced and sophisticated when Adam de-

scribed them but all in all, they could be summarised with *"run around in circles to confuse your enemies and then shoot them in the back."*

5.24 "Man you are taking this far too serious."

AFTER LISTENING TO Adam Smith's tactics walkthrough, it was time for their first game in the tournament. As they entered the arena, James Locker was paralysed and entered a trancelike state. Lasertag was no longer a match for him, this was for real, and he had to fight to survive! The panic gave him a massive surge of adrenaline that temporarily increased his potential, so for the 15 minutes duration of the game, and James was clearing the house with the opposing team. The price he paid, however, was steep as it instead of being a fun competitive Saturday pastime turned out to be a fight for survival in James Locker's mind. When the game ended James Locker collapsed on a couch outside the arena, his shirt was all wet, and he was hyperventilating. Adam Smith was the first to speak to him.

Adam Smith:

- Hey, James I never thought I would say this, but man you are taking this far too seriously.

- Mighty impressive performance though you outscored the entire opponent team yourself and we are through to the next round, five wins to go!

James Locker was unable to respond to this as he was still confused and felt very sick from the adrenaline leaving the body. Samantha Robinson noticed that James Locker was feeling very ill, so she tried establishing contact with him.

Samantha Robinson:

- Hey, James, are you alright? What happened there?

James Locker:

- No, I am feeling sick can anyone drive me home?

Adam Smith:

- Feeling sick? Come on man you would not have swept the entire opposing team by yourself if you were not feeling great. Have a drink to calm down; the next round is in 30 minutes.

Samantha Robinson:

- Adam! Can't you see he is not feeling well at all? Don't worry about it, and I'll drive him home as this game means more to you than it means to me anyway.

Adam Smith did not respond to this as he knew that Samantha Robinson was probably right in what she said. He found the events extremely confusing though as he certainly had not seen this scenario coming. He decided that this was not a fight to take so he accepted and encouraged Samantha Robinson's decision instead.

Adam Smith:

- Okay Samantha, maybe you are right. It's much appreciated that you are sorting this mess out, James hope you will feel better soon.

After this conversation, Samantha Robinson and James Locker headed to her car so she could drive him home.

5.25 James Locker opens up to Samantha Robinson

SAMANTHA ROBINSON WAS giving James Locker a drive home after the incident at the Lasertag place. She was very curious and worried at the same time over the behaviour she had seen. None of it made any sense to her considering all they have been doing were playing Lasertag. She was thinking of different ways to approach James Locker about the topic, and she realised that the best way to make him open up would be to pretend to have been through the same situation herself. Since they did not know each other that well, it was likely to work and in either case, James Locker was probably not in a state where he would question what she said. It was strictly speaking not

morally correct lying about her mental health, but since her motivation for doing so was to help him out, she did not feel sorry about it.

Samantha Robinson:

- I know what you are feeling; I have had similar episodes in my past. It's like the weight of the entire world is crashing down on me.

James Locker:

- Oh really? You have never told me about this before.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I guess felt ashamed to talk about it. I do not want to be perceived as the crazy woman; people would not take me seriously if they did.

James Locker:

- That's what I am feeling! I was depressed when my ex-girlfriend Emily left me nine months ago. I was not functioning very well at all. But then I got medication from my psychologist. It's called Xenopropsyche, and it's doing wonders for my mental strength. I mean I have never been doing this well at work as I have been the last nine months.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay, I have never heard of that brand before. Any idea why you are getting worse now?

James Locker:

- Can I say something to you in confidence?

Samantha Robinson:

- It depends on what you are going to say. All I can promise you is that I will not try to benefit at your expense.

James Locker:

- Well, that's good enough for me.

- Well to be honest with you, Xenopropsyche is not precisely an antidepressant.

- In reality, it's a mixture of antidepressants and antipsychotics. The reason for telling everyone it's an antidepressant is because people can accept and understand depression while insanity scares the shit out of them.

- And no-one should judge me for things I cannot help, and it has not affected my work either. I have been doing great workwise recently.

Samantha Robinson:

- I can't argue with that statement you have been doing great. Reaching the detective rank at the age of 32, not many persons advance that quickly.

- But you still have not told me why you think you are getting worse now.

James Locker:

- Well as effective as Xenopropsyche is at improving my work performance it has once great disadvantage for me as well. It shuts me down completely emotionally. I don't want to live the rest of my life like that, so that's why I am trying to stop it. But when I don't I take it I get severe anxiety and insomnia.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I see where you are coming from, but you should not make decisions like that without consulting with your physician. Resume taking them as prescribed, and you'll be okay.

James Locker:

- Well, reason says you are right. But the pills have seemed different recently. I can't put my finger on it, but something has changed. And the effect has changed as well, you see I took several pills last night, and the entire day today has been like a dream.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, maybe your pills were replaced by whoever broke into your house Sunday night?

- Tell you what, hand me some of your pills and some of your hair. I know a guy in the forensics lab that owes me a few favours. We can do it all anonymously, and with your locks taken, we can do a toxicological screening as well.

James Locker:

- Can't argue with what you are saying. Here you go.

Samantha Robinson:

- Great. I'll get back to you with the results as soon as possible.

- Oh and another thing, are you sure I should drive you home, maybe overnight observation at the hospital would be a better choice?

James Locker:

- Yes, I am sure.

- Thank you for the offer though.

A while later Samantha Robinson dropped James Locker off at his house. She would have preferred dropping him off at the hospital but he did not want to, and she could see no reason to force him to go. It was strange though as he seemed very unconfident and insecure most of the drive, but on the question whether he wanted to go home or to the hospital he seemed very sure about his choice. For the 15 minutes that passed rejecting to go to the hospital, he spoke very casually about the AFL game he saw last night and the upcoming finals for the Swans. Samantha Robinson had never witnessed anyone switching from broken to normal in that short time before and she was unsure how to perceive it. She checked her watch. Samantha would still be able to make it back to the Lasertag championship before the semi-finals, and it seemed likely that Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson would make it that far without her. But now she was more interested in following up on this lead than playing child games. Her reason for getting the hair from James Locker had never been to do a toxicological screening but to compare the blood from his bathroom mirror with the DNA of his hair. Of course, she would make toxicological testing as well, but that was so she would have something to show James Locker if he asked her about it at a later stage. Samantha Robinson called her contact, and after some intense persuasion, she managed to get him to meet her at his laboratory at the University of New South Wales in two hours.

5.26 Samantha Robinson meets with Gerry Livingstone at the UNSW forensic labs.

SAMANTHA ROBINSON ARRIVED at The University of New South Wales and was observing Gerry Livingstone, her former professor in forensic criminology and also the man she had a short affair with a couple of years ago. Physically he was a lot older than her and not very appealing, but she remembered that he had fascinated her a lot as a person back then when she was 20, and he was 40. Being a descendant of the legendary explorer David Livingstone mostly known as Dr Livingstone Gerry Livingstone had been quite an adventurer himself in his younger years although apparently not even close to reaching the fame of his famous ancestor. There had been a lot of thrilling meetings and the concept of seeing a married man had been an

extra spice at the time for Samantha Robinson. Sexually, however, he had never been much of an adventure though; Samantha Robinson's real sexual experiences had come later when she met Rebecca. She approached him with the classic phrase they always used.

Samantha Robinson:

- Dr Livingstone, I presume?

Gerry Livingstone:

- Hey, Samantha, great to see you too. Although it was tough to explain to my wife why I had urgent work at 10 pm a Saturday night!

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, at least you are honest with her this time.

- No, but seriously your help is much appreciated.

- I am working on a lead that would pose a significant security breach of the entire police force. But I can't proceed without knowing the facts; otherwise, I might be seen as a crazy bitch and ruin my whole career.

Gerry Livingstone:

- I see. I assume you don't want to share the details with me?

Samantha Robinson:

- That is correct. But that's for your best as well; you are not supposed to work outside the official channels either.

Gerry Livingstone:

- That's true. So tell me, Sammy, what is that you need from me?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well it's three things basically
- I need you to run a DNA matching test on this blood and this hair.
- I also need you to run a toxicological test on this piece of hair.
- Finally, I need to know if this pill is actual Xenoprosyche or if it's something else.

Gerry Livingstone:

- I see. Since you only need an indication, I can do the quick sample test which is invalid for court since it has a significant margin of error. For a hint, however, it's more than enough. It should take about two hours. I will also run a standard drug test on the hair you provided
- As for the pill, I can't help you for now with the chemical analysis as I am not a pharmacologist. But I have a friend at the university who is, and I can ask him as soon as I see him

Samantha Robinson:

- Great thank you. It's a bummer that I will have to wait to know about the contents of the pill, but I appreciate that you are helping me out nonetheless.

Gerry Livingstone started all the tests, and while the lab equipment performed the tests, they had some downtime which they spent talking about old memories. Samantha Robinson was fascinated by the fact that attraction felt so different with different people. When it came to be an exciting character Gerry Livingstone was probably one of the most attractive individuals in the world to her. She loved his stories and his intellect and the charismatic way he had of speaking which transformed the banalities of life into the most

extraordinary adventures. Physically, however, she had never been attracted to him and the sex they had back in the day was just her way of keeping him seeing her. After all, every human relation was about giving and taking, and she knew his main reason for meeting with her was the sex even though he somehow must enjoy her personality as well, otherwise he would never be able to be as entertaining and charming as he was back then and also tonight. Physically things had been the best with Rebecca, but they had been and still were best friends primarily. She had never experienced emotions like jealousy or overwhelming love with Rebecca and the fact that they both dreamt about families and kids in the future made them a poor long-term match. Most of all, however, she shunned the concept that she was expected to join the entire gay subculture just because she was attracted to Rebecca. The gay culture had never been her cup of tea, and she could not understand the peer pressure on bisexual people to be perceived as one group. Heterosexual people for sure had a lot more freedom in that sense, and that freedom was something she loved. She thought about Thomas Anderson. Could he be the man for her life? It had started off right, and he was the most balanced choice even though he would never be as charismatic and intelligent as Gerry Livingstone and never as sexy as Rebecca. Since Samantha Robinson knew that one could never get everything one wants in one person she was still excited to see how things would turn out with Thomas Anderson. Once the tests finished, Gerry Livingstone gave his report.

Gerry Livingstone:

- Well, I have run the DNA tests now, and there is a 90 per cent probability that the hair and the blood are different persons.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay, that's a relief! I was suspecting a friend of mine to be crazy and lie about a break in that supposedly occurred. But this proves that it did happen, so even if I feel a bit ashamed over not trusting my friend, I am still happy that he's okay.

Gerry Livingstone:

- Okay. A close friend of yours?

Samantha Robinson:

- No, not in that way. I am seeing a guy now though.

Gerry Livingstone:

- Well, congratulations Sammy! But about your other friend, I do have some bad news. From the toxicological screening, I made it seems like he has a pretty bad drug habit, specifically towards cocaine.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay, I did not see that one coming!

- But can you take the hair to the pharmacologist nonetheless? I need to know what else they can detect in a full scan.

Gerry Livingstone:

- Sure I'll get onto it.

Samantha Robinson:

- Thank you, Gerry, for everything, you are a good friend. I will not forget this.

Samantha Robinson left the University of New South Wales more confused than she got there. She had suspected James Locker for being crazy but never for cocaine addiction. Hell, she had nailed the "*How to identify a drug user*" course at the University and still she had not seen any symptoms of either cocaine intoxication or cocaine withdrawal in James Locker. Maybe the tests were wrong or gave an unclear indication? After all James Locker might be a casual drug user without her noticing it as cocaine was a drug that was

possible to use casually without showing any massive withdrawal symptoms as the addiction was mainly psychological and thus easier to hide.

In either case, Samantha Robinson now knew that her boss was a cocaine user, which was a felony in New South Wales. But what would she do with this knowledge? If James Locker indeed were crazy, it would have been a natural choice as it would have been in everybody's best interest that he had received proper help, and someone else had been in charge of the team. But with cocaine addiction, it was different. Michael Fuller had been an alcoholic and had been forced to quit due to this in the end. But had that been the right leadership choice? After all Michael Fuller was the best detective the city had ever seen, or at least, so it was said, and thus getting rid of him for something that had not affected his work performance seemed like an unfair move against Michael Fuller and a lousy choice for the team. Samantha Robinson also found it highly ironic that Barry Itch in his eagerness to get rid of the alcoholic Michael Fuller had replaced him with the cocaine-addicted James Locker.

Samantha Robinson decided to not make anything of her knowledge about James Locker's cocaine usage. One reason for not making a move against him was that she liked him. A more accurate reason was that Samantha had nothing to gain and everything to lose from turning James Locker in. If they indeed believed her and James Locker later got caught in the drug test, she was unlikely to get rewarded anyway as it seemed unlikely that they would promote her after her short tenure with the police. But if a drug test cleared James of her allegations Samantha had made a lot of effort and all she had made was a fool of herself and a personal enemy in James Locker. Indeed there was a significant risk that he would get cleared if she forced a drug test upon him. James Locker could go free because cocaine was detectable for up to three months in hair tissue but only up to three days in urine or blood tests. Since the only legally applicable tests were blood tests, James Locker was highly likely to be cleared anyway.

Samantha Robinson was considering if she was going to share her thoughts and concerns with Thomas Anderson. She decided that she would but not tonight. Samantha knew him well enough to realise that he was not as involved in work as she was and if she brought up work a Saturday night he would only annoy him, that she ruined the evening for him. Instead, she de-

cided just to send him a text message wishing him a good night. Her Message in full was. *"Hi Neo. I got James home safe and sound. Sorry for not returning to the Lasertag arena afterwards but I got obsessed with a lead that I wanted to follow-up. I won't bore you with the details now, but I'll tell you all about it tomorrow when we play bowling. I hope you won the championship without me and had a great night of boozing with Adam. XOXO Sammy"*

5.27 A revelation of the Killers ultimate plan.

THE KILLER WOKE UP. The sun was shining outside his window, and he felt great satisfaction with his life. All of his plans had worked great this far: James Locker was a broken man, and soon it would be the time to strike. His plan involving the replacing James Locker's antipsychotics with psychedelic drugs seemed to be working just fine. It had been a great pleasure for the Killer to make up the fictional profile of Vanessa Ward and then to trick James Locker into going to that deserted beach for a "date." The fool had been sitting around there for hours believing he had found his soul mate when he apparently was only speaking to the thin air or more accurately a manifestation of his subconscious. The most ironic of it all was that the pictures of "Vanessa Ward" were pictures of Emily Luong that the Killer had image edited to be unrecognisable. The killer had also made the profile to match Emily Luong personality and interests as far as possible. The idiotic James Locker had thus been on an imaginary date with his ex-girlfriend utterly oblivious of this ruse.

The Killer had a theory of his own that the mental problems of James Locker were because he was living in denial about what happened to Emily Luong that fateful night nine months ago. The killer, on the other hand, had not forgotten! He had been passive for far too long before he had decided to act approximately one and a half month ago. Unfortunately, James Locker had gone on a holiday just the day after the Killer had put his plans into motion, which was a frustrating drawback at the time but it did not matter in the long run. Now he experienced another delay with Michael Fuller hospitalised, but hopefully, he would be better soon

The Killer was reflecting over how he felt about Michael Fuller. To summarise it he had never liked the man. But Michael Fuller was not a primary

target in any way, but it was just necessary to frame someone for the killings otherwise the Killer would never be able to sleep sound at night always fearing that his past would somehow catch up on him. After all, there was no shame in setting Michael Fuller up. The Killer perceived him as an arrogant and selfish piece of shit who had always neglected the needs of others especially those of his daughter Rebecca in his pursuit of glory and "justice." Michael Fuller's drinking problem most likely attributed to the hole inside him that all addicts had by the nature of things and by sending him to jail at least he got the mercy of sorting out his priorities in life.

The Killer looked at the file he had made on his next victim, Emily Luong. Obviously not the Emily Luong he once knew and loved that would be impossible, but another one. The two Emily Luongs had very little in common except for their names, but the Killer reckoned that the name would be everything that was required to tip James Locker's mind over the edge so he would finally understand. What if James did not know? Well, the killer could not possibly be more transparent after that, so in that case, he would have to kill the oblivious James Locker anyway which would be a very unsatisfying but still acceptable outcome.

Since the Killer could not proceed with his plans today, he decided that it would be awesome to see Rebecca instead. They usually did not meet in the daytime due to various reasons, but he felt that he was willing to take the risk to look at her eyes glitter in the sun with the wind in her hair. After witnessing the "date" between James Locker and Vanessa Ward the day before; the Killer felt that a real meeting with Rebecca at the same beach would be so awesome, so it was worth the risk of detection. He called her up, and she accepted his invitation. Feeling happy the killer bought the best picnic basket money could buy and picked up Rebecca for an awesome day at the beach.

5.28 An excellent day at the beach

THE KILLER AND REBECCA went to the same secluded beach in the Royal National Park where he had witnessed James Locker's "date" with Vanessa Ward the day before. Even though this Sunday did not feature the excitement of breaking his enemy down it had some features which the Killer valued even higher. It offered the feeling of tranquillity, belonging and love.

The Killer admired the features of Rebecca in the sunlight. She had a beautiful face with her blonde hair glittering in the sun with blue eyes matching the colour of the sky and slim and very feminine body. The Killer reflected that if she would make it as police in the future, she would probably have to build some muscle so she would be less frail; nonetheless, a slim and very feminine woman was what he had in front of him now, and that's what he wanted. All in all, they both had a perfect time when they spoke, kissed and enjoyed the variety of flavours and drinks in the picnic basket. For the sake of this story, the following dialogue is the most important.

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh JP this has been such a beautiful day, you were indeed at your best today.

The Killer:

- Well as one should be when wooing a woman as unique as you are to me. And you have not experienced my best yet; the night is yet to come!

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh... you are such a teaser.

- Another good thing is that my father has left the hospital. Apparently, he was not as injured as they first thought so they reckoned it would be easier if he just rested at home for a few days

The Killer:

- That is excellent news; I noticed how worried you were when I drove you home the other day.

Rebecca Bell

- Yeah, I was, he is my father after all...

- You know I was so disappointed when you left for four weeks, it felt a lot like how my dad was during my upbringing

The Killer:

- I understand what you are saying. And I missed you a lot as well, but I did tell you that I was going abroad working for four weeks, not much I could do about it.

Rebecca Bell:

- Yeah, I know. You work for the government with some secret project and so on. And that's fine I am thrilled by the mystique and games as well, but I just feel that if we are going to have a long-term functional relationship we have to start being open to each other.

The Killer:

- Yes, I agree with you. Tell you what; my current project will probably finish in a couple of weeks. And after that, I won't extend it so I will go back to normal less undercover police work. But I just have to warn you. I might be swamped for weeks to come and difficult to get in touch with.

- But I will make it up to you for sure; look at this I have made reservations for us in a luxury hotel suite tonight.

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh, that's amazing. Wait a second your last name is not Pierce?

The Killer:

- No that is correct; it's just a name I use. The background is that I did some research on my ancestors. I found one named Aaron Pierce who was an adventurer in the 19th century, and he lived the

most inspiring and exciting life one can imagine. I feel like him when I use his family name, while my family name only makes me feel old, dull and tired.

Rebecca Bell

- Hey JP you are not that old! But don't worry I'll keep calling you Pierce as your last name if that what it takes to keep you interesting and attractive.

The Killer:

- Thank you, Rebecca. I am planning to change my name soon. So then it won't be any trouble for any of us. But hey let's head back to the city. The luxury suite is waiting for us.

After saying that, they headed back to the city for a night to remember in the luxury suite.

5.29 Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson goes bowling

IT WAS SUNDAY THE 1ST of September and officially the first day of spring. The season had very little relevance for Samantha Robinson and Thomas Anderson however as they were playing ten pin bowling indoors. The venue they were going to had a great deal giving one free game of bowling for every drink bought. This deal had sometimes led to quite a hangover for Thomas Anderson when he had faced Adam Smith in close edged bowling skirmishes. Since they were very competitive against each other, their bowling battles usually ended with them drinking until closing time just to determine who the best bowler was. With Samantha Robinson it was a bit different for Thomas Anderson, he still wanted to win, but the main point was not winning but only being with her. After two rounds Samantha Robinson's score was 248 VS 224 for Thomas Anderson.

Samantha Robinson:

- Oh, Thomas, I am winning; this is not a good weekend for you sports wise.

Thomas Anderson:

- Tell me about it. The two replacements we had to get for you and James from the team we eliminated in the first round were not able to pull your weight. We got eliminated in the semi-finals. Adam got spastic and made a fool out of himself.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I had to get James home, he was unwell.

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah, I know that. Adam, on the other hand, he thinks James is a crybaby and that you let us down by not coming back straight away.

- But don't worry about it, he does that sometimes, then he goes home sulking for a while and then everything is fine; he is not the kind of man who carries a grudge for long.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay. What do you think?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, I am disappointed we lost but not disappointed with either of you.

- I am curious though what lead was you following up on last night? Working a Saturday night does not seem very healthy I prefer if you are not the female version of Michael Fuller.

Samantha Robinson:

- Don't worry I am not.

- But I got hunch last night that I needed to check out. I thought "What if whoever broke into James Locker's house replaced his anti-depressants with something else?"

- Since I know a guy at the forensics lab, it seemed like a good thing to check it out off the books.

Thomas Anderson:

- I see. What did you find out?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, he could not determine the contents of the pills as he was not a pharmacologist. He also tried matching the blood from the break-in with the DNA from James Locker's hair. They did not match. But he did find out that James Locker had a terrible cocaine addiction from the concentration of cocaine in his hair. Do you know anything about this?

This question made Thomas Anderson uneasy. He could lie and say he knew nothing about it. But then he would be lying, and Thomas was somehow hoping that Samantha Robinson was the woman he would be happy with in the long run. If she were that woman, she would not judge him too harshly if he admitted he did cocaine with James Locker and Adam Smith the weekend before. Being honest however was a great leap of faith as he had no idea how she felt in regards to the use of recreational drugs. Thomas Anderson knew Samantha Robinson well enough, however, to know that sitting on the fence. I.E., admitting that he knew about James Locker's cocaine usage and at the same time condemning it would not work with her. She would only see him as a hypocrite, and Thomas knew her well enough to know she hated people who would not stand up for their actions. Hesitantly Thomas decided to tell her about what he knew.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, Sammy, you might not like this, but I will tell you anyway.
- Last weekend when we were out drinking we all used significant amounts of cocaine. I am not proud of it, but I am not going to lie about it either.
- I have never seen James as a cocaine addict though as I don't see myself as an addict just because I have an occasional line.

Samantha Robinson:

- Goddammit, Thomas! You are a member of the police. You should always try to uphold the law to the best of your abilities even in the case where you don't agree with it. I can see why you think the persecution of drug users is wrong but in that case, you should find another employer where your usage is not an as severe breach of the values of your workplace.

Thomas Anderson:

- I don't know what to say Sammy other than I am sorry and I don't want to lie about who I am to you.

Samantha Robinson:

- That's alright Thomas. On a personal level, I am not angry with you. Your occasional usage of cocaine is nothing that has affected my life negatively this far, and hopefully; it won't happen in the future. I am just saying you can't be a police officer and break the law even if the law is stupid. So I guess what I am saying is that for everyone's sake you'll have to make a choice; not between me and the cocaine but between your career in the force and the cocaine.
- If you choose the cocaine and find yourself another job, I have no objections... as long as you do it in moderation of course. You see I don't want to be together with a Michael Fuller either.

Thomas Anderson:

- Wow, Samantha. You do make a lot of sense; I have never thought about it that way.
- But anyway moving back to James, I have only done coke with him once, and never really seen him as an addict. But I must admit I have done it several times with Adam though.

Samantha Robinson:

- Oh well, at least you are not lying to me. But funny thing none of us saw James as a cocaine addict and still the tests indicate he is.

Thomas Anderson:

- I guess it only shows one can never truly know another person.
- While on the topic I also did some research on James' life today, it's a bit funny how big part he has in our lives.

Samantha Robinson

- Well, we have a lot of other things in common I reckon. Things that is more fun and uplifting to me. But anyway tell me what you found out?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well you know the date James spoke about last night.
- I rechecked her profile, and there was something that did not make sense with the pictures. So I used a photo editor to reverse the changes made to the picture to get the original image. Look at the picture from the site compared to the original.

Samantha Robinson:

- I must admit the pictures are different, but I can't see where you are going with this?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well now compare the original picture with this picture from James' Facebook.

Samantha Robinson:

- It's the same woman, but I am still not following.

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay, I tell you. James went on a "date" from an online dating page with his ex-girlfriend he has not seen or heard from in nine months. At least he thinks he went on a date with her. What's important to us is if he made the profile himself in which case he has completely lost it or if someone is trying to break him down mentally. In both instances, we need to find out as quickly as possible, and I will talk to him about it tomorrow first thing in the morning.

Samantha Robinson:

- I guess that would be a good idea. Oh boy, this is the strangest case I have ever had.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well from the bright side, you are only 23 years old; continue with your career in the police, and you will face a lot of strange cases.

- But hey let's leave. No point in sitting in a venue without drinking and I want to have a clear head at work tomorrow.

Samantha Robinson:

- Oh, I see. Does that mean you'll go to sleep early tonight?

Thomas Anderson:

- I am not THAT dedicated!

They both smiled and then left for Samantha Robinson's place not intending for an early night's sleep.

5.30 A Cinderella story

THE KILLER WAS LYING awake in bed. He wished he could fall asleep but he could not. He was too fearful for what might happen if he stayed. It was 2 AM, and in one hour he would transform. Filled with uncontrolled rage which was a force he had a hard time controlling. That would be okay if it were someone else, but Rebecca was not to see this side of him. For starters, he did not want her to see his darker sides, but most all because he genuinely feared to hurt her. She was the last person in the world the killer would ever want to injure, and if The Killer indeed did, he might as well end his own life. But he was not going to because he knew how he would remedy his rage that peaked a 3 AM; by eliminating the source to it. Every night for nine months he had that same vision in front of him at that time of the evening, the sight of James Locker doing horrible things to Emily Luong for claiming that she was unfaithful. He could not bring Emily Luong back, but he could bring her to peace by killing the monster that killed her. That monster was James Locker. But there was no meaning in killing James Locker without him knowing why, but anyway it had to be done soon!

The Killer left Rebecca a note explaining that he had to work and that he had left money for the room service they had consumed during the night. It certainly did not feel right to leave her money like she was some prostitute, but it was a far better solution than just leaving her with the bill. He left the hotel and drove home. In two days this would all be over, with James Locker dead and Michael Fuller in custody with ample evidence against him. That if something was an encouraging thought.

5.31 Thomas Anderson warns James Locker for Vanessa Ward

IT WAS MONDAY MORNING the 2nd of September 2013. James Locker was rewriting a report on their progress to Barry Itch who had complained about some of the other reports. James Locker had not been able to come up with any reasons why he should not be rewriting the report. After all, he wrote it poorly, and the trail to the Killer was cold although he hoped they would get some clues when John Dean came back to the office today so they could unlock the video files. Looking in retrospect James Locker was upset with the fact that they had not requested new copies from the building management on Friday and then worked with them on Saturday but his laziness had been in the way, and apparently in the other group members' way as well since no-one had suggested it. Thomas Anderson walked into James Locker's office and closed the door behind him.

James Locker:

- Hey, Thomas, good morning. What's on your mind?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well don't take this the wrong way, but I am worried about you.

- To be short, did you meet this Vanessa woman from the dating site last Saturday?

James Locker:

- What kind of question is that?

Thomas Anderson:

- Just answer honestly, and I explain you in a second.

James Locker:

- Well, to be honest, I did not. I went to the beach where we were supposed to meet up. But she never came. So I felt despondent and had the picnic myself daydreaming of a better life.

- I did not mean to lie to you; I just did not want to look like a fool.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that's great. You see Vanessa does not exist!

- You see the picture she was using was photo edited. But I recovered the original image. Can you see who it is?

James Locker:

- Oh my god it's Emily.

Thomas Anderson:

- Indeed. So tell me, James. Has your obsession with your ex-girlfriend gone so far so you are creating a fake profile for her so you can imagine chatting with her?

James Locker:

- That notion is absurd. Of course, I did not!

Thomas Anderson:

- Very well. Would you like me to find out who did it? It might lead us to the person who broke into your house whom most likely is the Killer.

James Locker:

- Yes, of course, it's a scary thought that all of this would be about me, but I have thought about it myself.

- I suppose you need my login and password for the site so you can backtrace the messages from Vanessa?

Thomas Anderson:

- Yes. That would be preferred as I don't fancy the concept of hacking the dating site account of my friend and boss.

James Locker:

- Yeah, you better stay away from that stuff. Oh well my username is JamesLocker81, and my password is emilyluong

Thomas Anderson:

- That would have been easy to hack!

- Oh well, I will get back to you with an estimate of who is behind the "Vanessa" account this afternoon.

After Thomas Anderson had left the room, James Locker took a few deep breaths to calm his nerves. He was afraid as it now seemed obvious to him that whoever was behind these murders also had him in his sights. But why was this the case and how was James connected to all of this? He could not come up with any answers, but he hoped Thomas Anderson would figure something out before it was too late.

5.32 John Dean gets taken off the case

JOHN DEAN WAS SITTING at his desk frustrated and anxious. He knew that he was on the brink of losing everything and that he was powerless to do anything about it. For starters, his decision to take money from Michael Fuller would probably backfire as it was highly likely that he would get in trouble once they realised that he had been covering up the fact that Michael Fuller had been at the crime scenes which they would recognise once they had a proper viewing of the video files. For sure there might be a chance that they believed his explanation that he had missed seeing Michael Fuller in the

videos. But even if they somehow trusted him, there were no guarantees that Michael Fuller would not rat him out once they questioned him about what he was doing at the crime scenes hours before the murders. John Dean was considering his options. Stalling the investigation even more by deleting the video files would not do him any good as they would just go to the security companies directly and ask for new copies. Besides John Dean was unsure how he would delete the files without being noticed by the log that registered all changes done to the case file. Anyway, stalling would not do any good as he had spoken to Michael Fuller, who had left the hospital during the Sunday and was "celebrating" the fact that he had survived his car crash without any serious injuries. Apparently Michael Fuller had given up his pursuit to find and apprehend Antonio DiMaestro as he finally had realised that there were better things to do with life than wild goose chasing ghosts from the past. John Dean had explained to him that they would probably come by his house and question him as soon as they realised his connection to the crime scenes.

Apart from his professional problems John Dean was also facing personal challenges. He had seen another woman last night, and his wife who was supposed to a double shift on Sunday had apparently come back early from work, so he had not been home when she got home. He had had a hard time explaining why he was not home until 2 AM and now in retrospect, John wondered if he should not have come out clean instead of denying it and making up a story. Officially John Dean had been celebrating with Michael Fuller that the latter had come out of the hospital without any severe damages from his car crash-induced concussion. His wife had told him that he was out of his mind who first took two days off to be with his daughter, and then leaving her with his sister to go out drinking on the weekend. She had not bought it at all and John Dean was frankly worried that this would be the final factor that would lead to a divorce, which even if it might be for the best still would be a callous thing to go through.

"More trouble is coming" John Dean muttered when he saw James Locker accompanied by Samantha Robinson approaching. James Locker looked quite angry, and John Dean knew that this was going to be a confrontation.

James Locker:

- Hey John. Please follow us to the meeting room; we need to talk to you.

John Dean was considering if he should argue and ask why they took him off privately. He knew that it would probably not be a good idea as he from their perspective had fucked up. Hopefully, they would accept his apologies and move on without question his loyalties or get the idea that he had been collaborating with Michael Fuller. John Dean followed his colleagues into the meeting room.

James Locker:

- Jessica Hall was killed the night towards last Tuesday. Now on a Monday almost a week later you have been unable to find anything useful on the surveillance tapes, and I would like to know why?

John Dean:

- Well, I told you I could not see anyone entering Jessica Hall's apartment at the time of the murder. I don't know why frankly, but the video seems strange for the time around the assassination like someone edited it in a way I have not seen before.

James Locker:

- Okay. Samantha claims that you were very unhelpful when she requested your assistance in identifying the mysterious drunken man during the Wednesday. How do you explain that?

John Dean:

- Well, I was stressed from home, and when my daughter got sick during the afternoon, I just closed down my files to be with her as soon as possible without worrying about the handover.

James Locker:

- Okay, I see, but that still does not explain why you used a biometric password for the files or why you could not just get by the station to unlock the data during the Thursday or the Friday..

- I am sick of your bullshit. Just get your thumb out of your arse and on that biometric password scanner so Samantha and I can work on the files. You are off this case. Proceed to work on the Father Walker case report. Hopefully, you won't fuck that up.

John Dean chose to not respond to James Locker's verbal assault. He unlocked the files and left the room without a word.

Samantha Robinson:

- A bit hard on him hey?

James Locker:

- No, I don't think so. He has been spending most of the investigation sulking over the fact that I got promoted instead of him. Since he is apparently stalling, he is better of wrapping up some other case that sabotaging this one.

Samantha Robinson:

- So what do we do now?

James Locker:

- Well, you better get us some coffee we are not leaving this room before we have identified the mysterious drunken man!

A short while later Samantha Robinson came back with one triple shot latte each as this was a task that was going to take a lot of focus...

5.33 The inner circle has a lunch discussion

FOR THE FIRST TIME in a week, the team was making serious progress. Since James Locker believed someone was compromising the team, he decided to only take his inner circle out to lunch instead of sharing the case with the entire group. A group consisting of James Locker, Adam Smith, Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson met up at a dinner serving excellent rump steak close to the police station. After eating their meals, James Locker decided to take the initiative.

James Locker:

- Thank you for joining me today. I will move away from my rule to not discuss work during lunch break as these are extraordinary circumstances.

- We found out today that Michael Fuller had been at both the crime scenes just hours before the killings took place. We discovered this through reviewing the surveillance tapes that John Dean has been investigating the last weeks'. Considering how fast we found out these facts, there is every reason to believe that John Dean, in fact, has intentionally been sabotaging our work.

- The question is. How do we proceed?

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's a simple one. We got to the high command of the police and request arrest orders for both of them as they are apparently up to no good.

James Locker:

- Well by principle you are right Adam. Problem is we don't have evidence against any of them that would lead to any convictions at present. If we go in and arrest them now, we are in big trouble in case we can't find the evidence necessary. Bear in mind that these

are our colleagues and respected member/ex-members of the force after all.

Thomas Anderson:

- What if we just have informal questioning with both of them without actually bringing up any accusations, that can't bring us any harm?

James Locker:

- Well indeed our careers can't be damaged by just informally questioning Michael Fuller and John Dean, but there is a problem. If we ask them informally and any of them is the killer that person will have all the time in the world to get rid of all the evidence.

Samantha Robinson:

- So you are scrapping the Antonio DiMaestro trail then?

James Locker:

- Well not entirely. He is still of the highest interested for questioning, but after all, there is not even any indication whether the man is alive or not. All the traces we have got from him the last month might as well be someone else trying to frame him for the murders

Adam Smith:

- Well, you got the point boss. How do you reckon we should proceed?

James Locker:

- Well, I reckon we should get permission from Barry Itch and the High Command to tap Michael's and John's phones and see where

it leads us. It is imperative however that you don't share this information with the rest of the group as we can't tell the allegiances of the other team members.

Samantha Robinson:

- I find this to be a North Korea approach, with distrust and spying on your peers. I don't like it at all, but given the proof, we have of Michael's and John's hostile approach I am obliged to agree with you.

James Locker:

- Thank you, Samantha. Yes, this is not the usual approach, but extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary solutions.

- Has anyone anything to add?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, I have another thing that speaks for your approach. My research showed that Michael Fuller is behind the "Vanessa" account on the dating website.

Adam Smith:

- I don't see the big deal; it's obviously a prank. Can it be illegal?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, I don't think it would be illegal no, but it's one thing when you do it and then have a laugh about it and an entirely different matter when Michael Fuller does it with the intent of breaking James down, don't you think?

Adam Smith:

- Well, I guess you are right...

James Locker:

- Anyway. I don't want to be the crazy one later on. Does everyone in this room agree on a path of action where I ask Barry Itch for permission to tap Michael Fuller's and John Dean's phones and locations for the last two weeks to find clues that will lead us forward in the investigation?

Samantha Robinson, Adam Smith, Thomas Anderson

- Agreed

James Locker:

- Great. I will talk with the BITCH, and hopefully, we'll soon be ready!

5.34 Failed Communication with Barry Itch

IT WAS MONDAY AFTERNOON, and Barry Itch was sitting quite content in his office. He had had a good weekend providing him with the best of life. Barry being a high-ranking police director, received a paycheck that enabled him to enjoy the best of life and the weekend that passed had contained all of it both when it came to the company, drinks, and activities. He had enjoyed listening to Wanda complain about how dreadful and horrible it was to have Adam Smith on part 2 of her workplace equality seminar. Although Barry Itch acknowledged the importance of his wife's work, it was still a good feeling for him to let her experience what he had to deal with on a daily basis. After all, a lot of his subordinates were lowbrow grunts which apparently had some undefined usefulness in the organisation, but Barry Itch simply could not stand dealing with them. In that way, it was a shame that Michael Fuller had been forced away as he at least was intelligent enough to stimulate the brain and match Barry Itch when it came to intellectuality.

Barry Itch saw James Locker entering his office, and in the glimpse of an eye, his good mood left him. To Barry, James Locker had indeed been a pain to deal with, and he had not met the expectations Barry Itch had set for him.

He made a mental note to find a permanent replacement for Michael Fuller as soon as possible and demote James Locker to inspector again as he was just too much hassle to handle. James Locker approached him and started talking.

James Locker:

- Hey sir. I have some important news to share with you. Please look at the videos I have prepared for you at my tablet.

Barry Itch:

- I see a drunken Michael Fuller arguing with someone...

- Michael Fuller is not working here anymore why are these movies relevant?

James Locker:

- Because the videos show Michael Fuller arguing with the murder victims just hours before the killings.

- Furthermore, John Dean was unable to report on Michael Fuller's presence in these shots although he worked with them for over a week. For Samantha and me it took two hours. So he must be stalling at best and actively sabotaging the investigation at worst. I have taken him off the case effective immediately

Barry Itch:

- I see. What you are implying is very serious indeed if it turns out to be true. As John Dean is still working for us, it would have to be internal investigations investigating his case.

- With Michael Fuller, you are clear to take him in for questioning, but you don't have enough evidence to put him in custody.

- I will, however, get all the clearances needed to tap his phone and trace his position. You'll have the approval tomorrow.

James Locker:

- Is it a good idea stalling this even more? If John Dean had not been delaying in the first place, Jessica Hall might still have been alive.

Barry Itch:

- Well sadly for you James the wheel of justice runs slowly. Now if you excuse me; I have other matters to resolve.

After James Locker had left his office, Barry Itch felt very uncomfortable. An internal investigation was the last thing he wanted considering how he handled the cocaine issue with Michael Fuller a few weeks ago. This time the threat was real to Barry Itch. If Michael Fuller got caught, there was a grave risk that he would drag him down the abyss. But why would Michael Fuller kill the wife and mistress of Antonio DiMaestro? Barry Itch had known Michael Fuller for over 20 years, and although they have had their differences in the past, this seemed like madness and not at all the Michael Fuller he knew. Barry Itch had had a hard time dealing with Michael Fuller in the past, but that had mostly been due to his impulsiveness, drunkenness, and recklessness. Stealing cocaine from a crime scene somehow match this description as it was not unlikely that someone addicted to alcohol had an affinity towards other drugs as well. But these murders were very thoroughly planned and perfectly executed, and Barry Itch could not see Michael Fuller killing anyone that way. It was also a mystery to him how Michael Fuller would practically perform these murders considering how drunk he was the hours before them. Then again alcoholics often could function almost normally even while drunk, so it was not an impossible scenario.

Barry Itch finally made up his mind about the "*Michael Fuller being the Killer*" scenario. He did not buy it and as he did not; he saw nothing wrong in refusing James Locker's team the right to trace and tap John Dean's and

Michal Fuller's phones. He would not run the issue with his superiors, but he would tell James Locker that he had when he came by tomorrow.

5.35 The Killer makes his final preparations

THE KILLER SAT RESTLESSLY in his car parked in Palm Beach one block away from Michael Fuller's beach house. Tonight was the night to strike, but he somehow would have to convince Michael Fuller that it was a perfect idea to see Emily Luong in Claymore supposedly the worst suburb of Sydney. As it seemed, Michael Fuller had given up so this would not be an easy task, but he hoped he had precisely the bait needed to fry this fish! The Killer picked up his phone and dialled Michael Fuller's number. Getting that phone had been a hassle as every sim card was supposed to be registered with an ID card according to Australian law. Apparently, he had been able to acquire a sim card anyway as most things were available for someone willing to pay the right price but it still had been an unwelcome hassle.

Michael Fuller:

- Hello, who is this?

The Killer

- It's a friend.

Michael Fuller:

- All of my friends carry names. If you don't then fuck off

The Killer

- Okay then, It's Jordan Palmer

Michael Fuller:

- That's better.

- Although I don't know you so what do you want?

The Killer:

- Well, suffice to say we have common enemies. James Locker is an infiltrator at the CSMI; he has been working for Antonio DiMastro all along.

- I know who can help you prove it.

Michael Fuller:

- I don't care about that anymore. I have quit the force for good and put all of that behind me.

The Killer:

- Well, that's a shame because that means in 24 hours you'll be in custody for the murders of Jessica Hall and Miranda DiMastro. You see they have surveillance tapes showing you at the crime scenes hours before the killings as well as location data for your mobile phone showing that you were in the area during both murders. Just because they failed getting rid of you by planting the cocaine in your house it does not mean they will fail again.

Michael Fuller:

- You have my attention Jordan.

- So who can prove this conspiracy you are talking about?

The Killer:

- Well, James Locker's ex-girlfriend Emily Luong who lives in Claymore can tell you all you need to know about his shady connections. From there it's up to you.

Michael Fuller:

- Alright, I will play along with your games stranger. How do I find this woman?

The Killer:

- I will text you the address. Go tonight, they are bringing you in tomorrow, and from there it's too late!

The Killer was checking the trace he had on Michael Fuller's phone. Soon he would know if Michael Fuller had swallowed his bait or not. What was his contingency plan if Michael Fuller did not take the bait? Well for sure he could still frame Michael for the other two murders, but it would be difficult going through with the Emily Luong murder. That would indeed be a missed opportunity as that killing was the final piece of breaking James Locker down before killing him. The Killer did not have time to think more about his contingency plan as his master plan was working. He could see Michael Fuller moving on his tracking monitor and a short while after he saw Michael Fuller's car passing down the crossroads. It was time to strike. He had been checking out the Fuller residence for a couple of hours before making the call just to make sure there were no surveillance systems installed since his last visit. There wasn't, but he could still not be sure that there were not any hidden cameras in the building invisible from the Internet. This scenario would apply if Michael Fuller had somehow anticipated his plan and installed analog tape-based cameras. Just in case the Killer decided to wear a mask while breaking into the building knowing that even if detection would mess up his attempt to frame Michael Fuller, it would still not lead them to him. He planted the evidence where the masterpiece was the almost two month's old severed head of Antonio DiMaestro. He placed the head on a pedestal in Michael Fuller's meditation room. The severed head on a stand would undoubtedly give any investigator entering the room the impression that Michael Fuller had lost his mind. Combined with the other evidence as well as well as Michael Fuller's proved presence at all the crime scenes it would be more than enough to lock Michael Fuller up for good.

The Killer smiled. It was time for the second last kill, and then he would finally be free.

Chapter 6: The attempted murder on Emily Luong



6.1 Michael Fuller gets a bad hunch

Michael Fuller was driving on the highway towards Claymore when it finally got up for him what an absurd mess he had put himself in. He was driving his replacement car with a blood alcohol level way above 0.5, a few days after a car crash that demolished his car and could have killed him if he hadn't been able to brake, in the last second. He was driving towards a destination to see a woman who supposed to be James Locker's ex-girlfriend and was meant to give him pointers on how to clear himself. But there were too many "if" in this scenario for Michael Fuller to feel comfortable at all. For starters how did he know that this woman the mysterious caller referred to knew anything? How could he be sure that James Locker was the one behind it all? It could be anyone in the police or even outside for all that mattered. All Michael Fuller knew was that his life was like the motto on the Australian coat of arms. "Never stand still." He was heading into the night towards an unknown destination, but at least if he were to go down, he would not do it without a fight. If Antonio DiMaestro and his scumbag crew wanted him, they would have to come and get him! He looked at the gun which he had brought tonight. It was a heavy calibre Desert Eagle with a lot of punching power. If they wanted him, they would have to come and get him! With renewed energy, he headed towards Claymore in the darkness of the night.

6.2 A drunken man at gunpoint

EMILY WANDA LUONG WAS watching an episode of sex and the city while eating a bag of potato chips. Growing up in Claymore, and living all of her life there, she did not have much in common with James Locker's ex-girlfriend Emily Dawn Luong. Well except for the name and that they were both

of Asian ethnicity. While Emily Dawn Luong had been petite and very feminine Emily Wanda Luong was a horror for the eyes with her features since long ruined by excessive junk food eating, smoking, and childbearing. Emily Luong was dreaming herself away while watching the show. All their issues and discussions seemed so unreal to her so she could not relate to any of it but in there was the charm of the show. It provided her with an escape from reality by showing her an alternative reality that seemed so far away. She was both happy and sad that her children were with their father this night. Comfortable as it gave her time for herself but sad as she felt very lonely and was convinced that their father was abusive to them. The court, however, was of a different opinion and thus they had received shared custody after their separation a few years back. Emily Luong sometimes considered the option of moving out of Claymore so her children would get a chance for a better upbringing and environment. She had a job, and with some extra support from the government, she would be able to afford it. But where would she go? All of her friends and family was living there, and somehow it seemed safe and pleasant to be close to her family even though she dreamed of a better future for her children someplace else.

Emily Luong was awoken from her reflections when someone knocked on the door. She was hesitant to open it, but since she lived in a security building, she decided to do so. That was one of the advantages of getting a paycheck instead of welfare, at least she and her children could live well and safe. Emily got terrified when she opened the door. On the other side was a drunken delusional man who introduced himself as Michael Fuller from the Central Sydney Murder Investigation Department. He spoke some incomprehensible nonsense about a conspiracy within the police and worst of all this man was holding a gun in his hand waving it in broad gestures. After a few moments of terror, the man realised that he had come to the wrong house and apologised wryly before leaving. Emily Luong did what anyone would and called the police.

6.3 A failed attempt

THE KILLER SAW MICHAEL Fuller go from the building where Emily Luong lived. He was holding a gun in his hand. There could, in theory, be

a problem as Michael Fuller who was visible on the nearby traffic camera held another model of a weapon in his hand than the Killer had used for the killings. Then again this proved nothing as nothing was saying that Michael Fuller could not be in possession of several firearms. On the contrary, it showed that he was delusional and aggressive why would he otherwise be waving his gun like that? The Killer decided that it was time to strike. As it was a security building, visitors were forced to scan their driver's license to enter as a way to keep criminals out of the building. The Killer, however, used an electronic lockpick on the backdoor instead to get in undetected and proceeded towards Emily Luong's apartment.

He had mixed feelings towards killing her, as she, in his opinion, had done nothing to deserve to die and it was a shame to bereave two children of their struggling mum. Then again he was not a man that was mainly driven by his morals but by what he felt he needed to do. The Killer knocked on the door and said that his name was Jordan Palmer from the local police. Emily Luong opened the door, and the first thing he did was to shoot her in the head. When the Killer tried discharging his second shot, he noticed that his gun had jammed. The gun jamming was terrible news as it was not sure that one shot from such a weak revolver would be enough to kill her. He wanted to make sure she died partly to ensure no loose ends existed but mostly out of pity with the unconscious woman lying on the floor. If she survived that shot, she would most likely get severe brain damage, and that was a fate far worse than death. The Killer could hear police sirens in the distance. There was no time to lose! He ran into her apartment and locked the door behind him. He then jumped down from her balcony and disappeared to his car before the police arrived. He was far too close to getting caught, the killer reflected, and he had to get rid of the gun. He drove to the nearby Eagle Vale pond and dumped it in there, after all, there was no way he could plant it in Michael Fuller's house as the police were probably headed there at any moment as he had planted Antonio DiMaestro's phone switched on in there.

When driving home, the killer felt very relieved and pleased with his victory. The news of the death of Emily Luong would surely drive James Locker to insanity. Insanity he would try curing from taking his precious pills. Precious pills that the Killer had replaced with other medicines that would make James Locker's mind worse!

Chapter 7: The Case gets solved



7.1 A trace on Antonio DiMaestro

James Locker woke up in the middle of the night from his phone calling. The caller ID told him that the call was from the Technical Surveillance Department of the Sydney Police. James Locker certainly hoped that they were bringing a significant breakthrough as it would be unnecessary to wake him just to notify him of minor detail.

James Locker:

- Hello, James speaking.

Andrew McLane:

- Hi this is Andrew from Technical surveillance

- We have pinpointed a signal from Antonio DiMaestro's mobile phone. How do you wish to proceed?

James Locker:

- Well, we believe Antonio to be armed and extremely dangerous.

- So I would suggest that you seal the block and surround the house. Then send in a tactical squad to apprehend him.

Andrew McLane:

- Great a squad will be going shortly.

James Locker:

- Oh, and where is this place? My team will need to come by the secure any evidence that might be in the building.

Andrew McLane.

- It's in Palm Beach, at Ocean Road.

James Locker:

- Thank you for the call, Andrew. I'll assemble my team and be there as quickly as possible.

After hanging up the phone, James Locker started thinking. Michael Fuller lived at Ocean Road in Palm Beach. So there were two likely scenarios: either Michael Fuller was the killer and was posing as Antonio DiMaestro as a distraction or Antonio DiMaestro had decided to come after and kill Michael Fuller. James Locker concluded that the most likely scenario was that Antonio DiMaestro was coming after Michael Fuller, as it seemed strange that the latter would turn on the mobile phone of Antonio DiMaestro in his house if he wanted to divert attention from himself. Thinking that the life of his former colleague might be at risk James Locker decided to call Michael Fuller:

James Locker:

- Hi, Michael. We got a trace from Antonio DiMaestro's mobile phone. It seems he is in the vicinity of your house. I just called to warn you.

Michael Fuller:

- Oh, shit is he coming after me? Yeah, I reckon he might be; I guess I have been looking too much for him lately. Oh, and it makes sense that he would want to kill me after failing to get me convicted in the cocaine set up.

James Locker:

- Cocaine set up?! What the fuck are you talking about? Where are you at the moment, by the way, it sounds like you are in a car?

Michael Fuller:

- Yeah, I went out for a midnight ride; following up on a clue in the shadier parts of town.

James Locker:

- Michael let me make this clear for you. You are not a police officer anymore. You do not have the authority to conduct any investigations on behalf of the police or claim to be a police officer with whatever delusional games you are playing. Just get to your house and meet up with the patrol cars waiting outside. I will be there in an hour.

7.2 Outside Michael Fuller's home

JAMES LOCKER ARRIVED outside Michael Fuller's house one hour and 15 minutes later. As he had instructed police surrounded the house and a tactical squad was on standby ready to move in and apprehend Antonio Di-Maestro. He went to Michael Fuller who was obviously drunk. James Locker decided that it was time to take actions against Michael Fuller and his alcoholism once and for all as the situation had gone out of hand. He called two nearby police officers from the local police to come over.

James Locker:

- Officers, how did this man arrive here?

Police officer:

- He drove here sir. He claims to be Michael Fuller, the owner of the house.

James Locker:

- Did he drive you to say? So what are you waiting for? The man is obviously drunk; test his blood alcohol levels for drunk driving.

A short while later the officers came back.

- Sir, you were right he had a staggering 1.5 in blood alcohol level.

James Locker:

- Perfect. You know the drill for severe drunken driving. Lock him up in the prisoner transport car.

Michael Fuller was going to protest, but he could not come up with anything to say. He knew what he had done was a felony and that he would probably have to serve a couple of months of months in jail for it. Michael realised that this was perhaps a punishment long overdue and that he had got away from testing several times by knowing the officers conducting the tests. Feeling a bit shameful all he hoped for was that this would not prevent him from his planned British Islands holiday, departing at the end of the week.

From James Locker's point of view arresting Michael Fuller for drunk driving served two purposes. Firstly it was essential to send Michael Fuller a message that he did not stand over the law and should not be meddling in police business. Secondly, it gave him an excellent opportunity to question him about his part in this mess once they had apprehended Antonio DiMaestro. With all loose ends sorted out, James Locker sent in the tactical squad to capture Antonio DiMaestro. A few minutes later he got a response from their team leader over the radio.

Squad Leader:

- Sir, we have found Antonio DiMaestro.

James Locker:

- Excellent bring him out then.

Squad Leader:

- No, I wouldn't do that. We found his severed head on an altar.

James Locker:

- Oh my god! Well just secure the scene, and my team and I will come in shortly.

Knowing that Antonio DiMaestro was found dead in Michael Fuller's house, he decided to make a quick decision. Officially it was a decision to be made by the district attorney, but James Locker was so sure of the outcome, so he did not feel compelled to call the DA at 4 AM in the morning for clearance. He walked towards the prisoner transport car opened the door and said:

James Locker

- Michael Fuller! You are under arrest for the murders of Miranda DiMaestro, Jessica Hall, and Antonio DiMaestro!

7.3 Inside Michael Fuller's house

JAMES LOCKER AND HIS team entered Michael Fuller's home. From some empty whiskey bottles and beer bottles, it looked like the place had been hosting a huge party the night before. James Locker reflected over how dirty and untidy the house was and if that was an indication of Michael Fuller's general decay as a person. He remembered one year before when he and Emily Luong had been to Michael Fuller's 55 years party. The place had looked so different back then. It had been spotless, and Michael Fuller had been in his best moods as a host. Evidently, he had been drunk at the time but not the lousy and foul-smelling drunk he had been his last months at CS-MI. James Locker wondered if this decay had a connection to an individual event in Michael Fuller's life or if it was a natural development once someone started taking up the bottle to fill the holes in one's soul. James Locker was interrupted in his thoughts by Adam Smith who began talking to him.

Adam Smith:

- Hey, James. One can say a lot about Michael's arrogance and "know better than everyone else" attitude, but the man sure knows how to party.

James Locker:

- Well, I don't know if I would call it a party, there is no indication of anyone else visiting this place.

Adam Smith:

- Oh well, I guess there is a fine line between being an awesome party dude and a pathetic lonely alcoholic. But as long as I stay on the right side of the line, I am happy.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hey James what are we looking for in here?

James Locker:

- Well, you are checking his computer. Try figuring out how he hacked the security systems of the crime scenes. Also, check if any files give us any indication on his motives. As it is right now, I can't see any other reason than booze-induced paranoia. Finally, it would be good if we find anything connecting Michael Fuller to John Dean. I am sure that weasel was sabotaging our investigation, but it would be good if we could prove it so that we can get rid of him for good

- For the rest of you guys. Look extensive anything that could explain his motives would be good. Best of all would be if we could find the murder weapon, but there are no guarantees that he has not got rid of that already.

Samantha Robinson:

- James. I have got an idea on how to expose John Dean.

- Send him a text from the Michael Fuller's phone that he has to meet up as soon as possible and that John should bring all the files he got.

- John is the case, so he does not know that we have captured Michael. By doing things this way, we might catch him off guard.

James Locker:

- Sounds like a plan Samantha. In case he swallows the bait bring Johnson and Baker to the meeting point you decide and confront him!

After saying this James Locker had a walk around the Fuller Estate trying to get a general overview of the house. He got captivated by a set of pictures depicting what was most likely Michael Fuller's daughter. The photos were depicting her from her baby years up to roughly 15. She was a beautiful girl, and strangely enough, she looked very familiar although James Locker could not recall ever meeting her. James Locker moved on to the meditation room, where the severed head of Antonio DiMaestro was sitting on the altar, this seemed very strange to him, but he recalled from the Father Walker case that Michael Fuller had a very vivid interest in the occult. The head was in an advanced state of decomposition, and James Locker reckoned that Antonio DiMaestro must have been dead for weeks. In general James Locker was a bit shocked that the Killer turned out to be his former boss but at the same time relieved as the evidence securing phase of a case would now commence. Although it was painstaking and sometimes very frustrating, it was a lot less stressful than the previous stage where they supposed to find the killer. Especially in cases with serial killers the job was very stressful as they all knew that lives were at stake!

For now, they would just have to gather as much information as possible before conducting the first interrogation of Michael Fuller in the morning. James Locker was considering the option to interrogate him now, but there was no point in talking to a drunken person unless it was an urgent matter.

7.4 John Dean avoids the trap

JOHN DEAN WOKE UP BY the text message tone on his mobile phone. He felt about confused as no-one ever texted him in the middle of the night. John was a married man in his mid-forties, and he did not have any friends who texted him drunken text messages in the midst of the evening. He reached for his phone and saw that it was a text message from Michael Fuller. The message read the following. *"I am in trouble and need your help immediately. I would greatly appreciate if you could bring some of the investigation material so that I can run my case. I would like to meet at the University café in Macquarie Park before you start work. Would 7 AM suit you? PS I am close to catching Antonio DS/ Michael Fuller."*

After reading this text message, John Dean immediately realised that Michael Fuller had been arrested and that James Locker was trying to use an entrapment strategy on him. Although it made him uncomfortable that the police arrested Michael Fuller, he felt a bit relieved at the same time as Michael Fuller had apparently not agreed to testify against him as the other team members apparently felt obliged to send him this pathetic text message instead. John Dean decided to reply to the text message to show James Locker that John was on top of his games and insult him at the same time. He wrote *"Hey James. I suppose you have somehow arrested Michael Fuller on insufficient evidence and now you are trying to forge some against me as well. Well, it won't work as I would never leave out classified material to unauthorised persons. PS Michael Fuller never communicates through text messages, and he never goes to places that do not sell alcohol. DS /John Dean."*

Satisfied with his answer John Dean decided to sleep for a few more hours, after all since they had taken him off the case he was not in any rush at the moment.

7.5 A heavy reaction

IT WAS 10 AM TUESDAY the 3rd of September 2013 and James Locker was preparing himself for the initial questioning of Michael Fuller. They had been unable to find any more evidence out of interest at the Fuller estate, but at least they had received the location data for Michael Fuller's phone for

the last month and now knew that he had been in the vicinity of both crime scenes at the time of the murders. They were also matching Michael Fuller's DNA against the unidentified male DNA found at both the crime scenes, but the result of this matching was yet to come as they were doing the full scan which was reliable enough for the court. James Locker was distracted from his thought when he received an unexpected call from Campbelltown.

Alan Morse:

- Hello this is Alan Morse from the Campbelltown police station, is this James Locker speaking?

James Locker:

- Indeed it is, how can I help you, Alan?

Alan Morse:

- Well, we had a woman shot in our district earlier tonight.

James Locker:

- Well, I am sorry to hear that Alan but Campbelltown is not our jurisdiction. Try with the Western Sydney Murder Investigation Department.

Alan Morse:

- Well, I beg to differ.

- You see this woman, Emily Luong called in at 1 AM tonight and told us that she was threatened at gunpoint by a drunken lunatic who called himself Michael Fuller and claimed to be an officer from CSMI. Apparently, he was raving about a conspiracy in the police force against him before he left.

- We, of course, took the call seriously but when we arrived 15 minutes later sadly, Emily was found unconscious with a bullet wound to the head.

James Locker:

- I see. We'll come by and talk to you as soon as possible. What was the name of the victim again?

Alan Morse:

- Great. I'll see you later today then.
- Her name is Emily Luong.

James Locker:

- Oh my god, I got to go!

Upon hearing that someone had shot Emily Luong James Locker fell into profound shock. He just could not believe that she was shot. It was impossible. But why was it impossible? Horrible images of Emily Luong were sweeping in front of his eyes. His pulse rose, and his vision and hearing became distorted. Adam Smith who was passing by his office noticed James Locker's condition and approached him.

Adam Smith:

- What's the matter James, you look like you just woke up next to a fat ugly tranny?

James Locker:

- They called from Campbelltown; they believe Michael Fuller shot Emily.

Adam Smith

- Shot your ex-girlfriend, Emily?

James Locker:

- Yes.

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's a bummer.

James Locker:

- They want me to come by, but I can't handle this...

Adam Smith:

- I understand that...

- Look this is what we do. We drive you home, and I go with Samantha and meet up with them. Then I will let you know whether it's your ex-girlfriend or some other woman with the same name.

James Locker:

- Yes. Just get me out of here. I need to go home and get my medicine now!

Adam Smith:

- If you say so boss, let's go!

They picked up Samantha Robinson at her desk and then left the police station for a drive to Campbelltown via James Locker's home in Lidcombe.

7.6 A medical failure

AS SOON AS HE GOT HOME, James Locker reacted instinctively and took a triple dose of his medication due to the misconception that more is better. He soon realised that it was not a great idea and all of a sudden he

saw the wandering corpse of Emily Luong coming towards him haunting him with an Eerie distorted voice. She disappeared and appeared randomly, and there were fire and flames spread throughout the room. Time was moving extremely slowly, and James could see how his fleshed open and closed back and forth. He realised that he somehow had been poisoned and with a great effort he managed to get to the bathroom to throw up. By chance, his eyes met with his reflection in the bathroom mirror, and it was the worst horror James had faced thus far. He could see how the other face was smiling at him and talking a foreign tongue with a hissing voice. The last thing James Locker heard was a voice saying, "*YOU did this to yourself*" before he fell unconscious.

7.7 An interrupted meeting

ADAM SMITH AND SAMANTHA Robinson arrived at the police station in Campbelltown. It was like the rest of the neighbourhood a lot more run down than the central parts of Sydney where Adam Smith and Samantha Robinson usually resided. They stated their business to the receptionist and met with the local detective Alan Morse.

Alan Morse:

- Welcome to Campbelltown, I am Alan Morse. I hope the traffic was not too bad.

Adam Smith:

- No, it was alright. I am Adam Smith and with me is Samantha Robinson.

Alan Morse:

- Okay, this is peculiar; I thought the detective of your group, James Locker, would come?

Adam Smith:

- Yeah, that would make sense.

- But basically, it was a sensitive matter for him.

- You see your victim, Emily Luong has the same name as his ex-girlfriend, and he did not think he would be able to handle a case with someone close to him.

Alan Morse:

- Well, Emily is in a coma in the hospital, but this is a picture of her.

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's a relief as this is not James Locker's ex-girlfriend.

- So tell us what you know about the case?

Alan Morse:

- Not very much. A local woman, Emily Luong, called in to report that crazy drunken man who claimed to be Michael Fuller had threatened her gunpoint. A traffic camera outside the building captured the following shots.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, the video is pretty unclear, but from the clothing, it looks like Michael Fuller. We do have a location data from his mobile phone telling us he indeed was in Claymore at 1 AM and this explains what he was doing there.

- Can you upload the emergency call and traffic camera video to our evidence database?

Alan Morse:

- Yes, of course, anything else I can do to assist you?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah if you can do the on-site examination and talk to the neighbours that would be good, we are busy with the investigation of Michael Fuller house since we arrested him tonight, suspecting him of three murders. But yeah, I am not the one with the final say in this matter so James Locker will have to get back to you.

All of a sudden Samantha Robinson mobile phone called. It was from Gerry Livingstone. She decided to take the call.

Samantha Robinson:

- Hey, Gerry! What's new?

Gerry Livingstone:

- Well, I spoke to my pharmacologist colleague today.

- He supposed that your friend has some mental issues towards schizophrenia considering he is using Xenopropsyche. It's not one the most potent substance on the market, but it still has its effect.

- That's why his finding was extra critical as he found out that the pills you supplied him with are Xenoantipsyche, a class A psychedelic drug.

- So if your friend uses the drug believing that it will make him better, it's worrisome news indeed.

Samantha Robinson:

- Thank you, Gerry. I got to go!

Adam Smith:

- Bad news?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yes, we got to go to James' place straight away. I will explain in the car.

After having said this, they rushed out of the police station and left Alan Morse, and the rest of the staff at Campbelltown PD confused.

7.8 The Killer watching James Locker fading away

THE KILLER WATCHED James Locker fading away on his bathroom floor. Or fading was maybe not the right word as he was vomiting heavily, screaming for help and asking Emily Luong for forgiveness. It seemed to the Killer that James Locker had finally realised that he was the one who killed Emily Luong and that was a great relief as he now was ready to die. But how should the killing take place? The easiest way would be if James Locker ate enough of the Xenoantipsyche to die from a toxic overdose. But that was a highly unlikely scenario, as the Xenoantipsyche was a lot more dangerous to the mind than it was to the body. What other ways would there be? Well, there was always the option to kill him where he was lying as James Locker in his current condition would not be able to do any resistance. But the killer knew that if he chose that path his entire master plan of setting Michael Fuller up for the murders would fail. After all, James Locker killed by poison that Michael Fuller left in his house was an ingenious plan, and it also worked as the police would find several containers of Xenoantipsyche in Michael Fuller's home as well, containers planted there the night before.

All of a sudden the killer noticed that James Locker was somehow coming to his senses and seeing his presence in the room. James Locker was reaching out for him. The Killer hesitated for a while but then decided to take James Locker's outstretched hand and hold it.

James Locker:

- Forgive me, and I never meant to hurt her. I loved her I would never want to hurt her...

The Killer:

- I know you loved her, but still, you killed her. You know why I am doing this to you don't you?

James Locker:

- Yes, I do.

After having said that James Locker passed out again and his body was cramping heavily while he was unconscious. In a way, the Killer felt sorry for him, such a horrible way to die. But then again James Locker had killed the woman in the world that had meant the most to him, and there was only one punishment worthy of such atrocity, DEATH!

The Killer realised that he would miss James Locker once he was gone. After all, for the last nine months, his primary purpose in life was to make James Locker understand what he had done and to make him pay. Now The Killer was so close to that goal but what would come next? For sure he would be free and could fully develop his relationship with Rebecca without his hatred and anger coming in the way, but on the other hand, his life would lose much of its purpose once James Locker was gone. It was a funny thing he started thinking about this factor right at the end if he had thought about it earlier maybe he would have chosen another path.

The Killer came back to his senses when he could hear police and ambulance sirens approaching. The police arriving was indeed unplanned for, but there was not much that could be done about that now. Realizing he should NOT be there when the cops came, The Killer made a run for it and left the building unnoticed.

7.9 At Auburn Hospital, toxicology department

A SHORT WHILE AFTER the ambulance had delivered the unconscious James Locker to the toxicology department that was handling cases regarding drug overdoses Adam Smith and Samantha Robinson arrived there. They were greeted by doctor Jayachandran who took them aside to talk to them.

Dr Jayachandran:

- It's a good thing you called us, but his condition is still grave. It looks like a drug overdose or deliberate poisoning, but we have to determine the cause of it to put in treatment. The problem is that I have never seen these symptoms before.

- And we need to identify the poison to commence with a treatment

Samantha Robinson:

- It's Xenoantipsyche

Dr Jayachandran:

- Are you sure? That's a bizarre drug to abuse and overdoses are practically unheard of.

Samantha Robinson:

- Yes, I am sure, just administer the treatment!

Dr Jayachandran:

- Well, the hospital cannot deliver unsafe treatments like this without consent from the patient or next of kin. It's a matter of legal liability that we need written permission to undertake risky procedures and basing treatment on what you think the patient might have taken is sadly enough an unsafe way of determining treatment.

Adam Smith:

- What is the treatment for a Xenoantipsyche overdose?

Dr Jayachandran:

- That would be a shot of compound called Flushout. But that substance can be hazardous if used to treat overdoses from Opioid

substances, and we can't rule those out from the symptoms James is showing.

Adam Smith:

- I see Doctor. Well, you just take your time getting the consents while Samantha and I are waiting outside.

They left the room, and once they got out of sight Adam Smith whispered to Samantha Robinson:

Adam Smith:

- Look, I am not intending to let my best friend die while some stiff bureaucrat is filing consent reports.

- Are you sure he has overdosed Xenoantipsyche?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yes, I am positive.

Adam Smith:

- Great, I am moving in. We need to find a shot of Flushout and give it to James. Those fucking consent forms can take hours to fill in, and I am not letting him die during that time.

Samantha Robinson:

- Are you sure? You know if it fails you the court might charge you with murder.

Adam Smith:

- Yes, I am sure.

- Look, just keep the uptight son of a bitch distracted while I find the shot and give it to James. Flushout sounds like the name of a standard compound, so it should be available in the room

Samantha Robinson:

- How would I do that?

Adam Smith:

- Well, the way he looked at you, it would not take much effort from you to keep him distracted.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay, let's go.

They decided to move in. Samantha Robinson unbuttoned the two top buttons of her blouse which was enough to show her great cleavage but not enough to make it too visible what her purpose was. She then started flirting with Doctor Jayachandran while Adam Smith found a shot of Flushout and applied it on James Locker whom immediately came to life and started cascade vomiting and rambling strange, incomprehensible sentences.

Dr Jayachandran:

- Oh my god man, are you crazy? What have you done?

Adam Smith:

- I am saving my friend, while you the doctor who is supposed to protect people are too preoccupied with protecting yourself by filling out bullshit forms instead of even trying!

Dr Jayachandran

- You are crazy; let's hope for both our sakes that he will come out okay.

After this conversation a few hours of nervous waiting took place. Finally, James Locker came back to his senses and started talking.

James Locker:

- Adam, Samantha. What happened and where am I?

Adam Smith:

- Congratulations you just had the trip of your life!

Samantha Robinson:

- Michael Fuller poisoned you. But you'll be okay the doctor can tell you more.

Dr Jayachandran:

- You took a massive overdose of Xenoantipsyche. Physically you'll be fine, but we'll have to keep you for at least one week for observation to determine what mental damage it caused you.

James Locker:

- I see, well probably for the best.

After that James Locker went back into a delirious state once again. Adam Smith and Samantha Robinson looked worried, but the doctor calmed them down.

Dr Jayachandran:

- Don't worry. At least his vitals are fine now. As for the mind, it will take time to recover. You should go home and get some rest now; you look exhausted.

They left the hospital and when in the car Adam Smith started talking:

Adam Smith:

- Hey Samantha where should I drop you off? Or we are going straight to my place in Lidcombe to get to know each other better after all the heroism I showed you today?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, it's incredible that you are still thinking about sex after all the stress we been through today?!

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's who I am. You never see James Bond at the end of the movies whining over all the wounds he has received or feeling remorse over all the lives he ended? You see him bang a hot chick!

Samantha Robinson:

- True as that may be, I am still going to decline. I am already dating Thomas, and I assumed you knew that?

Adam Smith:

- Seriously?! Is it you he is seeing? I have been thinking all along that he finally came out of the closet alternatively starting seeing a hideous woman. That guy is so full of surprises!

- But it was a bad choice of you telling me about Thomas because now I have to withdraw my offer. Where should I take you?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah, that's sad; I can't imagine what experience I must be missing!

- Well, I live in the city so drop me at the train station. You must be exhausted as well, so no point for you driving back and forth to town just to drop me off.

Adam Smith dropped Samantha Robinson off at the train station, and they both went home to sleep, at their respective home.

7.10 Wayne Bruce helps Thomas Anderson decrypting Michael Fuller's computer.

THOMAS ANDERSON WAS sitting in the Fuller estate and tried decoding the information on Michael Fuller's computer. He was tired and frustrated as the task seemed to be overwhelming for a man of his skill level. After all Information Technology and Internet security was supposed to be his specialties and yet Thomas felt inept to even compete with the skills showcased by Michael Fuller on his computer. The news of James Locker in the hospital did not improve his focus, and he was considering the option to give up and call it a day. But at the same time, the poisoning of James Locker served as a motivator to him. If someone almost killed his friend he would do his utmost to get that person behind bars. Michael Fuller, of course, was behind bars already but it was still critical to find more evidence to get a conviction. Another issue was the fact that Samantha Robinson's effort to set John Dean up for the sabotage they suspected him of had failed miserably and Thomas Anderson was afraid that he would do everything in his might to undermine the investigation in case they were unable to prove that he indeed had been sabotaging it intentionally.

In spite of his dedication, Thomas Anderson had almost given up when he realised that he could use his wildcard Wayne Bruce who had received clearance for working on the case by Barry Itch a few days earlier. Thomas Anderson called him, and he appeared in a heartbeat since his mansion was located nearby Michael Fuller's house.

Wayne Bruce:

- Hi, Neo, I have seen you in better shape, how can I help you?

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah, I have been here since 3 AM, so I am not feeling sharp.

Wayne Bruce:

- Well, that's 14 hours straight. One cannot complain about your dedication. Tell you what if I ever start a new IT company there will be a place for you in it!

Thomas Anderson:

- Thank you, Wayne! That's very generous of you. But let us focus on the tasks at hand.

- I need to access the files on this computer, but they have a biometric lock. I also need to find out who copied the data on this USB stick and handed it to Michael Fuller.

Wayne Bruce:

- You have this guy in custody right? What I would suggest is that you give him a glass of water tomorrow and cover that glass in a plastic material that absorbs fingerprints. That's way more convenient than getting a court order forcing the suspect to unlock the files.

- As for the USB stick verification, did you know that a lot of systems these days save an invisible code every time you make a copy of a file? This is an antipiracy/ anti-terrorist surveillance thing, but if you know how to find it, it's quite easy to crack.

Thomas Anderson:

- Thank you, Wayne. Can you do this for me?

Wayne Bruce:

- Sure it will take a couple of hours but sure. You can crash at my place for the time being.

Thomas Anderson:

- Thank you, Wayne, but I can't leave an outsider with a crucial piece of evidence without police supervision. But yeah I can sit next to you while you are working.

After saying that, Thomas Anderson left the computer and the USB memory stick in the hands of Wayne Bruce. He was unable to keep his focus up though and soon fell asleep leaving Wayne Bruce unsupervised with the material. A couple of hours later Wayne Bruce woke him up.

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh shit, did I fall asleep?
- How did it go?

Wayne Bruce:

- It went well, I managed to find the coding I was looking for, and it proves that the files were copied by the user JDEAN between 22nd of August 2013 and the 28th of August 2013.

Thomas Anderson:

- Great, please join me with me and go to the internal investigations office straight away, it's time to get this snake out of our organisation once and for all!

7.11 At the Internal investigations office

THOMAS ANDERSON AND Wayne Bruce went to the internal investigations office which located in a decidedly unflashy and grey office building situated in Redfern. To avoid a situation where police officers were investigating the colleague who sat next to them in their office all internal investigations was conducted by this particular department to prevent investigation bias. Considering the state of affairs at the internal investigations department, however, a police officer who broke against protocol was likely to get away with it since the agency auditing them was underfunded and in terrible shape. Thomas Anderson was by no means distraught by this fact as he had

used his position in the police and the inadequate control of police officers to solicit bribes. He met up with the responsible officer Steven McLean who greeted him at the office.

Steven Mclean:

- Hello, officer Anderson, I am Steven Mclean the officer in charge here, how can I help you?

Thomas Anderson:

- Hi, Steven. I am here to give you some additional evidence in the case against John Dean at CSMI. I am sure such proof will prove that John Dean sabotaged our investigation as well as leaked information about it to our suspected killer Michael Fuller.

Steven Mclean:

- Yes, I have heard about the arrest of Michael Fuller. It's in the headlines all over Australia considering his relative fame within the police and all.

- When it comes to John Dean, there is no case pending on him so sadly I can't add any evidence to a case file that does not exist.

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh, that is strange indeed. The detective of my team, James Locker, spoke to Barry Itch the director of CSMI about John Dean and he thought a case was being started up.

Steven Mclean:

- Well, apparently he was mistaken. Now if you excuse me, we are closing now.

After witnessing the unhelpful and disinterested behaviour shown by Steven Mclean Wayne, Bruce felt compelled to intervene.

Wayne Bruce:

- No, you are not. I am an Australian citizen, and it's in my right to file a complaint. In my case, the claim is against John Dean that is an outrage and shame for the police corps.

Steven Mclean:

- Well that's very interesting whoever you are, and I am sure you can call customer service to complain about this, but we are closing our office for today anyway.

Wayne Bruce:

- Nah I think I will pass when it comes to calling customer service.

- You see I am Wayne Bruce the IT billionaire. As a billionaire, I have a lot of ties with the New South Wales government.

- So I will discuss your behaviour, Mr Mclean, with Michael Lawson the minister of police, when I see him during the state fundraiser this weekend.

Steven Mclean had indeed not seen this headache coming five minutes before closing time. He was unsure of whether the man opposite to him was the man he claimed to be or not, but it seemed to Steven Mclean that it was not worth the risk to call as he could not know if his opponent was bluffing or not. With a loud sigh, Steven Mclean agreed to help them start up a case file against John Dean. 30 minutes later he summarised the case against John Dean like this.

Steven Mclean:

- Look, guys, I have set up the case file against John Dean now. I don't know if it's enough to get him convicted, but I will call high Command and make sure he gets suspended immediately.

Thomas Anderson:

- Sounds good to me. As long as the snake is out of my face, I am happy.

Wayne Bruce:

- And I am glad as soon as you have made the actual call. You don't seem to be the most cooperative of men Mr Mclean.

With an even louder sigh, Steven Mclean called the necessary calls to make sure The police force suspended John Dean from duty. Happy with the outcome Thomas Anderson went straight home postponing the after work drinks suggested by Wayne Bruce.

7.12 Initial interrogation of Michael Fuller

IT WAS 9 AM THE 4th of September 2013, and it was time for the first real interrogation of Michael Fuller. A shorter talk had been held the day before informing of his legal rights but due to the circumstances with the poisoning of James Locker and the suspension of John Dean the team had been unable to set up a proper interrogation the previous day. Present in the room were: Michael Fuller, Adam Smith, Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson. Thomas Anderson initialised the questioning:

Thomas Anderson:

- Can the suspect state his full name, date of birth and passport number, please?

Michael Fuller:

- Michal Samuel Fuller, 22nd of February 1957, M0992136

Thomas Anderson:

- Are you aware of the accusations against you? You stand accused of the murders of Antonio DiMaestro, Miranda DiMaestro and

Jessica Hall. Furthermore; you are charged with the attempted assassination of Emily Luong and James Locker.

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, I am aware of this as assistants Johnson and Chung informed my lawyer and me about this last night.

Thomas Anderson:

- Great!

- Well, Michael, you know how this goes down, so please give us a general overview of your actions these last few weeks, and we will be adding questions to your story.

Michael Fuller was considering his options. He knew that the evidence against him was massive and that there had been cases in the past with people convicted with less evidence against them in spite of denying everything. Michael Fuller had discussed this with his lawyer the day before, and they planned to admit all the minor offences he had done and to defame the entire CSMI so that the credibility of the police would be in the spotlight for the trial to come. Michael Fuller and his lawyer, however, had decided to save some of the best contradictions in the police material for the court so the police force could not cover up the cracks in their case against him.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I suppose what is interesting is what happened on the 19th of August 2013 the day I quit the force on supposed health issues?

Adam Smith:

- Well, initial analysis indicates that the head of Antonio DiMastro has been decomposing for more than a month, but sure go ahead.

Michael Fuller:

- Well anyway. The 19th of August I get called into Barry Itch's office where he accused me of possessing stolen cocaine from the crime scene of the Lopez case which occurred the 12th of July the month before. Apparently, they had seen a bag on the video where Lopez got shot, and then the camera went down, and when we got there, the bag was not there.

- Anyway, Barry Itch did not want this to be a public scandal, so he had hired two operatives from a shady security company to search my house for the bag. Sadly I consented to this and signed the consent form he gave me. Apparently, the two operatives found the pack with 3.5 kilos of cocaine in my house and I had the option to either resign immediately stating health options or facing charges for severe drug crimes. I chose to leave.

Thomas Anderson:

- Wait a second. So you are accusing the director of CSMI to cover up serious crimes? Do you any proof to support these accusations?

Michael Fuller:

- I do. You see the entire situation felt very shady from the start, so I turned on sound recording on my mobile phone when Barry Itch was looking away.

- I can show you if you want?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, since it's apparently against protocol to let the suspect have access to the evidence we can't accept that; however, we will do a thorough search for the file on your phone.

- But back to the new subject of the stolen cocaine, why did you take it? To use it or to sell it?

Michael Fuller:

- I did not! Someone placed it in my home to set me up.

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that's a fascinating thought. You are aware that Australia has the most expensive cocaine in the world right?

- So you are claiming that someone spent cocaine with a street value of approximately \$500,000 to set you up?

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, that is what I am claiming.

Samantha Robinson:

- Are you sure that it was real cocaine that was in that bag?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, Barry Itch used the compound on a standard drug test in front of my eyes, and it turned blue for cocaine.

Thomas Anderson:

- I see. What did he do with this cocaine afterwards? I can't recall any significant quantities of cocaine found by our department this month.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, he asked me to open the bag and flush all the cocaine down the toilet, and I did.

Thomas Anderson:

- That is a highly unlikely path of action if indeed Barry Itch and Antonio DiMaestro were conspiring against you.

Samantha Robinson:

- Let's move on. Tell us your reasons for going to the DiMaestro estate intimidating Miranda DiMaestro and then murdering her.

Michael Fuller:

- Okay it might have been a foolish, drunken choice but my reasoning was like this:

- I had been looking for Antonio DiMaestro ever since the Lopez case a month before. I wanted to question him about his part in the whole matter. But I never got the chance since the case was transferred to the organised crime department after the suspected gunman Angelo Ramirez died in a gunfight with airport police.

- But I never gave up the DiMaestro trail even though it was not my case anymore.

- So I guessed that he was the one who set me up to get rid of me

- In my opinion, I did not intimidate her, and I did not kill her.

Adam Smith:

- Come on Michael this is fucking ridiculous. You are saying that you suspected the man, whose head we found in your house for trying to set you up? Even if he wanted to set you up, why would he spend 3.5 kilos when 100 grams would have been enough to attain the same goal?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I never killed Antonio DiMaestro. Someone placed his head in my home while I was away. As for the amount I don't know why they used so much.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay noted. So what were you doing in the DiMaestro mansion then if you did not kill Miranda? Were you drinking tea with her?

Michael Fuller:

- I have never set foot in the DiMaestro estate.

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's interesting, as we found your DNA at several places in the house.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, it must have been planted there by whoever killed her.

Thomas Anderson:

- Who you at the time believed to be Antonio DiMaestro?

Michael Fuller:

- That is correct.

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay. As you might be aware of the security cameras at the DiMaestro mansion was hacked, so the actual murder was not filmed. However, we did manage to backtrack the hacking to the IP address of your computer. Any comment on that?

Michael Fuller:

- I would not consider myself computer literate enough to comment on that.

Thomas Anderson:

- Fair enough. How do you explain your presence in your area at the time of the murder? According to our positioning data, you were connected to the same mobile phone base station for hours, thus being at the crime scene or in the vicinity of the crime scene when the murder of Miranda DiMaestro took place.

Michael Fuller:

- I was sitting at the local RSL club just down the road.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well anyone who can verify that?

Michael Fuller:

- I was not there with anyone if that's what you are asking. But I did sign it at around 10 PM, and that should be on their records.

Samantha Robinson:

- When did you leave Mosman RSL?

Michael Fuller:

- Around midnight.

Adam Smith:

- Well, that's a horrible alibi, Michael. You see you were phone was connected to Mosman base station until 1230AM and Miranda DiMaestro was murdered between 1215AM to 1230AM. So you

are saying that you were in the neighbourhood without an alibi at the time of the killing.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I might have left the Mosman RSL a bit later then.

Thomas Anderson:

- I am sure we'll find out somehow.

Samantha Robinson:

- Moving on. On the 22nd of August, you withdrew \$10,000 in cash from your bank account. What was the purpose of acquiring such large amounts of money?

Michael Fuller was considering the option to hand them John Dean, but he decided not to. Partly because John Dean had been his friends for several years but also because it seemed highly unlikely that John Dean was the man behind his situation. After all, why would John Dean sacrifice cocaine worth \$500,000 to set him up and then ask him for \$10,000 to help him? Such behaviour would not make any sense.

Samantha Robinson:

- Let it be noted, that the suspect refused to answer the question.

- We have reasons to believe that you have been meeting up with John Dean on several occasions the last few weeks, what were the purposes of those meetings?

Michael Fuller:

- And I assume you have figured this the same way you have calculated everything else, through your flawless mobile phone location data, right?

Samantha Robinson:

- That is correct.

Michael Fuller:

- Well in the case with John Dean it's straightforward. We are friends, and there is nothing wrong with us hanging out even after I finished working here.

Samantha Robinson:

- Very well and I assume the fact that you withdrew \$10,000 in cash and the fact that John Dean somehow managed to miss you in surveillance tapes from the crime scenes are entirely unrelated?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, John has been under a lot of pressure recently with his daughter being sick and his marriage breaking down. He could have missed it out.

Samantha Robinson:

- And the USB stick with sensitive case material that we found in your house.

Michael Fuller:

- I got it from other sources.

Samantha Robinson:

- Right...

- So tell me about the break-in at James Locker's house where you painted him a message at his mirror with blood that turned out to be Antonio DiMaestro's?

Michael Fuller:

- I did not do that...

Samantha Robinson:

- So you claim that you have not broken into James Locker's house recently?

Michael Fuller:

- Well I did break in at a later stage because I reckoned there was something fishy about the entire "*break-in at James Locker's house*" scenario

Thomas Anderson:

- Yes, you might claim that was your motive. And we have you on video while breaking in there. A hidden camera took this video. But I do have another theory on why you broke in that second time. You did it so you could replace James Locker's medicine Xenopropsyche with the substance Xenoantipsyche, which is a dangerous drug for people with a weak mind.

- Were you aware of James Locker's mental health issues?

Michael Fuller:

- Yes of course, as his boss I was mindful of the fact that he had a breakdown after the breakup with his ex-girlfriend. But he received medication and from what I could tell he was doing fine.

Thomas Anderson:

- Were you also aware of his colour-blindness which would make it impossible for him to see the difference between his medication

Xenopropsyche and the substance Xenoantipsyche which almost killed him?

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I am sure it is in his file, but it was not a detail I ever reflected over.

Thomas Anderson:

- Okay. In your house, we found an amount Xenoantipsyche, with your fingerprint on them, how do you explain that? Were you a user yourself?

Michael Fuller:

- No, I have never been using that drug.

Adam Smith:

- Moving on, you went to Jessica Hall place drunk and intimidated her, before killing her, a couple of hours later. Why did you do that?

Michael Fuller:

- I confronted her because I thought she knew about Antonio Di-Maestro's whereabouts.

- I never killed her or hurt her in any way.

Adam Smith:

- Okay, but you were in the neighbourhood at the time of the murder?

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, I was at my favourite whiskey bar which is next to her apartment complex.

Adam Smith:

- Okay, do you have anyone that can confirm that you were there at the time of the murder?

Michael Fuller:

- Maybe my bankcard usage can, otherwise I don't think so.

Adam Smith:

- Well, your bank card usage would not be sufficient evidence to your favour though as you could have asked anyone to stay and buy drinks with your card and pin number, while you "*went out to smoke* ." I am sure you would be able to find many takers for such an option.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I suppose I could, but I did not, I bought drinks for myself.

Adam Smith:

- Whatever you say, Mr Fuller, whatever you say.

- You went to Jessica Hall's apartment a third time that night, or you stopped in the elevator and claimed to be going to a friend's place, who were you seeing?

Michael Fuller:

- Okay, I admit I was going to Jessica Hall's home again because I was irate and frustrated. I felt that she was lying to me and indeed knew where Antonio DiMaestro was hiding.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I believe you went back to take the precious necklace you stole from the DiMaestro mansion when you killed Miranda DiMaestro the week earlier. You got second thoughts because although it was a smart way of setting up Antonio DiMaestro for the murders, it was just too valuable to waste on such a venture.

Michael Fuller:

- I don't know what you are talking about? What necklace?

Samantha Robinson pulled out a picture from the case folder of the expensive jewellery that was left on top of Jessica Hall's dead body.

Samantha Robinson:

- This necklace.

- A costly necklace. I did some research on it, and it turned out a Sydney jeweller sold it to Antonio DiMaestro for \$85,000 a few days before last Christmas.

Thomas Anderson:

- Moving on.

- A few days later you crashed your car into a tree in Olympic Park. What were you doing out there?

Michael Fuller:

- I was on my way back home, from my investigation of James Locker's house.

- As you all know I got a concussion and was hospitalised for a couple of days.

Adam Smith:

- Yes, we are aware of that because it was a few relaxed days. No hacking of our computers, no break-in at our colleagues' and no murders.

- But once you left the hospital, you became homicidal once again. This time your victim was Emily Luong. Why did you attack her, she has no connection to Antonio DiMaestro as far as we know?

Michael Fuller was considering his options before answering this question. As far he knew they had not presented any evidence that he was actually at Emily Luong's place so they might be shooting blindly at him, then again if he denied an apparent fact he would ruin his credibility. He decided to move ahead and tell them.

Michael Fuller:

- Well, I got a call from a mysterious person who called himself Jordan Palmer. He claimed that James Locker was collaborating with Antonio DiMaestro to set me up, and this was the reason the police had been unable to locate Antonio DiMaestro.

- Furthermore, he told me that James Locker's ex-girlfriend Emily Luong had incriminating evidence against James Locker and that I had to see her that night otherwise James Locker would arrest me on the evidence he had forged.

Adam Smith:

- Okay now you have passed the border for delusional paranoia I reckon.

- So why did you shoot her? The woman you tried killing was not James Locker's ex-girlfriend Emily Luong. I know that, and you knew that as well, as you have met Emily Luong on several occasions on police functions.

Michael Fuller:

- Yes, I realised that it was not the right Emily Luong the moment she opened her door. So I got baffled, and then I left.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well according to the emergency call, which is as you know always recorded she called in to report that a drunken delusional man who called himself Michael Fuller were threatening her with a gun and claimed that there was a conspiracy within the police. When a squad car arrived 15 minutes later, they found her, shot in the head.

- Did you go back and shoot her?

Michael Fuller:

- No, I did not.

Adam Smith:

- Okay. When you were arrested for drunk driving a couple of hours later, you were found to carry a Desert Eagle pistol. Why did you wear this gun, and what happened with the .22 calibre silenced revolver that you used for the killings?

Michael Fuller:

- I did not kill anyone, so I don't know where that weapon is as it has never been in my possession.

- As for the Desert Eagle pistol, I took it in case I was walking into a trap as I did not want to be captured by some low-life mafia scums without the chance to defend myself.

Samantha Robinson:

- So you admit that you considered the option to kill someone that night?

Michael Fuller:

- I recognise that I brought a gun with me in case I needed to defend myself!

Adam Smith:

- Okay, Michael. I think this concludes our initial interrogation of you. Of course, we will follow up with more detailed questions later, but as for now, we are done.

- If this were an employment interview, this would be the stage where we told you that we would get back to you and then you would never hear from us again. Since it's not, you will see us a lot the weeks to come. Some custody guards will pick you up shortly and bring you back to your seven square meter accommodation brought to you courtesy of the taxpayers of New South Wales.

After Adam Smith had finished his line, he left the room together with Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson.

7.13 Strategy meeting after the interrogation

AFTER THE INTERROGATION of Michael Fuller Samantha Robinson, Thomas Anderson and Adam Smith went to a restaurant for lunch as well as to devise their strategy for the work to come. The issue with John Dean was still to be solved, and if Michael Fuller was correct in his accusations, they had a problem with Barry Itch to resolve as well. Since they did not know the allegiances of the other members of the team, they decided it was better to keep their thoughts to themselves for the time being. Once they had finished their meals, Samantha Robinson started the talking.

Samantha Robinson:

- So what are your thoughts about the case? Do you think Michael Fuller did it? There are some strange things about I reckon.

Adam Smith:

- Oh, I am confident the bastard did it. He seems delirious from all the drinking and loneliness I reckon. I mean look at the facts. He was at all the crime scenes at the time of the murders, and we found a lot of evidence at his place. I say he lost it and went on a killing spree. Maybe that's why he was so good in the first place because he had killers mind?

Samantha Robinson:

- I agree with all you are saying, but what about his motives? He did not seem to have any?

Adam Smith:

- Well, I knew that a comprehensive murder investigation should state the killer's motives, physical evidence, and witnesses. But we don't live in a perfect world as it is in the textbooks, so I think we have more than enough to get him convicted. If not that's for the court to decide.

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah, I agree with Adam on this one. One can never be a 100 per cent in any case, and it's healthy to be sceptical before judging, but sometimes we just have to leap of faith. If it was only the evidence, we found at his place it could be a setup. But he was at all the murder scenes even though he has no logical reason whatsoever being there.

- As for motive, I don't think most serial killers I have read about actually had a reasonable, rational purpose; I think it's just an urge

to kill that drives them. Often this urge is fuelled by an extreme paranoia like in Michael Fuller's case.

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah, I know that what you are saying makes sense logically, but still, my gut feeling says there is something fishy in this case.

Adam Smith:

- Well if people's gut feeling were always right there would be no need for logic and reasoning, would it?

- Besides a lot of times my gut feeling tells me that a woman I am talking to wants to bang. And then again a lot of the times when I get that feeling the only moist I am getting is that from her drink shoved in my face!

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, thank you for sharing a compelling argument, Adam!

- Moving on, how do you think we should proceed with Barry Itch and John Dean?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well with Barry Itch we are not even sure he has done anything or if what Michael told us is just a product of his delusional paranoia. Nevertheless, I will make a thorough scan of his phone to see if I can find the file.

- As with John Dean, I reckon the best way would be to have my buddy Wayne Bruce talk to the Minister of the Police directly as we spoke with internal investigations yesterday, but they did not seem eager to help or do anything at all. For sure John Dean is suspended for now, but my feeling was that the case would be can-

celled in a few weeks and then we will have status quo, with the risk of having John Dean promoted to detective. But if we get one piece of crucial piece of evidence more, I am sure we'll get this snake!

Samantha Robinson:

- I do have an idea about that. Don't banks put in marked notes in kind of robberies or suspicious cash withdrawals?

- The withdrawal of \$10 000 in cash that Michael Fuller did would indicate illegal business to take place. So there is a chance the bank put some marked notes among the ten grand Michael received. What if we were to ask the bank if they put in marked banknotes among Michael's \$10 000? If we ask the minister directly for a search order against John Dean's house and if we find the marked notes we have enough proof for a conviction.

Thomas Anderson:

- Great. You and I will do that, while Adam will check Michael's phone for the supposedly incriminating audio file against Barry Itch.

- Finally, Johnson, Baker, Chung, and Lee can do detailed interrogations with Michael Fuller. I don't think spending time interrogating him will give us anything of value, but we never know, and better keep those deadbeats busy as well!

Adam Smith:

- Agreed. Let's do this.

- Oh, and Thomas, save your energy for tonight.

Thomas Anderson:

- No worries, I am not as bizarrely over-sexual as you are.
- See you tomorrow!

After finishing talking they split up to proceed with following up on their respective leads.

7.14 A search warrant

AS IT TURNED OUT THE bank indeed had placed marked notes among the \$10,000 that Michael Fuller withdrew from his account two weeks earlier. The marked banknotes were indeed good news as this would make it easier to prove that John Dean indeed had betrayed the team through sabotaging the investigation and leaking information to Michael Fuller. As Thomas Anderson had predicted it was a lot easier to get, the internal investigations to work on the case after Wayne Bruce spoke to the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency service Michael Lawson. With the assistance of internal investigations, Thomas Anderson and Samantha Robinson received a search warrant and went to John Dean's house. John Dean greeted them at his door.

John Dean:

- What the fuck are you two doing here? You have already gotten me suspended what more do you want with me?

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh, it's quite simple John, we want you out of the team for good. You see internal investigations are highly unlikely to do anything at all on their own, and then you would be back, maybe even getting promoted to Detective.
- But we are only one tiny bit of evidence from putting you behind bars, and then you are gone forever. And as you can see on the search warrant, we managed to persuade the minister himself to sign it.

- So I suggest you hang out in the garden with Officer Chung while the rest of our team search your house for the evidence we need.

A couple of hours of searching began. Finally, Officer Baker managed to find a bag with money in it, in a hidden compartment in the garage. Samantha Robinson made a quick count of the cash and estimated it to be around \$8000.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well John, look what we found, \$8000 in cash in a hidden compartment in your garage. How do you explain this?

John Dean:

- Well, I fell behind on my mortgage payments so a friend of mine lent me the money so I could get ahead, it's all legit.

Samantha Robinson:

- A friend you say? Who just happens have \$8000 lying around in cash to hand out to you? Because seriously if it for the mortgage it would be easier for your friend just to wire you the money.

John Dean:

- Well, he just happened to have the money lying around. Besides, you guys are not working for the taxation office, so I have no obligation to let you know about all of my private finances.

Thomas Anderson:

- That is true; nevertheless, we are confiscating this money to examine whether they stem from illegal sources or not.

- But don't worry, we'll make it quick so you can come by tomorrow and pick them up if our research can't prove that any crime has occurred.

After having said the team left John Dean's house to go back to the police station and try tracing the serial numbers of the confiscated banknotes.

7.15 Adam Smith confronts Barry Itch.

ADAM SMITH SHONE LIKE the sun when he finally found the audio file on Michael Fuller's mobile phone which proved that the circumstances Michael Fuller had provided about his resignation were real. Adam Smith was very confused by the fact that the same man that forced him into spending five unpaid Saturdays attending workplace equality seminars for using inappropriate language would cover up serious crimes conducted by Michael Fuller.

Adam Smith was considering how he could use the audio file with the cocaine discussion between Barry Itch and Michael Fuller, to do maximal damage to the BITCH. Adam Smith had never been a fan of Michael Fuller whom he found arrogant and the pushy, but his real nemesis in the CSMI was without doubt Barry Itch its director. There was no doubt that this was due to a clash of personalities as Adam Smith and Barry Itch were each other's opposites. While Adam Smith, was outspoken, impulsive, messy, hard to offend and ultra-macho in his approach to things Barry Itch was careful with what he said, very controlled, extremely tidy, very easily offended and very much against the macho culture of the police. Adam Smith could not understand why someone who was against chauvinism would have come up with the idea to join the police force in the first place. After all, the reason for Adam Smith to become a police officer was that he would get a lot of macho atmosphere at work as well as a uniform that could be used to pick up and impress a specific type of women. As long as Barry Itch was the director of CSMI Adam Smith realised that there would not be much of a macho attitude at his workplace and as the uniform was not as good for picking up women as he had hoped it would be, he was quite disgruntled with his work situation from time to time.

Adam Smith decided to make copies of the recording and use one of the copies to confront Barry Itch directly and force him to resign his job. The standard protocol would be to go to internal investigations, which Adam Smith found was a time-consuming and backstabbing way of dealing with things. He preferred confronting his enemies full on, and now he finally had a weapon against the man who had refused him any payrise and promotions in the last five years it was time to strike. He entered the office of Barry Itch where the latter was finalising a report to his superiors.

Barry Itch:

- Hi, Adam, are you enjoying the Saturday sessions with my wife? You must excuse me, but I am quite busy at the moment, I am finishing this report for the High Commissioner of the Police.

Adam Smith:

- Well, I can see why you and Wanda are a match at least. If I were you, I would not worry too much about that report for the moment. I am a lot more critical to your life as it is right now.

Barry Itch:

- I highly doubt that you will ever be an important person in my life or for my career Adam. Frankly speaking, I believe there is a very slim chance that you will ever get past police assistant in your career

Adam Smith:

- Well, that may be, but I will still have a higher rank than you will tomorrow!

After saying that Adam Smith played the audio file with the conversation between Michael Fuller and Barry Itch the day Michael Fuller got busted with the stolen cocaine. While Barry Itch listened to this audio file, he felt a mix of fear and anger. Concern for his career and anger towards Michael

Fuller who must be the man behind the recording. So Michael Fuller sold him out after all he did to be lenient towards him and keep him out of jail. To Barry Itch, Michael Fuller was the worst kind of traitor, and he was now free of his doubts that Michael Fuller indeed was the killer. Too bad that scumbag would drag him down the abyss with him. Unless... Adam Smith had come to his office with the evidence to confront him instead of running straight to internal investigation with the recording. Maybe it was possible to cut a deal with him? Barry Itch decided to give it a shot.

Barry Itch:

- Hey, Adam. I must say I am impressed. You have me in a steady grip now, and in spite of our past differences, you decided to come by my office which means you are looking for something.

- Maybe I can give you a mutually beneficial deal that would benefit the both of us?

Adam Smith:

- Hmm. Mutually beneficial deal? Are you perhaps trying to bribe me?

- I like that idea...

- Show me your offer!

Barry Itch:

- Well, there is a position as a detective available since James Locker was only appointed provisional detective and is now in the hospital, I can fast track your application so to speak.

Adam Smith:

- Hmm, Detective Smith. I like that, and I am sure the ladies will as well. But there is a problem with the scenario. Every detective has to meet up with you for a daily briefing every day. I can't see how that would be endurable.

- But don't worry, I have another offer.

- The Adam Smith "charity" needs some fundraising. What would be better than if the director of CSMI sponsors this fund with \$10,000 and then receives an MP3player with particular recordings on it? I mean for sure the price is a little steep, but the money is for a good cause.

Barry Itch swallowed hard. After all, he had a well-paid job and getting rid of that recording would indeed be a good investment. But he was incredibly worried about what Wanda would say, after all, she kept an eagle eye on everything and explaining a \$10,000 spending would be a difficult thing to do. Unless of course, he forged a receipt for a charity to let's say Female right's in Uganda. If he sponsored such fund, his wife would be proud of him! Of course, there was the problem when it was time for the charity tax deduction in the yearly tax return, but the receipt might easily get lost sometime before then. Barry Itch decided to go with Adam Smith's proposal.

Barry Itch:

- Okay. I accept your offer, how do we do this business?

Adam Smith:

- Oh, that's quite simple. We go out and have lunch together; after all, we have been working together for five years it's time for us to hang out. You withdraw \$10,000 and donate them to my "charity" you will then get a complimentary MP3player.

Barry Itch:

- I see. Well let's go then

After that, they left for lunch and the monetary exchange.

7.16 Adam Smith rats Barry Itch out

IT WAS 5 PM ON THURSDAY the 5th of September 2013, and Adam Smith was indeed happy with his day. He had managed to solicit a \$10,000 bribe from his Nemesis at work Barry Itch, and the best of it was that he would rat Barry Itch out anyway! After all, Adam had made several copies of the recording between Barry Itch and Michael Fuller so giving one of them away was not a big deal. He had also learned from John Dean's mistake when it came to soliciting massive bribes in cash. Knowing that the banknotes he received from Barry Itch could be traceable, he chose a straightforward course of action to remedy this issue. By going around to different bars and put a lot of notes on the poker machines, playing a few games and then asking the devices to pay out the remainder. By doing this, he would have all the money in new notes as well as receipts on his winnings in case someone was to ask him why he had thousands of dollars in cash at his place. Happy with his choice Adam Smith walked into the internal investigations office at Redfern and filed a case against Barry Itch.

7.17 Barry Itch resigns

IT WAS 7 PM, AND BARRY Itch had had a long and troublesome day at work. As If getting blackmailed for a large sum of money by the idiot Adam Smith was not bad enough, he was also criticised for the inadequate level on the report he handed in, to the chief of the police. This criticism was strictly speaking a direct consequence of the interruption Adam Smith had caused on his work and Barry Itch was determined to get his revenge on Adam Smith someday soon. The chief of police also informed Barry that John Dean was arrested for sabotaging the investigation and leaking case files to Michael Fuller which meant that the CSMI was in worse shape than ever in spite of all his efforts to improve the organisation. When Barry Itch believed that the day could not get any worse, he received proof of the opposite when the New South Wales Minister for Policy and Emergency services Michael Lawson called him.

Michael Lawson:

- Hi, Barry. You have had a few terrible days down at CSMI, haven't you?

Barry Itch:

- Well, I must admit you are right, but I can assure you that I have the situation under control and that I don't expect anymore more issues.

Michael Lawson:

- No matter how much I would love to believe you, Barry, I just cannot. A couple of minutes ago internal investigations received a recording of a conversation between you and Michael Fuller.

- Somehow they found the content of this recording urgent enough to interrupt my speech in front of the New South Wales cabinet, and frankly speaking I understand why.

Barry Itch:

- But sir, that recording is taken out of context.

Michael Lawson:

- Well, Barry, I cannot see any context where it's okay that a director of a branch of the police is letting one of his detective's get away with a severe crime. Of course, the cover-up is even worse in this case as the man you covered for is now suspected of three murders and two attempted murders.

- I am sorry Barry, but there is nothing I can do to help you, the internal investigations are not going to let this one pass, so it's probably in the best interest for both of us if you come to my office and sign your resignation.

Barry Itch sighed heavily out of resignation. He should have seen Adam Smith's deceit coming a long way, but he did not. Anyway, there was nothing to do with Adam Smith now, because if he tried striking back telling the minister about how he bribed one of his policemen to keep his mouth shut, well it would just strike back at him. Barry Itch knew that the recording was not enough to get him convicted in a court of law but also understood that with all the attention he would get when his way of managing the CSMI became public, he would be forced to quit the job anyway. And by resigning the post now on his behalf at least, he saved himself from public battering and could more easily score another excellent job for a private security company in the future.

Barry Itch:

- I accept, you offer and will resign immediately

Michael Lawson:

- Great, there will be a press conference tomorrow at 10 am at Governor Macquarie Tower. See you then

- Oh and I am sorry that thing's ended this way Barry, I know you have been working harder than any other director for the police, but sometimes hard work is just not enough.

Chapter 8 Darkness unfolds



8.1 A new leadership of Central Sydney Murder Investigations department

It was the week before the election and the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency services Michael Lawson was overlooking his strategy in cooperation with his chief strategist Melanie Stephenson. The scandal at Central Sydney Murder Investigations where former star detective of CS-MI team 1 Michael Fuller was facing charges for a series of assassinations and police inspector John Dean was facing charges for sabotaging the investigation had led to the resignation of Barry Itch, the director of CSMI. Due to these scandals, the confidence in the police was at a record low level, which was terrible news for the minister of the police one week before the election.

Michael Lawson:

- Hi, Melanie, good morning. Don't tell me how the polls are going; I am sure I don't want to know.

Melanie Stephenson:

- Well, you are becoming historic in a way, but I guess being memorable for being the elected minister who gets the least votes ever in re-election is not what you want to be.

- It's a shame really because we did some significant changes to the police during your years in office, but they people will forget them due to this debacle.

Michael Lawson:

- Well, it's a shame, but who said anything about history being fair. Speaking of which, can you suggest any radical changes I can do to the police now that I am guaranteed not to win the election.

Melanie Stephenson:

- I do have some suggestions that would make you historical in a more positive way. You can be the first minister of police who appointed an aboriginal person to a director role within the police. Furthermore, you can nominate the youngest woman ever to be a police detective.

- Here are the files of Dwayne Uluru a prominent aboriginal detective whom I suggest to be the next director of CSMI and Samantha Robinson an up-and-coming female police assistant who I recommend will be the new detective of CSMI team 1

Michael Lawson had a quick look through the two files his chief strategist provided. From a competency point of view he believed that there would be more suitable candidates to fill the positions but just promoting the most qualified candidates would not make him historical in any way, so the suggestion certainly sounded like a great plan from a political point of view.

Michael Lawson:

- Well, Melanie, it's an interesting idea, but I have some questions. CSMI team five which has been led by Dwayne Uluru for the last four years has the worst statistics of all groups, why would I pick Dwayne Uluru? Furthermore, the files say that Samantha Robinson has only been with CSMI team 1 for seven months and are still ranked as a police assistant. Why would she be promoted straight up to detective?

Melanie Stephenson:

- Well, see it this way. You might get a lot of female and aboriginal voters if you support a woman and an indigenous Australian. If

they do not work out in their new positions and you lose the election, then it's your successors' headache to fire them. After all firing the first aboriginal director of a branch of the police. It would seem a bit racist and illegitimate to some groups.

Michael Lawson:

- What about James Locker, the current detective of CSMI team 1?

Melanie Stephenson:

- Well, he is only on a provisional contract for that role, and I am sure you will get a public understanding of a point of view that a person with proven mental issues is not suitable to lead a team.

Michael Lawson:

- You have convinced me. Let's go ahead with these suggested changes. Dwayne Uluru's first task while he is to appoint his successor in team 5, as that question is not as politically relevant.

After deciding on these changes Michael Lawson and Melanie Stephenson contacted the high command of the New South Wales police to have the changes implemented. They soon found out that both Samantha Robinson and Dwayne Uluru happily accepted their promotions.

8.2 Rebecca Bell seeks comfort from Samantha Robinson

IT WAS THE 10th of September 2013 and one week had passed since the arrest of Michael Fuller. During this time his daughter Rebecca Bell had been living in denial and hoping that it all would be a mistake and that the court would release her dad from all charges, or at least all the severe ones, she had no trouble believing that he had been driving while drunk. When Samantha Robinson's first decision as the newly appointed detective for team 1 one of

CSMI was to hand over the case to the district attorney. The finalised police report indicated that Samantha believed that they had enough evidence to get a conviction against Michael Fuller which came as a decisive blow against Rebecca Bell's hopes about everything turning out fine in the end. Her first reaction when Samantha Robinson told her about the decision was to cry and call Samantha Robinson a fucking traitor who betrayed her and her dad. After the initial response she calmed down, and the following conversation took place between them.

Rebecca Bell:

- I am sorry for what I said before; this just came as such a shock for me. The entire concept of my dad committing several murders is just so unreal to me, so I hoped it would just be a nightmare from which I could wake up. Your decision to hand over the case to the district attorney proves that I am probably not going to wake up from it...

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I know it's probably not any comfort for you, but it was a hard decision for me to make as well... I like your dad, and my gut feeling tells me that he is somehow innocent.

- But I can't let my sympathies prevent me from doing my job, and my job is to present the court with the most likely suspect for a case and then it's up to them to decide whether he is guilty or not. If I was to determine who was guilty or not, I would be too biased and would not be able to do my job.

Rebecca Bell:

- Yes, I know that I am soon finished with my police studies after all.

- But I would still love to talk to him if I only could understand why...

Samantha Robinson:

- Well you know he will have visitor restrictions until after the trial, but I know what you can do meanwhile, that he would appreciate.

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh, what is that?

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, he told me after I notified him that his case would be handed over to the DA that he hoped that you would go on the whiskey tour to Great Britain and Ireland with his tickets now that he can't go. He reckons that it would be an excellent way for you to get closer to each other although you are apart.

Rebecca Bell:

- Well, I don't know. I have never been a great fan of whiskey, the taste is disgusting.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I don't think you need to be a fan of whiskey to enjoy this tour. You will see a lot of beautiful and exciting places accompanied by the yellow leaves of the British autumn.

- Besides, I think a holiday would do you good to get away from your sad situation at the moment. Who knows when you get back in three weeks' time you might have come to terms with the entire situation.

Rebecca Bell:

- Yeah, I guess you are right.

- Um, would you like to go with me? It would be awesome to go on a holiday with you since we never had a chance to do that back in the days when we were together.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I would love to, but I just got my promotion and can't leave now. Besides, I have a boyfriend now, so it would not be the same as if we had gone back then...

Rebecca Bell:

- I also have kind of a "partner, " but that fact is only making me feel worse. You see I know he's swamped for a couple of weeks, but still, he should be there for me in a situation like this!

Samantha Robinson

- Yeah, I agree with you. You should dump this bastard. Oh, this is making me so angry; I want to confront the asshole for doing this to you! What is JP short for so I can find him and yell at him?

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh the same old Samantha, coming to my rescue. I always liked that part of you, you know.

- His name is James Pierce, or his real family name is not Pierce, but he wants to change it to get a new start.

- Hmm if I can only remember what his real family name is...

- Oh, now I remember it's Locker.

Samantha Robinson:

- James Locker!?! That's the guy who was appointed provisional detective for my team after your father left the police force. He is at

the to hospital after being badly poisoned, allegedly by your dad. He is still recovering.

Rebecca Bell:

- Oh really? I didn't know what he does for work really; he is quite mysterious.

Samantha Robinson:

- Okay, I see, well I have a picture of him on my phone... wait...
- Is this the guy you have been seeing?

Rebecca Bell:

- Yes, that's him!

- So my dad poisoned him? That's horrible. We should see him at the hospital!

Samantha Robinson:

- I don't think that's a good idea. You see the poison has left him a mental wreck.

- Thomas and his friend Adam went to the psychiatric ward the other day, and he specifically told them that he did not want to meet anyone until his mind was right. I think we better respect that...

Rebecca Bell:

- But what should I do then?

Samantha Robinson:

- Just go to Great Britain on the tour your dad gave you. The trip leaves on Friday morning and is three weeks long, by the time you

get back I am sure James Locker will be feeling better and would love to see you.

Rebecca Bell:

- Okay. I would love to be there for him, but I guess you are right. But tell him I miss him if you meet him!

Samantha Robinson:

- I sure will have a great trip, honey.

After Rebecca Bell left, Samantha Robinson felt very confused. Why had James Locker used another family name in his relation with Rebecca Bell? Why had he gone after a lot of women while in Asia if he had a potential girlfriend at home and most interesting of it all why hadn't he told anyone about it? She realised that she did not know James Locker well enough to answer these questions, so she called Thomas Anderson for answers.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hi, Sammy. How were things with Rebecca she must be having a hard time with her dad accused of several murders?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah, she was devastated at first and blamed me for not betraying her father, but she came to her senses and realised I was only doing my job.

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah and you are doing it well.

Samantha Robinson:

- I am happy you see things that way.

Thomas Anderson:

- No worries! Still up for dinner tonight?

Samantha Robinson:

- Yeah, I am. I just found out some bizarre things about James Locker, that I can't get off my mind. Maybe you can help me out and explain since you have known for a while?!

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah almost four years, and been close friends most of the time, so I am the right source for information.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, I just found out that the guy Rebecca has been dating JP, is James Locker, just that he used the name James Pierce instead. They have been seeing each other on and off for three months now. What do you know about this?

Thomas Anderson:

- Oh, I have heard James Locker use the name James Pierce sometimes when he gets drunk. Apparently it some ancestor to him. He gets mad when he uses that name, at times crazy in a positive way as in doing unexpected fun things and sometimes in a wrong way as in borderline psychotic.

- When it comes to why he has kept it a secret, I guess he just feels vulnerable and doesn't want to risk becoming embarrassed in front of his friends if it does not work out. Or maybe he is not sure that she is the one for him?

Samantha Robinson:

- But do you think he is good for Rebecca, Adam told me James fucked a lot of women in Asia?

Thomas Anderson:

- Well, that is true, but then again you said the last time you had sex with Rebecca was about one month ago, and they were dating back then as well. I guess we should just let them figure out their relationship on their own.

- As for chemistry wise I think she is a good match for him at least, she reminds me a lot of his ex-girlfriend in looks and personality, the only real difference I can figure is that they are different races, Emily was South East Asian while I would guess Rebecca is Nordic.

Samantha Robinson:

- Well, can you at least talk to him? Rebecca means the world to me, and I don't want her to be hurt.

Thomas Anderson:

- Sure. I'll tell him Rebecca is an awesome girl and he should go all in on her.

- Is there Something else?

Samantha Robinson:

- No that's all for now. See you tonight.

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah, you too.

8.3 James Locker leaves the mental asylum

IT WAS A SUNNY DAY the 24th of September 2013 when James Locker declared fully recovered and was able to leave the Blue Mountains Mental

ward where he was submitted three earlier. Three weeks was an unusually long recovery time from a Xeniantipsyche overdose but bearing James Locker's history of mental illness in mind his doctors preferred playing things safe. He was met up by Adam Smith and Thomas Anderson.

Adam Smith:

- Look who is back from the dead! I am sure you were healthy as a horse after two days and were too busy banging crazy chicks to leave or even have time to hang out with your friends who go all the way out here to see you!

James Locker:

- Sorry to disappoint you Adam but if you ever get submitted here you won't get laid with any women, as the male and female wards are separated.

- Although as I have said many times, any woman who wants to have sex with you must be crazy. So you know more insane people than I do, even though I spent the last three weeks' in a mental hospital!

Thomas Anderson:

- Ha-ha, the old James is back. God, I have missed our trinity chemistry.

James Locker:

- Yeah so have I, you are indeed better than the demons from hell that kept me company for the first week in there.

Adam Smith:

- I am honoured to hear that.
- Should we drive you home?

James Locker:

- Nope, let's enjoy the nature, after having seen it for three weeks while being locked up, I reckon it's time to enjoy it now that I am free. Besides, it's better for you if we have some wilderness fun here as well.

Adam Smith:

- Sure let's go.

For a couple of hours, they walked around in the mountainous paths of the Blue Mountains. The smell of vaporised eucalyptus was lying thick over the mountains this day which gave them their characteristic fragrance and bluish fog. After a couple of hours of bushwalking, the sun was starting to set, and they decided to drive back home. Before dropping of James Locker, Thomas Anderson remembered his promise to Samantha Robinson to talk to James Locker about his relationship with Rebecca Bell.

Thomas Anderson:

- Hey, James, I hope you are not blaming Rebecca for what happened to you because it's not her fault...

James Locker:

- Rebecca?

Thomas Anderson:

- Yeah I mean she can't help that Michael broke into your house and poisoned you, it would be mean if you held her responsible.

James Locker:

- Oh yeah, Michael Fuller's daughter. Yes, of course, I don't hold her responsible, why would she think I do?

Thomas Anderson:

- Great.

- And Rebecca wants you to know that she is sorry that she did not visit you at the hospital, she felt terrible about it, but Samantha told her that you did not want visitors at the time and she felt obliged to respect your wish after what happened.

James Locker:

- Oh, that's sweet of her, no I am not angry about that, I did not want anyone to see me in that condition.

Thomas Anderson:

- And finally Rebecca is sorry that she could not meet up with you today, but she did not know when you would leave the hospital and she did not want to miss out on the British Isles tour. But she misses you and is longing to see you as soon as she gets back if you still want to meet her.

James Locker:

- Um okay...

- Yeah, sure I can meet her if that is important to her...

- I am getting quite tired now, but thank you for today it was great hanging out with you two guys again.

After leaving the car, James Locker went into his place; made some tea and watched some television. It had been a beautiful day, and it felt great to finally be out of the mental institution again so he could get on with life but what the fuck had Thomas Anderson been talking about in the end? Why all this talk about Rebecca Bell, Michael Fuller's daughter? Had he even met that woman? From the way, Thomas Anderson spoke about her sending her

regards and all it seemed like they were very close but James Locker could not even recall that they had ever met. Apparently, they must have crossed paths at some stage, and apparently, he had made a great impression on her, but it was still all in all very strange.

After thinking about it for a while, he decided that it was a mystery that would probably be solved once Rebecca Bell got home. If she wanted to meet up and discuss what had happened, she would probably be a lot better at explaining things than Thomas Anderson just was. Feeling very tired all of a sudden James Locker decided to go for an early night's sleep.

8.4 Darkness unfolds

JAMES LOCKER FELT LIKE he was falling and then felt hitting the ground and waking up. He reflected that the concept of dying in a dream and waking up was one of the themes of the blockbuster *"Inception"* that he had seen in the cinema a few years earlier. James felt more awake than he had felt for a very long time. He watched his nightstand clock. With eerie red light, it showed 3.00AM. Déjà vu, he always woke up precisely at 3.00AM. It was not 3ish. It was always 3.00AM sharp. What significance did this exact hour have to him? He could hear noises from the basement, but how could that be? The door to the cellar had been locked all year, and he had not been down since. Yes, when was the last time he went down there?

James Locker felt petrified all of a sudden. What if Michael Fuller was not the killer? He recalled someone being in the room with him the day he got poisoned. That blurry mysterious someone left only moments before a squad of police officers and paramedics entered his house and took him to the hospital. James Locker got a hunch that this man indeed was the killer, and now this mystery man was in his home, coming after him. He knew the logical choice would be to run but he could not, his curiosity was too intense, he had to know who it was. All of a sudden James Locker realised that it was the same feeling that drove Michael Fuller down the abyss. Michael Fuller never had any logical reason to visit all the murder victims, but his desire within to never give up and keep looking for the answers had been his downfall. Would James Locker fall into the same trap or would he flee and run away? But the mysterious killer had come to his house this night for a

reason, and James Locker felt compelled to find out what that reason was. It was evidently not to kill him as the killer would have had several chances to do so already.

James Locker was contemplating his options: He could either leave the building, calling the police or he could grab his gun and confront the eluding shadow of death that had been haunting him for the last couple of months. If he called the police the killer would know, he would hear it, and he would most likely manage to escape once again. But if he confronted the man he could finally get the answers. The answers to everything he had been asking himself throughout the years. James Locker decided to take his gun and go down and confront his menace once and for all.

James Locker was sneaking down the staircase. For every step he took the weird noise from below grew louder and more impactful. With a few more steps to go James froze from fear. His mind wanted to go on, but his body just refused to follow. Through bringing together all his strength, he managed to go the last few steps and entered the basement. At first, he saw nothing strange, but then he flicked the light switch. He looked up and saw the mirror. In the reflection, he saw him.

James Locker:

- You! I saw you before when I was a poisoned a few weeks ago.

James Pierce:

- Fool! I have always been with you. And you have seen me a lot of times although you denied it.

- Tell me James, how you usually feel when you watch your reflection?

James Locker:

- I... I feel very uncomfortable... I have never been able to put my finger on why...

James Pierce:

- Well, I can tell you, James. When you see your reflection you see me, but you deny it, and the denying of your true nature is like a splinter in your mind driving you sleepless and insane!

James Locker:

- But who are you? And why are you doing this?

James Pierce:

- The why am I here question... The question that drove you here but as you will soon be aware the least relevant question.

James Locker:

- ...

James Pierce:

- Okay, I will make it easy for you fool; you are going to die anyway so you might as well know the truth! I will tell you who I am, why I did all of this, and how I did it!

James Pierce:

- My name is James Pierce, and I am you. But a better you, a stronger you, a version of you that deserves to live while you deserve to die!

- I have been your guardian all your life.

- Do you remember all those episodes throughout your life where you remember one thing but all of your friends were remembering an entirely different story?

James Locker:

- Yes, I must admit I have had a lot of those episodes in my life...

- What about them?

James Pierce:

- Well, all those were when I was in control. For your mind to deny my existence, your subconscious made up a lot of memories that never took place. Like in Asia you thought you were dating the same woman all the time right?

James Locker:

- Yes... Was I not?

James Pierce:

- No, you were not. Your friends' description about dozens of women were more on the money. A quite impressive feat by me if I am allowed to say it myself...

James Locker:

- But I don't understand... Why would I block memories of having sex with various women on my holiday, I have never been morally against promiscuous behaviour?

James Pierce:

- Well... because you almost killed those women and I had to intervene for nothing wrong to happen... But for that to make any sense at all, let's reverse the tape to Christmas time last year. Do you remember anything peculiar happening

James Locker:

- Well, I proposed to Emily, and she said yes, it was the happiest time of my life.

James Pierce:

- Yes and the most joyous time of my life as well, you see as your protector. I finally felt relieved of the pressure and let my guard down...

- Do you remember what happened on the 2nd of January this year?

James Locker:

- Well, that day is very blurry. But I remember having a great fight with Emily, she left with my money, and I never saw her again...

James Pierce:

- Yes wasn't this a highly unexpected chain of events? From happy and getting married one week to big fight and never seeing each other one week later?

James Locker:

- Of course, it was. Why do you think I have been obsessing over it for the last nine months?

James Pierce:

- Great! Do you want to see the same reflection you saw in this mirror the 2nd of January 2013 03.00AM?

James Locker:

- Yes!

All of a sudden the reflection changed in front of James Locker's eyes. His eyes looked crazier as if he was in an insane rage. Worst of all he could see the corpse of Emily Luong in the corner. After a few seconds, the reflection changed back to the present again.

James Pierce:

- Was the truth what you had hoped you would find?

James Locker:

- Did I kill Emily? Why would I do that? I loved her more than anything else in the world

James Pierce:

- Well, that's what I thought as well. And I hope that you finally loving someone out of the bottom of your heart would eventually beat the darkness you have within yourself. I call him the beast...

James Locker:

- What? I don't follow you at all?

James Pierce:

- Well, it's hard for me to tell what happened, after all, I let go for a week, and it was like a long dreamless sleep. But somehow you unleashed the darkness within you and killed Emily in this very basement the 2nd of January at 3.00AM.

- But this is what I have managed to puzzle together of the event.

- Emily was working as a receptionist at Antonio DiMaestro's business at the time. One day you must have found a costly necklace given to her by him.

- From this event, your jealousy grew uncontrollably, and it turned out killing her.

James Locker:

- I... I am not a very jealous person...

James Pierce:

- That's because I am in control, pulling strings in the background.

- Anyway, that night after disposing of Emily's body I made up my mind.

- I decided that I should aim to break free. After all, I gave you freedom, and that's how you repaid me. You were not worthy of my protection anymore.

- So that's why I stole all your money and stored them in your basement, the place I knew your subconscious would never let you visit.

- Or as you rationalised it "I have lost my key, and there is no point breaking the lock to the door as there is nothing of value down there anyway."

James Locker:

- But this was nine months ago. All of this mess started pretty recently. Why the waiting?

James Pierce:

- A valid question which leads us to the question of why.

- You see when I first started out my life as a "free" man I realised that I did not have any reason for living. You see I thought for all those years that I could never experience feelings. If I were unable to feel anything, it seemed reasonable to be your guardian instead of breaking free to live my own life.

- But then it just happened, like an angel from above, she appeared in my life. Yes, I am talking about Rebecca, Who to you is no one in particular and you only vaguely know her as Michael Fuller's daughter. To me, however, she is perfection. My one true love. She

is my Emily Luong but like I am the better version of you, she is the better version of Emily.

James Locker:

- That explains a lot! I remember when I saw pictures of her at Michael's house how beautiful and familiar she was and I found it odd because I thought I have barely met her in my life. It was even more confusing when Thomas spoke about her to me yesterday!

James Pierce:

- Exactly. But you have experienced this feeling a lot of time in your life haven't you? When someone talks about something that makes no sense whatsoever. That's why you played along, wasn't it?

James Locker:

- Yes that was my reason, and indeed it has happened a lot in my life, I thought it was a normal feeling.

James Pierce:

- Well, at least you know better now.

- Anyway, when I met Rebecca, I made up my mind: That I would break free. I had to do this if ever is going to have a functioning relationship with her as I am the one loving her while you are still dwelling in the past.

- But I have been petrified... of you and the monster that lives within you. So I am doing this, both for my sake to be able to be with Rebecca and also for her sake as I can't let you hurt her as you did to Emily.

James Locker:

- I don't understand really. How did you plan to break free? And how has the last month's event anything to do with all of this?

James Pierce:

- I was planning to break free by showing you what kind of person you are...

- A murderous psychotic son of a bitch...

- And as we have our first real conversation in your life, I must say that I have finally managed to break down your shell of denial that you have covered yourself in all of your life.

- Like an epiphany, the solution came to me...

- I could reveal your true self to you, by killing the people you secretly dreamt about murdering and then have you chase me, or to be more precise chase your own shadow.

James Locker:

- So that's why it felt like a Déjà vu every time I arrived at a crime scene?

James Pierce:

- Yes, you are catching on just fine.

- The first one to die was Antonio DiMaestro. What you might not realise is that you and Antonio have met several times throughout the years, after all, Emily worked for him.

- I promised him safe passage to smuggle cocaine into the country, and he willingly took me out on his yacht alone.

- You see contrary to what you might see in American action-movies, the average drug lord doesn't have a militia armed with

submachine guns. At least not in Australia, as drug trafficking here is mostly a question of stealth.

- While on the yacht I convinced him that Mauricio Lopez was planning to kill him to take control over his business. That way I managed to get a hitman sent to kill Mauricio who was the second objective on my list...

- After organising the hit on Mauricio, I shot Antonio. I cut off his head, gathered some of his blood in a blood bag, and took his keys and mobile phone as well as all the money he had brought for the drugs. I then sent an encrypted message to the cartel he was supposed to do business with stating that he had a tail and the deal was off.

- I then sank the yacht and left on the motorised dinky that was the ships emergency vessel.

James Locker:

- But this is so strange? So no-one ever filed a report about Antonio being missing or started looking for him?

James Pierce:

- Oh, I did send out encrypted messages from Antonio's E-mail account. I am not sure if everyone bought it, but then again what would they do? Go to the police and file a missing person report about their boss, husband or sugar daddy that disappeared on his yacht while doing drug deals?

James Locker:

- Yeah, I guess that would not make any sense to anyone. But they could still have gone after you?

James Pierce:

- Well, the mob is not an open organisation like the police. Most people only know a few individuals in the group and the rest is shrouded in obscurity. Secrecy is necessary for their line of business.

- The only one who knew about me except for Antonio was Mauricio Lopez, and he was about to get killed by Angelo Ramirez.

- I witnessed the murder over the CCTV, and then I sent the instructions on how Angelo Ramirez would receive his money. We never met, and he thought he was working for Antonio DiMaestro all the time.

- My next step was to hack the security system and steal the drugs. Knowing about Michael Fuller's obsession with his work I knew that he sooner or later would get to know about Antonio DiMaestro and chase his shadow.

James Locker:

- But how did you know that our team would get this assignment?

James Pierce:

- That was not too hard really. I know how CSMI works and I know what criteria they use for distributing the cases.

- But I never planned for Angelo Ramirez to get killed at the airport, my plan was for him to get back safely to Colombia and then Michael Fuller would be obsessed with the case in general and Antonio in specific as his company owned the warehouse where Mauricio Lopez died.

- Sadly my plans came to a halt when you decided to join our friends for a month in Asia.

- It was a very draining period of my life, partly because I missed Rebecca a lot, but mostly because I had to be constantly aware of and ready to react on your madness when you brought all of those women back to your place.

- Anyway, I came back to Sydney, and I wasted no time in my next objective. To get rid of Michael Fuller.

James Locker:

- Why did you want to get rid of Michael Fuller?

James Pierce:

- Well, for two reasons. First of all, I respected him, and I feared him. If there is anyone in this city that would be able to uncover my plot it was Michael Fuller.

- Secondly, I wanted you to be more active in the search for me. With Michael out of the picture, you would be expected to take more responsibility for the case. If it was as a detective or as an inspector serving under John Dean, well it did not matter to me.

- So I sprayed in some sleep-inducing gas into the house of Michael Fuller to ensure he would not wake up. Then I walked in carrying a gas mask and planted the cocaine with his fingerprints on it. Furthermore, I planted a program that made it look like the hacking of the security cameras at Antonio's warehouse was Michael's doing. I also took some fragments of his skin and some hairs to plant the evidence we already had in the case file.

James Locker:

- But this does not make any sense at all? Michael Fuller was never arrested for stealing cocaine from a crime scene; he resigned due to health issues.

James Pierce:

- Yes. Who could see that one coming?
- It was indeed a fascinating turn of events which as it turned out only served to make things a lot more interesting.
- You see my original plan was to frame Antonio DiMaestro for the murders while you subconsciously understood that something was not right.
- But with Michael Fuller still in the picture, I changed my plan to framing Michael who in this scenario made a failed attempt at framing Antonio.
- To be honest, it was not hard work framing him; his obsession was his downfall.
- You see I reckon most people would just let things go if they somehow got away with having a lot of cocaine at home. But not Michael Fuller, he got obsessed instead, and he hunted the man who was behind the Lopez murder, Antonio DiMaestro.
- And without his job which was what had held him together for all these years, he fell into the abyss which in Michael's case was embodied by alcohol.
- Fuelled by alcohol driven paranoia, he was an easy target to frame and so I did.

James Locker:

- But how did you frame him, were you following him around everywhere?

James Pierce:

- No to be fair, it was a lot easier than that. You see we have his number on your phone right.

James Locker:

- Yes of course. I have been working under the man for ages.

James Pierce:

- Indeed you have...

- So I sent him a text message with a tracking virus from MY phone.

- I am sure you can imagine getting one of those texts when you are drunk. Takes ages to load and then there is no message. You would get frustrated, but most likely you would forget about it quickly.

James Locker:

- Well probably yes...

James Pierce:

- And that is perhaps how Michael reacted.

- Anyway, I now had a trace on his phone, and knowing him well, I knew he would go to the DiMaestro mansion to confront Miranda DiMaestro about Antonio sooner or later.

James Locker:

- Yes so far I am with you, and I guess I could anticipate such irrational behaviour from Michael as well. But that does not answer the question: why on earth did you/I want Miranda DiMaestro dead?

James Pierce:

- Why?!

- Am I supposed to tell you why?

- You were in love; I left you unaccompanied for one week. It ended with you killing Emily, the supposed love of your life.

- And when I tried recreating the week I left you unsupervised, I found a notebook with some insane jealousy driven delusional notes about Emily, Antonio, Miranda, and Jessica all being plotting against you and conspiring against your happiness. I assumed this was a list of people you wanted dead as you killed Emily. I reckoned to finish the record while having you hunting yourself would finally get you to realise who you were and stop denying my existence.

- As it turned out, my plan failed miserably.

- In spite of killing every target from your list and leaving a blood-stained message on your bathroom mirror, you still refused to see the truth.

- So I went to plan B, where I gradually got you addicted to the drug Xeniantipsyche by replacing your medicine with it...

- I then planted the drug along with all the other evidence at Michael Fuller's place the same night I shot the other Emily Luong.

James Locker:

- But why did you do that?

James Pierce:

- Please, James, you have to ask more specific questions.

- I planted the evidence at Michael's place to frame him and make you/me seem like an innocent victim.

- I shot the other Emily Luong to induce psychosis in you. Deep down, you did know that the Emily you loved could not be the victim, but you could not understand why you knew that and that knowledge drove you crazy.

- I knew that this experience would either make you realise what you did or make you take large quantities of "medication." You choose the latter, and that choice almost killed us both, but at least it led to you finally realising the truth

James Locker:

- But why didn't you murder the other Emily? Was that a message as well?

James Pierce:

- I am sure people will speculate about it, but to be honest, it was just a coincidence. My gun jammed after the first shot, and I could hear the police coming. Killing Emily wasn't important; I knew you would get the message anyway.

- So James any final questions before we proceed?

James Locker:

- I don't know; I am so overwhelmed by all of this, I need time to think and reflect on what you just told me

James Pierce:

- Enough of that bullshit, I am sick of waiting for you to figure things out. I have been waiting for 32 years and very eagerly the last nine months.

James Locker:

- Okay then... What do you want me to do then? Just tell me, and we'll take it from there?

James Pierce:

- I want you to acknowledge my existence! I want you to step back and be my guardian while I enjoy life with Rebecca. After all, I have everything to live for while you have nothing!

James Locker:

- But you are a cold-blooded monster. There is no way I am letting you get away with everything you have done. I will stop you!

All of a sudden, James Locker felt an uncontrollable rage taking over his body. His pulse rose, and his vision stained with blood. He raised his gun and aimed it at his reflection.

James Locker:

- I am going to kill you here and now. Any last words, you piece of shit!?

James Pierce:

- If I may ask, how do you think shooting a mirror with a gun would kill someone that is a manifestation of your subconscious?

Hearing these words of reason and logic James Locker fell into tears. His enemy was right of course. He would never be able to kill that monster that would take over his life more and more until nothing good in him remained. He was crying heavily and felt completely left out to the powers of the world. He could feel the hand of James Pierce on his shoulder. James Pierce spoke to him with a gentle voice to comfort him.

James Pierce:

- Don't worry James; everything will be fine, I will look after us both from now on.

James Locker made his decision. He looked deeply into his reflection and stared intensely into his enemy's eyes. He turned the gun towards his head and spoke:

James Locker:

- I will end this right now! If the only way to kill you is to kill me, so be it!

James Pierce:

- So you are choosing to kill the both of us? But why we make such a good team you and I?

James Locker:

- I won't even discuss this with you anymore as you said a few minutes ago, the time for thinking has passed, it's time to take action.

James Locker pulled the trigger and fell dead to the ground...

James Pierce woke up from the shock a few minutes later. He was looking at the corpse of James Locker. The corpse had a bullet wound to the head and although James Pierce knew that the body of James Locker was only a manifestation of his subconscious it still gave him great satisfaction to see it lying there on the basement floor. James Pierce reflected that it indeed had been a satisfying feeling to die or in this case "*die*" Logically he was unhurt, an unloaded pistol was not doing any damage after all. But still due to the significant connection between the soul and the body James Pierce had felt dying for a couple of minutes because James Locker whom he shared the body with indeed died. Feeling a great relief that things were finally over, James Pierce suddenly felt a tsunami of tiredness drenching his body. He went back to his bed where he had the best night's sleep he had had in all of his life...

The end

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