Jack Reacher's "Number 2" Strategy

Credits: @horrorhistory on Discord



This document analyzes Jack Reacher's strategy as it unfolds in Season 3, Episode 3 of the series.

The Strategy:

For context, Reacher is secretly working with DEA Agent Duffy while undercover in Zachary Beck's criminal operation. A major shipment is arriving, but even Reacher isn't told what it contains despite being on the inside of the operation, which confirms the real power players (Beck, Duke, and someone higher up named Julius McCabe) are tightly controlling the information. Reacher and Duffy keep finding nothing because the answers are locked within the inner circle, with Reacher learning McCabe's name from Beck's son, showing just how restricted everything is.

Since Beck still doesn't fully trust him, Reacher decides the only way in is to become Beck's new number two, but with Chapman Duke already holding onto that position, Reacher concludes he as well needs to get rid of him. Reacher tells Duffy to get into Angel Dole's email account and says they'll need an isolated, untraceable empty

house. She suggests a DEA safehouse in the woods which would be perfect for his scheme.

Reacher then has her send Beck the address from Angel's email, claiming it's the kidnappers' last known location. Back at Beck's mansion, he tells Reacher about the email he received from Angel that revealed the kidnapper's location, and recruits the former alongside Duke to the aforementioned DEA safehouse. Reacher makes an excuse to go back into the mansion for a few minutes, taking this opportunity to rush out the back and retrieve Angel's gun (that he stole from him after killing him) from a trashbag and secure it in his pocket.

When they arrive, Reacher and Duke grab their guns and quietly move toward the house while Beck waits by the car. Seeing no vehicle outside, Duke assumes it's empty. Reacher frames it as the kidnappers hiding their car to make the place look abandoned, adding that it's exactly where he'd lie low if he were them. Still wary of an ambush, Duke hesitates, but Reacher insists he's there to do the job and heads for the house, stressing that he just wants his money to keep up the act.

At the house, Reacher peers in through the window and deceitfully tells Duke that six men are inside, drugged and with their weapons out of reach. He offers to go in first while Duke covers him, anticipating that Duke will refuse and insist on taking point instead, which is exactly what Reacher is counting on to get the upper hand. When they enter, Duke moves quickly through the rooms with his gun drawn, but Reacher slips in behind him, disarms him, and holds him at gunpoint. He demands Teresa's location, and Duke realizes his suspicions about Reacher were correct. Still refusing to cooperate, Duke is shot in the head by Reacher, which is heard by Beck.

Reacher quickly begins to fabricate a shootout to sell the ambush, first by emptying the guns all throughout the house to give off the illusion of multiple attackers. Then, he gives himself a self-inflicted injury before rigging the scene to explode by causing a gas leak and igniting flammable materials before fleeing. Rushing back towards the car, Reacher acts shaken and tells Beck that Duke was killed in an ambush by eight men.

When Beck asks if he saw them clearly, Reacher says no and hands Angel's gun to Beck and says it was found with the attackers (which Beck recognizes as Angel's gun

because of the model). Reacher also uses this as an opportunity to cover up Angel's disappearance by pointing out that Angel sent them the address, leading Beck to believe Angel was bribed and set them up. Reacher goes further by suggesting two of the gunmen resembled Sklar and Bellinger, the same men who had traded trucks with them (who Reacher and Duffy had also killed a day prior), giving Beck a reason to believe they were involved and explaining why they're now missing.

This effectively eliminates suspicion surrounding their prior deaths, removes loose ends, and shifts Beck's trust toward himself, with Beck now turning to Reacher as his new "Number 2". In one move, Reacher disposed of Duke, fabricated an entire shootout to cover up the murder, effectively framed Angel, Sklar, and Bellinger as moles to cover up their deaths/disappearances, weakened Beck's faith in his crew and positioned himself to be promoted as Beck's new right-hand man, which would give him the high-level access needed to reach Xavier Quinn.