



TERMINAL

STRATEGY

He just wanted to retire -
They just wouldn't listen ...

A thriller by
MAX DRAYTON

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There is language, violence and scenes of adult nature.

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Part Three of a Trilogy

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SAMPLE OF: TERMINAL STRATEGY

A bounty has been put on the capture alive of the assassin, Jagger Gilchrist. Bounty Hunters are circling. Like the American, Cruz.

CRUZ

Do you know what pisses me off? Everything.

When I have high expectations, I expect gratification. Who doesn't? But these days, who gives a shit about levels of service and value for money? No one.

I try my best to be patient and give everyone a chance to give me what I expect but does that happen often enough?

No!

Like the Lawyer crud, Levy. He took an instant dislike to me. Why? Because I'm foreign. I know his type. Quick to judge. Books and their covers. All that crap. Hell, I hated him too. He knew that as well.

To look at me you can see I'm a nice guy. Sure I have a dress style that not everyone goes for. But it is style, my friend. Not victims of the fashion machine. Women wearing the McCartneys and Jimmy the Shoes. Because "someone" said they had to wear.

I like my look. My cowboy boots, £3,000. Not Jimmy the Shoes. Handmade, matching snakeskin belt too. Leather vest, black, of course. Black leather trousers, you have to, right? Black silk shirt and western tie. Black again. Yes, right, black. Underwear you ask? Tommy Hilfiger. My concession to fashion is only based on comfort. I like comfort. Yes, black too.

I didn't like, Levy. Gave me attitude all the time. Credentials he wanted. What's with the credentials? Can I do the job, yes? Have I done this before, yes? Ten dead people in the ground. Of course, I've done this before.

Bounty Hunting is not legal in the UK. However, rewards can be offered for information. To prove that information, sometimes you have to make

contact with the target. If you have contact, then you can make a citizen's arrest and take them to the police. That's if you're inclined to. To "find" a body is not illegal. You can claim self-defence, but not *too* often. Sometimes I've used 'he was dead when I got there'. But you can't use that every time.

I stood over the geek and slapped down my business card. I smiled as he read it. It's always satisfying to see people's reactions. 'Have Gun, Can Travel'. He almost smiled and handed the card back to me. I threw it back at him.

Only then, as I began to make him nervous, did he offer me a folder. Information Pack he called it. Pathetic details is what I call it. You see? No one gives proper service anymore. That's all I have to work on, almost nothing!

He didn't want to tell me who else was on this case. Three so far, he eventually said. I had to let go of his tie then. I felt that I might be going a little too far. After all, this was the guy that was going to pay me millions. I would rough him up later if he struggled to pay me.

I saw the relief in his face as I left the office. I got looks from his staff outside too. Had I made that much noise? Did I care? 'Course not.

Only one place to start, last known address. So I hit the road and powered on with my new Mustang GTO. Five litre V8 with all the trimmings. Black, of course. I had the roof up as it was getting into autumn now and I just relaxed to the sound of the twin exhausts and Garth Brooks. Just on the too loud side. I took the Petersfield exit off the A3 and concentrated on the sat nav.

I rent on the South Coast, so this is new territory to me here. Looks a nice place. But I love the country, anyway. I found Clanfield and started to look for the address. It was hard to find. The Post Code was no help.

It took another half hour, and I was getting angry now. Why can't the British signpost everything properly? I found the track that I thought might lead up to the house and left the car on the side of the road. It has all the latest security systems, so I pitied the bastard that tried to steal it.

From out of a hidden compartment under the dashboard I pulled out my Sig and slipped it into my belt. Even after a quick read of this dude's details, I knew he might be a handful. But then, he'd never met me, yet.

The info stated very clearly that this man was wanted alive. Be that as it may, but if the fucker started shooting at me, I was going to shoot back! If he was dead when I got him back, I'd argue my case. Until then, I would be patient, for a while. I would try to keep him alive for questioning.

As I walked up the drive, I began to realise I was wasting my time. From the small amount I'd read it seemed that this was the place he was attacked in before. And he got away. Why would he still be here? I shrugged. There might be something inside that should lead me to him. There usually was.

He most likely high-tailed it out of the house and left everything behind. I would see.

It was getting to dusk, and I thought I'd hang around until it was dark. I went back to the car and sat to wait. I read the rest of the material. I whistled through my teeth when I was reading all about this Magician guy. Talk about a hitman. There were over forty cases that were linked to him. Never ever seen, caught, or even a sniff of who he was. This was going to be a tad more difficult than I thought. I had to make sure I had the right man. But how would I really know?

Using my satellite phone I opened Google Earth to study the ground from the air. This place was a fortress. There were no paths, roads, or tracks other than the main one up to the house. It was supposed to be a farm, but all I saw was one big old house surrounded by solid fencing, alarmed no doubt too, and nature's natural boundaries.

From the trunk I lifted out my rucksack with all my equipment in it. I pulled it into place on my back and set off back up the road. I approached the gate slowly, inched my way along its side and along the fence that went all around the property. Once into denser bushes I tested the fence and found it was not electrified. I understand that to be illegal in this country. For once I was glad of that.

I'm quite a big guy. Six-six and two hundred pounds. But I'm fit and a natural athlete. I eased over the six-foot fence and dropped to the ground. I jogged to the side of the house and made my way around to the rear.

The place was falling apart. If I pushed it, the walls would fall over. The back door was no problem with the picks. I slid an Infra-red viewer over my head and everything turned grey. I made my way slowly and silently through the ground floor. No dishes in the sink. I took the time to open the fridge. It had food in it. Everywhere looked deserted. Whoever lived here was probably not here right now.

I began to relax. I needed to be sure there was no one around before I began my detailed search. That might take hours, or even days if I had the time. Being secure was my first priority.

I made my way up the stairs. Slowly and silently again. I opened a few doors, nothing. I opened the last one on the end and it appeared a larger room. I was about to leave when I noticed something on the bed. A shape. It was someone sleeping. Two forms. Two people sleeping.

Tensing, I paused and waited. They didn't move. They hadn't heard me. What to do next. If this was The Magician and his wife, I'd cracked the case at first attempt. I felt excited. I felt...cheerful. But how to handle it? The man first, He was the most dangerous. I needed to disable him.

I slid the Taser from the back pack and switched it on. There was a faint whine, and I moved nearer the bed. Hit him with it first and be prepared to silence the woman. I could hit her, or if I had the time, use the Taser on her too.

Reaching the bed I pressed the stud.

A bright flash blinded me. I thought the Taser had exploded. I felt movement beside me and reacted accordingly. I leapt to one side and stumbled over some furniture. I felt my shoulder hit a wall which gave way. I found myself falling. I reacted naturally, quickly trying to relax and prepared for the jolt on hitting the ground.

I crashed to earth, and the wind was blown right out of me. I'd landed feet first, I do think I'm part cat. I rolled and took some of the impact out of the fall. My ankle had pain shooting up it, but I kept rolling and pulled off the Infra-red viewer.

Still blinded, I looked around for some idea where I was. In a blur ahead of me I saw the main gate. I ran stumbling towards it and heaved myself over. I heard a clang next to me followed by two others. Someone was shooting at me.

I'd landed awkwardly, my ankle giving way. From now on I could only hobble. There were no more shots, and I reached the Mustang and slid into the driver's seat. I pressed the starter and roared away, my ankle now throbbing like mad. I hoped I wouldn't have to use the brakes too much because it had no function left in it.

I hit the light switch, and the road lit up ahead of me. I was driving blindly and slowed down. I shook my head trying to clear my eyesight. If I was going to be pursued, it would take a while for the guy to get mobile. I made a few turns and finally found a decent road, then a larger one, then the A3. My eyes were getting clearer, so I floored the V8 and made good my escape.

Had I just met The Magician? If I had, I was lucky to get away. He was waiting for me, I'd been suckered into a trap. That wouldn't happen next time.

It would be my turn to fire the shots.

LATER IN THE STORY:

Toni Moss, originally trying to capture Jagger, now is on his side and trying to help in any way she can.

TONI MOSS

Having great sex with a regular boyfriend is useful when lust wins out over practical considerations. But mid-morning, during the week, did seem a little odd.

We originally agreed it was to be that evening. A meal, watch a movie, sex, sleep, get on with our lives the next day. But Ryan changed it to mid-morning, after his late shift at the salt mine. So it came down to...morning sex and get on with our lives. Not even lunch!

I didn't remember him saying he'd started shift work, but Ryan is quite insular. Forgetful might be a better word for it, bone idle more like. Ryan concentrated on one thing at a time. Mostly that thing was himself.

He had some justification, he was a very bright young man. Perhaps not so young at thirty-two, but certainly upwardly mobile in his chosen profession. Not that I'd ever got a clear description of what he did for a living. But certainly, he was a whiz at getting information that I couldn't get through any other sources. The Internet has its limits.

Good looking is a term that's applied by the person doing the looking. For me, he was more...vaguely handsome. Fairly slim built, high cheekbones, short curly hair that fell in unruly locks over his bright blue eyes. He was always smiling. Always happy. Always ready to move on to the next thing he had to do that day.

He lives in a nice flat. Single bedroom, nice outlook over the city. Not an expensive place, but carefully furnished and finished with quality items that made it a home, rather than a house.

After our six minutes and forty seconds on the bed, he was up and into the shower. I was still getting my breath back. When I was with Ryan, I usually had little to do. He made all the headway and the end result was always satisfying for me.

As I lay there looking at the ceiling, which did need painting, I thought....could this be my life? Was he the one? No, was the answer to both. But until something better came along.....

I got out of the bed, picked up my underwear and dragged them all back onto their rightful places.

My leggings seemed to have escaped me and I had to get on my knees to reach them hiding under the bed. I pulled them out and started the awkward process of getting them back on.

As I pulled, a piece of material came away in my hand and I could see it wasn't part of my black tights. It was a black bra. And not mine. Far too big for me.

Who doesn't miss a bra?

I don't know why I was so shocked. Neither of us declared total dedication to each other. Neither said there were no others in our lives. Well, there certainly wasn't in mine. But clearly, Ryan had more than one person he "couldn't live without" in his.

Maybe not just one, either?

It began to explain many things. His obsession with having time for his "mates" had a new connotation to me now. Changing from evening to day, possibly meant he had someone else lined up for tonight.

I could get mad and angry. I could be upset and feel let down, betrayed. But what had really changed in the last few minutes?

Nothing.

No...one thing. I was struggling to analyse this new feeling surging through my core, into my cortex and into my conscious mind. I was glad! I felt a wave of....freedom.

As I pulled on the last of my clothing, I was smiling. It'd just occurred to me that these meetings were becoming....purely functional. Was that what we both wanted? I guess it now was.

The sound of the shower brought me back to reality, and the world surrounded me once again. I stood and breathed in deeply. His aftershave hung in the air, it permeated every pore in the room. But there was now a hint of another fragrance too.

On the side table was his wallet, keys and phone. I picked up the phone. I took an overly dramatic glance towards the bathroom door and clicked through to the contacts menu.

Amy, Sand, Rach, Ems, Bim and J.

I've a good, trained memory. I recorded all the telephone numbers into my memory and put the phone back. On the table was a sheet of paper. I looked at it. Details of two American Bounty Hunters. Only they were listed under Hit Men. It sent a shiver down my spine.

I needed to get this to Jagger as soon as possible.

I carefully laid the bra across my pillow and headed for the door.

As hellos were now so brief and redundant, so goodbyes were no longer necessary.

If you enjoyed this sample please consider reading the whole novel.

www.maxdrayton.co.uk/novels.htm

If you didn't like the sample, please let me know why:

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