

SYNCHRONICITY

By

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For the next fifty-eight minutes, his name is Luca Russo.

After that he will have another name. Hopefully a *better* name. The next name should come without the pain of osteoarthritis, and bits of shrapnel Luca has buried in one leg – the product of an assassination attempt forty-two years ago.

The Machine heals many things, but even it has its limits. Apparently bits of iron wrapped in bone scarring is one of them. At least for the next fifty-eight minutes.

Luca considers whether he should go into a bathroom at the subway station and simply cut out the shrapnel. Some of it feels like it is embedded in bone, but even that could be cut out. Luca always carries a knife or two, so given time...

But time, of course, is what he does not have. Besides, he does not want to get stopped by someone asking about the copious blood in the bathroom stall. And, even worse, the people he is meeting – albeit briefly – will wonder why his suit is covered in blood.

The Machine cannot heal clothing. Perhaps someday.

Until then, he will walk with a bit of pain. It won't last long.

He checks his phone. It is an iPhone, which unlocks with facial recognition, which makes Luca grin no matter what name he has.

It unlocks. As it should – it knows the face of Luca Russo.

It also verifies the time. More than enough.

And what if the subway is late? Or crowded?

That is a possibility, he supposes. And, supposing such, he walks a bit faster.

Not too fast. He could be a blur if he wished. But, again, that might draw attention. He can deal with attention, but it makes his bankroller angry. Not a huge concern, but Luca's "benefactor," as the man likes to call himself, can be a pain when he is angry.

Besides, public attention is always inconvenient – at least for now. Someday he will cease to hide who and what he is. But for now he will remain in the shadows. And that is fine: he has things to do, and people to be.

So he walks quickly, but not *too* quickly. He does not limp, though his hip sings out at first. The Machine can deal with pain, though. A bit of concentration, and Luca's throbs and jabs become mere background noise.

He walks a bit faster. Just over fifty minutes. Enough time. Unless things go wrong.

Like that bastard Axel showing up. Or his attack dog.

Luca Russo walks faster still. He pushes a few people aside. Then rushes down the stairs.

He starts pushing through the mass of people milling about the station. He does not use all his strength. Not yet.

The man called Luca Russo appears to be in his seventies, but he is very strong. People part left and right like the Red Sea must have done with Moses. Luca does not really believe that story – if it happened by the power of some god, wouldn't he remember doing it?

He is not completely sure he *is* a god. But he must be close.

Luca Russo – strong, fast, osteoarthritic, and with just over fifty minutes left before his name changes – pushes harder through the crowd.

He cannot fail. Gods never do.

The people part. Luca pushes.

He hears an announcement: the subway is coming.

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