

The Surfer in the Looking Glass

Prologue

May 2020

Sat 1 May, 18:47

My fee for the contract is 1.5 million dollars US to be paid in Bitcoin

How and when do you require payment?

18:48

Half payment in advance.
You will receive an encrypted text with an account number and a separate 8 digit access PIN via voicemail
Receipt of payment will confirm our mutual acceptance of the contract
The contract will be completed within six months

18:51

And the balance?

18:51

Within one week completion

18:51

How will I know when?

18:52

You will receive photographic evidence and there will be no further communication between us

18:53

Sun 2 May, 08:00

Send me the account details

Part One

Saturday 7 August, 06.45 - Cork Airport, Irish Republic

As the early morning flight touched down the event was heralded through the cabin loudspeakers by the trumpet fanfare.

The passengers stepped on to the warm tarmac where the air was fresher than in Amsterdam. They made their way into the terminal building and immigration. With no checked-in baggage to pick up, a tourist with a blond ponytail and baseball cap and a bomber jacket with *Royal Portrush Golf Club* insignia on it passed through quickly. Had the tourist been stopped for a check on the single item of hand luggage, customs would no doubt have been greatly impressed by the camera and lenses in the bag carefully packed along with a laptop between various items of clothing.

Going immediately to the Europcar desk there was no queue and half an hour later the tourist was driving towards Dublin in a pre-booked motor home.

A brief delay at Naas on the outskirts of Dublin enabled the tourist to pick up a Zodiac and outboard motor. A significant bundle of Euros changed hands.

A second stop at the Carrickfergus Monument south of Belfast significantly added to the tourist's single piece of hand luggage. A wheeled golf caddy containing an impressive set of clubs and several other items were exchanged for another fat brown envelope.

Seven hours after leaving Cork, the golfer caught the afternoon ferry to Stranraer in Scotland. Driving north up the Ayrshire coast, the golfer left the Zodiac hidden on a beach a couple of miles south of Girvan and drove on to just south of Ayr to check in at the Trump Turnberry Hotel for a week's holiday.

Sunday 8 August

The golfer spent the day sightseeing and birdwatching with a camera and powerful telephoto lens boating across to the Brest Rocks a few hundred yards offshore and 2km south-west of the hotel. Turnberry Lighthouse proved to be of particular interest and before the golfer returned to the hotel for an evening meal, a Russian DXL-5 sniper rifle had been wrapped in a waterproof bag and concealed on the low lying offshore rocks.

Part Two

Friday 13 August 2020 - Trump Turnberry, 19.56

The multi-millionaire was a man of habit and this evening was no different from any during this week he had been staying in the presidential suite of the hotel. As he left the terrace of the tastefully refurbished lighthouse keeper's apartment he glanced in the looking glass and smiled at the mature, golden-haired surfer looking back at him. He made his way to the door giving access to the tower. The anticlockwise spiral staircase of 76 steps took all of his 110kg to the top of Stevenson's lighthouse. No, it wasn't *Stevenson's* lighthouse any more, he thought, it was *his* lighthouse now, and even though he enjoyed his view from the top of *his* lighthouse there was

something on this particular evening - there was a chill even though it was still warm with hardly a breath of air coming off the sea.

He half turned as the small door behind him opened. Seeing who it was he turned back to look out over the Firth of Clyde towards 'Paddy's Milestone', the great granite rock of Ailsa Craig silhouetted in the setting summer sun. The waiter placed the tray with a burger and a glass of Coca Cola on the small table and retreated through the narrow door to the stairway closing it quietly. A few moments later the man sighed and took a bite of the burger. It was better than the chef back home produced. He'd come to like the Scottish addition of tomato ketchup.

Before he could swallow a dark hole appeared in his forehead and the back of his head exploded. He was pushed back against the white wall of the lighthouse. Collapsing to the floor, the partly formed thought about putting in an offer for the island he'd just been looking at was instantly terminated.

A mess of what could be easily be mistaken for burger and ketchup was splattered across the white wall. Behind where his head had just been, a trail of red and grey streaked down the wall to where he lay like a discarded puppet on the theatre set as ownership of the lighthouse had changed again.

The bullet had left the rifle 2.4km away and taken 1.6 seconds to reach its target. The sound of the shot had taken another 6.4 seconds before anyone else heard what he had not.

Friday 13 August - Brest Rocks, 19.56

In the still air on the Brest Rocks the only sound now to disturb the evening quiet and the gentle lapping of the sea was the whirring of a camera as it automatically took a burst of photographs.

Friday 13 August - BBC World News, 21.00

"News is coming in of a shooting incident at Trump Turnberry Hotel in the west of Scotland. No details have been released but it is known that ex-President of the United States, Donald Trump is staying in the hotel. We'll bring more news as it comes in."

Friday 13 August 22.00 - Amsterdam, Netherlands

They were sitting outside the Eland, a small bar on a corner of Prinsengracht in Amsterdam.

"Is he dead?" The tall, blond Slovenian asked in accented but fluent English. "I don't believe in fake news any more than he did."

"Most certainly he is dead," said the Dutchman passing the photographs he had received an hour before. "I have never known the Shibriya to fail."

Even though the Dutchman had never met the Shibriya, never would, he owed a debt of honour which, from time to time, like now, he would pay off an instalment.

The Slovenian glanced at the photographs. There could be little doubt. The matter was closed, the contract fulfilled.

"Then the Shibriya must be paid the rest of what I owe."

Friday 13 to Saturday 14 August

The drive to Newcastle airport was pleasant and the Holiday Inn busy with pre-departure holiday makers. The following morning the golfer had the choice of several pre-booked options and chose the early morning flight to Malaga.

Before checking in, the golfer went to the washroom, entered a cubicle and removed the baseball cap, blond wig and old clothes carefully folding them into a small bundle. Waiting for several minutes before she came out into the washroom. The attractive brunette business executive with short, dark hair and of middle eastern appearance was now wearing black denims and silk shirt and a smart white jacket. After washing and drying her hands she forgot to pick up the bundle of old clothes which was left for the cleaners to find. Carrying a grey Corbusier laptop backpack she dropped her redundant passport into a waste bin and made her way to check-in.

Epilogue

Sunday 15 August - Slovenia, late afternoon

They sat drinking tea in the garden of the retirement home in the Arto district of Sevnica. The old lady had greeted her grand-daughter with a sigh. "You are still so beautiful Lani and I have missed you greatly these many years. You were always the favourite of your grandfather. But he did not like the American politician." "The American is no longer with us, 'babica'" she said, in the Slovenian dialect of her childhood. She stood up and walked a couple of steps to the edge of the lawn. "The 'separation' cost me dearly", she said, partly to herself with a note of what might have been taken for regret in her voice, "but the diamonds he gave me as a wedding present, I sold in Amsterdam and have seen to my immediate needs. But the hotel he left me will be good too". "Your grandfather would be have been glad to see you come home at last Melanija."

Author's note

The **Shibriya** is a Bedouin dagger and a feminine noun in Arabic.

The **DXL-5 'Havoc'** is said to be the first sniper rifle in the world capable of eliminating targets 7,000 meters (4.35 miles) away. The Russian sniper rifle manufacturer Lobaev Arms announced their latest development DXL-5 in 2020.

The muzzle energy is between of 12 and 15kJ and the bullets weigh 120g.

The muzzle velocity is between 4 to 5 Mach (ie. 4 or 5 times faster than the speed of sound). Bullets will leave the rifle with a speed of 1,200-1,500 meters per second. A cartridge will give the rifle the accuracy of around 70 MOA (Minute of Angle) for 3,000-meter (3,280 yd) targets.

A bullet flying at Mach 5 would take 1.6 seconds to reach Turnberry lighthouse from the Brest Rocks and the sound of the shot would take 8 seconds.

The author can personally recommend the **Eland Bar** with its canal views, local ambience, interesting clientele and of course, good beer.

'**Lani**' is the shortened familial name for Melanija and '**Babica**' is Slovenian for grandmother

(Version Saturday 1 May 17.10pm)