

Chapter 1

Jonathon and Sophia got off the jet, and walked over to their car, where Tony, their driver, was waiting for them. They were exhausted, but happier than they'd ever been. They were coming home after the first cruise on their new boat, the *Lady Sophia*, which had been more fun than they'd ever imagined, or even hoped. They had entertained almost nonstop, picking up friends at different ports in the Caribbean. The boat itself was a 250 foot megayacht, and as comfortable as any home. Their chef was extraordinarily creative and skilled, and the crew was happy, willing, and exceedingly competent. So they had eaten like sultans, played, seen beautiful tropical islands, shopped and generally just had a wonderful, carefree time.

They got to the house, made a quick snack, and then headed for the bedroom and a good night's rest. On the way, Jonathon did a quick tour around the house, turning off the lights. He climbed into his bed, gave Sophia a quick peck on the cheek, and was asleep almost before his head hit the pillow.



Eight men, in two boats, were sitting about three hundred yards away from the beach. They were all dressed in black, with camouflage paint on their faces. The inflatable boats were black, and loaded with explosives, guns and ammunition. Two of the men had binoculars trained on the house, watching Jonathon as he went from room to room, turning off the lights. At three o'clock in the morning, they started their boats and headed straight for the strip of white sand in front of Jonathon's house. They pulled the boats up on the beach, and six of the men planted the explosives on the house, while two men stood guard. A knowledgeable person observing the scene would have been astonished by the amount of explosives the men used, as the quantity was great enough to completely obliterate several buildings larger than this one home. Another curious fact was the inclusion of white phosphorous explosive, something that would create a raging inferno in whatever was left after the main explosion had reduced the structure to sticks. The men finished their work, got back in their boats, and headed down the coast to a clearing, where a helicopter was waiting for them. They got out of their boats and turned them back toward the sea with the throttles jammed forward. Then they got into the helicopter and lifted off, flying back towards the house. One man pushed the red button on a small remote control he was holding, and, as the helicopter hovered, an enormous explosion, accompanied by a huge fire, erupted at the house. Given the force of the munitions, it was very clear that no one in the house could have survived. The man dialed a satellite phone, and after three rings it was answered. "It's done," said the man, and he hung up.



Jericho. That one word in the Subject line of an email comprised the total message. Both John Clements and Fred Atkins, Jonathon's pilots, got the email, as did Larry, Alison, Bobby Thomas, Toby Wagner, and Vladimir Baryshnikov. John and Fred went to the airport, and flew Jonathon's Gulfstream 650 to Paris. Bobby Thomas immediately sent a four man protective detail to the home of Jose and Rosa Flores, in San Diego, and another team of eight men to Larry's ranch and company headquarters in Montana. Meanwhile Larry and Liz went to the airport in Bozeman, and boarded a Gulfstream 5, piloted by Toby. This plane was bound for Paris. Finally, Alison and Diego drove to a small airport in North Carolina, where they boarded a Gulfstream 5 that was also headed for Paris. When they landed, Larry and Liz, who had arrived just thirty minutes earlier, met them, and the four of them boarded a waiting, unmarked helicopter. They landed an hour later inside the gates of a large estate, the focal point of which was a picturesque French chateau. And it was here that they first experienced one of the many unusual events that defined the next several months.

They all climbed out of the helicopter while the co-pilot got their luggage, and set the bags on the lawn. Just then, the large glass and wrought iron doors at the front of the chateau flew open, and four young men, all dressed in white, ran to the helicopter and retrieved their bags. They took the bags to the door, quickly sorted them, and then stopped, waiting for the group of four people. While they waited, a large man appeared, just inside the doors. He was about six feet, four inches tall, had a full beard, and blue eyes, flecked with silver. He was dressed in white, wore a white turban with a scarlet sash, and was of indeterminate age. He stood quietly until Larry, Liz, Alison and Diego got to the doorway.

"Gentle people, we welcome you," he rumbled in a deep, mellifluous voice. "My name is Kulbir Thapa, and I will be your host until we know Jonathon's fate. These four gentlemen," he said, pointing at the four young men who had gotten their bags, "will be your personal stewards. If you need or want anything, simply push the appropriate button on one of the iPads you will see throughout the home, and your steward will see immediately to your need or desire. I also have a package for each couple, and you will find that in your rooms. So let us proceed."

With that, he waved at the idling helicopter and it took off. Then he motioned toward the four men in white, who picked up the bags, and led the guests up a wide, curving marble staircase to their rooms. Each of these rooms had a sitting room furnished with two chairs and a sofa, all clad in brightly colored floral upholstery, a small, fully stocked bar, a bedroom and his-and-her bathrooms. The sitting room also included a large balcony overlooking the estate's formal gardens, and past the gardens, a large pool and pool house.

When Larry and Liz were shown to their room, the first thing Larry noted was a large manila envelope lying on the table between the two chairs in the sitting room. He quickly opened it, and found a phone and a note.

Dear Larry and Liz:

Well, the day has come, as I suspected it would, and you are now ensconced in one of several safe houses I have around the world. My grandfather built and established these homes in anticipation of unpleasant events like those that bring you here today. And while I have no way of knowing, the comprehensive nature of the precautions I've taken to survive an attack afford me pretty good odds.

With respect to specifics, the man who met you at the door is one of the most fierce and loyal people imaginable. He is the son of a Ghurka officer, and was rescued from the Taliban by my grandfather. He had been tortured and left for dead when Grandfather found him, and he was really not much more than a child. When he recovered, he returned to Afghanistan and led a grisly, gruesome campaign against the Taliban until he finally accepted my grandfather's offer to work with him. And I must tell you that I, and all my SEAL friends, are a complete bunch of pussies compared to Kulbir. So, my friends, you are in good hands.

Now, please do the following for me. Call your friend Peter Nicholas, the man who manages all my business affairs. Tell him that my fate is uncertain, and that until that uncertainty is cleared, you, Larry, are the boss. When you call him, do not use my name, and give no information with regard to your location. Also, use only the phone in this package. Peter is not to call you, but can receive calls on a phone that has been sent to him.

And finally, both you and Liz have been wonderful friends, and together, have made my life much richer. With any luck, I'll see you in a week or so. Until then, keep the faith.

Jonathon

The note to Alison and Diego was similar in tone and substance, except there was no mention of a phone, and there was more emphasis on patience. As soon as everyone was settled in their rooms, they all went downstairs and found Kulbir waiting for them.

"I assume that you must be hungry," he said, "and would also like a tour of the house and grounds. So I thought I would show you around the estate, and then we can repair to the butler's pantry, where a full sandwich buffet is being laid out. If this plan is acceptable, follow me"

They spent the next thirty minutes on their tour, and were astonished by the size and style of their temporary home. Each of the home's rooms was elegant in design, and furnished in the best of taste. Their last stop on the tour was the butler's pantry, situated right off the stainless steel and glass kitchen. The pantry held a table seating eight people, and was painted a beautiful, sunny yellow, with coordinated upholstery and window treatments. On the table were four large silver platters holding a variety of breads, cheeses, fruit and sliced meats. Silver ice buckets held bottles of champagne and white wine, while a crystal decanter was filled with a red wine. On the whole, it was an extraordinarily elegant setting. After they were all seated, with plates overflowing, Kulbir left the room, and the four of them were alone.

"Well," said Larry, "does anyone know where we are?"

“Hell no,” retorted Diego, “but I’ve got a general idea. We flew southeast from Paris, and we’re in what looks like the French Alps somewhere. My guess is that we’re in the general area of Grenoble, but that’s just a guess.”

“Wherever we are, what are we supposed to do now?” asked Alison.

“The note I got from Jonathon said that they’d be here in about a week, so I say we just wait it out, and enjoy our spectacular surroundings,” replied Larry.

And so they did. Or at least they tried.



The four people in the room were nervous, jittery, and unhappy, still having heard nothing. They’d now been waiting three days, and nerves were wearing thin. No one from their professional lives would have recognized them. Larry Green and Elizabeth Galati were thought to be the two best minds in the country with respect to decryption analysis, and technology matters in general. As such, they were regarded as cold, analytical machines by most of their professional contacts. Alison Chambers ran the blackest of black ops programs at the CIA, while Diego Rodriguez, a former SEAL, was both her bodyguard and companion. The very few people who had contact with Alison and Diego found them intimidating, and a little scary. But today, they all looked and acted like four scared little kids.

“So,” began Larry, “has anyone heard from Jonathon or Sophia?”

“Nope,” said Diego. “Not a word. But really, I’m still not too worried, yet. Jonathon was ready for this to happen, and based on my talks with him, he was surprised it hadn’t happened sooner. Given the things he’s done, and the businesses he’s in, he has pissed off a lot of people. And he knew it. Another thing is that Jonathon faced situations like this all the time when he was in Afghanistan, and he survived that.”

The four people talked, gossiped and speculated for the remainder of the day. When cocktail hour came, one of the stewards rolled a large, portable bar into the room where they had situated themselves, and everyone partook liberally. They drank until supper was served, and, following the meal, the group retired to their respective rooms, anxious, a little drunk and full from a wonderful supper. The following day was much like the day before, but quieter as hangovers were nursed. They had awakened that day full of anxiety and somewhat ill tempered, as the stress got to them. They retired that night grumpy, nervous, humorless and, more than anything else, frustrated.

The morning of the fifth day was one they all remembered for the rest of their lives. They had all met at the top of the stairs heading down to the main floor, and it was an extremely irritable group that convened in the butler’s pantry. A light breakfast was laid out, and Liz had just put a single croissant on her plate when she heard a familiar voice.

“Hey Liz, is that all you’re going to have?”

She turned around to see both Jonathon and Sophia smiling happily, just like always. She was so startled that she dropped her plate in her rush to hug Sophia. Both Larry and Diego ran over to Jonathon, while Alison just started hugging

everyone. It was an exceptionally happy reunion, and the six people just stood there, rattling on with joy, until Jonathon raised his arms and got them all to quiet down.

“Get some food, guys, then let’s head for the sitting room and we’ll tell you our story. Francois,” he said to the steward standing there, “please bring us some mimosas, and keep everybody’s glass full until we’re done.”

The group of happy people moved into a room overlooking the garden, glasses were filled, and Jonathon told his tale.

“Well folks, it’s been an exciting few days. As Larry knows, I’ve got a very sophisticated security system at home, and it saved our hides this time. If anyone, or any thing, gets close to the house, the tablet beside my bed tells me where they are. In this case, Sophia and I had gone to bed early, exhausted from our boating escapades, as well as the plane ride. Then about three in the morning, the alarm system went crazy, indicating that there were people all around the house. So I hit the button sending the email, and Sophia and I made for our escape hatch, which is a tunnel extending from our house to the house across the street. The entrance to the tunnel is the floor of the closet, and once that hatch is closed, it’s closed and invisible. In any event, we ran through the tunnel and into our safe house, which I bought at the same time as I bought our place. I’ve kept it maintained, and anybody watching the neighborhood would just see a nice, well-maintained place that was empty except for a skeleton staff, a very common situation in Monaco. We’d just gotten into the safe house when there was a huge explosion and fire at our place, which is now just a pile of rubble. We spent a day there in case anyone was watching, and then put on wigs and old clothes, hopped into an old, ratty car I keep there, and started driving this way. We doubled back from time to time to check for tails, and spent a few nights in some pretty crappy little hotels. We finally got confident that whoever blew up the house was absolutely sure that we were dead, and then got here as quickly as we could. And so we’re here, happy to be alive and madder than hell at whoever did this. And I apologize to all of you for uprooting you from your homes. But if Alison’s right about a mole in the Agency, I don’t think anyone is safe. Given the nature of the attack, its military precision and cost, I think there’s a real chance she’s right. And that’s our tale.”

“So what are you going to do now?” asked Larry.

“I want to know who the hell did this. Sophia’s pissed and I’m pissed, and I want to get to the bottom of this before somebody gets hurt. So here’s my proposal. I’d like Alison and Diego to go to Monaco, and talk to a friend of mine who’s a cop there. Maybe they’ve found some clues, or maybe they haven’t. But we won’t know until we ask. Sophia has called Vladimir, and he’s fit to be tied. I’m gonna see if he’ll come here tomorrow, and we can talk to him. As for you and Liz, you’re free to do whatever you want, but I would be very appreciative if you would consider staying here for a while. The kids that work at your company in Montana are safe, so you’ve nothing to worry about there.”

“Gees, Jonathon,” said Larry, “of course we’re in. And I know the business is safe. The NSA can’t afford to lose us.”

“Who exactly do you want us to see in Monaco?” asked Alison.

“His name is Jacques Arnoult, and he’s a good man. He’s also former military. Just call him, tell him we were friends of yours, and he’ll be delighted to see you. He’s an interesting guy.”

“Okay, so when do we go?”

“Give him a call and set up an appointment. I’ll get you a helicopter when you’re ready to go. And by the way, while I really value your help, I don’t want to impose on you in any way, shape or form.”

“Oh for the love of Pete,” Alison said. “I’m the one that was trying to drag you into helping me find the mole. And I don’t know if he or she is connected to this mess, but I need to know. Happily, only one person at the Agency knows I exist, and I know he isn’t the mole. If there is a mole, he or she must be very senior, based on the stuff that’s caused me to believe a mole does exist. In any event, I’m trying to say that I’m in this until we get it solved.”

“Thanks for saying that, Alison,” said Sophia. “We need the help, and I like working with you.”

“Well, what about you, Diego?” asked Jonathon.

Diego smiled. “Somebody’s got to keep the blond firecracker safe and grounded,” he said, referring to Alison, “and I’m the man for the job. And just for the record, I’m a little offended that you even asked.”

“Okay, great. I guess that this will be our little band of warriors then. So let’s spend the rest of the day recounting in minute detail everything we know. Uncle Vladimir will be here tomorrow afternoon, I hope, and if we could get a report from you, Alison, that might be very helpful.”

“Done. I’ll call Jacques right now and we’ll try to get to Monaco tomorrow morning,” said Alison.



The boat was old and weathered from many years of use. Claude Benoit, who owned the boat, was old and weathered as well, but he and his boat were highly regarded by the restaurant owners in the city. The fish he brought to market every afternoon were fresh, and without bruises. Local chefs vied with one another to purchase his fish for their sumptuous, gourmet dishes, pleasing to both the palate and the eye. But on this day, his catch was rather unusual. He towed what appeared to be an almost new, twenty-foot inflatable boat into the harbor, and tied up to his usual spot. Then he called his friend, Jacques Arnoult, at the police station, and asked him to come to the harbor. The boat would bring the fisherman a lot of money if he sold it, but he wanted to be sure he could sell it legally.

Jacques walked down the pier to Claude’s boat. Jacques was about five feet, ten inches tall and very thin. A large, bushy mustache decorated his gaunt face, giving him an almost comical air, suggestive of Groucho Marx. But despite his casual demeanor, Jacques was a serious man. He’d been in the French Foreign Legion, and then he had done a stint as a mercenary in Africa. The horrible things he’d seen there had a profound and lasting effect on him, and he left that occupation to become a policeman, focusing on solving crimes involving blood diamonds. Monte

Carlo was a fertile field for that type of work. So when Claude had called with a report on the inflatable, it seemed natural for him to investigate, for a couple of reasons. First, he guessed this boat might have been part of a smuggling operation. Second, he always wanted to accord Claude respect, as Claude had been very helpful to him in reporting odd happenings on the seas near Monte Carlo.

“Good morning, Claude. It looks like you’ve caught a big one today,” Jacques said, motioning toward the inflatable. “Where did you find it?”

“About ten miles offshore,” Claude replied. “It was just drifting around. I tried to start it, but I think it’s out of gas. And then I got the hell off it, because I noticed this stuff.” He pointed to what looked like little white bricks attached to the pontoons.

“Holy shit,” Jacques exclaimed. “We need to call the bomb squad. That looks like C-4 plastic explosive to me, and that amount would make a pretty bad mess if it went off here. So don’t touch anything.”

The men from the bomb squad arrived very quickly, and expertly removed the explosives. Two men carrying gear to take fingerprints closely followed them, and the boat got a detailed inspection lasting nearly two hours. The net result of that inspection was, after identifying and eliminating the prints left by Claude, a single fingerprint and a stick of Wintergreen gum. And that was it. Jacques was intrigued when the job was done. It appeared to him that someone must have used the boat to get to shore, then turned it back to the sea where it would explode and sink, erasing any sign of its existence. But why that would happen in Monaco was something of a mystery. It seemed to Jacques that this looked like a military operation, and that made no sense at all. And then he thought of his friend Jonathon, and the explosion that had taken his life, wondering if these two things might be connected. Jacques decided then and there that he needed to get to the bottom of this. The boat was a thread, and he was going to pull that thread until something unraveled.



There are two kinds of black operations. The term is applied to operations like the attack on Bin Laden. In that case, the operation was a closely guarded secret because of the fear of alerting the target, as well as the fact that the operation involved violating Pakistan’s sovereign status. The term is also applied to operations about which the political establishment wants to know nothing. The President sanctioned the Bin Laden operation. But the President finds out about other operations when the *Washington Post* reports the assassination of a loathsome dictator. Nobody in Washington wants to know how that killing happened. So it fell to Alison Chambers to organize and oversee these blackest of black operations. In order to provide maximum operational security, her identity was known to only one person in the CIA, and virtually no one else. She had a budget that comprised small chunks of every secret military budget, and no one other than Alison knew either the full amount of that budget, or how it got spent. It was a lonely, dangerous job. Fortunately, she was exceptionally capable, and she truly loved her work. The fact

that her bodyguard was a handsome, retired navy SEAL, as well as her boyfriend, made her life much safer and more pleasant than it might otherwise be.

As the helicopter descended for landing, Diego spotted a Bentley convertible, with a driver, sitting at the edge of the landing pad. He and Alison got out of the helicopter and walked to the waiting car.

“Hey there, you must be Tony,” said Diego.

“I am indeed. Hop in, and I’ll take you to the police station.”

Alison and Diego got in the back seat, and twenty minutes later were deposited at the front of a beautiful, stone building.

“Just go on in,” said Tony. “He’s waiting for you.”

Alison and Diego walked up the stone steps, and presented themselves at the front desk. A few minutes later, Jacques walked up to them.

“My name is Jacques Arnoult, and you must be Alison and Diego. Come on back to my office,” he said, leading the way.

They sat down, and Jacques came right to the point. “You said you wanted to talk to me regarding the tragic events of last week. Jonathon and Sophia were great friends of mine, and I’m anxious to do anything I can to solve the mystery of what happened. So tell me what you need.”

As he was speaking, he watched both Alison and Diego carefully. Alison was a beautiful woman, and carried herself in a dignified and formal manner. And to his trained eye, it was clear that her companion, Diego, was a military man of some sort, probably Special Forces. He was also reasonably confident that they were both armed, based on some peculiar bulges he noticed in their attire. He decided that, regardless of what they said, there was much more here than it appeared. It also occurred to Jacques that this was true of almost everyone he’d met through Jonathon and Sophia.

“Well, really, we’re just nosing around,” said Alison. “Jonathon was a great friend, and we both just loved Sophia. So we’re curious to know if you’ve been able to make any progress in figuring out what happened.”

“I’m happy to say that you’ve come at the perfect time,” replied Jacques. “This morning I got the first break in solving this puzzle. At least I think I have.” He then went on to relay the story about the inflatable boat.

“Now, I know this doesn’t sound like much. But I ran the fingerprint through every database I could think of, and got nothing. So, on a whim, I ran it through the City of Paris police department’s database, and got lucky. It seems like our mysterious boat owner got picked up for driving while intoxicated, and now I’ve got a picture and a name. Then I called one of my friends in the department, and got quite a report. It seems that this man was very drunk, and according to the arresting officers, was a very tough customer. And he chewed gum like crazy, Winteregreen gum. There is no doubt that this guy was on the boat. Here’s everything we’ve got on him,” Jacques said, handing Alison a large envelope. “So while this is a start, I know very little else.”

“Thank you very much,” said Diego. “And we’ll be sure to let you know about anything we might dig up.”

On their way back to the helicopter, Diego took out the photo and stared at it.

“Alison, I know this guy. He’s a former Delta Force operator, and now he’s a mercenary. And he is one mean son of a bitch.”

“I know,” replied Alison, “because I actually tried to hire him for a job, but he said he was too busy. I hope you know how mad this will make Sophia, and she’s already plenty pissed off.”

“Maybe we should just clue Jonathon in, and let him handle Sophia. I’m telling you, that lady scares me a little.”

Alison laughed. “You, Mr. Rodriguez, are turning into a complete pussy. But I think you’re right about this.”



Alison and Diego had just returned, and the whole group was sitting down for dinner, when they heard the approaching helicopter. Sophia ran out of the chateau, and hugged her uncle Vladimir as he got out of the helicopter. Then they both ran over to the rest of the group as they came out of the building. Vladimir was joyous at seeing Sophia looking so well, and he even grabbed Jonathon and gave him a big hug, something he’d never done before. They all went back in the house and sat down at the table, quickly moving plates around to add another place.

“Jonathon,” said Vladimir, “I salute you on your escape. To be candid, when I got your email, I was more than a little irritated, and alarmed. And then, when I heard the full story about what had happened at the house, I was sure you had finally gotten my beloved niece killed. I’m obviously happy that you didn’t, but more than that, I’m very impressed with the steps you took to make a clean escape from an ugly situation. I guess I shouldn’t have been surprised, but I was. Now, have you made any progress in figuring out who did this, and why?”

“We haven’t, and that’s because I really can’t figure out why someone would go to all this trouble just to kill me. I know I’ve pissed off a lot of people, but I’ve never pissed off someone who would have the ability to put together an operation like this. That’s particularly true of drug dealers. About the most sophisticated attack directed against me was when Adolph attacked us on the boat.” Jonathon was referring to an event a year earlier when a drug dealer mounted an attack on a boat on which Jonathon was cruising the Caribbean. “So if we rule out those guys, who’s left?”

Vladimir smiled. “You know, one of the things I like about you the most is how personally unaware you are. When I first heard that Sophia had taken up with you, I was not the least bit happy. But as I’ve gotten to know you, it turns out that you are almost completely unknowing about your potential to incur jealousy and hatred. For example, people that are as rich as you are tend to be real dicks, and allow their money to define themselves. But you have avoided that problem, and instead have turned out to be a very nice, selfless person whom I am delighted to have as part of my family. I say this to note the fact that, in spite of your redeeming qualities, there are a whole lot of people who fear and envy you, and the list of people who would love to see you put in what they regard as your proper place is

quite lengthy. So let's widen our scope in trying to figure out who might want you killed."

Jonathon was surprised by Vladimir's declaration, as was Sophia. She'd never, in her entire life, heard Vladimir speak of anyone in this fashion, and didn't really know he even thought about things like this. Sophia knew her uncle Vladimir as the head of the FSB, and as such, he was a stony, cold man. And even though he showed Sophia all the love of which he was capable, he was not a tender man.

"Thank you, sir," Jonathon replied, "and I will work hard to never disappoint you. And as for Sophia, well, I'll do anything in my power to make her happy. She's an extraordinary, wonderful woman, who has brought me a peace and happiness that I thought I would never experience after my time in Afghanistan. But, for now, let's get back to figuring out who it is that's currently trying to kill us."

"Alison has raised the issue of a mole at the Agency, and I suspect that she is on to something. Any number of times I have given her solid information on near term events that never materialized. Monies were not transferred, robberies didn't happen, assassins never showed up. All of these cases smelled like information had been leaked. But there's no way on earth that anyone could know that I had relayed information to Alison."

"Yeah, that's right," said Alison. "People in the Agency don't even know that I'm a source most of the time."

"And even if someone did know I was passing information to Alison, why kill me, particularly in an operation so expensive and large?" said Jonathon. "So that makes me think that there is something else at work here."

"On that point, let us give you the report on our trip to Monaco," said Alison. "Jacques was very nice, and quite informative. To be specific, it seems that Jacques has turned up a real lead on the attackers, and it confirms our belief that this was a well-organized military attack. Jacques was also able to give us information on one of the men in the attack group."

Alison passed around the information and picture Jacques had given her. Vladimir seemed unusually interested in the materials, and stared at the picture for a long while before he raised his head and smiled.

"People, I know exactly where this guy is," he said. "So I think we should go get him. And by the way, Jonathon, when I first got here, I caught a glimpse of a man I think I know. Is that great big guy with the turban Kulbir Thapa?"

"It is, but how on earth do you know him?"

"Because he and your grandfather saved my life once. I was in Afghanistan, and got captured by the Taliban. They tortured me for a few days, and had decided to send me home piece by piece. Then this giant young man appeared on the scene, and the Taliban were absolutely terrified. They were terrified because this young man, Kulbir Thapa, had killed so many tribesmen, so brutally, that he had become a legend. So the Taliban that had me just took off. About that time your grandfather showed up, and to my incredible surprise, Kulbir was completely deferential to him. Well to make a long story short, that was how I met your grandfather and Kulbir. And let me tell you, Jonathon, regardless of the reputation you acquired in Afghanistan, you're just a pissant compared to Kulbir. You are incredibly lucky to have him working for you."

“But why did my grandfather care about what happened to you. This all seems very strange to me.”

“I obviously thought it was as well. But your grandfather told me that he thought it might be a good idea to open communication channels between organizations on our side and his side. I was a brand new recruit for the KGB then, and I thought he was trying to recruit me. As a result, I got kind of shitty with him. But he never mentioned the subject of recruiting me. He just wanted to open those channels of communication. And in the years that followed, I was damn glad to have them. He and I probably stopped a nuclear war between our two countries because of those channels. Well, enough of that shit. Let’s go get our guy. His name is Randolph, I think.”