

Chapter 2

Plaza Hotel, New York City

Jon Isaacson rarely sat still. His fingers drummed against the leather armrest of the limousine as he skimmed his notes.

The Plaza Hotel was already in sight. He smirked. I've sold this building before. Selling it again will be child's play.

He adjusted his red tie—the same one he had worn the last time he closed a multimillion-dollar deal. Some called it superstition. He called it control.

Barbara Corelli stood just outside the conference room, arms crossed, watching Jon step inside the atrium.

"Jon Isaacson in a black overcoat, black suit, and a red tie." She shook her head. "Still sticking to the classics."

Jon laughed. "I wore this when I sold the Plaza to the Malaysians in 2000. It worked then. It'll work now."

Barbara started to protest. "They're Indian businessmen. They don't care about—"

Jon waved a hand. "Relax. I know what I'm doing."

They entered the conference room. The potential buyers were already seated, waiting. Jon smiled, reading the energy in the room.

"Gentlemen," he began, "you don't just buy a building. You buy a legacy."

The interpreter translated.

Jon continued, "This is the Plaza Hotel. It's not just real estate—it's a collector's item. It's an icon. A Rembrandt. A Michelangelo." He let that sink in.

The buyers leaned forward, intrigued.

Barbara hid a smirk. Damn it, he's doing it again.

Jon had turned cold numbers into a story. And in business, stories won every time.

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Washington DC

Secretary Agnes was excited to see how the arrest went, but first she had some unfinished business. She hired al-Zahawi to complete a task. Once completed, journalists would be coming out of the woodwork.

Fortunately, she showed the CIA how to use non-disclosure agreements, a must-have tool, when dealing with the US News media.

No news organization was immune to greed; especially, when hundreds of millions of dollars were dangled in front of their eyes. With a budget of nearly 4 billion for media expenditure, the US Government had no problem finding a couple hundred million for most of the broadcast networks.

The US Government needed all kinds of media services. The catch, however, was the non-disclosure agreement (NDA). Before the news organizations could provide intel services, they had to sign an NDA.

The NDA placed the CIA on point for any news story that implicated the US Government. Before the news station could run the story, they had to run it through the CIA. They had complete discretion, leave it, kill it, or rewrite it.

Power wasn't just about influence—it was about control. And Secretary Agnes had mastered both. As she stared out the window, the city below oblivious to the strings she pulled, her intercom buzzed.

Leaning against her desk, while staring out the window, her intercom came on. "Ma'am, I have Director Cromwell on the line. Would you like me to patch him through?"

While still staring out the window as she got her thoughts together, she replied, "Yes, Teresa, patch him through."

"Secretary Agnes, your secretary said that it was urgent that we talked. How can I help you," Director Cromwell asked over the speaker phone.

She turned from her window to take a seat at her desk. With her elbows

placed firmly in front of her and fingertips pressed together, she said, "David, we have intel showing there could be trouble tonight at the consulate in Barq. The trouble could be blamed on one of our sources that we have been working with. We don't want our source disclosed and we sure as heck don't want it disclosed that they are one of our sources. If there are any news stories suggesting the US or state department has any connection to any individual or organization, we need to kill it."

"Yes, ma'am, we know what to do."

"I just want you to understand with Khadafi being killed and the country in an uproar, we don't need conspiracy theories and rumors making our job even harder than it is," she replied.

"Yes ma'am, I understand completely. We'll do whatever is necessary to protect our sources and methods," Director Cromwell said.

She felt a sense of relief. "Thanks David. I just wanted to give you a heads up."

"I appreciate that ma'am. I owe you one. Actually, I owe you a bunch, but I appreciate you looking out for us," the CIA Director replied.

Secretary Agnes showed her cat-like grin, "Oh David, you don't owe me a thing. As a matter of fact, you and Margret should join us next time Thomas and I go down to the Island. The Caribbean is beautiful, and that Island of Jeff's is to die for."

"I'll bring that up with the Mrs. We might just take you up on that someday."

"I look forward to it. I'll let you know next time we go," Secretary Agnes replied. After the pleasantries were over, she hung up the phone. One more loophole closed.

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5th Avenue New York City

Marked and unmarked police cars sped up and down 5th Avenue. Fred could hear sirens all around. From the looks of things, the Secretary of State, Helen Agnes, was livid. If it wasn't so intense, he would probably laugh. "She had to have been on to us before we even started that transfer. How else could have

she got the police there so fast?” he thought to himself. That was her scam that he and Matt interfered with. “Scamming the scammer,” Fred thought to himself. They never like that.

Just as she had done numerous times before, Secretary of State Agnes planned to pay Ansar al-Zahawi to do her dirty work in Barq, while at the same time getting millions laundered from Ansar al-Zahawi back into the Agnes fund. The fund she advertised to the world as the freedom fund. She said this fund would be used to bring the world together under one government. The wealth building system of the US would be shared by all.

“What a crock of crap,” Fred thought to himself. “Well, Ms. Ruler of the world, you should have anticipated me and Matt a little better, this was our seventh download, and although it was only \$700K this time, she should have caught on before now.”

Hahahaha, he laughed. Matt’s software worked way beyond expectations. It actually found her phone nearly a year ago, using a sniffer to identify her voice and the way she spoke. Within hours of deploying it, they were listening to Secretary Agnes’s conversations, whether she was on the phone or not. The program Matt loaded sorted out the conversations and flagged the ones that appeared profitable.

“Wow! Did she have a lot of schemes,” Fred laughed as he came around the corner in front of the Plaza. “And they call guys like me and Matt con artists. If the people only knew.”

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Office of the Secretary of State

Secretary Agnes was standing at her desk, eyes focused on her speaker phone, with jaw clinched. “Those incompetent lazy bastards.” Secretary Agnes shouted. “We pinpointed the address for them,” she yelled. “All they had to do was go and pick them up. We handed them to the police on a platter. Did they let them get away on purpose?”

“We most definitely did not let them get away on purpose,” Attorney General Margolis replied. “Something or someone tipped them off before we could

get there.”

She stood and started pacing. “It doesn’t matter. These people figured out a way to steal money from the US taxpayer. They took it from a foreign transfer in Barq, and it’s not the first time. I thought for sure we had them this time. They represent a very serious threat to the United States.”

She stopped pacing and turned to face the phone. “You need to use the full weight of the Department of Justice and law enforcement to find whoever did this.” Secretary Agnes picked up a paperweight and threw it against her wall.

“I understand ma’am, we will.”

“If they were in that building someone had to have seen them. Also, there must be fingerprints in an old building like that. I want a meeting tomorrow morning. I want the FBI, the Mayor of New York, and the Chief of the New York Police department all in attendance. By the time we meet, we better have names and fingerprints.” She was once again leaning over her phone.

“Ma’am, I’m not so sure we can get a meeting like that together by first thing in the morning, but I can assure you that the FBI and I will be there,” Attorney General Margolis replied.

Shaking her head, she could not believe what the AG was saying. Using both hands to lean on the desk, staring at the speakerphone in front of her, she yelled, “YOU’RE NOT LISTENING ERICK! This is a clear and present threat to the US taxpayers! We need the full weight of DOJ and the police on it.”

“Yes ma’am, I’ll convey the urgency. I’ll have them on the phone first thing in the morning,” General Margolis replied.

When the call finally ended, she stormed out of the office. Someone was going to pay!

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Outside the Plaza Hotel

Walking up the red-carpet stairs, past the front pillars, the door man held the brass doors open. Looking through the hotel lobby, Fred took it all in, the marble stairways, the oak stairway, the conference rooms. People were bustling everywhere, up and down the marble stairways, the oak stairway,

the carpeted stairways, the atrium, the conference rooms. The Plaza Hotel truly looked and felt like a castle, with servants and patrons moving in every direction.

He looked in a mirror. Was he pushing his hips forward? Shoulders, were they properly positioned above his hips? Chin down. “Your walk had to be relaxed and confident. You stood with confidence,” Stan would say. And you especially talked with confidence. Stan made it a point to never let your guard down.

You had to be interesting, which meant you had to be knowledgeable. While in high school, Fred hung around with Jammie Berkenstock, whose father was a doctor. On Fred’s first visit to their house, after school, Jammie’s father showed them a magic trick. Jammie’s father turned the water tap on. Then after combing his hair, he put the comb next to the water stream and the water followed it. Wherever his comb moved, the water followed it, bending the stream of water.

The doctor asked his son, Jammie, how he was able to do the trick. Jammie had no answer. Doctor Berkenstock then asked Fred.

“Water molecules stick together because they’re polar, one end is positively charged, and the other end is negatively charged. The static electricity on your comb is negatively charged. The positive water molecules are attracted that charge. That’s why the water moves toward your comb,” Fred said.

Jammie’s father was quite impressed and began to show Fred more tricks. If Fred didn’t have the answer, the doctor would give him an assignment to go to the library and figure it out. The next day Fred would come back with the answer.

When Fred received 1585 on his SAT’s, Dr. Berkenstock stood ready to help him get into Harvard or Yale. The doctor was quite taken back when Fred told him he was going on a mission for his church and then wanted to go to Hollywood and be an actor. Fred lost a great mentor that day, but his teacher of the con game, Stan, couldn’t have been happier with the training.

Stan preached to all his protégés that to be good at this game, you had to commit to a lifetime of learning.

“Ignorant, stupid people are not interesting. They can be funny and