

# *Waltz im Syncopated Time*

## *Part 10*

*August 17, 1987*  
*Vienna*

Unwilling to let the film out of his hands for even a few moments, Lee slept fitfully and fleetingly, the tiny canister clutched tightly in his left hand.

Later, at the sound of the shower running next door in Billy's room, he rose, dressed, and had ordered coffee for two from room service by the time his boss was done shaving.

"I'm not going to ask where you disappeared to last night, because from the looks of it you're going to tell me," Billy announced.

"Winkel has her; he's sent her somewhere; it's all here." Lee punctuated his frantic sentences by pointing the canister at Billy.

Billy reached for the film then stopped after Lee pulled his hand away. Keeping his tone even, he suggested, "Let's get this developed."

Lee beat Billy out the door.

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"Hello!" Amanda cupped her hand around her mouth and called out as she stepped from the dock onto the old wooden fishing boat. Looking at the pollution in the river around her, she wondered how anyone could make a living fishing it - and then added a silent prayer of thanks that the cod she'd eaten the night before was not a river fish.

"Hello?" she poked her head into the cabin and called again.

"Down here, Mrs. King," a voice whispered harshly and the hair on the back of her neck stood on end.

She stepped cautiously down the ladder and turned to face her contact. "I've brought the list from the restaurant; I understand you have something for me."

He looked at her, silent. In return, she studied him. His hair fell in unkempt, greasy locks from under a stocking hat that she was sure had once been white, but was now gray. His face sported several days' growth of beard, and the rest of his clothes were as ill-fitting and dirty as his hat, but his eyes were bright, alert, and piercing.

"All in good time, Mrs. King." He finally spoke and took the papers from her hand.

"No!" she responded forcefully growing angry. "I'll take the papers *now*." She looked around the small cabin, wondering fleetingly whether there were anything in there to use as a weapon should the need arise.

His hand went to his hip pocket and he withdrew a small sheaf of papers that he then held tantalizingly out of reach. "You seem to be forgetting who's in charge here, Mrs. King."

"No," she answered, lunging for and snatching the papers, "I'm not." She turned on her heel and ascended the ladder more quickly than she had descended.

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"I'll be damned . . ." Lee and Billy stood shoulder to shoulder in the cramped darkroom within Austrian

intelligence. "Bratislava . . ."

"Such a German," Lee mused, "always keeping impeccable records." He swirled the print around the fixative, preserving image of the lines of type that revealed the location of his wife.

Billy studied the photograph as it dried. "Well, God bless that anal retentiveness," he answered finally, with a sense of thoughtfulness. "I'm going to pass this to Austrian Intelligence." He gestured to the photograph and continued. "It should be enough to get Winkel out of circulation. You go find your wife."

"Yes, sir!" Lee's eyes lit, and he felt surprised to realize, after so many days of tension, that a smile was crossing his face.

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She studied the muddy blue-green waters again. Standing on a bridge, still holding the small packet of papers she'd been given on the Flusspferd. "Oh please, let me get back to Lee. . ." she whispered, almost an invocation

Then, she kicked a pebble from the bridge and as it splashed into the water, she seemed to find her answer. Spirit bolstered, she returned to Sophie's flat. As though it knew her thoughts, she realized that the Danube would lead her back to Lee - and she would once again be in charge of her own life.

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Lee sat back in the train compartment, watching through the window as the landscape passed him by. Had Amanda watched this same scenery? What had she thought? Was she scared; did she blame him?

The questions flew through his mind, and as the train drew nearer the city his heart sped with the realization that he would soon see his wife again. With that, he allowed himself the luxury of imagining just how their reunion would play out.

Closing his eyes, he saw hers - brightening with recognition when she saw him. Parting his lips with a sigh, he could almost feel her lips on his - soft, warm, insistent. Crossing and uncrossing his legs, he remembered hers - long, slender yet supple, and surprisingly flexible.

The train lurched to a stop, and he stepped out into the station. His ISP granted him the right to enter the country unquestioned, but little else. Finding his wife would have to be a task he undertook independently.

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Amanda entered Sophie's apartment without knocking and was not surprised to find the older woman sitting on the couch, chin tucked into her chest in a mid-morning nap. "Sophie, I'm back." She shook her gently by the shoulder. "Sophie?"

The woman roused slowly, yawned, and stretched. "Ahh, Amanda," she yawned through the greeting. Fighting back a sympathetic yawn, Amanda wondered if the old woman's blasé air was part of what made her so effective. Few people would suspect her of anything.

"This is what I got from the man on the Flusspferd." Amanda handed the packet to Sophie.

Sophie flipped through the pages - scanning them, whether they were written in English, German, Czech, or Russian, with ease. "These are good," she finally assessed, "more of the Stasi plans - ways to ensure Western cooperation. You know, more and more people in the government are beginning to think that openness and freedom are good ideas. Winkel and his colleagues are trying to stop that."

"Sophie, I need to get out." Amanda seemed unconcerned with what Sophie was telling her. "And I think I've figured out how. Do you know where I can get a boat?"

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He looked around the train station, convinced that he might find her within the people there, yet knowing how unrealistic the possibility was. He kept his face impassive, trying to blend into the crowd. He knew how close he was. Yet, at the same time, he was frustrated that he wasn't closer. Where, in this city of thousands of people, was she?

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"Amanda, don't be ridiculous. You can't take a boat into Vienna. You'll be found. You'll be caught."

Amanda smiled gently as she reminded her, "Jason was followed by a whole army; he made it through."

"That was two thousand years ago." Sophie countered. "Be realistic."

"What if . . ." Amanda thought out loud. "What if . . . instead of a fishing vessel, I took a cargo ship? Surely there's a captain out there that can be bribed to smuggle me."

She paused, waiting for an answer, and was pleased her newfound friend did not immediately dismiss the idea.

"Let me get us some tea and biscuits," she finally answered, "and then we can discuss this further."

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Billy stood just off to the side when the state police and Austrian intelligence agents knocked brusquely on the door to Peter Winkel's office and announced he was under arrest for conspiring against the government.

He smiled in silent, proud satisfaction as the formerly untouchable man was led away in handcuffs. The man who was responsible for destroying countless lives - including that of his most unlikely recruit - was going to be unable to do so again.

**END PART X**