

## TERMINAL

Logan fished the phone from his pocket and flicked on the screen. He unlocked it with a swipe of his finger, leaving a smear of salt and oil. Narrowing his eyes to the top of the screen, he noticed an unread message sent at ten o'clock that morning.

They had, they thought, very little time.

They scurried ahead. Three men donning stained unicolor tee-shirts, raw denim, and worn-in rigger boots. Their hair slipshod: crewcut, curtained, and bald. They strode apace, possessed of some rhythm guilty men keep.

Jack checked the time on his wrist and questioned whether these moments would be the last of the life he knew. Logan kept abreast of Jack as they stutter-stopped up to a crosswalk.

Dense westbound traffic had sealed off their route for what they assumed would be the next twenty or thirty seconds. Riley tapped his feet restlessly against the curb until a couple car lengths of room opened in both directions when, in unison, all three bolted off again, weaving around a braking minivan as they darted through the intersection and north up Broadview Ave. Riley's arms swung by his round, youthless waist, bumping into Jack's as they juked by street vendors, donation hagglers, lunch rushers, and tourists. Logan was close behind, his breathing becoming labored by the lungful.

Logan had tied the knot earlier that summer. He remembered coating wax into his hair. The memories came in flashes, or momentary flickers. He remembered being fitted for his tux with Riley, he remembered waiting outside the changing booth while the tailor removed boxes wrapped in polyester tape from shelving units and searched, box by box, for something that wasn't there.

Riley craned his neck to look above the sea of bankers and hedge funders in front of them, each of them brandishing some combination of clip tie, messenger bag, or hands-free earpiece. He looked around—inundated by peeling billboards, LCD advertisements, and sun-dimmed neon signage—before noticing the hordes of commuters collecting around the bus terminal a block ahead.

Jack ran, patting his pockets: *phone, wallet, tickets, phone, wallet, tickets*. He gathered speed, rushing headlong. He ran past an out-of-

towner standing with her back against a concrete wall. She was levelling a camera viewfinder to her squinting eye, a grin busy at her mouth, pressing down the shutter just as a blurry Jack entered the frame.

Logan lagged a couple sidewalk slabs behind, having had to weave between passersby entering cabs and offices. “Jack,” he panted, “slow it down.”

Still moving forward, Jack spun to face him and returned a glare that brought Logan back to the wedding.

“Logan, get over here,” said Riley, “you think you can slip away that easy?”

“Riley, my man, what’s the hurry for. We got all night, don’t we?”

“Sit that ass down, right here,” said Riley. “Now get this in you.”

They both drank.

“Hey, isn’t it a sin to be pounding like this at a church?”

Riley leaned over and called to Jack, who was sitting opposite of them on the horseshoe-shaped bar with a highball glass in his hand and a woman seated next to him. “Jack, we’re Christians, are we not?”

Jack made a face, put down his glass, and excused himself. He joined Riley and Logan at the bar, crashing onto the stool between them.

“We’re no Christians tonight,” Jack said. “Isn’t that right, Loe?”

Logan let out a smile, appeasing Jack. Logan’s elbow propped his weight against the rickety countertop. His right hand cradled his chin, and his head bobbed on his damp neck.

With his vision corrupted, Logan could only intuit that the weight of Jack’s arm had wrapped around his shoulders, corralling him tighter into earshot. “What do you say, we got an hour til last call. What do you say we make another run at the dancefloor, huh?”

A couple mute seconds prompted further egging from Jack. “Riley, remind this boy why we’re here. You only get married once—that’s what they say, right? Getting fucked with the boys is a goddamn rite of passage, is it not?”

Riley met eyes with Jack. “Maybe the kid just needs another one of them famous Jack Monahan bathroom breaks,” Riley said. He winked and slid a finger underneath his nose.

“Hey,” Jack said. “We’re not about that tonight. We’re not bringing out the big guns with Hailey present, you know she can sniff it out like a fucking bloodhound. You know what—enough talk—let’s go.”

Jack shot Logan that familiar glare, and pulled him off the stool, grabbing him by his shirt before transferring sweat from his palm onto his dress pants. “How about we find that bride of yours, Logan. That’ll put some life back in them bones.”

Pocket check: *phone*, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, *phone*, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_.

Jack started toward the bandstand with Riley and the groom in tow. The banquet pavilion was covered by a tall, oversized gazebo whose creamy white tarpaulin covered the glittering night sky.

Jack unfastened the mesh door, pulled it aside, and the men exited the main hall. They stumbled onto a cobble walkway lit overhead by lanterns pumpkin-shaped, ornamental, and the colour of beer.

They stopped to share one of Riley’s cigarettes. As they passed it around, they joked about how the wedding was being held on the same chapel grounds that played host to their baptism thirty years prior.

“Circle of life,” Riley said.

“Circle of wife,” Logan threw back. They laughed, though unsure.

Having sucked it down to the filter, Jack threw the butt in the garden and jumped up the wooden steps and onto the bandstand. It was roaring with laughter, song, and the chatter of dancing feet. The crowd cheered as the emcee, Riley’s brother-in-law, cut the music and announced their arrival.

Logan didn’t acknowledge any of it. He made his way across the floor toward his bride—Aiden—whose beauty appeared to him like something of fantasy. He coiled his arms around her and pressed his forehead into hers, slurring words she could not make out.

“Group shot—everyone—group shot!” Jack blurted out, breaking attention away from the groom and bride. He waved his phone in front of his face. Riley gathered in the huddle forming behind Jack.

“Wait, Loe’s got to be in the shot.” Jack turned and called for Logan, who stood alone with Aiden and whose head was still nestled against hers. He was mouthing words to her, a mute spectacle. The group waited while seconds passed in twos, then threes.

“This is real touching, but how about you get in one last shot for the night. You know, something for your mom to share on Facebook.” Jack waited, his plea made void by a sustained silence. A bridesmaid called out to Aiden, equally struck by the scene.

Logan and Aiden, ignorant of their audience, carried on their exchange, which although still intimate could now be faintly heard by those closest to them. A string of white lights draped behind the two, casting a soft spotlight on their embrace.

The selfie huddle diffused into a loose mob that began to encircle the bride and groom, patiently watching over the scene. Some of the bridesmaids started taking pictures, their camera flashes revealing the couple in momentary flickers. The emcee dimmed the stage light, and the photography stopped. The bride and groom stood still, hardly visible, producing only a silhouette in the twilight behind them. Their shadow looked like a material substance, physical and pure—nothing derivative.

Riley sloshed his beer around the rim of his glass, allowing it to circle once or twice while keeping his gaze fixed on the performance before him. He waited for the end-scene, for the actors to break character and return to life as it permanently is.

At that moment, Aiden broke away from Logan, provoking audible gasps from the crowd. Words had been exchanged moments prior, but now the groom and bride stood apart, trading stares in silence. Though they could not be seen, inexplicable tears welled in the bride's eyes. She turned away and raced down the steps and onto the cobble before slipping off her heels and carrying herself away onto the grass and into the cool dark of June. The lights twitched back on, revealing nothing.

The three men were waiting under the awning of the bus terminal. The next northbound bus was scheduled to depart at one-thirty, in twenty minutes. They counted the seconds as they passed, watching them turn into minutes like hours turn into weeks.

Logan was breathing heavily. He was slouching on a plastic-coated park bench beside an empty newspaper vending machine, its fern green paint fading like worn clothes. Riley stood beside it while Jack paced relentlessly along the curb, his eyes scouring the horizon.

“We got time boys, don't you worry, we got plenty of time,” Jack said, almost laughing. “They said two o'clock, right?” He let out a laugh. “Boys, we're good. We're so good.”

Logan, looking into his phone, did not respond. He was tapping madly at the screen, hoping to get an answer from his wife, who had popped a double dose of sleeping pills after finishing her nightshift at the hospital.

They were eating lunch out of brown paper bags thirty minutes earlier.

Riley wiped the grease off his fingertips and onto his stained overalls. “You got any more ketchups in that thing, Jack?” He nodded at Jack’s bag.

“These are mine, buddy. It isn’t the fifteenth yet, you can’t just be taking handouts like that. They’re a hot commodity, these things,” Jack said.

“What do you mean, are you low on them? I ordered extra ketchups—I even said, ‘extra ketchups,’ did I not say those exact words, Loe?”

“Huh?” Logan asked, aloof.

“Check the order; I think they screwed us on the ketchups again.”

“Oh really,” said Logan, disinterested.

“No, no actually, check,” said Riley, “I made a point to ask for extra ketchups. This’ll be the last time I use that fucking app, I swear.”

Logan fished the phone from his pocket and flicked on the screen. He unlocked it with a swipe of his finger, leaving a smear of salt and oil. Narrowing his eyes to the top of the screen, he noticed an unread message sent at ten o’clock that morning from Grand Gala Casinos and Resorts LLC.

**Subject: Congratulations, Logan, You’re a Grand Prize Winner!**

Jack, now finished his meal, reached in the bag and grabbed a handful of ketchup packets and threw them at Riley’s chest. “You want ketchups, bud, well there you go.”

“I knew you had them in there, you bitch.”

Jack ran his oily hands through his hair, slicking each part to its side.

“Buddy, you’re the loudest guy I know. Just take your goddamn—”

“Wait, wait, stop,” Logan interjected, a hand planted on his bald head.

He shoved his phone in Riley’s face. “Tell me this is isn’t a scam. Is it?”

Riley studied the email opened on the screen, squinting hard.

“What the hell is this, Loe? What’s this about a minority share? You enter this sweepstakes shit?”

“I don’t know—it had to be Aiden, I mean it has to be, you know she’s always on the computer, she’s always on that thing, on her iPad doing whatever, so maybe she saw an ad or something, I mean she’s always

playing these games on the Internet you know, that's what she does, so maybe she saw an ad and clicked something—I don't know.”

“And she entered the contest in your name?”

“No, no, she entered in our name,” said Logan. “Look—look at the last line, it says ‘Agostino, Grant, and Monahan Industrial Painters’. She must have put the company down for the contest. It must be one of those corporate sweepstakes. They have those, right? That means she couldn't put herself down for it.”

“Wait, she entered a contest for AGM Painters?” asked Jack. He got up and snatched the phone from Logan's hand and read the message on the screen.

“I don't know, I've seen those online scams before in my emails, like on AOL or whatever, but this doesn't look like them,” said Jack in a hushed voice. “Look at the address it's from,” tapping a finger on the screen. He read it out loud, slowly:

fulfillment@grandgala.com

“That's legit, boys. That's got to be legit,” Jack concluded.

“I thought so too,” said Logan, looking to Riley for affirmation. Riley nodded his head in agreement, looking lost.

“What is it, then,” Jack asked, “a share in the company, is that what we won?”

“A ten percent share. Or five and a cash prize,” said Logan. He looked up at them both, wide-eyed. “We got to get over to their head offices though, and soon. The consultation, whatever that means, is at two o'clock today.” He paused to check the time on his wrist. “And it's going on one already,” he shouted out, “oh my god, oh my god, I can't believe this. I can't believe this is happening.”

“I'll call up Darryl and cancel our two-thirty job. We're going to make it, we got to get moving, we have to cash in on this,” Riley said.

“I got bus fare boys, I got tickets for us—let's go, let's go,” said Jack. “I don't think we got much time.”

They left their bags on the grass and ran.

At one thirty-four, the three men were still waiting at the terminal.

Jack was quiet now. He glanced down at Logan's feet before speaking. "I have to ask." He paused to clear his throat.

"I have to ask; do you think this will cover the cost of the operations? I mean, Loe, it's got to cover at least some."

"I don't know," said Logan, "I couldn't tell you."

"Maybe," he said, though he knew it would.

The certainty of his situation had started to set in for Logan, and now he could not hold any of it back. Jack had turned the taps in his mind, and now he would be taken by it. He thought about his legacy, about leaving a legacy behind. He wanted something to leave behind, he wanted something to have, and the thought that he might be able to leave the world with something after him carried with it a sense of being submerged. Now his thoughts were moving too fast for him to control, almost too fleeting to notice. It was all too much, too much for him, and he did not know the words to make sense of it; this incomprehensibility caused such frustration that it reduced him to tears. He turned away, keeping his face out of sight, and dialed Aiden's number one more time.

Riley and Jack were attuned to the road, anticipating the bus to round the corner at any moment. "This is it, this is it, this is it," echoed in their heads, leaving room for no other words.

Jack, noticing Logan had turned away, walked over and swung his arm around his shoulders. "Wait a second," said Jack. "This is what you need. This'll get you on track. This'll get you okay again." Riley looked away, pretending to search for the bus, though trying to listen in.

"Hey, hey guys," Riley shouted. A green coach bus screeched onto the terminal bay. It sputtered toward them. "I think this is it, come on," he cried, though no one moved.

The bus pulled close to the curb, blowing fallen leaves onto the platform. It screeched forward, and forward still; still forward. Riley was convinced it was going to ride past them, destined for someplace else, until it rocked to an abrupt halt at the end of the curb. The driver pulled the parking brake as the bus sunk down to loading height.

People gathered their belongings and prepared to board. They waited in a single-file line for the doors to open.

"Come on," Riley said aloud, hopping in place.

They continued waiting for something that would never come.