

I'm seated at a table for two in a dark corner of Le Poisson Riche, the swanky waterfront restaurant accurately described by the *Boston Herald* as a "chrome nightmare on steroids."

On the table in front of me is a glass of Shiraz and a laptop computer. The laptop is displaying live footage from several stealthily placed street cameras. In one window, a 1986 Bentley Continental Cabriolet, onyx black, the top down, glides down jammed Northern Avenue three blocks from Le Poisson Riche, the rest of the traffic parting around the car like a school of herring giving berth to a shark.

The Bentley's driver is Marco Glitzenhammer, the billionaire founder and head of Glitzz, the iconic Boston-based luxury swimwear designer. Glitzenhammer has a team of private drivers, but he loves to show off the Bentley—and no one drives the Bentley except for Marco Glitzenhammer.

I speak into the tiny microphone clipped to my blouse. "Octopus is on the prowl."

I continue tracking the Bentley, then check the stream from another camera feed. A tan twenty-year-old Acura Legend idles at an intersection ahead of the Bentley.

"Go Coral," I say.

As usual, Coral plays her part perfectly. She guns the Acura and crashes it into a thick cement light pole, blocking the restaurant's valet cutout. She flings her door open and discreetly slashes the front tire with a pocket knife to ensure that the car won't be going anywhere soon, then kicks the knife under the Acura and begins to swear loudly—in several languages at once—at the befuddled valet.

Traffic starts to snarl. The Bentley crawls ahead half a block.

"Go Yellowtail," I say.

Yellowtail, running the Wyoming Firetrap con and wearing a stolen valet uniform, appears as if by magic from the restaurant's entrance, runs into the street, and flags down Glitzenhammer. Yellowtail explains that an accident is blocking the valet area, then he waves over another valet—Marlin, another member of my team wearing another stolen valet uniform.

The annoyed Glitzenhammer hands the Bentley's keys to fake-valet Yellowtail, who hands them to fake-valet Marlin. Yellowtail walks Glitzenhammer toward Le Poisson Riche, apologizing profusely for the inconvenience, while Marlin climbs into the Bentley.

I check the camera footage, then say, "Go Marlin."

Marlin runs the Denver Dupe with the best of them. He wheels the Bentley around the block and into the hotel's valet parking area. I switch to another camera and watch Marlin park the convertible, get out, and bend down, ostensibly to tie a shoe. Thirty seconds later, my laptop dings, and I've received a 3D model of a key, thanks to Marlin's digital key duplicator.

It isn't the key to the Bentley. It's a key to a Beacon Hill townhouse—Glitzenhammer's love nest, a place he's kept secret from his current wife, his previous two wives, and everyone else but his string of interchangeable mistresses. Glitzenhammer hides a spare key to the condo in the otherwise-empty hip flask in the Bentley's passenger door minibar. Finding this key was a challenge, but last month Coral gave one of Glitzenhammer's car detailing team members food poisoning, then filled in admirably as his replacement.

Yellowtail leads Glitzenhammer between the still-swearing Coral and the still-befuddled valet and into Le Poisson Riche.

"Go Mako," I say, then transfer the uploaded file of the key to Mako, who's parked a block away from Glitzenhammer's love nest. She'll fire up a portable 3D printer and make a copy of

the key. Glitzenhammer's building has exceptional security, but Mako can run the Baltimore Backdoor in her sleep.

A late-night search of Glitzenhammer's office last year revealed not only the existence of the love nest, but the purchase of a Rhino 815, a state-of-the-art safe guaranteed impregnable to everyone but the owner and the Rhino design team—and Mako, who coded a backdoor into Rhino's corporate computer system six months ago when she posed as a consultant.

We know that the Rhino is in the love nest. What we don't know is the contents of the safe. I'm counting on there being two specific items in the Rhino, if this long con is going to work. One of them is a bikini.

The Glitzz Fantasy Bikini is a two-million-dollar swimsuit horridly bedecked in precious gems and stones. Glitzenhammer designs and makes a new suit by hand in secret each year and unveils it to kick off the GlitzzShow, the company's annual presentation of next year's line.

Tomorrow is the start of the show. Given that Glitzenhammer keeps the swimsuit hidden away until the unveiling, I'm certain that it isn't at Glitzz headquarters—a place where secrets go to die—and I know that it's not in the sprawling West Roxbury home that he shares with his wife. The bikini has to be in the safe.

Yellowtail's voice crackles in my ear. "Octopus in 30."

"Scatter," I reply. Each team member responds with a single click. Coral, Yellowtail, and Marlin will meet up with Mako at the love nest. The four of them will split the bikini's jewels and anything else they want to carry out. My take will be the second item that I'm counting on being in the safe—the Glitzz corporate secrets that will allow me to control Marco Glitzenhammer and his Glitzz empire like a puppet for years to come.

I close my laptop and slide it into my bag, stash my earpiece and microphone, then take a sip of my Shiraz.

The maître d' walks Glitzenhammer over to my table. I tilt my head so Glitzenhammer can kiss me on the cheek, but he declines, as he always does.

“This city is becoming unbearable,” Glitzenhammer grumbles as he sits. “A loud foreign woman crashed her car outside. I couldn't even properly valet!”

“How awful, Marco,” I reply.

The maître d' beckons to a waiter, who scurries over. “The usual,” Glitzenhammer says before the man can speak.

Everyone on my team has their preferred cons. Now me, I love running the Avenging Annie. It can take years, but in the end, the payoff is always worth it.

“Very good, sir,” the waiter replies, then turns to me. “And for you, Mrs. Glitzenhammer?”

#