

Chapter 4

The following morning, concerned that he hadn't heard from Cassandra and while taking a break from his usual office routine, he lifted the receiver and dialed.

"Cassandra, have you got a minute to talk?" he asked, while cradling the telephone receiver between cheek and shoulder and moving aside some documents.

"I'm really busy sweetie, can it wait till later?"

"Not really, something has come up and I have to travel to Italy ... I'd like you to come with me and I need to know if you can."

"Why that sounds marvelously romantic but I'm dreadfully busy right now. I have crates of antiques due in any day now and I must be here to inspect them."

"OK," he said, with audible disappointment, "I guess I'll speak to you later."

He sifted through his appointment calendar looking for a good departure date and decided upon the following Wednesday evening. I'll make it a long weekend; a few days should be all I need to have a good look around, he thought, as he reached for the intercom.

“Martha, check on first class flights to Pisa, Italy for next Wednesday evening.”

“Yes sir,” she replied.

The intercom buzzed ten minutes later. “Dr. McCain?”

“Yes, Martha, what is it?”

“There is no direct flight leaving from either Newark or JFK, the best I could do was business class on Alitalia to Milan, Milan to Pisa.”

“Book it for a Sunday return.”

“Already done sir.”

Smiling, Weylin leaned back in his chair and thought, a Vineyard, damn.

Although Weylin had hoped to spend the entire weekend with Cassandra, the previous week’s chill had persisted. He had tried his best to ignite the warmth that he believed to be within her but to no avail. After dinner Saturday evening, they had a brief but mechanical sexual interlude that left him cold. He departed her condo at midnight thinking, I’m not sure I can do this much longer. I used to feel uncomfortable when women would berate me for an apparent lack of warmth following sex. I’m beginning to understand that cold empty feeling that they talked about.

Wednesday morning arrived in the blink of an eye. There were calls to be made and papers to be signed before he could leave for Pisa. He had made the obligatory phone call to Franklin Dobbs to inform him of his pending departure. Dobbs had made him recite his entire plan of action for things to be done in his absence and at one point he said, “Franklin,

you seem to forget that I am the CEO and President, not a high school student.

Furthermore, I'll only be away from Condor for two days and my satellite phone will be at my side."

"What if we have another incident while you are away?" Dobbs asked.

Weylin stopped himself from saying what he really felt. "I have spoken to all the VP's and collectively they can handle it," he said.

At three P.M., as he was tying up loose ends, Martha buzzed through on the intercom. "Dr. McCain?"

"I'm not here unless it's an emergency. I've got to finish these calls and then leave for the airport. Does the driver have my bags?"

"Yes, but I think you might want to walk out into the corridor and take a look down at the front parking lot."

"What now," he griped, as he rose from the chair and sprinted towards the corridor window.

A large crowd of sign carrying people were gathering in a tight mass, effectively blocking the partially repaired front entrance. The signs read, *Baby killers* and variations thereof. Just what I needed, Weylin said to himself. He ran back to his office and called Bob Ryan. "Ryan, this is Dr. McCain. Can't you get your people to disburse that crowd?"

"They're just chanting and waving posters. I've already called the police. They're on the way but you know the news crews will be just behind the squad cars. Are you sure you want that scene on the six o'clock news?"

"Tell them that they are impeding the construction repair crews."

"Can't, they've already left for the day."

Shit, Weylin said to himself, the board will eat me alive for leaving with this in progress. “Alright, do what you can to convince them to leave without going Rambo.”

“I’ll try,” Ryan replied.

For the second time in as many weeks, red and blue flashing lights illuminated Condor’s entrance. The crowd separated when the patrol cars and S.W.A.T. vehicles approached the front of the building. By the time the armored police officers had fully deployed in a protective and defensive line, the crowd had already begun to disburse and gradually disappeared. Relieved, Weylin sat in his chair waiting for the inevitable call from Dobbs but none came.

Weylin sat tensely in the back seat of the Condor limo on the way to the airport. He anxiously pressed the rear seat’s radio buttons searching for commentaries about the demonstration. Nothing so far, he thought, but I’ll miss the six o’clock news on the plane. Well, if the board wants my hide, they’ll have to wait for my return.