

Mistaken Identity

As the subway bounced along his eyes were watching every single movement of the elderly man sitting across the aisle from him. He was watching every single movement, recording, and analyzing all the incoming data. He was trying to make a decision. It was a life and death decision.

The word “assassin” comes from a tribe in Lebanon who sold the men as contract killers. It was the principal income generator for the tribe. The question that kept rolling around in his mind was “Is all that he was?” He has been a Navy Seal. He almost made the Olympic shooting team when he was a student at Yale. He had a graduate degree in linguistics and spoke three languages fluently. He was voted in “most likely to succeed” in high school. He had all of that going for him and here he is working for the CIA as a hit man.

His eyes went around the subway in case he had to make the score “cowboy style”. That wasn’t the plan. However the order was assigned, “deadly dangerous, at - any cost eliminate”. Farther down the car there was a hooker in a black mini skirt with yellow hose and purple hair. She was chewing gum with her mouth open and holding a bag of groceries in her lap. Hookers have to go to the grocery store also. There were three of punk kids sitting down by the other exit door. At the other end of the subway was a tired looking overweight past middle aged black woman who was dozing off. She was probably a late night maid just getting off work.

The job hadn’t been bad until a month ago when he made a mistake. "Mistaken Identity", that was how they stamped the file. But he couldn’t get past it. There was the look of surprise in the man’s eyes when he’d killed him. It kept coming back in his dreams every night. He’d taken to driving by the guy's house. Then he started staking it out. There was the black wreath on the door and little kids were coming and going. He’d done a full bio on the guy. He knew

everything about him. He even knew his wife's middle name. He'd cash his retirement and set up a phony off shore insurance company who sent the victim's widow enough money to pay for their home and live on for a few years. No one ever questioned where a life insurance check came from so he was safe there. The victim was just some poor son of a bitch whose bad luck was he looked like someone else. The people he killed were was an enemy of the United States. Right? Isn't that what this is all about? Protecting the country.... right?

Wonder who decides exactly who gets whacked and who doesn't? One thing is for sure they don't write any of that down anywhere. He wasn't going to do that again. Never would he mistake someone innocent. Never again would he kill the wrong guy.

He was watching every detail of his target. The subway was slowing down. It was then the old man coughed up some junk from inside his smoke ridden lungs. He pulled an old yellowish handkerchief out of his pocket he only got ninety percent of it wiped off his lips and chin. That was it! That was the proof he wasn't the assignment. No one could act that well except an actor. Not the kind of people who kill people or get killed for a living.

The train slowed to a stop. He was relieved that it was over. His palms had been sweating and the white priest's collar that he wore as a disguise was soaked. There was a twitch in his stomach that had started when he found out about the "mistaken identity". It wouldn't go away. He threw up half of what little he ate these days. He couldn't sleep because he didn't want to. He didn't want that dream which was in slow motion of him killing the wrong person. There was the look in that guy's eyes as if were as if he was saying, "Why? Why are you doing this to me? I'm a nobody going home to my nobody world."

But since he'd been learning about the man he wrongly killed and his family he had realized how much this man had that he didn't. He had a world of people that he loved and loved

him. In only a moment he had taken that world away from him. It was as simple as one, two, and three. That's the way it works in the "shooter" business. Shots one and two go into the center of the chest and the third shot is in the skull as insurance.

One, two, three, then the lights are out. The bad guy loses. Right? The country is safe for Mom, baseball and apple pie. Maybe that was what he needed, apple pie.

The train came to its stop the old man left. He waited a couple of moments to separate them and then he left. His stomach cramps were backing off. He headed for the men's room to wash his face with cold water. He was doing that ten times a day now. It was over for the day. The old man wasn't the target in disguise. He was merely an old man with spit still on his lips and chin. He was an old man going to his nobody world.

He held his face down close to the sink as he splashed the water again and again trying to restore some feeling in his skin. His face was going numb. It seemed all of his was going numb except his brain which was a source of constant pain.

When he looked up he was aware of someone standing back to his left. In the sink three down were the coat, the hairpiece and mustache of the old man on the train. He looked up in the mirror and saw the raised pistol pointed at the center of his back. Part of the actor's gum that had held the disguise on was still on the younger man's face.

In slow motion he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He didn't open them until the sound of a pistol rang out, once..... twice..... He didn't understand why he didn't feel the bullets entering his body. All that energy contained in the lead bullet had to be absorbed somewhere or the bullet kept going. Was it possible that he was that numb? That he couldn't even feel his own death?

Opening his eyes he saw his assassin face down in a growing pool of blood. Behind him, holding a pistol was the hooker with the purple hose and hair from the train. Her grocery sack that had the pistol inside she dropped after the second shot. Then she stepped closer to the man on the floor and pointing the pistol directly at his head fired another shot. She looked up and said, “At headquarters they thought you might be losing it. Driving by that guy’s house and all. I’m your cover. Looks like you’re set for early retirement.”

He was so shaken he could barely walk. She took him by the arm and as they walked out of the men’s room in the desolate train station she glanced back at the lifeless bleeding form on the floor, “mistaken identityhuh?” The hooker helping the stricken priest in a desolate subway station made quite a striking picture.

Meanwhile the three punk teenagers had decided that the cleaning lady was worth mugging since she must have some cash on her. The cleaning lady was keeping in the shadows as she followed the hooker and the priest. She had her hand on the machine gun in her large purse as the three punk kids approached her from behind. They are in for quite a surprise.