

## 11 The Spider

For a while he lingered between consciousness and sleep where the body knows it is waking but the mind wants to remain in dark. In that state of mind, a person can imagine impossible feats born only in the deep subconscious brought to the surface by the gray area between darkness and light. Salvador Cordero found himself in such a place.

What transpires in the mind of a cruel man?

In Cordero's case, it was peace. He found comfort in outward recognition of his greatness and there were people in his mind; peers in the fight for mankind's salvation. He was in a large room—a ballroom maybe—and various luminaries were encircling him, hanging on every word he spoke. His words laid out an agenda that was readily accepted by the elite in the room. When there was a word of doubt spoken he quickly put down the mere hint of rebellion and the people grew to love him even more. He was their leader, after all; the one they had been waiting for. He offered a sound path, a rather rapid path to achieve their shared ambitions and they all found agreement with him.

There was a man who wore a crown which, obviously, wouldn't be worn in the real world; in this world of Cordero's fancy the man represented the frail nobility of the world; spokespersons of a bygone era of feudalism that actually was being practiced to this day though under the banner of another name. This prince was weak, though he still hung to the notion of past glory. He spoke down his nose to Cordero and Cordero simply withdrew a small dagger, that could easily have been mistaken as a letter opener and with

the effort of a slight breeze, thrust it into the prince's throat. The reaction was a mix of fear and admiration. The admiration was ceding power to Cordero; the fear assured the power would remain his. He smiled as the prince grasped at his neck wound and slithered to the ground. Cordero reached down and wiped the knife on the prince's jacketed shoulder and holstered it again. A woman, no really a young girl barely old enough to be Cordero's grandchild, stroked his hand that had just struck down the prince and it excited him.

The sexual arousal transferred into his waking mind.

He lay on his side as his eyes opened and began the process of acclamation to the invading light coming through the tinted windows of his stateroom. His thoughts lingered in the grogginess of consciousness and of the dramatic actions he delivered from the imagination. He smiled briefly then silently yawned.

The sun broke completely into his cabin—probably from a change of course—thus emptying his perfection of reflection into the abyss of his mind to a solitary passion of emptiness. He could feel the hum of the twin diesel engines propelling his ship.

The girl lay next to him, breathing softly and lost in desire; or so he believed. She no doubt dreamed of possessing a perfect body—it had been enough perfection for his needs the night before—draped in diamonds and gold while brawny men drooled as she passed. Every possible want is delivered in a person's dream and she knew ignorant ecstasy as no other. Ah, but this manner of exhilaration knew boundaries. She could not possibly fathom, for instance, the responsibilities that men of greatness shouldered. Her dreams would always be of a material nature and never metaphorical but then how could they escape the boundaries of the mundane? She would never reach those heights for her

inner being was incapable of such musings. She was but a child and would remain so. She was but a child for his amusement.

The previous evening spent at Key Biscayne had been very satisfying. The woman's benefactor, Nigel Longworth, was the closest man to being an actual confidant that Cordero enjoyed within the elitist cabal known simply as the Group. Longworth and Cordero had sat on a balcony overlooking the Biscayne Bay sunset while drinking after-dinner Cognac. Cordero smoked a Cohiba Espléndidos while Longworth a pipe. They discussed, in generalities, the attributes of great leaders of men; the careful balance between benevolence and cruelty designed to elicit allegiance and fear. It was obvious to Cordero that these conversations had led to his fanciful dream. Once the alcohol had penetrated their minds, they began speaking of the evils of the dominance of man. Cordero had found the discussion stimulating and with these musings of dominance, his masculinity heightened, and thus the need to channel his unbridled desires into a chalice of innocence. Nigel obliged.

"The woman is a frequent traveling companion," Nigel had explained while presenting him with the gift of the woman. "She certainly helps by removing my mind from pressing responsibilities."

Fueled by cocaine, the woman had indeed been delectable.

He looked to Misty; yes, that was her name, he recalled. She was certainly an angel and certainly worth his afterlife of damnation, though, even in his cynical heart he believed that God would indeed welcome his soul home for his part in saving His creation.

She was lovely and had performed everything his body needed for renewal and

now she slept the sleep of the angelic and dreamed her simple dreams of false salvation. Ah, the joys of her body were beyond description and for those hours of intense pleasure one was certainly able to imagine the delights of facing one's Maker. The intensity and emotional yearnings had been delivered in the package that young Misty provided and she must truly be a child of God for how could anything be more enlightening?

Cordero turned in his bed, away from the sun and toward the sleeping girl and held out his hand over her body and carefully, with his hand but an inch above the sheeted figure, traced her curving form from shoulders to hips and delighted in having such a pure, innocent beauty temporarily share his existence. As if by magic but not by touch, she stirred and turned away from him as the sheet fell from her back and exposed a broad tattoo, a squiggly triangular design culminating in a point just above the part in her buttocks.

It was as if he had shot a high caliber weapon for he recoiled violently in disgust. He had not known she had defiled her body in such a vulgar way for they had entered his cabin and bedchamber with only the light of the moon penetrating his cabin's broad windows. Purity was defined in modesty and the exclamation of impurity exhibited through an arrogant symbol of commonness was something by which he could not abide. He needed the illusion intact but that was now spoiled; filth had penetrated his sanctuary. He would have to communicate his displeasure with Nigel the next time he was in his company.

He quickly but quietly removed himself to his shower where he washed before his morning workout—something he usually did not do—and then climbed down the twisting

stairs to the small cabin that housed his compact weight machine and treadmill. Today was cardiovascular and so he set the machine for a ten-minute warm-up before the thirty-minute run and subsequent five-minute cool down.

While his conscious mind usually explored the realms of imagination, constantly working problems and scenarios, he did not allow these wanderings as he punished his squat, powerful body. He was particularly proud of the fact that he could compartmentalize with relative ease and he held out this ability in his consciousness to reaffirm that he was not insane. It was part of the teachings he had provided Daniel Wentworth, after all.

After the five minute cool-down he drank a protein shake that his staff had provided and climbed up the stairs to his master cabin and showered for the second time, scrubbing his entire body twice before dressing in a white pair of slacks and linen white shirt. The white heavily contrasted with his bronze body, softening his chiseled Romanesque features. He donned his tan loafers without socks and his wide-brimmed straw hat and walked to the bridge of the twin-hulled Bentley Silhouette.

His captain informed him they were two hours out from Atlantis. Cordero thanked his employee and exited to the stern deck for breakfast and coffee. How he loved no longer living on land, except on some occasions. *La Araña*, Spanish for spider, was now his home. He ate quietly, enjoying the mounting sun and the dancing white caps of the infinite waves that frolicked to the horizon and beyond.

Now his thoughts turned to his protégée Daniel Wentworth, whom he would be speaking with shortly. He had great faith in Wentworth and the control of his brain chemicals that flowed with little or no regulation otherwise. It was a blessing what modern

medicine could accomplish and Wentworth was certainly a byproduct of that. Regulation was always the key. They had placed him in a position of importance, married him to a well-bred woman, and paid a high price for the best that psychology and pharmacology had to offer which allowed the genius, typical of those who suffer the same condition as Wentworth, to become more or less stable. As he ate the last bite of an egg white omelet with asparagus, a steward emerged from behind and handed him a satellite telephone.

“Mr. Wentworth, sir,” he announced.

Cordero glanced at his Patek Philippe. Eight-thirty as promised.

“I’m happy to hear from you Daniel.”

“Greetings, Señor,” spoke Wentworth in a high-pitched nasally voice.

This was an unusually cheerful greeting from Wentworth. He could possibly be suffering a manic episode. Tread softly. “So, Daniel, your little operation has begun. Congratulations.”

“Thank you, Salvador.”

“Yes, as you would say, without a hitch?” Cordero asked.

There was a brief pause; the voice turned strained. “Well, not completely but I’m assured by the one in charge that it has been managed.”

Managed could mean a host of different scenarios but Cordero would rather not know; he was only concerned with finalities. “Well, Daniel, I’m happy to play my modest part.” Then, as an afterthought, needing to reaffirm the delicacy of his position, he added, “I must be kept completely in the loop until it is time for me to act as the ferry. If something does not go as plan and unpredictability enters the picture, I must terminate my

involvement. We are too close to the conference for me to become entangled.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more, Señor. Of course I would never put you in a compromising condition.”

Cordero nodded to himself: So long as that was understood.

“So, Daniel, I will be expecting your arrival when?”

“Well, as you know, I must keep up my appearances at Hardcastle. I don’t want anyone calling me a slacker.”

“For heavens’ sake, Daniel, I own Hardcastle.” One of the major symptoms of bipolar disorder was a withdrawal from society. This was no time to lose him to the cavern inside his mind. “Mr. Apple will be arriving next week. I suspect you might want to catch on to his entourage. I will send you the particulars.”

There was a pause. “Daniel. You don’t sound well. Maybe you are vacillating?”

“No. It’s Martin. He has really been pushing us this week and I’m just not focusing.”

Cordero thought for a moment. *A slave cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honor the one and offend the other.* “Leave it to me, Daniel. Just make arrangements to come down to Genesis Cay.”

“Should I bring Lynn?”

Lynn Wentworth: Very delectable but also quite a distraction. Not for Daniel but for Cordero. “No. I think the conference might bore her. Why don’t you take her somewhere special, maybe Paris,” yes, a brilliant idea, “and then drop her back in New York and come down here. That way Martin won’t be bothering you this week. Don’t worry. I’ll arrange

it.” Getting him away from the operation and letting it take its own course was better for all concerned.

“I don’t know if that is a good idea. You want me to monitor the operation.”

“You have a telephone.”

There was a pause. “Yes, Señor. As you wish.”

“Is there anything else, Daniel?” He didn’t give his minion an opportunity to answer. “Fine, then.” He smiled. “And Daniel?”

“Yes.”

“You did an outstanding job with this operation.”

Cordero ended the conversation abruptly and abandoned the phone on the table. He stood and walked to the railing, lighting a Cohiba Espléndidos after sipping an espresso that had just been served. He was doing God’s work and even God, he mused, must enjoy a good cigar on occasion.

“Hey, Salvador,” came the shrill voice of Misty.

He winced but did not turn. The waves were quite mesmerizing. He glanced at his watch. They should be close to Nassau soon. He thought of Lynn Wentworth, Daniel’s delicious wife. But no, he wasn’t ready to take her from his child prodigy quite yet. Until then, he would have to suffer females such as this one to satisfy his cravings.

Cordero turned and retrieved a robe that was draped over a chair at his dining table. Misty came to him, her ample breasts barely covered by a slender piece of cloth and her groin area not fairing any better in modesty, and he threw the robe at her.

“Cover yourself,” he said mildly.



“You didn’t need me to cover myself last night,” she playfully responded.

Cordero glanced at his Patek Philippe again, a compulsion he could not control when impatient.

“I would like for you to go below, eat breakfast if you would like, watch television if you would like and clean yourself. We will be at Atlantis soon and you will be leaving to return to whatever life you live. Until then, please stay in the cabin.”

“Hey, what about my vacation?”

“Have Nigel take you,” he responded coolly.

“Salvador, what’s wrong? Did I do something?”

“No. You performed to standards.”

“Hey, I’m not some whore, you know.”

“Last night I knew no better,” he said, turning his back on her. “And please, see about having that abomination removed from your back.”

She left and she was no longer a thought in his mind; so quickly could he turn off an event and move into another with ease. She would be spirited off of the yacht as soon as it was docked and he would never see her again.

He tapped his cigar and the ashes fell. He let his mind linger on Lynn Wentworth a little longer and somehow the thoughts faded back into his dream. The prince came into his mind. Sure, it was symbolic but it also signified something else. He was on a mission to slay another prince. He smiled a melancholy wisp. How he enjoyed slaying princes.