

## Chapter Forty-three

When Kane and Grant had gone, Bitsy and I had a second cup of coffee. She said, “A lot to think about.”

“Yes. A hell of a lot. I’d like to know what’s happening in the Golden State. And I wonder if it will involve Les Bladen. Maybe they’re going to offer us bit parts in his production.”

I knew that if we didn’t report in at the Sheraton Universal, Grant might renege on my fee. “We’ll have to go out there and stick around until I can verify that our money has been transferred. Once that has taken place, if we don’t like what’s going on we can bail. Are you comfortable in going out there by yourself?”

“Not entirely, but I’ll do it. What’s really bothering me right now is something more immediate. Now that we’ve gotten this close to finishing with Alfred Said, I’m getting frightened, not for me but for you. This is really starting to spook me.”

I tried to look confident as I said, “Bitsy, please don’t worry. I’ll nail that bastard. During the final days and hours of all my previous tasks I’ve been almost clairvoyant in how I see things are going to take place. By the time he gets his I’ll be so damned focused that I simply can’t fail. There is a saying in football that the offense has a big advantage in that the defense doesn’t know for sure what is going to happen. They know something is going to occur and they still get caught off guard about half the time. Well, it’s even more true in my line of work...no, make that endeavor. Sounds better. If the subject doesn’t expect an offensive move, it’s almost impossible for him to defend. I’m

not trying to make light of something extremely serious, but you really don't need to be anxious."

"I'm sorry, Duncan, but I'll be fretting constantly until I see you in California. Remember, you did say he might be smarter than you. Can't help worrying, Sweetheart."

That didn't really settle much, but at least we had said what we both needed to. I said, "I'm going to call my sailing buddy Mr. Said and get him lined up."

I dialed the bank and Maizie answered the phone. "Bank offices. How may I direct your call?"

I said, "Hello, Maizie. This is George Lampson. May I speak to Mr. Said, please?"

She was much more friendly than the last time we had spoken, which I took to be a good sign. "Why, yes Mr. Lampson, I'll get him for you right away."

Alfred was on the line in a few seconds. "George, nice to hear from you so soon. Good sailing news, I hope?"

"The best, Alfred. We fly to Grand Bahama Island this coming Monday. And by the way, I don't expect my volunteers to spend their own money. I've secured first class tickets for both of us on American Flight 342 out of La Guardia at nine next Monday morning. Pack for ten days, all casual. Bring boat shoes and your passport."

I could hear the excitement in his voice as he said, "That's wonderful. I will be there for certain. And thank you for inviting me. I hope that I will do a good job as a crew member. Will other members of the crew be flying with us?"

I said, “No, they are going down the next day. My wife has already gone. She’ll be laying supplies aboard. By next Wednesday, we should be at sea. And don’t worry. I am sure you will give it your all. I’ll see you Monday.”

That evening, Bitsy went on the internet and found the names of everyone who had died in the Brown Center. She printed out the list and gave it to me. “When you leave that bastard, tuck this into his shirt pocket. It shouldn’t take long for someone to figure out why he was killed.”

I took the sheet of paper and folded it carefully. Then I placed it into a plastic baggie. “In case it gets rained on.”

My conference with Able Kane was set for the next morning. I had asked him to meet me at the Bryant Park Café, located adjacent to the New York Public Library. Bryant Park is one of the most beautiful of New York’s small parks. Lots of trees and benches and a great lawn on which to lie down. The bums love it.

Kane was already there when I arrived. “Hey, Judge, you’re looking sharp. Is that a new suit?”

“No, is yours?”

“As a matter of fact it is. Unlike you, I can’t take all my goods with me when I move. So if it’s only the clothes on my back, I want good ones.”

I didn’t ask why he might have to travel light. “That’s too bad for you. And speaking of moving, are you going to L.A. with us?”

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“So what’s going on out there?”

“If you’re looking for the truth out of me, you will grow a lot older waiting for it. All I can say is that it is going to be very interesting. You’ll have a ball.”

“I hope so. I’m not having one now.”

“So tell me about the bank. Are you pretty sure there will be only two people in there when I go in?”

“Like I said before, I’m not certain. My educated guess is that the receptionist, Maizie, and the D.P guy, Al-Sassani, are the only employees. If there are any more, they will be in the data processing room where Al-Sassani works. However, Al-Sassani will be the acting chief honcho in Said’s absence. He will probably be sitting in the president’s chair, smoking cigars and sipping Iranian *shiraz*. Another thing to think about. I’m not sure what volume of paper will be produced, so you probably ought to take a valise with you to carry it out.”

He nodded. “Sounds like a plan, Judge. Have you drawn a layout for me?”

I gave him an envelope from my pocket. He removed the diagram and studied it, then tucked it away and asked, “Do you think there will be any cash laying around in this bank?”

I laughed. “Once a crook, always a crook?”

If he could have blushed, he would have. “Just curious, that’s all.”

“Anything else?”

He said, “Yeah, I’m going in at three p.m. Said’s cell phone will be out of range, so we won’t have to be concerned about that.” He picked up a menu. “I think I’ll try the turkey club”

E-mail the author: [mcdougal8@verizon.net](mailto:mcdougal8@verizon.net)