

## Chapter 4

Opening the door to Steve Vorbach's outer office, two men stood on either side of the door. Senator Hayes ignored the men and continued walking down the long hallway of state senators' offices toward the elevators. Randy kept a step behind the elderly man, and the two other men followed behind them. Randy, though having worked out of this office for nearly a year, had never seen these men before. He had glanced sideways and spied their badges hanging around their necks. *Government issue*, Randy thought, *but nothing I have recognized before*.

Hayes pushed the elevator button and they all waited for a few moments in silence. The *ding* reverberated in the empty hallway as the doors opened. The senator entered, turned and glanced at one of the men. The man punched the button for the lower level. The doors closed as the four men watched the floor numbers above the door.

Seconds later the doors opened as they looked at the gray walls of the tunnel which went under the street toward the statehouse itself. Stepping out, they turned to the right and walked purposefully down the hallway which sloped slightly downward. The incline increased after about fifty steps, and Randy knew they were directly under what used to be Senate Avenue, before the city had blocked the street off from traffic when the state office buildings had been built.

The tunnel system was familiar to Randy as this was the way all the state senators and representatives and their staffs would go from Government Center South to their respective chambers to legislate. This tunnel connected with the southwest corner of the statehouse, known as the Lower Level. Tunnels also lead from the northwest corner to the Indiana State Library and from the southeast corner connecting the state agencies at 1 North Capital Avenue. It was simply the quickest way to exit the statehouse, especially keeping legislators away from the public and lobbyists.

After another hundred steps or so, a security guard sat at his desk. The primary purpose of this checkpoint was to not allow people who were not authorized to use this passage to continue on to the statehouse. The guard looked at the lead man's badge and did not even stop the others who followed him. Randy had never seen anyone ignored at the checkpoint. Even well-known senators and representatives were known to have been turned back, usually causing a staff member to run back to their office to retrieve a badge for their legislator boss.

The four men started the slight incline upward toward the statehouse. Security cameras at each turn recorded their progress, as someone, somewhere, whom Randy

never would know about, watched them. The older of the two “agents,” Randy thought they had to be from some “agency,” led the way now. The younger one followed Randy and the senator as they walked beside each other. Randy had been through this tunnel literally hundreds of times, but now it seemed eerie; late at night, no one else around but the security guard in the tunnel, and three people who seemed out of place here. *What have I gotten myself into*, he thought.

They emerged from the tunnel and turned left; not the normal way into the statehouse for young Jones. He had never been down this corridor before. It all looked the same in the hallways in the lower level, but there was the way to the elevator to go up to the first floor and beyond, and this was not it.

At the end of this passage was another elevator. The older agent slid his badge into the slot and the elevator doors opened. Only one button was pressed, which Randy assumed went down only. The elevator doors opened, revealing another identical passageway with a door at the other end of it. But at that door Randy could see two more men seated on each side of it, who immediately stood upon seeing the approaching four men. Randy stared at one man’s badge as he approached this door. “U.S.D.H.S.” it read. He was not close enough to make out the name yet. *Federal men... U.S. Senator... makes sense, but what is this place. And what is U.S.D.H.S.?*

The lead man slid his badge into a slot next to the door and a buzz was heard. The man opened the door inwardly.

They entered a large room with about thirty glass offices on the right, each office module about ten-by-ten square feet. Computer monitors glowed from every desk, each with a different screen saver going. A few of the offices were still lit up and a man sat working at each computer screen. Numbered metal doors lined the left side of the room. The lead man went straight to the door numbered 14. He again slid his badge into the slot and opened the door, outward this time. He held it for Senator Hayes and Randall Jones to enter. He and his fellow agent followed them.

The older agent, Randy glimpsed *Barrett* on his badge, took a cell-phone like object from his pocket and held it shoulder high as he walked against each wall in this ten-by-twenty chamber, with an oblong conference table in the middle and eight chairs around it. This was the only furniture in the room.

“It’s clean, Senator.”

“Thank you, Mr. Barrett,” Hayes responded, as he sat in the closest chair to the door. “I’ll need the file on BARA.”

“Yes sir.” Agent Barrett nodded toward the other agent, who immediately left the room. Thirty seconds was all that was needed for his return. He laid a box of files upon the table in front of Hayes as Randy took a seat to the senator’s left. The two other men moved toward the door to leave the room.

“Knock when you are done, Senator.”

“Thank you, Mr. Barrett.”

“Mr. Jones, you are not cleared for this information I am about to give you. I will get you clearance as soon as I can.”

“Sir, I don’t even know where we are.”

“We are in the federal side of the Shadow Government, known as *ShagUS*. The state side, *ShagI* is on the same level, but still a few hallways from here. This was built back in the eighties, when money was appropriated by the Reagan administration to protect the current state and federal leaders from terrorist attack. It was placed under the Department of Homeland Security after Nine-Eleven. In the event of an attack upon other statehouses, the governor and his cabinet and the senators, congressmen and their staffs will be directed to this place. It could withstand a nuclear bomb, probably not directly I’m afraid, but one that hits close by. My office, since I am the ranking senator from the state, would be directly behind the governor’s office on the state side, with a door between us so that we can directly communicate the state and federal response. Our families can come if there is enough time to allow for that. This place can actually house four-hundred people for about three months, or the time for nuclear fallout to subside.”

*This must be a bad dream*, thought Randy as he glanced at the clock on the wall behind the senator’s head which was inching toward one in the morning.

“But we are here,” the older man continued. “And what matters more is the reason why we are in this room, Mr. Jones. What I am to share with you goes nowhere. Do you understand?”

“Yes. I believe I do.”

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“Hello?” Lee answered his cell without turning a light on or even opening his eyes.

“I’m so sorry to bother you, Lee. I forgot to share something important with you earlier. I know it’s late, and I woke you, but I won’t be able to go to sleep until I share this with someone.”

“Let me wake up a bit then.” Lee sat up and arranged his three pillows behind his back for support. Then he turned on the light next to his bed. “Okay girl, unburden your soul.”

“I spoke to Randy earlier tonight. He seemed... preoccupied with something to do with Senator Vorbach. He said it was on orders from the senator himself.”

“I suppose his day was not all that orderly, so that...”

“No! That’s not why I’m concerned.”

“What is it then?” Lee took a quick look at the clock. It read 1:00.

“I don’t know. It’s just that... well, he lied to me. Twice... three times maybe. Like it wasn’t Randy I was speaking to at all.”

“Laura, he’s been under a whole lot of stress today. He had to hold up during it all. I saw him at the crash site. He looked like a zombie. Then he stood in front of the

media for over an hour. Then he went to see the senator's family. I mean, not exactly the day he expected it to be."

"I know that. But he didn't even call his mom and dad after he told me he was going to do it right away, after hanging up with me. I called them after we talked to let them know I got a hold of him, but he had not called them."

"That is puzzling. But maybe there is a good explanation for all of it."

"Maybe, but I still think he needs someone."

"Okay; tell you what: after we meet tomorrow morning, we'll spend some time at the park just to wind down and talk about this. Then we'll try to find out what's going on with our main guy."

"That would be good."

"Well, I'd do whatever I could to assure you of your beauty sleep. We will get to the bottom of this tomorrow afternoon. I'll be sure to wear my secret agent outfit. Remember my black turtleneck?"

"Uh, Lee?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you want me to meet you, or not?"

"No black turtleneck, slacks, and dark glasses?"

"I don't think so."

"I'll come dressed normally. You do tend to take all the fun out of this."

"Go back to sleep Lee. And thank you for being there when I needed you."

"Night, kid. You are welcome. Call me back if you need me again, or if you change your mind on the turtleneck."

"Don't worry. I'll leave you alone for the rest of the night."

"Shucks."

"Bye, Lee."

"Bye."

Laura turned her light off and rolled over, clasping a pillow in her arms. Closing her eyes, she only saw Lee, dressed in a black turtleneck and sunglasses, meeting her at the park.

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Senator Harris continued to speak from the open book in front of him. He glanced at the clock on the dais – 1:15. His Chief of Staff, Brenda Welte, was a single, thirty-two-year-old career politician staffer, and had very light brown hair that nobody had better call blond. She had seated herself next to the standing senator, and was coordinating sections of another book for Harris to read from into the record. Mike had written a short letter to Brenda concerning the episode which transpired when the chamber was empty a short time ago. He knew he needed to hold out until five or six the next evening for the already printed Indiana ballots to be tossed out and

reprinted without the BARA amendment on them. But the threat was that any filibustering after eleven o'clock in the morning would bring bodily harm to the senator and his close relatives.

Welte, a 1982 political science graduate from Indiana University, was emboldened to stay the course with her boss this time. The Capitol Police could evacuate the rest of the building, but not anyone actively participating on the Senate floor, unless they voluntarily chose to leave. She had been in the Senate cloak room, trying to enter the chamber, when the alarm rang earlier in the evening. She reluctantly followed Police and exited the building, waiting outside until the fire inspector went through the building and gave the all clear signal. By then Mike Harris had been put on notice that he was antagonizing the wrong people, and would suffer for it.

She participated in the plan to filibuster, knowing that it would put her in the same position as Mike. Even though they could continue holding this senate seat in Washington until the end of Mike's term, no one from either party would do business with them. Their coming to work each day, and preparing for committees, would all be academic after this. "Censure" was what they would officially call it. Ignore Senator Harris completely was the practical side of censuring. No committee positions, no bill signings. They would not even call Harris' name in a roll call vote. He could still cast his vote, and it would be counted, but they would all pretend he did not exist.

Brenda knew that censure would be the very least of their worries. The threat the senator had received earlier loomed greater in all their minds. After placing another book on the senator's table, with a section highlighted to make it easy for him to find, she continued typing into her laptop computer an e-mail to Senator Hayes, relating the incident that they were still trying to sort out. If contact was made quickly, families could be protected or moved. She worried that the elder senator would already be asleep, and that he might not even receive the e-mail until sometime in the morning. Would he have enough time to counter any move against Mike's family?

*Mike believes that anyone that can control the Capitol building does not make idle threats,* she typed into her laptop. *He needs to know if his family is safe before he continues on past eleven. Please advise quickly.*

She hit the *send* button on her e-mail program, and as quickly as it disappeared on her screen it appeared on Senator Hayes' laptop accompanied by a *beep*.

Hayes' laptop was being observed by one of the men in the cubicle in *ShagUS*. Agent Barrett was immediately alerted about the incoming message from Brenda Welte. He grabbed the laptop and headed to room 14.

"So how did you know all of this?" Randy showed his attorney training by continuing to ask question after question in order to get the facts on the issue.

"Steve had the initial gut feeling, but I had the resources and the clout to find out if it was true." Hayes had given Jones the overall picture, but the details would take

some time, and he wanted to assure the young man that what he had told him was the Gospel truth. "I am the ranking member on the Senate Intelligence Committee. We have access to every document from every intelligence agency in the country. We give oversight and approval for the president's policies on foreign and domestic security issues. There are far too many issues for any one on the committee, or anyone else for that matter, to follow. I simply screened the documents concerning domestic terrorism toward the individual states, specifically the state of Indiana, and what I have found is that there are cell groups that have been planted and are being watched in every state in the country. Intercepts have come that have told of plots to blow up statehouses in several states. Of course, the purpose is to unleash terror in the heartland of America. People will stay at home; businesses will close; local police, whoever is left after desertion, will be transformed into mere checkpoint stops, with a dozen officers at each stop."

*Knock-knock.*

Hayes turned his head toward the door. "Come!"

The door opened, and Agent Barrett entered with a laptop computer open in his hands.

"Sorry to interrupt you, Senator, but this requires your immediate attention." He laid the computer in front of Hayes.

"Thank you, Mr. Barrett. Stay while I respond."

Randy watched the senator's eyes as he read the e-mail. The brow furrowed and the eyes narrowed. He also noticed the breathing deepened.

"If you are in, Mr. Jones, let me know now. If not, God bless, and leave now and forget what all I have told you."

Hayes did not even look away from his computer as he spoke to Randy abruptly. There was no being halfway in now. It was all or nothing. The excitement of actually finding out what Steve Vorbach had uncovered drew him. The lack of realization of the dangers caused a numbness of mind. Randy had no seconds left to even contemplate his direction. He took the leap.

"I'm with you, Senator Hayes. Count me in."

Hayes turned his computer screen toward Randy. "Read." He turned to the agent. "Mr. Barrett, please secure Mike's family."

"Six agents have already been sent from the Ft. Wayne area with instructions," Barrett replied.

"Coordinate with Sheriff Henderson on this."

"Already done, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Barrett."

The man turned, opened the door and went through it.

"Well, Mr. Jones?"

"What is this all about, Senator?"

“There are actually liberal groups high up in our government which are using radical Islam groups to help forward their liberal agenda. And, the Islam groups are using our liberal politicians to advance their agendas. The thinking of our politician ‘friends’ is that if they win both houses, the White House, and most of the state houses, then the terrorists will promise to leave us alone.”

Randy could not believe what he was hearing. “That’s not logical! Iraq taught us that Shiite Muslims cannot even get along with Sunni Muslims. What makes them think the radical groups will co-exist with even the liberals in control.”

“They cannot. And that’s why I am doing this. They have a common enemy – Israel. And as long as America backs Israel, we will be their enemy as much as Israel.”

“What is it that I can do?” Randy felt awfully small in all of this. “This looks way out of my league.”

“You will take Steve’s place in a way. Steve being governor would have put us in back to back emergency offices. He could also have vetoed legislation concerning gun control. But we must find a way for you to have an office above here in the statehouse.”

Randy offered a solution which was logical to him. “As my father’s assistant I can be on the third floor in the Supreme Court wing.”

“No. I need you on the first floor in the governor’s offices.”

“But how...”

“I have a plan for that. You will have to learn to trust me. We will get you as close to the new governor as we can.”

“I really doubt Gary Allen would have me on his staff now.”

The senator chuckled. “No, I don’t suppose he will. You really gave him a ride in the last month. You are not his favorite person right now.”

“Your suggestion?” Randy was really puzzled now.

“I have a meeting scheduled with Allen tomorrow. We have no time to lose. I will offer him a deal he cannot pass up – ‘for the good of Indiana’ of course. I’ll let you know the result as soon as we come to an agreement.”

“How will I be able to contact you?”

“Already taken care of, young man. Barrett’s men have placed a jammer in your car. Pushing the cigarette lighter in will activate the jamming for your phone signal to not be intercepted, and if you use Steve’s phone, you can still speed-dial me. Agent Barrett is coordinating the mission. His number is his name. Just dial *B-A-R--R-E-T-T*. Now, if you will excuse me, I must respond to Brenda’s e-mail. Mr. Barrett will show you back to your car.”

Randy stood for a moment as Senator Hayes started typing on his keyboard. He hesitated as if he would like to ask more questions, but he knew the senator was too busy with life and death to take the precious seconds to answer what would seem to be silly questions at a serious time like this. He took three steps and opened the door. Barrett and the other agent were waiting for him.

Brenda Welte was relieved when her laptop beeped. She turned it toward Mike Harris. As the younger senator took a drink before continuing his filibuster, he read the screen. *Family secured. Security breech just closed. We are all praying for you. – BH*