

CHAPTER 17

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

"I finally have you where I want you," said Dean Miller, the Gene Hackman-like megalomaniac behind the attack on the Nicaraguan consulate.

"F*** you Miller," came Target's quick-fire response.

"Your quips wont get you out of this one," Miller spat, both figuratively and literally. Target had to admit he was in a bad situation - tied to a chair in Miller's lavishly decorated office with no obvious means of escape. And who could forget Miller's huge Samoan bodyguard, ready and waiting to come charging into the room should his evil employer call for help? John Target - that's who not could.

"Don't even think of escaping," Hackman began, "You see this mirror?" He pointed to an ornate gold-framed mirror on the wall to Target's left.

"Judging by the detail in the carving, I'd say it's the work of Arkady Illych Golov... if I had to guess," Target replied.

"I'm impressed Target. You know your 17th century Russian artisans."

"No more than a passing interest."

"Well I think this piece should hold your interest... given that there's an expert sniper on the other side of that mirror, ready to kill you at the least sign of... stupidity. Yes Target, that mirror is one of a kind, just like everything else in this room."

Hackman stepped to a drinks' table and picked up a bottle of whiskey.

"Brewed at St. Clavert's Monastery on a remote island off Scotland. One of the most sought-after whiskey's in the world... and that was before I had the monks tortured, killed and their brewery burned to the ground."

He smiled, then gestured towards a tall grandfather clock.

"This clock was one of Napoleon's most prized possessions. In his memoirs he mentions how he went so far as to have it shipped to him during the Egyptian campaign."

Miller crossed the room and stood over Target.

"Oh yes Target, the situation in which you find yourself in is quite inescapab-"

BONG!

The grandfather clock chimed the hour - and all hell broke loose!

Before Miller could register what was happening around him he found himself in terrible pain, his legs limp, supported by Target's hands clasped tightly at his collar. Miller looked around the room. The chair to which Target had been tied was in pieces on the floor, with the binding ropes strewn about. The Golov mirror was smashed, broken pieces of glass still around the frame, and the sniper lay dead in the hidden room behind it. His trusty

Samoan bodyguard was crumpled on the floor crying in pain. And worst of all, Target's face was right there before his, smiling smugly.

"What happened?" Miller asked.

REWIND!

"Yes that is the clock that Napoleon took with him for the Egyptian campaign," Target thought, "but if Hackman had taken the time to read Napoleon's memoirs in full he'd know that the Emperor hated that clock - citing the hourly chime as an infuriating distraction during his planning of the rout of Murad Bey's forces at Giza.... but will it be enough to distract the sniper for the instant I need?"

The clock chimed, and Target made his move. He rocked forward, as if to move towards Miller, knowing that the sniper could - and hoping that he would - take his shot. The bullet pierced the priceless mirror and zipped across the room, right through the space where Target's head had been but which was now filled with the rope binding Target's hands behind the chair.

The rope cut, Target kicked the chair to the floor, one wooden leg breaking free and bouncing elastically to where Target caught it and launched it javelin-like through the mirror and into the face of the sniper on the other side.

Crashing through the door, Miller's Samoan bodyguard charged at Target - the bodyguard who Target had recognized the instant he saw him as Charles Atoa, defensive guard for the Toledo Rockets college football team in the first half of the 1987 season. As the lumbering giant approached, like a giant on a train, Target recalled how, lying prone in a foxhole in Lebanon with nothing but his rifle and a walkman radio, he had listened to Atoa's career being cut tragically short in a game against the Miami Hurricanes - his left knee being knocked completely out of joint. The same knee that Target now delivered a second career-ending impact to with his right heel.

With Atoa down, nothing was left between Target's fist and Miller's Gene Hackman-like stomach. Bam! Miller coughed with pain.

"What happened?" Miller asked.

"I killed one guy with a chair and busted another guy's leg," Target replied, "and now I'm going to use what's left of your precious one of a kind mirror to decapitate you with a somersault kick!"

Target shoved Miller against the mirror and pushed him into position, the broken glass around the frame pressing against his neck.

"Wait Target! You think it was me who took Veronica Ice but it wasn't. I can help you! I can tell you who has her."

"So tell me," Target demanded, his face close to Miller's.

"If I tell you, you wont decapitate me?"

"You have my word."

"It was Senator Carder."

Target's eyes burned with rage. To think that he had trusted the Willem Dafoe-like Senator Carder! But it all made perfect sense now.

In a flurry of motion Target tore an ancient tapestry from the back wall, and set about tying the four corners to Hackman's hands and feet, so that he looked like one of those squirrel things that can kind of fly.

"What are you doing Target? You said you wouldn't kill me!"

"No Miller... I said I wouldn't decapitate you."

Target delivered a swift kick to Miller's torso, launching him across the room, and out through the window - the twentieth-story window. The tapestry stayed in tact despite the breaking glass (as Target knew it would, familiar as he was with the quality of twelfth century Moorish cloth work), and Miller began to glide gently towards the ground.

Target walked slowly to Miller's desk. Meanwhile, Miller stopped screaming and realized he would land safely.

"Ha ha ha!" he laughed, "You trusted me you idiot, but I was working with Dafoe all along!"

High above Target tossed and caught the whiskey bottle from the Scottish monastery, now deftly converted into a Molotov cocktail.

"Feel the burn Miller," Target said quietly, not feeling confident enough in the pun to shout it audibly. He threw the bottle and watched it arc towards the oblivious, laughing Miller.

Explosion!

Miller screamed in pain as he slowly fell, burning, towards the ground. Somehow, after a seeming eternity of excruciating pain, it seemed he would not burn to death. He had survived the flames!

"Ha ha ha!" he laughed once more, "You haven't seen the last of-"

The Moorish handiwork finally gave way to the flames, and the parachute was undone. Miller fell the remaining distance and landed hard on the street, apparently dead.

Above, Target was already gone. Target's new target was Senator Carder... perhaps his most deadly target yet.

END OF CHAPTER 17

If you think that Target should track down Senator Carder, turn to chapter 18.

If you think Target should check if Miller survived the fall, turn to chapter 67.