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The door opened and a young woman entered wearing a black silk dress that exposed only a hint of cleavage and ended just below the knee. She walked confidently: a brunette of mixed heritage, wide eyes, full lips, high cheekbones. Her thick hair swept down well past her shoulders and partially covered the computer interface she wore at her left temple. Such interfaces were not uncommon now, but they were still rare enough to draw attention. Not that this woman needed to draw more attention to herself. She was nearly six feet tall, her lean build accentuating her height. Except for her interface, she reminded Jeremiah of his late wife Catherine—something similar in the way she carried herself, as if unconcerned with how the world saw her. Jeremiah's breath caught in his throat. This woman was taller than Catherine and thinner. Perhaps a little more athletic. Like Julianna but softer. Hell, everyone was softer than Julianna. Jeremiah was softer than Julianna.

The woman kept her eyes on Jeremiah as she crossed the room. He thought he detected a message there but had no idea whether it was hostile or friendly. When she reached the divan, she sat next to the old man, crossing her legs, the silk dress moving up to expose a hint of her lean thigh muscles.

Turning to pat the woman on the hand, Eli gestured toward Jeremiah and said, "Lendra, meet Jeremiah Jones. Jeremiah, this is Lendra Riley. She will be accompanying you on your journey."

Lendra nodded to Jeremiah, then turned to Eli. "Please, my dear," the old man said, "tell Jeremiah what we know of the current situation with respect to Walt Devereaux and Gray Weiss."

Lendra looked through Jeremiah and began speaking:

"As you probably know, Walt Devereaux went underground three years ago, at the time his mansion was breached by a team of assassins from Israel, which was angered by his harsh condemnation of Israeli

policies. He's not been seen in public since, though he makes many appearances over the web. Rumors placed him in Europe, China and South America. Several months ago Weiss began arresting Devereauxnians, questioning them." She glanced at Eli. "He used harsh measures against them in his quest to learn Devereaux's whereabouts."

Eli said, "He plans to charge Devereaux with treason."

"Due to the bio-weapons he created?"

"Actually, no," Eli said. "That's being kept from the public to prevent panic."

Eli turned to Lendra, who said, "Weiss intends to use the newly enacted Harris-Bock Patriotism Amendment, under which treason is defined as conspiring with one or more persons for the purpose of advocating publicly any course of action that materially harms the interests or welfare of the people of the United States."

"That law's a joke," Jeremiah said.

Lendra said, "Weiss' plan, as I understand it, is to apply the law only to Devereaux. And with the current state of the high courts, there is virtually no chance Devereaux's conviction would be overturned."

"But what about the rioting, the civil unrest?" Jeremiah said.

Eli said, "I personally believe Weiss wants the anarchy. He wants an excuse to create scapegoats of the Devereauxnians. And when Devereaux's trial and the mass demonstrations begin, he'll make sure they turn into riots. Then he'll swoop in and clean up the streets, making himself look all the better. Now that the Posse Comitatus Act has been repealed, permitting the Army to operate inside this country, and now that he has soldiers under his authority, he'll be able to use the violence as a springboard to the presidency."

Jeremiah fought down the frustration and anger. He could sense the truth behind Eli's argument. Weiss made no secret of his ambition to be President. Nor had Weiss made a secret of his dislike of Eli, a fact that Jeremiah believed influenced Weiss when he refused Jeremiah the opportunity to examine Carlton Security's vid-files. It was then that Catherine had given up, escaping the darkness of loss with a bottle of pills.

STEVE MCELLISTREM

“So where in Minnesota is Devereaux?”

“The same place Weiss is now. Crescent Township.”

“Crescent Township. Why does that sound familiar?”

“It’s where that famous statue is—‘Emerging Man.’ Southeastern Minnesota.”

“That’s right,” Jeremiah got to his feet and began pacing. “I passed through there once about twenty years ago. Beautiful place back then—rather quiet.”

“I know you dislike flying,” Eli said, nodding in understanding. “So you’ll be driving. When can you leave?”

Taking a deep breath, Jeremiah ran his fingers through his hair. “In a few hours.”

“Fine. Lendra, dear, pack a bag.”

Lendra stepped from the room with a backward glance at Eli.

“Okay,” Jeremiah said, “who is she really?”

“What are you talking about?”

“She’s no field agent.”

Eli shrugged, conceding the point. “I have high hopes for her. She’s very bright.”

“Things can get messy and dangerous out there.”

Eli issued a grim smile. “Since you get migraines when you try to wear an interface, she’ll go along to provide you with information and keep in contact with me. Don’t expect her to be of any assistance if you find yourself in a tight spot.”

“Are you sleeping with her?”

Eli laughed, shook his head. “I keep falling in love with them. Remember Sadie? She was the last one. I’m too old for that kind of nonsense now.”

Jeremiah nodded. “Me too.”

“You?” Eli snorted. “Don’t be ridiculous. You need to rebuild your life.”

Jeremiah pointed toward the door. “I don’t know what you told her, but this trip will be strictly business. I don’t want things any more complicated than they are.”

Eli held up his hands. "I didn't tell her anything. But I think she romanticizes you. How could she not? You're one of the most accomplished ghosts. You're a legend."

Jeremiah shook his head. "She deserves better than me."

"Come now, Jeremiah, you're not so bad."

"Yes, I am," Jeremiah answered. "And you know it. After all, you're the one who made me."