

## 44 Discovery

The afterglow lingered for Jack; he was splayed atop the rock, his mind mush, his emotions spent and all he wanted to do now was sleep. What he felt in the briefest of moments of ecstasy was so unlike anything he had ever felt before. The fear of loss was wiped clean and he entered her in heart, mind, and spirit. He would never be able to feel what he had felt ever again except when with her.

The rock was in the middle of the small pond that was fed by the waterfall and surrounded by a tropical forest so lush, so full of nourishment that if they had chosen to remain there on their island, they could live out their lives with need of nothing more.

They were exhausted and both breathed heavily and for the longest of moments they laid there listening to their own hearts beat, the water crashing, and feeling the ripples from the action they had committed together.

Finally, Jack Whitte spoke. "So, what do I call you?"

She took a deep breath and turned to him. "Tiffany." Then she smiled. "At least for now."

Whitte turned toward her and cocked his elbow beneath his head. "So I was wrong that first night when we met."

"About what?"

"You weren't lying about your name when you said Amber."

She chuckled. "I wanted to see if you recognized me." She kissed him.

“Maybe this isn’t the right time but,” she said with a little apprehension, “can you tell me about what happened after I *roofied* you?”

He laughed. “Did you date rape me that night?”

She chuckled in return. “I wish I had. Maybe none of this would have happened.”

He nodded with a grin then he told her everything that he had experienced from the time he was in the general manager’s office to the time he got to the island: Inara, being drugged again, waking up, and not knowing where he was. Between Croswell, the Ranger, his father, and now the woman formerly known as Amber, Whitte felt he was finally getting a handle on the plot against he and his father. But there were still holes he didn’t understand. One was the role of the man who drugged him and who went after Britannia Morgan in Antigua.

“Tell me about this guy, Mark Bennetti.”

“What’s to tell? I was young. I’d finally gotten over my crush on you,” she said playfully, “and he was the first man I met who wasn’t trying to get in my pants constantly. He respected me for my abilities and advocated for me when I was still in training at the FBI Academy.” She shrugged. “We dated for about a year and decided to get married. I kind of figured it wouldn’t be something that lasted but I respected him and, well, felt a little sorry for him.”

“Why?”

“He’d just been phased out of the CIA.”

“Phased out?”

“Yeah. He was kind of a hot head. And, he was seeing conspiracies under every

rock.” Her face turned sad, almost melancholy. “I guess he was right about all of this.”

“I blame him for Britannia.”

“Why? That’s on you Jack. No offense. He broke cover to try and help her and you interrupted that meeting. Frankly, she’d probably be in protective custody now.”

Whitte let that guilt sink in for a moment: She was right.

“We really need to start talking about getting you and your dad out of here.”

He nodded in agreement. This nightmare needed to end.

She reached over and brushed her hand along his cheek and then across his chest and finally, she rested it on his upper thigh. Whitte winced as she passed over the scar above his pelvis. “What happened there?”

He repositioned himself so he could look down at the scar. “It might be an RFID chip.”

“What?” she asked alarmed.

“Well, it’s a radio frequency...”

“I know what the hell an RFID chip is,” she said with a measure of agitation. “What the hell is it doing in *you*?”

“They were trying to track me but I doubt they can scan it this far away,” he said with an air of thoughtlessness that, as soon as he said it, realized they were screwed. What was he thinking? The problem was that he hadn’t been. He wanted a shot at revenge but they hadn’t killed Abigail and in all of the confusion, he had forgotten it was there. Whitte suddenly became very frightened.

Tiffany shook head back and forth, her eyes filling with anger. “You *fucking* idiot.

We need to get that thing out of you right now.”

They barged in on the elder Whitte, George Crosswell, and Horse Johnson sitting around the kitchen table. Each had a glass of Jack Daniels in front of them.

“Well if it isn’t the love birds,” Robert said.

Jack shot him a look of scorn.

“Tiffany, we’ve been talking through our options,” Johnson began. “We’re going to fly to Houston and have a press conference. Get all of this out in the open and let the chips fall where they may.”

“We have a more pressing issue now.” She explained to them Jack’s stupidity by not informing them of the RFID chip. “If they’re tracking us, we won’t make it anywhere.” She turned to Horse. “What do you know about RFID chips?”

“We use them to track items during sting operations, you know, money, drugs, weapons. If it’s a passive RFID chip it’s not something we need to be too worried about. You’ve got to be within about a hundred yards or so and have an active line of sight. I’m going to guess it’s an active chip with it’s own power source. That’s what we use.”

Jack confirmed his assumption by describing the one he had found in his knapsack.

“So it’s probably programmed to send a signal on its own, maybe every minute or so. A sophisticated satellite can track it but I’d be surprised if they have access—but a plane, definitely. Then I’m guessing they have a local device that can pair with it, you know like a Bluetooth headset to a cell phone.” Horse thought for a moment. “Anyone have a cell

phone handy? I want to try something.”

Croswell handed his over. Johnson noted it had a full charge then accessed the menu. “Any of you have any Bluetooth enabled devices turned on right now?” Everyone shook their head. “Okay, then let’s give this a try.” He watched as a small icon spun on the screen then stopped and announced it was connected. “Well I’ll be damned.” He handed the cell phone to Whitte. “Keep that close. As long as the chip and that phone are paired, no other device can pair with it.” He turned to Robert, “You have any tin foil and duct tape? Need gauze too.”

Then he turned to Jack: “Drop your drawers.”

Jack’s face turned red. He looked like he was about to tell everyone to go fuck themselves but Tiffany stepped up.

“You’re the idiot that didn’t tell us about it. Drop them.”

Whitte grimaced and did as he was told. Horse drew near and grimaced himself as he examined the nearly two-inch wound. Robert returned with the tape and a roll of tin foil.

“Damn, Jackie. You certainly didn’t inherit that from me,” he said to his son. Then he turned to Croswell, “A little embarrassing, isn’t it.”

“Asshole,” Jack croaked. Robert cackled and slapped his son on the shoulder.

“Gauze?” Johnson asked.

“Amber, dear. There’s some in the bathroom down the hall. Look in the medicine cabinet.”

Johnson tore off a good two-foot piece of the foil and folded it in squares until it was enough to cover the cell phone with good overlap. When Tiffany returned with the

gauze, he placed a thick wad over the face of the phone, made a “case” for the phone out of tin foil and then handed it to Tiffany. “I don’t want to get near his junk,” he said.

“Okay,” Jack announced, “Enough. Just tape the damned thing to me and let’s get on with it.”

She took a measure of appreciation of Jack’s uncomfortable situation. She positioned the contraption over the wound, giving Jack as much mobility as the large rectangle could offer, and taped it to him with the duct tape. She made sure it stuck to hair and skin alike.

“This is going to hurt like hell when I take it off.” After pulling up his pants, he tried to do squats and then straighten out his leg. “I won’t be able to run with this on.”

“What does it matter? If you have to run then they’ve found you.”