

TREASON'S REWARD

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Treason's Reward

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Prologue

About five years ago. . .

“Damn. What in the hell was that?” Bobby said in anger, not really expecting an answer. He was just walking into the shower stall in the men's locker room next to Ward. Ward had already thrown off his mud-encrusted clothes and gone into the showers to try and remove the layers that still clung to him. Ward had trained with these men before and their reaction to the mini training mission they had just been on was interesting.

“Is she some sort of freak?” Bobby continued as the spray hit him and the mud began to puddle at the base of the stall.

“They said she was good when we set up the training mission,” Ward put his head under the water and closed his eyes. He had been planning this since he had put in for a transfer to the Phoenix office. Part of it had been curiosity, part of it just another way to meet up with her again, but he hadn't bothered to tell Bobby, his best friend or comrade, that. Closing his eyes and placing his face back under the water he could clearly picture her. He couldn't help but smile at the outcome of this training session. It didn't surprise him that he had a good helping of admiration for her either. She had beaten them thoroughly. Her performance during the training session had not been anything less than extraordinary. Nothing he hadn't expected after he had looked at her file, after all they were PED agents. All of them worked for a little known governmental department or agency known as the Paranormal Enforcement Department, or 'PED' for short. In the department it was their job to provide protection, detection, and deception. Jan, as well as others, were part of a grand experiment that had started back in the 1960's and never ended like it was supposed to have. As in the last ten to fifteen years they had been discovered through bogus psychology experiments in colleges. Then they were slowly and carefully drafted into a lifetime of service for the department. All of these agents could read minds, and they were partnered with a handler to keep them loyal to the job. They were also well trained in all types of areas to make them virtually unstoppable.

No one could yet beat her time in assembling a firearm in pitch-blackness. It was pure pleasure to watch as she moved through terrain that was best left to swamp creatures. She then switched her weapon under live fire. She had allowed him to watch all of this through her mind. It was only toward the end when they had tried to block each other that the true strength of her talents had shined. She had been the only mind reader he had ever met that could pick off a trained blocker in pitch-blackness. He was hoping he would get a chance to ask her about that.

“Yah, but how did she find us in all that mess and pitch black conditions? She picked us off as if we were standing in the middle of open field at noon. I couldn't even read that she was anywhere around,” Bobby vigorously rubbed shampoo into his matted hair, “Could you read her?”

“Genetic freak, that's what she is,” the only other man on the mission made his comment as he got into the showers. The training mission had included just the four of them, Jan had been set up as the one they had to capture and bring in. One woman had bested all of them, and egos were now hurting, all except for Ward's.

"We're all genetic freaks if you want to get down to the nitty gritty and no, had no clue she was even around," he wished he could have said the last part with more conviction. Since the first time he had seen her in the office, he had never stopped feeling her when she was around him.

It had only been a quick glance at first, but then something had compelled him to look her way again. His eyes had been captured by her intense stare. It began innocently but he had stared a moment too long, and then their eyes had locked. It had only been for a minute, but that minute had changed him forever. Her eyes had invited him to get to know her back then, but he hadn't even gotten a chance to talk with her. He had looked in her files, when no one was watching, to learn everything he could about her. Ward was no stranger to computers and could break into any system that existed including his own department. A skill he had shared with no one within the department. He liked the idea that he could have any information he wanted, whenever he wanted. In college he trained to be a doctor, but found that he had a way with computers as well once he had joined the department. He saw no reason not to use it.

What he found in her records was impressive. She had been undercover a number of times according to her files, a lot of dangerous assignments. Each time had ended with the successful completion of her mission and the capture of the suspect. Nothing surprising there, that's what they did for a living. Her training session's scores had been excellent, and in some cases they had exceeded the scores and standards of the others in this as well as many other departments.

As for her mind reading abilities, only a few readers were truly in her league. In fact, his score on the ESP tests and hers were almost identical, but she certainly had discovered something that he hadn't. Digging a little deeper, he had found that the recent assessments of their mind reading skills were comparable, and their accuracy levels were off the charts. As he continued to read the file he discovered that his range for an accurate read was a bit farther and he was able to break past mental blocks a little easier according to the scores, but that might be the only differences between their abilities. They were well matched and at the top of their field. The more he learned about her, the more he wanted to learn about her. She was a psychology major, and had a minor in languages. She had joined up right out of college and there were no messy family situations that had to be dealt with. Like all of them she was a loner. She had never had a partner change in the department and her operations base had always been the Phoenix office. He had hoped that this training mission would be an opening to get to actually talk with her. All he knew right now were the dull facts that they put in her file, and he was pretty sure there was nothing dull about her.

"Did you see her time on the blind assembly?" Bobby let out a whistle, "That woman has good hands," Bobby put his head back under the water to rinse off the remaining mix of mud and shampoo.

"Shot the hell out of your record," Ward walked out of the showers and wrapped the towel around his waist as he went over to his locker. How good the woman's hands were not the only things Ward was interested in. But he kept those thoughts closely guarded. It was never a good thing in a room of mind readers to let them see just who peaked your interest, whether it was business or pleasure. Right now Ward wasn't even sure which it was, but he knew he was going to find out. She had made him think and feel things he never thought were possible.

"Want to get a coffee and some breakfast?" Bobby asked as he walked back to where he had stored his street clothes before the training session. Ward was already dressed and zipping up his bag.

"Love to, but already have plans," or at least he hoped he did. If he was right, Jan was about to leave the women's locker room.

"Hope she's worth it bro," was all Bobby had time to say before Ward walked out. Ward should have known he would see through to his real motives.

Chapter 1

Years Later...

Jan awoke suddenly and completely in the middle of the night to the ringing of the phone on the pillow beside her. It wasn't a surprise, she had gone to bed expecting the call to come in and she was awake in seconds. In one fluid motion she had answered the secured cell phone placing it next to her ear by the second ring.

"Lo," she pushed up on the pillows letting the sheet pool around her waist.

"What are you wearing?" The voice was low, deep, and very familiar. Ward only had a few moments and he wasn't going to waste it on small talk. He missed being near her; being in her head.

"Nothing but a smile. How's the weather there?" Jan could care less about the weather. They used the word weather instead of the word mission. It was standard procedure, even if the line was secure they couldn't, wouldn't, take any chances.

It had been about a week and a half ago when Ward had gotten an e-mail from an old friend that worked at another government agency. Over the years, Ward had only given his e-mail to those who he could truly trust, and who might need his help. They were the ones that gave him jobs that other agencies didn't want. The e-mail had simply said, *I need your help on this one. In this situation, I only want to work with the best*, and Ward was the best. He had signed it only as, *Golightly*.

They had been teamed together many times years ago and knew each other well. He was one of a small number of people that Ward trusted and called friend and even brother. Ward sent only a one line e-mail back, *Call me*, with a phone number. Two days later Ward received his call. Jan knew of him but had never had the pleasure to work with him.

Jack Golightly had needed another person whom he could trust to help set up a semi-legal surveillance operation on a developing group in South America. If that had been the only thing he needed he would have called the agency, but there was more. There was another problem he only hinted about to Ward as they spoke. Ward's skills as a technological expert, and his ability to be on the outside of the system were exactly what Jack had needed to set up his surveillance on both the group and his agency team. His current field partner on this assignment was adequate, it was farther up the grapevine that he was worried about. He assured Ward that it would only require a week or more of unfavorable conditions. The location of this assignment was in and around Iquitos where rain was the normal weather this time of year and sun was the oddity. What he didn't have to tell Ward was it would also be handy to have a mind reader to go into the different situations where placing a bug, or checking on teammates, could be difficult, or impossible, for anyone else. Jack had promised more information when and if Ward went down there.

After a brief discussion with Jan, Ward had taken off to Peru to help out. Jan had stayed behind to monitor another developing problem that they had been watching for the last two weeks. They were about to take action on it if no one else picked it up. As it turned out the FBI had picked it up three days after Ward left, leaving them out of the picture, and Jan with nothing to do.

"There doesn't seem to be much of a change in the weather down here. It's fairly clear and I should be headed back in a few days as long as the weather balloons hold. There have been no other hints at inclement weather," he just needed to make sure no one found the equipment he had gotten into the homes, and that it monitored what they needed. Ward had also not seen anything that could confirm

Jack's suspicions, either in the main office in Lima, the branch in Iquitos, or the people around him here. He also knew that if Jack suspected it then it most likely existed, but he couldn't hang around forever. That was dangerous too.

It had not stopped raining for days. He had crawled through some of the worst swamps he had seen in a while to set up this monitoring station. They now sat concealed by a camouflage tarp that was a makeshift shelter, the rain hammered down on them, the mud slid and pooled beneath their feet. The generator created just enough power to keep the monitoring equipment going; they couldn't risk running any type of heater and didn't have enough power for it anyway. He had been living off rations and whatever Jack brought back from the forest to their shelter, which was far better than the rations they had been provided. It had been exactly one week since Ward had seen a shower and the mud on his clothes and skin had begun to feel like a part of his body even though he had made a couple of trips to the waterfall about half a mile from where he was right now. This had brought about the old memories of the first time he had ever trained with Jan so many years ago. Those memories always held mixed feelings as they also contained memories of another agent he once considered his best friend, as close to a brother as one got in this business of subterfuge and mayhem. Once he left the department he had discovered just whom he could call friend.

"Good. The weather has cleared here, but it's getting a little cold," Jan leaned up against the pillows and relaxed. Being in danger was part of who they were, but she was always glad to know that the danger was minimal. When they married they never promised each other their tomorrows, only their today's. The future held no guarantees.

"Looking at the forecast here, I see a warm front coming your way soon. In fact it will get very hot," Ward glanced at his watch knowing that he would have to end his phone call in less than two minutes.

"It's been down right boring. Nothing coming over the wire for us," no jobs were coming in from their other sources. There was nothing he needed to get back for besides her. She had been watching for another job, but all seemed too quiet. Jan was watching the bedside clock, and knew that their time was almost up, "I've even considered going shopping."

"That bad huh?" Ward knew that Jan thought shopping was a form of torture, the worst kind in her books. "If you feel the need to go, at least get something I will enjoy."

"That might make the trip worthwhile. Something red and small," she could almost see his face as she thought she heard the catch in his breath, "Watch your back."

"Will do," his voice just beginning to recover, "Will call again at the set time. Hopefully it will be to tell you I'm on my way. Will have to see what information Jack's bringing me. He'll be here in about five minutes. By the way, do me a favor and start checking out some of the names of the people connected with this mission. I'm getting a strange feeling but can't pin it to anyone," he gave her a list of names quickly, including Jack's. Jan committed each name to memory. Ward paused, "Love ya." It was funny, they had spent years in this line of work learning not to make these complicated relationship connections with others, but it felt natural and even good to have someone waiting for him to get back.

"Love ya," and she placed the phone back on his pillow before getting up to go to the computer. No time like now to get started since she wasn't going to go back to sleep anytime soon.

Ward put down the phone and put his attention back on to the radio transmitter. Everything had been taped, and nothing had happened that was noteworthy. He was pretty sure he wasn't here for this though. The usual conversations had taken place, nothing that would have confirmed or denied suspicions about any type of illegal activity they were looking or not looking for. He had suspected the obvious, drug running, but they had found none of that. Jack had only hinted that the CIA had suspected the new group of smuggling something. Once Ward had arrived, he learned that it may have actually been a new terrorist cell developing. Ward now understood why Jack had never mentioned it over the phone or the e-mail. Even on secure channels terrorism wasn't discussed out loud. Just what they were up to was their job to discover. He had to wonder just who the terrorists were that Jack was looking for. Ward felt a presence coming toward the outpost. He didn't move from his place as it was only Jack that he felt. The last time that Jack had been up to see him had been a day and a half ago. He had promised

to bring some computer equipment this time so that Ward could do a little more digging on his own. The flap to the tent flew open and rain spattered the small area as Jack made his way in.

“Had Toby run those pictures through the computer that you got, and came up with a big fat zero,” Jack stood a few inches taller than Ward and had about twenty-five more pounds of muscle on him. He was also caked with mud from the knees down. His hair was black and even wet it hung loosely around his face and ears curling slightly. His facial features had an angular look. They were strong and set, like they had been chiseled out of stone and his muscled frame matched the hard set of his face. He had been born and raised in the West, and was part Native American. He had worked with the CIA for the last fifteen years; most of that being in South America where his looks let him fit in like a native. Jack had his raincoat covering a bag that he was carrying. Quickly he shed his camo raincoat in the farthest corner to keep the water and mud away from the equipment. Droplets of water fell all over the corner and splattered the makeshift wall but somehow he missed the sensitive equipment that Ward had set up. Ward moved only one side of the headphones away from his ears. It was the same way he had talked with Jan just a few minutes ago.

“Did they check the other databases?” He asked the question, but Ward already knew the answer.

“They don’t have access to the ones you want checked. Why do you think I called you in? Just for your pretty face, or might it be the fact that I think you like sitting here getting a full spa mud treatment down here in this little paradise of mine?” Jack took the headphones off of Ward’s head, and handed him a waterproof bag about the size of a small suitcase. “We have this for a couple of days, and then they will figure out that it’s missing. What you want to do after that is up to you?” Jack was unsure of just how much Ward would want to or need to bend the rules.

“Does it ever stop raining here this time of year?” it was a rhetorical question as Ward had already pulled the specks on the area and knew that to be called a tropical rain forest it had to get a lot of rain, over two hundred fifty millimeters a month on average, more in some months during the wet season. That would leave about two dry days as Ward calculated it. Ward took the case and wiped away the mud from the zippers, “There’s been nothing new happening in there since we started to listen. Are you sure we’re barking up the right tree?” Ward then began to open the bag right beside the radio set up on what space was left of the small camp table.

“It stops raining one Tuesday in December I think. As for the right tree, that odd feeling I get, is getting odder as this job gets older.” Ward knew that only part of what Jack had said was true. Jack had had an odd feeling for a long time about this job, but he hadn’t shared all his suspicions with anyone yet. Ward had only worked to pick up on a couple of random thoughts, but Jack hadn’t been up here long enough yet to get past his blocks to see through to the real problem. What Ward knew was that Jack wanted him to go on his own feelings, and not Jack’s. If they both felt it then it meant that he wasn’t crazy after all.

Ward took out the laptop and put up the antenna to connect to the worldwide web via a satellite that was just in range. It was also time to put his mental antennas up to see if he could finally break through just a corner of Jack’s blockades. His fingers flew over the keys as he logged on to the different databases looking for names or descriptions to match the people who were occupying the house about a mile down the road, and his mind started to do what it did best.

He checked the intelligence sights of the major countries first and came up with nothing. Even the United States had minimal to no information on this group. Each name he tried had come up blank or with information that included about only the last two years on each person’s life. He assumed that this was a cover, a badly created one, but a cover the same. With each miss his fingers got faster and his temper hotter. Jack sat and intensely listened at the machine, hearing nothing that would have caused any alarm. Ward had gotten through part of his defenses, but not enough to get any names. A traitor was all the information he could ferret out of Jack’s head. Ward switched satellites and entered the Brazilian intelligence sight. After typing in the first two names he again found nothing but uncreative underdone covers there. Each cover consisted of a name, a credit card with a five hundred dollar limit, and history of no more than two years that he could find. It wasn’t until he typed in the last name that he got a hit.

This guy, or his cover, had a record. He had been picked up once for robbery, and had given a different name than was on his documents. The smile on Ward's face began to lift just a little at the corners. It may not have been a false name at all. If they had been building their covers, giving that name would have caused problems. Ward had to assume that he may have given them his real name but didn't have any documentation to support it; after all, the name could just be another alias. With little to go on, Ward started to enter the new name into the databases again. This time, he came up with all sorts of hits, and one from Russia that made him sit up and take notice.

The screen just rolled on and on. There were pages of information on this person. He read carefully through parts of the file, and when he got to the bottom he noticed there was another name attached to the file. As he read the name he suddenly sensed other minds moving in quickly. The thoughts hadn't been there a moment ago, or maybe he had been lax, because he thought they were too far out in the wilderness. There were at least three men, with semiautomatic rifles. None were close enough yet for Ward to get a good look through any of their eyes; he could only read their general thoughts. That was enough for him though. His voice dropped very low, and his words were carefully measured before he said them.

"Anything change in the house?" The way Ward's voice sounded, every muscle in Jack's body tensed. Ward could see his jaw clench. Without saying a word he shook his head no but never looked in Ward's direction, "Then we have unexpected guests. We have about two minutes before they catch sight of the tent, about five before we either confront them or leave. Want to tell me that something you've been hiding from me now?"

Jack turned to look at Ward, and it was as if all Ward's suspicions had been confirmed. No words were exchanged as Ward looked through what Jack was thinking at a rapid pace. Jack knew enough to allow him to have all the access he wanted right now; it would make what time they did have much more efficient. Ward could now clearly see the possibilities of all of it in his mind, and what he had just discovered on the computer could only be a beginning to confirm it. He had all the information he needed to start a deeper search, so Ward hit the save keys on the keyboard putting all the information he had just located on the hard drive. Ward cleared the computer screen and with a couple quick snaps of screws he pulled the hard drive out of the laptop. Jack had already gotten up and went over to the side of the tent to grab the emergency packs and a couple of rain jackets. Ward slipped the hard drive into the survival pack in a place where water wouldn't get in, "I know a way out of here where we won't be found. Leave the rest and let's go."

Jan went over the names in her head, only one of which she knew, and that was Jack's. The CIA routinely ran checks on people but rarely got the same information Ward did. As a matter of courtesy they didn't routinely hack into other databases. Jan also believed that it might also be a matter of arrogance on the agency's part as well. Not being able to sleep now, Jan grabbed her robe that lay at the bottom of the bed and walked into the living room where the computer sat in the corner. To look at, the computer looked like many other personal computers that were in many other homes all over the world. What was inside of it was what mattered in this case. The processor was fast, the gigs high, but that wasn't what made it special. What made it special was it contained the access codes to many of the intelligence agencies around the world. If one would happen to change, then the computer itself would randomly decipher it. A special program Ward had written himself. If red flags began to go off the computer would disengage before it was tracked, and then Ward would do his magic and break the code manually. All in all, a system that rivaled most espionage systems, and he could break into most of them. Jan flipped the switch and walked into the small kitchen to make a cup of coffee as the computer booted up.

The small espresso pot sat on the stove ready to go. Jan tossed in two scoops of coffee and turned on the burner, listening for the familiar clicking of the automatic lighter of the burner. She inhaled the smell of the coffee as it brewed and the aroma did more to wake up her senses than the caffeine in the coffee would. She walked over and took out the milk from the refrigerator. After a few moments she turned off the stove, grabbed the cup on the counter, and poured a cup of coffee then added just a touch

of milk. The milk was swallowed up by the blackness of the brew. As she stood in the small kitchen sipping her coffee she started to put two and two together getting the same number that Ward had come up with before he left.

Jack had called him in to do some computer and surveillance work supposedly, but there had been something else to it. Ward had heard it in his voice. She stared at the cup on the counter and wondered just what, or who, Jack was really looking for. Ward had given her a list of five names to look up, two which were field agents already assigned to the area. She decided to check the agents out last, as he would already have done an extensive background check on them. The other three names would be of the people they were watching.

She would look for discrepancies in information gathered on any of them, in any database. That would take time. She would also need to check entries and exits from almost any country that could harbor drug lords, gunrunners, white slavers, and terrorists. That would mean almost every country. It would be a long task, but one that he probably couldn't take on right at the moment due to the nature of his living conditions. In twenty-four hours he would try and contact her again and he would have whatever information she had ready. Two minutes later she picked up the cup and walked over to the computer. Sitting at the keyboard she started her search in the CIA computers looking for any information or anomalies on the first three names. As each profile popped up Jan carefully saved them, in order to compare them to the others that she would later dig up.

Two hours after starting her search she had found nothing out of the ordinary on two of the three people. Storing all the information to the hard drive, she started the search on the third person. Jan stretched and realized just how much work was going into these background checks. Her coffee was now cold and the sun was rising as the first rays entered the room. The central computers had nothing on this one either so Jan again started the long process to look through databases that were located in other countries. She kept the search specialized as there were only a few things that they really could be looking for. When she tried the Middle-Eastern entry and exit records from different countries she began to get hits. This could mean one of many things, not too many that were good, and Jan was not the type to jump to conclusions, she needed proof. She started a new file on the one named Sal Seital. Each hit she got that was related to Mr. Seital was stored and cataloged by color as to the number of times of entry or exit. What she got was a little less than proof but more than nothing.

The gentleman in question, Sal Seital, had entered into Libya more than once. He had entered at least four times and Jan highlighted the dates. She ran the other names through the same database. Setting up the computer to automatically run all the aliases she had found had been easy to do. It would take another fifteen minutes, so she readied the next list. For fun she would run the list of agents through as well.

Another person on the list, the agent assigned to Jack at the moment, had also been recorded as having two entries into Libya as well. Without Ward, Jan could only guess at what was going on. There were reasons for field agents to be entering countries such as Libya, but similar entry and exit dates brought him under a bit more suspicion. If he had had Sal under surveillance for a while then it would be natural, but there was always a possibility that natural was not the case. Jan began to get a strange feeling again. She saved that data into Sal's folder, knowing that the connection was there, but not sure just what the connection was. By now her coffee had gotten old and cold. The sun was peeking in the windows. Getting up from the computer she moved to where she could see the sunlight. Knowing the feeling of impending doom was beginning to grow again she moved toward the balcony and began her normal Tai Chi routine. Keeping body and mind working together were especially important with her skills. Sometimes twenty to thirty minutes of Tai Chi could help clear her thoughts and focus her energies on the correct path. What she feared most was the options that were now darting through her head. Some of the explanations were logical, some a little less. Worse yet, if what she had read showed signs of the agent and Sal working together, then Ward and Jack could be in real trouble and there would be nothing she could do to warn them for almost another twenty four hours.