The President’s Murderer

The President is dead!
A man is running in the night. He is afraid and needs to rest. But there are people behind him – people with lights, and dogs, and guns.

A man is standing in front of a desk. His boss is very angry, and the man is tired and needs to sleep. But first he must find the other man, and bring him back – dead or alive.

Two men: the hunter and the hunted. Which will win and which will lose?

Long live the President!  (Word count 5,270)
The First Day

"Run!" the man thought. "Move! Faster! I can’t stop now."

Over the man’s head the night sky was black and cold, and in front of him were the trees. Tall, dark trees ... five hundred metres away.

"I can hide there," the man thought. "I can hide in those trees. They can’t see me in the trees."

He looked behind him. He could see the lights. There were five or six men. They ran fast, and their lights moved up and down. They were not far away now. He could hear their feet on the ground.

The man ran faster. His legs were tired, his body was tired. There were noises in his head, he could not see. The trees were two hundred metres away. He wanted to stop running. He wanted to lie down and sleep.

Then he heard a new noise. Dogs.

"They’ve got dogs!" he thought. "Oh no! Not dogs! I can’t run faster."

But he did. Faster and faster. The trees were a hundred metres away ... fifty ... twenty ...

And then he was there. The trees opened their dark arms to him. But he did not stop running. It was dark and
The trees were a hundred metres away... fifty... twenty...

quiet under the trees. He ran first to the left, and then to the right. He came to a hill, and for a second or two he stopped and listened.

Nothing. Then he heard the dogs again, but he could not see the lights.

'Don't stop now,' he thought. 'Dogs don't need eyes. They can find you in the dark.'

Quickly he ran down the hill. It was very dark here, and he could not see very well. He ran into a tree and nearly broke his arm.

'Careful!' he thought. 'Careful.' He put his hands out in front of him, and ran more slowly. Then he heard a new noise. Water.

'A river!' he thought. 'The dogs can't follow me across water. Where is it? Quick!'

Soon he found the river. It was not very big, but it ran quickly. The water was cold on his tired legs. He walked and ran up the river, through the water, for about two kilometres. Then he stopped and listened again.

He could hear nothing. He stood there and waited. The trees watched him with dark, secret eyes.

Nothing. No dogs, no lights, no noises.

The man was cold now, and very, very tired. 'I need sleep,' he thought. 'Where can I hide?' He looked up at the trees.
'Up there,' he thought. 'The dogs can’t follow me up a tree.'

He found a tall tree and went up it. He could not see the ground now. He half-sat, half-stood in the tree, and listened. Nothing.

'An hour,’ he thought. ‘Sleep for an hour. Then go on. Go south. Hide in the day, and move at night. I can get there in five days, perhaps six.’

The man put his head down on his arms, and slept.

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'What are you saying? You lost him?’ the Chief of Police said angrily.

The young police inspector in front of her was tired. Very tired. He wanted to sit down, but people did not sit down in the Chief’s office. They stood and waited, and perhaps the Chief said ‘Sit down’. Then they sat down – but not before.

So the inspector stood. ‘I’m sorry, Chief,’ he said. ‘We couldn’t find him in the trees. We looked all night, but it was dark and ...’

The Chief of Police put her hands on the desk in front of her. ‘You had five men with you, Inspector, and two dogs. And you couldn’t find him!’

Eva Hine, the Chief of Police, was a tall woman of about fifty. Her eyes were grey and very cold. Dangerous
eyes. When Eva Hine said ‘Jump!', people jumped. They did not ask questions first.

The inspector waited, and the Chief of Police looked at him coldly. ‘What are you waiting for?’ she asked. ‘Go out and find him! Three months ago this man – Alex Dinon – killed the President of our country. He’s a murderer – a dangerous man. Twenty-four hours ago he escaped from prison, and our new President wants him back in prison – today! Now! At once!’

The inspector quickly left the room.

His name was Felix, and he was thirty-three years old. That was young for an inspector, but he was a good policeman. He liked his job, and worked long hours, but he was sometimes afraid of Eva Hine, the Chief of Police.

Ten minutes later he was back in his office, and Adam came into his room. Adam was twenty-five, and usually worked with Felix on important jobs.

‘What did the Chief say?’ Adam asked.

‘Find Dinon quickly,’ Felix said. ‘So, let’s begin. Have we got photographs of Dinon? And what about his family?’

Adam put some photographs on the desk. ‘He’s got a wife and two young children,’ he said.

‘Right. I want photographs on television and in all the newspapers. Four men can watch his house and family, day and night – four hours on, and four hours off. Next, I want policemen at all the airports and …’
Telephones rang, and people came and went in the office. Felix and Adam worked on, late into the night.

**The Second Day**

The next morning Alex Dinon was forty kilometres south of the prison. He moved quickly and stayed away from towns and villages. It was winter and the weather was cold, so there were not many people in the fields. He looked behind him often, but nobody saw him and nobody followed him.

At midday he found a quiet field and lay down under some small trees. He slept at once.

At about three o'clock Alex opened his eyes, and saw an old woman in front of him.

'What are you doing in my field, young man?' she said.

Alex sat up quickly. 'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I was tired, and needed some sleep. I'm going now.'

'You're very dirty,' the old woman said. 'Look at you! Where are you going?'

'North,' Alex said. He stood up and began to move away.

'Don't run away. I'm only an old woman.' She looked at him carefully. 'You're dirty, and hungry, and tired ...