



The crackling sound dies down in your ears as your vision is restored - just in time to catch the sight of dawn over a beautiful white Mediterranean beach. Across the water, you can make out a bustling maritime port on the coast of an adjacent island.

You look around, attempting to get your bearings, and spot two elderly men sitting at a makeshift table on some grass behind the beach. Trudging across to them, wishing you could feel that cool sand between your toes, you greet them a smile.

“Good morning,” says one gentleman with a mild accent. “I don’t think you’re from around here. Where did you come from?” His attention is divided between you and the intense board game in progress on the table, while your attention is divided between him and the lovely, steaming hot, roasted cups of coffee they are enjoying.

“Far away,” you respond cryptically. “Tell me, have you heard of any thefts around here? Odd disappearances that could be the work of an international crime syndicate with a thing for acronyms?” Not so cryptic.

Raising his eyebrows at the unusual query, the old man exchanges a look with his opponent. “Well, my granddaughter is in tears after she was robbed of her chance at fame.”

“Go on,” you say eagerly.

“There was a big formal gathering planned for tonight, in the grand hall over there in the capital.” He points to the other island you’d spotted across the water. “She’d been looking forward to it all year, practising her dancing with her boyfriend and making the social connections to get invited.” He looks at the board game sadly, but isn’t comforted by the sight of his opponent taking three of his pieces in three jumps. “Even the organisers can’t say what happened. It’s as though the event...” He dramatically snatches something out of the air. “Disappeared!”

The man’s opponent laughs. “Tell her to stop whinging about it. She should be grateful to live in a time when we even have our independence.” He sighs. “Almost fifty years of it! I’m getting old.”



You turn your back to the table and stare out across the blue water. Is this E.V.I.L.'s master plan? To steal one thing after another, country by country, while you pursue them from one step behind?

Then one of the old men exclaims in shock. You spin around - the table is bare, and the men are pointing at someone disappearing into some trees, yelling what you can only assume are foreign expletives. Just when you thought you had E.V.I.L. figured out - but your train of thought is interrupted by a scrap of paper lying on the grass under the table...

