

Chapter 3

Weylin arrived at the office by seven thirty A.M. the next morning hoping to catch Dobbs, the chairman of the board, at home early enough to avoid interfering with his own plans for the day. “Franklin, Weylin McCain,” he announced, holding the receiver away from his ear in anticipation of Franklin’s loud voice.

“Oh yes, Weylin. I didn’t expect you to call so early. Give me a minute to find my glasses ... OK, the reason I called was to discuss our problem with the abortion pill.”

“Franklin, if we ourselves begin to think of it in those terms, how can we support its use? Use its proper name, Delta 6,” Weylin suggested, with a conciliatory tone.

“Alright, have it your way. I called last night to discuss possible damage control but after rethinking the bombing and all, I think we should remove it from the market.”

“I disagree Franklin. Just because one psychopath decides that use of the morning-after pill is tantamount to feticide is no reason to even consider its removal. Furthermore, it

would require a full board vote.”

“But it *is* abortion, Weylin,” Dobbs said, with bitterness.

“Look Franklin, the designation, *morning-after pill*, means that it is taken the morning after sexual relations. A person taking this medication may not even have had the slightest chance of conceiving prior to its use. Think of it as failed conception rather than abortion,” Weylin suggested, while fully aware that its effective use might well be considered abortion.

“I ...,”

“Furthermore,” Weylin interrupted, “we are not the only ones marketing such a pill. Ours is merely the newest with the least in the way of potential side effects.”

“I still think a board meeting is in order,” Dobbs insisted.

“Fine, if that’s the way you feel then set one up and I’ll be there. Just remember, that if we pull a perfectly good medication under these circumstances, we will be setting a very bad precedence,” Weylin said, with obvious anger as he hung up the phone. “What a jackass,” he whispered to himself, as he left his office and headed for breakfast at the executive dining room.

Condor’s demeanor had changed somewhat under Weylin’s reign. The top floor executive dining room was now full service as opposed to the cafeteria style self service of past years. The change had been met with some resistance from the board of trustees, however, they soon became enamored.

Weylin had his own table near a large picture window that overlooked the horizon in

the direction of New York City. A white telephone sat off to the edge of the black and gold tablecloth with the Condor logo in its center. He took a seat that placed his back to a wall allowing him to either glance out the window or scan the room. A waiter took his order for a western omelette, toast and coffee and left just as Weylin lifted the telephone receiver to return Charlie Basso's call. "Charlie, it's Weylin McCain. Where's your secretary ... the one with that sexy voice?"

"Home sick with the flu, or so she says," Charlie lamented.

"You sounded excited and mysterious when you left that message last night. What's up?"

"For you, maybe the deal of a lifetime."

"I'm listening."

"Remember that conversation we had some months back when you ordered that ridiculously expensive bottle of wine and stuck me with the bill at Le Cirque?"

"How can I forget, you never let me."

"Well, you said that one of your many dreams was to own a vineyard and produce your own label. I've got your chance sitting right here on my desk," Charlie announced, smugly.

"What's the catch," Weylin asked suspiciously.

"No catch, just a great deal that fell into my lap."

"OK, give me the details."

"Not so fast, this isn't the kind of deal we can cover over the phone. Besides, I want a chance to get even for that bottle of wine ... twelve hundred bucks, really Weylin!"

"It was a once in a lifetime bottle and you said 'Order what you like'."

“OK, anyway, this deal may not be available to us for long, so we need to sit down together right away. Can you meet me tonight?”

“I’ll have to get back to you later, there may an emergency board meeting and I can’t miss that.”

Weylin’s discussion with Dobbs had served to put things in their proper perspective and there was no further discussion of an emergency meeting. There were, however, lengthy meetings with the legal department and Condor’s insurance company regarding their responsibility or lack thereof for the bombing repairs. Weylin had barely enough time to call Charlie Basso and arrange to meet him for an early dinner at a local Italian restaurant that he had frequented with Macy in the past. He hadn’t heard from Cassandra and assumed that she was still upset about his wine comment or perhaps something else that she had chosen to keep a secret. Women, he thought to himself, they sure know how to hold a grudge but, then again, I never had these problems with Macy, she always spoke her piece.

The sign read *Villa Torino*, a small Italian eatery that served northern Italian dishes, an oddity for both New York and New Jersey, where southern cuisine was the rule. Charlie was already seated at a large table when Weylin entered. Beside him was a stack of papers and an unopened bottle.

“Good evening, Weylin,” Charlie crooned, a Cheshire smile crossing his lips while cradling the wine bottle as if it were a newborn.

“I assume that’s the most expensive bottle on the list?” Weylin remarked.

“You bet and you’re paying but when you see what I have to offer you won’t mind.”

Weylin cautiously sat down and extended his arms for the bottle. Charlie passed it to him reluctantly. “Hmm, not a bad choice,” he admitted.

“Waiter, you can open this now,” Charlie shouted across the room.

“OK, what was so important that we had to meet tonight?” Weylin asked, his fingers nervously tapping on the wooden table.

“Wait till our glasses are filled,” Charlie said, as the waiter poured the purple liquid. He lifted his glass and shook his head in approval after tasting the first few drops of the expensive wine; the waiter departed.

Weylin swirled the liquid in his glass and gingerly evaluated its bouquet. “You did good, Charlie,” he said “now, start talking.”

“You’ve had me on the lookout for a good investment and in the past I’ve found several that I thought were appealing but you nixed them but you won’t pass on this one,” he smirked.

“Alright already, no more suspense!”

Without another word, Charlie slid a sheath of papers in front of Weylin. On the very top was a colorful map of Italy. “What are you telling me, Italy’s for sale,” Weylin chuckled.

“No, just a small piece of it.”

“OK, you’ve got my attention ... let’s hear the details.”

“There’s a small quality vineyard for sale in Tuscany, just south of Pisa, on the outskirts of a village called Bolgheri.”

“You had better be serious, this is one of my biggest fantasies.”

“There’s more. This vineyard is one of the few growers of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet franc grapes in the country. Apparently, the warm local temperature and proximity to the ocean is optimal for growth. Rather than sell the harvest, they produce their own wine and distribute it locally. I understand that the nearby hospitals are their biggest customers.”

“Hospitals serve wine?”

“I was just as surprised, but it seems that Italian patients expect wine with their meals unless their doctors forbid it for medical reasons.”

“What’s the name of the vineyard?”

“Camalia. Sort of rolls of your tongue.”

“Who’s the seller?”

“The deal was brought to me by a broker in the industry. All he could tell me was that the company that owns it is called Camalia, S.A. and that Camalia S.A. is owned by a holding company and after that it gets complicated.”

“Another words, you don’t really know who owns it?”

“Right, but look at the docs. It’s a clean deal. They’re selling the land, winery and the profitable contracts. There is one catch, however.”

“I knew that was coming.”

“Just listen. Their enologist claims to have developed a disease resistant vine or grape that accounts for the consistency of their crop. They will license the process to the buyer but the patent remains with the seller.”

“This sounds too good to be true. Why are they selling?”

“The vineyard is too small for their purposes and apparently the process alone is the

projected money maker. The broker told me that their disease resistance process is applicable to most vineyards throughout the world and they plan to peddle it vigorously. My knowledge of grapes is limited to the fruit section of the supermarket but you probably know what they're talking about."

"Depending upon which diseases their vines and or grapes are resistant to, they may be looking at huge profits. Wine appreciation, especially fine wines, has increased dramatically over the past few years and is projected to continue."

"If you say so. I'm a beer and scotch man myself."

"Don't take offense but most of the high powered and politically hosted dinners that I have attended featured an abundance of particularly fine wines."

"So, I guess you're hooked, right?"

"Yeah, but you haven't mentioned the price."

"I've got the number right here," Charlie mumbled, while shuffling through a second stack of documents. "Here it is, just outside the range we previously discussed, twenty-five million U.S. for two hundred hectares."

Weylin cleared his throat and frowned. "We discussed fifteen million leveraged dollars. How much of that twenty-five is your commission and what the hell is a hectare?"

"Do I detect a tone of distrust?" Charlie protested, taking a big gulp from his wine glass. "On a purchase of this magnitude, my cut will be five percent. Oh, and two hundred hectares is the equivalent of five hundred acres."

"That's one and a quarter million dollars. For that sum of money you had better check all the comparable sales in the region to make certain that we're talking fair price and then, work on getting them down a bundle even though it sounds pretty cheap for a working

vineyard.”

Weylin paid the check while Charlie reached under the table and retrieved an exquisite natural leather portfolio in which he placed the vineyard’s financials for Weylin’s review. “For this deal,” he announced, “I thought you deserved something better than a brown paper bag.”

McCain Vineyards, I like the sound of that, he pondered, while sliding into the Ferrari’s aromatic interior and starting its sonorous engine. He carefully nosed the vehicle out of its parking space and headed for home.