

ONE

They found him in Ponta Porã, a pleasant little town in Brazil, on the border of Paraguay, in a land still known as the Frontier.

They found him living in a shaded brick house on Rua Tiradentes, a wide avenue with trees down the center and barefoot boys dribbling soccer balls along the hot pavement.

They found him alone, as best they could tell, though a maid came and went at odd hours during the eight days they hid and watched.

They found him living a comfortable life but certainly not one of luxury. The house was modest and could've been owned by any local merchant. The car was a 1983 Volkswagen Beetle, manufactured in São Paulo with a million others. It was red and clean, polished to a shine. Their first photo of him was snapped as he waxed it just inside the gate to his short driveway.

They found him much thinner, down considerably from the two hundred and thirty pounds he'd been carrying when last seen. His hair and skin were darker, his chin had been squared, and his nose had been slightly pointed. Subtle changes to the face. They'd paid a steep bribe to the surgeon in Rio who'd performed the alterations two and a half years earlier.

They found him after four years of tedious but

diligent searching, four years of dead ends and lost trails and false tips, four years of pouring good money down the drain, good money chasing bad, it seemed.

But they found him. And they waited. There was at first the desire to snatch him immediately, to drug him and smuggle him to a safe house in Paraguay, to seize him before he saw them or before a neighbor became suspicious. The initial excitement of the finding made them consider a quick strike, but after two days they settled down and waited. They loitered at various points along Rua Tiradentes, dressed like the locals, drinking tea in the shade, avoiding the sun, eating ice cream, talking to the children, watching his house. They tracked him as he drove downtown to shop, and they photographed him from across the street as he left the pharmacy. They eased very near him in a fruit market and listened as he spoke to the clerk. Excellent Portuguese, with the very slight accent of an American or a German who'd studied hard. He moved quickly downtown, gathering his goods and returning home, where he locked the gate behind him. His brief shopping trip yielded a dozen fine photos.

He had jogged in a prior life, though in the months before he disappeared his mileage shrunk as his weight ballooned. Now that he teetered on the brink of emaciation, they were not surprised to see him running again. He left his house, locking the gate behind him, and began a slow trot down the sidewalk along Rua Tiradentes. Nine minutes for the first mile, as the street went perfectly straight and the houses grew farther apart. The pavement turned to gravel on the edge of town, and halfway into the second mile his pace was down to eight minutes a mile and Danilo had himself a nice sweat. It was midday in October, the temperature near eighty, and he gained speed as he left town, past a small clinic packed with young mothers, past a small church the Baptists had built.

The roads became dustier as he headed for the countryside at seven minutes a mile.

The running was serious business, and it pleased them mightily. Danilo would simply run into their arms.

The day after the first sighting, a small unclean cottage on the edge of Ponta Porã was rented by a Brazilian named Osmar, and before long the rest of the pursuit team poured in. It was an equal mix of Americans and Brazilians, with Osmar giving the orders in Portuguese and Guy barking in English. Osmar could handle both languages, and had become the official interpreter for the team.

Guy was from Washington, an ex-government type who'd been hired to find Danny Boy, as he'd been nicknamed. Guy was considered a genius at some levels and immensely talented at others, and his past was a black hole. He was well into his fifth one-year contract to find Danny Boy, and there was a nice bonus for snagging the prey. Though he hid it well, Guy had been slowly cracking under the pressure of not finding Danny Boy.

Four years and three and a half million dollars, with nothing to show for it.

But now they'd found him.

Osmar and his band of Brazilians had not the slightest hint of Danny Boy's sins, but a fool could see that he'd disappeared and taken a trainload of money. And, although he was very curious about Danny Boy, Osmar had learned quickly not to ask questions. Guy and the Americans had nothing to say on the subject.

The pictures of Danny Boy were enlarged to eight by tens, and tacked along a wall in the kitchen of the dirty little cottage where they were studied by grim men with hard eyes, men who chain-smoked strong cigarettes and shook their heads at the photos. They

whispered among themselves and compared the new photos to the old ones, the ones from his previous life. Smaller man, odd chin, different nose. His hair was shorter and his skin darker. Was it really him?

They had been through this before, in Recife, on the northeastern coast, nineteen months earlier when they'd rented an apartment and looked at photos on the wall until the decision was made to grab the American and check his fingerprints. Wrong prints. Wrong American. They pumped some more drugs in him and left him in a ditch.

They were afraid to dig too deeply into the current life of Danilo Silva. If he was in fact their man, then he had plenty of money. And cash always worked wonders with the local authorities. For decades, cash had bought protection for Nazis and other Germans who'd smuggled themselves into Ponta Porã.

Osmar wanted to grab him. Guy said they'd wait. He vanished on the fourth day, and the dirty little cottage was in chaos for thirty-six hours.

They saw him leave home in the red Beetle. He was in a hurry, came the report. He raced across town to the airport, jumped on a small commuter at the last moment, and was gone. His car was parked in the only lot, and they watched it every second of every hour. The plane was headed in the general direction of São Paulo, with four stops in between.

There was instantly a plan to enter his home and catalog everything. There had to be records. The money had to be tended to. Guy dreamed of finding bank statements, wire transfer reports, account summaries; all sorts of documents arranged in a neat portfolio which would lead him directly to the money.

But he knew better. If Danny Boy ran because of them, then he would never leave behind the evidence. And if he was in fact their man, then his home would be carefully secured. Danny Boy, wherever he was,

would probably know the instant they opened his door or window.

They waited. They cursed and argued and strained even more under the pressure. Guy made his daily call to Washington, a nasty one. They watched the red Beetle. Each arrival brought out the binoculars and cell phones. Six flights the first day. Five the second. The dirty little cottage grew hot and the men settled outdoors – the Americans napping under a scrawny shade tree in the backyard and the Brazilians playing cards along the fence in the front.

Guy and Osmar took a long drive and vowed to grab him if he ever returned. Osmar was confident he would be back. Probably just out of town on business, whatever his business was. They'd snatch him, identify him, and if he happened to be the wrong man they'd simply throw him in a ditch and run. It had happened before.

He returned on the fifth day. They trailed him back to Rua Tiradentes, and everybody was happy.

On the eighth day, the dirty cottage emptied as all the Brazilians and all the Americans took their positions.

The course was a six-miler. He had covered it each day he'd been home, leaving at almost the same time, wearing the same blue and orange runner's shorts, well-worn Nikes, ankle socks, no shirt.

The perfect spot was two and a half miles from his house, over a small hill on a gravel road, not far from his turning-around point. Danilo topped the hill twenty minutes into his run, a few seconds ahead of schedule. He ran harder, for some reason. Probably the clouds.

A small car with a flat tire was just over the hill, blocking the road, trunk opened, its rear jacked up. Its driver was a burly young man who pretended to be startled at the sight of the skinny racer sweating and

panting as he topped the hill. Danilo slowed for a second. There was more room to the right.

'*Bom dia,*' the burly young man said as he took a step toward Danilo.

'*Bom dia,*' Danilo said, approaching the car.

The driver suddenly pulled a large shiny pistol from the trunk and shoved it into Danilo's face. He froze, his eyes locked onto the gun, his mouth open with heavy breathing. The driver had thick hands and long, stout arms. He grabbed Danilo by the neck and yanked him roughly toward the car, then down to the bumper. He stuck the pistol in a pocket and with both hands folded Danilo into the trunk. Danny Boy struggled and kicked, but was no match.

The driver slammed the trunk shut, lowered the car, tossed the jack into the ditch, and drove off. A mile away, he turned on to a narrow dirt path where his pals were anxiously waiting.

They tied nylon ropes around Danny Boy's wrists and a black cloth over his eyes, then shoved him into the back of a van. Osmar sat to his right, another Brazilian to his left. Someone removed his keys from the Velcro runner's pouch stuck to his waist. Danilo said nothing as the van started and began moving. He was still sweating and breathing even harder.

When the van stopped on a dusty road near a farm field, Danilo uttered his first words. 'What do you want?' he asked, in Portuguese.

'Don't speak,' came the reply from Osmar, in English. The Brazilian to Danilo's left removed a syringe from a small metal box and deftly filled it with a potent liquid. Osmar pulled Danilo's wrists tightly toward him while the other man jabbed the needle into his upper arm. He stiffened and jerked, then realized it was hopeless. He actually relaxed as the last of the drug entered his body. His breathing slowed; his head began to wobble. When his chin hit his chest,

Osmar gently, with his right index finger, raised the shorts on Danilo's right leg, and found exactly what he expected to find. Pale skin.

The running kept him thin, and it also kept him brown.

Kidnappings were all too common in the Frontier. Americans were easy targets. But why him? Danilo asked himself this as his head wobbled and his eyes closed. He smiled as he fell through space, dodging comets and meteors, grabbing at moons and grinning through entire galaxies.

They stuffed him under some cardboard boxes filled with melons and berries. The border guards nodded without leaving their chairs, and Danny Boy was now in Paraguay, though he couldn't have cared less at the moment. He bounced happily along on the floor of the van as the roads grew worse and the terrain steeper. Osmar chain-smoked and occasionally pointed this way and that. An hour after they grabbed him, they found the last turn. The cabin was in a crevice between two pointed hills, barely visible from the narrow dirt road. They carried him like a sack of meal and poured him onto a table in the den where Guy and the fingerprint man went to work.

Danny Boy snored heavily as prints were made of all eight fingers and both thumbs. The Americans and the Brazilians crowded around, watching every move. There was unopened whiskey in a box by the door, just in case this was the real Danny Boy.

The print man left abruptly and went to a room in the back where he locked the door and spread the fresh prints before him. He adjusted his lighting. He removed the master set, those freely given by Danny Boy when he was much younger, back when he was Patrick and seeking admission to the State Bar of Louisiana. Odd, this fingerprinting of lawyers.

Both sets were in fine shape, and it was immediately obvious they were a perfect match. But he meticulously checked all ten. There was no hurry. Let them wait out there. He rather enjoyed the moment. He finally opened the door and frowned hard at the dozen faces searching his. Then he smiled. 'It's him,' he said, in English, and they actually clapped.

Guy approved the whiskey, but only in moderation. There was more work to do. Danny Boy, still comatose, was given another shot and carried to a small bedroom with no window and a heavy door which locked from the outside. It was here that he would be interrogated, and tortured, if necessary.

The barefoot boys playing soccer in the street were too involved in their game to look up. Danny Boy's key ring had only four keys on it, and so the small front gate was unlocked quickly, and left open. An accomplice in a rented car came to a stop near a large tree four houses down. Another, on a motorbike, parked himself at the other end of the street and began tinkering with his brakes.

If a security system started howling upon entry, the intruder would simply run and never be seen again. If not, then he would lock himself in and take inventory.

The door opened without sirens. The security panel on the wall informed whoever might be looking that the system was disarmed. He breathed lightly and stood perfectly still for a full minute, then began to move around. He removed the hard drive from Danny Boy's PC, and collected all the disks. He rummaged through files on his desk, but found nothing but routine bills, some paid, others waiting. The fax was cheap and featureless, and declared itself to be out of order. He took photos of clothing, food, furniture, bookshelves, magazine racks.

Five minutes after the door opened, a silent signal

was activated in Danilo's attic and a phone call was placed to a private security firm eleven blocks away, in downtown Ponta Porã. The call went unanswered because the security consultant on duty was swaying gently in a hammock out back. A recorded message from Danilo's house informed whoever was supposed to be listening that there was a break-in. Fifteen minutes passed before human ears heard the message. By the time the consultant raced to Danilo's house, the intruder was gone. So was Mr Silva. Everything appeared to be in order, including the Beetle under the carport. The house and gate were locked.

The directions in the file were specific. On such alarms, do not call the police. Try first to locate Mr Silva, and in the event he cannot be found at once, then call a number in Rio. Ask for Eva Miranda.

With barely suppressed excitement, Guy made his daily call to Washington. He actually closed his eyes and smiled when he uttered the words, 'It's him.' His voice was an octave higher.

There was a pause on the other end. Then, 'You're certain?'

'Yes. Prints are a perfect match.'

Another pause while Stephano arranged his thoughts, a process that usually took milliseconds. 'The money?'

'We haven't started yet. He's still drugged.'

'When?'

'Tonight.'

'I'm by the phone.' Stephano hung up, though he could've talked for hours.

Guy found a perch on a stump behind the cabin. The vegetation was dense, the air thin and cool. The soft voices of happy men drifted up to him. The ordeal was over, for the most part.

He had just earned an extra fifty thousand dollars. Finding the money would mean another bonus, and he was certain he'd find the money.

TWO

Downtown Rio. In a small neat office on the tenth floor of a high-rise, Eva Miranda squeezed the phone with both hands and slowly repeated the words she had just heard. The silent alarm had summoned the security guard. Mr Silva wasn't at home, but his car was parked in the drive and the house was locked.

Someone had entered, tripped the alarm, and it couldn't be a false one because it was still activated when the security guard arrived.

Danilo was missing.

Maybe he'd gone jogging and neglected the routine. According to the guard's account, the silent alarm had been activated an hour and ten minutes ago. But Danilo jogged for less than an hour – six miles at seven to eight minutes per, total of fifty minutes max. No exceptions. She knew his movements.

She called his home on Rua Tiradentes, and no one answered. She called the number to a cell phone he sometimes kept nearby, and no one answered.

He had accidentally tripped the alarm three months ago, and scared them both badly. But a quick phone call from her had cleared up the matter.

He was much too careful about the security system to get careless. It meant too much.

She made the calls again, with the same results. There is an explanation for this, she told herself.

She dialed the number to an apartment in Curitiba, a city of a million and a half, and the capital of the state of Paraná. To their knowledge, no one knew of the apartment. It was leased under another name and used for storage and infrequent meetings. They spent short weekends there occasionally; not often enough to suit Eva.

She expected no answer at the apartment, and got none. Danilo would not go there without first calling her.

When the phone calls were finished, she locked her office door and leaned against it with her eyes closed. Associates and secretaries could be heard in the hallway. The firm had thirty-three lawyers at the moment, second largest in Rio with a branch in São Paulo and another in New York. Telephones and faxes and copiers blended together in a busy distant chorus.

At thirty-one, she was a seasoned five-year associate with the firm; seasoned to the point of working the long hours and coming in on Saturdays. Fourteen partners ran the firm, but only two were women. She had plans to change that ratio. Ten of the nineteen associates were female, evidence that in Brazil, as in the United States, women were rapidly entering the profession. She studied law at the Catholic University in Rio, one of the finer schools, in her opinion. Her father still taught philosophy there.

He had insisted she study law at Georgetown after studying law in Rio. Georgetown was his alma mater. His influence, along with her impressive résumé, striking looks, and fluent English made finding a top job with a top firm a quick chore.

She paused at her window and told herself to relax. Time was suddenly crucial. The next series of moves required steady nerves. Then she would have to disappear. There was a meeting in thirty minutes, but it would have to be postponed.

The file was locked in a small fireproof drawer. She removed it and read again the sheet of instructions; directions she and Danilo had covered many times.

He knew they would find him.

Eva had preferred to ignore the possibility.

Her mind drifted as she worried about his safety. The phone rang and startled her. It was not Danilo. A client was waiting, her secretary said. The client was early. Apologize to the client, she instructed, and politely reschedule the appointment. Do not disturb again.

The money was currently parked in two places: a bank in Panama, and an offshore holding trust in Bermuda. Her first fax authorized the immediate wire transfer of the money out of Panama and into a bank in Antigua. Her second fax scattered it among three banks on Grand Cayman. The third yanked it out of Bermuda and parked it in the Bahamas.

It was almost two in Rio. The European banks were closed, so she would be forced to skip the money around the Caribbean for a few hours until the rest of the world opened.

Danilo's instructions were clear but general. The details were left to her discretion. The initial wires were determined by Eva. She decided which banks got how much money. She had made the list of the fictitious corporate names under which the money was hidden; a list Danilo had never seen. She divided, dispersed, routed, and rerouted. It was a drill they had rehearsed many times, but without the specifics.

Danilo couldn't know where the money went. Only Eva. She had the unbridled discretion, at this moment and under these extreme circumstances, to move it as she saw fit. Her specialty was trade law. Most of her clients were Brazilian businessmen who wanted to develop exports to the United States and Canada. She understood foreign markets, currencies, banking.

What she hadn't known about zipping money around the world, Danilo had taught her.

She glanced repeatedly at her watch. More than an hour had passed since the phone call from Ponta Porã.

As another fax rolled through the machine, the phone rang again. Certainly it was Danilo, finally, with a wild story and all of this was for nothing. Perhaps just a dry run, a rehearsal to test her mettle under pressure. But he was not one to play games.

It was a partner, quite perturbed that she was late for yet another meeting. She apologized with short words and returned to her fax.

The pressure mounted with each passing minute. Still no word from Danilo. No answers to her repeated calls. If they had in fact found him, then they wouldn't wait long before they tried to make him talk. That was what he feared the most. That was why she had to run.

An hour and a half. Reality was settling hard on her shoulders. Danilo was missing, and he would never disappear without first telling her. He planned his movements too carefully, always fearful of the shadows behind him. Their worst nightmare was unfolding, and quickly.

At a pay phone in the lobby of her office building, Eva made two calls. The first was to her apartment manager, to see if anyone had been to her apartment in Leblon, in Rio's South Zone, where the wealthy lived and the beautiful played. The answer was no, but the manager promised to watch things. The second call was to the office of the FBI in Biloxi, Mississippi. It was an emergency, she explained as calmly as possible with her best effort at accentless American English. She waited, knowing that from this moment forward there was no turning back.

Someone had taken Danilo. His past had finally caught him.

'Hello,' came the voice, as if it were only a block away.

'Agent Joshua Cutter?'

'Yes.'

She paused slightly. 'Are you in charge of the Patrick Lanigan investigation?' She knew perfectly well that he was.

A pause on his end. 'Yes. Who is this?'

They would trace the call to Rio, and that would take about three minutes. Then their tracking would drown in a city of ten million. But she looked around nervously anyway.

'I'm calling from Brazil,' she said, according to script. 'They've captured Patrick.'

'Who?' Cutter asked.

'I'll give you a name.'

'I'm listening,' Cutter said, his voice suddenly edgy.

'Jack Stephano. Do you know him?'

A pause as Cutter tried to place the name. 'No. Who is he?'

'A private agent in Washington. He's been searching for Patrick for the past four years.'

'And you say he's found him, right?'

'Yes. His men found him.'

'Where?'

'Here. In Brazil.'

'When?'

'Today. And I think they might kill him.'

Cutter pondered this for a second, then asked, 'What else can you tell me?'

She gave him Stephano's phone number in D.C., then hung up and wandered out of the building.

Guy carefully flipped through the assorted papers taken from Danny Boy's house, and marveled at the invisible trail. A monthly statement from a local bank listed a balance of three thousand dollars, not exactly

what they had in mind. The only deposit was for eighteen hundred, debits for the month of less than a thousand. Danny Boy lived quite frugally. His electric and phone bills were unpaid but not past due. A dozen other small bills were marked paid.

One of Guy's men checked all the phone numbers on Danny Boy's bill, but turned up nothing interesting. Another scoured the hard drive from his little computer and quickly learned that Danny Boy was not much of a hacker. There was a lengthy journal about his adventures in the Brazilian outback. The last entry was almost a year old.

The scarcity of paperwork was in itself very suspicious. Only one bank statement? Who on the face of the earth keeps only last month's bank statement in the house? What about the month before? Danny Boy had a storage place somewhere, away from his home. It all fit nicely with a man on the run.

At dusk, Danny Boy, still unconscious, was stripped to his underwear, tight cotton briefs. His dirty running shoes and sweaty running socks were pulled off, revealing feet that nearly glowed in their whiteness. His new dark skin was counterfeit. He was placed on a one-inch-thick sheet of plywood next to his bed. Holes had been cut in the board and nylon ropes were used to tightly secure his ankles, knees, waist, chest, and wrists. A wide black plastic belt was strapped tightly across his forehead. An IV drip bag hung directly above his face. The tube ran to a vein above his left wrist.

He was poked with another needle; a shot in his left arm to wake him up. His labored breathing grew more rapid, and when his eyes opened they were red and glazed and took a while to study the drip bag. The Brazilian doctor stepped into the picture, and without saying a word stuck a needle into Danny Boy's left

arm. It was sodium thiopental, a crude drug sometimes used to make people talk. Truth serum. It worked best if the captive had things he wanted to confess. A perfect tell-all drug had yet to be developed.

Ten minutes passed. He tried to move his head, without success. He could see a few feet on either side. The room was dark except for a small light somewhere in a corner behind him.

The door opened, then closed. Guy entered alone. He walked straight to Danny Boy, placed his fingers on the edge of the plywood, and said, 'Hello, Patrick.'

Patrick closed his eyes. Danilo Silva was behind him now, gone forever. An old trusted friend vanished, just like that. The simple life on Rua Tiradentes faded away with Danilo; his precious anonymity ripped away from him with the pleasant words, 'Hello, Patrick.'

For four years, he had often wondered how it would feel if they caught him. Would there be a sense of relief? Of justice? Any excitement at the prospect of going home to face the music?

Absolutely not! At the moment, Patrick was terror-stricken. Practically naked and strapped down like an animal, he knew the next few hours would be insufferable.

'Can you hear me, Patrick?' Guy asked, peering downward, and Patrick smiled, not because he wanted to but because an urge he couldn't control found something amusing.

The drug was taking effect, Guy noted. Sodium thiopental is a short-acting barbiturate that must be administered in very controlled doses. It was extremely difficult to find the proper level of consciousness where one would be susceptible to interrogation. Too small a dose, and the resistance is not broken. A bit too much, and the subject is simply knocked out.

The door opened and closed. Another American slipped into the room to listen, but Patrick could not see him.

'You've been sleeping for three days, Patrick,' Guy said. It was closer to five hours, but how could Patrick know? 'Are you hungry or thirsty?'

'Thirsty,' Patrick said.

Guy unscrewed the top from a small bottle of mineral water, and carefully poured it between Patrick's lips.

'Thanks,' he said, then smiled.

'Are you hungry?' Guy asked again.

'No. What do you want?'

Guy slowly sat the mineral water on a table and leaned closer to Patrick's face. 'Let's settle something first, Patrick. While you were sleeping, we took your fingerprints. We know precisely who you are, so can we please forgo the initial denials?'

'Who am I?' Patrick asked with another grin.

'Patrick Lanigan.'

'From where?'

'Biloxi, Mississippi. Born in New Orleans. Law school at Tulane. Wife, one daughter, age six. Missing now for over four years.'

'Bingo. That's me.'

'Tell me, Patrick, did you watch your own burial service?'

'Is that a crime?'

'No. Just a rumor.'

'Yes. I watched it. I was touched by it. Didn't know I had so many friends.'

'How nice. Where did you hide after your burial?'

'Here and there.'

A shadow emerged from the left and a hand adjusted the valve at the bottom of the drip bag. 'What's that?' Patrick asked.

‘A cocktail,’ Guy answered, nodding at the other man, who retreated to the corner.

‘Where’s the money, Patrick?’ Guy asked with a smile.

‘What money?’

‘The money you took with you.’

‘Oh, that money,’ Patrick said, and breathed deeply. His eyelids closed suddenly and his body relaxed. Seconds passed and his chest moved slower, up and down.

‘Patrick,’ Guy said, gently shaking his arm. No response, just the sounds of a deep sleep.

The dosage was immediately reduced, and they waited.

The FBI file on Jack Stephano was a quick study; former Chicago detective with two degrees in criminology, former highpriced bounty hunter, expert marksman, self-taught master of search and espionage, and now the owner of a shady D.C. firm which apparently charged huge fees to locate missing people and conduct expensive surveillance.

The FBI file on Patrick Lanigan filled eight boxes. It made sense that one file would attract the other. There was no shortage of people who wanted Patrick found and brought home. Stephano’s group had been hired to do it.

Stephano’s firm, Edmund Associates, occupied the top floor of a nondescript building on K Street, six blocks from the White House. Two agents waited in the lobby by the elevator as two others stormed Stephano’s office. They almost scuffled with a heavy secretary who insisted Mr Stephano was too busy at the moment. They found him at his desk, alone, chatting happily on the phone. His smile vanished when they barged in with badges flashing.

‘What the hell is this!’ Stephano demanded. The

wall behind his desk was a richly detailed map of the world, complete with little red blinking lights stuck on green continents. Which one was Patrick?

‘Who hired you to find Patrick Lanigan?’ asked Agent One.

‘That’s confidential,’ Stephano sneered. He’d been a cop for years, and was not easy to intimidate.

‘We got a call from Brazil this afternoon,’ said Agent Two.

So did I, thought Stephano, stunned by this but desperately trying to appear unfazed. His jaw dropped an inch and his shoulders sagged as his mind raced wildly through all the possible theories that would bring these two thugs here. He’d talked to Guy and no one else. Guy was utterly dependable. Guy would never talk to anyone, especially the FBI. It couldn’t be Guy.

Guy used a cell phone from the mountains of eastern Paraguay. There was no way the call could have been intercepted.

‘Are you there?’ asked Two smartly.

‘Yeah,’ he said, hearing but not hearing.

‘Where’s Patrick?’ asked One.

‘Maybe he’s in Brazil.’

‘Where in Brazil?’

Stephano managed a shrug, a stiff one. ‘I dunno. It’s a big country.’

‘We have an outstanding warrant for him,’ One said. ‘He belongs to us.’

Stephano shrugged again, this time a more casual one as if to say, ‘Big deal.’

‘We want him,’ demanded Two. ‘And now.’

‘I can’t help you.’

‘You’re lying,’ snarled One, and with that both of them joined together in front of Stephano’s desk and glared down. Agent Two did the talking. ‘We have men downstairs, outside, around the corner, and

outside your home in Falls Church. We'll watch every move you make from now until we get Lanigan.'

'Fine. You can leave now.'

'And don't hurt him, okay? We'll be happy to nail your ass if anything happens to our boy.'

They left in step and Stephano locked the door behind them. His office had no windows. He stood before his map of the world. Brazil had three red lights, which meant little. His head shook slowly, in complete bewilderment.

He spent so much time and money covering his tracks.

His firm was known in certain circles as the best at taking the money and disappearing into the shadows. He'd never been caught before. No one ever knew who Stephano was stalking.

THREE

Another shot to rouse him. Then a shot to sensitize the nerves.

The door opened loudly and the room was suddenly lit. It filled with the voices of many men, busy men, all with a purpose, all with heavy feet, it seemed. Guy gave orders, and someone growled in Portuguese.

Patrick opened and closed his eyes. Then he opened them for good as the drugs found their mark. They hovered over him, busy hands everywhere. His underwear was cut off, without much finesse, and he lay bare and exposed. An electric razor began buzzing, hitting his skin sharply at points on the chest, groin, thighs, and calves. He bit his lip and grimaced, his heart hammered away, though the pain had yet to start.

Guy hovered above him, his hands still but his eyes watching everything.

Patrick made no effort to speak, but just to be safe, more hands appeared from above and slapped a thick strip of silver duct tape over his mouth. Cold electrodes were stuck to the shaved points with alligator clips, and he heard a loud voice ask something about 'current.' Tape was then applied over the electrodes. He thought he counted eight sharp spots on his flesh. Maybe nine. His nerves were jumping. In his darkness,

he could feel the hands moving above him. The tape stuck hard to skin.

Two or three men were busy in a corner, adjusting a device Patrick could not see. Wires were strung like Christmas lights across his body.

They were not going to kill him, he kept telling himself, though death might be welcome at some point in the next few hours. He had imagined this nightmare a thousand times in four years. He had prayed it would never happen, but he always knew it would. He always knew they were back there, somewhere in the shadows, tracking and bribing and looking under rocks.

Patrick always knew. Eva was too naive.

He closed his eyes, tried to breathe steadily and tried to control his thoughts as they scurried above him, preparing his body for whatever lay ahead. The drugs made his pulse race and his skin itch.

I don't know where the money is. I don't know where the money is. He almost chanted this aloud. Thank God for the tape across his mouth. I don't know where the money is.

He called Eva *every* day between 4 P.M. and 6 P.M. Every day. Seven days of the week. No exceptions unless one was planned. He knew in his pounding heart that she had moved the money by now, that it was safely hidden in two dozen places around the world. And he didn't know where it was.

But would they believe him?

The door opened again, and two or three figures left the room. The activity around his plywood cot was slowing. Then it was quiet. He opened his eyes and the IV drip bag was gone.

Guy was looking down at him. He gently took one corner of the silver duct tape and pulled it free so Patrick could talk, if he so chose.

'Thanks,' Patrick said.

The Brazilian doctor appeared again from the left

and stuck a needle in Patrick's arm. The syringe was long and filled with nothing but colored water, but how could Patrick know?

'Where is the money, Patrick?' Guy asked.

'I don't have any money,' Patrick replied. His head ached from being pressed into the plywood. The tight plastic band across his forehead was hot. He hadn't moved in hours.

'You will tell me, Patrick. I promise you'll tell me. You can do it now, or you can do it ten hours from now when you're half-dead. Make it easy on yourself.'

'I don't want to die, okay?' Patrick said, his eyes filled with fear. They will not kill me, he told himself.

Guy lifted a small, simple, nasty device from beside Patrick and displayed it close to his face. It was a chrome lever with a black rubber tip, mounted on a small square block with two wires running from it. 'See this,' Guy said, as if Patrick had a choice. 'When the lever is up, the circuit is broken.' Guy delicately gripped the rubber tip with his thumb and index finger, and slowly lowered it. 'But when it moves down to this little contact point here, the circuit is closed and the current moves through the wires to the electrodes attached to your skin.' He stopped the lever just centimeters from the contact point. Patrick held his breath. The room was still.

'Would you like to see what happens when the shock is delivered?' Guy asked.

'No.'

'Then where's the money?'

'I don't know. I swear.'

Twelve inches in front of Patrick's nose, Guy pushed the lever down to the contact point. The shock was instant and horrific – hot bolts of current ripped into his flesh. Patrick jerked and the nylon ropes stretched. He closed his eyes fiercely and clamped his teeth together in a determined effort not to scream,

but gave up after a split second and let out a piercing shriek that was heard throughout the cabin.

Guy lifted the lever, waited a few seconds for Patrick to catch his breath and open his eyes, then said, 'That's level one, the lowest current. I have five levels, and I'll use them all if necessary. Eight seconds of level five will kill you, and I'm perfectly willing to do that as a last resort. Are you listening, Patrick?'

His flesh still burned from his chest to his ankles. His heart pumped furiously and he exhaled quickly.

'Are you listening?' Guy repeated.

'Yes.'

'Your situation is really quite simple. Tell me where the money is, and you leave this room alive. Eventually, we'll take you back to Ponta Porã, and you can carry on as you see fit. We have no interest in notifying the FBI.' Guy paused for drama and toyed with the chrome lever. 'If, however, you refuse to tell me where the money is, then you'll never leave this room alive. Do you understand, Patrick?'

'Yes.'

'Good. Where's the money?'

'I swear I don't know. If I knew, I'd tell you.'

Guy snapped the lever down without a word, and the currents hit like boiling acid. 'I don't know!' Patrick screamed in anguish. 'I swear I don't know.'

Guy raised the lever, and waited a few seconds for Patrick to recover. Then, 'Where's the money?' he asked calmly.

'I swear I don't know.'

Another scream filled the cabin, and escaped through the open windows, into the crevice between the mountains where it echoed lightly before losing itself in the jungle.

The apartment in Curitiba was near the airport. Eva told the cabdriver to wait in the street. She left her

overnight bag in the trunk, but carried her thick briefcase with her.

She took the elevator to the ninth floor where the hallway was dark and quiet. It was almost 11 P.M. She moved slowly, eyes looking in all directions. She unlocked the door to the apartment, then quickly disarmed the security system with another key.

Danilo was not in the apartment, and though this was not a surprise it was still a disappointment. No message on the phone recorder. No sign of him whatsoever. Her anxiety reached another level.

She could not stay long, because the men who had Danilo might be coming there. Though she knew exactly what to do, her movements were forced and slow. The apartment had only three rooms, and she searched them quickly.

The papers she wanted were in a locked file cabinet in the den. She opened the three heavy drawers and neatly placed the paperwork in a handsome leather suitcase he kept in a nearby closet. The bulk of the files contained financial records, though not much for such a large fortune. His paper trail was as narrow as possible. He came here once a month to hide records from his home, and at least once a month he shredded the old stuff.

And for the moment, Danilo couldn't know where his papers were.

She rearmed the security system and made a hasty exit. No one in the cramped building had noticed her. She found a room in a small hotel downtown, near the Museum of Contemporary Arts. The Asian banks were open, and it was almost four in Zurich. She unpacked a compact fax and rigged it to the phone jack in her room. The small bed was soon covered with sheets of instructions and wire authorizations.

She was tired, but sleep was out of the question. Danilo said they'd come looking for her. She could not

go home. Her thoughts were not on money, but on him. Was he alive? If so, how much was he suffering? How much had he told them, and at what price?

She wiped her eyes and began to arrange the papers. There was no time for tears.

With torture, the best results come after three days of episodic abuse. The more obstinate wills are slowly broken. The pain is dreamed of, and looms larger as the victim waits for the next session. Three days, and most people break and crumble into small pieces.

Guy didn't have three days. His prisoner was not one taken in war, but a U.S. citizen wanted by the FBI.

Around midnight, they left Patrick alone for a few minutes to suffer and think about the next round. His body was drenched with sweat; his skin red from the voltage and the heat. Blood trickled from under the tape on his chest where the electrodes had been stuck too tightly and were burning into his flesh. He gasped for breath and licked his dry shriveled lips. The nylon ropes on his wrists and ankles had rubbed the skin raw.

Guy returned alone, and sat on a stool next to the sheet of plywood. For a minute the room was quiet, the only sound was Patrick breathing and trying to control himself. He kept his eyes closed tightly.

'You're a very stubborn man,' Guy said, finally.

No response.

The first two hours had yielded nothing. Every question had been about the money. He didn't know where it was, he'd said a hundred times. Did it exist? No, he had said repeatedly. What happened to it? He didn't know.

Guy's experience with torture was extremely limited. He'd consulted an expert, a really twisted freak who seemed to actually enjoy it. He'd read a

crude how-to manual, but finding practice time was difficult.

Now that Patrick knew how horrible things could get, it was important to chat him up.

‘Where were you when your funeral took place?’ Guy asked.

There was a slight relaxing of Patrick’s muscles. Finally, a question not about the money. He hesitated and thought about it. What was the harm? He was caught. His story was about to be told. Maybe if he cooperated they’d lay off the voltage.

‘In Biloxi,’ he said.

‘Hiding?’

‘Yes, of course.’

‘And you watched your graveside service?’

‘Yes.’

‘From where?’

‘I was in a tree, with binoculars.’ He kept his eyes closed and his fists clenched.

‘Where did you go after that?’

‘Mobile.’

‘Was that your hiding place?’

‘Yes, one of them.’

‘How long did you stay there?’

‘Off and on, coupla months.’

‘That long, huh? Where did you live in Mobile?’

‘Cheap motels. I moved around a lot. Moved up and down the Gulf. Destin. Panama City Beach. Back to Mobile.’

‘You changed your appearance.’

‘Yeah. I shaved, colored my hair, dropped fifty pounds.’

‘Did you study a language?’

‘Portuguese.’

‘So you knew you were headed here?’

‘Where’s here?’

‘Let’s say it’s Brazil.’

‘Okay. Yeah, I figured this was a good place to hide.’

‘After Mobile, where did you go?’

‘Toronto.’

‘Why Toronto?’

‘I had to go somewhere. It’s a nice place.’

‘Did you get new papers in Toronto?’

‘Yeah.’

‘You became Danilo Silva in Toronto?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Did you take another language course?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Dropped some more weight?’

‘Yeah. Another thirty pounds.’ He kept his eyes closed and tried to ignore the pain, or at least live with it for the moment. The electrodes on his chest were smoldering and cutting deeper into his skin.

‘How long did you stay there?’

‘Three months.’

‘So you left there around July of ’92?’

‘Something like that.’

‘And where did you go next?’

‘Portugal.’

‘Why Portugal?’

‘Had to go somewhere. It’s a nice place. Never been there.’

‘How long were you there?’

‘Coupla months.’

‘Then where?’

‘São Paulo.’

‘Why São Paulo?’

‘Twenty million people. A wonderful place to hide.’

‘How long did you stay there?’

‘A year.’

‘Tell me what you did there.’

Patrick took a deep breath, then grimaced when he moved his ankles. He relaxed. ‘I got lost in the city. I

hired a tutor and mastered the language. Lost a few more pounds. Moved from one small apartment to another.'

'What did you do with the money?'

A pause. A flinch of the muscles. Where was the wretched little chrome lever? Why couldn't they continue chatting about the chase and lay off the money?

'What money?' he asked, with a passable effort at desperation.

'Come on, Patrick. The ninety million dollars you stole from your law firm and its client.'

'I told you. You got the wrong guy.'

Guy suddenly yelled at the door. It opened instantly and the rest of the Americans rushed in. The Brazilian doctor emptied two more syringes into Patrick's veins, then left. Two men huddled over the device in the corner. The tape recorder was turned on. Guy hovered over Patrick with the chrome lever in an upright position, scowling and angry and even more determined to kill him if he didn't talk.

'The money arrived by wire to your law firm's account offshore in Nassau. The time was exactly ten-fifteen, Eastern Standard. The date was March 26, 1992, forty-five days after your death. You were there, Patrick, looking fit and tanned and posing as someone else. We have photos taken from the bank's security camera. You had perfect forged papers. Shortly after the money arrived it was gone, sent by wire to a bank in Malta. You stole it, Patrick. Now, where is it? Tell me, and you'll live.'

Patrick took a last look at Guy, and a last glance at the lever, then he closed his eyes tightly, braced himself, and said, 'I swear I don't know what you're talking about.'

'Patrick, Patrick -'

'Please don't do it!' he begged. 'Please!'

'This is only level three, Patrick. You're halfway there.' Guy pushed the lever down, and watched the body bolt and straighten.

Patrick screamed with no restraint, a scream so fierce and horrible that Osmar and the Brazilians froze for a second on the front porch. Their conversation stopped in the darkness. One of them offered a silent prayer.

Down the road, a hundred yards away, a Brazilian with a gun sat by the dirt trail and watched for approaching cars. None were expected. The nearest dwelling was miles away. He too offered a small prayer when the screaming started again.

FOUR

It was either the fourth or fifth call from the neighbors that sent Mrs Stephano over the edge, and it also forced Jack to tell his wife the truth. The three men in dark suits loitering outside the car parked in the street directly in front of their house were FBI agents. He explained why they were there. He told her most of the Patrick story, a serious breach of professional etiquette. Mrs Stephano never asked questions.

She didn't care what her husband did at the office. She did, however, hold some rather strong feelings about what the neighbors might think. This was, after all, Falls Church, and, well, people would talk.

She went to bed at midnight. Jack napped on the sofa in the den, rising every half-hour to peek through the blinds and see what they were doing out there. He happened to be asleep at 3 A.M. when the doorbell rang.

He answered it in his sweatsuit. Four of them were at the door, one of whom he immediately recognized as Hamilton Jaynes, Deputy Director, FBI. The number-two man at the Bureau, who just happened to live four blocks over and belong to the same golf club, though the two had never met.

He allowed them into his spacious den. Stiff introductions were made. They sat while Mrs Stephano wandered down in her bathrobe, then scurried

back up at the sight of a room full of men in dark suits.

Jaynes did all the talking for the FBI. 'We're working nonstop on this Lanigan discovery. Our intelligence informs us that he's in your custody. Can you confirm or deny?'

'No.' Stephano was as cool as ice.

'I'm holding a warrant for your arrest.'

The ice melted a bit. Stephano glanced at another stone-faced agent. 'On what charges?'

'Harboring a federal fugitive. Interference. You name it, we'll include it. What difference does it make? I'm not interested in convicting you. All I want is to haul your ass off to jail, then later we'll get the rest of your firm, then we'll lock up your clients. Take about twenty-four hours to round up everybody. We'll get the indictments later, depending on whether or not we get Lanigan. You get the picture?'

'Yeah. I think so.'

'Where's Lanigan?'

'Brazil.'

'I want him. And now.'

Stephano blinked a couple of times, and things fell into place. Under the circumstances, handing over Lanigan was not a bad move. The feds had ways of making him talk. Faced with life in prison, Patrick just might snap his fingers and make the money appear. There would be enormous pressure from all angles to produce it.

Later, Stephano would again ponder the incredible question of how anyone in the world knew he had captured Lanigan.

'All right, here's the deal,' Stephano said. 'Give me forty-eight hours, I'll give you Lanigan. And you burn my warrant and drop the threats of future prosecution.'

'It's a deal.'

There was a moment of silence as both sides

savored the victory. Jaynes said, 'I need to know where to pick him up.'

'Send a plane to Asunción.'

'Paraguay? What happened to Brazil?'

'He has friends in Brazil.'

'Whatever.' Jaynes whispered to an associate, who then left the house. 'Is he in one piece?' he asked Stephano.

'Yeah.'

'He'd better be. One bruise on his body, and I'll hound you to hell.'

'I need to make a phone call.'

Jaynes actually managed a grin. He scanned the walls and said, 'It's your house.'

'Are my lines tapped?'

'No.'

'You swear?'

'I said no.'

'Excuse me.' Stephano stepped into the kitchen, then to a utility room where he kept a hidden cell phone. He walked onto the rear patio where he stood in the wet grass by a gaslight. He called Guy.

The screaming had stopped for the moment when the Brazilian guarding the van heard the phone ringing. It rested on its power unit in the front seat of the van, its antenna shooting fifteen feet beyond the roof. He answered it in English, then ran to get an American.

Guy rushed from the cabin and grabbed it.

'Is he talking?' Stephano asked.

'A little. He broke about an hour ago.'

'What do you know?'

'The money still exists. He doesn't know where. It's controlled by a woman in Rio, a lawyer.'

'Do you have her name?'

'Yes. We're making calls now. Osmar has people in Rio.'