**CHANTEUSE** ©

a Tom Larkin

international thriller

**by**

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**Episode Six**

**CHAPTER 16 – THE KING WILLS IT**

Sprawled on the floor, Larkin awoke painfully and frowned as

he felt the back of his head. Sitting up, he stretched with a groan, then

looked at his gold Rolex to see he’d been out for only a few minutes. He

staggered to his feet and rubbed the back of his neck. He sniffed the air

and wrinkled his nose—the smoke from the chimney. He went to the

fireplace and used a poker to disturb the ashes. Sparks flew up the

chimney.

Seeing a smoldering corner of parchment, he removed it from the

ashes and blew on it to clear off the cinders, but his breath made it flare,

and the burnt edges crumbled at his touch. He spat on a corner of his shirt

and dabbed at the parchment to keep it from burning more. Holding it to

the window, he observed the frail parchment backlit by the dawn’s early

glow.

Reading the scripted words, he thanked his high school French

teacher, Miss Duval, for having such a fine figure that he’d stayed after

class for extra help before final exams. Though now fluent in Spanish

after fifteen years on tour for the DEA in Mexico and South America,

French lingered only in his subconscious along with images of Miss

Duval’s derriere, but enough for him to know that *le roi le veut* meant,

“the king wills it?”

Carefully, he put the delicate parchment in his jacket, but a sudden

creak from a floorboard startled him. He heard it again and backed towards

the rear of the house to hide. Finding a rear door, he cautiously backed away

from the house, but stumbled clumsily over a motorcycle.

“Franklin,” he growled under his breath.

He reached for his gun, but found its holster empty. Steering the

motorcycle downhill away from the house, he put his foot down on the

starter, then accelerated downhill with automatic gunfire spraying at his

heels from the house.

“Larkin!” Franklin shouted. “Stop!”

Unarmed, Larkin drove past The Battlewagon parked where he’d left

it. Franklin ran downhill and started The Battlewagon with Larkin’s keys still

in the ignition. He pursued Larkin down blind, winding bends on the steep,

narrow road, firing once but missing him.

Larkin gained enough speed to get out of range and sight. He took a

sharp, skidding right at the fork and hid with the motorcycle in the tall shrubs.

At high speed, Franklin missed that right fork in the road, but jammed on his

brakes, backed up, and turned blindly to the right.

When Franklin passed Larkin’s hiding place, Larkin jumped out from

behind the shrubs and heard the sudden squeal of The Battlewagon’s bad

brakes. Franklin screamed right before a thunderous splash of the The Battle

Wagon plunging into a bog.

Larkin ran to the edge of the bog in time to see Franklin scrambling

onto the roof of the sinking vehicle. The quicksand made a sucking sound as

The Battle Wagon seemed to let out a groan before steadily sinking nose first

into the bottomless quagmire.

Franklin drew his gun and aimed it at Larkin as he shouted, “Larkin!

Get the rope from my bike and toss me a line! Hurry, damn it!”

“Throw me your weapon first!”

Franklin fired at Larkin’s feet. “Bull shit! Get the damn rope!”

“Take your best shot, Georgie. You’ve got sixty, maybe ninety

seconds at best, before you’ll be in the deepest cover you’ve ever known.

Without me alive, you’re dead.”

“I swear, Larkin! I’ll kill you!”

“Save a shot for yourself or be prepared to hold your breath for two

. . . maybe three minutes . . . and counting.”

“Son of a—! Ah!”­ He threw his gun at Larkin.

Larkin picked up the weapon and casually walked to the motorcycle

as quicksand gushed into the car’s open rear windows.

“Hurry! Where the hell are you going?” Franklin shouted.

Larkin started the motorcycle, pulled up to the edge of the bog, and

stared coldly as Franklin, whose feet were still tippy-toed on the hatchback

of the sinking car. Franklin sank chest deep into the bog and pleaded as he

struggled, slowly sinking deeper with each flail of his arms.

Larkin finally threw him a line and tied his end to the motorcycle

Franklin secured himself at the waist. Then Larkin revved the bike and

screeched off, dragging the mud‑caked Franklin for a fifty painful yards

before cutting the line and leaving him in the road.

“Sorry, Georgie, no room without the sidecar. *Ciao*!”

Franklin cursed as Larkin sped off.

\* \* \*

In uniform, Theo greeted Larkin at the front gate to Larkin’s home in

Ocho Rios

“The back of your head’s bleeding, Tom. What happened? You’d better

see a doctor, mon. You could have a concussion.”

“I’ve got to get to Grand Cayman this morning to see what Chanteuse

is up to there. She could be in grave danger.”

“*She’s* in danger? What about you? Maybe *she’s* the danger. I think this

bird’s already got her talons into you, Tom.”

Ignoring Theo’s words, Larkin packed an overnight bag.

“Your domestic, Lucea, is OK, but a bit shaken,” Theo told him. “She’s

looking after your dog. Are you listening to me, Tom? You seem lost in a fog.

I should take you to the ER in Kingston before you go off half-cocked.”

As if Theo wasn’t there, Larkin shaved and splashed water in his face

and under his arms. He patted the back of his head with a cold, wet towel and

saw the blood crusting, so he added a baseball cap in his bag in case he needed

to cover his wound. He wiped the corner of his mouth with his thumb and tasted

Chanteuse’s lipstick. As he did, he heard Theo’s voice as if someone had suddenly

turned on the radio.

“Have you been listening to me, Tom?”

“No. Sorry. This is important. I found a singed fragment of old parchment

with the phrase *le roit le veut* inscribed on it.”

“The King wills it,” Theo said with a frown. “It’s a formal proclamation

honored by international law for centuries. There are many such proclamations

in our museums, but some even remain on current legal documents.”

Larkin held the scrap of parchment to the light. “I can just make out

the words *Las Tortugas* and *Le Petite*.”

“Where’d you find this, Tom?”

“I took Chanteuse to an old house in the hills above Annotto Bay,

where her mother lived before marrying Simon. I found this smoldering in

the fireplace. *Las Tortugas* means turtles, but is it a place or a thing? Could

this be genuine parchment from the seventeenth century?”

“I could have Kingston CSI test the ink,” Theo offered.

He handed it to Theo. “Do it. I’ve got to go.”

\* \* \*

A constabulary van dropped Larkin off at the U.S. Embassy parking

lot. He walked by his red Porsche and Riley’s black Mercedes, the only cars

in the lot at that early hour, then he entered the embassy. After showing his

security clearance, he unlocked the DEA office, turned on the office lights,

and found the British High Commission’s file labeled *Rabelle* in an envelope

marked *T. Larkin*—*Personal*. He read the few pages from Quigley’s files,

noting that Simon Rabelle’s last-known address was Owen Island, a minute

coral cay off the Cayman Islands. He called Theo.

“I have a High Commission file on Carmen Rabelle’s assassination.

The coroner listed *you* as the first Constabulary officer on the scene.”

“That’s correct, Tom. Why?”

“Then you actually saw Carmen Rabelle’s corpse?”

“What remained of her. If it weren’t for that gold tooth in her shattered

skull, I wouldn’t have been convinced it was Carmen. But it was.”

“Did you check her dental records at the time for positive ID?”

“There was chaos that morning,” Theo admitted.

Larkin pushed further. “Any chance Carmen’s still living?”

“Pray to God, no. It was a gruesome sight I’ll never forget.”

“I also have a copy of a Constabulary report from ten years ago connecting

Guy Jasparre to a major drug bust.”

“Yes, a shipment of Mexican Gold, a thousand kilos of the best-grade

ganja was dumped into the sea off Negril. It was a mixed-up venture. Jasparre

was responsible for the sabotage of the marijuana, not to help the Narcotics

Division, but to break Mexico’s monopoly on marijuana distribution. He was

barely eighteen when he took on the Mexicans and Colombians for control of

Caribbean narcotics.”

“A bold move, Theo, even if he’d been a seasoned pro. Who commanded

the Narcotics Division of the Constabulary on that case?”

“Hmm. I don’t recall offhand. Our Narcotics Division kept those names

out of the media to protect the officers’ covers. Jamaica is sixty-miles long, so

there’s nowhere to hide for long before some arm of the law will be kicking

down your door.”

“Then how could Jasparre possibly have hidden for ten years?”

When Theo gave him no response, Larkin said, “Forget it for now and

just meet me at the airport.”

Larkin hung up, went to Mona’s desk, and felt for the latch beneath

to open the hidden drawer. There he found the key to Riley’s inner office

and his plane ticket to Grand Cayman. He opened Riley’s office and went

to the files. Leafing through a file on Jasparre, he found a report on the

Mexican Gold bust from ten years ago, but something else caught his eye.

Pensive, he called Chief Barnes at Quantico from his cell phone.

“Tim, I need to contact Special Agent Carl Fredericks.”

“He’s head of our overseas training school. He’s in Qatar this week.”

“How can I reach him, quickly?”

“Qatar might as well be the moon.”

“I have an affidavit from his Foreign Service Report from ten years ago.

The cook aboard a Panamanian schooner was the only one arrested in a marijuana

bust off Negril where they dumped ten thousand kilos of Mexican gold. The cook

said there was a ‘snowbird, in the Jamaican Constabulary’s Narcotics Division

working for Jasparre to sabotage that Mexican haul. Fredericks’ report shows no

follow-up. I need the name of that Constabulary narc suspected of doubling for

the bad guys.”

“I’ll try to reach Fredericks, Tom. Where can I reach you during the next

forty-eight hours? From my own log, I understand you’re minding the store since

Jim Riley returned Stateside for a trial in LA this week.”

“I imagine I have you to thank for that, Tim. I’ll be in the field for the

next few days, so give the information from Fredericks to Mona at the Kingston

office. She’s one of ours.”

“I’ll do what I can, but I have people to answer to here. You’ve no

idea. Be careful, Tom.”

“Always.”

Hanging up, Larkin took the keys to Riley’s files and read a dossier

in which Riley claimed Larkin had personally manufactured a level‑one case

against a fictional drug lord, Guy Jasparre, to cover his own alliance with

Chanteuse Rabelle, whose letters were a danger to U.S. national security. In

cooperation with the British Secret Service and the CIA, Riley recommended

*termination* for both Chanteuse and Larkin.

Larkin found a photo of Chanteuse and him kissing at the Rabelle

mansion the first day they’d met. Under a file drawer, he found attached by

magnets, Riley’s mercenary contract with the CIA disclosing his Swiss and

domestic bank accounts. Larkin copied the contract and account numbers

then returned the keys to the hidden drawer. He left his signed promissory

note giving Mona his Porsche if he reneged on his agreement to send her to

New York for two weeks after closing the Jasparre case.

*Trips to Manhattan, a rendezvous in Ecuador, and a niece held*

*captive,* he thought. *What am I thinking by spreading myself so thin? At*

*least avoiding booze feels under control. That’s a start.*

He knew he was a desperate man, but when he arrived in Grand

Cayman, he couldn’t let it show. He figured if he did, he’d be—*soon dead.*

**CHAPTER 17 – MINI-SUBS**

When Larkin’s plane touched down in George Town, Grand Cayman

he called Mona at the office. “I’m expecting an important call from Chief

Barnes, so contact me with the information he gives you immediately.”

“Sure, and thanks for the promise—in writing for a change. Don’t

drive recklessly like you did with The Battlewagon. I don’t want any

scratches on what could be *my* Porsche.”

“Done.”

He took a taxi, but thought he saw someone tailing him in another cab.

Trying to shake off his paranoia, he told the cabby to continue along the harbor

so the suspected tail would have two cars between but still remain close behind.

They passed a sign on the docks that read:

Blue Horizon Sub‑Aquatics, LLP

*Neptune*Submarine Dive

$50 Adults $25 Children

Larkin paid and tipped his cabby from the backseat and told him to

stop short so he could get out quickly, and the cab could take off. Once out

of his tail’s sight around the next corner, Larkin jumped out of the cab with

his backpack before the cab following him could catch up. Larkin’s cab

suddenly sped away, catching the cab tailing him off guard.

The chase ended abruptly when Larkin watched from a distance as

George Franklin got out of the other cab at a traffic light and angrily kicked

a tire when he saw Larkin had escaped.

Larkin backtracked to the Blue Horizon Sub-Aquatics office on the

pier. Posing as a potential investor, he pumped the owner for information.

Dan Hurley, an Australian mariner in his forties, greeted him casually as he

sat at his desk. Ruddy-faced and sun-bleached, Hurley had a direct manner

with Larkin as he creaked in his swivel chair and scrutinized him when

Larkin asked for detailed information about investing in his mini-sub

operation.

“I saw your ad in the *Daily Gleaner* about seeking investors,”

Larkin said. “How many shareholders are there so far, and who are the

limited partners and the *general* partner?”

Hurley grinned with forced patience. “Unless you’re a shareholder

already vested with Blue Horizon Sub‑Aquatics, the only information

available to you is what’s available to the public—a copy of our prospectus.

In it you’ll find lists of individual invested *amounts*, but it doesn’t disclose

any names or whether they are individuals or corporate entities.”

“Very discreet—I like that,” Larkin said with a nod. “I’m personally

a *need-to-know* kind of guy, too.”

“As a potential investor, you’re entitled to a courtesy voyage on *The*

*Neptune*, our tourist mini-submarine. A picture’s worth a thousand words, Mr.

Larkin. Take the next dive. You’ll see why it’s worth one hundred thousand

dollars to invest.”

“A hundred grand isn’t pocket change, Captain Hurley.”

“That’s the minimum investment in Blue Horizon, just to join our

network.”

“What network?”

“Your investment makes you privy to our technology and puts you

on a priority waiting list for prime locations if you decide to navigate a Blue

Horizon franchise.”

Larkin cocked his head with curiosity. “And if I don’t?”

“With our seven‑year lease and open‑ended buyout, we provide a

qualified crew with a safety and maintenance warranty. We feel, after seven

years experience, you should qualify to manage those responsibilities on

your own.”

“How many of your investors are running their own franchises

*without* your crews?” Larkin asked.

“Only one. This is a brand-new venture,” Hurley explained. ”It’s

unusual to find someone with both submarine experience and that much

money. But it’s an entrepreneur’s dream—hi‑tech, vast commercial

potential, and no previous experience required.”

“Who’s the investor who chose to brave the deep without your

crew?” Larkin pushed.

“Sorry. As I explained before, that’s privileged information only for

those who’ve bought in. We pride ourselves on our confidentiality. You’ll

appreciate that if you purchase.”

“The article in Kingston’s *Daily Gleaner* said you expect to earn

hundreds of millions in profits within a few years,” Larkin recalled.

“We’ll yield one billion dollars annually by next year—before

shareholder’s dividend distributions,” Hurley boasted, handing him a

prospectus.”

Larkin browsed through it. “I see from your prospectus, as you

said before, you’ve listed each investor by a shareholder ID number—no

names. With such a sizable investment, how will I know who my partners

are?” Larkin continued to push. “That’s an added risk if you become a

limited partner, especially if the general partner, turns out to be a felon.”

Finally impatient with Larkin’s grilling, Hurley reminded him again,

“That information, as I’ve said several times, comes only with the buy‑in,

Mr. Larkin. How about it? Ready for that first dive? Maybe after a voyage

on the *Neptune,* you’llwant to ante up today.”

Larkin shrugged. “Sure. Let’s do it.”

\* \* \*

Several miles beyond the shoreline reefs, Hurley’s speedboat stopped

at a buoy. Larkin felt uneasy with nothing but the turquoise sea in sight. A

sudden gush startled him as a 60-foot submarine emerged like a whale from

the water. In black letters on its white hull were the words, *Neptune I.*

He assessed the suband mentally calculated its potential use for

smuggling. “How much cargo can she carry?” he asked Hurley.

“We don’t carry any cargo, but she seats up to forty tourists,” Hurley

explained. “Any more than forty would take away from the quality of the

unique experience. At fifty dollars for adults and twenty-five for kids, we

try to give our patrons their money’s worth. Try it and see for yourself.

Pretend your Captain Nemo.”

*Or Guy Jasparre*, Larkin thought.

Two shuttle boats pulled alongside the sub to take tourists back to

Grand Cayman. The tourists’ expressions and comments gave rave reviews

of the dive. Larkin and Hurley descended into the pressurized hull. As the

submarine descended, Larkin observed a serene undersea panorama.

“She’s quiet,” Larkin remarked.

“Our electric thrusters provide a quiet ride at half a knot,” Hurley

said with pride. “You get plenty of legroom and the best underwater view

money can buy with a 150-foot descent along the Cayman Wall—and no

discomfort from the pressure.

“What are your criteria for future locations, Captain?”

“The sub does fine in open sea, even in the worst stormy weather,

but submersion in protected waters for tourists’ comfort is our priority. We

seek locations with three hundred thousand tourists yearly.”

“Is Jamaica on your list of prime sites?”

“Not currently. We’re in production at scattered Caribbean sites.

Why do you ask, Mr. Larkin?”

“I’m connected with well-funded parties in Jamaica who have

expressed interest in a franchise, but it would be counterproductive to

have two submarines competing for that same tourist market.”

“It’s reassuring to know how serious you are about investing

with us.” Hurley smiled broadly. “However, although I respect your

inquisitiveness regarding such a large investment, since few prospective

partners actually invest and merely have a look, without a cashier’s

check from you, confidentiality prevails at Blue Horizon Sub-Aquatics.”

“It’s your confidentiality that’s sold me,” Captain Hurley. “That’s

why I’ve been so persistent about gathering information. I’ll have the money

wired to me here and I’ll sign the contract in the morning. One more question,

your prospectus lists franchise sites already operating or under construction.

I see that Little Cayman is on the list. Is there a contract on that site?”

“It’s not available for tourism, Mr. Larkin. It’s a research site which is

independently managed, but funded by Blue Horizon’s stockholders.”

“Research?” Larkin said with a cock of his head. “May I see that location?”

“Certainly, Mr. Larkin—in the morning, when I have your hundred grand.”

“Could you at least quell my curiosity by telling me where to find that

research facility on Little Cayman?”

“That’s public knowledge,” Hurley said with nonchalance. “It’s located

on Owen Island inside the South Town Reef.”

“Hmm,” was all Larkin expressed, but he agreed to return the next

morning with a cashier’s check for one hundred thousand dollars. In turn,

Hurley would take him for a firsthand inspection of the research facility

owned by Blue Horizon and located on Owen Island.

That evening in his hotel room in George Town, Larkin spread the pages

from the British High Commission’s files on his bed. He read them pensively

as he grabbed a map of Little Cayman then excitedly pointed to one paragraph

stating: Owen Island—last-known address of Simon Rabelle where he receives

treatment for his illness.

**CHAPTER 18 – HONORARY CONSUL**

Larkin phoned, Ziggy Schwartz, a longtime friend of Chief Barnes.

Ziggy was serving as Honorary Consul in the Cayman Islands. He was a

bachelor at fifty-five and retired from law enforcement with the Canadian

Mounties after serving thirty years.

“Tom? Ziggy here. What a coincidence. We were just talking about

you,” Ziggy said, much to Larkin’s confusion.

“I’m in George Town and have urgent company business to discuss

ASAP. When are your guests leaving so we can talk privately?” Larkin asked.

“I’ve got only one guest, Tom, but he’s with the diplomatic corps.

We haven’t started dinner yet. How soon can you get here? Please, join us.

Where are you staying? I could send a car to pick you up.”

“This business must be between you and me alone, Ziggy.”

“My guest has top clearance, Tom.”

“Who is it?” Larkin asked with caution.

“Your new Honorary Consul in Montego Bay, Richard Ludlow,

the famous writer.”

Larkin stared at the receiver with stunned disbelief.

\* \* \*

Half an hour later, Larkin felt compromised as odd man out in the

company of no less than *two* Honorary Consuls, both wearing formal dinner

attire. Ziggy ingratiated himself to the best‑selling author while playing the

snob to Larkin.

Ziggy was five-ten, wiry, and balding. His face always appeared

freshly shaven with rosy, high cheek bones and a prominent chin. His wide,

thin-lipped mouth sported a thin, graying moustache. His voice was gruff,

but affected by a lilting British accent that reminded Larkin of Errol Flynn,

though Larkin thought his accent was fake.

Ludlow, a good listener, threw out some bait before reeling in each

morsel of information. He struck Larkin as an egghead, a field agent wannabe

with unfulfilled aspirations. Ludlow was a slumped six feet with a slight pot

belly and sloping shoulders. He was clearly not at the peak of good health.

Watery, milky blue eyes with flecks of red veins in the whites betrayed a

stifled rage in the man in his late sixties.

Impatient, Larkin went through the protocol, but wanted to call

Chief Barnes at Headquarters, hoping the Chief could provide the means

for him get to Owen Island—undetected.

“It’s a tragedy you lost your wife so young in life, Richard,” Ziggy

said. “but I’m surprised you’ve never used your experiences with the Green

Berets as fodder for your novels.”

“It’s a long time ago, but the pain of losing my wife, Kim, stays with

me. A Vietcong mine took her after we married in Nam. We have two daughters

and I have three grandchildren, but some feelings are too painful and better

left untold. I don’t want to bore Tom with my tragedy. That’s history.”

“Perhaps we have more in common than you know,” Larkin said.

“Someone murdered my wife, Vera, last October, a professional hit just to

get back at me.”

“I’m so sorry,” Ziggy said, flushing. “My god, Tom. I had no idea.”

“How could you know? The DEA has kept the details under wraps

even from me,” Larkin said, not mentioning the kidnapping of his niece.

Then he turned to Ludlow. “You were a Green Beret in the Vietnam War?”

“Yes,” Ludlow replied, “a lifetime ago. I was so young back in 1969.”

“Before I was born.” Larkin shrugged. “My sister-in-law read all

your books. She died last year, but I’d heard her tell my wife that you’re a

very private person who shuns the public eye. She said you don’t do book

signings or give interviews. So why would you take on an honorary consulship?

Montego Bay draws a bustling crowd all year round—not a place I’d consider

a retreat for peace and solitude. You’d be better off in Belize.”

Acknowledging Larkin’s piqued scrutiny, Ludlow said, “I need a

recharge if I hope to keep going. Frankly, most of my close friends are dead.

I want to write at least one more meaningful novel before I die.”

“A book about Jamaica?” Larkin asked.

“If there’s a new story to be told. Take this flash roll you’ve requested

from Headquarters in Quantico,” Ludlow said, alarming Larkin. “The way I

understand it, you’ll use a hundred thousand dollars just to bait this drug dealer,

Guy Jasparre.”

Larkin saw no harm in providing more details about something

Ludlow already had a handle on.

“The flash roll will show I’m a high-roller. It will get me inside

and win Jasparre’s confidence. It could lead to a monumental drug bust.

The flash roll of money gets me through the door to meet the major players.

I expect Jasparre will be one of them, if not the only one. My sources tell

me that his minions are muscle and firepower rather than brains. He’s

probably the only clever mind behind the operation. You have to be

shrewd to avoid ever being seen by the DEA or local narcotics forces

for the past ten years.”

“Richard tells me Jim Riley is in LA,” Ziggy said. “He was told

by Ambassador Smythe. That’s why you have to contact Headquarters

for the authorization to proceed to Owen Island. Let me see if, Ms. Wells,

my secretary, has heard back from Chief Barnes yet.”

Ziggy left the room to check on the contact with Barnes to request

the wired funds while Larkin and Ludlow shared conversation over cigars,

Ludlow with a brandy and Larkin with club soda.

Larkin resented Ludlow’s inquisitive intrusion into his case and

thought he was an intellectual masquerading as a pseudo-diplomat—that

was until Ziggy left, and Ludlow spoke more frankly.

“Tom, we both know damn well this protocol overseas is fine for

the Brits, but I’m not about to let this glorified Kentucky colonel position

of mine as Honorary Consul go to my head like Ziggy has. How about

some straight talk between us—one Yank to another?”

“Well, Your Honor,” Larkin said sarcastically, “do you want to

discuss the Super Bowl or the World Series?”

“I’m serious. Call me Dick. I’m fascinated by what you do, Tom.”

“Fascinated? You know the drill. It’s dirty and dangerous, but

I’m the one who’s got to do it. I could tell you all the details, but then I’d

have to kill you. Fact is, driving a New York City bus is more dangerous,

and probably pays better, too.”

“OK, man to man, I get it, Tom,” Ludlow said with a shrug. “You’re

pissed that I’ve been thrown into your lap unexpectedly, and you see that as

some kind of punishment rather than a trusted responsibility.”

“Don’t screw with me on this case, Dick,” Larkin warned. “Don’t start

taking notes for your next book on my watch when there are lives at stake, one

in particular, that means a great deal to me other than my own. That’s all I have

to say about it. Got that? Maybe you should jot that down so you don’t forget.”

As Ludlow nodded, Ziggy returned excitedly and ignored the stare-down

between his two guests.

“Let me warn you, Tom,” Ziggy cautioned, “Chief Barnes has received

your classified cable requesting one hundred thousand dollars.” He handed

Larkin a phone. “But he wants to talk to you about it—and he seems quite

perturbed.”

Larkin took the phone and heard Barnes ask, “What the hell is going

on down there, Tom? I spoke to you this morning, and you never mentioned

anything about a hundred grand. Now you drag me away from dinner with a

goddamn NYAC, urgent-urgent asinine request for a flash roll! And what the

blazes are you doing in the Cayman Islands? Your assignment is in Jamaica!”

“The money’s just for show, Tim. You know the drill. The hundred

Gs gets me inside. I need it wired to Barclays Bank in George Town in the

morning. This cash trail will most likely lead me to Jasparre.”

“Damn you! This needs the Attorney General’s approval. And don’t

you dare remind me about Mexico again and how you saved my life. We’re

even on that one now. This had better go down smoothly. I want this Jasparre

case documented in detail from day one. If it blows up in your face, you’re

on your own. With Riley away, who’s minding the store? It was supposed to

be you. It was hard enough for me to get Riley out of the way for a week.

You have no backup in Jamaica, but at least I have some control there. In the

Caymans you’ve got zip, not even a half-ass support system from Headquarters?”

“Not necessary, Tim. I’m not making a drug purchase. I’m just scouting

the setup from the inside. The trail led me to the Cayman Islands. Anyway, I

can’t even carry a weapon on the flight to Little Cayman.”

“Back-up not necessary? My ass! I’ll get back to you after I’ve run it

by the AG. So sleep on it till then!”

Larkin heard a dial‑tone. Ziggy was right; Barnes was pissed.

Apparently taking notes for his next book, Ludlow disregarded Larkin’s

warning and was eager to know more details about his case. Larkin tried to

ignore Ludlow’s enthusiasm. He slept in a guestroom while waiting for the

next call from Barnes.

\* \* \*

At sunrise a ringing phone awoke Larkin, still wearing the same

clothes from the previous night. Needing a shave, he scratched at his

disheveled hair. Mona called from Kingston with Chief Barnes’s approval

to wire the money to Grand Cayman with the Attorney General’s instructions.

“Headquarters wired the money as you requested,” Mona said, “but

there’s one stipulation. You can’t go alone.”

“I have no choice. No one else is available,” Larkin replied confidently.

“You got only the first part right, Tom—you have no choice.”

“How so?” Larkin asked, puzzled.

“Let me read the Attorney General’s memorandum to you: ‘For

propriety assurance with the return of the Impress Fund amount of one

hundred thousand dollars, yielding to Special Agent Larkin’s guarantee

of no hazard, we entrust these funds to him as well as the safety of his

collaborator, Honorary Consul, Richard Ludlow. Good luck, gentlemen.’”

Larkin was disgusted. “Am I supposed to tell this to Consul Ludlow,

or does he already know?”

Ludlow popped his head through the door. “Tell me what, Tom?”

“I guess you must be a hell of a poker player, Dick.” Larkin glared at

him.

“I’m not bad at cards, Tom, but I prefer chess—three dimensional.”

As they stared at each other, Larkin’s eyes reddened with disdain for

the D.C. good ole boy tactics that the Attorney General employed by tying

a millstone around his neck with the dead weight of the Honorary Consul.

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**(To be continued in the next issue)**