

47 A Deadening Brightness

The room was sterile. The brightness of all the white and stainless steel tore into his eyes—even when shut—ripping at his brain, producing a throbbing headache. It was cold; impersonal, yes, but physically he was shivering. Of course that could be the by-product of all the adrenaline pumping through his blood as he realized his situation; he was terrified.

He was naked in a stainless steel chair. His ankles were tethered to the legs of the chair and his hands cuffed together and held down by a chain that was anchored to the floor. Even though he was shivering, sweat beaded across his chest and ran in tiny rivulets through his matted chest hair and onto his stomach. He kept his thighs tight together, protecting the male's primary vulnerability.

The last thing he remembered prior to waking in this room was being bounded behind his back and laying on a couch. He and Tiffany—or Amber as had known her—were across from each other. She was sobbing, restrained as he was. Her leg was tightly bandaged and her cheek was bruising badly from where Wright had slugged her. There was activity all around them as several men were tearing apart his father's house, searching for heaven knows what. They had been administered something, probably the same drug he had been given the first time he came to Genesis Cay, and he had fallen into a deep sleep.

He had awoken just once: he was in an airplane—he guessed the PBY Catalina he had seen ushering people to Genesis Cay the previous week—and it was shuttering as it lined up for landing in front of the private resort. From the window he had seen the

silhouette of the island and then he had passed out again.

Now, he was in the chair, alone and shaking. He didn't know what was behind him as he was facing a blank white wall. On either side of him were stainless steel cabinets and shelves. The ceiling was white with florescent lighting. He didn't see any air vents. He felt like this might be a treatment room for medical emergencies. It also dawned on him that stainless steel was easy to clean and the white hid no blood.

A door opened behind him. It wasn't the noise of the door opening as much as a sudden change in the room pressure. He heard a couple of footfalls. Then someone, a male for sure, let out a long, breathy exhale. Then suddenly he felt a sharp thud between his shoulder blades and he was thrust forward in pain.

“Son of a bitch!” Whitte screamed out, his head flung forward.

The man walked in front of him. He wore heavy-soled black leather shoes and black jeans. Whitte's eyes followed the trousers up to the man's waste and then his chest—he wore a black turtleneck with a shoulder holster and small caliber handgun and, finally, his eyes focused on the man's face. He squinted and realized it was Daniel Wentworth, the man Brita had identified as working for Cordero. He was dressed up for some game it seemed, appearing to have bought the costume at Thugs-R-Us.

“I don't like you, Whitte.” He slapped Whitte across the face.

Whitte licked the corner of his mouth where he could taste blood. “Gee, Dan, why not?”

This solicited a solid slug across his left jaw. That one hurt. He wondered if maybe his jaw had broken. He held back the scream he so much wanted to let out. Instead, he took

a deep breath and held it, squinting his eyes closed until the immediacy of shock left. He exhaled and spit blood from his mouth toward his distorted vision of Wentworth.

Wentworth smiled as he wiped the back of his hand across his cheek.

“The name is Daniel.”

“Fuck you, Dan.”

This time the blow landed in his gut and his head bounced back and then snapped forward. He let it hang there as he tried to concentrate on not throwing up.

“I just thought I’d come in here and loosen you up a bit. Get you talking some so we won’t waste time later.” Wentworth walked behind Whitte. He heard a tap turn and water flow. Something was filling up. Then, he was doused, water flowing over the top of his head and down his chest and onto his naked crotch. Whitte squinted and shook his head, trying to shake the water from his eyes. He glanced up at Wentworth whose eyes were narrowly focused on Whitte’s manhood.

“I’m not particularly impressed, Cowboy Jack. I always thought someone like you who, you know, gets around? Well, I thought you’d have something a lot more substantial.” He pulled a large pocketknife from his pocket and opened the blade. “But what little you have can be taken away just as easily as if you had much more to lose.”

“Is that supposed to scare me?”

“It’s supposed to terrify you.” Wentworth walked to Whitte’s left and as he did, he threw an elbow into his brow. The skin split and blood gushed over his eye. Whitte found out the hard way what it was like to see stars. He fought with consciousness and as he gained control of his mind, he wondered why he didn’t just let the darkness take him one

last time.

Wentworth continued walking behind him and he heard a click; the knife was folded back into place; he breathed slightly easier. Wentworth lingered next to one of the stainless steel shelves for a moment and then turned and walked purposefully back to Whitte. Whitte felt the man's arm wrap around his forehead and jerk his head back, exposing his neck. He saw Wentworth's other hand rise and there was a glimmer from a steel blade—a scalpel.

“This is probably a lot more efficient, wouldn't you agree?”

Whitte began to shake.

“Don't piss yourself.”

He lowered the blade to Whitte's neckline and applied the blade with a quick slice. Whitte could feel blood trickling down his chest. At first, he thought his throat had been slashed but realized that he could breathe and that the amount of blood he could see running down his chest was minimal.

“Just testing to see if I could do it. It's but a scratch.”

Whitte began to quake again. He felt embarrassed that he couldn't control his shaking but then something happened and he stopped shivering. The fear was being pushed aside. Whitte felt himself being dragged back to Belize. He realized that there was something deep down that was pushing through his fear, pushing into his heart that reminded him that he had survived Belize. He would, somehow he realized, survive this as well. Wentworth wasn't going to kill him; there was something he wanted and this was all show. The fucking sociopath would get what he wanted from Whitte, he decided, and then

he would kill him.

“Why don’t you cut the crap, *Dan*? Get to the point.” As soon as he spoke, Wentworth let loose with a torrent of punches onto Whitte. He beat him around the face and then tore into his gut with the ferocity of a hungry beast.

When he finally stopped, he screamed, “My name is Daniel!”

But Whitte didn’t hear him for he had passed out. Wentworth pulled himself away from the man and began to cry. He stood in the corner like that for minutes, sobbing and he didn’t know why. He felt ashamed on some level but there was another part of him that thoroughly enjoyed what he was doing to the man and this scared him. He had lost control. He must never lose control.

He took the bucket and filled it with water and dumped it over Whitte’s head. “Please wake up,” he whispered.

Whitte coughed and stuttered. He blinked his eyes. At first he wasn’t sure where he was and then he saw that he was naked and bound and hurt more than he ever remembered hurting before, he knew where he was. But he wasn’t frightened anymore.

Wentworth dragged another chair around in front of Whitte and placed it with the back closest to him and then straddled it and sat. He folded his arms on the back and rested his chin and then stared directly at Whitte. When Whitte didn’t respond, he reached out and slapped him across the face, not nearly as hard as he had before.

“Wakie, wakie sleepy head.”

Whitte pulled his head up and just as he was about to spit on the man, Wentworth held up his hand. “Let’s be civil this time. No need to resort to childish antics.”

It didn't stop him from doing it and Wentworth wiped the bloody spittle from his mouth. He wanted so badly to strike the man but he reminded himself that he must now be in control. "I deserved that," he smiled.

"What have you done with Amber?" Whitte croaked.

Wentworth chuckled. "Amber? What a lovely name. I am guessing that's what you call Ms. Marks?" Whitte didn't respond. "Yes, I see. She is someone special. Do tell."

Whitte remained silent.

"No?" He shrugged. "No matter. If you tell me what I want you have no need to fear for the safety of Ms. Marks."

"You lay a hand on her."

"What?" He pushed at Whitte's forehead. "What will you do silly man? Kill me?" He smiled. "Doubtful. Let's get back to being adults, shall we?" He shifted in his chair. "Now since you have waken from your little nap, suppose you be a good little boy and tell me all about this little plot you and your worthless father cooked up. You're going to end up giving us the company anyway so nothing you do will hurt us. Did you really believe you could expose us?"

Whitte shook his head. "That had nothing to do with me."

"Hanging your father out to dry?"

"I didn't know my father was alive till yesterday."

Wentworth nodded. "Perhaps you are telling the truth. Maybe Ms. Marks can tell me more?"

"You touch her and you will die."

Wentworth smiled. “Oh, I won’t lay a hand on her. Well, at least I won’t lay the first on her. Maybe sloppy seconds though.”

Whitte struggled in his chair, his face turned beet red.

“Now, now. Let’s stop playing this game. Tit for tat. Just tell me what I want to know and we’ll let you and the woman go.” He smiled. “You spent a day with your father. What did he tell you?”

Whitte took a deep breath and held it. He counted to five and let loose. He bit the inside of his cheek and that helped him to focus. He realized he needed to keep the game going. He was in no position to do anything and he wouldn’t be if he continued with the unbridled anger. The guy was a psychopath. Let him have his way.

So he told Wentworth everything: about his father’s faked accident, about the so-called Doomsday device or whatever the hell his father had called it. He told Wentworth, when he asked, that he didn’t know how to disarm it or if it even really existed. Obviously, they had not found anything at his father’s house or these people wouldn’t be that worried. Whitte also told him that he didn’t give a damn about his father. He didn’t care about Whitte Industries, or WO&G, or even his employees. He just didn’t give a shit. They could have it all; just let Amber Brown go.

“Okay, sport. I have one more thing to ask.” He reached out and playfully slapped Whitte on the face. “With whom did the actress meet in Antigua?”

Whitte remained quiet.

“I take it from your silence that you know?”

“No, I don’t know. I saw her there but then she lost me.”

Wentworth raised his right hand to slap him.

“Seriously,” Whitte said as he flinched. “I don’t know.”

Wentworth stood, patted him on the head like a pet dog and, without another word, left. Within a few minutes, he heard the door open again and in walked two people: an Hispanic man dressed in white slacks and white Guayabera and a black woman dressed in the island’s uniform of navy blue shorts and white blouse.

“I am Dr. Castro,” the Hispanic male introduced himself as. He was grimacing and muttering in Spanish under his breath. “Animal,” he finally said as he unshackled Whitte. The nurse had opened a cabinet and turned on a stereo system. Pachelbel’s *Canon in D Major* began its stroll through the speakers. Whitte sat there bleeding all over himself and now classical music played as Castro began wiping blood away with white cloths. Surreal. The whole fucking experience was just so damned *surreal*.

Castro took a cloth and held it over Whitte’s left eye. “Please hold this for a moment.” The nurse assembled items onto a tray. She brought it over to Castro and held it as he selected items from it. He numbed Whitte’s left brow with an injection and then removed the cloth that Whitte was holding. He took a needle and sewed stitches over the brow. He took gaze and placed it over the wound and then taped it on. He further inspected Whitte, wiping his neck and placing bandages on different spots and then finally he was done. He gave him another injection, “Antibiotics,” he announced.

The nurse left the room and returned with a small bag and clothes on hangers. She hung them on a hook and then removed underwear and socks from the bag. Castro and the nurse assisted him in putting on the underwear and socks, gingerly, and then she continued

to help him with a pair of khaki chinos and navy blue sports shirt and a pair of loafers.

“I am truly sorry for what these people have done to you.” He walked over to the counter and returned with a syringe.

Whitte shook his head. “I need my wits about me.”

“It is mild. You should also be as comfortable as you can for whatever will happen to you next.” Whitte acquiesced and then Castro handed the spent syringe to the nurse. He then motioned for her to leave. Glancing at the nurse as she closed the door, he bent down to his ear and whispered, “The lady they brought in with you is being held next door. I have placed a spare key to the room in your left pocket.” He patted Whitte’s left thigh. “I understand they killed the actress that was staying here with you?”

Whitte nodded.

His face reflected pain. “She was very nice. A lovely creature.” He nodded. “I have worked with Señor Cordero for years. Never have they treated guests like this. If he knew about this he would kill.”

“What are these rooms used for if not for torture?” Whitte asked.

“When people of stature need a surgical procedure but do not want it known, they can come her and have it completed and recuperate outside of the prying eyes of the paparazzi. I have personally operated on kings, prime ministers, actors, men and women of considerable power.”

Whitte nodded. “Where’s Cordero?”

Castro shrugged. “Ms. Fabre is here but she does not seem to be in control of this situation. That is why I fear for you.” He turned as if he were going to leave and then

stopped and turned back. “If you can make it back down here I will try to help you. The door at the end of the hall is for emergencies. It leads to the back of the resort and into the jungle. You can take the lady and go out there and hide and I will try to get someone from the mainland to come get you.” He patted Whitte on the arm. “I’m sorry I cannot do more for you.”

“Were you the one that put this in me?” he asked patting where the RFID chip had been sewn in.

“What is that?” Castro asked.

Whitte shook his head. “I guess it doesn’t matter.”