

Chapter Twenty-five

It was good being back in Texas. After Waldrip dropped us off, Bitsy and I talked long into the night. I had gone over with her the information I had learned from Waldrip. She said “That son of a bitch! My intuition had already led me to believe Said might have had something to do with the bombing. Let’s go drop a hand grenade down his pants.”

I said, “A big one. We’ll give him hell, Bitsy.”

I said, “We’re coming up fast on that big fork in the road that will take us away from here for a long, long time. Perhaps forever. Why don’t you call Margaret Beauchamp and see if she and Gordon would like to get together for dinner tomorrow night. For *auld lang syne*. “

She sighed. Sure. I’ll call her tomorrow.”

Later, as I lay on my back, holding Bitsy until she fell asleep, my mind raced fast-forward to Manhattan. It was difficult for me to drift off as I tried to develop a plan of attack, then modify it and amend it again. I aimed my thoughts at trying to uncover Said’s vulnerabilities. Everyone has some, although from what I had gleaned out of the file, he was a man with few points of weakness. Yet I hoped there would be one chink in his armor where I could slip in a stiletto. Gaining his confidence, even on a casual, social level would be important. A mini-epiphany struck me at two in the morning. The plan fell into place like a disassembled watch puts itself back together again when a film showing it being taken apart by a jeweler is shown in reverse. It would take some serious walking around money as well as an assist by someone who speaks Farsi. I figured that if Joe had

been able to find a Kraut couple to fly to the Caymans to keep an eye on me, he certainly ought to be able to find a Persian accomplice for my operation.

The next morning Bitsy, who owned more clothes than ten average families, went off to the Galleria for more. “Texas duds just won’t work in Manhattan.” I agreed, of course.

I had a second cup of coffee while I made notes on a yellow pad. At ten minutes to ten, Waldrip and Grant were at the door. I let them in and we settled down in the kitchen. Grant had again brought doughnuts. I put on a fresh pot of java.

Grant said, “Congratulations, Judge. Joe showed me a picture of your bride. She is quite a looker. Is she here? I’d like to meet her.”

“Thanks, Don. You’re right. She’s absolutely beautiful. She’s not here now. She’s shopping. And now she is in your file on me, complete with picture.” I smiled. “Anything I should know about her?”

“Nope. She was a good choice. You’re going to have a new cover identity. And because she’s your wife, she will, too.”

I asked, “So what have you got for me, Joe?”

He snapped open his briefcase and pulled out a large folder. “Your cover name will be George Lampson. Your wife is Edith Lampson. You are a retired oil broker from Freehold, New Jersey. A set of identity papers for you and Mrs. Lampson is included in this file as well as a personal profile for each of you. Also included is an in-depth description of the oil brokerage business. Driver’s license, passport, DD214 from the army and birth certificate. Same for your wife, except for the DD214. There are also credit cards and information on your checking account at the Bank of New York. There’s

plenty of dough in the account. Try to make it last.” Then, somewhat reluctantly, he added, “If you need more, let me know.

“You have an apartment in Manhattan at 755 West 85th Street on the Upper West Side. Here are two sets of keys. A phone is already installed. It’s a doorman building. He has been notified of your new lease there. And here are first class tickets on American Airlines, D/FW to La Guardia. You leave tomorrow evening. This stuff ought to get you started. Now, is there anything you want that I haven’t covered?”

“I mentioned before that I thought there might be an opening because of Said’s interest in sailing. I want you to contact the Hudson View Marina in Jersey City, where he keeps his boat, and rent dock space in my name for a seventy foot Swan sailing yacht.”

Grant spoke up. “Holy shit, Duncan, how much does one of those cost?”

I said, “Around two million, but don’t worry. I won’t need it. I simply want everyone at the marina to believe I own one and that it will be arriving sometime soon.”

“Well, that’s a relief. If it comes down to it, though, I might be able to get one or something close to it from our seizure inventory.”

“Good to know, but for now I don’t think that will be necessary. And finally, I’ll need someone on call who speaks Farsi. They’ll help me set up Said.”

Waldrip said, “I know of a guy in our organization who spent some time over there and he knows the language, at least enough to get by. He might need some coaching.”

Grant said, “You’re talking about Les, I assume.”

“Yeah.”

“He would be perfect. Coincidentally, he knows the oil business. Set it up with him. He’s in L.A. Bring him in when Duncan says it’s time. What else, Mr. Lampson?”

“That’s all for now.”

The three of us stood and we shook hands all around. Grant said, “Good luck, Judge. We appreciate your cooperation in all of this. I know you feel that you were mouse trapped, and I suppose you were. But I believe you would have come in with us even without the stick.”

I smiled as I said, “Probably.”

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