

DEADLY MINDS

By
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Hidden Promises

Treason's Reward

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Deadly Minds

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Chapter 1

Collapsing against the wall in the dark alley he sucked in air like a man dying of thirst would guzzle water. Bobby was sweating and tired, too tired for what he had just done. They had had him on the drugs way too long and now he was showing the signs of it. It had taken months of planning and finally it had paid off. The feeling of power he had gotten from killing that man still ran through his veins and filled him with something he hadn't felt in a long time. Bobby had watched as the life drained from the man's face; felt his mind dull and then become nonexistent. It had been wonderful. Carefully Bobby had tucked him away in the corner of what had once been his makeshift prison.

Taking just a moment he relived exactly what had happened when the man walked into Bobby's room as he had done every night for the last six weeks. He had given him his pill and tried making dull and inane conversation. Bobby had played along so as to slowly gain his confidence and knowing that when the time was right he would kill him. Tonight had been the night.

Bobby had hidden away two weeks of drugs he had supposedly taken. His mind was clear enough to kill and to follow through with his plan for escape. And God it had felt good. No one would know for quite a while. He wasn't due for another pill for three hours. In three hours he would be far away from here.

Switching clothing with the nurse, male nurse, he had just killed and leaving had been easy. It had been a challenge because he was way out of practice with his mind reading and control skills. The drugs had made his mind weak, but he had still been able to make the guards believe he was the stupid man that now lay dead on his floor. He couldn't help but let his mind jump back to a time when his friend and partner had tried to bring him back into the department. They had both been tortured, changed and yet he still believed in going back. The smug bastard didn't believe in using the new skills they had acquired from The Doctor's experiments. It was evident now that he had used them to escape the same prison they had put Bobby in as well. This time if they sent the self-righteous bastard after him with his prissy little wife, he knew exactly what he would do. Taking in one last deep long breath he moved again letting the darkness cover his tracks.

Ward completed his tai chi work out on the beach banishing what little stress was left in his body until he heard his cell phone ring. He froze in place. Slowly he took a deep breath and brought his hands to center as he bent and picked up the phone. When he looked at the identity of the person who was calling him it was a slight surprise that the name on the phone didn't read Eddy. It, however, was not a welcome one.

"Yah," he answered the phone with a small, undetectable sigh and rubbed his forehead. He could guess who was on the other side and he figured it meant work, trouble, or both.

"Nice to talk to you too," the hard voice on the other end was that of Rob Brown, who

had been Jan's agency partner in what seemed a lifetime ago. "I wouldn't normally bother you, but are you working a case right now? Cause you're not answering your e-mails and I've been waiting for about twenty four."

"No, we're not, and yes, she's fine. You don't have to keep checking up on her. We've been on a training op," Ward grinned. He was beginning to like the man. Over the last few years he had worked with him, off book, but this was a little invasive. There had to be another reason he was contacting him, and it couldn't be good. Ward would just have to wade through the pleasantries until he found out. The more small talk, the worse it would be.

They had never given Rob more information than he needed about them, or where they lived. Ever since Ward left the agency Rob had been his inside contact. Ward had become his secret informer that brought about many arrests over the years. It had worked well. Ward had always been careful never to put Rob in a position where he could get in trouble for dealing with him, because for a long time Ward had been a wanted man by the PED. Rob had never believed the accusations against him. He also had never fully understood why the department would believe them either, but they had. When Ward had given Rob that initial trust by contacting him, it had gone a long way in cementing the fact that Ward had never gone bad.

Ward had discovered that with his special skills it was nearly impossible to live in the real world, and impossible to live with the department. Without life skills for the one world and no trust left in the other, he had had to find other things to do and other ways to make money. He had done well. He had invested most of the money he had in property and spent his free time helping those who needed him at times for compensation, or as it was more often now, without. It didn't matter to him. When he called in information Rob believed him, and more importantly, he acted on it. At first it had been a leap of faith for both of them; then they had learned to trust each other in matters of work if nothing else. Once Jan left the department it had stressed and then solidified things even more between them. It was as if Rob had given Ward his daughter. Ward didn't ever think that Rob would completely trust him with Jan's heart, even though Ward knew it was perfectly safe. Lately, Rob had even started to like Ward. Strange world huh?

"Good, I've got something I think I need the both of you for," his voice was serious, too serious.

"Incase you don't remember, we don't work for you guys anymore. And to top that off, we don't exist anymore either," Ward's voice was half serious. If the job was interesting enough they might consider it. One of the mind readers, a trainer they had worked with in the field years ago, had taken it upon herself to remove any evidence of their existence not so long ago, freeing them from everyone and everything. It still amazed him that she had chosen to do such a thing. It wasn't her MO, but had been liberating. But for Ward it was about choosing jobs. Being assigned a job was definitely a different animal, and he wasn't ready to cross that line again. They now had a type of freedom that at one time seemed impossible and unreachable.

"Hey this one wasn't hand picked by me. I already turned it down on your behalf. I was made to contact you by the new director for your consideration," now Ward understood that this was a game. Since they didn't exist, the director would have, should have, no knowledge of them. "I think you need to know who got assigned to be the new director." He was acting like a little kid with a secret now.

"No," Ward really didn't care. He looked out toward the ocean to see if he could see Jan coming back in. There was no sign of her yet. Ward thought about the directors he had worked for and with during his years at the department. Their choices of directors over those years had been passable to downright ludicrous. And since he no longer worked for them, he didn't really

care if it got worse or better, but before he could finish his thought Rob gave him the name.

"Pat."

"Come again?" It was less of a question and more of Ward trying to breathe. Ward was truly taken by surprise by this information and he nearly dropped the phone. It took a lot to surprise him after how many years of service he had put in, but after a few minutes to pull it together his full attention was back on the conversation. Never in the department's history, although it had been a relatively short history, had they ever even considered putting a mind reader in charge. Secret government experiments back in the sixties on mind control were reported not to have come up with anything, but they had. Once the operations had been ordered to stop, they moved it underground, black-ops. Those in the know had given these people a blank check and for it they had gotten a small group of people with very impressive skills, mind reading. Once the department, PED, was created they quickly made sure that each mind reader had a handler. They were the ones to be controlled, watched, not the ones in control. Ward looked up towards the sun. Yes it was still in the eastern sky where it had risen this morning just about an hour ago and moving in the proper direction at the correct speed.

"Yup. Finally someone we appreciate is in charge and one that's on your side. Things have really begun to change around here and I might even hesitate to add that you two have been responsible for some of it. Thanks to your track record," Rob continued before Ward could recover from the shock and get a word in edgewise. "She doesn't expect you two to return to the department. She knows there is too much bad karma for that, but she would like you to consider taking some of the assignments she has to hand off. The ones that need special people, or need attention even though the department isn't sanctioned to work on them. Sometimes she will be able to provide the cash and goodies, and sometimes she won't. No special favors though. She doesn't expect any," this time he paused and waited for Ward to say something, anything. When he didn't Rob continued.

"Things are changing here. I just needed you to know that. She wants you to know that there would be payment and expenses covered with this job, even though I know that isn't a major factor for you, but here's the biggie, you would be able to get your hands on all the toys you would need," Ward heard Rob fidgeting with something, "documents as well, all courtesy of the department. Plus the budget on this one is pretty big; no top limit. She wants you to consider this offer just like you consider the rest of your offers, no more, no less." Ward could hear that there was something else about the job that they were going to be offered. There was something that Rob wasn't saying and really didn't want to talk about.

Not being near a person was a disadvantage for Ward, but somehow he didn't think Rob would have talked face to face with him about this either. He couldn't tell if Rob really wanted them to take the job, or just turn him down flat right now. Rob had kept his tone light, but there was an undercurrent there of terror. It almost seemed too strong of a word to use but Ward knew deep down that something had him really worried if he was calling after only waiting twenty-four hours for a reply. Rob had carefully worded, scripted the conversation, in such a way that would make it easy for Ward to say no and hang up, but yet there was that something else in his voice that made Ward apprehensive. Ward decided that the tone he heard could be nervousness and wished that he could read Rob's mind right now. Not being able to, only made him even more curious about the job, not less.

"If we say yes," Ward was quick to add, "and there are no guarantees to that, we would need a couple of airline tickets, and at least ten in spending money, cash, to begin with," Ward expected to hear Rob's jaw to drop and some argument about the amount he was asking for.

Government and money, especially the amount the government would want to spend, could tell him a lot about the importance of the job or mission. As of yet he hadn't heard anything untoward.

"No problem, just let us know when and where to deliver it," Rob's reply took Ward off guard once again and it made him even more wary about the job and what it may involve especially since the government would be happy to deliver.

"What's the job?" His voice was quieter now as he began steel himself for what was to come.

"Finding someone," he said on an exhale. Rob had definitely left something out of that statement. It left Ward wondering if he had left out the name to keep him from turning him down so quickly or hoping that he would.

"Who?" Ward was still in denial about the department wanting to contract out with them otherwise he might have picked up on the subtle clues. He didn't understand what Rob's problem was. Rob knew that he had found people in the past and then slowly the realization of who it might be began to dawn on him. Anger, disbelief, and fear seeped into his veins. It was then that Rob dropped the only name that could easily set Ward's answer in stone and make it crystal clear why the department needed them.

"Bobby," and the line went quiet. Rob knew it would take all of about three milliseconds for Ward to decide. After saying the name Rob had no doubts. Part of him was scared to death about what this would do to them. He had agreed to present it to them only after arguing against it with Pat for about two hours straight, a day ago. He explained just how much it had taken out of Jan and Ward to bring him in the first time. That encounter with Bobby had ruffled Jan's feathers far more than he had ever seen, and more than she had let on. He was now worried about what Bobby would do to the group. In the past Bobby had tried to kill each one of them, and it was almost certain that he would try again. Each time he got closer.

Ward had told him once that Bobby had an unhealthy attraction for Jan, always had. If Bobby had realized that he couldn't have Jan this last time he would have killed her. Now that he did know there was no more guessing. Things had gone their way that time, but could they have that same luck again.

Rob also knew that every day they didn't have Bobby back in custody gave him more time to recover and get stronger. The drugs they had had him on when he was in custody had controlled him until the doctors had gotten lax. Bobby had at least a two day head start on them. The drugs had to be almost completely out of his system. Rob knew that Pat was right. It had been her last statement that had convinced him to approach Jan and Ward. If anyone knew where Bobby was going it would be Ward. And then the kicker, if anyone could bring him in again it would be Ward and Jan. Bobby would want revenge for everything that had happened to him, and he would take it out on the people he blamed for it. It was like dangling a carrot in front of a very hungry and vicious rabbit, or this time more like live meat in front of a lion, a well-trained and vindictive lion.

"How many dead?" Ward had to ask. Bobby had left a trail of bodies ever since he had changed and Ward felt each one of those souls begging him to help them find justice.

"Ward," Rob's voice trailed off.

"I need to know."

"You're not responsible for him," he paused with no response, "Two."

"Details," his voice was pained.

"You don't need them," the last thing Rob was going to tell Ward was that it had been

one of the nurses in charge of taking care of Bobby and his wife. "You do need to know that he bought five airline tickets to various places and emptied out their bank accounts before he left," Rob tried to keep the conversation businesslike.

"So he's loose and no one can guess where he is headed," anger bubbled up in his voice.

"We are working on security camera's throughout all the nearest airports, big and small but," and he could almost hear Rob shrug, "We both know that will lead us nowhere."

"We'll go after him but it will take twenty and a couple of tickets to Thailand, maybe more. I'll make the arrangements for us; just put the money into the account. I also want Eddy there," he sighed, "No, I need Eddy there. Book us into a nice place for a couple of nights will you. After that I'll take care of everything," he knew they couldn't do the job on their own. They would need Eddy as a stabilizing influence for the both of them and also as a teammate they could count on. Even though Eddy wasn't a mind reader, and he had no idea they were, he had followed Ward's training and advice especially when it came to Bobby. Eddy had life experiences in other areas as well that made him the perfect partner. Although Eddy was a loyal friend and partner Ward wondered just how Eddy would feel about all of this when it was over. This would push all their limits.

"He'll be there," Rob said assuredly.

"Easier said than done," Ward said. "He doesn't know about the thinking thing, and he has never left the continent before. Not thrilled about flying either."

"Oh, I understand. Just trust me and a couple of friends," Rob's voice was more confident than Ward felt and he could imagine Rob scribbling down notes on a piece of paper on his desk.

"You can't send any information electronically; too risky. Bobby will be watching for that. Monitoring my number, and I don't have access to a burn phone here. I also won't know what equipment he has access to until I make contact with him. He may be monitoring the line right now," he hated the next part. The man hadn't ever wanted to be dragged back in and Ward kept doing it to him. But he needed people he could trust near him. "Can you send Bill to meet us with the details and some toys, standard stuff and a few special items? He'll know what to bring." It was less of a question and more of a command.

"No problem, where do you want to meet up with Bill?" It was the one thing Rob never knew. He didn't think anyone but Ward and Jan really knew where they lived or where they were at any given time. Even the people who were closest to Ward and Jan had no idea most of the time. Rob had asked. Eddy knew how to get in contact with them, as did most of the people they worked with, but where they lived, was always a mystery. He thought they had purchased a place located somewhere on the Baja of California Peninsula, but it was a big open space and nearly impossible to search especially when the people who bought the place specialized in hiding things. Plus why would he go looking for them when he could call, or e-mail to check on Jan all he wanted, and probably more than she would want Rob to do.

Jan was like his own daughter; not that he had one, but if he did he would want it to be her. She had seemed happy the last time they had gotten together, in fact, happier than he had ever really seen her. He knew that Ward had humored him and not told Jan about most of his contacts with him just to check up on her. This alone had kept him safe from Jan's wrath. The only problem was that during those times he had to rely on what Ward told him. So far he had never given him a reason to mistrust him and couldn't see a reason why he would have. He also knew that Ward cared for and loved Jan just as much as he did. He had never expected

monogamy from Ward, but miracles happened.

"Just tell the Darling to meet us," he smiled as he thought of Bill getting the next call and his message. "He'll give you the rest of the instructions."

"You'll be careful," it sounded strange to his ears. It must sound absolutely ludicrous to Ward.

"One day you'll tell me how he got loose I presume," his tone was nothing other than severe as he chose to ignore Rob's last remark.

"When I can," his tone matched that of Ward's. No one had quite figured out how Bobby had escaped, but when they did they would fix it and improve the system. He was the only one that they had ever had to jail. Ward had been restrained not jailed, but even he had figured out a way to escape. They hadn't figured out that one either and Ward hadn't told them. Maybe he should now.

"Just say the word and I'll send someone else," Rob was worried. It had come out so quietly he had to wonder if Ward had even heard him. He had wanted Ward to say no to this job; hell, he had wanted Ward to scream it, but true to form he had taken it with determination and just a hint of anxiety. Now he waited, prayed, for Ward to take this last chance that he was offering to get out of it. The silence dragged on for what seemed like forever and for a moment he had thought Ward had hung up. He was about to say something when he heard Ward's answer.

"No one else will be able to bring him in," and then a sigh, loud enough for Rob to hear and understand, "I'm not sure we can either without a price," and the phone disconnected.

As Rob hung up the phone, he knew that there was a message in the answer Ward had given him for Bill. The message wasn't for him and when he gave Bill the message he would know where to find them, or at least meet with them. He was probably funding another ticket to God knew where. Rob was certain it was a prearranged signal like the ones he had with Ward over the years. Ward may be beginning to like him, but gaining his complete trust, or anyone else's, was still somewhere in the realm of science fiction. Then again, maybe it was better he didn't know where they were. Bobby wouldn't know either. For now it would keep them safe. Rob switched to another line. He waited for an answer as the phone rang. His pencil scribbled little balloon figures for him to fill in notes on later. He often used this technique to organize his thoughts even though he had been laughed at for it. The phone stopped ringing and Rob could hear music, but no voice said hello so he waited a minute before he spoke.

"Need to meet you for lunch," was all he said to the person on the other end of the phone. Rob could hear the sounds of singing in the background and the organ beginning to fade. "Sorry, it's an emergency."

"I'll be there," was the only reply. Just before the phone disconnected he heard the beginning of another song 'Amazing Grace' and wasn't that a little message especially for him.

Ward sat perfectly still. There was definitely something wrong with the spin of the earth. He stared out to the ocean hoping to see Jan, the one thing that kept him grounded. With her nowhere in sight, his mind had time to wander into areas it shouldn't be. Just how could this be happening again? He, no they, had risked it all to bring Bobby in once, and now, somehow, he was free again ready and willing to terrorize them all. Terrorizing them was probably just the appetizer to what he had in mind for the entree. Bobby hated them, especially Ward, before they lured him in. He had had plans that he allowed Ward to get glimpses of, and they included Jan. Now his hate and dementia had had time to fester and grow. Dropping his head into his

hands he could almost feel the tilting of the earth and all that was good crumbling underneath him.

Fisting his hair in his hands he grappled with how to tell Jan. It wasn't fair to her. Bobby was surely going to be maliciously coming after them and worse yet he had plans for them that Ward hadn't shared with her. For a moment he toyed with the idea of not telling her, calling Rob back and just disappearing instead of taking this next assignment. Or maybe he should just disappear and take care of it as best as he could. But then he thought about it for another moment and knew that she would figure it out pretty soon and there would be hell to pay. Never try to fool a mind reader, he'd learned that lesson once and he smiled at the memory. He didn't want to pay that bill twice, plus she was too good to be left out of this. And he knew, God he knew, he would need her more than ever on this job.

He lay back on the blanket on the sand closing his eyes. Relaxation was not the goal as he began to think about where Bobby would head. It wasn't a hard choice. Knowing what his health must be like and his mental condition, Ward knew exactly where Bobby would go, and it was the last place in the world Ward wanted to be. A dim thought skirted the edges of his mind. He really had never been back there since that time and didn't know how it would affect him. Suddenly realizing that his hands were clenched, he tried to relax and just think of this as another job. In the end he knew that there was no such thing as this being just another one of their jobs, just like there was no such thing as normal when Bobby was involved. Ward placed his arm over his eyes and systematically cleared his mind being careful to make sure his blocks were in place. He didn't want Jan coming back and being upset, at least not until she had to be.

Jan swam even deeper into the ocean turning upside down to look back up through the water. She marveled at the light that danced on top of the water and wound all the way through the ocean in brilliant ribbons. She loved being surrounded by this world of water so much so that not even the gash on her shoulder could have kept her from taking a dip. Colorful fish swam past her as if she were a natural part of their world. The kelp moved rhythmically in the waves. Off in the distance she could see a sea turtle leisurely swimming along amongst the kelp looking for his next meal. She skimmed the surface of the water sipping in the air she needed before she dove deep into the welcoming expanse once again feeling safe and protected here. The warm water from the currents that embraced her as the waves glided past were almost as good as the embraces from her lover, her husband, who waited patiently for her back up on the beach. She smiled even though no one could see it.

Who would have ever thought that she would have married, especially in the type of job she had chosen. It hadn't been allowed. She drifted back to the surface to get another breath of air. As she floated on her back she knew that in a little while she would need to return to the beach and then, with any luck, like yesterday they would lie and make love before breakfast. Then again maybe they could just skip breakfast and go right to the next activity. Rolling back over she decided that she needed to complete her five-mile swim, and stop fooling around. The only thing that kept you safe in their line of work was to keep in excellent shape. She had chosen the water, that was where Jan felt free; Ward, her husband, felt free in the air. The sensations were amazingly similar. The rush from both was just as alluring. With determination to complete her original task she then flipped back over and got serious again.

She could feel the pull of the stitches as she swam. Jan thought back to the training mission they had just completed. After leaving the agency they worked for, in a not so welcomed way, they had had to come up with unique ways of training. Most types of training

they could do on their own with the help of information and connections that they both had. There were always things that they would never have access to unless they worked with groups. This time they had used her connections and she had been able to get a weekend session arranged for them with the Australian SAS.

Gordon, Jan's contact, had been happy to arrange for them to tag along even after he knew that they had left the agency. Jan had only felt it fair to let him know. It also kept him from checking up on them or completing paperwork that should never be seen. Gordon had been a good friend of Jan's and knew that she must be asking for a good reason. He had no idea of their mind reading skills, very few people were ever privileged enough to find out, and therefore it didn't worry him that they might not have left on the greatest of terms or without permission. He was in charge so he had just called it a joint training mission between special ops forces to make it clear as to what was happening with his men. Joint training missions were not unusual, so Jan was pretty sure only those in the chain of command above him who needed to know had been told of their presence on the operation.

They were testing out new light-weight gear for climbing. The gear itself was great. It had gone the distance pretty well except for the part where she was almost dragged off the side of the cliff by one of the new guys who thought he knew more. He was a headstrong young recruit that had too much testosterone and too little brains at this point in his life. One day he might make a good soldier, but for now he had gotten a free trip to the hospital and Ward had gotten to patch her up. The gear had held, thank goodness, and the guy who messed up got a good reaming out after he had regained consciousness and before they slipped him into the helicopter. It was Jan that had kept the man from dying on the rocks below them and she had the stitches to prove it as well.

Gordon had wanted to send her in to the hospital as well. He had watched the entire incident and Jan watched him turn six shades of purple after looking at the gaping wound on her shoulder blade where the man's boot had drug across, into, and out of it. The hospital was one place she couldn't show up in on this trip with the group. Ward had assured Gordon of his doctoring credentials and gotten to work.

Jan dove deeper under the water and couldn't have known that the cell phone Ward carried for emergencies had been in use as she swam under the waves surfacing from underneath the largest wave onto the beach. She walked out of the ocean into the warm sun feeling reborn as each droplet of water tingled on her exposed skin. It was how the ocean or any large body of water, made her feel. When they were in the Baja there wasn't a day that she didn't spend swimming in the ocean. Beads of salt water rolled down her body cooling her in the heat of the day as she walked up the beach. It had been a while since she had swum without the wetsuit. The wetsuit served as protection from many things, but they just hadn't had time to find one. It had made her extra careful in these waters, but no one could have convinced her to stay out of them. Jan walked toward the little sandy alcove nestled in-between the tall grasses and trees at the edge of the beach where she had left Ward. She saw Ward lying there, eyes surely closed. His tanned body lay still but his muscles were tense, ready to spring. His arm protected his eyes from the sun and something about him seemed edgy. She could tell by the little spot just below the sternum that seemed to bunch when things got bad, but that was her only clue. The rest of his thoughts were blocked or locked away. Her smile faded because she knew that that was never a good sign and she tensed in reply. Jan wondered just what had transpired when she was out for her swim. The threat wasn't here or he would never have left himself so vulnerable.

She stopped, stood right beside him and looked down waiting for him to acknowledge her. A bead of water made its way slowly down a length of brown hair that hung down beside her face as she studied him. It must be an assignment, she thought. As she just stood and waited impatiently Jan tried to force her way farther into his mind, but it was tightly closed even though he knew it was her. She didn't need to read his mind to deduce what had happened; other evidence presented itself all too clearly. The phone lay just within arms reach; he hadn't bothered to put it away. He wasn't relaxed at all, but wasn't on guard either. Whatever had happened had really upset him. The drop of water finally fell from her hair onto his bare chest. His arm barely moved from his eyes to his forehead. Slowly his eyes opened halfway.

He had known she was there, but he wasn't ready to face the inevitable yet. He had told her what had happened to him there, mostly. Some of it she had discovered from his file. He had been a coward and let her read some of what had happened instead of facing up to it himself. And now it looked as if that monster was coming back to hunt him down. As he opened his eyes he saw her standing there. The sun was behind her, silhouetting her. The way the light worked its way around her it looked like it emanated from her very core giving her the appearance of an angel. His angel, even if she didn't know. She had saved him without knowing it and he was about to take his angel into battle again. His happiness, their life, was always in the balance and that had never been as evident as it had been the last few days when they had been doing this training op. The details of her body that the sun kept him from seeing, his mind easily filled in. Ward raise one eyebrow when he realized just what he was seeing. Heaven help him she was naked right now, or nearly so. Gorgeous and dangerous, the perfect mix. Jan had removed the top somewhere between the ocean and this spot and now only wore the bikini bottoms with her knife strapped high on her thigh. He let a smile cross his face as everything else slipped from his mind.

"So what's the bad news?" Jan had a knack of reading him even though he had blocked his mind, and he was violently slammed back to reality. She loosened the strap and removed the knife, letting it drop down beside the phone. Ward waited and watched. Placing her hands on her hips she stood waiting for his answer.

"You're just a bit distracting that way," and when she didn't move or say anything he continued. "Did the sun rise in the west this morning?" He placed his arms behind his head now so that he could look appreciatively at his wife. He desperately wanted to pull her down on top of him and kiss away all their thoughts.

"What are you talking about?" Jan was sure now that there was something bad up, a mission of some kind. She even sounded a little miffed at his round about way of getting to the point.

"Come down here and let me check those stitches Babs," and he stretched out one arm, taking her by the hand and pulling her on top of him.

"Yah right," she smiled and started to kiss his neck. He had checked to make sure they were waterproofed before she started off for her swim. She'd let him play his games for a while. "When are you going to tell me what's really happening?" She said in between nibbles. The plastic coating had held up well.

"Soon," and his hands started caressing her skin. "It's another assignment that can wait oh," and he kissed the spot that made her melt into him, "let's just say an hour," and his hand moved lower, "or two." She wasn't sure but she thought she heard him say please. Whether it was in his mind or from his mouth, this mission was already causing him to worry.

Two hours later Jan lay beside Ward knowing that something was eating away at him

again. They had worked assignments, missions, or jobs, together before, but something about this one was different. Instead of waiting for him to tell her just what was happening she decided to start the conversation on her own. She had tried to read his mind with little or no luck. He had only ever once hidden his mind like this, been worried like this. It was the time when she had been recovering from a particularly bad assignment and she didn't have a memory of him at all. He had kept his memories from interfering with hers, allowing her the time and space she needed to heal. Something big was up. Propping herself up on one arm she looked at his face, eyes closed, jaw set.

"If I wasn't able to read minds I just might have doubts about this relationship," she tried to smile as he turned to look at her, still too serious. In that moment there was a small crack in his armor that she slipped through. It was just enough to be able to read a little of what was happening. "Who are we supposed to find?"

"Remember when I asked you if the world was turning backwards," Ward waited for Jan to nod an affirmative. "Well let's just say that I got a very strange call from Rob," he saw her eyes, "I know that Rob calling isn't strange but it was what he wanted. There's a new director at the PED and this new director wants us to take on some contract work."

"You must be kidding!" Jan sat straight up totally aghast at what he had said, "We're dead remember, or did Pat lie about that. She put us back on the roles and now we get to do their bidding anytime they want. We saved them from embarrassment and scandal," Ward held up his hand and she stopped immediately.

"I agree, and yes we are still dead to the world and to the PED," before Jan could say anything more he continued, "and do you know what beats all? The new director is Pat, and this is all off record. She wants us to find," he hesitated "seems to think we can find," and he stopped. Jan didn't let him finish his sentence.

"Bobby." Her voice was very low and dry.

"Yah. I'm sorry, and God help us I said yes. But you and I both know that it wouldn't matter if we said yes or no, he would still come after us. Don't know all the details yet Babs. I didn't think it would be good to get them over regular lines even if we think they are secure. Told Rob to send Bill out with them and some other toys for us. He'll meet us at Darling Harbor in Sydney day after tomorrow," Ward stopped and looked at Jan. It was a face he knew so well, and the shock that was registered in her eyes made his soul ache. The fact that she felt the same way was no comfort.

"That's not all," and this time he sat up taking her hand in his. Not sure if the gesture was for her or for him. "If I know Bobby, and I do, he is hurt and messed up. I know exactly where he is going to head. How could he not be hurting with what they must have been pumping into him," this time he looked out to sea. "They have had him sedated in some form or another for way too long. The PED never planned or even imagined one of us going rogue, let alone going bad. That's what the handlers were for, but things happened, things they couldn't imagine," he let that statement set in the air, "Damage must have been done to his skills and to his mind. If he wasn't crazy enough before, he is now. He will go to the only place he can to get help, and it's the very last place I want to be on this earth."

"Back to where it all started," and this time Jan took hold of Ward's other hand wrapping her hands around his in a protective act and holding on tight. He wasn't quite trembling, but she could tell that the idea of going back had rocked him to his very core.

"Right."