

# **Undercover Thief**

By  
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H. T. King

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For my mother. Without all of your love and support throughout my life, I may never have fulfilled my lifelong dream. Thank you.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# Chapter One

The door slid open with a small swooshing noise, revealing a grand open space. I paused for a moment, studying the room and its contents. A scary looking laser grid, poorly hidden pressure pads and bulky infrared cameras were the first things I noticed. And all of them were guarding a small plinth in the centre of the room, which was bearing possibly the largest ruby I had ever seen.

I cracked a smile at the sight.

This was going to be fun.

"Ok, now."

The lasers snapped off. Perfect, just like we'd practiced.

I shot the cord and grappling hook out of my gun and watched it smashed into the plaster of the ceiling, gripping into the thick beam behind it with metal claws. I yanked on the chord hard; to make sure that it wouldn't give out. It didn't move an inch.

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I tugged on the rope three times in a pre-arranged pattern; wrapping it securely around my arm to be sure I wouldn't lose my grip. Then the mechanism kicked in and it lifted me off the floor. As I swung towards the ruby, I snatched it off of its silk cushion.

"Did the trip work?" I asked. There was a moment of silence before Leah responded.

"Oh yeah. You've done it girl," she crowed over the coms device in my ear. I could almost hear her celebratory dance as we spoke.

"No, we did it," I corrected her as I slowly crawled closer and closer to the ceiling, the mechanism still pulling me up.

"And the suit is working perfectly. Infrared isn't picking you up at all."

"You're a genius Leah. To think of making a suit out of the same stuff as the tape."

"Well, I'm not disputing the genius part."

"Where's Jerry?" I asked checking my watch for the time. I was on time, but I wasn't alone in the building tonight.

"Still picking up a few souvenirs."

"Well tell him to hurry up. I'm dying for a cup of tea," I said putting the ruby into one of my pockets and zipping it up tight.

"Oh to be British," answered Leah with a snigger.

"Um, Leah, you're technically British too."

"A small technicality. I have Thai blood."

"And the fact that you can't remember a single thing about Thailand doesn't matter?"

"Nope," she said defiantly and I snorted.

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I reached the top of the rope. I was so close to the ceiling, I could reach out with my hand and touch the plaster if I wanted to. I let out the rope slowly, inch by inch and began to swing on it. I kept lowering it as I swung. Soon I got to what I felt was the right length. I fastened the rope tightly to my belt and swung, reaching out. My fingers closed around a small ledge, jutting out from just under a vent. I ripped off the covering, untied the rope from around my middle and crawled inside.

I wriggled my way along as fast as I could, a silent clock counting down inside my head.

"Ok, turn left," Leah instructed in my ear piece.

"Gotcha," I said and wriggled left next turning.

"So you know our next target?" asked Leah.

"I'm trying to get through this one at the moment Leah."

"Aw come on, you always have something in store."

"Alright, I have a few ideas," I admitted. Leah let out a laugh.

"Oh, good! Can we go somewhere with some sun? Maybe a trip to Las Vegas?"

"To cheat casinos? How cliché you are Leah."

"Oh fine. Oh, and Micah is itching to practise his Mandarin. China is sunny, like always."

"I'll bear that in mind," I promised, "But if we get a job in Italy, we're taking it."

"Oooh, Italy. They have nice weather too. I'm in," she conceded and I muffled my amusement, "Ok, turn right here and then go straight, that should lead you to a corridor and you can walk from there. I'll keep all eyes blind."

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"Thanks Leah."

"So what are you getting him for his birthday?"

"Micah? His birthday isn't for three months."

"I'm talking about Jerry, obviously."

"Oh!"

"He's turning seventeen."

"I almost forgot about that, I was thinking some more military grade cable," I joked and she humoured me with a small laugh.

"And really?"

"I have no idea. What does he want?"

"Like I have a clue! He talks more to you than he does to me, his own sister."

"You know what, whatever you decide to get him, I'll pitch in. So think big."

"See, this is the problem with shopping for a thief. They just take everything they want."

"Indeed it is," I agreed with a sigh, "but we can think of something. What about that new iPhone? That's supposed to be good."

"Yeah, if we get it with three weeks to spare I can fix all the bugs and upload my software," said Leah thinking it through.

"I'm sure we can manage that, what else? That new iPad while we're in the Apple shop?"

"You know he's not much of a computer guy, but I would love one."

"You could build one yourself," I teased.

"True."

"What else, a phone isn't really enough?"

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"I don't know, you know my brother, he's a bit of a closed book about things like that," she said.

"I know, annoyingly closed," I grumbled.

"Hey while we're on the subject, I built you a new phone."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, works through jammers and stuff. Nothing can stop it, not even military stuff."

"Do I want to know how you tested that?"

"I know a guy," she said and I gave a small laugh.

"Well thanks; that will come in useful, I think."

"It should," she said proudly, "I'm working on wiring it to an ear piece at the moment. That's proving difficult."

"You're eleven years old and you understand more computer stuff than most professionals. Something is bound to trip you now and again."

"Oh, I can do it, it's just taking a while for me to fix the bugs," she said.

"Of course," Jerry came over the coms.

"How long have you been listening?" I demanded.

"The new phone would be nice, thanks for the thought," he teased and I growled.

"Great, our one idea is completely wrecked," huffed Leah.

"Are you done collecting mementos?" I asked coming to the corridor that Leah mentioned and dropping down easily. I landed, knees bent looking around me for some kind of alarm. There wasn't one. I waved at the cameras.

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"Hi Pam, I can see you," said Leah. I grinned and headed towards the door.

"I bet I have more money in my hands than you do in yours," added Jerry casually.

"Ooh!" I smiled with interest, "anything in the form of jewellery?"

"Several."

I had first met Jerry, Leah and their younger brother Micah when I was ten years old. They were the Sklar family – a last name I had adopted when I was with them.

My parents were always away on business. They left me at home with my grandmother to look after me and money in an account to help pay for me. I don't really remember them all that well; I know their faces from pictures my Nana used to show me, and the ones stood on the mantle above the fire place and those dotted around their home.

I had special education from an early age, as soon as my Nana was told it was clear that I was incredibly bright. My grandmother had gotten me a number of special tutors, and I loved learning. Soon she pulled me out of regular school all together; with me so far ahead there didn't seem to be any point continuing in the state system.

And then, when I was nine, my grandmother died and my whole world stopped.

She had a heart attack while I was out at the shop. I called an ambulance – but they proclaimed her dead at the scene. My parents had only gone back to work thirteen days earlier. It was a shock to everyone – Nana had seemed so healthy.

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Then money ran out. I spent what little there was left burying her. The tutors stopped coming when they stopped getting paid.

I was left alone. Broken hearted.

Most people would expect that to be the time for parents to come home. Or at least call. Or arrange for someone to take care of their nine-year-old daughter.

But they didn't.

I was nine years old, with no money, in a large empty house with nobody to help me. The food ran out and the money to buy more dried up, but I waited.

I waited for someone to come for a very long time.

I was smart. I soon realised that no one was coming to save me. So, I gave up crying and accepted that I was on my own, and that I had no one left to care for me. I needed to care for myself.

I tried to think logically. I needed food. So I began to steal. I stole only food at first, then clothes, and books so I wasn't bored. Then the power to the house was cut off – because I couldn't pay the bill.

I got more and more ambitious with my theft, as I became more and more experienced. Then I lifted a laptop. I had lifted it in the hopes that I could sell it; perhaps use the money to buy myself a couple of hot meals. It was a desperately cold winter with no heating.

Only the guy had seen me as I stowed it in my backpack. So I did what any caught thief would do -I ran away. Tried as I might, I knew they were going to catch me. I almost gave up.

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That's when a boy grabbed my hand and pulled me into an alley way. I followed him blindly, not knowing where we were going, but glad that someone was there to help me. I was terrified, it was the first time I'd ever been almost-caught. He seemed to know where he was going, on instinct I trusted him. It wasn't long before we lost them and we stopped at the corner of an empty car park.

I could remember it like it was only yesterday.

I could tell he was about my age, coffee coloured skin and hair as black as night. Taller than me, he bent over his knees, taking several deep breaths as we recovered from our running.

"Hey," he panted.

"Hi, thanks for that."

"No problem. What'd you get?"

"I didn't--"

"Cause I got a phone," he cut me off holding up two iPhones. I shared his grin.

"Laptop," I answered.

"Nice," he nodded in appreciation, holding out his hand, "I'm Jerimiah."

"Pamela," I answered, shaking it, "really, thanks for the help. I thought I was a goner."

"Got to be a bit more careful there Pammie," he teased with a carefree smile, "kids like us don't do so well in correctional facilities."

"Who knows, perhaps that would get my parents' attention?" I muttered with a sniff, "So why'd you nab the phones?"

"To sell," he said matter-of-factly, "you steal a lot?"

"Um..."

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"Hey, don't be embarrassed about it," he said kindly, like it was no big deal, "You're in like-minded company here."

"Well yeah. I need to."

"Need to?"

"I don't have any money, and I need to eat," I admitted with a sigh, kicking the concrete floor, embarrassed about voicing my financial worries to someone, who was in essence, a complete stranger.

"Yeah," he said nodding his head in understanding, "that's why we have to do it too."

"We?"

"Me and my family. Ain't you got a family?"

"No."

"Oh! You're alone?"

"Yes," I said blushing bright red, staring at my interlocked fingers, sort of ashamed to admit that my family had abandoned me.

"Well...." he said tilting his head sideways to study me for a minute, "why don't you come and meet my family? They haven't met anyone new in a while, and you seem nice."

"Won't your parents mind you just bringing random girls home from the street? I could be a thief you know," I joked and he barked with laughter.

"Hey, you're funny Pammie. And no, it's just my brother, sister and me. We don't have any parents either," he said, "so you're good."

"Really?"

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"Of course, they're younger than us though," he warned.

"Well.... great. Thanks! I'd love to meet them."

"Cool."

And that was it. I met Leah and Micah. I loved them in an instant, they were kind and fun and always joking around despite the situation we were all in. I ended up hanging out with them all the time. So it only made sense when started working together, sharing the profits, and in the end, I became part of the family.

So it was the four of us. Leah, Jerry, Micah and Pamela. The perfect, underage criminal team.

"Ok," I said getting to my planned exit point, "I'm out."

I walked calmly out into the street, along it to the end and around the corner. A van drove beside me and pulled up, throwing open the door.

"Need a ride?" asked Leah. I climbed inside.

"Hold it!" called Jerry jogging over, swinging in behind me. We closed the door and drove away. That's when we pulled off our masks.

"So, let's see the ruby then!" said Leah. I pulled it out of my pocket for them to see.

"Ooh, shiny," said Jerry taking it in his hands and holding it up to the light.

"Hey, trade!" I reminded him, holding out my empty hands. He pulled a few necklaces from his pocket and tossed them into my fingers with his trademark grin.

"You approve?" he asked as I examined them.

"Oh yes," I muttered holding them up to the light.

"You star Jerry!"

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"I need a cup of tea!" I announced, feeling good about a job well done.

"Ok! We're headed back the attic now!" placated Leah rolling her eyes. We drove all the way back to the attic, through the semi-empty streets of London.

"Oooh," I whistled inspecting the pile of jewellery that Jerry had stolen, picking up one of them I found particularly lovely.

"You want to keep it?" asked Jerry, "It would look good with your blue dress."

"Yes, it would wouldn't it," I said picturing the two together. For a really macho man, Jerry had such a good eye for colour, and he wasn't afraid to admit it either.

"How's the cash flow looking?" I asked.

"We're stable," Leah answered in a second.

"When's Micah's next bill due?"

"Three weeks, I've already put money aside," said Jerry.

Whenever we stole or did anything illegal, all of the money that we made we split into two, and that was before we factored in things like running costs. Fifty percent of the profit we kept divided between the four of us equally after all costs had been paid for.

The other fifty percent went to charity. When we hit the big leagues, we started making a lot more money than we actually needed. Lots more money. Having all that money, after struggling and having so little for so long...it felt almost wrong to me. Leaving aside the little fact that stealing in itself is, of course, wrong. Whenever I walked down a street in London, I would see poverty and

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homelessness all around. It brought back the memories of when I had been like that. I had managed to pick myself out of the dirt, but some people couldn't do that. So, fifty percent of all the money we earned went to soup kitchens, food banks and towards charities devoted to getting people off the street and giving them a fresh shot at life.

I turned my gaze back to the necklace.

"Go on Pammie, it can be your cut," pushed Jerry, "You know you want it. Besides, when we run a con, first impressions count and nothing says first impression like that amount of money around your neck."

"Ok, then I think I can give these diamonds and sapphires a wonderful new home," I said, claiming the necklace that I loved. I really didn't need all that much persuasion.

Leah and I swapped who was driving. I took a firm hold of the wheel and watched as Leah picked through the jewels, doing some mental calculations about the money we had left and trying to decide if this really was more than my fair cut – because if that was the case I wouldn't accept it.

"You don't worry about it Leah," said Jerry, "it's not at all the most expensive one I swiped. You'll like this one, look at the size of this Emerald."

"I didn't like it for the expensive-ness.... if that's even a word." Leah laughed as my argument fizzled out.

"It probably isn't," she said, "It looks good Pam."

"So, what do you think about our next target Pammie," asked Jerry.

I was the one who decided our targets, our plan. I just had a better head for strategy than they did. They didn't mind though, and if they had ideas, then I happily listened to

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them. Jerry was definitely the head of the family, he and I were sort of the collective leaders, but Jerry was the one who made all final decisions. However, we were a family, and everyone got a say in how things were run and the decisions that were made.

"Well.... I'm not sure. I need to check with Milo, see if anyone is hiring at the moment. If not, there is a lovely museum in Italy that could really use a visit."

"Oh dear, are they getting too bogged down by material possession?" joked Jerry.

"Yeah, it's only fair that we help them out, it'll give them more storage space," I said playing along with his joke.

"Well, it sounds good to me," nodded Jerry stowing the ruby in one of our brief cases as I drove into our warehouse and parked the van.

This was where we lived. The warehouse had been abandoned when we had found it. We lived upstairs, in the attic space, hence we called our home an attic. We had bought the attic legally a few years ago, so it was a safe haven for us to come back to.

"Micah, we're back!" called Jerry as we piled through the door into our living space. I kicked off my work heels (you would be surprised how many times sharp, glass cutting heels could come in handy) and pulled my hair out of its tight ponytail.

"How was it?" asked a voice from the sofa. Micah's face turned towards us. Micah's face was shocking to most people. There was a mass of red scars and buckled skin where his eyes had healed badly – after an attack when he

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was small. He was completely blind, and simply turned his head in the direction of the noise.

The truth for all of us was that, if we could, we would walk away from this life of crime and never look back. We all had plans about how we'd get out if we chose to, as a family. Jerry would get a job or an apprenticeship that paid well; I was going to get a job at a firm.

The problem with that was it wouldn't pay for Micah's treatment. He needed constant checks for his eyes, they were at risk from infection almost constantly due to the way they had healed – half open. The damage was extensive, and all the appointments cost a lot.

It wasn't like we could take him to a traditional doctor on the NHS. People would ask about his parents and then take him away when they realised we were living alone. So we had to go private but not just any kind of private. Most doctors that did private work would also argue about needing to see his parents. We had to go through illegal channels to find doctors – doctors that didn't ask questions, and they cost a lot more money.

"We did well," I said immediately, going over to him and wrapping my arms around the small seven-year-old boy and giving him a tight squeeze.

"Yay!" he celebrated yawning.

"Are you tired sweetheart?" I asked gently and he nodded.

"Yeah," he mumbled leaning back against the sofa and my arm, snuggling up to me, raising his hand to my jaw. I closed my eyes as his hands ran over my face for a minute, his version of seeing me.

"You could go to bed," I told him.

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"No thanks," he sighed, "I want to listen to what we do now."

"We're going to celebrate," said Jerry.

"With a cup of tea?" I hinted. Leah let out a dramatic and simultaneously amused sigh as she made a big deal of switching on the kettle for me.

When we had moved into the attic part of the warehouse (purely for security reasons and partially the view) we had slowly kitted it out to make it homey and comfortable. We had decent furniture and everything was done nicely and decorated as well, like a proper apartment. There was no reason not to live in a bit of comfort, now we could afford it.

Over time we had made a lot of acquaintances. A lot of less than legal people. The kind of people who ignored the law and laughed in its face.

Our kind of people.

Some were nice and we remained in touch with them, and others we said good bye to as soon as possible. But they were able to hook us up with people in the Underground who could get us what we needed without asking questions.

This included doctors for Micah.

"Ok, time for cake!" said Jerry producing it from the fridge.

This here was my family. This here, in this moment, was when I was happiest. Everyone was in a good mood, everyone was smiling. Nothing could touch us. We were walking on air.

But good things never last very long.

## Chapter Two

That morning I woke up early. Very early. It couldn't even be two in the morning, and I felt slow and sluggish. Then I realised I had been woken up by a persistent beeping sound.

"Pam! Shut it up!" yelled Jerry grumpily from his room.

"On it!" I yelled back, dragging myself from the warm embrace of my bed and over to my laptop. I sat down with a plop on the seat, yawning and wiggling the mouse simultaneously. The black screen vanished and it popped up with an alert. The security at my parents' place had been tripped. And not just once either.

Someone was in my house.

Annoyed I brought up the camera feeds I had installed. I couldn't see anyone on the screen. Just because I didn't live there anymore didn't mean I didn't keep watch over it. Of course I did, because it was somewhere to run to just in case we needed it.

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I groaned, rubbing my eyes. This was annoying.

Now I had to go and check it out. I didn't really care if someone stole from the house. Everything I wanted from it was here already. But it could be someone investigating me, in which case I needed to know. And if it really was a thief, I would stop them. It was the principle really. It wouldn't do to have someone steal from me. With our family's growing respect and name in the Underground, we didn't need an event like this spoiling everything.

I got up and dragged myself to my dresser. I pulled on black jeans, a blue lace top and a black leather jacket. I pulled on some comfortable boots, lacing them up while all the time throwing glances at the monitor of my laptop. Still no movement that I could see. But that also meant I had no idea what to expect.

I pulled my hair up into a pony tail to keep it out of my face. I threw a small glance in the mirror and sighed when I saw that my purple eyes were framed by dark, sleep deprived shadows. Never mind, I could sleep when I got back.

Then I grabbed my phone and my keys from my bedside table and shoved them into my jacket pockets before leaving my room.

"Going to my parents' place," I called to anyone that was awake.

"Why?" came a muffled sound from Jerry.

"Security was tripped. Be back in a short while," I explained. All I got in response was a tired sounding groan escaping from Jerry's room. He had heard and that was all he could be bothered to respond with.

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"I'll get bacon too!" I all but sang, walking out the front door. I closed it behind me and started down the twisting metal stairs to the warehouse below.

This was where we kept a majority of our gear, the large computers where we monitored security feeds and carried out our hacks. There was military cable and high spec climbing equipment on various shelves. There were boxes of various kit, and on hangers were the specialised outfits that we'd use when we were stealing. A lot of thought had been put into their design, making them perfect for each specific purpose – depending on the type of place we were going to rob.

But what we also kept down here were the cars. We owned three cars, all of which were bought legally, with money obtained less legally and they were driven with very illegal driving licences. There was the van, for surveillance on buildings that we were planning to case. Inside was a state of the art computer system, or at least that's what Leah told me.

We also had two other cars. They were high end, expensive and very fast. They were incredible to drive.... even though I was fourteen and I wasn't supposed to drive, I did anyway. I was a master thief; of course I could get my hands on fake driving licences and ID!

We normally used the cars when we ran a con. First impressions counted, and often a big expensive car did the job nicely. After all, the people we were tricking were most often materialistic douche-bags. Only Jerry and I were allowed to drive them however. The van had tinted windows so no one could see in. But these cars did not, and Leah did

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not look old enough to pass for seventeen. And Micah couldn't for an obvious reason.

I got into my favourite white sports car and started the engine, pulling on my seat belt. I rubbed my fingers together trying to warm up a little. I turned up the heating and plugged my phone into the dashboard of the car. It was abnormally cold for late July.

I pulled up the security camera feeds onto my phone, so that I could keep watching as the car de-misted. Nothing new. No more security had been tripped, telling me they hadn't left. Whoever it was, they were still there.

I put the car into first gear and was off, driving comfortably through the streets of London at the dead of night. I switched on the radio, listening to the club music for two reasons. First was because I liked it, and the other was because I was hoping the heavy beat would wake me up. I tapped along to the base rhythm as I drove.

It was a thirty minute drive to my parents' house, in a nice area of town, on the outskirts of the city. Rather scrawny looking trees were planted at intervals along the pavement; the street was illuminated by green energy lamps. Every house looked a lot like the last, perfectly kept lawn with a people carrier car in the drive. Except my parents' place. The lawn was brown and un-kept, popping up with weeds. The windows needed washing, the dark bricks on the outside were crumbling, no car in the drive.

I drove past it, not wanting to stop right outside. I parked two blocks away deciding to walk back. I fished the forgotten house key out of my car door and headed to my destination. I walked, tossing the key up in the air and

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catching it absentmindedly, humming to myself. I avoided the few puddles there were littering the pavement, the result of a brief shower I hadn't heard in my sleep. In the background there were the usual city noises, dogs barking and cars sounding horns. Oh, the joys of London.

I got to the front door and opened it carefully. It wasn't locked. Interesting, so they had picked the lock. Some thought had gone into this, maybe they weren't run of the mill thieves after all. I bent down to look at it properly, running my fingers across the mechanisms and frowning. There wasn't any sign of locking picking, none of the usual scrapes and lines that went with an amateur. This was either a professional job (in which case why were they in my house?) or they had a key.....even more peculiar. I closed the door quietly behind me as I walked in.

I silently walked a little way down the wooden corridor. I paused as I got to two doors and the stairs. I had three directions to choose from. Where did I check first? Then I heard a large bang and some muffled voices, talking intensely but quietly.

The kitchen.

I looked around me; grabbing a dusty cricket bat from the place I had hidden it in the hall. I didn't know who or what I would face in there, and it didn't hurt to be prepared to defend myself, just in case.

"Then where are they? Hmm?" came a male voice, he was angry and stressed. It sounded like whoever was in there was waiting for someone, and it was more than one person.

"Calm down."

"No! I will not calm down! What if something has happened?"

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"We can't think like that! We have to be positive."

"I'm trying, but it's been such a long time."

"I know that."

"Where are they? Where could they be, I mean look at the time!"

"I trust them, don't worry."

It sounded like just the two of them. I knew exactly where they were by where their voices were coming from through the door. They were sat at the breakfast bar. Weird. Who broke into a house to sit at a breakfast bar?

I decided now was the time to announce my presence. I burst through, knocking one of them off their seat, sending them sprawling over the floor. Then the world was flying as I was thrown into the cabinet with a loud shattering of glass as I made contact and my arm went through. I hit the floor and looked up to see the cabinet about to fall onto me. I rolled out of the way as it crashed to the floor. There was a stinging on my face and my left hand was sore and had a warm liquid on it.

That was close.

"Ella!" gasped a voice.

That was a name I hadn't heard in a long time. No one had called me Ella, not since I was little....Jerry had called my Pam and that had stuck. I liked it; it fit who I was now more than Ella ever had. I looked up at the two people and finally recognised who they were.

"Oh. It's you," I huffed, rolling my eyes. I looked at my hand, a couple of cuts and some blood. But it didn't look like it had glass in it.

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"Oh my goodness, are you ok?" asked my mother picking herself off the floor from where I had thrown her and hurrying to my side. She knelt next to me, trying to look at my wrist. I tore it from her hand like she burned.

"Urgh, what are you doing here?" I asked brushing shards of glass off my clothes and being careful that they didn't fall into my boots.

"We live here. Ella, why were you rushing through the door with a cricket bat?" asked my father, who offered me a hand to my feet which I ignored. He had thrown me into a cabinet after all. He looked angry and ashamed.....both. Good.

"I thought you were here to steal stuff," I said getting up easily, "What are you two even doing here?"

"What do you mean Ella? We live here."

"You haven't been here in almost six years," I retorted going to the tap and inspecting the cuts on my hand again, double checking for glass before I washed the blood off of it. They were superficial wounds.

"Sorry darling," said my mother.

"Well, good to know you aren't stealing from me," I said, "and that I don't have to keep watching this place anymore. It's so annoying to keep doing. I was going to sell it, but now you're back I'll leave it to you."

"What?"

"Deeds are on the desk, but this place might need a spruce up if you're going to sell it too. I wasn't so worried about the capital but you might be."

"What do you mean sell it?"

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"I mean sell it. There isn't really a double meaning there. I changed the deeds to my name about six months ago."

"You don't live here?"

I took a deep breath and sighed.

"No! Of course not, look at this place. If I lived here I'd keep better house."

"And what does Nana think about you selling the house?" demanded my mother. I gave a short bark of humourless laughter.

"Oh, that's a funny joke," I said sarcastically as I snapped off the water from the tap and dried my hands with a tea towel.

"I'm serious. Where is she?"

"Same place she's been for the last six years. The cemetery," I answered sharply, walking out of the kitchen.

"What?" she gasped in a quiet voice. I went into the sitting room and used the mirror to wipe some of my blood off of my sleeve.

"Ella, have you been living here alone?" asked my father, "for the last six years?"

"You can drop the surprised act," I answered acidly whilst fixing my hair.

"Act? This isn't an act Ella!"

"Oh come on, you knew," I scoffed walking into the study. They followed me like lost puppies. I scooped the deeds off of the desk and handed them to my father. He took them and put them back on the desk.

"No, we didn't!" exclaimed my mother, hand clutched to her mouth and tears streaming down her face.

## Undercover Thief

She was crying. My father put an arm around her and tried to comfort her.

"Didn't what?"

"We didn't know your grandmother had passed away," said my father seriously.

"Wow.....I mean.....wow.....I called so many times I lost count. I left you so many messages on your answerphones they ran out of room. And you couldn't be bothered to listen to them? Any of them? I mean, I knew you didn't care but that is a new level," I said, still stung by this new revelation. I pushed past them and headed out into the hall.

"We never got the messages. Oh darling, we're so sorry!" sobbed my mother, rushing towards me, clearly looking to embrace me. I side stepped her neatly.

"You know what, it's really doesn't matter. Like I said, I don't live here. Excuse me, I gotta go home. Nice to see you again. See you again in another six years....or not. I really don't care," I said making my way back to the front door.

"Pamela!" said my father, grabbing my arm to stop me walking.

"Ow!" I complained, yanking my arm free, "this thing went through glass you know!"

"Sorry, where do you live?"

"What?"

"You said you don't live here, so where do you live?"

"With my family, now I have to get home or they'll worry. Bye," I said turning around and freezing as I caught a glimpse out of the window. There were people outside, and I knew that stance. I had the stance.

Damn.

H. T. King

"Ella, you did-what's wrong?" asked my father sensing there was a problem.

"There are three non-descript black vans outside," I said with a groan, "and they weren't there two minutes ago."

"What?" he demanded, about to storm over to the window to see for himself.

"Oh don't go over you idiot! We currently have the advantage! We've don't want them to know we've spotted them genius!" I snapped walking back into the study.

I turned on the old computer and plugged in my phone, bringing up my cameras so I could see the images more clearly, looking for some kind of detail.

"I didn't install those cameras," sniffed my mother, wiping her eyes with a hanky.

"No, I did," I muttered without thinking about it. I brought up the camera that was most relevant and enhanced the image. A gun.

"Shoot!" I hissed at the same time as my mother.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to drag you into this." I quickly unplugged my phone and went back out into the hall way.

"Wait a minute, you think you caused this?" asked my father perplexed.

"You think you did...." I realised, narrowing my eyes to inspect the two of them. Now I looked, they had the stance too. A stance that was ready for action....my parents? Really?

"They're on the move Gordon," said my mother looking at the computer screen.

"Right," answered my father producing a gun from the waist band of his jeans.

## Undercover Thief

"Whoa," I breathed taking a couple of steps back, my heart momentarily stopping for a moment, stunned by this new development.

My parents had guns? Oh no, no way were they sales representatives. The little liars! But I had a rule, one I didn't want to break. And it was simple really, a rule that a majority of thieves stuck to – or the good ones did anyway.

Breaking the law was fine; doing what it took to get the job done was ok. But no one should ever get hurt or die.

Nothing material was worth a life. So no guns.

"Pamela, you need to stay with us darling, and do exactly what we tell you too." My mother's face meant business.

"Well....you guys seem to have a plan. I think I'll just leave you to it."

"Pamela, where are you going?"

"As far away as possible from the gun!" It sounded like a reasonable plan to me.

"Pamela! You need to come back here and do what we say! We can protect you!"

"Are you kidding me? You plan to fight them! Six bullets against....twenty men on average? For goodness's sake it's like I'm the only one with a brain!" I turned and ran up the stairs.

"Pamela! Ella!" yelled my mother chasing me.

I didn't care that they were following. If they wanted to use the escape route I was using then go ahead. They were my parents after all, and I probably should look after them. I threw open the window at the end of the corridor and climbed easily up, onto the roof. I turned back and looked at them, and saw them about to try and follow me.

H. T. King

"Keep a good grip," I called, "and the third brick from the right is loose."

I found the cable I had left there, disguised as a power cable, about three years ago. I had left it there just in case I ever needed an escape. I was a thief, and a good thief always had an exit strategy, and tonight it more than paid off. I pulled it tight, tying it through a purpose built bracket (also installed by me for just such a time) attached to the chimney.

"Ella!" gasped my mother, "where did you get military grade cable?"

"How do you know its military grade?" I shot back, tugging on it to make sure it was done up tight.

"How do you-"

"Keep up if you're coming." I didn't let her finish, breaking into a sprint. I sprinted towards the edge of the roof and threw myself off. I caught the cable, swinging my legs in front of my and wrapping them around the wire. I pushed myself, feet first, along to the other end of the wire, which was tied to the roof of another house over the road, and most importantly, away from the men with guns.

I pulled myself onto the second roof and looked down. Nobody saw me making my speedy escape. That was good. I looked back at the cable and saw both my parents following me. I waited impatiently at the other end of the cable.

The moment they touched the roof I was untying the cable. I attached it to a launcher to get rid of this end of the cable.

## Undercover Thief

"Pamela!" said my father, snatching the launcher from my hands, "Where on earth did you get this stuff?"

"Around, I don't know. How about once we're out of danger you can ask stupid questions?" I snapped, taking the launcher back, and sending this end of the cable far away. If they found it, they wouldn't know which direction we had gone.

I threw the launcher aside and went over to the other side of the building where I knew I could climb down easily.

"Pamela, where did you learn to do this?" asked my mother.

"I have a few hobbies," I said vaguely. I didn't stop at the edge of the roof, hopping off easily, and spinning so my fingers caught the edge of the re-enforced gutters. My feet were dangling over the window ledge and I dropped on it, and started systematically working my way down the side of the house using previously scouted finger and toe holds. I had come up with several routes of escape from my house over the years, and I knew all of them like the back of my hand.

At the end, I jumped onto a large waste bin and then onto the concrete floor. I brushed off my hands and took my phone out of my pocket. I needed to talk to Jerry and tell him what was going on. This was a huge development that no one could have seen coming.

"Pamela!" yelled my father angrily; they hadn't started their way down yet.

"Yeah?"

"Wait there, we're coming down!"

H. T. King

"Nah, I have a better plan," I said, pausing before I hit call, "I suggest we separate. If they are after you and not me, then I won't have to deal with it. And vice versa. Win-win for everyone."

"Pamela!"

"Bye! This was fun, let's do it again in six years!" I called.

"Don't walk away from us!" snapped my mother, "Why do you have military equipment? Why are you able to do that? Why are there infrared triggers and secret cameras in our house? And why on earth would men with guns be after you?"

"You know what," I yelled up, "Figure it out!"

"Ella!"

"I'm not Ella! I'm Pam!" I shouted not looking back as I walked away, "I hope we don't meet again."

I rounded the corner and kept walking, moving fast. I didn't know how fast they would reach the bottom and I didn't want them to come after me. I walked all the way back to my car, reconnected my phone to my dash and phoned Jerry.

"It's early Pam," protested Jerry, sleep thick in his voice.

"Well wake up, we might have a problem."

"What? Hang on; is this to do with why you went to your parents' place?"

"Oh yeah," I said starting the engine, "my parents came back."

"Oh, nice of them to show their faces after so long. So, why is this a problem?"

## Undercover Thief

"Because they're the real deal,"

"Huh? Hang on, parents?" he definitely sounded more awake now.

"Yeah, I know. I'm still trying to process it."

"Hold your horses there Pam, run it by me again. What happened?"

"I just had to out-run men with guns. My father had a gun and he certainly looked like he knew how to use it."

"Guns? Damn, you're alright?"

"Nothing a band aid won't fix, there was an incident with a cabinet. But whatever my parents are, they aren't sales representatives," I said pulling on my seat belt.

"Leah! Get over here," yelled Jerry.

"What?" I heard her mumble sleepily.

"Parents are back," I repeated.

"Wow! Are you alright?" That woke her up.

"Eh, I knew they had to come back at some point. The thing that counts is that they brought a truck load of gun men with them."

"You say what?"

"I know right? Actually, three truck loads. Are we certain that no one like that is after us?"

"No one," said Jerry certainly.

"That's just more evidence to my 'not sales representatives' theory."

"You have more evidence?"

"I used an escape route over the roof," I explained, "They followed and they didn't even break a sweat."

"The one with the cables and the climbing?"

"Yep,"

"And the window drop?"

H. T. King

"Yep,"

"And nothing? Like, not even hesitation?"

"Nada," I agreed.

"I am beginning to support Pamela's theory about them not being sales reps," said Leah.

"Yeah, me too," piped up Jerry.

"Yeah, so Leah, think you can do some digging for me."

"Of course. By the sounds of it, they shouldn't be too hard to find," said Leah, "What are their names again?"

"Isabell and Gordon Torres,"

"By the sounds of it, you're parents have some secrets of their own."

"Let's find out what they are," I said as I accelerated hard away from the scene of my escape.

## Author's Note

The rest of Undercover Thief is available for only £0.99 or \$0.99 on kindle. Please go to the kindle store to read the rest or go to my website and/or order the paperback book off amazon.

I would just like to thank you for reading Undercover Thief. I had so much fun writing it. Please, if you enjoyed reading this, leave a review at your favourite online retailer such as Amazon and please recommend Undercover Thief to your friends.

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Parties interested in my work in a business sense, please visit my website in order to send an e-mail to me directly. I am more than happy to receive your contact and answer any and all questions you may have.

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~ H. T. King