

## Chapter 2

Three days later, Wednesday, and still shaken from the shock of the explosion, Weylin sat down to dinner at the home of Cassandra Bannister, his current female companion.

“What do you think of the Bordeaux?” Cassandra inquired, her lilting speech dripping of an upper crust British accent, as she sat opposite Weylin in her ornate dining room.

Weylin smiled, not wanting to hurt her feelings. “I know you tried, but I think it’s still in its pubescence,” he joked.

“Oh well, I find it quite amusing and, after all, I tend to prefer my pleasures on the somewhat younger side,” she said with a tone of sarcasm.

“Touché,” Weylin said, feigning a wounded expression.

“At the risk of provoking your ire, I would like to address a topic that you have

persistently refused to discuss,” she remarked, as a uniformed servant removed their salad plates and replaced them with decorative portions of rack of lamb.

“I’m all ears.”

“Your prior CEO, your girlfriend, I might add—you never really explained what happened to her?”

“Ugh,” he protested, “why must you persist in asking, it’s old news.”

“It would help me to understand who you are,” she replied, while picking at the lamb before her.

“Alright,” he said, realizing that there were things that he could not tell her, or anyone else for that matter. “Macy, as you know, was one of the first female CEO’s in the industry. She fought hard for her position but given her educational background and keen business sense, she deserved it ...”

“I’m more interested in your relationship ...”

“Don’t interrupt, I’ll get to it!”

“Sorry.”

“OK, so, there was a powerful chemistry between us but the relationship’s failure was probably more my fault than hers.”

“That’s all you’re going to say? What do you mean, your fault?”

He stared at the uneaten lamb, hesitating. “I kept putting up roadblocks,” he admitted, “I truly enjoyed her company and at one point, thought that a permanent relationship might be possible but she was my CEO and I felt strongly about propriety. By the time I’d finally made a decision to tell her how I really felt, she was gone, disappeared.”

“And you never found out what had happened to her?”

“I guess you don’t read the local papers, do you? They found a submerged automobile rented in her name in a New Jersey River. Her body was never found,” he replied, consciously omitting the part about the police finding a dead Saudi Sheik tethered to one of the open doors and his clandestine meeting with Macy before her departure for Israel, as well as her role in the Sheik’s assassination.

Cassandra lowered her head in reverence. “I’m dreadfully sorry, Weylin,” she whispered.

“So, how was your day?” he asked, abruptly changing conversation’s tone.

Cassandra, two years older than Weylin, replaced an errant bleached blond hair without altering her impeccably erect posture, smiled and began to provide an inventory of the antiques she planned to import from Europe for several clients. Although she had inherited a great sum of money from her parents, along with a stately home in London, she chose to reside in her family’s fifth avenue New York condo and, armed with a PhD in seventeenth century art and antiques, strove to succeed in the terribly competitive business of import and procurement. “I’m certain you have heard quite enough about antiquities for one evening,” she remarked, as she straightened her dark blue and white St. John suit. “Any news about the bombing of your building?”

“Well, I guess I can tell you, since it will be in the morning paper and probably on the late night news.”

“Oh goody, privileged information.”

He ignored her sarcasm. “The FBI is calling it an act of domestic terrorism. It seems that a radical antiabortion group has taken responsibility and have attributed their action to our recent release of a new morning-after pill.”

“My God, whatever happened to peaceful demonstrations, dialog and such?”

“The world has changed, my dear. Bomb first and ask questions later seems to be the order of the day,” he replied, shaking his head in disgust.

“Well young man,” she said, still apparently peeved by his description of her wine choice, “I’m a bit weary ... I’ve had a long day and expect another tomorrow.”

“Would you like some company in your chamber my lady?”

“Not tonight,” she snapped, “I’ve already told you that I’m tired.”

Without a word, Weylin raised his palms up as if to say *I give up* and left the condo.

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The drive home to New Jersey, in his new red Ferrari Maranello, was fraught with contempt, both for the way Cassandra dismissed him and the fact that he did not respond accordingly. She didn’t act like this the night we met at the Sotheby’s auction, he thought, as he smoothly shifted through the Ferrari’s gears. She was an insatiable tigress. He parked in the assigned space in his condo’s underground garage, not trusting the valet after he had damaged Weylin’s beloved old Corvette. Walking into the living room, he went straight for the bar and a bottle of cognac. He poured himself a generous glassful and sat down beside the answering machine. Good, just two messages, he thought. He pushed the *play* button and sat back to listen.

“Dr. McCain, this is Franklin Dobbs. The Board would like to arrange a special meeting to discuss the response to our morning-after pill. Please call me first thing tomorrow.”

“Weylin, Charlie Basso here. Gimme a call when you get a chance, I have an investment that might interest you.”

His curiosity was piqued by Basso’s message. Dobbs, he remarked to himself, probably wants to blame me for the bombing since I pushed for the early release of the pill, well, he can wait. Basso, on the other hand, sounded excited. I wonder what he has up his sleeve. He’s been on the money with most of his investment recommendations but he’s never called me at home. Looking at his watch, he realized that it was too late to return the call. He drained the last few drops from his glass and headed for the bedroom.