

48 The Angle of Death

It was one of the Aryan Wunderkinds that escorted him from the room where he had been tortured to the luxurious suite atop the Genesis Cay resort. As they rode the elevator, Whitte wondered what it would take to kill the man. The man was shorter than Whitte by a good deal but the sports shirt the man was wearing was strained under the force of his heavy chest and bronze biceps. Whitte would need a gun but the Wunderkind did not carry.

He was left alone in the room. It was in stark contrast to the stodgy library where he had shared drinks with Cordero, insulted Bolo, and was amazed at the insanity of Sir Johnny. It was modern with a simplistic European flair. The wood was straight-lined, dark, and sleek. The walls were copper tinted with gold as a strong undercurrent in the design. The floor to ceiling windows overlooked the bay and provided a bright, cheerful space but at night, it would probably be more subdued and sophisticated.

He sat on a utilitarian but surprisingly comfortable couch. In front of him were an ice bucket, a bottle of tonic water, a bottle of Tanqueray, and a plate of limes. He took one of the crystal glasses from a tray and made himself a T&T. There was a pack of Dunhill's on the table so he lit one and breathed in deeply. Thirty minutes ago he had been cold, bruised, near death in a sanitary version of hell. If he were going to die, he'd prefer this environment.

He stood, drink in hand, and walked to the windows. The sun was seemingly held

by a thread above the far horizon and brilliant orange spat out across the tranquil sea. The hulking black Bentley Silhouette was nowhere to be seen. So, the doctor was right; this wasn't going to be Cordero's play. Maybe he would catch up to him later.

The door opened behind him and in strolled Inara Fabre followed by the lawyer McIntosh and finally—with little surprise to Whitte—the snake, Hammed bin Abdul Rahman bin Al-Fa'sad, dressed as before in a dark suit, white starched shirt and sporting a pair of Fendi aviators protecting his snake-like eyes. McIntosh bore a wide smile, gone the olive suit, replaced by khakis and a white sports shirt. He strode across the room and held out his hand to Whitte. Whitte refused to take it.

“No?” McIntosh kept his smile. “Well, I bring ya good news, my friend.” He chuckled. “We found a killer and ya goin' ta get ta go free.” His smile was broader now as he turned and walked over to a desk along the far wall. He sat and opened a drawer and removed a stack of papers. He looked back at Whitte. “I'm really more comfortable with corporate law.” His carefree Caribbean lilt was gone, replaced by British prep-school confidence.

Behind Al-Fa'sad, another shadowy figure lurked. It was Brighton. Something in Whitte made him want to slap the smirk from his face. Instead, he returned to the couch and sat. It was the rudest gesture he could think of.

Al-Fa'sad nodded at Inara. She pushed a button on the wall and a thin veil rose through the middle of the double-paned glass, diluting the sun in the room. She pushed another button and muted light filtered from the ceiling. Al-Fa'sad removed his sunglasses.

“Mr. Whitte,” he pronounced as if annoyed. He did not offer his hand. Instead, he

sat on the couch opposite him as if to return the insult. Inara and Brighton remained standing.

“Cut the pretense. Call me Jack or Whitte.”

The snake’s mouth cracked a small bit. “I’d prefer to call you dead.”

Whitte did not react.

“No? You don’t think I’m going to kill you?”

Whitte shrugged his shoulders. “There’s no profit in it for you. I know what you want and I’m prepared to give it to you.”

This brought a smile to the snake but it was not from delight. “What is it you think I want? Your company?” He nodded. “I would have been happy with the status quo. WI allows us to pass through fifty million dollars a year into your country. That is a lot of money, even to you, Whitte. I do not want to give that up but if we had to, it would be no problem. There are dozens of U.S. corporate interests that we control in such a manner. We would have to increase the amounts through each company, possibly raising some suspicions but not enough to truly threaten us. Yes. I do want your company and irrespective your father’s machinations in Singapore, I will still have it. It will be sloppy.” He waved his hand then leaned forward and hissed, “*Mais, c'est la guerre.*” Then he nodded his head and sat back. “What I really want is my pound of flesh.”

Whitte finished the last gulp of his T&T. “Care for one?” When Al-Fa’sad didn’t respond he glanced up to Brighton who was glaring at Whitte. “Guess not.” He grabbed a clean glass and made another for himself. “I have a pound of flesh I would like to extract as well, Ali. Maybe you tell me yours and I’ll tell you mine.” He lit a cigarette and let the

smoke clear over Al-Fa'sad's head.

"Maybe as I tell you my story, you would like to watch some television?"

He nodded at Inara who picked up a remote control from a bookcase to Whitte's left. She pointed it at a flat screen mounted above the bookcases. She punched in a number and a split screen appeared. Both views were from ceiling mounted cameras. On the left was a naked man sitting in a room much like the one Whitte had been lead from. He too had his hands and legs bound, his head was slumped down and all that could be seen was his back. On the other screen was an operating table with a naked woman strapped to it, face up, legs spread. It was Amber Brown.

"Your father and Tiffany Marks. Two people I understand you hold dear."

Whitte stood and was about to move for Al-Fa'sad when Brighton removed a gun from his coat pocket and aimed it at Whitte's chest. "I would love nothing more than to pull this trigger, Whitte." His eyes were fire. "Sit."

Al-Fa'sad opened his jacket and inside was a small caliber weapon in a shoulder holster. "I would prefer this portion of our chat remain cordial."

"Don't forget about me, either, Mr. Whitte." McIntosh, still with reading glasses perched on his nose, pointed a handgun toward the general direction of Jack.

"Are you packing, too, Inara?" Whitte asked. She didn't respond. "You sure are a cold bitch. Your buddies here have tortured me. They're about to torture those closest to me. Remind me never to do business with you again. You suck as a business partner."

Her eyes betrayed no emotion as she examined Whitte but there did seem to be an edge to them that he hadn't seen since their discussion at his cabana. Perhaps there was

slight amount of humanity to her. He shrugged.

As Whitte sat back down, he felt a sense of warmth come over him. It had to be the pain reliever that the doctor had shot into him. With the addition of the gin, he was beginning to feel invincible. He set aside the glass. He shouldn't get stoned, and then thought better of it and took a long belt and began to fix another. "So tell me your story, you sick fuck."

Al-Fa'sad stood and sauntered over to the window. While the glass was heavily shaded now, the bay and the brilliant sunset were still visible. The Egyptian lingered at the vision. "Time is precious," he said, as if to himself only. He remained at the window, staring blankly as words entered his mind and the story took vision. "You see, my father helped the British during World War II and as the Germans were forced from our lands, the new master, Great Britain now stood on our necks. They were benevolent but all the same, they were our masters. For his help, my father was granted a bank that had been recaptured from the Germans, and, with the British help, it grew to one of the largest financial institutions in the Middle East. As we gained control over our Egyptian homeland, petrodollars flowed through us, strengthening us and legitimizing my father's decision to choose sides. By the early eighties, we had truly grown too large to remain regional. We could grow no more until exposed to new markets, European markets. By now, of course, my father's interest in the institution was waning and I was being trained to take over, much like you, Jack. My father decided that for the health of the company we should seek a merger partner. I liked the idea because, much like you, Jack, I had grown weary of the pressures and responsibilities forced upon me by a business that never slept." He then

motioned to McIntosh who stood and moved to a side cabinet and opened it, revealing a bar. He took a bottle of amber liquid and poured it into a glass and gave it to Al-Fa'sad as he continued to speak.

“There was a financial institution in London, much the same as us, wanting access to the Middle East. It was begun by a man who had served the intelligence community well during the war and had been granted,” he said as he took a sip, “and when I say granted I mean by the kings that are behind the kings who choose our Western leaders, these are the people who granted this man, Jonathan Brighton, Senior, this business. He grew it just as my father grew his. By the seventies he was ready to turn it over to his son, as my father was turning ours over to me. But his son, Jonathon the second, liked playing with fairies,” he glanced over at Brighton with a measure of disgust but Brighton kept his eyes on Whitte the entire time, “and had no interest in business and so the powers proposed a merger between the two houses.” He tossed the drink back into his throat. He no longer concerned himself with the guilt of adapting to the West and their dependence upon alcohol. Allah understood for Al-Fa'sad adapted to these ways to serve his God.

“Our Group—and mind you we really do not have a name and so calling ourselves *the Group* is really the only way to define our movement—can be quite medieval and so to unite these two financial houses, a marriage was arranged between Brighton's son and my daughter. Brighton's son is closer to my age and so when he was given a young and beautiful wife the belief was that interest would grow and the man would mature, consummate the marriage and begin taking an interest in our shared business. However on the wedding night, it was proven that he had no interest in women.

“Now, my daughter was quite a wild mare and the thought of marrying anyone, especially arranged by my father, sickened her and so, after being pushed into a relationship with this despicable man, she ran away. She ran to America but left a trail and my father’s people found her quite quickly. However, before they were able to put her on a plane, she disappeared for a second time and we had much greater difficulty locating her.” He walked to the desk where McIntosh had returned and poured himself another drink.

“My daughter was crafty. Not only did she want out of our family but she wanted to punish us. Her way of punishing us was to hit us at our heart and so the only way to do that was to commit a sin so great in my father’s eyes...” he paused for a sip, “but my eyes as well. She made herself available to the child of a business partner.”

His head shook and he closed his eyes. He took another sip of the liquor and nodded. “This boy violated her in everyway imaginable.” He glanced toward Brighton and nodded. Brighton replaced his gun and turned and left, closing the door behind him.

“It’s what you Americans say about lemons, you make lemonade, right?” He gulped the last of the drink. “We made lemonade.” He nodded.

“I’m afraid I dealt with her in the ways of my father. I should have never done that.” Al-Fa’sad paused and then nodded. “She later told me, after I punished her, that she believed the boy to be pure and that he and the father would protect her.” He turned back to McIntosh. “When I finish this story, you will sign the documents that Mr. McIntosh has prepared. Afterward, your father too, will sign them.”

He motioned toward the television. Whitte turned his gaze. In the room that held Amber, the door opened and in marched a man the size of a barn. His arms were oak trees,

his legs pedestals of granite. His gray hair was long, pulled tight into a ponytail and on his right forearm was a tattoo of a black cobra wrapped tightly around a crimson crescent moon. As he entered, he paused and looked up to the camera and smiled. It was the man that Jack had never forgot. It was Azra'il, the Angle of Death.