

## ***Murtoriu – Marc Biancarelli***

Trans: Chris Schaefer

### **Chapter 2**

Don Pierre has just parked the 4x4 on the dirt road. It's well-hidden, but at this hour nobody would dare approach the area. They'll go the rest of the way on foot. A hundred or so meters through the oak grove and the fields. Then they'll reach the Krauts' house. They'll just have to jump over the back wall and surprise them while they're eating. The perfect time to make a move.

“Let's put our masks on now and cock our revolvers. I'll switch off the security on mine. I've got the hang of it. Don't cock yours yet, though, so a shot doesn't go off and you bust up your knee like an idiot.”

“Okay, but are you sure there aren't any dangerous dogs,” Andria responds, mouth trembling.

“Not a chance, they're two rats not even this big. Some kind of dachshunds according to what Marc-Ange told me. They bark at the drop of a hat, but they don't attack. The owners won't even be surprised to hear them barking.”

“Are you sure the door'll be open...that we'll be able to get in?”

“Yes, it's always open when it's early like this. They're eating peacefully. They're well-organized, well-disciplined, Krauts through and through. The wife locks the door around 11 or midnight, but right now we're sure to be able to get in. Once inside, don't say a thing, you take care of the husband, keeping your gun on him. I'll do the rest and I'll speak.”

“And if the husband tries something funny? If he comes at us? What if my gun isn't cocked?”

“You'll cock it just before going in. And if he moves a finger, you'll shoot him in the knee. It's him or us, got it?”

“Yeah, got it.”

“You have the rope?”

“In the sack.”

“We're set. Now we gotta go. Keep breathing the whole time. Stay in control. No sweat. Don't be afraid.”

“I trust you.”

The two men cross the oak grove in silence. It is dark but the path is well-marked. It can be seen in any case. Don Pierre is satisfied, he tells himself that when they make their escape they'll avoid tripping on the big roots and they'll get back to the car quickly. They reach the fields now. No one speaks any more. Don Pierre walks in front. He is determined, knowing that there is a lot of cash at the Krauts' place and that they'll be leaving with a full sack in just half an hour. It's one hell of a payday. Tomorrow the Kraut is making an under-the-table payment on a plot of land. In the meantime he's keeping the money at his place. It's a delicate moment. Marc-Ange, who passed him the message, got the information from the bank employee who processed the withdrawal. There should be between 60 and 70 thousand euros for the taking. Ten thousand for the employee, ten thousand for Marc-Ange, and the rest to split with Andria. One hell of a payday for sure.

They're about to jump the wall. That's when the two dogs start barking. Don Pierre jumps anyway but realizes Andria hasn't budged. He's afraid of the barking. And for good reason. Here come two ferocious hounds running up frothing at the mouth, and Don Pierre silently curses Marc-Ange: “Two dachshunds? You motherfucker...” More like scary-toothed Rottweilers ready to bite my hand off. The only solution would be to shoot them, but then it would be goodbye to the payday, goodbye to thousands of euros in cash...the thug coldly raises his gun, taking aim at the first dog. That's when the two watchdogs suddenly stop barking and scamper off, tails between their legs, yelping like puppies. Unbelievable. It's like they knew the man could obliterate them in a single shot.

At last it is Andria's turn. He jumps and then whispers to Don Pierre:

"Scared the crap out of me! Two monsters, two..."

"Shut-up! Now cock your gun."

"Could they've heard us?"

"We're gonna find out real soon."

But it seemed as if nobody inside was concerned in the slightest about the barking. They're really used to it. Marc-Ange wasn't lying. Approaching the kitchen window, the two scumbags could see the family at the kitchen table: the couple and their two kids, two pretty cute girls around fifteen years of age.

The next moment is the most delicate: breach the premises, establish contact. It's impossible to guess these people's reaction in their own home, if they'll offer resistance or not. A family member could have a heart attack. Or maybe the father tries to defend his keep, play the hero. Or there might be screams, and in the confusion a gun goes off.

There are two ways to go forward here. The first is to knock on the door in order to attract someone to the entry to take as a hostage. Don Pierre chooses the second: he pushes on the door handle opening it himself and goes into action without uttering a word. Andria is on his heels like a shadow. The two men point their guns. Now they are in the kitchen. Still without uttering a word.

The family is eating. No one reacts. Petrified, the four Germans observe the intruders, staring wide-eyed, doubtlessly stunned by the embarrassment caused by the violation of their privacy. In any case this is not time for analysis; they don't understand. Then one of the young girls begins squealing. A scared shriek escapes her lips. Don Pierre points his gun at the mother and, with his free hand, puts a finger on the lips of the girl, imposing silence. She obliges, almost exactly like the dogs earlier. Andria hasn't lost any time either: he has taken up a position in front of the husband, and he threatens him with his gun. The man has maintained his composure. Doubtlessly surprised at the beginning as well, he hasn't freaked out or reacted stupidly. He isn't even showing his fear. He has surely understood the reason for the two masked men's presence: the money in his house, the bribe for the purchase of the plot...Instinctively, he has also understood that the safety of his family depends on his behavior. He calmly addresses one of his daughters. He must be telling her in German to not be afraid and to stay calm.

Curiously, Don Pierre feels a kind of frustration. Things are going too well. Finally he tells the man: "*Money! The Money! Raus!*" He has just said about every word he knows in English and German. The guy can not have not understood. Still calm but white as a sheet, the other responds, "*There's no money!*" How's that *no money*? Don Pierre, who wasn't expecting that response, feels a strange distress for the space of a second. Panic seizes him, but he immediately pulls himself together. The guy has entered the resistance phase. He's going to try to defend his keep, to gauge his attackers' capabilities. It was predictable. Even logical. A poker game begins.

"*No money? You wanna play around? Good! Now look!*"

He grabs the girl, the one that was squealing, and tears her from the table, pulling her to himself. He seals the gun's barrel to her head and the girl begins sobbing, trembling all over. The woman has shrieked. She is probably telling the thug to let her daughter go, to not hurt her...Don Pierre begins yelling like a wild man, an animal scream devoid of meaning, but which could mean: stop fucking around now. That's enough. I'm liable to do something fucking crazy... The shriek has paralyzed everyone and even Andria begins trembling while he continues trying to keep the husband in line.

"Let's tie this bastard up!" Don Pierre continues yelling. "Give me your gun and tie him up right away! I'm gonna show him if he keeps his money hidden for long!"

Despite his panic, Andria manages to get the rope out of his backpack and uses it to tie the Kraut to his chair while Don Pierre holds the rest of the family at bay, pressing his gun's barrel against the little screamer's head.

Once the father is all tied up, the two accomplices bind the women, one after another. Once everyone is immobilized, Don Pierre, now calmer, speaks again to the man of the house.

"I'm not joking around anymore: *where is the money?*"

Pale, the other keeps resisting.

*"No money here! There's no money at home..."*

Don Pierre pistol-whips the girl, in one enormous blow to the head. Blood gushes from the wound. The kid's face has been ripped wide open at the eyebrow. She falls to the ground, knocked half-senseless. The whole family then breaks out squealing. From fear. From despair. Maybe from disgust.

*"You like it like that? Where is the money?"*

The man shakes his head and says a few words in German, gesturing towards the upper floor and showing his bound feet, doubtlessly trying to explain that he will take him where the money is. Now he won't stop talking: the spectacle of his kid soaked in blood has shaken him. He wants to take care of business as quickly as possible.

*"It's okay...it's okay... Shut up now! We're gonna untie your feet and you're gonna show us the way, I understand. Alright, untie this bastard's feet! And then keep an eye on the family while I go upstairs,"* Don Pierre orders Andria, *"so they don't go escape and call the cops."*

And that's how things happen.

The German has almost run up the stairs leading Don Pierre into an office where he points out a painting hung on the wall. *"Inside! Inside!"* The thug has understood, he takes the painting down and sees the safe. With a mix of phrases and head motions, the captive explains that he just has to enter the code and so Don Pierre must untie his hands.

*"The code...yes...the code! I'm gonna untie you, but watch out! You lift a finger and I'll blow your brains out!"*

With one hand he frees those of his hostage. With the other he holds the barrel to the nape of his neck. The German enters the code and opens the safe. Don Pierre sees the bills inside. Green. Pink. Payday! The man gathers up the bills and hands them to the thug who then tucks them inside his vest pockets.

*"So, it's like that huh, no money...? Well thank you all the same, little idiot!"*

Then, thrusting forward he pistol-whips the Kraut, and as his victim collapses, he thinks to himself, *"It'll be easier to tie him up again, and besides he tried to hide the money. He didn't steal it. His pistol-whipping."*

In the kitchen, the women are distraught when they see the hold-up man return alone. Anxious, the mother questions Don Pierre in German. *"Don't fucking piss me off! Your husband's upstairs! Upstairs! Understand? Upstairs! Alright, we're outta here now. Let's unplug the telephones. We'll take their cellphones and get outta here pronto!"* he adds for the benefit of Andria.

It takes five minutes to gather up all the cellphones and to guarantee as much as possible the safety of their escape. Hidden away in their kennels, the dogs are nowhere to be seen. The reckless ones clear the wall without a problem. There they are running at last in the fields. They pass the oak grove. They fling themselves into the 4x4, and Don Pierre starts the ignition and peels out. There they are escaping into the night, disappearing onto narrow country roads. Their plan has succeeded. They laugh like the possessed.

*"How much is there? How much is there?"* shouts Andria like a nutcase.

*"I don't know. Impossible to count. I did everything as fast as I could...One hundred thousand euros maybe! Here, look!"*

He tosses a wad to his accomplice, to his disciple in dirty deeds, you might say.

*"Good God! We're rich!"*

*"Yes. Think of all the fucks we're gonna have with that money there! We're gonna hit up all the warehouses! All the blow jobs you're gonna get!"*

The night is torn by their victory cries. You might think it was two Apaches returning from a horse raid, but soon Andria, recovering some lucidity, seeks to clarify something that struck him strangely:

*"The guy... why didn't he come back down with you?"*

*"Towards the end he tried to stick me. He wanted to resist, so I pistol-whipped him, knocking him out."*

“But...you didn't...”

“Of course not! Stupid bastard! Just a barrel to the head to calm him down!”

“In the name of God!”

“I got the little one to calm down too, didn't I? That one's gonna to sleep well tonight, don't you think?”

“She didn't stop squealing. I saw right when the payday was slipping through our fingers...”

“Yeah, but I was there! I played it perfectly, right? Had to shake the bastard a little before he coughed his money up! I played it perfectly, though, right? When he saw me knock out his kid, he stopped trying to be a smart ass.”

“Yes, Don, you managed royally! And me, what'd you think of me, I was good, right? I mean for the first time...”

“Mmh...yeah. You proved you were up to the task. The first time's not guaranteed. I think we can do more jobs together now. Really. We'll keep it up like this. But there is someone who I have a word for...that bastard Marc-Ange: two dachshunds, two dachshunds is what he told us...!

“I saw right when those two hounds were bearing down on us! We got bad information!”

“Yeah, but a thing like that has its price. That won't be ten thousand euros for him, trust me. We're gonna pad our pockets a little due to risks incurred. It only makes sense.”

“Oh yeah! Makes sense! What an asshole, that Marc-Ange!”