

## The Intercept

Three minutes. That's all the time I've got to make the intercept from the first passengers arriving until they pass through the exit. After that, it's too late. I've got one shot. Everything rests on this final test.

I've got to stay cool. No one should notice me secretly surveilling their every move. I watch as the first few suspects arrive and make their way through the large open atrium, taking up positions surrounding the carousel. There's a loud rumble as somewhere below us the engine springs to life, and luggage of all shapes and colours starts clattering down the ramp.

A large woman wearing a garish leopard print dress shuffles uncomfortably from foot to foot. She looks over her shoulder in our direction, and for an instant, our eyes meet, before she quickly resumes intently scanning the carousel. Looks suspicious to me. I flick a glance at my partner, Margarita. She's seen it too. As if she can hear my thoughts, she gives me a nudge and we make our move. We close in on the target. I'm right behind the woman when she bends and retrieves a case from the conveyor. Brown leather, with a distinctive signature flowery pattern and stylised 'LV' monogram. She lifts it to the ground. The bag is as fake as she is. She smiles, reaching a hand in my direction, but I'm getting nothing else from her. I never socialise while I'm working, in any case, Margarita nudges me to carry on searching. There are only two minutes left to find our target.

We've done a full circle of the training zone and come up empty-handed. I'm starting to panic. What if the target already made it through?

One minute.

That's when I catch a glimpse of him. Out of the corner of my eye, standing in the queue about to pass through one of those big magnetic x-ray machines. Ragged semi-bleached hair hangs in rough greasy locks over his shoulders. An uncouth surfer type. A bright coloured shirt hangs untucked and open down to his waist. A few more steps and he'll be through the scanner and on his way to freedom. He pauses to ditch his surfboard so he can pass through the machine. Of course. I let him go and rush to the abandoned board. Bingo. I sit down and wait for Margarita. She arrives, turning the board over, tapping it lightly with her hands. A hollow sound reveals a hidden compartment and she pulls out a small plastic bag of white powder. Two more uniforms, a man and a woman come over. I've trained this scenario with Jackson before, but the woman is new. She wears a badge that says her name is Arlene, but she says nothing. Eventually, a smile breaks through her stoic expression. "Congratulations Officer Garcia, looks like you and Max have graduated."

Margarita kneels and pats me on the head. "Good dog Max," she says, handing me a treat. "I knew you could do it."