

Waltz in Syncopated Time

Part 8

The shower spray beat down on her, working its moist heat through her weary muscles. She inhaled the steam - willing the tension out of her body as she exhaled. Closing her eyes, she tilted her head back into the spray and let the water run down over her face.

"Hello!" She jumped in shock as she saw her husband's face peaking around the shower curtain.

"Lee?" she questioned, making no attempt to cover her nakedness. "What are you doing here? How did you find me?"

"I'll always find you," he answered and began to unbutton his shirt. "You should know that by now."

She stood almost mesmerized as he slid out of his clothes and stepped into the shower with her.

He wrapped his arms around her from behind, drawing her in close. She felt his lips along the nape of her neck and sighed. "Oh, Lee; I've missed you."

He reached for a bar of soap, working it into a lather. Then, his hands full of suds, he began to massage her shoulders, her arms, her stomach, and finally her breasts. He gently kneaded her soft flesh, working in ever smaller circles until he reached the stiff peaks of her nipples.

She leaned forward into his hands at the same time arching her back so that her bottom rubbed against his growing erection.

She turned in his arms and stood cautiously on her toes to kiss him. His lips were warm and tasted salty. She wondered briefly if he were crying and was surprised to ultimately realize that the tears were her own.

"Amanda," he brushed the tears away with his thumbs. "What's wrong? Is everything okay?"

"Everything's fine . . ." She pulled his palm away from her face and kissed it. "Everything's wonderful; I'm just so happy to see you."

He slipped his hands down to cup her rear and draw her close. "I know," he agreed, his voice growing husky. "I know."

Without another word, he lifted her and slowly slid himself inside. She gasped, enjoying the welcome intrusion, and wrapped her legs around him for leverage.

Warmth and tension, spread from her abdomen outward, through her chest and thighs. He braced her against a wall, and the cool of the tile coupled with the warmth of his skin threatened to send her into tactile nirvana.

"Lee . . ." she gasped against his chest as he began to buck into her. "Oh . . . Lee . . ." She gripped his shoulders, holding on to him as though he might disappear at any moment.

And then he did.

"Lee?" she questioned finding air where, moments before, her husband had been standing. "Lee?!" She asked, her cry becoming more desperate. "**Lee!**"

"Amanda?" She stood dumbly, looking around the bathroom in her attempt to locate the voice. As she looked around, her surroundings began to vanish just as thoroughly as her husband had.

The well-lit bathroom walls, melted into the drab, utilitarian living room of her hostess; the shower became the sofa

upon which she was sleeping. The voice, she realized belonged to Sophie, who was, at the moment, attempting to rouse her from her restless slumber.

"Amanda?" She felt a firm grip on her shoulder, and looked into Sophie's deep, brown eyes.

"Hmmm," she shook her head, trying to get her bearings, stretched, and finally sat upright.

Sophie sat next to her on the couch. "You were calling out in your sleep? Are you okay?"

"Yes, yes . . . I was . . . dreaming." She felt a blush begin to creep up her chest at the memory of the dream, and prayed her elderly companion couldn't see it in the dim light.

Sophie sat for a moment, bringing her upper lip between her teeth, appearing to be contemplating Amanda's reaction carefully. "Lee; you said, 'Lee.' That is your partner's name, no?"

"No, I mean, yes . . . his name's Lee," she answered, still somewhat disoriented.

"Well," the older woman began. "I'm sure you'll see him soon. Now, as long as we're both up, why don't you show me what you found in the list?"

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He'd just completed his third circuit of the building, and was no closer to finding a way in than he'd been on the first go-round.

He was trying to break into a bank. Foreign embassies, military bunkers, and even prisons were easy compared to bank breaking, and *nothing* in the Agency training had prepared him for this.

Beginning a fourth circuit, he studied the windows, the doors, and the walls once more. The first floor appeared entirely impenetrable. But what, he wondered, about the second floor?

"Yes!" he whispered, and then looked around quickly to ensure he hadn't been heard. With his eyes cast overhead, he began his fifth tour of the building's exterior. It was as he'd suspected. There were no bars, no alarm wires, nothing keeping him out - as long as he could get up.

And then he saw the rain gutter. "I'm gonna find you Amanda," he mouthed silently against the star-laden sky. "I'm gonna find you, and we're gonna go home." With that, he began to climb.

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"What do we do with it now?" Amanda asked looking down at both the original list and her translated version.

Sophie had listened silently as she read aloud from her list - offering no comment until Amanda reached the end. "I'm disturbed," she'd sighed, "but not surprised."

"We need to get to work," she now answered Amanda's question. "Winkel's group already knows what is in that list; this is only a test to see if you're a reliable mule. The real information will be in what he gives you in exchange."

Amanda yawned and blinked heavily. "I'm sorry, Sophie; you've lost me. What am I doing tomorrow?"

END PART VIII