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THE
BOURNE
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A NEW JASON BOURNE NOVEL BY
ERIC VAN LUSTBADER

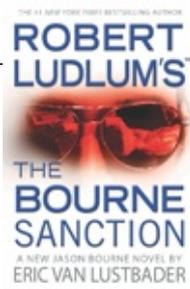
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GRAND CENTRAL
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*For Dan and Linda Jariabka,
with thanks and love*

My thanks to:

The intrepid reporters at *The Exile*.

Bourne's adventures in Moscow and Arkadin's history in Nizhny Tagil would not have existed without their help.

Gregg Winter for turning me on to the logistics of transporting LNG.

Henry Morrison for clutch ideating at all hours.

A note to my readers:

I try to be as factual as possible in my novels, but this is, after all, a work of fiction. In order to make the story as exciting as possible, I've inevitably taken artistic license here and there, with places, objects, and, possibly, even time.

I trust readers will overlook these small anomalies and enjoy the ride.

Prologue

High Security Prison Colony 13, Nizhny Tagil, Russia/Campione d'Italia, Switzerland

WHILE THE FOUR inmates waited for Borya Maks to appear, they lounged against filthy stone walls whose cold no longer affected them. Out in the prison yard where they smoked expensive black market cigarettes made from harsh black Turkish tobacco, they talked among themselves as if they had nothing better to do than to suck the acrid smoke into their lungs, expel it in puffs that seemed to harden in the freezing air. Above their heads was a cloudless sky whose glittering starlight turned it into a depthless enamel shell. Ursa Major, Lynx, Canes Venatici, Perseus—these same constellations burned the heavens above Moscow, six hundred miles to the southwest, but how different life was here from the gaudy, overheated clubs of Trehgorny val and Sadovnicheskaya street.

By day the inmates of Colony 13 manufactured parts for the T-90, Russia's formidable battle tank. But at night what do men without conscience or emotion talk to one another about? Strangely, family. There was a stability to coming home to a wife and children that defined their previous lives like the massive walls of High Security Colony 13 defined their present ones. What they did to earn money—lie, cheat, steal, extort, blackmail, torture, and kill—was all they knew. That they did these things was a given, otherwise they would have been dead. There was a life outside civilization as most people knew it. Returning to the warmth of a familiar woman, to the homey smells of sweet beets, boiled cabbage, stewed meat, the fire of peppery vodka, was a comfort that made them all nostalgic. The nostalgia bound them as securely as the tattoos of their shadowy profession.

A soft whistle cut through the frosty night air, evaporated their reminiscences like turpentine on oil paint. The night lost all its imagined color, returned to blue and black as Borya Maks appeared. Maks was a big man—a man who lifted weights for an hour, followed by ninety minutes of skipping rope every single day he'd been inside. As a contract killer for Kazanskaya, a branch of the Russian *grupperovka* trafficking in drugs and black-market cars, he held a certain status among the fifteen hundred inmates of Colony 13. The guards feared and despised him. His reputation preceded him like a shadow at sunset. He was not unlike the eye of a hurricane, around which swirled the howling wind of violence and death. The latest being the fifth man in the group that was now four. Kazanskaya or not, Kazanskaya, Maks had to be punished, otherwise all of them knew their days in Colony 13 were numbered.

They smiled at Maks. One of them offered him a cigarette, another lit it for him as he bent forward cupping a hand to keep the tiny flame alive in the wind. The other two men each grabbed one of Maks's steel-banded arms, while the man who had offered the cigarette drove a makeshift knife he'd painstakingly honed in the prison factory toward Maks's solar plexus. At the last instant Maks slapped it away with a superbly attuned flick of his hand. Immediately the man with the burned match delivered a vicious uppercut to the point of Maks's chin.

Maks staggered back into the chests of the two men holding his arms. But at the same time, he stomped the heel of his left boot onto the instep of one of the men holding him. Shaking his left arm free, he swung his body in a sharp arc, driving his cocked elbow into the rib cage of the man holding his right arm. Free for the moment, he put his back against the wall deep in shadow. The four closed ranks, moving in for the kill. The one with the knife stepped to the fore, another slipped a curved scrapper of metal over his knuckles.

The fight began in earnest with grunts of pain and effort, showers of sweat, smears of blood. Maks was powerful and canny; his reputation was well deserved, but though he delivered as good as he got, he was facing four determined enemies. When Maks drove one to his knees another would take his place, so that there were always two of them beating at him while the others regrouped and repaired themselves as best they could. The four had had no illusions about the task ahead of them. They knew they'd never overcome Maks at the first or even the second attack. Their plan was to wear him down in shifts; while they took breaks, they allowed him none.

And it appeared to be working. Bloody and bruised, they continued their relentless assault, until Maks drove the edge of his hand into the throat of one of the four—the one with the homemade knife—crushing his cricoid cartilage. As the man staggered back into the arms of his compatriots, gasping like a hooked fish, Maks grabbed the knife out of his hand. Then his eyes rolled up and he became a deadweight. Blinded by rage and bloodlust, the remaining three charged Maks.

Their rush almost succeeded in getting inside Maks's defenses, but he dealt with them calmly and efficiently. Muscles popped along his arms as he turned, presenting his left side to them, giving them a smaller target, even as he used the knife in short, flicking thrusts and stabs to inflict a picket line of wounds that, though not deep, produced a welter of blood. This was deliberate, Maks's counter to the tactic of trying to wear him out. Fatigue was one thing, loss of blood quite another.

One of his assailants lunged forward, slipped on his own blood, and Maks hammered him down. This created an opening, and the one with the makeshift knuckle-duster moved in, slamming the metal into the side of Maks's neck. Maks at once lost breath and strength. The remaining men beat an unholy tattoo on him and were on the verge of plowing him under when a guard emerged out of the murk to drive them methodically back with a solid wood truncheon whose force was far more devastating than any piece of scrap metal could be.

A shoulder separated, then cracked under the expertly wielded truncheon; another man had the side of his skull staved in. The third, turning to flee, was struck flush on his third sacral vertebra, which shattered on impact, breaking his back.

"What are you doing?" Maks said to the guard between attempts to regain control of his breathing. "I assumed these bastards bribed all the guards."

"They did." The guard grabbed Maks's elbow. "This way," he indicated with the glistening end of the truncheon.

Maks's eyes narrowed. "That's not the way back to the cells."

"Do you want to get out of here or not?" the guard said.

Maks nodded his conditional assent, and the two men loped across the deserted yard. The guard kept his body pressed against the wall, and Maks followed suit. They moved at a deliberate pace, he saw, that kept them out of the beams of the roving spotlights. He would have wondered who this guard was, but there was no time. Besides, in the back of his mind he'd been expecting something like this. He knew his boss, the head of the Kazanskaya, wasn't going to let him rot in Colony 13 for the rest of his life, if only because he was too valuable an asset to let rot. Who could possibly replace the great Borya Maks? Only one, perhaps: Leonid Arkadin. But Arkadin—whoever he was; no one Maks knew had ever met him or seen his face—wouldn't work for Kazanskaya, or any of the families; he was a freelancer, the last of a dying breed. If he existed at all, which, frankly, Maks doubted. He'd grown up with stories of bogeymen with all manner of unbelievable powers—for some perverse reason Russians delighted in trying to scare their children. But the fact was, Maks never believed in bogeymen, was never scared. He had no reason to be scared of the specter of Leonid Arkadin, either.

By this time the guard had pulled open a door midway along the wall. They ducked in just as a

searchlight beam crawled across the stones against which, moments before, they had been pressed.

After several turnings, he found himself in the corridor that led to the communal men's shower, beyond which, he knew, was one of the two entries to the wing of the prison. How this guard meant to get them through the checkpoints was anyone's guess, but Maks wasted no energy trying to second-guess him. Up to now he'd known just what to do and how to do it. Why should this be any different? The man was clearly a professional. He'd researched the prison thoroughly, he obviously had major juice behind him: first, to have gotten in here, second, to have the apparent run of the place. That was Maks's boss all over.

As they moved down the corridor toward the opening to the showers, Maks said, "Who are you?"

"My name is unimportant," the guard said. "Who sent me is not."

Maks absorbed everything in the unnatural stillness of the prison night. The guard's Russian was flawless, but to Maks's practiced eye he didn't look Russian, or Georgian, Chechen, Ukrainian, or Azerbaijani, for that matter. He was small by Maks's standards, but then almost everyone was small by his standards. His body was toned, though, its responses finely honed. He possessed the preternatural stillness of properly harnessed energy. He made no move unless he needed to and then used only the amount of energy required, no more. Maks himself was like this, so it was easy for him to spot the subtle signs others would miss. The guard's eyes were pale, his expression grim, almost detached, like a surgeon in the OR. His light hair thick on top, spiked in a style that would have been unfamiliar to Maks had he not been an aficionado of international magazines and foreign films. In fact, if Maks didn't know better he'd say the guard was American. But that was impossible. Maks's boss didn't employ Americans; he co-opted them.

"So Maslov sent you," Maks said. Dimitri Maslov was the head of Kazanskaya. "It's about fucking time, let me tell you. Fifteen months in this place feels like fifteen years."

At that moment, as they came abreast of the showers, the guard, without turning fully around, swung the truncheon into the side of Maks's head. Maks, taken completely by surprise, staggered onto the bare concrete floor of the shower room, which reeked of mildew, disinfectant, and men lacking proper hygiene.

The guard came after him as nonchalantly as if he were out for the evening with a girl on his arm. He swung the truncheon almost lazily. He struck Maks on his left biceps, just hard enough to herd him backward toward the line of showerheads protruding from the moist rear wall. But Maks refused to be herded, by this guard or by anyone else. As the truncheon whistled down from the apex of its arc, he stepped forward, broke the trajectory of the blow with his tensed forearm. Now, inside the guard's line of defense, he could go to work in the way that suited the situation best.

The homemade knife was in his left hand. He thrust it point-first. When the guard moved to block it, he slashed upward, ripping the edge of the blade against flesh. He'd aimed for the underside of the guard's wrist, the nexus of veins that, if severed, would render the hand useless. The guard's reflexes were as fast as his own, though, and instead the blade scored the arm of the leather jacket. But it did not penetrate the leather as it should have. Maks only had time to register that the jacket must be lined with Kevlar or some other impenetrable material before the callused edge of the guard's hand struck the knife from his grip.

Another blow sent him reeling back. He tripped over one of the drain holes, his heel sinking into it and the guard smashed the sole of his boot into the side of Maks's knee. There was an awful sound, the grinding of bone against bone as Maks's right leg collapsed.

As the guard closed in he said, "It wasn't Dimitri Maslov who sent me. It was Pyotr Zilber."

Maks struggled to extricate his heel, which he could no longer feel, from the drain hole. "I don't

know who you're talking about."

The guard grabbed his shirtfront. "You killed his brother, Aleksei. One shot to the back of the head. They found him facedown in the Moskva River."

"It was business," Maks said. "Just business."

"Yes, well, this is personal," the guard said as he drove his knee into Maks's crotch.

Maks doubled over. When the guard bent to haul him upright, he slammed the top of his head against the point of the guard's chin. Blood spurted from between the guard's lips as his teeth cut into his tongue.

Maks used this advantage to drive his fist into the guard's side just over his kidney. The guard's eyes opened wide—the only indication that he felt pain—and he kicked Maks's ruined knee. Maks went down and stayed down. Agony flowed in a river through him. As he struggled to compartmentalize it, the guard kicked again. He felt his ribs give way, his cheek kissed the stinking concrete floor. He lay dazed, unable to rise.

The guard squatted down beside him. Seeing the grimace the guard made gave Maks a measure of satisfaction, but that was all he was destined to receive in the way of solace.

"I have money," Maks gasped weakly. "It's buried in a safe place where no one will find it. If you get me out of here, I'll lead you to it. You can have half. That's over half a million American dollars."

This only made the guard angry. He struck Maks hard on his ear, making sparks fly behind his eyes. His head rang with a pain that in anyone else would have been unendurable. "Do you think I'm like you? That I have no loyalty?" He spat into Maks's face.

"Poor Maks, you made a grave error killing this boy. People like Pyotr Zilber never forget. And they have the means to move heaven and earth to get what they want."

"All right," Maks whispered, "you can have it all. More than a million dollars."

"Pyotr Zilber wants you dead, Maks. I came here to tell you that. And to kill you." His expression changed subtly. "But first."

He extended Maks's left arm, trod on the wrist, pinning it securely against the rough concrete. He then produced a pair of thick-bladed pruning shears.

This procedure roused Maks from his pain-induced lethargy. "What are you doing?"

The guard grasped Maks's thumb, on the back of which was a tattoo of a skull, mirroring the large one on his chest. It was a symbol of Maks's exalted status in his murderous profession.

"Besides wanting you to know the identity of the man who ordered your death, Pyotr Zilber requires proof of your demise, Maks."

The guard settled the shears at the base of Maks's thumb, then he squeezed the handles together. Maks made a gurgling sound, not unlike that of a baby.

As a butcher would, the guard wrapped the thumb in a square of waxed paper, snapped a rubber band around it, then sealed it in a plastic bag.

"Who are you?" Maks managed to get out.

"My name is Arkadin," the guard said. He opened his shirt, revealing a pair of candlestick tattoos on his chest. "Or, in your case, Death."

With a movement full of grace Arkadin broke Maks's neck.

Crisp Alpine sunlight lit up Campione d'Italia, a tiny exquisite Italian enclave of two-thirds of a square mile nestled within the clockwork-perfect setting of Switzerland. Owing to its prime position on the eastern edge of Lake Lugano, it was both stupendously picturesque and an excellent place to b

domiciled. Like Monaco, it was a tax haven for wealthy individuals who owned magnificent villas and gambled away idle hours at the Casino di Campione. Money and valuables could be stored in Swiss banks, with their justly famous reputation for discreet service, completely shielded from international law enforcement's prying eyes.

It was this little-known, idyllic setting that Pyotr Zilber chose for the first face-to-face meeting with Leonid Arkadin. He had contacted Arkadin through an intermediary, for various security reasons, opting not to contact the contract killer directly. From an early age Pyotr had learned that there was no such thing as being too security-minded. There was a heavy burden of responsibility being born into a family with secrets.

From his lofty perch on the overlook just off Via Totone, Pyotr had a breathtaking panorama of the red-brown tile roofs of the chalets and apartment houses, the palm-lined squares of the town, the cerulean waters of the lake, the mountains, their shoulders mantled with capes of mist. The distant drone of powerboats, leaving frothy scimitars of white wake, came to him intermittently while he sat in his gray BMW. In truth, part of his mind was already on his imminent trip. Having gotten the stolen document, he had sent it on the long journey along his network to its ultimate end.

Being here excited him in the most extraordinary way. His anticipation of what was to come, of the accolades he would receive, especially from his father, sent an electric charge through him. He was on the brink of an unimaginable victory. Arkadin had called him from the Moscow airport to tell him that the operation had been successful, that he had in his possession the physical proof Pyotr required.

He had taken a risk going after Maks, but the man had murdered Pyotr's brother. Was he supposed to turn his cheek and forget the affront? He knew better than anyone his father's stern dictum to keep to the shadows, to remain hidden, but he thought this one act of vengeance was worth the risk. Besides, he'd handled the matter via intermediaries, the way he knew his father would have.

Hearing the deep growl of a car engine, he turned, saw a dark blue Mercedes come up the rise toward the overlook.

The only real risk he was taking was going to happen right now, and that, he knew, couldn't be helped. If Leonid Arkadin was able to infiltrate Colony 13 in Nizhny Tagil and kill Borya Maks, he was the man for the next job Pyotr had in mind. One his father should have taken care of years ago. Now he had a chance to finish what his father was too timid to attempt. To the bold belonged the spoils. The document he'd procured was proof positive that the time for caution was at an end.

The Mercedes drew to a stop beside his BMW, a man with light hair and even lighter eyes emerging with the fluidity of a tiger. He was not a particularly large man, he wasn't overmuscled like many of the Russian *grupperovka* personnel; nevertheless something inside him radiated a quiet menace Pyotr found impressive. From a very young age Pyotr had been exposed to dangerous men. At the age of eleven he had killed a man who had threatened his mother. He hadn't hesitated in the slightest. If he had, his mother would have died that afternoon in the Azerbaijani bazaar at the hands of the knife-wielding assassin. That assassin, as well as others over the years, had been sent by Semion Icoupov, Pyotr's father's implacable nemesis, the man who at this moment was safely ensconced in his villa on Viale Marco Campione, not a mile from where Pyotr and Leonid Arkadin now stood.

The two men did not greet each other, did not address each other by name. Arkadin took out the stainless-steel briefcase Pyotr had sent him. Pyotr reached for its twin inside the BMW. The exchange was made on the hood of the Mercedes. The men put the cases down side by side, unlocked them. Arkadin's contained Maks's severed thumb, wrapped and bagged. Pyotr's contained thirty thousand dollars in diamonds, the only currency Arkadin accepted as payment.

Arkadin waited patiently. As Pyotr unwrapped the thumb he stared out at the lake, perhaps wishing

he were on one of the powerboats slicing a path away from land. Maks's thumb had withered slightly on the journey from Russia. A certain odor emanated from it, which was not unfamiliar to Pyotr Zilber. He'd buried his share of family and compatriots. He turned so the sunlight struck the tattoo, produced a small magnifying glass through which he peered at the marking.

At length, he put the glass away. "Did he prove difficult?"

Arkadin turned back to face him. For a moment he stared implacably into Pyotr's eyes. "Not especially."

Pyotr nodded. He threw the thumb over the side of the overlook, tossed the empty case after it. Arkadin, taking this to be the conclusion of their deal, reached for the packet filled with diamonds. Opening it, he took out a jeweler's loupe, plucked a diamond at random, examined it with an expert's aplomb.

When he nodded, satisfied as to the clarity and color, Pyotr said, "How would you like to make three times what I paid you for this assignment?"

"I'm a very busy man," Arkadin said, revealing nothing.

Pyotr inclined his head deferentially. "I have no doubt."

"I only take assignments that interest me."

"Would Semion Icoupov interest you?"

Arkadin stood very still. Two sports cars passed, heading up the road as if it were Le Mans. In the echo of their throaty exhausts, Arkadin said, "How convenient that we happen to be in the tiny principality where Semion Icoupov lives."

"You see?" Pyotr grinned. "I know precisely how busy you are."

"Two hundred thousand," Arkadin said. "The usual terms."

Pyotr, who had anticipated Arkadin's fee, nodded his agreement. "Conditional on immediate delivery."

"Agreed."

Pyotr popped the trunk of the BMW. Inside were two more cases. From one, he transferred a hundred thousand in diamonds to the case on the Mercedes's hood. From the other, he handed Arkadin a packet of documents, including a satellite map, indicating the precise location of Icoupov's villa, a list of his bodyguards, and a set of architectural blueprints of the villa, including the electrical circuits, the separate power supply, and details of the security devices in place.

"Icoupov is in residence now," Pyotr said. "How you make your way inside is up to you."

"I'll be in touch." After paging through the documents, asking a question here and there, Arkadin placed them in the case on top of the diamonds, snapped the lid shut, slung the case into the passenger's seat of the Mercedes as easily as if it were filled with balloons.

"Tomorrow, same time, right here," Pyotr said as Arkadin slid behind the wheel.

The Mercedes started up, its engine purring. Then Arkadin put it in gear. As he slid out onto the road, Pyotr turned to walk to the front of the BMW. He heard the squeal of brakes, the slewing of a car, and turned to see the Mercedes heading directly toward him. He was paralyzed for a moment. *What the hell is he doing?* he asked himself. Belatedly, he began to run. But the Mercedes was already on top of him, its front grille slammed into him, pinned him to the side of the BMW.

Through a haze of agony he saw Arkadin get out of his car, walk toward him. Then something gave out inside him and he passed into oblivion.

He regained consciousness in a paneled study, gleaming with polished brass fixtures, lush with jewe

toned Isfahan carpets. A walnut desk and chair were within his field of vision, as was an enormous window that looked out on the sparkling water of Lake Lugano and the veiled mountains behind it. The sun was low in the west, sending long shadows the color of a fresh bruise over the water, up the whitewashed walls of Campione d'Italia.

He was bound to a plain wooden chair that seemed to be as out of place in the surroundings of wealth and power as he was. He tried to take a deep breath, winced with shocking pain. Looking down he saw bandages wrapped tightly around his chest, realized that he must have at least one cracked rib.

"At last you have returned from the land of the dead. For a while there you had me worried."

It was painful for Pyotr to turn his head. Every muscle in his body felt as if it were on fire. But his curiosity would not be denied, so he bit his lip, kept turning his head until a man came into view. He was rather small, stoop-shouldered. Glasses with round lenses were fitted over large, watery eyes. His bronzed scalp, lined and furrowed as pastureland, was without a single hair, but as if to make up for his bald pate his eyebrows were astonishingly thick, arching up over the skin above his eye sockets. He looked like one of those wily Turkish traders from the Levant.

"Semion Icoupov," Pyotr said. He coughed. His mouth felt stiff, as if it were stuffed with cotton. He could taste the salt-copper of his own blood, and swallowed heavily.

Icoupov could have moved so that Pyotr didn't have to twist his neck so far in order to keep him in view, but he didn't. Instead he dropped his gaze to the sheet of heavy paper he'd unrolled. "You know these architectural plans of my villa are so complete I'm learning things about the building I never knew before. For instance, there is a sub-basement below the cellar." He ran his stubby forefinger along the surface of the plan. "I suppose it would take some doing to break into it now, but who knows, it might prove worthwhile."

His head snapped up and he fixed Pyotr with his gaze. "For instance, it would make a perfect place for your incarceration. I'd be assured that not even my closest neighbor would hear you scream." He smiled, a cue for a terrible focusing of his energies. "And you *will* scream, Pyotr, this I promise you." His head swiveled, the beacons of his eyes searching out someone else. "Won't he, Leonid?"

Now Arkadin came into Pyotr's field of view. At once he grabbed Pyotr's head with one hand, dug into the hinge of his jaw with the other. Pyotr had no choice but to open his mouth. Arkadin checked his teeth one by one. Pyotr knew that he was looking for a false tooth filled with liquid cyanide. A death pill.

"All his," Arkadin said as he let go of Pyotr.

"I'm curious," Icoupov said. "How in the world did you procure these plans, Pyotr?"

Pyotr, waiting for the proverbial shoe to drop, said nothing. But all at once he began to shiver so violently his teeth chattered.

Icoupov signaled to Arkadin, who swaddled Pyotr's upper body in a thick blanket. Icoupov brought a carved cherry chair to a position facing Pyotr, sat down on it.

He continued just as if he hadn't expected an answer. "I must admit that shows a fair amount of initiative on your part. So the clever boy has grown into a clever young man." Icoupov shrugged. "I'm hardly surprised. But listen to me now, I know who you really are—did you think you could fool me by continually changing your name? The truth of the matter is you've prodded open a wasp's nest, so *you* shouldn't be surprised to get stung. And stung and stung and stung."

He inclined his upper body toward Pyotr. "However much your father and I despise each other, we grew up together; once we were as close as brothers. So. Out of respect for him, I won't lie to you, Pyotr. This bold foray of yours won't end well. In fact, it was doomed from the start. And d'you want to know why? You needn't answer; of course you do. Your earthly needs betrayed you, Pyotr. That

delicious girl you've been bedding for the past six months belongs to me. I know you're thinking that's not possible. I know you vetted her thoroughly; that's your MO. I anticipated all your inquiries. I made certain you received the answers you needed to hear."

Pyotr, staring into Icoupov's face, found his teeth chattering again, no matter how tightly he clamped his jaw.

"Tea, please, Philippe," Icoupov said to an unseen person. Moments later, a slender young man set an English silver tea service onto a low table at Icoupov's right hand. Like a favorite uncle, Icoupov went about pouring and sugaring the tea. He put the porcelain cup to Pyotr's bluish lips, said, "Please drink, Pyotr. It's for your own good."

Pyotr stared implacably at him until Icoupov said, "Ah, yes, I see." He sipped the tea from the cup himself to assure Pyotr it was only tea, then offered it again. The rim chattered against Pyotr's teeth, but eventually Pyotr drank, slowly at first, then more avidly. When the tea was drained, Icoupov set the cup back on its matching saucer. By this time Pyotr's shivering had subsided.

"Feeling better?"

"I'll feel better," Pyotr said, "when I get out of here."

"Ah, well, I'm afraid that won't be for some time," Icoupov said. "If ever. Unless you tell me what I want to know."

He hitched his chair closer; the benign uncle's expression was now nowhere to be found. "You stole something that belongs to me," he said. "I want it back."

"It never belonged to you; you stole it first."

Pyotr replied with such venom that Icoupov said, "You hate me as much as you love your father; this is your basic problem, Pyotr. You never learned that hate and love are essentially the same in the person who loves is as easily manipulated as the person who hates."

Pyotr screwed up his mouth, as if Icoupov's words left a bitter taste in his mouth. "Anyway, it's too late. The document is already on its way."

Instantly, there was a change in Icoupov's demeanor. His face became as closed as a fist. A certain tension lent his entire small body the aspect of a weapon about to be launched. "Where did you send it?"

Pyotr shrugged, but said nothing more.

Icoupov's face turned dark with momentary rage. "Do you think I know nothing about the information and matériel pipeline you have been refining for the past three years? It's how you send information you stole from me back to your father, wherever he is."

For the first time since he'd regained consciousness, Pyotr smiled. "If you knew anything important about the pipeline, you'd have rolled it up by now."

At this Icoupov regained the icy control over his emotions.

"I told you talking to him would be useless," Arkadin said from his position directly behind Pyotr's chair.

"Nevertheless," Icoupov said, "there are certain protocols that must be acknowledged. I'm not an animal."

Pyotr snorted.

Icoupov eyed his prisoner. Sitting back, he fastidiously pulled up his trouser leg, crossed one leg over the other, laced his stubby fingers on his lower belly.

"I give you one last chance to continue this conversation."

It was not until the silence was drawn out into an almost intolerable length that Icoupov raised his gaze to Arkadin.

“Pyotr, why are you doing this to me?” he said with a resigned tone. And then to Arkadin, “Begin.”

Though it cost him in pain and breath, Pyotr twisted as far as he was able, but he couldn't see what Arkadin was doing. He heard the sound of implements on a metal cart being rolled across the carpet.

Pyotr turned back. “You don't frighten me.”

“I don't mean to frighten you, Pyotr,” Icoupov said. “I mean to hurt you, very, very badly.”

With a painful convulsion, Pyotr's world contracted to the pinpoint of a star in the night sky. He was locked within the confines of his mind, but despite all his training, all his courage, he could not compartmentalize the pain. There was a hood over his head, drawn tight around his neck. This confinement magnified the pain a hundredfold because, despite his fearlessness, Pyotr was subject to claustrophobia. For someone who never went into caves, small spaces, or even underwater, the hood was the worst of all possible worlds. His senses could tell him that, in fact, he wasn't confined at all, but his mind wouldn't accept that input—it was in the full flight of panic. The pain Arkadin was inflicting on him was one thing, its magnification was quite another. Pyotr's mind was spinning out of control. He felt a wildness enter him—the wolf caught in a trap that begins to frantically gnaw its leg off. But the mind was not a limb; he couldn't gnaw it off.

Dimly, he heard someone asking him a question to which he knew the answer. He didn't want to give the answer, but he knew he would because the voice told him the hood would come off if he answered. His crazed mind only knew it needed the hood off; it could no longer distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, lies from truth. It reacted to only one imperative: the need to survive. He tried to move his fingers, but in bending over him his interrogator must have been pressing down on them with the heels of his hands.

Pyotr couldn't hang on any longer. He answered the question.

The hood didn't come off. He howled in indignation and terror. *Of course it didn't come off*, he thought in a tiny instant of lucidity. If it did, he'd have no incentive to answer the next question and the next and the next.

And he would answer them—all of them. He knew this with a bone-chilling certainty. Even though part of him suspected that the hood might never come off, his trapped mind would take the chance. It had no other choice.

But now that he could move his fingers, there was another choice. Just before the whirlwind of panicked madness overtook him again, Pyotr made that choice. There was one way out and, saying a silent prayer to Allah, he took it.

Icoupov and Arkadin stood over Pyotr's body. Pyotr's head lay on one side; his lips were very blue, and a faint but distinct foam emanated from his half-open mouth. Icoupov bent down, sniffed the scene of bitter almonds.

“I didn't want him dead, Leonid, I was very clear on the point.” Icoupov was vexed. “How did he get hold of cyanide?”

“They used a variation I've never encountered.” Arkadin did not look happy himself. “He was fitted with a false fingernail.”

“He would have talked.”

“Of course he would have talked,” Arkadin said. “He'd already begun.”

“So he took it upon himself to shut his own mouth, forever.” Icoupov shook his head in distaste.

“This will have significant fallout. He’s got dangerous friends.”

“I’ll find them,” Arkadin said. “I’ll kill them.”

Icoupov shook his head. “Even you can’t kill them all in time.”

“I can contact Mischa.”

“And risk losing everything? No. I understand your connection with him—closest friend, mentor. I understand the urge to talk to him, to see him. But you can’t, not until this is finished and Mischa comes home. That’s final.”

“I understand.”

Icoupov walked over the window, stood with his hand behind his back contemplating the fall of darkness. Lights sparkled along the edges of the lake, up the hillside of Campione d’Italia. There ensued a long silence while he contemplated the face of the altered landscape. “We’ll have to move up the timetable, that’s all there is to it. And you’ll take Sevastopol as a starting point. Use the one name you got out of Pyotr before he committed suicide.”

He turned around to face Arkadin. “Everything now rides on you, Leonid. This attack has been in the planning stages for three years. It has been designed to cripple the American economy. Now there are barely two weeks left before it becomes a reality.” He walked noiselessly across the carpet. “Philippe will provide you with money, documents, weaponry that will escape electronic detection, anything you need. Find this man in Sevastopol. Retrieve the document, and when you do, follow the pipeline back and shut it down so that it will never again be used to threaten our plans.”

WHO IS DAVID Webb?”

Moira Trevor, standing in front of his desk at Georgetown University, asked the question so seriously that Jason Bourne felt obliged to answer.

“Strange,” he said, “no one’s ever asked me that before. David Webb is a linguistics expert, a man with two children who are living happily with their grandparents”—Marie’s parents—“on a ranch in Canada.”

Moira frowned. “Don’t you miss them?”

“I miss them terribly,” Bourne said, “but the truth is they’re far better off where they are. What kind of life could I offer them? And then there’s the constant danger from my Bourne identity. Marie was kidnapped and threatened in order to force me to do something I had no intention of doing. I won’t make that mistake again.”

“But surely you see them from time to time.”

“As often as I can, but it’s difficult. I can’t afford to have anyone following me back to them.”

“My heart goes out to you,” Moira said, meaning it. She smiled. “I must say it’s odd seeing you here, on a university campus, behind a desk.” She laughed. “Shall I buy you a pipe and a jacket with elbow patches?”

Bourne smiled. “I’m content here, Moira. Really I am.”

“I’m happy for you. Martin’s death was difficult for both of us. My anodyne is going back to work full-bore. Yours is obviously here, in a new life.”

“An old life, really.” Bourne looked around the office. “Marie was happiest when I was teaching, when she could count on me being home every night in time to have dinner with her and the kids.”

“What about you?” Moira asked. “Were you happiest here?”

A cloud passed across Bourne’s face. “I was happy being with Marie.” He turned to her. “I can’t imagine being able to say that to anyone else but you.”

“A rare compliment from you, Jason.”

“Are my compliments so rare?”

“Like Martin, you’re a master at keeping secrets,” she said. “But I have doubts about how healthy that is.”

“I’m sure it’s not healthy at all,” Bourne said. “But it’s the life we chose.”

“Speaking of which.” She sat down on a chair opposite him. “I came early for our dinner date to talk to you about a work situation, but now, seeing how content you are here, I don’t know whether to continue.”

Bourne recalled the first time he had seen her, a slim, shapely figure in the mist, dark hair swirling about her face. She was standing at the parapet in the Cloisters, overlooking the Hudson River. The two of them had come there to say goodbye to their mutual friend Martin Lindros, whom Bourne had valiantly tried to save, only to fail.

Today Moira was dressed in a wool suit, a silk blouse open at the throat. Her face was strong, with a prominent nose, deep brown eyes wide apart, intelligent, curved slightly at their outer corners. Her

hair fell to her shoulders in luxuriant waves. There was an uncommon serenity about her, a woman who knew what she was about, who wouldn't be intimidated or bullied by anyone, woman or man.

Perhaps this last was what Bourne liked best about her. In that, though in no other way, she was like Marie. He had never pried into her relationship with Martin, but he assumed it had been romantic since Martin had given Bourne standing orders to send her a dozen red roses should he ever die. This Bourne had done, with a sadness whose depth surprised even him.

Settled in her chair, one long, shapely leg crossed over her knee, she looked the model of a European businesswoman. She had told him that she was half French, half English, but her genes still carried the imprint of ancient Venetian and Turkish ancestors. She was proud of the fire in her mixed blood, the result of wars, invasions, fierce love.

"Go on." He leaned forward, elbows on his desk. "I want to hear what you have to say."

She nodded. "All right. As I've told you, NextGen Energy Solutions has completed our new liquid natural gas terminal in Long Beach. Our first shipment is due in two weeks. I had this idea, which now seems utterly crazy, but here goes. I'd like you to head up the security procedures. My bosses are worried the terminal would make an awfully tempting target for any terrorist group, and I agree. Frankly, I can't think of anyone who'd make it more secure than you."

"I'm flattered, Moira. But I have obligations here. As you know, Professor Specter has installed me as the head of the Comparative Linguistics Department. I don't want to disappoint him."

"I like Dominic Specter, Jason, really I do. You've made it clear that he's your mentor. Actually, he's David Webb's mentor, right? But it's Jason Bourne I first met, it feels like it's Jason Bourne I've been coming to know these last few months. Who is Jason Bourne's mentor?"

Bourne's face darkened, as it had at the mention of Marie. "Alex Conklin's dead."

Moira shifted in her chair. "If you come work with me there's no baggage attached to it. Think about it. It's a chance to leave your past lives behind—both David Webb's and Jason Bourne's. I'm flying to Munich shortly because a key element of the terminal is being manufactured there. I need an expert opinion on it when I check the specs."

"Moira, there are any number of experts you can use."

"But none whose opinion I trust as much as yours. This is crucial stuff, Jason. More than half the goods shipped into the United States come through the port at Long Beach, so our security measures have to be something special. The US government has already shown it has neither the time nor the inclination to secure commercial traffic, so we're forced to police it ourselves. The danger to this terminal is real and it's serious. I know how expert you are at bypassing even the most arcane security systems. You're the perfect candidate to put nonconventional measures into place."

Bourne stood. "Moira, listen to me. Marie was David Webb's biggest cheerleader. Since her death I've let go of him completely. But he's not dead, he's not an invalid. He lives on inside me. When I fall asleep I dream of his life as if it was someone else's, and I wake up in a sweat. I feel as if a part of me has been sliced off. I don't want to feel that way anymore. It's time to give David Webb his due."

Veronica Hart's step was light and virtually carefree as she was admitted past checkpoint after checkpoint on her way into the bunker that was the West Wing of the White House. The job she was about to be handed—director of Central Intelligence—was a formidable one, especially in the aftermath of last year's twin debacles of murder and gross breach of security. Nevertheless, she had never been happier. Having a sense of purpose was vital to her; being singled out for daunting responsibility was the ultimate validation of all the arduous work, setbacks, and threats she'd had to

endure because of her gender.

There was also the matter of her age. At forty-six she was the youngest DCI in recent memory. Being the youngest at something was nothing new to her. Her astonishing intelligence combined with her fierce determination to ensure that she was the youngest to graduate from her college, youngest to be appointed to military intelligence, to central army command, to a highly lucrative Black River private intelligence position in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa where, to this day, not even the heads of the seven directorates within CI knew precisely where she had been posted, whom she commanded, or what her mission had been.

Now, at last, she was steps away from the apex, the top of the intelligence heap. She'd successfully leapt all the hurdles, sidestepped every trap, negotiated every maze, learned who to befriend and who to show her back to. She had endured relentless sexual innuendo, rumors of conduct unbecoming, stories of her reliance on her male inferiors who supposedly did her thinking for her. In each case she had triumphed, emphatically putting a stake through the heart of the lies and, in some instances, taking down their instigators.

She was, at this stage of her life, a force to be reckoned with, a fact in which she justifiably reveled. So it was with a light heart that she approached her meeting with the president. In her briefcase was a thick file detailing the changes she proposed to make in CI to clean up the unholy mess left behind by Karim al-Jamil and the subsequent murder of her predecessor. Not surprisingly, CI was in total disarray, morale had never been lower, and of course there was resentment across the board from the all-male directorate heads, each of whom felt he should have been elevated to DCI.

The chaos and low morale were about to change, and she had a raft of initiatives to ensure it. She was absolutely certain that the president would be delighted not only with her plans but also with the speed with which she would implement them. An intelligence organization as important and vital as CI could not long endure the despair into which it had sunk. Only the anti-terrorist black ops, Typhoon, brainchild of Martin Lindros, was running normally, and for that she had its new director, Soraya Moore, to thank. Soraya's assumption of command had been seamless. Her operatives loved her, would follow her into the fires of Hades should she ask it of them. As for the rest of CI, it was for herself to heal, energize, and give a refocused sense of purpose.

She was surprised—perhaps *shocked* wasn't too strong a word—to find the Oval Office occupied not only by the president but also by Luther LaValle, the Pentagon's intelligence czar, and his deputy General Richard P. Kendall. Ignoring the others, she walked across the plush American blue carpet to shake the president's hand. She was tall, long-necked, and slender. Her ash-blond hair was cut in a stylish fashion that fell short of being masculine but lent her a businesslike air. She wore a midnight-blue suit, low-heeled pumps, small gold earrings, and a minimum of makeup. Her nails were cut square across.

"Please have a seat, Veronica," the president said. "You know Luther LaValle and General Kendall."

"Yes." Veronica inclined her head fractionally. "Gentlemen, a pleasure to see you." Though nothing could be farther from the truth.

She hated LaValle. In many ways he was the most dangerous man in American intelligence, not the least because he was backed by the immensely powerful E. R. "Bud" Halliday, the secretary of defense. LaValle was a power-hungry egotist who believed that he and his people should be running American intelligence, period. He fed on war the way other people fed on meat and potatoes. And though she had never been able to prove it, she suspected that he was behind several of the more lurid rumors that had circulated about her. He enjoyed ruining other people's reputations, savored standing

impudently on the skulls of his enemies.

Ever since ~~Afghanistan and, subsequently, Iraq~~, LaValle had seized the initiative—under the typically wide-ranging and murky Pentagon rubric of “preparing the battlefield” for the troops to come—to expand the purview of the Pentagon’s intelligence-gathering initiatives until now they encroached uncomfortably on those of CI. It was an open secret within American intelligence circles that he coveted CI’s operatives and its long-established international networks. Now, with the Old Man and his anointed successor dead, it would fit LaValle’s MO to try to make a land grab in the most aggressive manner possible. This was why his presence and that of his lapdog set off the most serious warning bells inside Veronica’s mind.

There were three chairs ranged in a rough semicircle in front of the president’s desk. Two of them were, of course, filled. Veronica took the third chair, acutely aware that she was flanked by the two men, doubtless by design. She laughed inwardly. If these two thought to intimidate her by making her feel surrounded, they were sorely mistaken. But then as the president began to talk she hoped to God her laugh wouldn’t echo hollowly in her mind an hour from now.

Dominic Specter hurried around the corner as Bourne was locking the door to his office. The deep frown that creased his high forehead vanished the moment he saw Bourne.

“David, I’m so glad I caught you before you left!” he said with great enthusiasm. Then, turning his charm on Bourne’s companion, he added, “And with the magnificent Moira, no less.” As always the perfect gentleman, he bowed to her in the Old World European fashion.

He returned his attention to Bourne. He was a short man full of unbridled energy despite his seventy-odd years. His head seemed perfectly round, surmounted by a halo of hair that wound from ear to ear. His eyes were dark and inquisitive, his skin a deep bronze. His generous mouth made him look vaguely and amusingly like a frog about to spring from one lily pad to another. “A matter of some concern has come up and I need your opinion.” He smiled. “I see that this evening is out of the question. Would dinner tomorrow be inconvenient?”

Bourne discerned something behind Specter’s smile that gave him pause; something was troubling his old mentor. “Why don’t we meet for breakfast?”

“Are you certain I’m not putting you out, David?” But he couldn’t hide the relief that flooded his face.

“Actually, breakfast is better for me,” Bourne lied, to make things easier for Specter. “Eight o’clock?”

“Splendid! I look forward to it.” With a nod in Moira’s direction he was off.

“A firecracker,” Moira said. “If only I’d had professors like him.”

Bourne looked at her. “Your college years must’ve been hell.”

She laughed. “Not quite as bad as all that, but then I only had two years of it before I fled to Berlin.”

“If you’d had professors like Dominic Specter, your experience would have been far different, believe me.” They sidestepped several knots of students gathered to gossip or to trade questions about their last classes.

They strode along the corridor, out the doors, descended the steps to the quad. He and Moira walked briskly across campus in the direction of the restaurant where they would have dinner. Students streamed past them, hurrying down the paths between trees and lawns. Somewhere a band was playing in the stolid, almost plodding rhythm endemic to colleges and universities. The sky was

steeped in clouds, scudding overhead like clipper ships on the high seas. A dank winter wind came streaming in off the Potomac.

“There was a time when I was plunged deep in depression. I knew it but I wouldn’t accept it—you know what I mean. Professor Specter was the one who connected with me, who was able to crack the shell I was using to protect myself. To this day I have no idea how he did it or even why he persevered. He said he saw something of himself in me. In any event, he wanted to help.”

They passed the ivy-covered building where Specter, who was now the president of the School of International Studies at Georgetown, had his office. Men in tweed coats and corduroy jackets passed in and out of the doors, frowns of deep concentration on their faces.

“Professor Specter gave me a job teaching linguistics. It was like a life preserver to a drowning man. What I needed most then was a sense of order and stability. I honestly don’t know what would have happened to me if not for him. He alone understood that immersing myself in language makes me happy. No matter who I’ve been, the one constant is my proficiency with languages. Learning languages is like learning history from the inside out. It encompasses the battles of ethnicity, religion, compromise, politics. So much can be learned from language because it’s been shaped by history.”

By this time they had left campus and were walking down 36th Street, NW, toward 1789, a favorite restaurant of Moira’s, which was housed in a Federal town house. When they arrived, they were shown to a window table on the second floor in a dim, paneled, old-fashioned room with candles burning brightly on tables set with fine china and sparkling stemware. They sat down facing each other and ordered drinks.

Bourne leaned across the table, said in a low voice, “Listen to me, Moira, because I’m going to tell you something very few people know. The Bourne identity continues to haunt me. Marie used to worry that the decisions I was forced to make, the actions I had to take as Jason Bourne would eventually drain me of all feeling, that one day I’d come back to her and David Webb would be gone for good. I can’t let that happen.”

“Jason, you and I have spent quite a bit of time with each other since we met to scatter Martin’s ashes. I’ve never seen a hint that you’ve lost any part of your humanity.”

Both sat back, silent as the waiter set the drinks in front of them, handed them menus. As soon as he left, Bourne said, “That’s reassuring, believe me. In the short time I’ve known you I’ve come to value your opinions. You’re not like anyone else I’ve ever met.”

Moira took a sip of her drink, set it down, all without taking her eyes from his. “Thank you. Coming from you that’s quite a compliment, particularly because I know how special Marie was to you.”

Bourne stared down at his drink.

Moira reached across the starched white linen for his hand. “I’m sorry, now you’re drifting away.”

He glanced at her hand over his but didn’t pull away. When he looked up, he said, “I relied on her for many things. But I find now that those things are slipping away from me.”

“Is that a bad thing, or a good thing?”

“That’s just it,” he said. “I don’t know.”

Moira saw the anguish in his face, and her heart went out to him. It was only months ago that she’d seen him standing by the parapet in the Cloisters. He was clutching the bronze urn holding Martin’s ashes as if he never wanted to let it go. She’d known then, even if Martin hadn’t told her, what they’d meant to each other.

“Martin was your friend,” she said now. “You put yourself in terrible jeopardy to save him. Don’t tell me you didn’t feel anything for him. Besides, by your own admission, you’re not Jason Bourne

now. You're David Webb."

He smiled. "You have me there."

Her face clouded over. "I want to ask you a question, but I don't know whether I have the right."

At once, he responded to the seriousness of her expression. "Of course you can ask, Moira. Go on."

She took a deep breath, let it go. "Jason, I know you've said that you're content at the university, and if that's so, fine. But I also know you blame yourself for not being able to save Martin. You must understand, though, if you couldn't save him, no one could. You did your best; he knew that, I'm sure. And now I find myself wondering if you believe you failed him—that you're not up to being Jason Bourne anymore. I wonder if you've ever considered the idea that you accepted Professor Specter's offer at the university in order to turn away from Jason Bourne's life."

"Of course I've considered it." After Martin's death he'd once again decided to turn his back on Jason Bourne's life, on the running, the deaths, a river that seemed to have as many bodies as the Ganges. Always, for him, memories lurked. The sad ones he remembered. The others, the shadowed ones that filled the halls of his mind, seemed to have shape until he neared them, when they flowed away like a tide at ebb. And what was left behind were the bleached bones of all those he'd killed or had been killed because of who he was. But he knew just as surely that as long as he drew breath, the Bourne identity wouldn't die.

There was a tormented look in his eyes. "You have to understand how difficult it is having two personalities, always at war with each other. I wish with every fiber of my being that I could cut one of them out of me."

Moira said, "Which one would it be?"

"That's the damnable part," Bourne said. "Every time I think I know, I realize that I don't."

LUTHER LAVALLE WAS as telegenic as the president and two-thirds his age. He had straw-colored hair slicked back like a movie idol of the 1930s or 1940s and restless hands. By contrast, General Kendall was square-jawed and beady-eyed, the very essence of a ramrod officer. He was big and beefy; perhaps he'd been a fullback at Wisconsin or Ohio State. He looked to LaValle the way a running back looks to his quarterback for instructions.

"Luther," the president said, "seeing as how you requested this meeting I think it appropriate that you begin."

LaValle nodded, as if the president deferring to him was a fait accompli. "After the recent debacle of CI being infiltrated at its highest level, culminating with the murder of the former DCI, firmer security and controls need to be set in place. Only the Pentagon can do that."

Veronica felt compelled to jump in before LaValle got too much of a head start. "I beg to differ, sir," she said, aiming her remarks at the president. "Human intelligence gathering has always been the province of CI. Our on-the-ground networks are unparalleled, as are our armies of contacts, who have been cultivated for decades. The Pentagon's expertise has always been in electronic surveillance. The two are separate, requiring altogether different methodologies and mind-sets."

LaValle smiled as winningly as he did when appearing on Fox TV or *Larry King Live*. "I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the landscape of intelligence has changed radically since 2001. We're at war. In my opinion this state of affairs is likely to last indefinitely, which is why the Pentagon has recently expanded its field of expertise, creating teams of clandestine DIA personnel and special-ops forces who are conducting successful counterintelligence ops in Iraq and Afghanistan."

"With all due respect, Mr. LaValle and his military machine are eager to fill any perceived vacuum or create one, if necessary. Mr. LaValle and General Kendall need us to believe that we're in a perpetual state of war whether or not it's the truth." From her briefcase Veronica produced a file, which she opened and read from. "As this evidence makes clear, they have systematically directed the expansion of their human intelligence-gathering squads, outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, into other territories—CI's territories—often with disastrous results. They've corrupted informers and, in at least one instance, they've jeopardized an ongoing CI deep-cover operation."

After the president glanced at the pages Veronica handed him, he said, "While this is compelling, Veronica, Congress seems to be on Luther's side. It has provided him with twenty-five million dollars a year to pay informants on the ground and to recruit mercenaries."

"That's part of the problem, not the solution," Veronica said emphatically. "Theirs is a failed methodology, the same one they've used all the way back to the OSS in Berlin after World War Two. Our paid informants have had a history of turning on us—working for the other side, feeding us disinformation. As for the mercenaries we recruited—like the Taliban or various other Muslim insurgent groups—they, to a man, eventually turned against us to become our implacable enemies."

"She's got a point," the president said.

"The past is the past," General Kendall said angrily. His face had been darkening with every word Veronica had said. "There's no evidence whatsoever that either our new informants or our

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