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About 1000 words

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OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

by Hannah Dolan

The dinner went well.

Mr. Night talked to Ms. Connors about the deal, the future of her company and how it would benefit. Mr. Night had walked her to her hotel room. Ms. Connors said she would talk it over with her boss, Mr. Roman, and get back to him. She had little doubts about the deal and believed Mr. Roman would approve.

As Mr. Night drove through the quiet uptown streets, he thought about Ms. Connors. She was pleasant, slightly flirtatious, and knew how to conduct business. She was smart and had clearly assessed all the pros and cons of the deal. She was good at what she did.

It was a shame the deal was non-existent, and she would be dead within the hour.

* * *

Ms. Connors stepped out of the shower. She wiped away the steam on the mirror, combed out her hair, and got dressed.

She walked to the window and closed the curtains, leaving a large enough gap for anyone looking in to see whether the lights were on or not.

Ms. Connors walked to her bag and pulled out her gun. She checked to see that it was loaded and attached the silencer. She climbed into bed, placing the gun next to her and reached for her

tablet on the nightstand. She opened the hotel's security feed she had tapped into when she first arrived and turned off the lights.

She waited for Mr. Night to arrive.

She enjoyed his company at dinner, despite the lies he fed her all night. He was charming, a little soft spoken, and mild mannered. He was good at what he did.

Too bad he would be dead before the night was over.

* * *

Mr. Night pulled into the parking lot of Ms. Connors' hotel. He drove around the building, looking up to the third floor. He found room 325's window, the lights were out. He parked and walked to the side door.

He took out the key card he had picked off Ms. Connors earlier that night and let himself into the hotel.

* * *

Ms. Connors watched as Mr. Night inserted the card, she had let him pick off of her earlier into the reader. She had roughly three minutes before he would insert that same card into the reader at her door.

She closed the feed and placed the tablet on the nightstand.

She grabbed her gun and rolled onto her side.

* * *

Mr. Night took the stairs, his steps echoing in the stairwell. He arrived at the third floor and continued on.

The hallway looked like every other hotel he'd ever been in. The same bland wallpaper and the same muted patterned carpet and the same clean hotel smell.

Room 325 came up on his right. Mr. Night checked the hall to make sure he was alone.

No one else was in sight.

He pressed his ear to the door.

Silence.

He put the key card into the reader and the door unlocked with a gentle beep. He opened the door just enough to get through then closed it quietly behind him.

He stood by the door, listening for any indication that Ms. Conners was awake while letting his eyes adjust to the darkness.

Once he was sure she was sleeping, he continued on.

He walked further into the room, picking up the pillow from the armchair as he passed it.

As he approached the bed, he could see the outline of Ms. Conners laying on her side, her back to him. The sound of her deep, slow breaths filled the otherwise quiet room.

This was too easy.

He walked to the side of the bed and she shifted. He froze waiting for her to settle. After she stilled, Mr. Night reached to place the pillow over Ms. Conners' face.

"Don't make another move, Mr. Night," Ms. Conners said.

Mr. Night froze, then he noticed the glint of the silencer peeking out from under Ms. Conners' arm.

"Drop it," she said.

He did.

Ms. Conners turned and sat facing him.

"The guns too."

Mr. Night reached into his waistband and pulled out his gun and dropped it.

She kicked the gun away.

“The other one too, Mr. Night.”

He pulled the gun that he kept strapped to his ankle out and dropped it. He stayed kneeling on the ground.

Ms. Conners kicked the other gun away as well. She then leaned over and turned on the lamp. The room lit up with a dim, yellow light.

“Well this is quite the surprise, Ms. Conners,” Mr. Night said. He reached into his shoe.

“I knew Roman wouldn’t let me live after our latest business venture. He’s smart enough to not leave loose ends, but he was dumb enough to think I wouldn’t have realized that.”

“I can see, you’re much smarter than either of us had realized.”

“I’ve been in my line a work for a while, Mr. Night. Dealing with people like you and Roman are nothing but an occupational hazard,” Ms. Conners said with a smile.

Mr. Night smiled back, “I understand that, my occupation is a hazard,” he felt the handle of the small switchblade pressed between his shoe and foot. “So, what now? You kill me then go after Roman?”

“Exactly.”

Mr. Night grinned, shifting the blade into his palm. “Do you want some help with that? For the right price, of course.”

“Part of what makes me so efficient is that I don’t leave my work for someone else to do. And in this business, it’s deadly to do so.”

“So, no deal?”

“Afraid not, Mr. Night. But I did have fun tonight. Even though you’re not as discreet as you might think, you are quite good at what you do.”

“Just not good enough,” Mr. Night dropped the knife.

“Just not good enough.”

Ms. Conners pulled the trigger.