

FROM THE CURIOSI CASEBOOK

-PROJECTION POINT-

PART TWO

-6-

The Piazza San Marco was filled with pigeons. Those that weren't strutting around pecking at the ankles of tourists in hopes of a handout were swirling overhead casting a whirlpool of shadows. Their fluttering wings accompanied the Mozart being played by the string quartet seated at the front of the café where we were seated with Harry sipping on a coke while I nursed a glass of Pelegrino. Federico had downed an Espresso and was giving us another lecture, this one on St. Marks, as we waited for Hilary Evesham.

Federico told us that the bones of St. Mark were stolen in 829 from Alexandria, Egypt by Venetians. According to the legend the thieves concealed them by burying them in pork in order to cover up their sweet smell. There was quite a market for stolen religious relics in the Middle Ages and as late as the 15th century members of the Scuolo San Rocco stole the relics of St. Roch, the patron saint of victims of the plague from Montpelier, France. In the 9th Century Venice, being a wealthy place, was in the market for relics, and the only bones of a Saint they had acquired were those of St. Theodore, which had nowhere near the cache of St. Mark. St. Mark was one of the twelve apostles and even wrote a Gospel while Theodore, well God only knows what he did. So, they absconded with the bones of St. Mark and sailed off to Venice. Then, according to Federico, while carrying the remains to the Doge's palace for temporary storage, the container they were in - one assumes the relics had been extracted from the pork - suddenly became so heavy the carriers had to put it down and were unable to pick it up again. The Doge decided that this was a sign from God that he should build a basilica at that very place rather than placing the bones in the Cathedral. It seems that the very first miracle in Venice attributed to the Apostle's bones was to build a basilica next to the Doge's palace. "Possession of the relics alone helped Venice snare its very own bishopric, which was quite a geopolitical-theological coup," Federico said in conclusion.

"Sounds just like us Americans when we build a stadium to lure a pro football team: A domed stadium, at that." Harry said as he pointed his coke bottle at the onion towers of the Basilica of St. Marks.

"I imagine it didn't hurt the Doge's image and power to have the basilica with relics of St. Mark's built next to his palace," I said.

"In fact, they built it twice. The second time after the first basilica burnt down in 976." Federico replied. "Unfortunately, that was when the body of St. Mark was lost. They rebuilt the basilica but without the body. The legend was that the bones were hidden and the location known only by the Doge and a senior priest but then the location had been forgotten somehow. Miraculously, just before the basilica was about to reopen in 1094, sans St. Mark, after the entire

population of Venice had fasted and prayed, led by Doge, Vitale Falier, a column of the south transept of the Church suddenly opened revealing the bones. Just in time since our rival city, Bari, in the south of Italy had acquired the body of St. Nicholas, who most people know as Santa Claus.”

“Sounds like Venice was the one that was saved in the nick of time,” Harry chuckled.

“Speaking of the nick of time, I’m terribly sorry for being so late.”

We turned in unison to see a woman standing behind the empty chair between Federico and Harry.

“You must be Hilary,” Harry exclaimed as he half rose from his seat. “Fred here was just giving us a little lecture on old St. Mark.”

Hilary Evesham pushed her sunglasses over her forehead into her thick auburn hair. “Harold, it is so nice to meet you in person. I must say you look just as I envisioned you as we spoke on the phone.”

“And you look just like the picture on the back of your books,” Harry answered. “Except for the fact that none of the backs of your books have your photograph. In fact, there isn’t a single photograph of you in your books.”

“I’m afraid a photograph would blow my cover,” Hilary laughed. and turned to me. “And you must be Dante Flynn? As one writer to another let me say how happy I am that you agreed to observe and chronicle our little project. Although you will probably find this quite boring compared to what you have been writing about.”

“If you mean boring as in no bombs then that’s fine with me.” I stood and shook her hand, and then offered her the empty chair next to me. “From what Harry just said you must have written a number of books?”

Federico replied before Hilary could. “Signora Evesham is the author of the *visiting again for the first time* books. Her most recent one, not coincidentally, happens to be *Visiting Venice Again for the First Time*.”

“You don’t need to preface my name with Signora, Federico,” Hilary said then turned to me. “But of course, you wouldn’t know my real name, Dante. I use the pen name E. Hilary. It would make it very difficult to write the type of books I write if everyone knew who I was.

“So that’s what you meant by not wanting to blow your cover,” I said. “I always wondered what the E. stood for although I imagine a lot of people think it’s for Edmund as in Sir Edmund Hilary?”

“As you can see, I am definitely not a Sir and the closest I’ve come to climbing Mount Everest was to spend several nights in Katmandu. However, I have managed to climb the Campanile

over there instead of taking the elevator.” She nodded at the tower that loomed over the Piazza. “Although I won’t claim to be the first to reach its summit.”

“Dog gone I never figured that something that old would have an elevator,” Harry whistled.

Federico said. “This is not the original Campanile, Harold, but a second one built after the first one collapsed on July 14, 1902.”

“Did they find any bones in its ruins? Like they did with the Basilica?”

“If you mean the bones of someone who was struck down when it collapsed, fortunately no, but they did discover that the Marangona, the most famous bell in the Campanile, was completely undamaged, which many Venetians believe was an even a greater miracle than no one being killed.”

“The real miracle, Federico, is that anything remains standing at all in Venice given that the entire city is built on mud,” Hilary said. “But while we’re on the subject of miracles, I consider Harry’s discovery of the long lost Baedeker to qualify. Did you bring it with you?”

“I sure as heck did,” Harry passed the red volume to her.

“Yes, yes, this is truly it, Harry,” Hilary said as she held up the inside page. “You can see William Bancroft’s signature is still here. It’s faint but unmistakable. If he’d only known...”

Interrupting, Federico snapped. “Yes, Hilary, we already know that the book belonged to Bancroft.”

“I’m sorry if I was a bit carried away. But to actually hold the book in my hand is to finally have some proof when up until now it’s only been a theory.”

“I wouldn’t go so far as calling it proof, Hilary,” Federico said. “If that is all the proof that was needed then we wouldn’t have to undertake this investigation.”

“Evidence then,” she said as she eagerly paged through the book. “That my theory might be right. Even, more than just evidence, this is the key that unlocks all the rest.”

“I’ll grant you that it is evidence, Hilary. Although, whether it unlocks anything remains to be seen. But tell me, why did you ask us to meet you here? Isn’t the Scuola a more a private place for an examination of scientific evidence?”

Hilary set down the book. “I was thinking about Harry. This is such a nice sunny day and sunshine is the best thing for jet lag. You know, it helps reset the biological clock to local time. Also, I thought meeting in the Piazza San Marco would be appropriate since the tours that were described in Bancroft’s Baedeker begin right here in this very plaza. What better place to begin than where William Bancroft began?” Without waiting for a reply, she picked up the book again, pulled out a map of Venice that was tucked inside and gingerly placed it on the table.

“It wasn’t me that unstuck that map,” Harry explained. “I didn’t touch it at all since I figured you’d want everything as undisturbed as possible. It was already unglued when I found the book. Probably the glue dried out.”

“You needn’t worry, Harry. I fully expected it to be detached. In fact, I would have been quite surprised if it was still bound to the book. It would be much more likely that Bancroft would have detached it in order to use it for his purpose, although it has retained a crispness that makes me feel as if I’m opening it for the first time.” She unfolded the map and then, bent over, to examine it. Pulling back, she smiled broadly and turned it around on the table so that we could all get a view. “Tell me what you see?”

“A map of Venice?” Harry volunteered

“Yes, Harry, but what else do you see?”

“I see colors, the water, the canals, the lagoon, and all of that. They’re colored pink, or maybe salmon would be a closer color.”

“Do you see anything else? For example, do you notice anything about the printing?”

“It’s black, some of it is pretty itty bitty and,” He pointed at the serpentine Grand Canal with a stubby finger. “There are a lot of pizza places.”

“Those aren’t pizza places that is the abbreviation for piazza,” Federico said, pointing at one of the markings. “See, this is the Piazza San Marco, which is where we are right now.”

“You must be right because I don’t see any pizza parlors,” Harry laughed and rubbed his stomach. “Not that I need any.”

“Do any of you see anything else on the map?”

“What exactly is it that we’re supposed to see?” Federico asked Hilary with a hint of exasperation.

Ignoring Federico, Hilary asked. “What about the names of the streets?”

Harry takes off his glasses and looked at it with his eyeballs just inches from the paper. “There aren’t any street names that I can see. There are the names of some plazas and churches if the s. in front of the name means saint. The bigger canals are named and then there are some museums and other major buildings but there aren’t any street names that I can see.”

“Very good,” she said. “What you are now seeing is what isn’t there.”

“And what pray tell is that?” Federico asks.

“That almost all of the names of the canals and streets on the map are missing.”

“How the heck was anyone supposed to find their way around and keep from getting lost using a map that doesn’t have the street and canals labeled?” Harry asked, shaking his head in wonder. “I mean Venice is confusing enough as it is.”

“It does seem to add to the confusion unless you are someone like Bancroft who was a way finder, which is similar to orienteering,” Hilary said. “He liked nothing better than to use his compass to find his way around and not having the street names printed on the map would make it much more of a challenge. Now, Harry, could you turn the map over and tell me what you see on its backside?”

“Somebody has written a whole bunch of numbers. They’re pretty faint.”

“Let me see,” Federico said taking the book from Harry. “These look like compass readings and the times that they were taken.”

“Correct,” Hilary said. “Bancroft took his compass and a pocket watch with him and these are the readings that he took every time they changed direction and the time notations told him how much time had elapsed between readings, which would have allowed him to calculate their position.”

“Why didn’t he just trace it on the map or write down the names of the streets or skip the whole thing and just put down the final destination once they had arrived?” Harry asked.

“First, his guide, who was a gondolier named Rudolfo – Bancroft doesn’t tell us his surname - made him travel in an enclosed gondola with curtains over the windows.”

“Like the kind they use as hearses,” Harry blurted. “We passed by one of those docked on that cemetery island when we were coming over on the boat from the airport.”

“Similar, I imagine. In any case, Bancroft wouldn’t notice any canal or street names or other landmarks as they traveled through the canals. Second, when he finally arrived at the destination Rudolfo blindfolded him and the blindfold wasn’t removed until they were inside the building. By making these notations he would be able to retrace the entire route and find the place again.”

“And grab the map,” Harry said, nodding his head.

“Tell me Hilary,” Federico asked. “How exactly did you come to know all of this?”

“Because Bancroft kept a journal of his Venetian trip, and in his journal he wrote that he had come across a map used by Venetians since at least the 11th century and that it was the map that the Venetian fleet used to sail to the Holy Land during the first crusade following a route through the Adriatic and Mediterranean. It was this map that enabled them to monopolize the trade routes in the Adriatic and Mediterranean oceans. That supremacy lasted until the Portuguese discovered an alternate route that went around the Horn of Africa. Bancroft wrote in his journal

that he had marked its location on the back of the map in his Baedeker guidebook. I stumbled onto the journal he kept during his stay in Venice at the Royal Society for Wayfinders. It was among the papers that were donated by his estate after he vanished in 1914 while on an expedition to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. Since the Baedeker wasn't with the rest of his papers I thought he might have taken it with him to Colorado and left it somewhere. I put out a request to antiquarian book sellers and collectors in Colorado asking them if they had come across it and, as luck would have it Harold saw my request."

"How do we know that the map is still here?" Federico asked. "Maybe this Bancroft person went back the next day without his minders and grabbed it, to use Harry's words."

"Because he wrote in his journal that he was able to mark its location on the map in his Baedeker just before he left Venice the next day for England and we know he didn't return to Venice before his trip to America. Although he doesn't note it in his journal, I think the most probable reason as to why he didn't try and retrieve the map is that he knew he was being watched by Rudolfo and the others who were guarding the map. No doubt he planned on returning after his trip to America when enough time had elapsed so that he could sneak into Venice without being detected, retrace the route he had marked in his Baedeker and find the map."

Harry snorted. "Sounds just like finding a pirate's map of buried treasure."

"Except that in this case the treasure is the map," I added.

"Very well, you might be right," Federico conceded, then asked Hilary. "But did Bancroft describe the map in any way such as its dimensions or the condition it was in so that at least we would have some idea as to what we are looking for?"

"Unfortunately, he didn't write down any description in his journal. Perhaps he was afraid that if he wrote down those details someone might get their hands on what he wrote and be able to find the map before he returned from America. That might also be the reason why he took the Baedeker with him rather than leaving it in England along with the journal of his trip."

"Sure, explains why he'd have a guide for Northern Italy with him on a trip to the American West," Harry observed with a sage expression. "It was like tearing a treasure map in two and taking one half with him. Just what a pirate would do."

Visibly annoyed by the talk of pirate maps, Federico asked Hilary. "Might I ask why you were interested in Bancroft and his papers in the first place?"

"Excellent question, Federico. I became a member of the Royal Society so I can have access to their archives whenever I'm writing one of my books. As you know, I try to make my reader look at a place from a fresh perspective, so that even though they have visited there before, even multiple times, they will see it the next time as if they had never been there at all. The archives of the Royal Society are filled with the papers of explorers so what would be a better place to get

a first impression from a unique, some would say eccentric, perspective. It was while I was researching my own book on Venice that I stumbled on Bancroft 's papers."

"Guess that means you shouldn't always watch your step, because if you had, you never would have tripped over his papers," Harry said."

"I propose that we begin tomorrow morning here in the Piazza San Marco at the Café Florian."

"But why wait until tomorrow morning?" Harry asked. "I mean, I feel like a bull rider in the chute ready to take his ride."

Federico looked at Harry. "You're in Venice not in some rodeo, Harry, and the only thing we ride is a boat and while they might sway they certainly don't buck."

Hilary smiled as Harry settled back into his chair. "In answer to your question, Harold, the reason we need to begin tomorrow rather than immediately is because Bancroft set out from this very Café on his journey with Rudolfo at 10 AM in the morning and I believe we need to follow his timetable since he noted the time he took each of his compass readings. Besides, Harry, I imagine you could use a good night's sleep after your journey from America."

"Well, I suppose after all these years the map can stay buried another day."

"Now that we've settled that," Hilary said. "I want to invite all of you to join me for dinner at the restaurant in the hotel where Dante and I are staying. It has an excellent reputation."

-6-

"I still don't get why it's so darn difficult to get your hands on these old maps." Harry said toward the end of our dinner.

Apparently taking that as a cue to launch into another lecture, Federico explained that it wasn't a simple task. "Maps were carefully guarded secrets because they gave the owner an advantage over their enemies and competitors. It allowed them to go places that were only imagined, to travel beyond the horizon, to sneak up on their enemies and arrive at places before their competitors did. So important were these sea charts and maps that the Spanish kept their extensive collection in a strongbox with two locks, each of which required two keys and each key was held by a different person."

"There you go, Fred," Harry interrupted with a grin. "Like I said before, it's just like tearing a treasure map in half."

"Yes, Harry, I suppose in this case there is a certain similarity," Federico seemed flustered for a moment but then regained his composure to resumes in his professorial voice. "As I was saying, in 1508 they created a master chart called the *Padron Real* which they also kept under lock and key. Unfortunately for the Spanish, a Venetian cartographer employed by the Spanish named Sebastian Cabot managed to get his hands on the chart and offered to sell what was called the

secret of the straits – meaning the straits of Magellan – to both Venice and England. By the way, Cabot also claimed to possess the secret for longitude but that it was such a divine secret so he could not divulge it to any mortal. Of course, the Venetian and English maps were also kept in very safe places. In the case of Venetian maps, only the Doge and a few other trusted persons knew where the maps were kept.”

“What museum did they put them in after they found them?” Harry asked.

“I’m afraid they never found them,” Federico sighed, throwing up his hands. “You see, just like St. Mark’s bones, they forgot where they hid them. Unlike the case of St. Marks, however, they have not miraculously reappeared. That is why my life’s work has been engaged in the reconstruction of as many of these maps as possible. In all modesty, I must say that with only a few fragments of those that have survived and archeological and other historical data I believe I have still managed to come very close to what some of these maps looked like. I have even published some of my research this past year.”

“An Atlas of the Lost Maps of the Ancient Mariners,” Hilary interrupted. “The International Association of Ancient Cartography has called the maps in your book, the closest thing to the originals we will ever have.”

“Why, thank you, Hilary.”

“But if we find the real map, the one that Bancroft said he found then we will have an original, won’t we?” Harry said. “And that beats a copy no matter how good it is - at least in my book.”

“But that is only if this story of Bancroft’s is true and, even if it is, that we can find this map that apparently even he was not able to get his hands on,” Federico sputtered in protest.

“Perhaps it doesn’t exist or that we can’t find it if it does,” Hilary answered. “But as you noted, miracles have been known to happen in Venice.”

A sudden breeze rustled the flowers in the window box next to our table and beyond it a gondola was gliding to a stop in the canal. The gondolier looked familiar and as he stepped onto the riva I recognized him as Nicolo even though he had changed into the traditional gondolier’s uniform of tight shirt with horizontal bands of black and white and black pants.

“I called the Scuola and asked Nicolo to bring the gondola,” Federico said, happy to change the subject. “Nicolo is also our gondolier. He succeeded his grandfather, Emilio, who took over from his own father. Being the Scuola’s gondoliers has been passed down from father to son for centuries.”

“Is there a reason they skipped over Nicolo’s father?” I asked.

“I’m afraid his father was a plumber. I must say, Emilio seemed very disappointed in his son’s choice of profession and that the family line of succession with the Scuola might end with him, but now that his grandson has become our gondolier his family honor was saved and he couldn’t

be prouder. It also made it easier for him to retire. Although, as you have noticed, he didn't remain retired long because after only a week he asked us if he could be the doorkeeper at the Scuola as a way to keep occupied. I do think, though, that he might be taking advantage of us."

"In what way?"

"For many years, even before I joined the Scuola, we have allowed him to use the Scuola as a place where he and some of his fellow gondoliers could meet. Although it is highly irregular to allow outsiders to meet at the Scuola it was something that the members viewed as harmless. After all the gondoliers were Emilio's friends, and all growing older so it would end soon enough. But, instead of growing older and smaller, younger gondoliers joined the group and they could be meeting indefinitely. I fear that Emilio is taking advantage of our generosity. I have already suggested to the Council that we ask Emilio to find another place for their social club. In fact, I told them that I thought Emilio should be asked to retire completely because, to be perfectly honest, we hardly need a doorkeeper anymore with all of the technology available today. Every time I hear that antiquated telephone ring it makes me cringe."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Hilary said. "I find Emilio and your present system to be quite charming. The latest technology isn't always the best."

"The fact that we study antiquities doesn't mean we must use them ourselves." Before Hilary could answer, Federico turned and nudged Harry who had dozed off. "Harold, our boat has arrived."

Harry slowly stirred, as if fighting to free himself from quicksand. "Is it one of those Hardy Boys taxi boats?"

"No, Harry," Hilary said. "This is an actual gondola."

Harry rubbed his eyes and leaned over the table to look out the window. "Well I'll be. Seems sort of a waste to just have only guys in it." He shot Hilary a look and then broke into a grin.

We watched as Federico boarded the gondola first and then Harry climbed aboard with an assist from Nicolo. The gondola dipped from the added weight and then bobbed until Harry finally settled into one of the plush red seats. With a push of Nicolo's foot the gondola slid forward. Casually Nicolo stepped onto the stern and with a circular sweep of the long oar the boat glided away leaving only the moon washed fronts of the buildings on the opposite side of the canal filling the frame of the window.

"Sounded like Harry was inviting you along for a ride in the gondola," I said.

Hilary turned from the window and looked directly at me. "Perhaps, but St. Dismal isn't a very inviting destination as far as I'm concerned."

"We don't have a gondola at our disposal but we could go for a walk?" I suggested.

“What direction?” Hilary asked wrapping a black shawl around her shoulders.

“I’ve been here several times but I’ll be just as lost no matter what direction we take. You wrote a guidebook on Venice so you must know your way around.”

“We’ll see,” She said. After looking in both directions along the canal she decided we should go right and then, just past the hotel we turned right again onto a calle. After a short walk we came to another canal. Its surface was covered with a smooth crust of moonlight. “I believe that this canal is called the Rio Pietro. Anyway, it looks like a river of stone in this light, although it’s filled with water so we shouldn’t try walking on it.”

“It’s actually a relief to know that the most dangerous thing you can step on is water,” I answered as we crossed a bridge and then walked along the left side of the canal.

“I forgot that you were just in the Balkans, Bosnia, the former Yugoslavia or whatever they call it now.”

“A lot of people call it hell and leave it at that. In fact, a lot of them would leave if they could.”

“I can only imagine how dangerous it was covering the war.”

“It might be better to say the war covered me just like it covered everyone and everything else. The fog of war over there is so thick it’s impossible to see how they’re going to get out of it.”

We had come to the end of the riva, forcing us to stop. The canal continued on into the darkness: Another dead end ramo. The only alternative was to turn left and after we walked down a narrow street that was almost pitch black we came out onto another canal and turned left again and continued until we came to another bridge.

“If we went on in this direction we would come to the Guggenheim,” she said as we stopped on the bridge. “It is really worth seeing.”

“Maybe I’ll have a chance to come back during the day so I can.”

“You should try it at night. Everyone who comes to Venice visits the Guggenheim during the day, when its open to the public. After you have done that once you should then see it when no one else is there except the ghosts of Betty Guggenheim and her dogs.”

“I thought the best way to see paintings in an art gallery was by natural light not artificial?”

“Did I say anything about artificial light? No, the visit would be done in the darkness. But first you would need to go during the day and see it for the first time.”

I asked her how she got the idea for her books and why didn't she want people to know that she was the author? "Most writers are trying to figure out how to get noticed and here you are, the writer of a popular series of books and no one knows who you are."

"It's partly because I don't consider myself to be the author." She pulled the shawl up to her ears and told me how she had grown up in a small Cotswold village where her father had been the Vicar. She managed to study hard and escape the picture postcard when she went to Oxford. That's where she met Edward and managed to fall completely in love. He was a couple of years older than she was and was the second son of one of those old families who managed to make some new money so they didn't have to turn their manor house into a tourist attraction. Edward was more interested in seeing the world than making money and after he graduated he traveled around the world, writing her from all the places that she would have wanted to visit. Not having a trust fund, Hilary applied herself to her studies and when she graduated got a job at a small publishing company in London. Whenever Edward passed through on his way to some other foreign place he would stay with her, but never invited her to come with him when he resumed his traveling. She waited five years while he was off to Asia, Africa, North and South America, the South Pacific, the Orient. By then she was an editor by then and she told him she didn't want to continue to be treated as a lay-by on a motor route. His response was to ask her to marry him, which she did. After a one week honeymoon in Cornwall they went to Plymouth where, to her surprise, he had a sail boat all fitted out. She thought for minute that it was part of the honeymoon and that they were finally going to travel together. Only, it turned out to be solo voyage across the Atlantic that he was going to take. He promised it was to be the last one he would take without her. In fact, he was getting tired of the traveling and wanted to settle down. "He never arrived in America." She stopped and looked at me, as if she wanted to show me that she wasn't crying.

"It turned out", she continued. "That Edward left me more than the memory of his sailing off into the sunset, he also left a trunk with all of the journals he had been keeping of his travels. I decided to make a book out of them. Since there was so much material I used only the first three journals. After a year of editing and writing I was able to create a manuscript that I thought could be published. Of course, every publisher I sent it to rejected it. They said that there would be no way to verify Edward's account since he was dead, which meant that they couldn't publish it as a work of nonfiction, which was an obvious prerequisite for travel book. I was quite depressed. My employer noticed and asked to look at it. He thought it was very engaging and suggested that the solution to verifying the accuracy of Edward's account was to have it be my account as well. He pointed out that I had already contributed quite a bit through my editing and writing and now, all I had to do, was to visit the same places. He even agreed to publish the final book although they had never published a travel book before and gave me an advance to cover my expenses as I visited the places that Edward had written about. The result was a book that was based on Edward's journals and my own account of seeing these places for the first time. The first book was a great success and even though I've written five books since I've still only visited half of the places Edward wrote about."

"It sounds like you have your future pretty well mapped out?"

“Yes, but it’s a bit too mapped out. That’s why when I was asked to join the Curiosi a year ago and engage in these kinds of investigations I jumped at the chance.”

We kept walking in silence until we reached a canal from which all the water had been drained. I wondered if it was the Filled In Canal of Thoughts that Nicolo had mentioned.

“What are you thinking?” She asked.

“I was thinking that the first time I visited Venice about twenty years ago I had come from Split that time as well. Of course, it was Split, Yugoslavia then. When I reached Venice, I had no money at all and my parents had arranged for me to pick up some travelers checks at the American Express here.”

“So, money brought you to Venice the first time?”

“I was also planning to meet up with a Swedish girl I’d been hitch hiking with. She took the ferry to Italy but since I didn’t have money for a ticket I had to hitch hike by myself. We were going to meet here.”

“And what happened?”

“The money was waiting for me but she wasn’t.”