

Chapter Forty-two

Don Grant sat down in my temporary living room. Kane had gone into the kitchen with Bitsy to help with the coffee. The FBI man was glum as he said, "Joe Waldrip died last night."

"I'm sorry to hear that." I didn't know what else to say. How do you commiserate about the death of someone who, in all likelihood, would have someday tried to kill you? In the end, Joe had done what he believed was the right thing. For that I was grateful. But for little else.

Bitsy and Able Kane returned to the parlor with the coffee. Kane set the tray on a table by the couch and found a seat. Bitsy sat next to me. I said to Bitsy, "Joe Waldrip died." She said the same thing I had said, but with a little more sympathy.

Grant said, "He left you something. I brought it along." He snapped open his briefcase and removed a police special .38. "He wanted you to have it."

I looked at him and smiled. "Are you nuts? I wouldn't take it on a bet. You keep it."

That was just what I didn't need, a pistol with a history of God knows how many mob hits. Did Grant know that and think I would be dumb enough to accept it? Well, now he knew better. He shrugged and put it back in the case. Kane grinned and winked at me.

Grant said, "Before we get started, I have something for you and Bitsy." He handed me a large manila envelope. I opened it and pulled out two photographs, one of a man in a police uniform and the other an enhanced closeup of his face. "That's the Houston bomber."

I studied the photos carefully. This was the man who murdered over one hundred innocent people, many of whom were my friends. I felt a visceral hatred well up inside me. I knew I would not hesitate to send that bastard straight to hell if I ever had the opportunity. I nodded without saying anything and handed the photographs to Bitsy. She looked at them carefully, then slid the pictures back into the envelope.

Grant said, “Okay, Judge, this is your meeting. What have you got?”

“I have a few questions to begin with, before I lay out my plans. First, what is the Institute for Political and International Studies in Tehran?”

“We believe it is the ministry that oversees most of Iran’s overseas activist networks. Spies, terrorists, the whole kit and caboodle. It is also the propaganda arm of the mullahs.”

“Alright, and who is Salim Jarsan?”

Kane looked quizzically at Grant. Grant asked, “Where in the hell did you get that name?”

I said, “You gave it to me. It’s in Said’s file.”

Grant took in and exhaled a deep breath. “Jarsan is the principal control for most of Iran’s major players in the U.S. For instance, he supervises Seyed Mahmood, with whom you are familiar, and in turn, Said.”

“Did you know Jarsan is Ghodsi Said’s brother?”

“Now that you mention it, yes.”

“Is she going to be a problem when her husband bites the dust?”

“That’s a possibility, but I don’t believe it’s something to lose sleep over.”

“Not for you, perhaps, but I wouldn’t like her trying to find me.”

“Okay, I get it. We’ll keep an eye on her. Now, what else?”

“Well, when I was in the *Banco J. G. de Honduras*...”

Grant interrupted me. “You have actually been inside the bank?”

“Yes, I have. It’s a bullshit institution, no more a bank than the corner Burger King. I have set up Said to be lured away from *el banco*. And here’s the beauty part. While he’s away from the office it would be very easy to go in and take the bank’s records. They would lead you to the parts of the network that Said is supporting. The bank has only three rooms. A reception area, Said’s office and a computer room. The guy running the data processing is named Ghadir Al-Sassani. The receptionist is a ditzzy gal named Maizie. I don’t believe she knows what’s going on, but you can bet Al-Sassani does.”

Grant nodded and said, “Okay. We’ll get back to this in a bit, but first tell me how you are going to eliminate Said.”

I explained at length how I had baited the trap with a sailing adventure. “I have told him the Swan is berthed at the West End Marina on Grand Bahama Island. I plan for him and me to fly to Freeport and rent a car. We’ll drive toward West End. I’ve been on that road before. It’s lightly traveled. Somewhere along the way, I’ll pull over, walk him into the brush and pop him.”

“Judge, I can think of about ten different ways for that plan to blow up. For instance, how are you going to get your Glock into the Bahamas?”

“No sweat. I’ve done it before. They don’t x-ray checked luggage at the Freeport customs office. The gun will be under the bottom panel in my suitcase.”

“And why do it down there? Wouldn’t it be less difficult to do it somewhere in New York?”

“Probably, but the danger in that is that almost immediately, thanks to New York’s finest, Al-Sassani and half the country is going to know what happened. On the other hand, the Royal Bahamian Police Force will take longer; longer to identify the deceased and longer to come up with a suspect, namely me. It’s not that they are inept. To the contrary, they are spot on when it comes to dealing with their domestic crime. But they don’t have the Bureau’s Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System at their disposal. By the time they figure out who their vic is, I’ll be long gone. More importantly, Kane here will have had plenty of time to go into *el banco* and get the records.”

Grant sat silently, obviously mentally examining from every angle what he had just heard. Kane sat back, a smile on his face.

Grant said, “So you complete the job, turn around and go back to the Freeport Airport and fly home. Is that right?”

“Yep. Pretty straightforward. A no frills trip to the Caribbean.”

“And you’ll work with Kane to make sure he has a layout of the bank?”

“Naturally. I have one small stipulation, however. I want a duplicate of the bank records.”

Grant shook his head. “No, Judge, that won’t happen. I told you at the beginning that you were not a freelancer anymore. I haven’t changed my mind about that.”

“That was before we became partners; blood brothers as it were. Think about it. I know more than you ever wanted me to know. For instance, I know who Joe Waldrip

really was. A Chicago mob hit man named Constantine DeMarco. What we have, Don, between you and me is a good old fashioned Mexican standoff. It won't hurt you to give me a copy of those files."

Grant calmed down a bit. "Look, Judge, I can't possibly fill you in on the whole story. At least, not for now. I have the responsibility for a number of ongoing operations. People are depending on me. Their lives could be in jeopardy if I screw something up. I can't let you or anyone else go off on a tangent. I just won't allow that to happen."

"The reason I want a copy is to see if there is anything that will help me on my remaining assignments. That's the only reason. I don't plan to take any independent action. Just call it research. How can that hurt?"

Grant performed another heavy breathing exercise, then said, "How about this? I'll let you see the files, but you take no notes and get no hard copies. What the hell, Kane is going to see them. You may as well, too." He shook his head slowly. "We've got a Goddamn mini Freedom of Information request here."

It was obvious Grant knew he was on shaky ground. The last thing he needed was a mutiny.

I wasn't going to push it any further. I smiled and stuck out my hand. "That's a deal."

Kane asked me, "When are you leaving with Said?"

"My plan is to fly down with him next Monday. We'll take American to Fort Lauderdale and then Bahamas Air to Freeport. With luck, I'll be back in New York the same day."

Kane said, “What time will your flight land in the Bahamas? I need to know because his cell phone will be out of range then. I’m sure you don’t want him receiving any calls from the bank.”

“ETA is one New York time.”

“Then I’ll hit the bank Monday afternoon. I don’t know how long it will take Mr. Al-Sassani to print out the data, especially if he is trying to do so with a kneecap wound.”

I said, “Take some duct tape with you. Strap Maizie in a chair. She hasn’t done anything that deserves being killed.”

Kane looked to Grant for guidance on that one. Grant said, “Yeah. Don’t harm her unless you have to.”

Kane looked relieved. I knew from his background that assassinations were not his forte.

Grant looked at us individually, then said, “Are we set here?”

We all nodded in assent.

He said, “Alright, here’s what I’m going to do. Bitsy, when Duncan leaves for La Guardia Airport, you take a cab to JFK. Take everything with you that you want to keep. You won’t be coming back here. I’ll have a ticket and a reservation for you on Delta for LAX. When you get there, check into the Sheraton Universal in Universal City. Before Monday, I’ll have a courier deliver a whole new set of identity papers there for you and the Judge. Duncan, same deal for you. When you are back in Fort Lauderdale, take an American flight to LAX. Stay in the Sheraton until you are contacted about your next assignment. That should do it. Oh, by the way, Duncan, where do you want your fee to be sent? To the Royal Bank of the Caymans?” He laughed as he asked.

“No, just wire it to my bank in Dallas. You have all the info on that.”

He hesitated a moment, then said, “Sure. I’ll take care of it.”

He and Kane got up to leave. Kane said, “I’ll come by tomorrow and we’ll go over the bank operation. This is going to bust their ass bigtime.”

I smiled, “That’s the spirit, old pal.”

Grant shook my hand and said, “Good work, Judge. And if you thought this was exciting, wait until you get to California.”

“I’ll be on pins and needles.”

E-mail the author: mcdougal8@verizon.net