

“You understand there’s no guarantee of a call,” Mr. Simons says. He strokes his mustache, something he’s done frequently during the interview. It’s dyed brown, I can tell. Same brown as the walls, the elaborate wainscotting, his shiny desk, the thick carpet, the leather chair I’m seated in. The kind of weighty, sober brown that makes you speak in hushed tones.

“Yes, sir. The Craigslist ad mentioned that.”

“We wanted to be clear and upfront.”

“The ad was crisply written and very clear,” I assure him.

“And you understand this is after-hours work. The shift is 5 P.M. to 8 A.M. You’re on standby the entire time. If there’s a call, you go.” Another mustache stroke.

I’m glad for the mustache, it will be a good clue later. “And I can conduct the standby at home,” I say.

He waves a hand. “You can do it anywhere. We forward the night line to your cell phone. You just have to have your phone with you, and you have to answer it.”

I pull my phone out of the inner sport jacket pocket. “Always.”

“Excellent. Here’s how it works. You get a call, you drive here. Clock in. Pick up the necessary paperwork, the materials, and the vehicle. We’ll show you all that. You go to the address, take care of business, come back here. You unload. We’ll show you how, and where everything goes. Then you gas up the vehicle—we always keep it full—and bring it back.” He brushes his hands together, like knocking away crumbs. “And that’s that, you’re done. You clock out. Don’t forget to clock out. If you forget, it’s a two-hour call no matter how long it took. So don’t forget. That clear?”

“That seems fair.” It seems like a shallow step above slave labor, but you know what they say about beggars.