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## ARRIVAL, SEPTEMBER 2022

‘AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE of your visit, Mr Holger Rudi?’

The CBP officer looks at me without interest as he scratches his upper arm just below the emblem of the US Customs and Border Protection service. His eyes are tired.

‘Research,’ I answer.

‘And what do you intend to research?’

I’ve just flown from Oslo to Minneapolis via Reykjavik, a seven-hour time difference, and my body is telling me I should have been in bed long ago, so instead of following my instinct to reply ‘murder’ and end up in an interrogation room I tell him that I’m writing a novel about a policeman with Norwegian heritage.

‘So you’re a writer?’

I feel like telling him I’m a taxidermist. I stuff things. That I’m here looking to clothe a character, someone in a story I already

have clear in my mind. It's an image that has haunted me these past few months, a title I like to give myself. But as I say, I'm tired.

'Yes,' I reply.

'Interesting. As it happens I was baptised in the Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church.'

'Really?'

'We're all over Minnesota.' The CBP officer chuckles as he hands me my Norwegian passport.

On the taxi ride into the city I can see at once that everything has changed. New roads and buildings that weren't here last time I was in Minneapolis eight years ago. The downtown skyline looms up ahead of us as we turn off the freeway. Between the skyscrapers I see the afternoon sunlight reflecting off the angles of a gigantic structure.

'What's that glass thing?' I ask the driver.

'That? It's the US Bank Stadium. That's where the Vikings play.'

'Wow.'

'You interested in football?'

I shrug. 'I've seen the Vikings play. At the old stadium. Maybe I'll get myself a ticket.'

'Good luck with that.'

'Good luck?'

The driver, a black man who looks to be in his fifties, glances at me in the rear-view mirror through his almond-shaped glasses. 'Very hard to get hold of. I was offered a ticket yesterday, very ordinary ticket, they wanted 350 dollars.'

'Really?'

'Yeah, really. A football game in the old days used to be

something you could take your kids to. Now it's like everything else in this country. For rich folk only.'

I look out of the window. When we used to visit my uncle and aunt we rarely went downtown. Anything we wanted we bought at the corner store or else in the Southdale Mall. Even so, I'm struck by how quiet it seems, how few people there are about. Eight years ago – when my cousin took me to a rooftop restaurant on Hennepin Avenue – the streets were full of bustling life. Especially around the next avenue we cross, Nicollet Mall.

'Where is everybody?' I ask.

'The people, you mean?'

'Yeah.'

'Aw, things haven't been the same since all that stuff happened.'

*All that stuff happened.* For me, *all that stuff happened* means the murders six years ago; but for him and for everybody else in Minneapolis it means the murder of George Floyd two years back. Just on the drive in from the airport we've passed three murals depicting the black man who was killed by the Minneapolis police.