

CHAPTER 1

Today

It's just too damn early in the spring to be out here.

The agreeable breeze blowing off the Straits carried with it a hint of summer, but that wouldn't be for another three or four weeks yet. Then the tourists from English cities would flock to this British possession and trespass on the private beaches like a gaggle of geese and his family wouldn't have this kind of privacy at all. As it was now, only the children's and his wife's prints marred the clean, perfect sand.

"I see it is true, you have no balls," he heard his father's voice behind him.

He refused to be baited and maintained his vigilance over his wife and children playing at the sea's edge. There weren't many beaches in Gibraltar and it was nice to watch his family enjoy themselves. His intractability, however, necessitated his father to move along side of him.

"Father," he greeted his parent with a single word. "Aren't you just a little overdressed for the beach? This beach anyway."

"I thought I'd wait until your mother comes down from the apartment before freezing my ass off, too," he replied. "If I'm going to swim in the buff, I'd just as soon do it in the privacy of my own pool. My own heated pool."

"That's why I have no balls—nor much of anything else for that matter," Pegasus replied, his arms folded across his bare chest. "I've been in already. But I've been gone for quite some time and she wanted to go on holiday before I had to leave for another round of sales calls."

"Still selling for Deutscher Munitions—International?"

"It was good enough for you to retire from, why shouldn't I be happy with them? After all, they pay well and Margot is always **SO** happy to see me when I come home," answered his son. "I think if I had a local job, she'd tire pretty quickly of having me under foot every night."

Deutscher Munitions was a publicly held firm traded on the floor (actually the computers) of DAX and many other exchanges throughout the world. The end of Hitler's reign in Germany, signaling American, British, and French occupation of West Germany, provided many opportunities for those with ready cash in hand and the right connection. Steeped in the capitalistic philosophy, three of the four victors approved one private business venture after another as they attempted to stabilize the economy of post-war Europe and sought to defray the cost of maintaining troops in Germany. Among the many chores necessary to facilitate rebuilding the new German nation was the disposal of the hundreds of tons of unexploded ordnance littering every village and city in the country. While the Allies had thousands of service men routinely performing the task, it is not a safe vocation. By the late 40's the French followed by the Americans and British decided to let bid for the location, removal and detonation of failed munitions.

In a flash of bureaucratic brilliance, the functionaries determined former enemies of the Allied nations would not be suitable for these positions inasmuch as they may be tempted by the explosive power placed in their hands. Unfortunately, about the only German nationals qualified to perform the responsibility had previously been uniformed members of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS. It was a rare gem for a divisional EOD officer when he found someone who knew *anything* about explosives, let alone disarming them, and hadn't been tainted by serving in the uniform of his former enemy.

In the early spring days of 1949 Ludwig Tannenbaum dressed shabbily, clutching a soft cap in his hand, presented himself to American Major Luke Eddington stationed at Kaiserslautern, who was charged with meeting the manning description specified by the paper-shufflers in the European Theater of Operations. The young, *Jesus! He couldn't be more than*

18 or so, man stood before the Major's desk. The German submitted the appropriate application and letters of endorsement from the Bundes Republik. One other thing caught the Major's attention when the man reached to place the documents before him. Eddington caught a glimpse of a crudely tattooed number on his left forearm.

During the hour-long interview and the much longer lunch to which Eddington felt obliged, he found out more about the man than he really thought possible. Ludwig Tannenbaum had been born in Dresden, Germany a year before the National Socialists stopped swilling beer in Munich and came to power, and grew up in Krakow, Poland. He and his extended family of bakers were deferred from removal from the Krakow Ghetto since their industry was considered essential for the prosecution of the war. But the year following the invasion of the Soviet Union the Ghetto was closed and they were removed from their property without compensation and sent for *RELOCATION*, a euphemism for a concentration camp, to work for the Fatherland—*Arbeit macht Frei*—which meant being gassed, hung, shot, strangled or any other devilish devised death, and then cremated, having their bones ground for fertilizer. The German slogan should have been *ARBEIT MACHT TOT!*

But even the voracious ovens of Auschwitz couldn't accommodate all the Jews sent there and many labored at factories dotting the area outside the fence and in Birkenau. A few, Ludie included, were marked for a different sort of task. The war in Poland, first against the legitimate government and later against the USSR, left the flat fields of the country unsuitable for agriculture and hindered relocation of thousands of German farmers to cultivate the conquered land. It would not serve the Nazis if one of their farmers died every other day when his plow struck a mine or shell buried in the earth. At first, the Auschwitz Jews were lined up across a field and walked its length, pausing only long enough to replenish their numbers when some

unfortunate stepped on an explosive device.

But that was a temporary solution at best. While it eventually cleared a field of anti-personnel devices, it did nothing about bombs and shells that buried themselves in the ground. For this, a greater level of expertise was necessary and the Jews were trained in this skill, which they continued to perform until the Russians liberated them. Then, those few surviving forced conscription with the Germans found themselves pressed into service with the Soviet Army performing the same function yet in the opposite direction. One day when he finished his assignment, Ludwig simply walked away from his job with the Russians and kept going to Krakow, but found only streets recently cleared of rubble and nothing or no one he recognized. He wandered to Kaiserslautern, finding employment when and where he could, getting by, and trying to decide if he should continue in Germany or immigrate to the new nation of Israel. Before the day was out, Major Eddington processed the man's paper work, vouched for a loan through the local Jewish community, and gave the man his first or many assignments for the governments of the United States and West Germany.

Time passed. Eddington went home. Tannenbaum worked hard. The company continued to prosper under the name Tannenbaum and Son Agricultural Supplies, having branched into agricultural chemicals from demolitions and employing hundreds by the 1960's when it was wholly purchased by a Luxembourg bank and renamed Deutscher Chemical. With new capital from the financial institution, the firm returned to its origins and began manufacturing high-quality explosives for NATO forces. In 1974 Deutscher Chemicals leaped to Deutscher Munitions—International, sold shares of the company to the public, and became a modest player in international arms sales and distribution. While the company was best known for its weaponry and explosives manufactured in Leopoldsbury, Belgium, it continued to

manufacture fertilizer (Oslo), jet fuel (Manchester), plastics (Bern), cosmetics (Paris), food colors (New York), and clothing dyes (Beijing).

Market analysts thought poor Tannenbaum got out of the business just when it was getting off the ground and would shake their collective, knowledgeable heads in their convocation of stemmed glasses of Chablis at his misfortune, and ask themselves, "What ever was it that happened to poor Ludie?"

But they needn't have concerned themselves with Tannenbaum's well being, although he was no longer known by that name. That hardly concerned him since it had never been his anyway. Nor the tattoo. Nor the story of his time in the concentration camps. Nor his forced servitude with the Germans or the Russian. The money realized from the sale of Tannenbaum and Son was immediately reinvested in Deutscher Chemical stock that was rolled over to buy Deutscher Munitions—International. He judiciously continued to buy stock in the company through intermediaries, always careful not to own too many shares in which case his name would become a matter of public record, yet enough so that he maintained influence in the companies of the corporation. He used that control to find gainful employment for his son when the time came.

The junior member of the Deutscher Munitions sales force had no office, no secretary, and no prospect of advancing beyond his current position. He was absent from work so often not a half dozen people could recognize him, turned in just the barest minimum of orders to retain his job, and received no Christmas bonus, even when the times were good—meaning there were several wars in the world and sales were high. His immediate supervisor would have terminated him with pleasure anytime during the last decade, but the general manager always interceded on his behalf, rescuing him from the unemployment lines. It was the perfect job for Pegasus.

Although he currently owned the name, as had his father before him and his grandmother previous to his father, it was not his. It belonged to the family as an enterprise name. A company. A firm. A family of mercenary assassins, who were not legendary, but more mythological. Individual parties knew they existed and a few more suspected they did, but there was no proof, *per se*, just lingering hints based on conjecture. For the various intelligence communities that meant if a) a perpetrator couldn't be identified then b) it must be someone whom they could not trace; therefore, c) it must be a "professional." They would have been surprised how close they were to the truth, if not actually identifying him. The Russians were perhaps closest to identifying him, but even they came up short in the process. They really had no need to know who he was, other than to keep track of people, which Pegasus thought part of their cultural paranoia. He supposed it had crossed their minds once or twice that it would be nice to know who he was in the event they needed to dispose of him, but he was too valuable to their plans – past, present and future – to make him go to ground if they pressed too hard to find him. Even their pitiful efforts to crack the electronic codes of Horth-Berg, the family's Luxembourg bank, to trace the funds they deposited there were thwarted even if successful. The family did no transaction electronically. None.

Silent moments passed between the two men allowing them to refresh themselves with sounds of breaking waves and cries from the gulls circling overhead. *Soon the dolphins will be running in the sea*, he thought, contemplating the good time his wife and children would have on the boat he'd already reserved. *Perhaps, they'll see a whale migration. That would be nice.*

"Do you ever regret it?" the older man asked while removing his suit coat, tie, and unbuttoning his shirt.

"What?"

"Getting into the business instead of having a normal life," the father reflected watching his daughter-in-law and grandchildren taking turns trying to stand on their heads only to be tumbled over by the breaking waves.

"Not like I had a lot of choice at the time," replied Pegasus.

His declaration elicited a grunt from his father who looked up at him to see if there was blame attached to his words. There wasn't.

"Nice job in the Caribbean, by the way," he kicked off his shoes and tugged his socks from his feet.

"I thought I'd fucked up," he answered honestly. "Events began running me, instead of the other way around."

"But you did what was necessary and survived," Father remonstrated him for his self-indulged concern.

"Until the next time," Pegasus replied.

"Will there be a next time?" inquired Father.

"Oh, Father! You know damn well the Russians are coming. I only hope the West can stop them before they get here and fuck this resort up with their enlightened management techniques," he replied sourly.

"If you don't like them, why work for them?"

"I learned long ago—from you, as a matter of fact—you need not like your employer to work for them. As long as their money's good; that's what really counts," he relayed a long-ago learned lesson. "Besides, if things go poorly for the West, I can always change sides. You were right, Father, **WE** are the balance of power in the world, not the great nations of the planet. What good are all their armies? Where is their strength when pitted against us?" he asked

rhetorically. "They must employ circumspection; we deliberateness."

The parent neatly folded his trousers before setting them atop his pile of clothing and removing his underwear. "Is that water as cold as it looks?"

"Colder. What do you think I'm doing out here?"

"Well, come on," he gripped his bare arm with his hand. "The Russians and Americans and all the rest of that lot will wait until tomorrow. Your wife and children won't."

Pegasus smiled. Not the mindless killing machine grin he wore at work, but the smile of his inner heart. It warmed his father to see.

"Last one in pays for dinner," Pegasus played. He ran ahead of his father.

"You buy. You're the one working. I'm on a fixed income. Retired you know," he called, chasing after him on sands of white.

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"Mayday! Mayday!"

"Aircraft declaring an emergency. Identify and continue," answered the control tower without hesitation.

"Dallas, this is Delta Four-Seven-Five requesting emergency landing instructions."

"All aircraft in the vicinity of Dallas/Fort Worth," the operator ignored the distressed aircraft for a moment, "immediately execute a ten minute 360 degree turn to starboard. We have a declared emergency. Delta Four-Seven-Five what is your status?"

"Don't know, Dallas. Something hit us. Controls are very sluggish. Losing power fast," the excitement in the boyish voice of the first officer was apparent.

"Delta Four-Seven-Five, we have you one point five miles out. You are clear to land on runway thirty-one right. Emergency vehicles are rolling at this time," the supervisor's eyes were on Rogers. He was the best, reaching beyond the confines of his glass and concrete castle to lend

the courage of his voice to frightened pilots and, by now, their terrified crew and passengers. He'd need all his skill tonight.

"Delta Four-Seven-Five, Dallas. You're losing altitude too fast. Pull up. I say again Delta Four-Seven-Five, you are too low."

"Jesus, Bob!" Rogers stole a quick glance from the sensitive, desk-mounted unit displaying the aircraft in peril to the stereotypical grim, wrinkled, cigar-chewing face of his supervisor. The creases had deepened with anxiety, the folds casting new shadows over his perpetual frown.

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A 737 with a crew of five and one hundred sixteen passengers, Four-Seven-Five's flight originated at Dulles International. The flight had been as uneventful as the preceding twenty-odd on which First Officer McCrory had accompanied Senior Pilot Marshall. In fact, the only "highlights" of the whole flight were the perfunctory passenger precautions regarding seat belts, non-smoking policies and a last-minute search for an umbrella, normally-sunny Dallas had seen fit to greet Delta Four-Seven-Five's passengers with torrents of rain. Even the passengers lining the walls of the molded metal and plastic tube had been more passive than usual: no one attempted to bring more than three ounces of liquid aboard, children hadn't screamed, married men hadn't made obnoxious passes at the stewardesses, and no one had tried to plug up the smoke detector in the bathrooms so they could satisfy their habit.

Entering the pattern behind Continental Three-Seven-One from Atlanta and ahead of a U.S. Air commuter, the cabin crew of Delta Four-Seven-Five had just finished lowering the flaps and extending the landing gear when it received a substantial jolt to its starboard side, skidding the tail section across the sky. Diminished control and dwindling power followed immediately. The First Officer immediately informed Dallas of their problem and then grabbed for his set of

controls and struggled with Marshall to gain enough altitude to make runway thirty-one right before the earth was able to reach any higher and swat them from the sky.

Delta Four-Seven-Five landed. As it approached the ground, the pilots could see the flashing lights of the emergency vehicles racing toward them. It landed 700 meters short of the fence which defined the airport's northern boundary, plowing a furrow into the soft dirt.

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No one had used Durban's field for years. Children did not play sandlot games there, nor did picnickers frequent the area despite, by Texas standards, the lush stand of oaks visible from the highway. The aesthetic possibilities of the site mattered little to anyone. The field was at the end of the landing pattern for one of the busiest airports in the United States and when it rained, as it did now, the clay soil made the use of motor vehicles in its marsh-like conditions, impossible. As well, since the government of the United States had designated the site as a repository for hazardous waste, no one ever used Durban's field. When dry the site became a judicious spot for lovers who infrequently visited the place, seeking a location for their backseat pleasures. Sometimes drug dealers stopped here, but not all that often. There was a supply and demand business, and the "demand" was in the city, not among the scrub oaks. Even hookers had given up on the field. Just too noisy and with the landing lights illuminating them constantly, their johns had begun to refuse the benefits of their company. Inasmuch as prostitution is a service-oriented industry, they had to find different accommodations. Creatures of the night shunned Durban's Field and never used it – almost never, anyway.

A black, all-terrain vehicle traveled the trails of this secluded spot, but it would not have raised suspicion among the many dirt-acclimated, three- and four-wheelers in the area. As it was, with the mist interrupted by an occasional modest downpour, few would have been

foolhardy enough to be out this evening.

But not Klaus. For him, the night's satisfaction lay in Durban's field, not the myriad of entertainment spots in the Dallas area. However, the waiting had eclipsed his passion. Not waiting for a specific screaming engine to pass overhead as the rain beat upon the helmet he wore. Rather, he waited for a specific moment - a mood really, during which he would take another human life; without rage, but not without passion and certainly with remorse.

The protective coveralls, which bore the name of the Japanese manufacturer down the right sleeve, repelled the rain completely and did a splendid job of keeping the jeans and T-shirt beneath them dry. The sticky, red, Texas mud, however, covered his rubber boots.

The sound of the jets that passed overhead was barely discernible to Klaus; yet, his equipment would allow him to seek them out when the time came. He tilted his head now and again to hear their approach, the apex of their sound overhead and the change in propulsion as they landed five miles to the south. Waiting: a time, a place and a moment of resolve; he knew not for what, except that it was to be this evening.

He climbed off his ATV and stepped around to the rear on which was mounted a black box about the shape of a footlocker, but only half as wide. In some ways it resembled a coffin for children with handles at the appropriate locations. Klaus removed the container and carefully placed it on the dirt shoulder of the pathway and watched in silence as it settled half an inch into the mud. So slow and deliberate were his actions that under other circumstances the Dane would have been mistaken as drunk or dull-witted, although he made no mistakes associated with an inebriate or a mentally impaired person.

He flipped the clasps at each end of the trunk which sprang open with a thin metallic noise, dulled by the rolling, distant thunder. Opening the lid a bit more quickly, he reached

inside and removed the tubular construction from the shock-absorbent material. The device had been tested previously for function and when Klaus activated the electronic package he was satisfied it would work, despite the rain. It emitted a high-pitched, warbling sound as he aimed it toward the sky when a jet streaked past, sounding like a ravenous best of prey.

Tonder made no pretense of understanding the political implications of what he was doing. His controller had activated him as he worked at his fairly sedate job as a bartender at Jill's Place not far from Dallas' West End. The bottom floor served as a bar, the upper as a brothel. A plainly dressed man had perched on a bar stool in the nearly empty cafe during the afternoon three days ago as Klaus turned from making change for yet another customer. He had ordered, "A martini. Shaken, not stirred. Just like James Bond did in *Goldfinger*."

It had taken Klaus a stunned moment to recognize his contact phrase and respond with: "I'm sorry, Sir, I believe that was *To Russia with Love*."

"Yes. How silly of me not to recall the right picture." *You have a drop at the second location*. Klaus considered the operative word "silly" which could be substituted for the word "foolish" indicating the first drop, "stupid" the third or "dumb," the fourth.

"Yes, but a normal mistake," *I understand and will check tonight*. He said placing the drink before the customer.

The ordinary man took a short sip from the wide-mouth glass, "Yes, but still, you would think I could get the picture right." *That will be fine*.

Drop two was in the "DG" section of the Dallas Public Library among other historical works. Klaus meandered up and down the aisle to ensure that his privacy was not being invaded and then selected Goddard's *A History of Denmark*. The message, actually a series of numbers on a chemically treated slip of paper, lay flat between the last page and the rear cover. Had the

book been checked out, the same information could be obtained from the same numbered volume in the "DH" section. It was to be presumed by all parties concerned that both books removed from the shelves at the same time was an order to break all contact.

Before leaving the library, he stopped to make a copy of the front page of the previous day's *Dallas Morning News*, to which he did not subscribe on a regular basis, and a copy of the last edition of the *Dallas Times Herald's* front page. Oddly, the latter published its final edition on the same day Gorbachev stated he would no longer keep the Soviet Union intact by force of arms, but Tonder was unaware of this quirk in history, nor of its significance to him.

Klaus hated the stop-and-go driving necessary to negotiate the traffic around Dallas. It seemed to him the state of Texas was willing to give a driver's license to any moron willing to pay the fee. He felt a strong sense of gratitude to an unknown deity when he finally reached his parking space at the low, concrete apartment complex; a stronger sense of well-being when he closed the door to his apartment behind him and threw the locks.

The Dane tugged his windbreaker over his head before placing the two papers side-by-side on the kitchen table. He ignored them for the time it took him to heat water for tea. Despite the warmth and humidity of the region, he had never learned to drink the brewed liquid cold.

The code was simple, infallible, and undetectable unless given the specifics and a knowledge of cryptography. With the aid of a pocket calculator, Klaus quickly added the sum total of yesterday's date written in a numeric, vertical fashion. This sum he subtracted from each of the numbers listed on the flammable paper retrieved from the library. Ignoring articles and adjectives, Klaus then circled the remaining words on page one which occupied the left, uppermost column. From top to bottom, he found the words by counting down the number of

circled words in the *Dallas Morning News*. This left a series of meaningless words in a third column on flash paper. Every third word was discarded and then every seventh word until the column held only thirteen words. Each of these words was summed by assigning a number to each letter's placement in the English alphabet. For instance, the word D-A-Y (4-1-25) would equal thirty. Words adding up to numbers 101 through 126 indicated that the first letter of the word was to be used. A fourth column was quickly formed consisting of random numbers. The agent then found the upper, left-hand story in the *Dallas Times Herald* and by counting down the words, this time not subtracting verbs or articles, he was able to circle seven words in this newspaper. Klaus was an exacting man and did each task twice to ensure his math was correct. It was a crossword puzzle worker's nightmare. It was cumbersome and time consuming. In fact, the only saving grace of the system was that it could not be defeated.

Normally, the pages of the papers were run through an optical scanner and once converted to digital-form easily transcribed into the proper message on a computer. This advantage was considered, however, and deemed an unnecessary encumbrance to the operation.

An hour later, not much more time than it took to write it and drink two cups of tea, Klaus had deciphered the code. It read: "Main Post Office. Package in name Dunn." Klaus, of course, had an American name while residing in the United States. Klaus Tonder, or William Dunn, had moved to Dallas, Texas six months earlier from Wyoming where he had followed a small resurgence of interest in the oil fields which tapered off after several months. Or so that's what his job application had reflected, not that anyone called to Wyoming to verify application information in filling the position of a bartender. His employer was much more concerned that he knew the appropriate amounts of Worcestershire sauce used in a Bloody Mary, or that one salted the rim of the glass before pouring a marguerite into it, than how dependable

he proved as a roughneck. Besides, most of the customers who turned up at Jill's were not there to observe the expertise of the bartender, but to sample other wares stored in the building.

In point of fact, Klaus had spent several months in Wyoming living out of a suitcase in order to be able to give a plausible account of his "years" in that state should he run into anyone who wished to relive the "good ol' days" or compare notes. He could talk, with a fair degree of confidence, about the incessant wind that blew off Casper Mountain in the city of that name, or the disappearance of the Popo Agie River, and even more importantly, pronounce it correctly, into the ground at Sinks Canyon near Lander, or, in a pinch, give the name and description of the local, now defunct, bordello in Lusk and its distinctive color, yellow, for which it was known region-wide. Klaus had the name, the lingo, and the appearance of an American, if not the birthright.

He called in sick at work the next morning and visited the downtown post office of Dallas. There, after showing proper identification which was provided him after he entered the United States legally on his Danish passport, he took possession of a small, general delivery package being held in the name of William Dunn.

On the return trip home, he stopped again at the library and made copies of the front page of the *New York Times* and *The Daily Oklahoman* for the same day he had previously. Behind his locked apartment door, he slit the packing envelope with a small penknife and two keys fell on the table when he upended the contents. The paper was the same type of flammable parchment he had retrieved from the library the day before. The first column of numbers, longer this time, was already in place. The keys he placed in his trousers pocket knowing they would somehow be involved in the assignment reduced to this numeric expression. It took much longer to decipher this message inasmuch as locations, use of the keys, timetables, and alternate plans

had to be disclosed. Other than the location of the vehicles and time of day, the message read: "Evacuate to Denver by 20 September. Meet at location three. Execute indiscriminate plan Delta."

That the plan and the plane were one and the same was the sheerest of coincidences. Plan Delta was to be the downing of an aircraft as it landed at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Klaus, however, had never envisioned the plan becoming reality and never thought that the reality would manifest itself without a politically specific target or a worldwide crisis.

Perhaps, that was why Klaus subconsciously chose his position so close to the outer fence of the airport. And perhaps the lack of a specific target was why he allowed Delta Four-Seven-Five to fly past his optimum killing range, toward the outer, effective parameter of the hand-held missile he had hefted upon his right shoulder. *Just maybe*, he thought, *there may be a chance of survivors.*

Tonder depressed the trigger mechanism and involuntarily flinched as the missile roared from the tube and streaked through the darkened sky, goaded on by the glow of the 737's engines. Never wavering, the projectile found its mark, though Klaus never saw the impact, blinded in the night by the ignition of the missile's engine.

Tonder/Dunn dropped the launcher, where he stood, making no effort to conceal the evidence, per his instructions. He drove the tricycle back toward the parked pickup, slipping around the last curve of the path as he approached the white Chevy.

After leaving the ATV alongside the road, the agent climbed into the 4X4 and drove the thousand meters to the paved service road on the west side of the field. He removed the coveralls, boots, and helmet, replacing them with slip-on shoes and the same windbreaker he had worn the day he was contacted and threw the muddy clothing in the bed of the truck.

After driving three secondary roads, Klaus eventually was able to enter the eastbound traffic on Highway 171. He remained in the right lane until reaching the north entrance to D/FW airport. It was difficult to gain entrance to the airport because of the northbound, steady stream of emergency vehicles racing past him in the night. He parked the truck in the long-term lot leaving the keys in the ignition and the clothing in the bed despite the many signs cautioning owners that the airport was not responsible for lost or stolen items. *With luck*, mused Klaus, *one of the locals will steal this thing and complicate matters further for the cops*. He walked to the nearest bus pick-up point, his head bent against the driving rain. He did not expect, but nor would he have been particularly surprised to see, a dark figure approaching the parked Chevy.

Within a few minutes, a bus stopped for Klaus and carried him to the terminal where he had booked an economy flight for Denver earlier that day. After a short delay, some sort of "landing problem with the planes," cooed the voice on the speaker, "Probably due to the weather," a passenger complained, the plane was finally boarded and the Dallas-to-Denver Continental flight departed one hour twenty-seven minutes after the Delta Four-Seven-Five plane "landed." Not quite two hours later, the same flight circled Denver International Airport as it waited in turn to land in the pattern. Klaus looked down at the city as they circled above. *Mile-high city*, thought Dunn, the alias of Denver, but from this position it looked more like an island of light in a sea of mountains.

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The divergence between the humid jungles of Panama and the pelting snow propelled before the whipping Wyoming wind provoked an involuntary shiver quickly giving way to a general quaking of the human form hidden inside the military parka. He had arrived on the last flight into the Riverton airport, one of twelve passengers aboard the puddle-jumper providing the Denver-to-Riverton service, one hour twenty minutes later than its scheduled arrival, not an

unknown situation for the United subsidiary. Things seemed to happen in Wyoming which would have been unheard of at other regional facilities. The day he had left the Wind River Indian Reservation eighteen months earlier, a baggage handler drove her cart into the still prop of the aircraft necessitating the passengers to board a bus to Denver for disbursement to their final destination, fourteen hours later.

The airport attendants locked the doors to the building promptly fifteen minutes after the last plane of the day departed and all but a single passenger had been met or made other arrangements to travel the five miles into town. Levi thought about calling the local cab company for a ride, but decided against it. First, his Uncle was supposed to be here to meet him, and second the cab company, an on-again-off-again proposition, was off again at the moment. Now that he was outside freezing his ass off with no ride in sight, Bear-Shot-With-Two-Arrows wasn't all that certain that he shouldn't have taken the chance of asking one of the other travelers for a lift. It was not an option without risks attached. Culturally, being refused a ride because of his race and despite his uniform, was a greater embarrassment than literally cooling his heels waiting for his relative. White Wyomingites still tended to judge the red residents of the State by the handful of drunks which hung around outside the local IGA. The closer to the reservation, the greater the racism was an axiom that proved especially true for people who lived in the middle of the Federally created preserve. Yet, Levi understood from his time in the Army and away from the Rez that this was a gate which swung both ways. A pragmatic, impartial observation of the situation forced him to admit that his people appraised the white society surrounding his ancestral home with no less a jaundice yardstick. Like the whites, his people judged the many by the actions of the few, much to the disadvantage of all. After digging the Caucasian, Black, Latin and occasional Asian bodies from the rubble of Howard Air Force Base,

he conceded that the lives of all the planets peoples' was simply too precious a commodity to squander in the name of racism; their potential contribution too important.

He heard the muffler-less car over the howling wind long before he could see the remaining headlight beam which vaguely illuminated the darkness. The fifteen-year auto skidded to a stop on bald tires not three feet from the American soldier. Without acknowledging the driver, he lifted his duffle bag and trudged to the rear of the vehicle where he unlatched the trunk of the Ford by the simple process of unhooking the bungee cord which held the lid down before tossing his bag into the trunk amidst the spare tires, as bald as those on the car, and the fishing gear and the hunting equipment. He re-latched the compartment before tugging hard on the caved-in passenger door to get inside the dubious warmth generated by the dilapidated heater. The wipers, he saw, were inadequate to the task of scraping the ice and snow from the windshield.

"Your Uncle couldn't make it," the sparking smile split the darkness. It had to; the interior light was inoperative.

"Cops?"

"Game and Fish," she replied easing her foot off the brake and onto the accelerator. She hadn't placed the car into park having found out the idle didn't work finding it a sure and certain way to cause the vehicle to die. "Poaching."

"Hmm," Levi grunted. "Do I know you?"

"Mary Many Horses," she answered, unwilling to take her hands from the wheel in order to shake his hand.

Bear tried to examine her more closely by the dim illumination cast by the occasional lamp placed at intersections along Highway 20-26. The girl was svelte, not a common feature

given the diet of most of the residents of the Reservation which seemed to be high in starches and low in protein. The athletic youths seemed to do well enough maintaining their collective weight, but it seemed with graduation from high school came the added pounds. Yeah, Levi had heard the Anglo jokes: “What’s the difference between a squaw and a buffalo? Fifty pounds and a Coors Light jacket.” The demeaning comments hurt even though the greater Native American society placed little credence what white society thought was a properly emaciated physique.

That she had raven hair swept straight back was no surprise, nor was her dark eyes and high cheekbones. What did catch Levi off guard, however, was the fluidity of her motions and exactness - determination - etched in her beautiful face.

“That’s right!” Bear was able to place her within the framework of his extended family. “You’re Aunt Fern’s niece.”

“Not exactly. My mother is your Aunt Fern’s second cousin,” she ventured as glance over to his side of the seat as the vehicle nose over traveling down Griffy Hill at the incredulous speed of forty miles an hour over the ice-packed pavement. Many Horses was able to slow the dilapidated auto at the stop sign by throwing the ancient transmission into low while simultaneously pumping furiously on the brake peddle.

“Nice car,” Levi commented casually.

She smiled at him. “Gets me from here to there.”

“And where is ‘there’?”

“Smith.”

“‘Smith’ what? Smith, Iowa? Smith, Texas? What?”

“Smith . . . the college,” she concentrated on herding the car to the right and onto the main road.

Levi searched his memory before a vague remembrance popped into his head. “The Ivy League school?”

“Close enough,” she answered.

“What . . .”

“Fall break. I was back on Fall vacation when it happened.

Bear nodded his head in understanding. “What the hell are you doing at Smith?”

“Majoring in economics with a minor in political science,” she answered promptly.

“What? That’s not allowed?”

“Not common,” replied Levi honestly. Young women from the Wind River Indian Reservation so seldom went anywhere that he was shocked to hear Mary had *escaped?* from the limited opportunities afforded Native Americans. Men, if they could pass the ASVAB (the military entrance examination), could follow the way of the warrior as a ticket off the Rez. Women could, of course, avail themselves to the same opportunity, but culture mediated against this course. Instead, many found themselves swept up by the triple threat of reservation life: alcohol, pregnancy, and substandard lives. Even the cream of each year’s graduating high school class found the road to success potted with many hazards. That this remote relative had shed the cultural chains which bound her to this dismal land to take her chance in a sea of white society commanded his immediate attention.

They drove the distance in silence, having exhausted the conversation for the time being. It wasn’t until they turned south toward Ethete after passing through the small town of Kinear that they rejoined the discussion.

“For me it is,” she broke his concentration.

“‘For me it is,’ what?” Levi asked having lost the line of the conversation. He was more

absorbed in catching familiar glimpses of the countryside as it rolled by.

“Common,” she replied. “It was intended that I should go to college from the day I was born, I guess. That I got to go to Smith was happenstance; that I got to go to college was foreordained.”

“Whatcha goin do with a undergrad degree in economics and political science?”

“Law. Land law,” she smiled one of her fantastic smiles at him in the dim moonlight. The closer they came to one of the small “Indian” towns on the Reservation (or further they went from the “white” towns), the less frequent the streetlights. Considering it without a shred of self-piety, it was one more example of the difficulties the residents on the Rez lived. Much like the lack of telephones. It wasn’t that the people out here were unwilling to purchase a telephone or incapable of making their monthly payments; rather, for some reason the phone company had proved unwilling to make available enough lines for residential use. To compound the problem, the lack of telephone lines directly hampered the development of businesses which would relieve the unemployment of the Native Americans and make available the computer technology accessible to the rest of the country by a touch of a button. Struggling economically with one’s hand tied behind one’s back was one thing; attempting to compete blinded, deaf and dumb was another altogether. Cell phones and satillites were just now obviating the problem. When a carrier had a “hole” in its coverage, it seemed to be centered over the Rez.

“Oh, Christ,” Levi moaned audibly.

“What?” she inquired turning left at the only stop light for twenty miles.

“Don’t tell me you’re one of those bleeding-heart liberals who are going get the Red man’s land back,” he lamented. One of the many handicaps shouldered by the locals was the liberal faction which permeated any segment of society and which the Arapaho Tribe had no

immunity. Between the hired white consultants who sucked them dry and the indigenous radicals who tried to lay claim to everything their ancient ancestors had once roamed, true progress which the Tribe evaporated more quickly than the dew from the leaves of the poplar before a mid-summer sun.

“Not a chance in Hell,” she pulled into a drive which contained a half dozen other vehicles even more dilapidated than then one she drove. Mary pumped the brakes frantically to get the car to halt before striking the rear of the vehicle parked closest to the road. She pushed the gearshift into park and turned the ignition off. The car dieseled for several seconds before finally grinding to a halt. “The best thing I can do for my people, my mother says, is to provide an example to the others. If I can make, they can do it, too.”

“Pretty smart woman, your mother,” he said reluctant to open the door and face his family.

“More like ruthless,” she smiled tight-lipped, nothing at all like the flashes of teeth she had treated him to before. “Don’t get me wrong. I think she’s right about this, but she’s not the type to allow anyone or anything to stand in her way.”

“Yeah?” he replied girding enough courage to open the car door. Expectedly, the interior light didn’t come on this time either.

“Yeah,” she breathed into the cool evening air which invade the vehicle. “You okay?”

“I guess,” he replied uncertain if that were the truth or not.

“You guys close?”

“Yes and no,” he found himself willing to talk about a subject he had avoid thinking about until he had no choice. “He was older than me. By five years. It was more like hero worship,” he considered.

“From what I understand, you could have chosen a worst hero,” she tried to sound upbeat.

“I think so,” he pushed himself from the car; she followed quickly after him since the driver’s door didn’t operate. He put his cap on his head more from habit than against the cold. Levi’s thick hair provided enough of a barrier against the elements.

She moved quickly to take his arm and pushed the hood from her head. Mary’s hair was shorn short in sympathy for the loss of the family. He was surprised she had cut it so short. The closeness denoted the closeness of the person to the relative, and he didn’t think she had even known Abraham. The tresses would be placed with the deceased to help the spirit along his journey. “I grieve with you, Levi.”

“Thank you,” he replied not knowing what else to say.

“Let’s get in from the cold,” she led the way.

“Good idea,” he called behind her.

* * * * *

"Copenhagen International, X-One-Three-Seven requesting final.

"X-One-Three-Seven, come right to two-seven-five. Winds are ten knots, gusting to fifteen from the northeast. Turn right at your first exit. Your escort will meet you."

"Roger, Copenhagen," than a moment later, "X-One-Three-Seven on final."

The old man (God he hated to be referred to as such, but at the same time acknowledged it to be an apt description) stared out at the black sea below him, its limitlessness broken only by the occasional island village and ships' lamps since his plane had left Brest, Belarus. A gnarled hand scratched the white-bristled face which had only stubbornly yielded its beard the morning before. Large, but certainly no giant in a country populated by people of considerable stature, Aage Kircke sat in the place of honor on the plane. Coffee in his left hand, the inevitable

cigarette held upward between the thumb and index finger of the hand which stroked his face with the otherwise unoccupied three fingers, watching time and space travel past his tiny portal.

Aage had not always been portly. He liked to think of himself as portly or even rotund, preferring not to use terms such as "obese" or "fat" which his doctor used. Indeed, fifty years before he had weighed some forty kilos less and had the strength and endurance of one who worked the soil. Now, though, his belly eclipsed his shoes should he bend his gray head in an attempt to count the digits on his feet. Even from the supine position, they hid like bashful maidens which he could sense, but could not see. *Thank God for slip-on shoes.*

"Mr. Prime Minister, we're ten miles from Copenhagen."

"Thank you, Christoffer. Would you ask the pilot to contact the palace and ask if the queen will see me first thing in the morning?"

"Of course, sir."

If Christoffer Nytorf wondered about the request, his face showed no sign of curiosity. The aide had been with the Prime Minister for three years now and knew if the old man had wished to elaborate, he would have done so. Still, he did not understand why, in a democratic country such as Denmark, the head of government should confer with the ceremonial person of the queen on any matter more important than the royal household budget. But he did not voice this question, and his face remained impassive.

Snoopy bastard, isn't he? He'd love to know what I want to see the queen about, but he's too . . . too . . . what? What's a good description for young Christoffer? Oh well, he's too damned efficient to replace and too politically reliable to annoy, the old man thought as his aide retreated down the aisle toward the aircraft's cabin.

* * * * *

"That one is in a hurry, Captain," the mate noted to the captain of the *Frigga*, a large ferry

which worked the islands of Zealand and Funen transporting vehicles and passengers with a care spawned from generations on the sea.

"Always busy, them," Nils Oodam responded. He did not like the ways of Copenhagen, or those who resided there. He was from the village of Nykoby on the Koge bay and claimed it as his home even though he had spent the last seventy-five years at sea. The master of the *Frigga* coughed and spat the phlegm over the side of the ship. "Head us south, Ditlev. I don't like these waters."

"Aye, Captain."

Oodam had spent his life in these waters. Some say he'd been born on the water, but that was more local lore. He'd been at sea before the Nazis came and many years since. There was, in fact, little he fears on water, above or below it. He didn't fear death, only the infirmities of life. He was, he thought, the essence of Denmark. Not those who infested the government.

* * * * *

Since the Prime Minister's chair was attached to the right side of the aisle, he would have had a splendid view of Scania had the weather been better. Instead, attempts to look out returned only a reflection of his own wrinkled features. Nytorf returned, drawing his attention away from the portal.

"The palace asks if it would be convenient for you to come straight there after we land, Mr. Prime Minister.

. . . too pompous. That's it, the proverbial pompous ass. "Very well, Christoffer.

Inform them that we'll be there within the hour.

The aircraft touched down with the ease its designers had intended and taxied to the waiting Volvo. Nytorf shielded the Prime Minister with an umbrella from the drizzle which was falling during his transfer from the airplane to the car.

The sleek black sedan rolled off the tarmac and headed toward the city. Copenhagen International Airport is located on the Island of Amaga, east of the mainland, and it was necessary for the Volvo to cross the Langebro Bridge on its way to the palace. There was little traffic to impede the limousine this time of the morning, and it rolled unnoticed into the Radhuspladsen. Like many European cities, the Town Hall Square serves as the hub of the asphalt spokes which comprised the wheel of Copenhagen's road system. If time permitted, the Prime Minister often ordered his driver down the Vester-Brogade so he could pass the Tivoli Gardens. Even in the off-season, Aage found the sight of them helped him to re-identify himself as a Dane.

Seemingly, the rear passenger window of the Volvo granted greater depth than that of the airplane and allowed the Prime Minister to see the rain drip from the awnings over the entrances to the small shops and restaurants which lined Vester Voldgade (West Rampart Street). *Good, this rain, thought the old farmer. Winter crops are in. Time enough to repair equipment before the harvest. More time yet to care for the stock,* contemplated Aage.

"Good, this rain, eh Christoffer?"

"Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, but it does seem to perceptively dampen the atmosphere of the city."

Ass.