

Toil

By

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INT. OFFICE - DAY

A small room with blinds blocking out daylight. Muffled dance music is playing somewhere in the building.

ALEX, a tired woman of 30 in creased hoody and jeans, sits stiffly on the edge of a chair. A door opens to her left.

From the inner room emerges ARNO, a middle-aged man in a shabby suit. He's being shown out by MARCUS, a younger, handsome man.

ARNO

It's not like I'm unwilling. It just takes time to get that much.

MARCUS

Don't give in to despair. You'll think of something.

Arno leaves. Seeing Alex, Marcus speaks to someone off-screen inside the inner room.

MARCUS

Alex is here. Phil's girl.

Marcus nods Alex inside.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

An sparsely furnished office with a desk and filing cabinet. Alex sits down opposite the BOSS, a middle-aged man in a sharp suit.

BOSS

Alex. Guess you know who I am. Sit down. Drink?

Alex shakes her head 'no'.

BOSS

So. You were Phil's girlfriend?

ALEX

Phil was my husband.

BOSS

Right. Of course. What was it- Leukaemia?

ALEX

Pneumonia.

(CONTINUED)

BOSS

Shit. We were sorry to- Nice guy, Phil. Not always the smartest, you know, at a card table-

ALEX

Look, I don't want to get into that. Yes, Phil had debts. No, he didn't plan on dying. You know I can't pay them, and I know you people won't let this lie. You've made that clear. So fine. I'll do what I have to to just draw a line under this whole thing.

BOSS

Fair enough. Marcus will go over everything with you. Tonight is best. You can do tonight?

Alex nods her head 'yes'.

BOSS

Tonight then. After dark. You done this before?

Alex shakes her head 'no'.

BOSS

Well. Don't think about it. It's just a job that needs to be done. Do you have a gun?

ALEX

No.

BOSS

Marcus will sort that too. Do you have a car?

ALEX

No.

BOSS

Can you drive a car?

Alex shakes her head, 'no'.

BOSS (CONT.)

Well, you'll need to get away quick. I can't stress that enough. Get it done and get far away fast.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I'll sort something out.

BOSS

Because the worst mistake you can make-

ALEX

I said I'll sort it.

The Boss shifts in his seat, appraising her.

BOSS

Women don't normally do this sort of thing. Sure you're up to it? We've got other work for you.

ALEX

I just want to draw a line under it. Just to pay the debt.

BOSS

Right then. Any questions?

ALEX

What did he do?

The Boss lights a cigar.

BOSS

The mark? Lots of people borrow money from me. Some people think they can take my money and not pay it back. Don't want to work for it. Don't want to work for it like you are. That's when it goes wrong for a person. That's when you come home to an unfriendly stranger. Don't lose this.

He produces a manilla folder from a drawer and hands it to her. She briefly looks inside: a photo of a smiling middle aged man.

BOSS (CONT.)

That's that then. Let's draw a line under it.

She puts the folder in a tote bag, stands and is shown out by Marcus, who follows her.

EXT. CANAL - DAY

Alex follows Marcus along the canal.

EXT. YARD - DAY

A neglected part of the city. Alex is pointing her fingers, in the shape of a gun, at Marcus's chest. He nods, and moves her hand to his forehead.

MARCUS

Or the brain. Try not to touch anything. If you do, wipe it clean. Wipe the gun and drop it somewhere like a river. Not somewhere people walk dogs.

Alex nods.

MARCUS (CONT.)

What else? If there are people around cover your face. Try not to go in and out the front door. It's a block of flats so who knows. Be cautious.

Marcus' phone rings and he answers, turning his back on Alex. While he is talking - terse business talk - Alex points her finger at his heart again. She makes an almost inaudible gunshot noise.

He hangs up and turns back round.

MARCUS

Alright, my guy can give you a gun if you go and see him in an hour. We'll cover the cost, seeing as Phil was a friend.

Alex is distracted, thinking about something else.

MARCUS (CONT.)

All right? No second thoughts?

ALEX

Phil owed eleven thousand.

MARCUS

Right.

ALEX

I bet that's less than you'd pay for this. I bet you'd pay at least a couple of grand more.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

Now hold on. You're not a professional. You're working off a debt.

ALEX

I'm still doing a job. I want three grand as well as the clean slate.

MARCUS

After the mess Phil left-

ALEX

I had nothing to do with it.

Marcus hesitates, then arrives at his decision.

MARCUS

All right. I'll check with the boss.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A tidy apartment with thick carpets, decor sparse but tasteful. A KNOCK at the chained door. AUSTIN (30s), in board shorts, t-shirt and socks, answers it to Alex.

AUSTIN

Yeah?

ALEX

Hi, Marcus said to-

AUSTIN

Sure. Come in. Shoes off, if you don't mind.

Alex enters, leaving her shoes with others by the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

In front an enormous muted TV, Austin and Alex are looking into a suitcase full of guns. Austin picks them up as he speaks, showing them to Alex.

AUSTIN

There's your snub-nosed revolver, easier to conceal, but you'll have to be close. The M9 holds more rounds, but some people don't like them, I dunno. The Glock is reliable, will keep its worth if you look after it. Uh...yeah, well, take your pick.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

They all look...the revolver.

AUSTIN

Sure.

Austin hands Alex the revolver and closes the suitcase. He slides a lockbox from under the TV and unlocks it. The box is full of ammunition.

Alex awkwardly tests the weight of the gun in her hand.

AUSTIN

Now the snub takes .38 special. Chamber holds five, but if you need more than that I can give you more.

ALEX

Five is fine.

AUSTIN

All right. Five rounds of .38, call it 25 quid.

ALEX

Oh, Marcus said to charge it to them.

AUSTIN

Marcus said to charge the gun to them. Didn't say ammo.

ALEX

I don't have any money, I can't pay.

AUSTIN

I don't care who pays.

ALEX

Marcus will cover it, I know that's what he meant.

AUSTIN

It's not what he said.

ALEX

Look it can't be a big deal. I'm only gonna use it once anyway-

AUSTIN

Jesus, don't tell me. Don't ever tell me.

(CONTINUED)

Austin runs a hand through his hair, considering.

AUSTIN (CONT.)

Fine, take the rounds. But you'd better be square with Marcus or this'll come back to you, not me.

Austin packs the suitcase up. Alex practices holding the gun out at arm's length and aiming. A TODDLER wanders into the room, into her sights.

Startled, Alex lowers the gun, then puts it down on the sofa. The toddler's MOTHER, following him, picks him up and takes him back out.

AUSTIN

I'll be a minute.
(To Alex)
Let me show you out.

Alex puts the gun in her bag and follows Austin to the door.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Later that afternoon. Pedestrians and a few shops. Alex is sitting on a bench eating a homemade sandwich.

A TEENAGER rides a bike to a chicken shop, drops it on the ground and goes inside to join a group of his FRIENDS.

Alex looks between the bike and the chicken shop. The teenagers are ordering. She stands, throws her sandwich wrapper in a bin, paces evenly towards the bike and casually picks it up from the ground.

She doesn't turn around. She pushes it a few steps away, and then gets on. The Teenager runs outside.

TEENAGER

Oi!

As he runs after her, Alex pedals fiercely to get away. More people come from the shop. The Teenager approaches - his hand reaches her shoulder - but she pulls away from him in time.

She turns off the main street and into smaller avenues, checking behind her to make sure she has not been followed.

EXT. YARD - DUSK

Behind a warehouse. Alex is crouching on the floor, the bike against a wall. She loads the rounds into her gun with careful but shaking hands. In front of her, the folder is open to the face of her Target.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

The quiet, clean street is mostly empty. Alex arrives on her bike outside the address from the folder. A ground floor apartment faces onto the street, and through the sliding glass door Alex sees the TARGET, placidly watching television.

Down the street, a stranger's laugh startles her. She turns off the bike's light and pushes the bike down the street.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Alex enters the narrow passage and leaves the bike there. She puts her hood up, checks the way is clear, and walks back to the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alex cautiously approaches the glass door. In front of it is a balcony at about head height. From the shadows, she watches the Target inside.

He drunkenly gulps some vodka. After a time, he gets to his feet and leaves the front room, moving out of sight.

Alex moves towards the window. She reaches up to the balcony, but finds the tote bag awkward.

She takes out the gun, puts it in her hoody pocket, and hides the tote bag beneath the balcony. She lifts herself up the railings onto the balcony.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alex slides open the glass door, careful not to make a noise. The apartment is messy and full of books. The TV fills the room with blue light and noise. Alex slowly creeps through the front room, hearing movement in the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Several doors coming off the hall. Alex pokes her head through the front room doorway. A door opens, and she snaps back out of sight. The Target emerges from a bedroom and enters the bathroom, leaving the door slightly ajar. The sound of a running tap.

Alex strides through the hallway and enters the bathroom. BAM! A flash of gunfire. BAM! Another. No movement.

The running tap is turned off. Alex clumsily exits the bathroom, and steadies herself on the hallway wall. She hunches over, breathes deeply, and covers her mouth, distraught. For a moment she almost collapses.

She pulls it together and walks back through the front room.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Alex climbs down the balcony and gets away from the apartment as fast as she can without running. She puts her hoody up and keeps her face down, striding and trying to control her breath.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

She appears at the entrance to the passage. As she is about to turn in, she sees that her bike is now surrounded by the teenagers from earlier.

She walks away down the street, not turning back, terrified.

When she reaches a corner, she runs as fast as she can.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

A mostly empty bus. Alex sits near the back and gazes out of the window, wired. She breathes evenly to calm herself.

Then panic hits her. She has forgotten her bag. She darts up, rings the bell, waits for the bus to stop, and runs off.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Out of breath, Alex arrives back outside the apartment. She lingers in the shadows, checking the coast is clear.

She creeps towards the balcony, staying low, and quietly retrieves the bag. Standing up, she sees through the glass door a glamorous WOMAN, distraught, speaking on the phone. The room still lit by TV light.

Alex slowly backs away, then turns and paces quickly down the pavement.

EXT. RAILWAY - NIGHT

A road high above a railway line. Alex is wiping the gun with her sleeve. She gently places it on the wall separating the road and the precipice. As she is about to push it off-

TEENAGER

Oi!

She turns around. The Teenager is riding his bike fast towards her, flanked by his friends.

TEENAGER

Did you steal my fucking bike?

He approaches and jumps off his bike, letting it clatter to the ground. He's coming straight for her.

Alex picks up the gun and spins around, aiming it at him. Startled, they all back off and scatter.

When they have disappeared, she puts the gun back on the wall. Almost shoves it. Doesn't. She puts the gun back in her pocket.

Alex picks up the bike from the floor and rides away on it.

EXT. BINS - NIGHT

Alex pushes the bike next to some wheelie bins and hides it behind them. She wipes the handlebars, seat and frame with the sleeve of her hoody, and walks away casually.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small apartment with some books stacked on the floor. Cheap furniture and fittings. Alex enters, locks the door behind her, and drops the bag to the floor. She presses her head against the door, fighting exhaustion.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alex enters and flicks on the light.

At the table sits Arno, sadly pointing a Glock at her. Alex doesn't move. Her hand is in her pocket.