



*In his State of the Union address, President Obama cited brain research as an example of how the government should “invest in the best ideas,” one of which was brain mapping. The details are not final, and it is not clear how much federal money would be proposed or approved for the project in a time of fiscal constraint or how far the research would be able to get without significant federal financing. – Los Angeles Times*

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*Brain mapping is not about big science or small science; this is about good science and bad science, or at best, not-so-good science. – Doctor Simon Morton, Johns Hopkins*

*Can't get you off my mind. Wish I was with you. I'm tracking that lead on Hannah in Oregon. Give 'em hell today. Stay warm. - Voice message, Archer*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

## CHAPTER 1

### SENATE HEARING ROOM 4 CAPITOL BUILDING WASHINGTON D.C.

“I see that we are coming upon the three o’clock hour. I would like to thank the new members of the Foreign Relations Committee - Senators Johnson, Klupec, Garner and Abel – for sitting in before their confirmation to this esteemed body.

“I would also like to thank those who have come so far to testify here today. A rise in factional tensions in Eastern Europe has been the focus of this committee for some time now. While our State Department has kept us apprised of our diplomatic endeavors, we are cognizant of the fact that our citizens can also be affected adversely in their everyday lives by world events. To that end, it is the charge of this committee to be aware and proactive. . .”

With that, Josie Bates zoned out.

Senator Ambrose ‘Pat’ Patriota, lion of the senate, White House bound unless the electorate suddenly became fickle, and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate was doing exactly what everyone in a position of power did when they wanted to reaffirm their importance: they pandered for the cameras, the record and the public. For the most part Ambrose Patriota had a rapt audience. Anyone who bothered to glance Josie’s way would assume she was equally spellbound by his rhetoric.

Those people would be wrong.

Josie was doing what every good lawyer did when cross-examinations, opening statements, and testimony dragged on: filtering and compartmentalizing information and tagging buzzwords. It was a skill that allowed her to react appropriately on a moment's notice and appear as if she had hung on every word of opposing counsel. At this point she doubted she would be called upon to respond to anything but old habits died hard.

She had spent two days in this small, marble-floored room staring at the carved, curved, gleaming walnut bench that could accommodate fifteen senators on a dais wide enough and long enough for three times as many aides. Josie assumed a chamber like this would be cavernous when in reality it was cramped and utilitarian, the human equivalent of an ant farm. The only difference was that not all these humans were engaged in work of any discernable value whereas ants labored selflessly for the good of the colony.

Josie also listened with one ear because she had done what she had come to do: testified about her experience with Eastern European culture and the terror it had wreaked upon Hannah and Billy Zuni, Archer and Josie. Sitting on a hard chair at a long table, Josie spoke into the microphone in front of her, didn't bother with the water bottle to her left and tried to ignore the phalanx of photographers crouched on the floor between her and the committee. She had been the last of three witnesses and the least interesting. The Albanian girl who had been trafficked at the age of fourteen and rescued by the pastor of a local church was the star of the day. She spoke about her ordeal in halting English that made the tale even more poignant. Now twenty, she was a poised, brave and exotically beautiful young woman in college studying to become a psychologist. Taking second place was a Serbian immigrant who had built a solid business in the U.S. only to suffer economically and personally at the hands of Eastern European organized

crime. The photographers had salivated when he held up a fingerless hand and told of the nightmarish extortion committed against him as his adult son who wiped away tears.

Josie had told them about Gjergy Isai and the ancient blood feud that had resulted in the deaths of three people and put Hannah and Billy Zuni on the run. Josie had told them of the one phone call she received, a message from Hannah to reassure her that they were alive. Smart girl. She had called in the dead of night, leaving a message on the office machine, unwilling to hear Josie's voice for fear it would draw her home before it was truly safe. Josie told them of the very real threat that others from the Isai clan would come for Billy, that this was a never ending cycle of retribution that had no place in the modern world. Yet, without Hannah and Billy, without pictures, without wounds, Josie's urging of reconciliation of ancient laws with modern justice were politely received but made no real impact.

“And lastly we want to thank Ms. Bates for coming all the way from California to enlighten us about the very real threat stemming from Albanian cultural justice known as blood feud, a practice that the Catholic Church and Albanian government have both denounced. . .”

Josie acknowledged the recognition with a tip of her lips, an inclination of her head. Patriota graced her with the kind of smile one might give an old friend even though they had never met. Washington was, indeed, a well-ordered machine when it wanted to be. Minions had orchestrated the event, lavishing attention on the witnesses in an effort to make them forget that the man in charge hadn't even so much as shaken their hands. Now he owned a piece of them. Their stories, their pictures, were in the public record.

Josie readjusted her shoulders and realigned her sites, aware again of the uncomfortable sense that even as Patriota's interest in her waned someone else's hadn't. For the last hour she

had been the object of someone's scrutiny and now, as the hearings came to a close, her sense of unease intensified.

She cut her eyes left and scanned the people standing against the wall. She looked right and did the same. No one showed any particular interest in her. She resisted the urge to look behind her, to smooth her hair and calm her prickly nerves. She rubbed the nape of her neck and assumed she was simply tired and off her game. Away from the beach, the sun, and the surf she was the proverbial fish out of water. Beautiful as the fall was in the nation's capitol, the chill in the air, the weight of her coat, the gloves in her pocket made her itch for Hermosa Beach.

Josie looked back at Patriota, quelling her paranoia by focusing on him. He was an exceptional looking man for his age. His jaw was still square and strong, and his eyes bright and green. He wore his hair long. It was artistically colored by nature – steel grey to glinting silver. Patriota's People, as his constituency was known, adored him and their ranks had swelled to include people across the country. The man usually said what he meant and stood by his principles when push came to shove. Josie didn't always agree with his politics but Josie knew that if anyone could help with Hannah, it would be this man.

And yet, despite her admiration, seeing him in the flesh had a strange effect on her. From her vantage point looking up at him in profile she was bothered by the notion that she knew him. Or, at least, that they had met before. There was something about the turn of his posture – militarily precise – that nicked at her. But where or when they met was an elusive bit of information She had run in some high-powered circles early in her career but never with Washington elite so the memory of him wouldn't have been work related. And wouldn't he have remembered and mentioned it in their correspondence if, indeed, they had crossed paths? She

almost laughed at that last bit of arrogance. A politician's met thousands of women. There had to be more than one who stood as tall as she.

Still, there was something about Patriota that pulled at her. In profile, viewed from a lower vantage point, his shoulders squared, his bearing regal – almost militarily precise – Josie could swear that she had been this close to him before. . .

Suddenly, Patriota was done and Josie's daydreaming came to an end. The exercise in politics that for the witnesses was excruciatingly personal, for the Senators was simply another thing to mark off their calendars. Aides picked up their bosses' files and water bottles, whispered to them about next appointments and received their marching orders. Some of the Senators socialized while others fled the room. Reporters leapt from their seats, photographers pushed off the floor. Half of them turned their lenses on the Senators and the other half converged on the witnesses.

“Ms. Bates, Hannah Sheraton was tried for murder in California. Could you address her legal problems? Do they have any bearing on her current situation?”

Josie had barely picked up her coat when that question was thrown at her. Her first instinct was to admonish the man. Hannah had been acquitted and if he'd done his homework he would have known that. Her second was to keep it simple and direct the conversation.

“Hannah is a victim and a hero. She is the one who stood between Gjergy Isai and Billy Zuni. He is alive because of Hannah -”

Josie's lost her train of thought, her attention caught by a disturbance in the back of the room. People were jostling. Fighting? No, they were annoyed at something.

“Does her mother know about this situation?” Another reporter called.

“Yes.” Josie attended to the reports, forcing herself to listen to them. “Yes, I have sent word to the prison where Linda Rayburn-“

It was impossible. The commotion had taken on a life of its own. Then she saw the cause. A man was pushing through the crowd. He bobbed. His head was up. His head was down.

“Ms. Bates?”

“Yes. Sorry. I’ve sent. . . I’m sorry. . .”

That man was nearly in the middle of the crowd now and he was moving faster now. Quickly, awkwardly, bumping into people, careening off a chair. Josie had seen someone move like that before and dismissed the danger he presented. That man had drugged her, imprisoned her, and nearly killed her. But this was a public place. This -

“Ms. Bates?” The staff member assigned to Josie flipped her long blond hair and touched Josie’s back to get her attention. Josie barely heard her; hardly felt her touch.

The reporter’s lips moved. He was getting angry.

The moving man stopped. He put his head up and looked directly at her. Like a Prairie Dog sensing danger, his head went down again.

Beside Josie the girl engaged the reporter.

The man in a hurry raised his head again. Light reflected off his glasses. His lips moved.

The blonde girl took Josie’s arm. They were moving but Josie pulled back. They were moving in the wrong direction. They were moving toward that man.

The girl looked over her shoulder at the senators. Her hair smelled like flowers.

The man locked eyes with Josie. He raised his arms. He used his clasped hands as a wedge and forced his way through the crowd.

*Twenty feet.*

*Ten feet.*

Nothing was going to stop him, he was coming for her, and she seemed to be the only one who knew it.

Josie's eyes darted around the chamber. Two security officers stood by the entrance to the chamber, one was talking to a woman in a red dress. Another officer was at the door where the senators had entered and were now departing. Patriota was listening to a tall and man who seemed to be looking her way. She tried to catch his eye and the realized he was listening so intently to what the senator was saying that he wasn't really seeing anything on the floor.

"I'm sorry. Ms. Bates can't answer any more questions..."

Josie's head whipped back just as the reporter shoved his microphone closer. She flinched away from him. Her heart thundered. Her head pounded. She couldn't breath. She couldn't move. She couldn't make them see what was happening.

The man in the unkempt blue suit was upon her.

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