

THE FOODIST

Written by

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INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S HOME OFFICE. SAN FRANCISCO. WINTER
AFTERNOON. PRESENT DAY.

The room is lit by natural light, yet still seems dark: the cases of books and faded Persian rugs absorb whatever sunlight filters in past the heavy curtains.

MARCUS TEMPLE is sitting in a recliner. He is an African-American 46-year-old executive protection specialist, fixated on details with a detached air of professional courtesy. Everything he does is deliberate - almost choreographed - in its ease. He works to keep the lean build he had as a Marine and cop.

This is the only place he ever really lets his guard down, but even so, he still remains vigilant. He is haunted by a bad shoot that ended his police career.

MARCUS is in the office of DR. YASMIN HASHEMI, a psychotherapist in her early 30s. She has been seeing Marcus for quite some time, but has yet to really see his pain. She sits across from him and takes notes as he stares blankly across the room.

MARCUS

I don't want to do this anymore.
This job, I mean. Protection.

DR. HASHEMI

Then what do you want to do?

MARCUS

I don't know. Just not this.

DR. HASHEMI

What's the worst part of it? Is it
the fear? The --

MARCUS

Landings.

DR. HASHEMI

I'm sorry?

MARCUS

Landings. When my flights land.
That's the worst part of this job.

DR. HASHEMI

I don't understand.

CUT TO:

FLASH FORWARD - MONTAGE - MARCUS TRAVELS. NEXT DAY.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Plane takes off. Plane lands. I get off the plane.

-- Marcus removes carry-on from overhead, nods to the pilot and flight attendants and walks down the jet way, all business.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

All roads lead to dead ends or baggage claim. Baggage claim is always on the same floor as ground transportation: cabs, buses, limos.

-- Marcus walks through the terminal at JFK, his bearing crisp, as bedraggled travelers struggle around him with missed connections and screaming children. He avoids the moving walkway, going faster than those trapped on it.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You put the big gate numbers behind you and walk straight and fast. Avoid the moving walkway: there's always someone who is standing perfectly still on the left-hand side. Stand right. Walk left. Simple, right? Apparently not. I pick up my gun from baggage claim and head out.

--Marcus gets in a cab and hands the driver a piece of paper.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I get in a taxi and tell the driver where to go. I have everything written down on an index card. Flight number, times, hotel address, reservation: everything on one piece of paper. If I lose it, that's ok. I have it in my phone. Two is one and one is none. Redundancy is security.

--Marcus gets out of an elevator and enters a hallway in the Sherry-Netherland hotel.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I'll get in a day ahead of my client to advance the hotel. Every hotel, no matter how nice, feels the same.

--Marcus enters his room. We see the items he describes.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Lamp and landline. Clock and coffee pot. Some kind of perfume to make the linens smell clean. Comfortable, predictable, and uniform. Sterile. Nobody waiting up for me. Nobody to call. They're just anonymous.

END MONTAGE.

Marcus rubs his temples. He is exhausted.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

No matter where I land, the airports, the hotels... they're all anonymous. And so am I. Even when I get back home, because there is no home.

DR. HASHEMI

That sounds really painful. Lonely.

MARCUS

Yeah.

DR. HASHEMI

Why do you think you keep doing what you do?

MARCUS

That's exactly it. It's just what I do.

DR. HASHEMI

Right, but that's a choice.

MARCUS

I don't think it is anymore.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERRY-NETHERLAND HOTEL ROOM 2311, NEW YORK. EARLY WINTER MORNING. NEXT DAY.

A clock on a night stand next to the bed glows with the time: 5:58 AM. An iPhone is plugged into the clock's built-in charger next to a Glock 19.

The iPhone begins beeping an alarm as the clock's time changes to 6:00am.

Marcus removes the phone and turns off the alarm with a smooth, singular movement. Now calm, his movements are mechanical, but fluid.

The room is small, but luxurious. A man's dark suit hangs next to an immaculate white shirt in the open closet. On the floor are two pairs of brightly polished shoes.

He stands and opens the curtains. The windows look out on to the city, pale in winter.

He stretches, then drops to the floor and does a series of push-ups before standing back up.

He walks over to the mini-bar, where a small coffee maker sits along with a selection of coffee filter packs. He pours a bottle of water from the top of the bar into the machine and hits the "on" switch.

He reaches into a small duffle bag and pulls out a bag of coffee beans, a small hand grinder, and an Aeropress coffee maker. He grinds some beans, feeling the grains between his fingers, then loads the Aeropress with a filter, his freshly-ground coffee, and the hot water. He presses out a fresh cup of coffee into one of the hotel mugs, and takes a sip. He closes his eyes for a moment, gauging the mouth-feel of his coffee. It is perfect.

He walks to the closet and begins to get ready.

He dresses deliberately - without being fussy - adjusting his tie and his gig line in a full-length mirror.

He picks up his Glock 19, cracks the chamber just a bit and, seeing the gleam of brass, taps the mag to ensure that it is seated before holstering the weapon.

He picks up his briefcase and walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY: SHERRY-NETHERLAND HOTEL. MOMENTS LATER.

Marcus exits the elevator. FRANK, an older Bell Captain smiles and nods at him.

MARCUS

Good morning.

FRANK

Good morning, sir.

MARCUS

I'm with Jerome Williams' group on the 23rd floor. I spoke with a manager who said "Frank" would be available to show me some of the staff and kitchen areas in the restaurant this morning.

FRANK

Yes, Robert said you'd be down early. I'm Frank.

MARCUS

Marcus Temple.

They shake hands.

FRANK

This way.

The two men proceed through the opulent lobby before entering HARRY CIPRIANI through the side door. Marcus makes notes on a series of note cards and takes pictures with his phone.

INT. HARRY CIPRIANI. CONTINUOUS.

The restaurant is not quite open and is empty, save for VITTORIO, the 60-year-old bartender who is setting up the bar, blending white peaches into purée and polishing glasses and SERGIO, the elegantly-dressed Maitre d'. Sergio immediately walks over and clasps Marcus' hand warmly.

FRANK

Sergio, this is Marcus Temple. He's at the hotel with our guests on the 23rd floor. (To Marcus) Sergio is the Maitre d'.

Sergio nods, all-smiles. In his 50s, Sergio is a master at reading and connecting people. He is the penultimate host, knowing exactly who to seat near who, and always discreet.

SERGIO

Of course, welcome, welcome, Mr. Temple. You have been here before, no?

Marcus is already seduced by Sergio's charm. He instantly knows that this is a man who can be trusted.

MARCUS

My first time. Please call me Marcus.

SERGIO

Ah! First time! You must try our cappuccino. I drink at least 4 every morning.

FRANK

You're in good hands, Marcus. Please let me know if you need anything.

Marcus half-hears him and nods his consent for Frank to leave. He looks around the restaurant, scanning it for points of exit and entrance.

SERGIO

Vittorio, un cappuccino!

Vittorio wipes his hands and begins to make cappuccino. Sergio motions to the bar.

SERGIO (CONT'D)

The bar and entry is almost exactly the same as Harry's Bar in Venice. But the rest here is more formal.

He notices Marcus' detachment.

SERGIO (CONT'D)

I can tell you like a good meal. You must see the kitchen.

He leads Marcus into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. HARRY CIPRIANI. CONTINUOUS.

The kitchen is ultra-modern. Gleaming stainless steel, save for copper sauce pans that hang from hooks above one station. Two cooks, JOHNNY and NICK. NICK is pounding pieces of meat flat.

Marcus is immediately captivated. He looks at JOHNNY who is whisking egg yolks, slowly adding olive oil.

MARCUS

Mayonnaise? For carpaccio?

SERGIO

Yes! That is exactly correct. We always make it fresh. Johnny, come meet Mr. Temple.

Johnny stops whisking and shakes Marcus' hand. He is in his 20s, dark, handsome.

JOHNNY

Come, try.

He takes a piece of thin, nearly translucent beef from Nick's area and puts it on a plate, then slowly drizzles his freshly-made mayonnaise over it. He hands Marcus a fork and pushes the plate towards him.

Marcus takes a bite. It is obviously orgasmic.

MARCUS

It just melts... This isn't sirloin, though, is it?

JOHNNY

No, no. Always tenderloin. And we never freeze it: ruins the texture. For the mayonnaise, you have to know how much oil to add.

MARCUS

Incredible.

JOHNNY

You a cook?

SERGIO

Mr. Temple is here with our guests on the 23rd floor.

JOHNNY

You're the rapper?

MARCUS

No, I'm his... assistant.

An awkward silence passes as Johnny tries to size Marcus up.

Vittorio walks in with a cappuccino, which he hands to Marcus. The cappuccino's foam has a cartoon likeness of Marcus. Marcus, amused, smiles at Vittorio who winks and then walks back out.

SERGIO

We're about to open. Johnny, make something special for Mr. Temple.

JOHNNY

You like eggs?

Marcus, still beaming at the carpaccio and drinking his cappuccino, shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. HARRY CIPRIANI. A LITTLE LATER.

Marcus is sitting at a large table in the corner.

A few other guests are scattered around the restaurant, drinking coffee.

He's looking at files and itineraries on his MacBook. He compares them to identical files on his phone and types information in from his collection of note cards.

JOHNNY comes out, carrying a plate, which he sets in front of Marcus.

JOHNNY

Poached eggs on carpaccio on toast.
It's like eggs benedict, but...
you'll see. It's better.

MARCUS

Johnny, thank you.

Johnny waves him off and starts to walk away.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Hey, uh, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yo?

MARCUS

Is it always this slow?

JOHNNY

(Cautiously) Well... Things have
been better. People don't come like
they used to. Some bad press with
the owner... It's not as good as
before. We had to let a couple guys
go.

MARCUS

I see.

JOHNNY

It'll be ok. Always is.

MARCUS

Yeah, I guess it always is. Thank
you.

Marcus takes a picture of his meal with his phone, then cuts away a piece and takes a bite, savoring the eggs and beef. He opens a webpage on his computer and enters login credentials.

The page reads "THE FOODIST." Marcus begins typing.

SUBTITLE: "An Italian Renaissance In NYC: Eating The Perfect Breakfast At Harry Cipriani."

CUT TO:

INT. SHERRY-NETHERLAND HOTEL. 23RD FLOOR. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CITY SUITE 2309. LATER.

Marcus enters the suite. It is filled with haze. Empty champagne bottles, t-shirts, promo crap and takeout boxes litter the floor. It's a beautiful room... trashed. People are passed out everywhere. Marcus looks disgusted as he steps over the casualties.

MARCUS

Jerome.

Marcus makes his way through the suite stepping over people. He picks up an empty champagne bottle and looks at it.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(to himself) Vintage. What a fucking waste.

He enters the bedroom. Passed out on the bed is JEROME WILLIAMS, aka ROME JUVIE. At 20, the rapper has more money than he knows what to do with, made clear by his excess. He is African-American, thin, and tattooed from feet to forehead. He's educated, but pretends to be far more stupid than he is to fit in with his squad. He's also a distant cousin of Marcus.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

JEROME.

Jerome stirs under the covers and opens his eyes. Two naked women are next to him, sleeping peacefully. Jerome nods at Marcus, then reaches over to his vape pen and takes a hit.

JEROME

'Sup, Marcus.

MARCUS

You know you're not supposed to be smoking that shit in here.

JEROME

Ain't smoking, nigga. Vaping.

The two naked girls wake and look at Marcus, confused and a little scared.

MARCUS

(to the girls) You. And you. Get the fuck out. And don't take anything more than you came in here with.

Jerome rolls his eyes then grabs a roll of cash and peels off a few c-notes which he hands to the girls, who stumble out of the room, grabbing their clothes on the way out.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I am NOT your 'nigga,' Jerome.

JEROME

Rome, cuz. Only you and my moms still call me Jerome. Why you hatin'?

MARCUS

It's your name, isn't it?

JEROME

ROME is my name from the street. JEROME is my slave name.

MARCUS

(laughs) This shit again? What street? Sesame Street? Slave name? You had a full ride to Julliard on a violin scholarship after private school...

JEROME

Yeah, in L.A...

MARCUS

(laughs again) Right. Harvard-Westlake ain't exactly Compton. Then you decided you wanted to do this thug "Rome Juvie" shit...

JEROME

This "Rome Juvie" shit pays your rent, cuz.

Jerome takes a long hit of his vape pen, looking satisfied. Marcus has nothing to counter Jerome's point. Jerome senses his cousin's discomfort and changes the subject.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Why you up so early anyway? Show's not til tonight.

MARCUS

Did an advance on the restaurant downstairs. Had some other work to do too.

JEROME

Downstairs? Thought we were going to that place with the gold leaf ice cream. We eating there now?

MARCUS

We're not. I am. Let me do my job, Rome.

JEROME

Let me do mine, nigga.

MARCUS

(softly) I told you, Jerome...

Suddenly someone puts a hard, heavy hand on Marcus's shoulder. This is FATTY DOPE, one of Jerome's squad. FATTY is a gargantuan moron that Jerome keeps around as muscle, despite Marcus' protestations. He is about the same height as Marcus, but with three times the girth.

Marcus easily turns to the outside of FATTY'S grip and sinks his weight into his elbow, knocking him off balance and into a pile of trash.

JEROME

(laughing hysterically) Fatty, you dumb motherfucker.

FATTY

Oh shit, sorry, Marcus.

MARCUS

(impatiently) I told you not to do that shit, Fatty. Didn't I tell you? Didn't I fucking tell you?

FATTY

Sorry. Forgot.

MARCUS

Get your ass up, we got shit to do this morning.

Fatty gets up. He's wearing a suit jacket over a t-shirt and a huge gold chain and baggy, completely mismatched pants Marcus looks him up and down.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Didn't I say you need a suit?

Fatty looks puzzled.

FATTY
This is my suit.

Jerome laughs and peels off some more money.

MARCUS
Your friends, Rome. Your friends.

CUT TO:

EST. SHOT. NEW YORK CITY: MIDTOWN. LATE MORNING.

Hustlers are out hustling, people are in a continuous stream as the city comes to life. We feel the pulse, the intensity of Manhattan. In the middle of traffic, we see a WHITE LIMOUSINE slowly edging through the city.

INT. LIMOUSINE EN ROUTE TO CLUB. CONTINUOUS.

Marcus and Fatty are in the back of Jerome's pimped-out car. Marcus is wearing an overcoat in addition to his suit. Fatty is still wearing his "suit." Hip Hop is playing over the speakers. Fatty is like an excited kid, looking around the city, playing with the fish in the tanks housed in the seat backs. Marcus is on his laptop, typing.

We see on Marcus' screen that he's writing about HARRY CIPRIANI, uploading pictures of his breakfast.

A new song comes on.

FATTY
(to driver) Oh shit! Hey, turn that up.

The volume increases. Marcus doesn't look up from his screen.

MARCUS
Don't.

The volume decreases.

FATTY
That's Rome's new track, though!
Driver, bump that shit!

The volume increases. Marcus still doesn't look up from his screen.

MARCUS

Sean, turn that down please.

The volume decreases. Fatty looks hurt,

MARCUS (CONT'D)

And switch it to something for grown-ass men, please. Thank you.

The music switches. MARK MORRISON'S "Return of the Mack" comes on. Marcus looks up, all smiles, then looks over at Fatty.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You hear this? This is real music. None of this "motherfucker this and motherfucker that" Rome Juvie nonsense. In my day, this was IT.

FATTY

Yeah but--

Each time Fatty interrupts, Marcus sings along with another line from the song, taking joy in Fatty's frustration.

MARCUS

WATCH MY FLOW!

FATTY

Yo man, stop play --

MARCUS

HERE I GO!

FATTY

Marcus --

MARCUS

(singing with the music) So I'm back up in the game, running things to keep my swing, letting all the people know that I'm back to run the show...

Fatty gives up and stares out the window. Marcus stops laughing and goes back to writing.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(to SEAN, the unseen DRIVER) Sean, what's another word for "elegant"

SEAN

Genteel.

MARCUS

"Genteel..." Nice. Thank you.

SEAN

My pleasure.

CUT TO:

INT. IRVING PLAZA. SECOND FLOOR. - AFTERNOON

MARCUS and FATTY are with SUE, the HOUSE MANAGER of IRVING PLAZA. She looks a lot like the YOUNG WOMAN from Marcus' shooting incident in SCENE 1. She's showing them around the club as Marcus distractedly jots down notes about exits and entrances.

The club, naturally, is empty.

SUE

So do you think Rome is going to want the downstairs dressing room?

Marcus stares at Sue, alarmed at how much she looks like the YOUNG WOMAN, saying nothing.

FLASHBACK - THE SHOOTING

Marcus is on his knees pressing hard on the YOUNG WOMAN's gunshot wound.

She stares at him, eyes tearing, wide with shock and fear.

Her eyes go blank.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY.

FATTY

He always uses the downstairs --

Marcus snaps back to attention.

MARCUS

I want him upstairs. I don't like how close to the main floor the downstairs puts him.

FATTY

Yeah but --

MARCUS

Upstairs.

SUE

(brightly) Upstairs it is!

They continue their tour. Marcus can't stop looking at Sue, breaking his stare only when she looks back at him uncomfortably.

SUE (CONT'D)

I do have a few questions about the rider.

MARCUS

Hey, I'm sorry to keep staring at you. You just look like someone I used to know.

SUE

(laughs) It's no problem, I get that all the time. Just one of those faces I guess.

MARCUS

Yeah. I guess that must be it.

SUE

I see here that Rome wants three "big ass" bottles of champagne? How big?

FATTY

Just big. Just get some big-ass bottles.

MARCUS

He wants Jeroboams of Veuve. Four and a half liters. Chilled. Ice cold.

SUE

Is he a champagne guy?

MARCUS

That's one way to put it.

