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## THREE WEEKS LATER

EVERYTHING THAT WAS LEFT OF MY PARENTS, who'd been killed in Switzerland nearly ten years ago, was laid out before me in neat piles. Their ashes in matching urns, photographs, mementos, files, journals with the dank smell of decay from being left in a trunk all that time.

I sat inside the barn of what had once been their farm in Middle- burg, Virginia, on the mounting block my mother had used to climb aboard her horses. The wood walls of the tack room were covered with photographs of long-dead horses, their frames now so coated with dust it looked like a fungus. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling, and the air was stale from the room's being locked tight since my last visit just after they were killed.

I didn't want to be here now, but my brother had asked me to housesit for him while he was off in the South of France with his latest girlfriend. We weren't close. The fact that the tanking of e-Antiquity and our parents' deaths had happened simultaneously had led the FBI and Interpol to try to hold me responsible for their deaths, which fractured Ben's and my relationship beyond repair. That's why his call for help had felt like an opportunity.

A shiver sat me up straight and I again looked at the piles on the floor. Hard to believe these few items were all that remained from lives as remarkable as my parents'. With a long and decorated career at the State Department, two presidents had considered my father as a candidate for secretary of state. His reputation as a no-nonsense maverick had ultimately scared them off, presidents generally preferring yes-men. Mom had been a tireless scion of the community, chairwoman on many a non-profit board. A decorated equestrian, she was the epitome of horse-country class here in Middleburg, where they'd settled in their thirties not long after I was born.

A snapshot of my family taken after a day of snorkeling and boating several miles off the coast of Key West on what we referred to as Shark Beach stared up at me from the top of the picture pile. Just kids then, Ben and I were laughing, but my mother's lips were pressed tight. Her anger at my father for letting us swim with sharks had been forever captured on film.

I smiled. "It's okay, Mom. We survived."

The echo of my voice in the otherwise empty room wiped the smile clean. I turned to a file labeled "Charles B. Reilly III" that, along with Dad's journals, had been locked in the

bottom drawer of his desk in the house. I had a pretty good idea what it contained but had never opened it.

I tore the yellowed envelope open. The stationery heading, “Washington DC Adoption Bureau,” proved me right. These were my adoption papers.

The three-page document had many of the same elements as a bill of sale. It was dated a few days after my birth date and had my birth specs: twenty-one inches long and eight pounds, four ounces. Hair blond, eyes blue. Healthy. The next page had my parents’ names, their home address at the time, in northwest Washington, D.C., and some legalese about agreeing to care for me.

All as expected, except for the last page. It was an affidavit from the British Embassy waiving rights to my citizenship—I was born British?

What the hell?

There was no birth certificate, no names identifying my birth parents. There was a serial number for my case, as I’m sure there were with all adoptions, and that was it.

Strange.

I folded up the papers and placed them back in the envelope.

I refocused on my father’s journals. Seeing his handwriting sent a warm sensation through me. There were three black books and one spiral-bound brown notebook. The first black book contained names, dates, and locations of meetings my father had attended on State Department business. Every page was full. The names that jumped out at me were Hamid Karzai, Wen Jiabao, Moshe Katsav, Jacques Chirac, Vladimir Putin, and Fidel Castro.

Wow.

He really could have been secretary of state.

The other black books were similarly filled with names of heads of state, foreign ministers, and diplomats along with the dates of their meetings. Most I didn’t recognize, but given the locations and chronological order, I realized just how much Dad had traveled on behalf of the country. Maybe someday I’d put pins on a map of all the places he’d been and number them to show the order. Would his meetings coincide with major negotiations of the times? Successes and failures?

The oldest of the four journals was on the bottom of the pile. It was a brown spiral-bound notebook that was totally different from its black brothers.

The handwriting was much looser, hurried, there was far less order, and some of the sentences made no sense. There were city names and dates going back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. I fanned through the pages and realized there was a much tighter pattern of locations than in his black journals. In the brown one he'd noted trips to Bogota, Cartagena, Cali, Panama, Havana, Medellín, Miami.

And Key West.

My father's career in the State Department didn't start until the late nineties. What was he doing in Colombia, Panama, Cuba, and South Florida in the late eighties and early nineties?