

# *The Cooking Class in Budapest*

By Karen Tripson

## Chapter 1

Bernadette's son Henri woke her up early in the morning with a phone call to say he had just talked to his father in Paris. An official document from Budapest had arrived addressed to Bernadette at the house in Paris. He opened it to see what it was about. The cover letter, in schoolboy French, was from an attorney. Someone died in Budapest and named her the executor and a recipient of the will. The document attached to it is in a language he doesn't know and Henri couldn't guess at either. Should he take it to the office to scan and email to Henri? Of course, he was standing by the phone waiting for the reply. He'd told Henri to get a response right away as he had to go to a meeting.

Without the benefit of even one cup of coffee, Bernadette tried to make all the appreciative remarks she could think of while examining options for the smallest paper trail with the least amount of people observing. She decided the whole package including the open envelope should be put in a new envelope and sent to Henri's bank's address in Seattle without urgency. She didn't want her ex-husband's bank or Henri's bank involved in scans and emails. She sent apologies for the inconvenience to her ex-husband and suggested Henri tactfully remind his father of the location of the post office closest to the house. She hoped not, but bet the new wife would get to do the chore. That might cause friction today in the marriage.

Henri asked, "Do you know who it could be?"

Bernadette said, "I think so. It's probably an old friend of my mother whom we visited several times when I was a child."

“So, the document is in Hungarian?”

“Maybe or Serbian or some other Eastern European language. The man I knew spoke Hungarian and French among other things. He taught me some Hungarian. I think I’ll be able to figure it out. There are always those online translation programs.”

“Let me help you when it comes. Sounds like fun to me.”

After she hung up, she knew the only person in Budapest who would mention her in a will is that old friend of her mother’s, her biological father, the painter, whom she saw three times in her whole life and is fond of but hasn’t seen in more than 20 years. She’s never mentioned the man to Henri, although Henri met him when he was a toddler on that last visit to Budapest. As a first and then only child he took to center stage naturally. Henri had delighted the painter and enjoyed the new audience. She was glad to share her precious son with him once but saw no reason to encourage any memories in Henri’s head then or later. Bernadette learned from her mother to be discreet about her affairs and visits to Budapest, or any other place so that the husband in Paris never knew exactly what the details were. Bernadette’s mother told her as a young woman about to marry, “Never neglect your husband when you take a lover. That way there’s never any hurt feelings or questions.” That seemed shocking and cynical to Bernadette at the time but later on, so smart. Bernadette wished she’d been more circumspect and less honest with her husband. She might have had more money in her divorce settlement, even though she hadn’t done too badly. All these tips from Mother had worked well for Bernadette.

Bernadette spent some time during the day musing about what her inheritance might be and if she’d have to go to Budapest to get it. Hopefully, it would fit in a small envelope and could be mailed to the United States.

She thought a bit about Drew too, who was starting to be too charming and worrisome to her. He was getting under her skin and she was liking him more than she knew was prudent. He was

slowly relaxing her into the point of view it would be a good idea to have an affair with him just for the fun of it and the joy of intimacy. To give up, for even for a short time, that solitary feeling with all defenses up and on alert to all intruders would be like going on holiday carefree.

Being around Henri and Julia, who seemed so in love with each other, created an unrealistic atmosphere of the power of love to redeem so many bad things in the world. The combination of them and her chaste resistance to Drew's pursuit made her feel like she was a dull woman aging too quickly. She still had some looks left and caged *joie de vivre* dying to get out.

He was attractive, no question. Not just his handsome face but the leanness of his body was attractive to her. She suspected he had good muscle tone under the impeccably tailored clothes even though she had no idea what or when he might exercise. He'd never mentioned it. Maybe he exercised at home as she did every morning. She was curious to see his body and to feel it with her hands and her body. So, there it was. She wanted to see him naked. That's how far she had come with this conundrum. Not wanting a man in her life but now wanting this man in her bed. Could she possibly have it both ways?

Another thing about Drew she found attractive was that his obsession with art didn't leave much room for other interests. He was focused and didn't waste his time with any halfhearted activities such as sports or watching television or the Internet. Bernadette liked to think she was equally focused but knew she was not. She read novels now instead of serious art books and publications. She felt far away from her academic life in Paris where staying up to date on everything in the art world was essential to her teaching, writing and curating.

Life in Seattle was easy with no stress. Teaching French at la Alliance Française required little preparation and presented a small stage for her dramatic abilities. It was fun entertaining the mostly middle-aged students who were easily impressed with her wit and knowledge. Drew was more challenging to amuse. He was bright but a creature of his provincial environment. The Pacific

Northwest was his world and he didn't venture far from it. He knew the detail and the minutia about the art and artists of his region even though he didn't know as much about European art history as she did. It hadn't taken her long to study the PNW art scene and learn the key players. The history was brief, decades, not centuries and eons long.

The art and architecture tours she led for European tourists who needed a guide who spoke their language were fun too. She enjoyed the company of Europeans and discussing cultural things. Speaking French, Spanish, German and Italian as well as English made it easy to accommodate people from many countries. Selling art, something she'd never done, turned out to be remarkably easy for her. She brought the Europeans to Drew's gallery after the city tour. They were usually charmed by the region and the perspective of the artists he exhibited. She seldom had to explain the value twice. She had also worked as a salesman on the floor of his gallery when it was busy. Selling art was more lucrative than teaching or touring and her bank account balance was reflecting her new skill.

She and Drew had finished eating the hand made gnocchi with pesto sauce at Machiavelli's on Capitol Hill and drank most of a bottle of *Nero de Avola*, which was a little more than she usually drank. He said their friend Eva had told him about this wine she considered a great value and since Eva wasn't value-oriented, that made it special and worth trying. Bernadette was feeling warm toward him after a pleasant evening together and they were closer to her house than they usually were in downtown restaurants. Bernadette considered her options. Should she let him in for the first time or send him on his way home without her? She had visited several times in his apartment, which was stylishly appointed with good furniture and art. He had not tried too hard to seduce her. Sometimes his body brushed against hers but he didn't put his arms around her. He allowed her room to move toward him and away from him of her own volition. She liked that. If she let him inside tonight did that mean she was letting him into her bed as well? She wasn't sure if it meant

that—or if she wanted him in her bed tonight. Would she rather try his bed first? What was different now was that she'd gone from thinking she was absolutely not getting into bed with him, to when and where was she likely to.

Maybe this was a good time to introduce a new facet into her small world, a virile man who seemed fascinated with her and was intelligent enough not to rush her. She wondered if this was his usual gambit with women or one he created for pursuing her? It might be just for her. She smiled at that thought and looked at him across the table.

Drew said, "What pleasing thoughts you have tonight."

"Oh, pardon me if I've been rude. I was just thinking what a nice life I have here."

Drew said, "No, you haven't been rude at all. It's been entertaining watching your face. I honestly thought for a moment you were feeling amorous toward me and then you switched gears." He looked intently into her eyes with a small smile that might be ironic or teasing.

"Well, you are, as you know, an attractive package. One can speculate about unwrapping the package. That's not only normal but expected by the person who put the package together right? Wouldn't you be disappointed if there was no speculation? I would be."

"To know that you are speculating about me is irresistible. Tell me more."

"You already know enough," she said and rolled her eyes.

"More, please! I want to know a little more." He took her hands in his and held her gaze.

"This is too fascinating to change the subject."

Bernadette made up her mind then. "As a man said to me not too long ago, would you like to see my art?" She looked slyly at him.

"Absolutely. Right away. Let's not delay another minute." He gestured for the server nearby to bring the check.

Drew parked his car in front of the turn of the century three-story house on 18th Avenue East, where she rented an apartment, and said, "Thanks for inviting me. It means a lot as you told me you don't let anyone in your house." He was sincere, not glib.

Bernadette just nodded at him acknowledging to herself she had leaped off the safe side of the path.

Drew stepped inside the front door after her and stopped still except for his eyes going left to right and up and down at the art hung gallery style floor to ceiling on one large wall and more paintings hung decoratively on other walls around furniture. The lighting was soft but he could see the art well enough.

He walked forward to look more closely. "Museum quality? These can't be real. Are they?" He turned to look at her incredulous.

She shook her head yes, "They are real." She locked the door and stood by it while he resumed looking. After a few minutes, she sat on the couch and watched him. He methodically looked from a short distance and then approached to try to read the signatures, occasionally gasping and then moving back a few feet. She felt a bit disappointed that her body wasn't the attraction now but if it had been he wouldn't be the art lover he was. He finally sat down near her on the couch seemingly out of breath and looking at his hands. She said nothing, waiting for him to find his words.

"Manet, Monet, Cezanne, all recognizable as the work of the artists, but these are paintings I've never seen before in books or museums. Others I have no idea who they are. How can it be I've never heard of them? I'm flabbergasted. You've got millions of dollars in art here with no security system. Are you crazy?"

Bernadette smiled at him and nodded her head. "Yes, I know it's a lot to absorb in a few minutes. Millions if I sold it all now. But I'm not selling it ever and Henri will never sell it. This is a

private collection that will always be private. It's existed for generations. The big names you recognize and many of the lesser-known were purchased for pennies before the first and second world wars by my great grandmother and my grandmother. What you don't recognize, my mother and I bought over time. Those artists aren't so well known and some are from Eastern Europe where they don't get much publicity."

"Tomorrow, first thing, I'll help you select a security system."

Bernadette said, "If no one knows it's here, I don't need a security system. If signs go up in the window and by the front door advertising a security system, then thieves will get curious about what could be in this old humble house."

"Is it all documented?"

She said, "Yes. Thoroughly cataloged on paper, computer disc and in film. If even one obscure item were to disappear an alert could be put on it to prevent any honest collector from buying it and make it difficult for the thief."

"Bernadette, no wonder you don't let anyone in your house. I thought it was for other reasons."

"They are both good reasons. I value my privacy. I'm sure you will respect that." She looked at him expectantly. He nodded in agreement. "May I offer you coffee or tea?"

"Do you have anything stronger?" he said.

With a snifter of Armagnac in his hand, Drew relaxed next to her on the couch and seemed to regain his usual affable self. "Let's get back to the topic that brought me here tonight, your bewitching mind and body. Tell me again about speculating on unwrapping the package."

She looked thoughtful. "Maybe I've revealed enough for one evening."

"Oh, no. I'm in excellent health. I can take another shock."



Bernadette said, "I think we should think more about it. Now that you've surveyed the front gallery I might as well give you a tour of my back gallery."

She led him through the living room down a hall and into a bedroom turning on a light by the door that cast a soft glow into the room. The silk quilt on the bed glimmered. Four large square pillows in fancy cases looked ready for someone to get comfortable in bed and read with antique lamps on the bedside tables. An overstuffed chair and ottoman with a table and a standing reading lamp occupied one corner. The only other furniture was a low French chest of drawers. The light was low enough she knew he could see several large paintings and a few small ones but probably not completely. He seemed to be taking in the overview of the room and then the details one at a time.

Bernadette loved her bedroom. It was luxe and cozy at the same time, spacious but not huge. Turn of the century houses had such good proportions to them with decent ceiling height. When the house was built this had been the dining room with a table for ten or twelve off the kitchen and the living room that faced the street. A few renovations later blocked the egress from the dining room to the kitchen in favor of a small room, closets and a bathroom. She used the small room for a studio. It had been perfect for her son Henri to sleep in when he first came from Paris before he found his apartment in Pioneer Square where he now lived with his girlfriend Julia, who worked for Drew at his art gallery in SODO. The neighborhood took its name from its location 'South of the dome'. No one bothered to say anymore that the dome had been demolished long before it needed to be and before it was paid for to build a new sporting arena with taxpayers' money. It was an unpleasant topic and no reason to rename a neighborhood.

She leaned against the doorway and watched him absorb the collection. There was a range of styles from impressionist to cubist to modern flat two-dimensional treatments but the subject of each was a nude woman with dark hair. Sensual to stark, joyous to despair in emotion with a variety

of poses, the collection could have been a treatise on love, relationships, or marriage that hadn't ended well.

Drew studied the large canvases first and then the smaller ones. He stood back to get the impact of the groupings in style and tone. He finally joined her in the doorway and held her hand.

"You are a good model. Were you a professional?"

"Depends on who you ask. As an *avant-garde* art student, I considered it an essential experience in understanding the creative process. I posed for money for some artists. I posed for love for others. You know how that is," she said.

"Yes, I do. It's sort of unusual though to get to keep the painting."

"A few of these are only studies and were farewell gifts from the artists when they knew I was leaving. Another few didn't sell as quickly as hoped for and I got a discounted price. The best ones I purchased myself from the original buyers some years later who were happy to think their acquisitions were appreciating so quickly. Whenever I had money to invest I'd take a look at what was available," she said.

"Well, I see now how much you appreciate the story of my young life in my paintings hanging in my office. This collection is a magnitude above that which appears to tell the story of your whole life from innocence to cynicism or love to despair. This is a powerful story arc to deal with daily. Why do you choose to display it this way instead of breaking it up into smaller vignettes?"

"This is what I like about you. You understand it immediately. Now you know, I love to torture myself with all the mistakes I've made."

Drew said, "The angst on that side of the room seems so recent. Is the artist local?"

"Yes."

He persisted by saying, "Anyone I know?"

"Yes."

“I don’t recognize the work and I love to think I know everyone in town who’s producing.”

Bernadette looked down and contemplated what would be the value in telling the truth compared to withholding the truth. She was starting to feel naked in this conversation, in an uncomfortable way. Why not be honest? How could it hurt her at this point and with this person that she respected?

“Those are self-portraits.”

Drew immediately went back across the room to study the brush strokes and details. He turned around to look at her when he said, “I’m impressed. They are quite good in every way. I never thought about you being an artist. This is very exciting for me.”

He approached her and took her hand holding it close to his chest. He said, “As your friend who wants to be more than that, I’d like to help you rehang the collection so it’s not such a harsh judgment. Everybody makes mistakes. Let me help you retell the story. Let’s take this canvas, so warm and sensuous and make it the centerpiece with this and this and this grouped around it. This is joyful art that’s inspirational. Let’s move this over here and this to another room. It could be a stand-alone or tie it into a similar emotion of another subject. I need to see the space by the light of day.”

Bernadette considered his enthusiasm and admired his energy for the project at this time of night. She said, “You have to go to work tomorrow. Maybe this is a good time to say good night.”

“I’ve got a better idea. Why don’t you come home with me and put another spin on the evening? It’s been fascinating. I’ve learned so much about you and it would be sad to lose the feeling of connection. It’s not that late.”

She said, “Thank you, but I think it’s enough about me for one day.”

He kissed her gently but firmly still holding her hand against his chest. He kissed her neck below her ear pausing to inhale her scent and enjoy his skin on her skin. She didn’t respond in any way. He raised her hand to his lips and looked earnestly into her eyes.

“Are you sure I can’t change your mind?” he said.

Bernadette barely shook her head no.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Okay, you're a complex woman. I will leave you to your torture and hope to speak to you tomorrow."

## Chapter 2

Amy paced her living room conjugating verbs and questioning why she ever thought learning French would be fun or easy. She loved attending the class with Eva and loved Bernadette the teacher, but it was so hard to learn. Was her brain getting old? To mix up the modes she stopped reciting and started listening to a taped conversation between two friends in a restaurant to see how much she could understand. A few more words and the rhythm of the language were apparent from the previous session. She was learning something but it was so slow!

She picked up her phone to practice another mode, “*Bonjour Eva. C'est votre amie Amy qui est affamé et veut sortir pour le déjeuner. Êtes-vous libre?*” (This is your friend Amy who is starving and wants to go out to lunch. Are you free?)

“*Oui! Let's allez déjeuner immédiatement,*” said Eva. (“Yes! Let’s go to lunch right away. Where shall we meet?”)

At the 5 Spot Diner on the corner of west Galer and Queen Anne Avenue North they ordered a glass of Prosecco and the Bacon Lettuce Avocado Tomato sandwich.

“How’s your husband?” asked Eva.

“He’s peeved at me. We’re not agreeing on our next adventure and we’re both being stubborn. I want Scandinavia and he wants Patagonia, literally opposite ends of the world.”

“Why not go where he wants to go first and then where you want to go?”

“I don’t enjoy the cruise ship thing and that’s required for Patagonia to see the sights of the glaciers and the penguins. I just don’t feel like compromising at the moment, but that is a good idea if I can’t get him to come around. How’s Laurence?”

“Technically he’s fine but he’s made me peeved with him, by not wanting to go anywhere. I wish I could talk him into any place in Europe. Even though I know I said I didn’t want to go again, I’m missing it now that I haven’t been for a while. France or Spain would be marvelous. We could follow your Basque country itinerary. You would think he’d want to go since he fell in love with the food but he says no. He doesn't need to see it for himself. He believes you and everything he has read.”

“Sorry our trip there is not helping you out,” said Amy. “I’d be glad to talk to him about it if you have an angle for me to pursue.” She sipped her Prosecco and presented her best new idea, “What about warming him up with something nearby in the San Juans or the Oregon coast. How about McMinnville? Easy travel. Not fancy and the pinot noir is so good. Want to consider going together for a long weekend just to get him off the couch? The wine tasting would be magnificent and a weekend in the country is so refreshing.”

“That’s a great idea. Any fun places to stay?”

“We haven’t been lately. I’ll look into it, or you can. We’d be happy to stay anywhere you like,” said Amy.

“I’ll talk to him about it later and send you a couple of ideas for hotels. New scenery will be good for everybody. I’d love to drive but I think your bigger car would be more comfortable. Will Kevin mind driving?”

“Not at all. He’s happy to drive and not talk.”

To Eva’s surprise Laurence not only didn’t want to go to Oregon, he didn’t want to go anywhere in Kevin’s car.

Eva said, “Darling, please try to see this as a pleasant experience with friends. It’s easy. It’s casual. There’s nothing stressful about it.”

Laurence said, “You’ve never once mentioned wanting to go to McMinnville. I have no interest in it. If you wanted to drive me to the coast I might do that because you enjoyed it so much, I thought I might enjoy it. I don’t want to ride in their car. It’s too close quarters and too long a drive. I’m not good at small talk. Dinner is one thing and a five-hour drive is another,” said Laurence.

Eva was disappointed she couldn’t get him to see any brighter side of the situation. She settled for driving Laurence to Manzanita, Oregon where she had stayed before at a terrific small hotel by the beach with a view and a hot tub in the room. Amy was disappointed but she understood. Her husband had a very similar mindset and outlook. She and Kevin would go to McMinnville by themselves, the way Kevin preferred to travel.

## Chapter 3

When the envelope from Paris arrived with the attorney's cover letter in French attached to the mystery language document, Henri called Bernadette. "It's here. I'll come right after work. Do you have a Hungarian dictionary?"

"I might, I'll look. Please make a copy of the document so we can write on the copy. What about Julia?" said Bernadette.

"She's painting today and will be happy to carry on until we eat dinner. Did you invite us for dinner?"

"Of course, I did. I'm excited about solving the mystery."

When Henri arrived Bernadette quickly looked at the document and said, "It's Hungarian. I recognize a few words."

Just in case it might be Hungarian she had prepared a Hungarian basics list She explained her organization to him. "There are only three tenses, present, past and future. For our purposes it's lovely that the language is first, second, third-person singular and then again for the plural, coincidentally similar to Italian and Spanish. Here are the words I know. For nouns, the prepositions, possessives and gender are all attached at the end. We also have here a list of 500 words we should already recognize in Hungarian as they've become international, made by a most helpful young man on the Internet. I also made a list of the nouns that may seem common to wills, although I can't imagine this fellow had much to give. Our keyword search includes art, canvases, landscapes, abstracts and portraits. That sounds grand—and unrealistic. To my knowledge, he was not a big seller of his art and never made much money. I am still so surprised that there is any bequest at all."



Henri smiled at her and said, “I’m sorry to hear you don’t think you’ll be rich tomorrow, but I love the challenge of the translation.”

“I think we should first search for the words we know and insert them. Then decide what makes sense after that. What do you think?”

“I start at the end and meet you in the middle.”

Bernadette and Henri each took half of the pages and began hunting for words they knew from the list. After an hour they knew they had only found a few, not enough to understand the document. They couldn’t find any of the common words they expected to see. Bernadette began to suspect it must be a dialect of Hungarian from a region or another time. In rural areas the language could be different than in the city.

Henri said, “Did you look for all the possible names he might have used for you?”

“Yes, and I see my name at the beginning. I don’t see any other names in the document.”

Henri said, “Shall we go online and try feeding a few sentences into a translator and see what we get?”

Free translation services even for a brief message weren’t available for Hungarian as they were for so many European languages.

“Gee, Maman, I’m not feeling like your genius son tonight. Sorry to let you down. I thought we’d be done by now and counting the money,” said Henri.

“I don’t feel very genius either. I guess I’ll have to look for a native speaker with references. Who to trust in this situation is the problem. It’s possible somebody at Alliance Française may know someone. I’ll ask tomorrow night.”

There was a knock at the door and Henri jumped up to let Julia in with a big hug and kisses. She had a black raincoat on over a white t-shirt and black leggings with boots. Her hair was pulled back in a messy ponytail.

“Ah, the artist fresh from the atelier. You look radiant, Julia,” said Bernadette.

“Thanks. I had a good day with the brushes. I hope I don't stink of paint. I had to borrow the shirt from my roommate to come here somewhat clean. Doing laundry has now become critical.” She took a seat at the dining table where they had been working. “How's the translation going?”

“It's not,” said Henri. “We're nowhere. Say, if you wanted to leave me all your canvases how would you say it?”

Julia looked at both of them, shook her head and sighed, “You two are the word people. I don't know. If I had to say something, maybe I'd just say, *to my dearest, I leave all my work.*”

“All my work!” exclaimed Henri. “Could that be it? Maman, do you know the word for work or dearest?”

Bernadette smiled at them and looked pleased. “It's marvelous to have fine young minds focusing.” She reached for the dictionary. “Here are two more words to look for,” she said printing them out in clear letters. “You take your half of the pages.”

They found the word for work but not dearest and it did appear toward the end of the document.

Bernadette said, “This is enough investigating for one day. Why don't we have some dinner and relax? How about cold chicken and salad?”

Henri said, “That would be great. I am so hungry.” He picked up Julia's hand and kissed it. “How about you?”

“Sure. I haven't eaten since breakfast. Anything would be good. Can I help toss the salad?”

“Henri, open a bottle of wine while I carve and Julia tosses.”

They sat and ate and talked about the canvases that Julia had made progress with today. Bernadette and Henri were happy to listen to her talk about where she thought she was and where

she wanted to go with each of them. She tended to work on two or three things on her painting days putting one aside to dry a bit while she worked on another. As an art historian, Bernadette had met a lot of artists and listened to them endlessly. Julia, from the first meeting at Drew's gallery, was a person of few words. She was articulate but not effusive or self-promoting. She was speaking from the heart. Bernadette as a mother, couldn't be happier for her smart son to fall in love with a hard-working artist. He had been to business school but had studied art history first so he appreciated Julia's straightforward conversation about making art. Sometimes she did struggle for words. She was accurate that they were the word people, Bernadette and Henri. The vocabulary and thought patterns of the highly educated and multi-lingual would never be Julia's patois. Bernadette and Henri both spoke the same five languages. Julia had been to art school and was savvy at figuring things out in many mediums. She was a visual person and a sort of engineer. She could see it in her mind and then make it. Bernadette and Henri admired that skill and talent more than any that they had with languages and history.

Showing exactly how comfortable she felt, Julia stretched out on the couch after dinner and promptly fell asleep. Bernadette and Henri remained at the table and spoke in whispers to be private and not wake her. He plotted out a new strategy for deciphering the document. She thought about it for a while and said, "I think your ideas are good. We can try that. My concern is that this document is a ruse and an attempt by somebody mean spirited to draw me out and expose me. I'm enjoying my quiet life here. This is a good place for me to stay for the time being. Maybe I'll retire to the cottage in the south of France when I'm truly old, but for now, I don't want to jeopardize what I have created here."

"I agree. It is a nice life here in Seattle and I too would like to stay if I can make my business life secure. The personal life could not be better." They exchanged a wry glance at the sleeping beauty on the couch.

Bernadette said, “I keep thinking of groups of people, not single individuals. Maybe there is something valuable in Budapest or Hungary and they can’t figure out how to find it, but think I can. I wish I trusted the attorney enough to call him and learn how he came to represent the artist. The reputation of the authorities in that country doesn’t give me any confidence to trust anyone. I think we should put it aside and not be in a hurry. I’m afraid we are succumbing to greed in our haste to figure it out.”

He shook his head. “Yes, the world is a den of thieves and honest citizens like us are usually deceived. Do you think he’ll try to contact you again if he doesn’t hear from you?”

“There was no deadline or timeframe mentioned in the cover letter. I think he’d try again before giving up. That would be his responsibility to his client, wouldn’t it? Do you have a secure way to look up the attorney on your computer at work that wouldn’t leave a trail?”

“I don’t know. It’s hard to do in general and the bank may feel it’s in their best interest to be able to trace everything employees have done. I’ll ask one of the back-office security guys if there is a private route. What might be a possibility is in a hotel, there are frequently open computers in the lobby for guests to use for business or printing out boarding passes. I think it’s possible to use one without identifying yourself. I’ll take the contact information and see what opportunity I can create to learn more about the author of the cover letter. We have so many visitors it’s should be easy for me to arrange to meet them at the hotel and wait in the lobby.