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Did I tell my name to anyone last night?

by MaryPat Campbell

That nightcap with my so called colleagues was a bad idea. Keeping up the pretence of who I am, especially when I like these people has been harder than usual this time round. After a fine dinner and talks over the cheese board I agreed to more drinks in what was by then an almost empty bar. The lone bartender looked sullen, and resentfully served us, his late customers. Following a number of excellent bottles of wine at dinner and a couple of cognacs, I did that fatal thing of beginning to relax.

Did I tell my name to anyone last night, or didn't I tell my name? I can't remember, I might have let it slip, I'm usually so careful. If I did, they will know who I am now. First thing you learn at the bureau, never let your guard down especially where alcohol is concerned.

It's 6am and I'm sitting on the edge of my bed staring out at the early morning traffic as it starts to move slowly along the wet streets of this city, in which every time I visit, it always seems to be raining. I could be at home now, still asleep in our warm bed beside Katya, who knows nothing of my 'business interests' in this city. Lots of pretence there too. The lies I've told, the trusts I've betrayed, I say one thing and do another. I've been well protected by the bureau, am very well paid and all my tracks have been covered so far. Except for last night, did I or didn't I give myself away? This feels like a warning, to get out now and disappear, try to stay alive and out of their reach, while another part of me knows this is unlikely.

Is this what happens to people like me, I started off confident and full of ambition to be a world player in the background, to play my part. Now, hungover and sick to my stomach with fear, wondering how or even if I can escape. I imagine Katya is looking forward to me coming home tomorrow but I dare not wait that long. I've more than likely slipped up badly, it could be catastrophic not just for me but for the whole operation.

I can't face coffee. I should pack my bag fast and get out. I'll pay my bill and leave for the airport as soon as I'm dressed. The hotel room's phone is ringing, I'm in a panic now, my heart is racing. Should I answer it? Better not. I won't use the lift, they'll be waiting for me down in the lobby. Just get the hell out of here as fast as I can.