

Bound For Error

Darkness greeted me. A bitter chill wrapped around my body like a vice as my lungs filled with ice-cold water every time I tried to breathe, though my mind and figure were calm. They say you are at your calmest right before you die. I guess you might be wondering how I got into this mess. Well, to understand, we will have to go back a few hours.

It was a day like any other day. Well at least for me, a depressed nineteen-year-old boy. You see, with depression, days kind of start to blend. Chunks of memory start to disappear. I woke up in my sleeping bag where I was lying on the hard cement that held a bridge structure in place. Waking up to this reminded me again that I was homeless. Memories of my own mother shoving my bag full of clothes into my arms and thrusting me out the door onto the lawn of dead grass came to the forefront of my mind.

My own body odor wafted up into my nose from the chasm of the sleeping bag. It hadn't been washed for a multitude of days. Sighing through my nose I heaved my body from the dense terrain that I'd lain on. My bones cracked as I stood. My body had taken a toll because of my situation and the weather, though I wasn't even into my twenties yet. I turned to my right and started digging through my worn brown corduroy bag which held a change of clothes, a plastic bottle of water, and a couple of protein bars I was able to buy with the money I earned the day before I got that bag for my sixteenth birthday from my father. It was the last thing he gave me before everything went downhill.

I shook the memory out of my head before grabbing the change of clothes which consisted of a pair of worn-down blue jeans and a wrinkled gray cotton long-sleeved shirt.

Turning towards the river behind me, clothes in hand, I undressed and rubbed the freezing water onto my skin trying to get rid of the dirt clumping to my body like a leech, along with the rancid odor drifting from me. Once my skin turned pink, I got dressed. As I walked back to my sleeping space I noticed a nicely dressed man standing near my stuff.

"Hello?" I asked as I got closer. The man looked up from the ground at me and stared as I walked up to him. I studied him. He had medium-length dark brown, almost black hair that was pulled up into a small ponytail on the back of his head. The man was dressed in an expensive noir suit with shiny black shoes and sleek black leather gloves. I could only dream of having clothes like him.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

He finally replied with a gravelly voice, "Are you Zachariah Ross?"

I gazed at him for a moment before looking away. I crouched in front of my bag, shoving my clothes into it.

I looked back at him, answering, “Yes that’s me, though I go by Zach.”

The man turned and gazed out toward the river. “I have a job for you.”

This intrigued me. I had been looking for a job for three years. No one wanted to hire someone without experience. Once my father kicked me out it seemed like my life just went downhill.

“What kind of job?” I asked him.

“The kind of job that pays someone a lot of money,” he answered.

Thoughts started running through my head. How much money? What would I do at this job? Who was this man? How does he know my name? My head spun with all these unanswered questions. I opened my mouth to question him.

Before I could make a sound, he said, “Five million dollars”.

I asked him, “What do you mean, five million dollars?”

He responded, “That is how much you will get paid to do this job.”

My mind started racing again. Thoughts of what was happening beating like fists against my skull. At this rate my head just might explode.

“What am I supposed to do at this job?” I questioned. I didn’t want to just jump into a random job offered by a mysterious stranger. I’m not that idiotic or desperate, even for five million dollars.

“I will need you to sign some papers before I convey that information to you”.

I was startled. While I kind of understood the need for a contract for a five-million-dollar job, I was hesitant to accept because of the foreboding air of mystery.

It took me fifteen minutes before I finally made my decision. “I’ll do it!”

All of a sudden, a bag was thrust over my head and my body was slammed to the ground. Darkness covered my sight. I cried out in shock. What was going on? I started kicking and screaming with all my might. Was I being kidnapped? I tried to fight my attacker, but my weak body barely budged the person who had the girth to easily thwart me. Flashbacks of my stepfather screaming and throwing things at me resurface. After a while, my body gave out on

me. I didn't have the energy to fight anymore. That was most likely because I hadn't had a full meal in two years.

I was swiftly thrown into what felt like the trunk of a car and the sound of a car door closing filled my ears. My body shook as the car drove off. I knew I couldn't do anything to prevent them from taking me, so I decided to let the situation happen. I was broke and homeless anyway.

It felt like hours before I felt the car come to a halt. The car opened and I was thrown over a person's shoulder in a firefighter's carry. My body swung back and forth as the person carrying me walked.

Just as my ribs started getting sore because of the shoulder digging into them, I was heaved into a metal chair. A light blinded my sight as the bag was ripped off my head. As my vision adjusted, I saw the man from before sitting in another metal chair across from me with a metal table between us. I looked around and noticed two doors, one to my right and one behind the man in front of me. I then saw a paper and a pen laying on the table

The man startled me out of my stupor by saying, "This is the contract you will sign".

I turned my gaze toward the paper. It was a single piece of paper with half a page of words printed on it. A thin black line was drawn about three quarters down the page. I guessed that was where I was supposed to sign. Now I know what you are probably thinking. This kid can't be dumb enough to sign this paper. Well to answer you, yes, I was that dumb. I was even more stupid to have bypassed the print and signed the paper without even reading the contract.

The second I signed the paper the man spoke up again.

"Welcome to your new job, Zachariah Ross. My name is Mr. Y, and I only have one task for you."

My eyes widened. Mr. Y? The famous mob boss? I heard of him on the news a few weeks ago when I was buying some food. I'd walked up to the cash register of a small run-down convenience store when his face popped up on the news. I think I remember him being wanted for murder and multiple other felonies. What kind of job would he want me to do?

Mr. Y must have taken my silence as a positive response.

"I need you to kill this man".

The door in front of me burst open as a man tied to a metal chair and gagged was dragged into the room by two men wrapped in muscle. I peered at the man, who had a terrified expression on his face. He looked to be an overweight middle-aged man with brown receding hair that looked

greasy. The man was dressed in a black pinstripe suit soaked in sweat, with the scent of body odor coming from him.

At this moment I knew I had made three mistakes. The first was when I accepted the job offer. The second was when I didn't read the contract. The third was when I signed the contract. Kill this man? That's murder, I didn't want to do that, but what would happen to me if I didn't fulfill the task? I didn't know because I stupidly didn't read the contract.

I was shaken out of my thoughts when a handgun was shoved into my hands. I couldn't do this! A weapon like this killed my own father!

I looked up as Mr. Y spoke.

“Do it, kid. Or else!”

A shiver ran down my spine. My gaze locked onto the man in the chair. I shakily raised the gun up towards his face. My finger lingered on the trigger before letting the gun fall from my hand.

Mr. Y then suddenly picked up the gun with his glove-covered hand and shot it. The sound of the bullet piercing skin rang through my ears.

Just then, police sirens rang outside the building. Mr. Y looked at me with a toothy grin. I knew right then that I would be falsely accused of murder because my fingerprints would be the only ones on the gun. I quickly looked at the contract I signed. It was a murder confession. Turning around, I sprinted as fast as I could towards the door to my right. It burst open with the weight of my body being thrown at it. Stumbling a bit, I caught my footing before running as fast as I could into the black abyss of night.