

# CHAPTER

# 1

NALAM PHARMACEUTICAL WAREHOUSE  
MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES

**C**raak!  
The bullet came within an inch of Diane Connors's head before it buried itself in the crate beside her.

Shit! She had to get out of here.

Those bastards had taken her completely unaware. No warning. The two security guards were supposed to be gone another five minutes while they completed their rounds of the warehouse. She would have been gone if they'd just kept to their damn schedule.

She tucked her camera into her jacket, then grabbed a handful of manila files out of the file drawer before she bolted toward the steps leading to the back entrance, where the driver of the truck was waiting for her.

Another shot! This one hit the railing of the steps beside her and ricocheted into the wall ahead of her.

The guards were shouting now, and she heard them cursing and the sound of their boots on the wood floor behind her.

“Stop! I’ll blow your head off!”

Why stop? He’d probably do it anyway, she thought desperately.

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The Nalam security guards were notorious for not thinking twice about firing on anyone breaking into the property. She'd known that when she'd made the decision.

And they were gaining on her!

She ran faster. Her heart was pounding, threatening to jump out of her chest. The door for the parking lot was just ahead, beyond a row of cardboard cartons.

Two more shots!

She was at the door, jerking it open. The truck was outside in the lot several feet below her, but she didn't bother running down the metal steps.

No time.

She braced herself and then launched her body into the bed of the vehicle. She hit hard.

*Pain!*

Her shoulder . . .

"Go, Manos!" she shouted to the driver. "Get the hell out of here!"

Another bullet hit the metal cab of the truck.

She saw two uniformed guards standing at the spot from which she'd just leaped. They were aiming at her again.

But Manos had almost reached the gates.

Then they were through and on their way toward the pier!

There might be pursuit, but Manos had arranged to have a boat waiting for her. With luck, she'd be on the high seas by the time those guards reached the pier.

And so far, luck had been with her. Her hand slipped into her jacket pocket to make certain she still had her camera, then tightened on the manila folders she'd taken from the file cabinet. She'd gotten what she'd come for tonight. She hadn't been shot. She might have a broken or sprained shoulder, but she'd gladly accept that in exchange for making it to the boat.

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Yes, luck was definitely with her, and she'd soon be on her way to Alon and the island...

### HAKALI ISLAND SOUTH SEAS

"Your shoulder's not broken," Alon said curtly. "Just a bad sprain. Better than you deserve. How did it happen?"

Diane flinched as he finished bandaging her shoulder. It just showed how angry he was that he wasn't being gentle with her. Alon Hakali was never anything but kind to her or anyone else with whom he came in contact. "The way you warned me it might happen. I got caught trying to steal the file on Kai."

Alon swore softly but his touch was suddenly no longer rough. "You're an idiot, Diane. You've come so far, and yet you'd risk everything to get those damn records? I told you to forget about them. They might not tell me anything."

"And they might tell you everything. You told me yourself that they were the only evidence left that might give you a hint of where Nalam stashed Kai. They were important." She tried to keep her tone light. "Because I knew it was only a matter of time before you went after those records yourself. They were sitting there in that office like bait for the tiger. Which probably is exactly what it was. Well, they didn't get you and they didn't get me. But there was no way I could forget them."

"And so you broke into that warehouse and tried to steal them. You could have gotten yourself killed. Those contractors who guard Nalam's properties don't hesitate to shoot first and ask questions later."

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“I’d heard that, and I found out it was true,” she said wryly. “But I’d already taken photos of the document and was on my way out of the warehouse when they started to shoot. They only managed to force me to duck a couple of bullets and then brace myself as I jumped into the back of the truck I had waiting.” She smiled. “You would’ve been proud of me, Alon.”

“No, I would’ve been terrified,” he said soberly. “Nalam is a monster, and no one knows that better than I do. You might not have gotten shot, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be ramifications. They saw you tonight. That means I might be safer, but you won’t. You knew that would happen, didn’t you?”

“I thought there would be a possibility.” She shrugged. “I hired Leo Manos to get me out of Manila. He’s a professional, but someone might track him down. And there are so many super-duper surveillance gadgets these days, and Nalam certainly has the money to afford them in all his warehouses. I tried to avoid the cameras and disguise myself as much as possible. But one of his cameras might have caught me, and I’m not that good at disguises. Then there’s trace evidence . . .” She made a face. “Yeah, I made a choice. But you shouldn’t be so rude as to ignore what’s important here.” She reached into her backpack and pulled out her camera. “I brought you a gift.” She handed it to him. “Now say, ‘Thank you, Diane.’”

“Thank you, Diane.” He cleared his throat. “Even though it’s much more important to keep you safe than it is me. The first thing Nalam is going to do is find out what’s missing and then figure out why and who might have done it. No one knew anything about you, but that will change, Diane. We both know that you shouldn’t have done this. It was neither wise nor safe.”

She chuckled. “Since when did my decisions ever reflect either one of those qualities? Now stop being so serious. I wanted to do it and it’s done. I didn’t take the file itself. I took photos of it and then

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took a handful of other files so he wouldn't know what I was after. It will be a while before the results catch up with me, so I'll have time to find a way to take the next step and maybe protect myself along the way." She got to her feet. "But not too much time. Consider it a goodbye gift. I'll be leaving your island tonight. It's not safe for you or your people if I don't." She stood looking at him. She had always thought him the most handsome man she had ever met. He was everything that was tall and strong and golden. He was of Polynesian descent, but that golden glow wasn't only genetic. It came from the soul within. She held out her hand to him. "Come and take a walk with me on the beach, Alon. I'm not sure when I'll be able to come back here, and I'll miss it."

"It's only a place, Diane." He took her hand and walked with her toward the veranda. "I thought I'd taught you that people are much more important than places."

"Oh, I might miss you, too." Her voice was unsteady as she added, "Remember that you're the best friend I've ever had, the mentor who taught me, perhaps even the father who was never there for me. But neither of us are that sentimental, are we?"

"You certainly try not to be. But actions speak louder than words." He smiled at her. "However, it would probably be less emotional for you if you told me where you plan on going after you leave here tonight. You do have a plan, I hope?"

"Of course, as much a one as I could throw together on the way here to the island. I'm even planning on asking someone to help me . . . if I can talk him into it."

"That sounds like you. Brilliant on research and creativity, not so good on keeping your head above water. Who are you planning on trying to persuade?"

She looked away from him into the scarlet of the sunset. It was beautiful and peaceful here, and soon there would be no peace in her

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life. She was leaving Alon, who had been her bedrock since the bad days, and going where no certainty existed. “You’ve heard me talk about him, but you’ve never met him. I’m going to Hong Kong.” She didn’t take her gaze from the sunset, which now seemed to be exploding with all the color and fire that her life held. “I’m going to see Hu Chang.”



### LAKE COTTAGE ATLANTA, GEORGIA

“I’m glad to be back home,” Eve murmured as she cuddled closer to Joe on the porch swing. Her gaze turned to the moon shining down on the lake, the trees of the forest surrounding it like dark protective bastions. Yes, that’s how she’d always thought of the cottage. A serene bastion, a place to come back to and recover from all the battles of life. A place of healing, home, love, family. She felt as if she could reach out and touch it all at this moment. They’d only arrived here this afternoon and had been so busy settling in after the long trip that this was the first time she’d had the opportunity to really appreciate the fact that they were here at last. She glanced up at Joe. “We were gone too long. Africa was too far away. I know that job in Maldara was entirely my fault, and I can’t be sorry that I accepted the chance to bring those poor kids back home to their families. But will you promise to remind me how I feel right now if I ever tell you I want to go any farther than to Michael’s school for one of his soccer games?”

“You bet I will.” He lifted her chin and kissed her. “Not that it will probably do me any good. We live in the real world, not some far-off planet. It’s big and sometimes scary and you’ve never dodged facing it even when I’ve begged you to turn your back.”

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She frowned. “You’ve never begged me.”

“Haven’t I? Maldara came pretty close.” He shrugged. “And I think you’ve forgotten a few of the other times because I let you forget. Maybe I couldn’t bear to make you choose.”

“What?” She sat up and looked at him. “What’s this about? You’d always come first. You know that, Joe. After all the years we’ve been together, you’d better know that.”

“But it wasn’t always like that and perhaps I have a few lingering memories...” He suddenly threw back his head and laughed as he saw her expression. “Just thought I’d make this a moment to remember for both of us. I like the idea of you never wanting to leave here again.”

“What lingering memories?”

He shook his head. “I was joking. I’m not going to go in that direction when you’re so happy at being home. The only lingering memories I have are good ones that tell me what a lucky guy I am to have you and Michael back here again.”

She settled down against him again. “Damn you. But it’s funny you came up with that nonsense just now. Did something upset you? You haven’t said practically anything since you and Michael got back from checking out the boathouse after dinner. Did you find something wrong there?”

He shook his head. “Just as we left it. I didn’t expect anything else since I had the guys at the precinct check it out once a week from the time we left. Michael can’t wait to get out on the water again. I told him we’d go right after breakfast tomorrow. Are you coming?”

“Probably not. I have several texts to answer that I put off while I was in Maldara.” She wrinkled her nose. “The last one I received was a little pushy, so I imagine I’ll be receiving a skull to reconstruct by FedEx sometime this week. I probably can’t put it off.”

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“You’d be bored out of your mind if you didn’t have something to work on. We both know it.” He tilted his head. “But I don’t like that it was pushy. Don’t they realize you’re probably the foremost forensic sculptor in the world and they should treat you with respect?” His lips tightened. “Maybe you’d like me to tell them?”

“It might not send the right signal if I sic the cops on them. Particularly not *my* cop.” Her eyes were twinkling. “It might create an international incident. We keep having immigration disputes with Mexico.” She added gravely, “And I wouldn’t want to have to fly down there to make my apologies. My Spanish isn’t that good.”

“Mexico?” he asked warily.

She was chuckling. “And no, the job is not in Mexico. The government is just requesting my help with a reconstruction of the skull of a citizen found buried out in Nevada.”

“Nevada.” He made a weighing motion. “Mexico. I thought I might have to invoke the promise I made you. But I might be able to accept the wide-open spaces of Nevada.”

“I don’t know if I can. I’ll probably just have them send the skull here and make my report.” She threw her hand out in an expansive gesture that included the lake, the forest, and everything else in view. “Like I said, I’ve missed this, Joe.”

“So have I.” He was silent a moment. “I got a call from my captain when I was down at the boathouse with Michael. He’s had a request from Quantico to lend me to them on a special service detail.”

“That’s happened before.” But her smile was fading. “You have connections everywhere. You were FBI before you became a detective with ATLPD. Everyone knows how sharp you are, Joe.”

“This sounded . . . different. I didn’t get the impression it was a routine request.” He grimaced. “And the last thing I want is to become involved with something that’s going to take me away from you and Michael right now.”

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“Then tell them no,” she said. “After all, I gave up Mexico for you. You can tell the FBI to get someone else, can’t you?”

He nodded slowly.

Of course he could, Eve thought. But Joe was a former SEAL besides being ex-FBI and probably the most patriotic man she knew. It would never be easy for him to say no if his country needed him. He was as bound by his duty and code as she was by her own. “Okay, let’s compromise. You talk to the FBI, and unless some sleazebag is going to blow up something irreplaceable, you stay home with Michael and me. Is it a deal?”

He grinned. “It’s a deal.”

“Good.” She kissed him and got to her feet. “Then I’m going to go say good night to Michael. You go to bed and wait for me.”

“Delighted.” His brows rose quizzically. “Any particular reason?”

“I’ve got to make sure your judgment isn’t clouded when you make that decision. I don’t mind losing out to some scumbag terrorist if it’s a fair fight.” She headed for the porch door. “But I guarantee before this night is over, *all night*, you’ll know you’ve been in a battle. You’ll make sure that whatever the FBI wants you to do is worth it.”

She heard him laugh as she closed the door behind her.

There was a lingering smile on Eve’s own lips as she crossed the living room and started down the hall toward Michael’s room. Laughter, love, family: The concepts existed wherever they were, but here there were also memories and that was precious. “Time for bed. Did you take your shower, Michael?” she called. “I heard you on the computer talking to Tomas before I went out on the porch. You have to remember there’s a five-hour time difference from his hospital in Scotland.”

“I took my shower before I got on the phone.” He was sitting on his bed with legs crossed, dressed in his blue striped pajamas. She noticed that he was starting to outgrow them. He was only ten

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years old, but he'd had a growth spurt since she'd bought them four months ago. His mahogany-colored hair was slightly mussed, and he was grinning at her. "I didn't know how long it would take to get Tomas used to Skype. Neither he nor his mother have ever used computers before. But I thought it important they start right away. Isn't that right? They're going to be lonely now that we can't visit them for a while." He put his computer on his bedside table. "I told Tomas that Dad and I were going out in the boat tomorrow and that when he came to visit, we'd take him and his mom on the lake."

"That won't be soon," she reminded him quietly. "The doctors said it might take several surgeries before they'd release Tomas from the hospital." The reminder wasn't really necessary, she knew. It had been Michael who had been instrumental in helping to save that little boy after he'd been savagely tortured by the monster who had fathered him. "He'll get well eventually, but it might take longer than we'd like."

"That's why I have to make certain he knows it will happen someday," he said simply. "I know you and Dad and Jane are taking care of everything you can with all those doctors and therapists, but he has to know what's waiting for him when it's over."

"Hope?" she asked gently.

"Sure." His expression was sober. "That's what you do, Mom. Whenever you do a reconstruction on a skull and bring that person back to the people who love them, you're giving them hope."

"Am I?"

"You know you are." His forehead was wrinkled in thought. "You're giving them back the memories they had. You're giving them the hope that there might be something beyond those memories if they look hard enough. If they *try* hard enough."

"Really?" She had to clear her throat. "You've evidently thought

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this through. And do you think there is something out there beyond those memories?”

“Of course. We both know that.” He met her eyes. “Bonnie is there, and so much more.”

Bonnie, Eve’s daughter who had died when she was seven years old. He had mentioned her to Eve before, but that had been a long time ago. She had known from the day he was born that Michael was very special and had psychic gifts no one else possessed. It had proved to be both a difficulty and a blessing the older he became. Yet she would never give up one iota of what made him who he was. “Yes, so much more . . .” She reached over and turned off his lamp. “Good night, Michael.” She gave him a hug and a kiss on the forehead. “I’ll see you for a late breakfast when you and your dad get back tomorrow morning.”

“That’s right.” He yawned before he cuddled down under his covers. “You’ve got that Mexican guy, who’s not really . . .”

“What?”

“Never mind. It doesn’t matter right now . . .”

“Be sure and tell me when it does matter,” she said dryly as she got to her feet. She wasn’t going to worry about it right now. Michael had probably mentally picked up on what she’d told Joe about Mexico and Nevada. It wasn’t the first time and wouldn’t be the last. “And we’ll call Tomas’s doctor tomorrow and see how he’s doing.”

“Good.” He nestled into his pillow. “But I think he’s okay. I’ll keep checking on him . . .”

She knew he would, she thought as she closed the door. Tomas was designated as both Michael’s friend and a mission, and he would never be forgotten while the boy needed him. How lucky she was to have a son like Michael.

“The kid okay?” Joe was lying in bed as she came into the room.

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His arms were beneath his head and he was smiling. “I believe it’s a yes. You’ve got that mushy look on your face.”

“Maybe it’s for you.” She pulled her nightshirt over her head and threw it aside. “Let’s see if it is.” She slipped in bed and crawled over to him. “I think it might be.” She could feel her heart start to race as she stared down at him. Lord, he was gorgeous. Even after all these years together she never got tired of looking at him. The same mahogany hair Michael possessed, the amber-tea-colored eyes, the muscular chest, and the tension that she knew would explode the instant they came together. Along with everything else between them, that wild attraction had always been there almost from the beginning. “No, it’s not mushy, it’s pure erotic sex. If you decide that’s okay with you.”

“It just might be okay.” He pulled her down on top of him. “Since you got me so hot, I practically ran back here when you made me that promise.” He was sinking deep inside her. “All night?”

She couldn’t breathe. Deep. So deep. She already wanted to scream. “All night...”

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ATLANTA AIRPORT

11:40 P.M.

“You must be Catherine Ling? I’m Diane Connors. Thank you for coming to meet me.” The woman coming down the gateway toward Catherine smiled wryly. “Though you probably didn’t have a choice. Hu Chang can be very determined. Were you able to obtain the information Hu Chang asked you to get for me?”

“Yes, Eve’s at the Lake Cottage,” Catherine said curtly. “But it wasn’t so much a request for information as an order, wasn’t it?” She

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led Diane Connors down the escalator toward the baggage claim. “Eve, Joe, and their son arrived back there this afternoon. According to Joe’s captain, it’s supposed to be an extended stay unless Quinn agrees to go to Quantico as requested. Is that what you wanted to know?”

“That’s what I wanted to know...for now.” Diane Connors smiled. “Thank you. I know you didn’t want to give me any more information than you had to. I thought for a minute that you might refuse entirely. Why didn’t you?”

“I was tempted. I don’t like *this*.” Catherine’s tone was cold. “I’m doing what I promised to do, but I’m not going to wait until you walk out of this airport before I learn what’s happening. You’re traveling under an assumed name, and your ID must also be bogus. And when I called to get that information from Langley you wanted, I could tell it was sending up red flags.”

Diane Connors’s gaze flew to Catherine’s face. “What kind of red flags?”

“Mild, but significant. You tell me. I could see that the only reason that I wasn’t transferred to be questioned more thoroughly is that I’m down as a close friend of Eve’s family, and all I was asking was where they were presently located. I’ll probably hear more about it later. I’m CIA, and although they told me what I wanted to know, I was ordered to cooperate with both the FBI and the ATLDP if they requested my services or information regarding Eve’s family.” She added coolly, “It’s obvious whatever you’re doing might involve Eve in a major criminal case category.”

“It would seem so, wouldn’t it?” She was frowning. Then she shook her head. “But I don’t believe that was a red flag, merely an alert to keep an eye on Eve because she might turn into a key player. I think it’s still safe for me to see her.”

“Really? Since I don’t know what the hell is happening, I’m not

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about to accept the judgment of a woman who might be a criminal herself.”

“I can see why you’re suspicious, and I’ll try to tell you as much as is safe.” Then Diane shook her head. “First, I’m not a criminal. I’m what you might call a person of interest.” She suddenly chuckled. “I can see how frustrated you are and I’m sorry that I had to bring you into my particular nightmare. I’m sure you’d have promptly called your CIA gurus and squealed on me when you got that red flag if it hadn’t been Hu Chang who had called you and requested you give me what I wanted. Was he very insistent?”

“No, he’s never insistent. He’s just Hu Chang.”

“I appreciate the distinction. I gathered that he was your mentor while you were a child growing up on the streets of Hong Kong until you were hired by the CIA when you were a teenager. That must have been a strong tie.”

“He told you?” She stared intently at Diane’s face. “That’s not like Hu Chang.”

“And you think I might be lying? I’m not, Catherine. In a way, I was also taught by Hu Chang. I’m an MD, but I’ve a passion for botany and medicinal and herbal research. You probably know what exotic plants and herbs Hu Chang has gathered from every country in Asia and Europe. I’ve worked in his labs in Hong Kong and also Northern California. He taught me more than anyone I’ve ever known.” She made a face. “Believe me, I needed teaching. I’ve made a lot of mistakes in my life. I’m still making them. Just call Hu Chang and ask him.”

“He wouldn’t tell me. He’d keep it confidential. No one respects personal privacy more than Hu Chang. That’s why I wonder why he told you about me.”

“He trusts you.” She paused. “And he thought I might need you.”

“That answer’s not good enough. Why? Because I’m CIA?”

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“Maybe. Partly.” She shook her head. “Not really. I told you, all those damn mistakes. He knows how impulsive I can be. If I get cornered, he’s afraid I might make another one.” She hesitated and then sighed. “Oh, hell, I think Hu Chang is probably all wrong about this. There’s no real proof that anyone knows anything about me being here. But it seems there are people out there who very much want to capture or kill me. And I absolutely agree with Hu Chang: It’s essential that I stay alive. So you can see there may be a problem.”

“I understand why you might think that for any number of reasons,” she said dryly. *What have you gotten me into, Hu Chang?* Catherine wondered in exasperation. He’d told her practically nothing when he’d called and asked her to pick up this woman at Atlanta Airport. Only that he’d appreciate her cooperating and protecting Diane, and that he’d be in touch later. “But he didn’t mention the possibility of me becoming intimately involved in your problem on a long-term basis. And it’s too coincidental that he sent you here on the same day that I got notice that there’s something very troublesome stirring with both Quantico and the CIA.” She added, “Now, over the years I’ve known him, Hu Chang has been involved in all kinds of less-than-legal, even deadly, enterprises whenever it suited him. He’s always marched to his own drummer. But we’re friends, and I could have sworn he’d never send anyone to me without telling me exactly what I might run into.” Her lips tightened. “He didn’t do that this time. Just some vague request for me to cooperate. Not like Hu Chang at all.”

“Exactly like Hu Chang,” Diane said quietly. “I told him my problem had to remain completely confidential. I didn’t want a bodyguard, but I did agree I needed help. If he could get you to give me that help, I’d accept it.” She smiled crookedly. “So Hu Chang got his foot in the door and will probably be on the phone later to

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try to persuade you that you should extend that help to whichever direction he intends it to go.”

“You do know him well,” Catherine said slowly. That was exactly how Hu Chang would have handled such a difficult situation. “But if there is a real threat to you, he must have told you that I’m very good at my job and it would be smarter if you’d take his advice.”

“He said you’re excellent, but excellent agents tend to want their own way. I can’t have that, Catherine. It has to be my way or I walk.” She added quietly, “If I’m going to make any more mistakes, they’re going to be purely my own. Do you understand?”

What Catherine was beginning to understand was that in spite of Diane’s frankness, she might be a force to be reckoned with. She had sensed from the moment she saw her walking down the gateway that she seemed to be the complete package. She was elegant, sleekly blond, mature, and totally stunning in an Angelina Jolie kind of way. She also gave the impression of being smart, quick-witted, and completely controlled, with a dry sense of humor. But that didn’t mean she might not be as dangerous and deadly as some of Hu Chang’s other associates. She definitely hadn’t liked that first request Diane Connors had asked Hu Chang to pass on to her. “I can understand that you want your own way, but it could be the biggest problem of all for me. I don’t want to get killed because you’re doing something stupid. You clearly know Hu Chang and probably have an idea that I’d do almost anything he asked me to do.” She paused. “Almost. Sometimes Hu Chang’s goals and motives can be enigmatic, and his philosophies suspect, and I have to question them. You might be one of those exceptions.”

“I probably am, but still, he sent me to you. He could have chosen someone else, but he trusts you.” She hesitated and then confessed, “Along with the fact that I told him I might have to use Eve Duncan—and you know her.”

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Catherine stiffened. “Not only do I know her, but we’ve been friends for years, and she did me one of the greatest favors a person can do for another. You’re crazy if you think I’d let you use her.”

“And yet you used her yourself when you were trying to find your son years ago.” Diane stared her deliberately in the eyes. “You used her and almost got her killed. Because that was the only thing important to you at the time. Sometimes we’re all willing to do anything to get the job done, no matter what the cost.”

Catherine gazed at her, shocked. “Did Hu Chang tell you that?”

“No, I knew I was going to have difficulty if I had to bring Eve Duncan into it, so I did my own research.” They had reached the exit doors leading to the parking lot, and Diane stopped and turned to face her. “I realize how close the two of you are, so I know that I have to be honest with you and make sure you know I’m not trying to manipulate her in any way. I have a favor to ask Eve. It will be purely her choice if she agrees to help me.” She made a face. “And it may be a hard choice for her to make and she might tell me to hit the road. I probably deserve it. But I’ve got to try because she’s probably the only one who can do what I need.”

“But you’re still using me to get to Eve?”

“Yes. I thought it might help to have a neutral in my corner when I face her.”

“I’m not neutral. I know nothing about you.” She added bitterly, “Except that you invaded my privacy to find out about my relationship with Eve.”

“And that Hu Chang thinks it worthwhile to keep me alive.” She added coaxingly, “If Eve does me this favor, it might help with that.”

“But I’d never trade Eve’s life for yours.”

“I’m not asking that. I agree that her life appears to have a good deal more value, but then she’s always had so much more going for

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her in the morals department. All those mistakes again.” She shrugged and then asked bluntly, “Yes or no? I promised Hu Chang I’d try to work with you, but I don’t want to offend any of those scruples you seem to have developed . . . since you got your son back.”

The jab was obvious, but Catherine thought it was more teasing than vindictive. “I’ll take you to meet her, but I won’t give you any recommendations. You’ll be on your own.”

“I don’t want recommendations. I’m sure Eve would laugh if you tried to tell her what a wonderful, caring person I am. I just want to have you there to tell her that Hu Chang and maybe a few other people believe I’m worth keeping around.” She shrugged. “And that sometimes leopards can change their spots.”

“You don’t want guarantees?”

“No.” She turned and opened the door. “Tonight I want you to take me to a hotel, and tomorrow we’ll go to see Eve and have a discussion. You’ll do your part to make Hu Chang happy by keeping me alive so that I can at least talk to her. After I get an answer, I’ll make my next decision. Is that okay with you?”

Catherine hesitated. “I don’t see why not. You’re not asking a great deal. I don’t promise not to call Hu Chang tonight and ask him a few more questions.”

Diane lifted her shoulder in a half shrug. “He expected it, didn’t he?”

Catherine nodded. “And I’ll have to contact Jonathan Terrell, my superior at the CIA, and tell him that I’ll be in touch with Eve Duncan. Though that shouldn’t be a problem. The messages we were receiving were primarily about Joe Quinn and whether or not he was going to go to that meeting at Quantico. Nothing about Eve.”

“There would have been. It’s only a matter of time,” Diane said grimly. “Do what you like, but you might get some interference

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and questions you might not want to answer. Who knows? I might be wrong about no one being aware I'm here. If I am, they'd make contact, set up, and then go in for the first strike. Those messages probably weren't really about Joe Quinn at all. They were all about Eve."

She frowned. "That doesn't make sense."

"Believe me, it does." Diane's voice was slightly mocking. "Anything that involves Joe is connected to Eve. No one knows that better than I do."

"Of course it does. It's natural with couples." Her gaze narrowed on Diane's face. "But that isn't what you meant, is it?"

She shook her head. "No way. But thinking about Eve might have led me down a path that brought back a few memories." Her lips twisted cynically. "And I thought I'd put all that behind me."

"Put what behind you?"

"Eve. Joe." She gestured impatiently. "One of my more idiotic mistakes. Perhaps the worst one of all."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'll say it once and then I'm through with it. Don't ask me any questions because I won't answer them. You'll probably hear details from everyone else, but it won't be from me." Her voice was stilted. "But you should know one of the reasons that I might have trouble getting Eve to help me is that we have a history."

Catherine repeated slowly, "History."

"If you can call it that. The triangle was always confusing. I never really knew what it was between us from the moment I met him." She turned and strode across the street toward the parking lot. "Even though I was Joe Quinn's wife long before he married Eve."