

Chapter 42

The team's arrival back into the Israeli territory was not without consequence. As anticipated, the appearance of an undocumented dead body wearing the uniform of an I.D.F. soldier created more than a minor problem. It resulted in the group's immediate and guarded transport to Jerusalem under the watchful eye of the Mossad. It was, however, only through the recognition of one of their own, Macy, that the group was allowed to state their case.

"You people," Aaron, the Mossad's chief of operations, said, "have entered our country illegally, and to make matters worse, you disguised yourselves as Israeli soldiers."

"We ..." Sascha said.

"I am not finished," he interrupted. "The border patrol had every right to shoot you all on the spot but for some odd reason they brought you here. However, after careful investigation, it appears that you have done us and the Americans a favor, although, I am still not clear on how my deep cover agent met her death."

"She died saving my life," Weylin explained.

"Yes, I am aware of your previous relationship, after all, we facilitated her rise to power at

your Condor. But, she uncharacteristically blew her cover. I never saw our Macy as an altruist.”

“Then, sir, you didn’t know Macy at all,” Weylin replied softly.

“Well, that is a matter for future reflection but right now, I have a problem,” Aaron admitted. “The Americans asked us to deal with Mahmud and his gang but we did not, you did and therein lies the problem. I can hardly admit that a group of foreigners dressed as I.D.F. defeated our security, did our job and then snuck back into Israel, can I?” he said, while pacing about the cell-like room, rubbing a days growth of chin stubble.

“I’m sure we would all be happy to sneak back to where we came from,” Weylin said, tentatively, while Sascha rolled his eyes and gazed at the ceiling.

“Yes, but the word *sneak* gives me heartburn,” Aaron said. A lone chair had been placed before the cowering group and he carefully scanned each face as he lowered his body into it. “I have an idea,” he offered, “just an idea mind you, but I might be able to convince my superiors to issue a statement saying that your operation was sanctioned by our government. That way, we get the credit from the Americans and you get to go free.”

“But that is bound to cause a publicity stir,” Sascha remarked, “my people require anonymity.”

“Ah yes, we at the Mossad can certainly understand your position, but there is one among you who might benefit from such notoriety,” Aaron said, while staring directly at Weylin.

“I assume you’re referring to me?” Weylin said.

Aaron chuckled. “Hero status might bode well for your image as I am aware of your problems at Condor.”

“How would you know about that?” he said, as Sascha noisily cleared his throat, then

added, “uh, sorry I asked.”

“OK, then it is agreed,” Aaron said. “We will leak a modified version of the truth to the press, naming Dr. McCain as the organizer of this little expedition. The group’s origin and its leader will remain our secret. Until arrangements have been made, however, I must ask you all to be our sequestered guests.”

“Are you proposing that we remain in this cell?” Svetlana asked.

“Of course not. We have an entire floor reserved at a nice hotel for such purposes. Rest assured that all your needs will be addressed but, I ask that you remain on that floor until we tell you otherwise.”

The team returned to Geneva first class, complements of a grateful Israeli government. The news of Weylin’s remarkable feat, with the assistance of the Mossad’s powerful connections, received national and international acclaim. Three days after his return to Geneva, while dressing for a celebratory dinner hosted by local dignitaries, Weylin’s satellite phone came alive. He removed it from its charging stand, while attempting to adjust his tie. “Hello, McCain here,” he said, the phone pressed against his cheek and shoulder.

“Dr. McCain, this is Franklin Dobbs ...”

“Oh, hello Franklin,” he interrupted. “I’m kind of busy right now, can I call you back tomorrow?”

“I’ll be brief.”

“OK, go ahead.”

“I am calling on behalf of the board and our shareholders to congratulate you. You have become a household name in the industry, a legend in your own time. When will you be returning to take charge of Condor?”

“It wasn’t that long ago when you asked me to leave, Franklin,” Weylin said, sarcastically.

“But you must have understood our position at the time?”

He stopped fiddling with the tie and gazed out of the window as darkness began to shroud the newly greening trees. “I fully intend to return to my position of CEO,” he said, “with the salary and bonus increase that I am certain you forgot to mention, but I have one more life altering matter to take care of.”

“That ceremony was ego gratifying but otherwise pompous,” Weylin admitted, while seated in the rear of Sascha’s car, firmly gripping Svetlana’s hand.

“It was their way of showing appreciation for your accomplishment,” Svetlana countered.

“You mean, *our* accomplishment.”

“Do not forget the promise we made to Aaron, strike the *we* from your thoughts.”

As the BMW rolled to a stop in front of the house, Sascha turned to face his rear passengers. “With all those stuffy speeches this evening, we did not have any time to talk,” he said. “Come, let us retire to the library for a nightcap.”

They sat before the unlit fireplace while Sascha poured three glasses of aged cognac. He took a prolonged sip and then eased into his favorite leather chair. “Tonight will mark the beginning of my new life in retirement,” he announced.

“But father, your period of semiretirement has barely begun,” Svetlana chuckled.

“It didn’t last very long, did it?” he laughed. “No, the truth is, my daughter, running around in that field like a mad man, firing my weapon, fed me a dose of reality. My day has come and gone, it is time for me to look towards other things.”

“Such as?” Weylin inquired, as he rose to refill his glass.

“This is a big house, a few grandchildren would be a welcomed addition,” he said, while placing his glass on a nearby silver tray and rising from his chair. Turning to leave the room, he winked, adding, “Think about that.”

Weylin watched and waited for the disappearance of Sascha’s shadow, then pivoted to face Svetlana. “Do you remember what I said when we were sitting behind that boulder,” he said, “the sky scintillating with stars?”

“Yes, you talked about your boyhood in Texas.”

“But that was only part of what I was thinking.”

“And the rest?” she asked, coyly.

“Could you ever give up this life of excitement?”

“What are you asking, Weylin?”

“To join me in making your father’s wish come true.”

“What?” she whispered, while gazing intently at him.

Straining for the words, almost losing his voice, he said, “Will you marry me?”

Momentarily speechless, her eyes wide and mouth agape she cried out, “Yes, yes, yes!” as she jumped from her seat to his lap.

Fifteen minutes later, following a lengthy and passionate embrace, Svetlana pecked Weylin on the cheek and turned serious. “We will continue the negotiation later,” she said, “now, I must go tell father.”

Weylin returned to his room and reflected upon his life altering decision. She asked for a small wedding here, in the house, he said to himself; I need a best man. Raising his arm to check the time on his wristwatch, he picked up the telephone and dialed the number of his closest remaining friend. “Special agent Vincent Black, please,” he said to the operator.

“Is this official business?” she inquired.

“Yes,” he replied, hoping for a short hold time.

“Agent Black, speak,” Vincent announced.

“It’s Weylin, Vincent. How are you?”

“Oh hello, Weylin, the operator failed to mention that I was about to speak to an international hero. I’m sure there’s more to the story but congrats on your Lebanese success. Now, I hope you haven’t gone and gotten yourself into yet another mess?”

“Not exactly, but I do have a request.”

“I hope it’s not the big one where I lose my job?”

“Do you have some free time coming in the next week or so?”

“Depends on the reason.”

“I would like you to be the best man at my wedding.”

“Are you serious?” he stuttered.

“Very.”

“The Russian, right?”

“She has the right blend of passion, unpredictability and heady chemistry ... I can’t live without her.”

“Tell me when and I’ll be there.”

“Thanks, Vincent.”

The sun shone brightly on Condor’s sleek Gulfstream jet as it sat on the tarmac at the Geneva airport. Following a tearful departure, Weylin and Svetlana climbed the boarding ladder as Sascha shielded his eyes from the blinding streaks of light reflecting from the large diamond on Svetlana’s left hand.