



The

Undertaker

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3'500 words

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by TAF KADD

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I was literally minding my business when I got apprehended by a rozzar in the person of one PC Jackson Fyfe.

That PC sure was one lucky bastard. A wrong idea on his part -- like making me open the trunk of my car -- would have meant his instant demise. Instead, he wrote me down for parking in a loading zone and lack of a driver's licence. And maybe for being a foreigner.

So there we were, the three of us: PC Fyfe, silly little me and my cover, in danger of getting blown. Because I was below my usual standard of flying under the radar.

You need to know, even though it says 'undertaker' on my business card, you don't turn to me when a member of your family has deceased.

In fact, you don't come to me at all. I come to you.

And then you're in big trouble.

Sounds unbelievable, doesn't it, when at the moment it's my door being knocked on by trouble?

You're doubtless wondering how I got into that predicament. Well, to understand the chain of events that brought me here, we first need to step back together and ask ourselves two fundamental questions:

Who am I?

And what the fuck went wrong?

* * *

My father was Ambassador to a small country I will not name, to protect the innocent -- and myself. Routinely after three or four years, we moved to another location. One place often differing greatly from the other.

This was always extremely exciting and instructive. It helped me stay open-minded. But it was also the reason I never had any friends.

Not that I was a loner.

I was always popular in the schools I had to attend and my life ran on a busy schedule. Socially as well as sexually.

It became clear early in my life that I had the knack of making people feel at ease in my company. I always had lots of acquaintances -- but never a genuine friend.

But for the two exceptions to the rule. No, I will not name them. Again, to protect the innocent. And in one case, the somewhat less innocent.

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Being the child -- and only remaining family -- to an Ambassador, I got to go to more functions than I cared to go to. And I found out that as representative of your country you get to meet bad people. More often than you might think.

My father was being forced to protect these people from the law. Sometimes at gunpoint. It made me feel both helpless and angry.

First, I pitied my father. Then I began despising him for letting these bastards treat him like shit.

Then one day some especially ruthless guy forced my father to help him at gunpoint to my head.

It was then that I realised what kind of pressure my father must have been under all those years. Immediately my contempt for him turned into the love and admiration he undoubtedly deserved.

That was also the moment I made a decision which would change my life. And the lives of countless other people.

* * *

I had spent a lot of my spare time on the townships during our time in South Africa, where barkers confronted me for my short and slender physique. Some of them possessed a bite, too. Unfortunately, despite my natural charms and good looks, I did not always escape their fangs without a bruise or two.

Sometimes those were quite a bother to hide from my father.

It was only natural then that I would pick up a good fighting knowledge in Musangwe and Dlala 'nduku, better known as Zulu stick-fighting.

When I finally saw the light at gunpoint in my father's office, it was but a small step to become an expert in martial arts. Though an arduous and tedious one.

I did this according to the original philosophy of Jun Fan's Jeet Kune Do. Roughly paraphrased as 'Pick the best, cut the rest'. I incorporated Capoeira, Krav Maga and many others. These I distilled and formed into a whole much greater than the sum of its parts.

But not only did I become a lean, mean fighting machine.

I used my father's connections without his knowledge to get intensive practice in a profusion of useful crafts and techniques.

In short, by the age of 22, I had become what you might call the ultimate Super-Ninja. To use a well-worn cliché.

This, in retrospect, may be yet another reason for my lack of friends.

* * *

On my twenty-second birthday, I graduated myself from my 'basic training high school' since I had decided it was finally time to go out and do the good deed I had sworn myself to do.

Namely, to undertake to rid the planet of bad people.

Like any good apprentice, I started slow and took it easy.

My first customer was some little local number, quite a nobody actually, on my scale, who had the misfortune of simple bad timing.

The greedy bastard had just got himself into the papers on a matter of forcibly evicting some folks from one of his buildings. Were it not for the hint of an alleged suspicion of a connection with some bigger local allegedly bad people, I would never have taken notice.

As it is, I did take notice and after some research, I decided he was my man, my first-timer, the one to lose my virginity to, so to speak.

Let's call him Adam, why don't we?

I took up work at a cleaning company. After a short while, I got myself appointed to the team assigned to Adam's office building.

I took him out late one evening while he was taking a crap. With a G-string. Guitar, not panty.

Piece of pie.

* * *

After I had taken care of four more customers in similar clean transactions, I needed a break. So I went to my old townships in South Africa.

There I had some old unfinished private matters to attend to. Five, to be exact.

I attended to them with a relish I would not have believed possible. And which would not have been possible without my apprenticeship with 'Adam', 'Brian', 'Chris', 'Donny' and 'Eric'. My personal 'Boy Group', so to speak.

Things got quite messy with the 'Township Five' and I am not proud of that. But I have always been rather lax concerning my private life, letting things run their own way. In contrast to my usual high standard of spotless and tidy business dealings, as honed to perfection with my 'Boy Group'.

So I just might have got into a kind of frenzy that is quite the reverse of my usual cool, calm and collected self that handles the business side of my... well, business.

Dealing with those private duties done me a lot of good. It was as though I had shaken an entire mountain range off my soul. I felt alive and radiant again.

Even though my suffering at their hands could obviously not be reversed by closing those affairs, so to speak, I still had the sense of a renewed cleanliness.

Like I had altogether washed away the deep scars of old wounds somehow.

* * *

But enough about me. Now on to the minor matter of what the fuck went wrong.

I will have to elaborate a bit, so please bear with me.

You may have heard of the Medellín Cartel and Pablo Escobar. Well, who hasn't? Welcome to the club.

But have you also heard of 'Rubin'? I thought not.

That guy was just a footnote on the hunt for Escobar, a mere drudge. He was a pilot to the drug traffickers, who at one point incurred the wrath of his capo and had to flee for his life. And who then helped the U.S. officials in hunting down one of the worst and most brutal criminals of our time.

Or so it seemed.

However, there was something about his story which didn't quite add up. To me, anyway.

That got me onto his trail.

Why the bloody fuck should he care whom Escobar had kidnapped? Surely the husband of a sister of one of the Ochoa Vásquez brothers working for Escobar could not have been worth risking his life over?

If Rubin had not suspected Escobar from the beginning, I would have understood his snooping around. But with Escobar the main and only suspect, who in his right mind would have gone digging up the dirt?

Suddenly I began doubting the whole background story about Rubin and how he was just a pilot, a low underling, and fearing for his life and therefore willing to help with the hunt.

What if there was more to Rubin than meets the drugged eye?

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I thought Rubin might have been a mole for the CIA. Or any other three-letter agency. But none of my research yielded even the slightest hint of any traces into that direction.

Then I broadened my investigation and stirred the waters in a big way.

And hey presto, pieces started falling into place. Sooner than you could say 'Pablo Escobar may have been a murderous drug trafficking bastard, but it looks like Rubin might be an even bigger son of a psychopath'.

Evidence began showing up and the picture became clearer and clearer still.

The picture of the man behind it all. He of the long strings, the puppeteer.

In fact, Rubin was more than simply the secret actual head of the Medellín Cartel. He was the Capo of all the Columbian drug cartels altogether.

And he was also one of the head honchos behind worldwide organised crime!

I uncovered close ties to the Ndrangheta, the Yamaguchi-gumi, the Solntsevskaya Bratva, the MS-13, the 18th Street Gang, the Sun Yee On -- to name a few. And when I say close ties, I mean the 'I-say-do-and-you-jump-to-attention-and-then-do-it' kind of ties.

This was the summit, the pinnacle, the zenith of organised crime!

I had finally found it.

Now to get rid of it. In an orderly way. As fast as possible.

* * *

Get this straight, though. I would not kill Rubin. Well, not just like that, anyway. I needed him to give me names, places, dates, everything.

I needed to discover his weak spot. The one point in space and time when and where he would be the most vulnerable.

Then dope him, grab him and take him to a hideout.

Ask him nicely to tell me every minute detail about these little ventures of his. Hoping to god he'd remain silent as a post.

Ask him again, this time the way he deserves it. Make various copies of the spilled beans, just in case.

Have some fun with him. Memorise every detail of what he told me.

Have some more fun with him.

Do I sound cruel here? So be it. Just think of all the pain and misery he had caused.

Do him in and hand him over, then devise a fresh course of action based on Rubin's cues.

Get it? Rubin's cues. Rubik's cube? Oh, never mind.

I was going to take out that murderous circle one by one from the top.

Ambitious? Nah, just a dream about to come true, that's all.

* * *

I won't bore you with a detailed explanation of how I found Rubin's weak spot. I had to pull a few strings, call in some old debts and ask one or two of my two friends for help, but hey, that's all in a day's work.

When the great day came, I was so tired from all the preparations during the previous days that -- despite my excitement -- I almost overslept.

When I finally did wake up, it was already half past seven in the evening. I was to be at the hotel at eight o'clock so I was in a real hurry to get out of the tiny two-room apartment I had rented for this occasion and into the rented dented white '85 Hyundai Stellar that was to be my getaway car.

I pushed the Stellar to the legally allowed limits all the way to the hotel where Rubin was blissfully unaware of his role in the coming kidnap. I arrived in the nick of planned time.

Of course, somebody had taken the parking space. The one I had planned and explicitly paid for. Bugger the English for honesty and reliability.

Well, I would not be long anyway, so I just parked in front of the back entrance.

Into the hotel. Into the staff dressing room. Change into the room service dress laid out for me. Thank god that worked out at least.

It was a tight fit, though. That's what you get from relying on others.

* * *

When I arrived at the kitchen, I could hear them already take the order.

Whew, close, but not too close. I waited a few seconds and went in.

With an 'I'll take that', I grabbed the trolley, pushed it out of the kitchen and into the staff lift, quick as a cricket, before anyone could notice anything amiss about me.

On the way up, I poured a good dose of a strong laxative over the Caesar's salad. And into the Sea Breeze, just to be on the safe side.

And judging from her choice of drink, the lady wouldn't mind losing a few 'calories'.

Out of the lift, two doors to the right, a knock on the door.

'Room service.'

* * *

As I enter the room, they are on the sofa, untangling from a not yet risqué situation.

As she gets up, I can see the expected cliché unfurl in front of me. Long blonde hair, blue eyes, a smile any man would kill or die for, full bosom, long legs.

Oh, my god. Those legs. They seem to be endless. She must be six feet tall.

Him I will not describe, you'll soon be seeing the gory pictures.

And she is American, apparently.

'Hi, honey. Oh, my, that looks great, I'm sure. Thank you ever so much.'

Well, there is nothing to thank me for, honey. Just eat or drink up, there's a good little girlie.

I pick up my tip and leave. Handsome tip, have to give him that.

Rubin must have felt lucky tonight.

* * *

In a corner of the dimly lit corridor in front of his suite, I am now waiting for the telltale sounds of someone urgently following nature's call. Hoping no one will show up and detect me.

Finally. I wait a few seconds more. Then I knock.

'Room service. Passing through. Can I get you anything?'

Angry shout. 'Yes, come in.'

He is pacing the room. As I enter, he turns to me, furious.

'You! What the fuck have you brought us? My girlfriend, she is sick and very much so.'

I can't see her. Good sign.

'She probably needs a doctor.'

He looks towards the bathroom, which is my cue. In one swift move, I pull the syringe out of the breast pocket of my livery and stick it forcefully into his shoulder.

He looks at me, all surprised, yet already unable to make a sound. Slowly and softly, I let him collapse onto the sofa.

Now. Quick.

From under the trolley, I take out a blanket and wrap him up.

I remove the dishes and glasses from the trolley. I pick him up and drape him across the trolley.

I open the door. Check the corridor. All clear.

I pull the trolley outside and over to the laundry chute.

I heave him into the laundry chute and return the trolley into the room, careful to replace the dishes and glasses as they had been before.

Now. Me into the laundry chute. Down, down, down. Bang onto him. Feet ahead, so it hurts him more than me.

Out of the laundry trolley. Push the trolley out of the laundry room to my car. Open the trunk. Lift blanket wrapped Rubin out of the trolley and lower him into the trunk. Close the trunk.

Whew, that was the hard part and much easier than I feared, actually.

Trolley back into the laundry room. Me into staff dressing room.

Out of room service uniform. Out of staff dressing room. Out of the hotel.

Straight into the friendly and very welcoming open arms of the law.

* * *

'What's going on here?'

'Sorry, officer. I don't know what you mean.'

'Is that your car?' pointing at my rented dented white '85 Hyundai Stellar.

'Well, it's rented. But technically, yeah...'

'Do you realise you parked it in a loading zone?'

'Yes, I do, officer. But I haven't parked it longer than ten minutes and--'

'When I walked through here ten minutes ago, this car had already been here. Therefore, you must have parked it for over ten minutes.'

'I'm sorry, officer. I was just in and out, really. It can hardly have been much over ten minutes, maybe eleven, twelve tops. You must have passed right after I parked and come back again just as I came out.'

'That is as may be. However, ten minutes is the limit by law, so I have to fine you. May I see your driver's licence, please?'

'Absolutely.'

Only then did I realise I must have left my wallet at the apartment.

My beautiful black leather wallet. Containing a masterfully crafted fake driver's licence. Which I had payed handsomely for.

Fuck!

* * *

'I am sorry, I can't find my wallet, but I think I know what happened. I was in a hurry to leave, so I probably must have forgotten it in my flat.'

I turn on my charms, full power. Look at his name tag.

'PC Fyfe, is it? Jackson Fyfe? What a lovely name.' Big smile. 'Tell you what, Constable Fyfe. May I call you Jackson? Constable Jackson. Why don't we drive over to my place where I

can show you everything? My licence and anything else you would like to see...' A wink. 'And I promise to drive you back here later on.'

'Hmm... we don't usually do this. But I think it won't hurt to make an exception, for once.'

Yeah, I'm sure it won't hurt. 'That's absolutely grand.' A wee touch on his arm. 'Thank you very much, Constable Jackson.'

In we get. My car. Over we drive. My apartment. Out we get. My car. In we get. My apartment.

After I've shown him what he came for -- my driver's licence, that is -- I get him to sit down on the couch.

In the kitchen, I prepare his special drink. Then I sit down next to him, real close like, and watch him drink it.

'Now, Mr Officer, sir. Let me explain a few things. That lovely drink you just had contained a powerful drug. You will find you cannot move at the moment, but please do not panic, everything will be fine again in a few hours.'

I move him into a lying position, prop up his feet and put a pillow under his head.

'There. You're all comfy, now.'

I sit myself on a chair where he can see me. I put my mobile on the table.

'Now, while we are waiting for the phone to ring, telling me that my hideout is ready and stage two of my plan can begin, I might as well tell you a little about myself. So you understand why the two of us are here together.'

I can see his pupils dilate.

'Oh dear, no, no, no. Don't panic. You will fall asleep shortly and once you wake up again, you won't remember a thing that's happened in the last, oh, two or three hours. There will be absolutely no need for me to kill you, so relax.'

* * *

And sometime later, of course, is when you stepped into the frame.

Just as I opened the door to my apartment, you had to walk past it -- in those bloody silent sneakers of yours -- and see the packaged PC lying on the floor, ready for moving.

Talk about a case of 'wrong place, wrong time'. You forced me to change my plan and proceedings -- in rather a hurry, I might add. I also had to tell my story twice. I do hope you found it interesting.

So there we all are. Crisis over, plan well under way. Everything's hunky dory.

I'll retire to my hideout shortly, have a few weeks of fun, then present Rubin to the public.

With proof definite of his guilt. And my trademark card.

Here, let me show you one. Go on, take a good look at it.

The next time you see one of those, you'll either be dead within seconds or a cop on a case wondering whether the stiff deserved it.

Gotta dash. I'll leave you in the company of this trustworthy officer, however, so you needn't worry.

When you two lovebirds wake up, it'll feel like a rather good night out that neither of you can quite account for. Your guilty little secret.

Oh, and obviously -- you will both forget all of this.

