Adrian Markov entered the large warehouse, just off San Fernando Rd. in Sun Valley. Surrounded by industrial buildings, storage facilities, auto shops and junkyards, it was the perfect place for a meeting of this sort. No body around here is gonna ask questions, no body around here is gonna care at all. He felt as if he was a bit over dressed. Jeans and a blazer, around here, he looked like a fucking cop and that was the last thing he wanted to be made as. He hurried into the metal door of the building trying not to have too many eyes on him. It smelled of oil and old rust inside. Must have been a machine shop at one time. The place was large, with a huge roll door just to the right of the smaller door he entered through. Aerospace maybe, whatever it was it was all gone now, there was nothing in the entire huge space except for a table and six chairs directly in the center, and a rolling white board in front of that. A man stood at the white board putting up photos and writing names. There was another man, sitting about ten or more feet away from the table. He was dressed in an all black suite, white shirt and a thin red tie. Probably secret service, he’d never seen him before, Adrian was sure he didn’t work for “The Company”.

“Good afternoon Mr. Markov. Glad you could make it.” the man at the white board said turning to Adrian. “Have a seat. The rest will be here soon.”

The man turned back to the white board and continued putting photos up. He was in his mid forties, curly brown hair cut short with gray at the temples. He was in a cheap yellow dress shirt with the sleeves rolled to the elbows, and brown polyester slacks. Did they even make things from polyester anymore? He looked like a man who was so overworked that he didn’t have any time to put himself together. Sloppy some would say, but Adrian could see it, he wasn’t a slob, he was focused. So focused he had little time to put on airs. The door opened spilling sunlight into the dim warehouse. Time for roll call.

A woman entered, she definitely stuck out like a soar thumb. She wore a dark blue skirt suite and black sensible heals. Now, she works for “The Company”, he could tell, she had that arrogance in her stride that said, “I don’t give a fuck, my clearance is so high I could find out the results of your last colonoscopy.” Fuckin spooks, she better play nice, he had a lot riding on this.

As she approached the table and pulled out a chair, the man at the white board said “Ms. Polzin, pleasure to see you again.” He hadn’t turned around to look at her just continued to write on the board.

“You too Stanley, thanks for the invite.” she glanced at the second man sitting alone away from the table. Adrian could tell she was suspicious of the man, guess he’s not CIA then. Looking at the pictures being added to the white board Adrian recognized some of them. At least two of them were on the FBI’s most wanted list. Every agent committed those faces to memory and Adrian was no different. He had his marching orders though, get the intel on Sadaf Yassin, where he is, where he goes, who he meets with. It should be smooth as silk, as long as everyone else can keep their shit together. The door opened again, this time two men entered.

The first one to reach the table, shaved baled with a goatee, gray and black plaid flannel with the top button done and a white tea shirt beneath, pulled out a seat, turned it around and sat. Both men were covered in tattoos. The second slowly walked up, black dickies work shirt with black dickie pants, pleated and rolled, he wore a black and white bandanna and was shaved bald as well. Adrian could see what the tattoos were, he was FBI, and they were on his radar. The facial tattoos marked them as Maras. These guys were Mara Salvatrucha, MS13. So brutal was this gang that the Sinaloa Cartel recruited them to fight Los Zetas in Mexico. What the hell were these guys doing here.

The man at the white board broke the tension. “Mr. Silva. Now that you have arrived we can start.” he moved to the side of the board so that everyone could see.

“OK everyone, this op came together pretty quickly and we have a very short window to get this done. I know not all of you have been briefed so I appreciate your quick response and patients. Let me start by saying. I don’t give a fuck who you are or who you work for, I have it from on high that this is my op and the rest of you are here in a support capacity. I know you have your own agendas, but listen up, your agencies wouldn’t have the chance to get in this close if it weren’t for us and we are happy to have you hitching a ride. This is a DEA operation people. I don’t wanna see shit go off the rails because of some other priority. These men’s lives depend on you all doing what they tell you to do. So don’t fuck it up. I also want you to know there is no extraction plan. You are expected to operate completely on your own. Mr. Silva has more details for you, Mr. Silva.” at that he moved for an empty chair. It was the first time since Adrian had showed up that he sat down.

Silva stood, the tattoos covering his face hid his mood, he was in a perpetual state of scary as fuck. How could we be working with MS13 Adrian thought, these were some of the most brutal criminals on the planet. The tattooed man walked to the white board and regarded it for a moment, then turned to face the others. “My name is Alto Silva, some of you are feds”, he looked at Adrian, “and you may have heard my name a time or two. Forget everything you know about me. It should go without saying that what I am about to say cannot leave this room”. He looked into the eyes of each person, holding for a moment.

“I am an undercover DEA agent. I have been under deep cover for the last five years. I grew up in Los Angeles. Connections from my youth helped me infiltrate MS13. I climbed the ladder and I am now on the Council of Nine, the top of the organization. I have done things to get there that, well; lets just say I’m a wanted man. You may have seen my face in connection with some truly bad shit. Now you know, I’m on your side. This is Himee Hernandez”. He motioned to the other tattooed man. “It’s the same for him. He isn’t as high ranking as me, but he is the leader of what they call a Clica in El Paso, he runs groups of soldiers on the streets. You may have seen him on a wall as well. He’s undercover DEA, three years in the gang. I tell you this because I want you all to understand the gravity of the situation. If you fail to listen to Himee or myself, it could get us killed. Not to mention dumpping five plus years of work down the toilet. After this op I’m out, everything I have done to this point comes to a head here. Himee too. So you better believe we want this to go smooth. I have to live with the things I’ve done and this”, he gestured to his face with two fingers, “it has been long and hard but this is the end of the line. I only say this because if you compromise the mission or hang back when its time to go, I will leave your ass. Believe it.”

He turned to the white board and paused. Moving one of the photos to the replace another, the photo that was replaced he threw on the table. “He’s dead.” he said pointing to the photo, it was an Afghani man in his late forties maybe. “So, here it is. I found out that MS13 operates a distribution line out of San Antonio Texas, which is the largest supply line of heroin into the U.S. that we have ever seen. The interesting part is that no one can seem to find out where it’s coming from. It just seems to appear in San Antonio and then MS13 distributes it from there. We could never figure out where it was coming from until I overheard some conversations regarding it a year and a half ago. Mara Salvatrucha has been working with someone in Afghanistan. We suspect it is the Taliban or one of the other extremist groups providing the drugs for money to fund their operations. I have been working to find more information for over a year. I have positioned myself in a good place to be put on the management of this supply line. Last week we got a break. A drone strike killed two Maras who were in Afghanistan overseeing the operation. They needed a new boss out there and my ticket was pulled. This is an opportunity like no other. Because of that we allowed other agencies to hitch a ride, we wont get an opportunity to be inside the belly of the beast any time soon. You two”, he said pointing at Adrian and the woman across from him with his pointer and pinky fingers. “are acting as Russian mafia, I have been working the Russian angle with the higher ups, telling them we need to expand globally. It’s all bullshit, no one but me has been talking to the Russians so I can introduce anyone and they will think it’s legit. This is a volatile piece that could back fire on us. If anyone from MS13 starts to try and contact the Russians, we are gonna be in a world of shit. They are letting me deal with it for now so you have your cover story. It’s just the four of us, we are going in with no backup and no extraction plan. If we can pull this off we will be cutting off a supply line that provides over forty percent of MS13’s revenue. This will cause some serious problems for them. Once done there are several smaller operations that will take out other key supply lines. In the end over half of the money MS13 brings in will disappear overnight. It’s quite possible this will collapse the organization entirely. In addition this also cuts off the flow of money into Afghanistan in a big way. This is big folks. So here’s the plan.”

“Himee and I will be flying into Kandahar together, you two will fly in separately, routed through somewhere in Eastern Europe. We will have rooms reserved at the Kandahar Hotel, so when you get there ask for a reservation under your name. After that we wait for my contact to get in touch. The main objective of this operation is to break the supply line from Afghanistan to San Antonio. We will do that by assessing the operation from the far side, getting all of the intel we need on the who’s, what’s and where’s. We’ll then be making the full trip, from Afghanistan to San Antonio, traveling with the drugs. We’ll be going on the cover story that we need to see the operation in its entirety. That will be our ticket home. If something goes wrong and we can’t make the run we are stuck out there. On the states side we will have provided the location of the drop. Agents will be waiting to take the location on our go. At that point we will be on the inside. We can drop cover and try to take out any high-ranking objectives. None of our people will know who we are, they will only know there are 4 agents on the inside. If we can pull this off we will be cutting off a huge supply of money to both MS13 and the Taliban. The Afghans don’t trust the Maras and we don’t trust them. You two, no fucking one is going to trust you. We have to play this smart and low key. Let me do the talking. We’ll have to figure out which one of use is in charge for the Russians. Who ever it is can do the talking for you. We wont get a second chance at this, once Himee and I blow cover it is all over, we will either be killed or be out of MS forever.”