

Ghost

by Robert Harris

(Adapted book. Upper Intermediate level)

CHAPTER 1

The Body on the Beach

When I heard how McAra died, I should have said no to Rick. But Rick, who's my agent, is a good storyteller. I often think he should be the writer and me the agent. The story he told me over lunch that day went like this:

Two Sundays earlier (12th January) a man called Michael McAra had been on the last ferry of the day from Woods Hole, Massachusetts to Martha's Vineyard. There was a strong wind when the ferry left at 9:45 PM and the boat was crowded. McAra parked his car below decks and then went upstairs. No one saw him alive again.

The journey to the island usually takes forty-five minutes. But that night, because of the bad weather, it was nearly eleven o'clock before the ferry reached Vineyard Haven. When the driver of a new Ford Escape SUV did not come to take it off the boat, some of the crew pushed

the car onto the dock and then began a search for the driver. They did not find anyone.

A police check showed that the brown Ford Escape belonged to Martin S. Rhinehart of New York City, a well-known publisher. However, when the police telephoned Mr Rhinehart, he was safe in California. He said that he kept the car at his holiday home on Martha's Vineyard for himself and his guests to use. He told the police that several people were staying there at the moment. After telephoning the house, Rhinehart said that someone was missing - a man called Michael McAra.

The next morning, a woman found McAra's body on a beach about six kilometres to the west at Lambert's Cove. The police took it to the little morgue in Vineyard Haven and then drove to Rhinehart's house to give the guests the news and to ask someone to come and identify the body. That 'someone' arrived at the morgue in a police car, followed by a second car with four armed guards. Until eighteen months earlier, he had been the prime minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He was Adam Lang.

* * *

The lunch that day was Rick's idea. He'd phoned me the night before.

'I'm surprised it hasn't been in the newspapers,' I said when we'd finished eating.

'It has,' he said.

Perhaps I had seen something, but I'd been busy working fifteen hours a day for a month to finish my new book, the autobiography of a famous footballer.

'Why did an ex-prime minister identify the body?' I asked.

'Michael McAra,' said Rick, looking straight into my eyes, 'was helping him write his memoirs.'

And this is where I should have left him sitting at the table and walked out into the London street, with the rest of my life safely ahead of me. Instead, I said, 'I don't know anything about politics.'

'Adam Lang needs a professional ghostwriter like you, not another politician,' said Rick. 'Rhinehart paid ten million dollars for these memoirs for two reasons. One, he wants the book finished and in the bookshops within two years. Two, he expects Lang to tell everything about the War on Terror. At the moment, he's not getting either. Things got so bad around Christmas that Rhinehart let Lang and McAra use his house in Martha's Vineyard so that they could work without interruptions. But McAra must have been feeling the pressure. They found a lot of alcohol in his body.'

'So was his death an accident?' I asked.

'An accident? Suicide? It doesn't matter,' said Rick. 'He worked with Lang when Lang was prime minister. He

did research and wrote Lang's speeches and when Lang resigned, McAra continued to work with him.' Rick finished his coffee, then went on. 'Rhinehart's company is worried. They're holding a meeting tomorrow, to choose a new writer. John Maddox, Chief Executive of Rhinehart Publishing, is flying over from New York. Lang's sending Sidney Kroll, his lawyer. There are going to be interviews.'

'I'm not sure about this,' I said.

'I've got other writers that I could suggest, but you're the best for this job,' said Rick.

'Me? But this isn't my usual kind of writing job,' I said.

'The money will be good,' said Rick. 'The kids won't starve.'

'I don't have any kids,' I reminded him.

He smiled. 'I do,' he said.

* * *

After leaving Rick, I went into the nearest bookshop and was surprised by how many books there were about Adam Lang. I bought several for research, then left the shop.

The moment I got outside, I realized that a bomb had gone off. People were hurrying from the underground railway station at Tottenham Court Road. In a nearby shop

window, televisions were showing a picture of black smoke coming from the underground station at Oxford Circus. Words running along the bottom of the screens said that a suicide bomber was suspected.

It took me two hours to walk home. All the underground stations were closed and no buses or taxis were moving. It was six o'clock when I reached my flat in Notting Hill. Kate had already arrived and was watching the news on TV. I had forgotten that she was coming for the evening. She was my... girlfriend? Lover? I've never known what to call her.

I kissed the top of her head, dropped the books on the sofa and went into the kitchen to get myself a drink. When I went back into the living room she was removing the books from the bag. 'What are all these?' she said, looking up at me. 'You're not interested in politics.' And then she guessed, because she was clever and she knew I had just had a meeting with my agent.

'They want you to ghost his book?'

'It probably won't happen,' I said.

She hated Lang, I knew that. 'But if they offer you the job, will you do it?'

Before I could answer, there was a picture of Adam Lang on the TV, speaking from New York about the bomb attack in London.

'What's he doing in New York?' Kate asked, her arms tightly folded across her chest.

'Lecturing?' I said.

'So he travels abroad and drives around in a bomb-proof car with armed bodyguards, making lots of money from lecturing,' she said, 'while the rest of us are left here to be attacked by terrorists. And all because of the stupid decisions he made when he was prime minister.' She looked at me angrily. 'I don't understand you. All the things I've said about him over the past few years - "war criminal" and the rest of it - and you agreed. Now you're going to write his book and make him even richer!'

She got up and went into the bedroom to get the bag she brought on the nights she planned to stay. I heard her filling it noisily with her things. I could have gone in and talked to her, but I didn't. I continued to stare at the TV.

Minutes later, she was gone.

CHAPTER 2

The Best Man for the Job

The next day I arrived at the London offices of Rhinehart Publishing five minutes before midday. Roy Quigley was waiting for me by the lifts.

'How many other writers have you seen?' I asked him.

'Five. You're the last.' Roy Quigley was about fifty years old, tall and wearing a suit. He was not a happy man. His work no longer interested him, but he was careful not to let his employers know this. I knew him quite well - well enough to know that he didn't like me.

'I have to say,' he said as we went up in the lift, 'I don't think you're the right man for this job.'

His job title was UK Group Editor-in-Chief, which thankfully meant nothing at all. The man that made all the important decisions - John Maddox - was sitting behind the large table when we walked into the huge meeting room. He was a big New Yorker with a bald head. Lang's Washington lawyer, Sidney Kroll, a weak-looking man in his forties with a pale face and unfashionable glasses, was sitting on his left.

Quigley introduced me to them, then said, 'And Rick Riccardelli you know.'

My agent turned to smile at me and I sat down next to him.

'I believe you know what we're looking for,' Maddox said to me. 'So perhaps you could tell us exactly why you think you are the best man for the job.'

'I'll be honest,' I replied. 'I don't read political memoirs. Nobody does. But that's not my problem, it's yours. I've heard that you've paid ten million dollars for this book. How much of that do you think you're going to get back? Two million maybe? You won't be happy with that.' I turned to Kroll. 'And Lang won't be happy either. He doesn't want a book that nobody reads.'

Kroll was smiling to himself. Maddox was staring hard at me.

'Political memoirs sell badly,' I continued. 'Everyone knows they're going to read the same old things that all politicians say. You've got to put in some feeling, some emotion. What Adam Lang really needs is an experienced writer like me. I can ask the right questions; get at the real man, the man with a heart, not the politician.'

'What rubbish!' said Quigley. 'This autobiography is going to be a world publishing event, not something for a celebrity magazine.'

There was silence and then Maddox spoke slowly and quietly. 'I have hundreds of "world publishing events" that I can't seem to sell, Roy,' he said. 'And a lot of people read celebrity magazines. What do you think, Sidney?'

'Adam wants this book to be a success,' Kroll said after a moment. 'He's very upset about Michael, but he's ready to work with someone quite different.'

'We need the book finished in a month,' said Maddox.

'A month?' I repeated.

'We already have a complete manuscript,' said Kroll. 'It just needs some rewriting.'

'A lot of rewriting,' said Maddox, looking at me. 'But Rick tells me that you work fast. Also, you're British, and the ghost has to be British like Lang.'

'But everything has to be done in the US and the manuscript must stay in America,' said Kroll. 'Martin let us have the house in Martha's Vineyard because it's secure. Only a few people are allowed to look at the manuscript.'

'How soon could you fly over to America?' Maddox asked me.

'It's Friday today,' I said. 'I could be ready to go on Sunday.'

'And start Monday?' He looked at Kroll, then at me. 'The job's yours.'

Everyone was smiling except Quigley.

Before I left, Kroll gave me a bright yellow plastic bag. At first I thought it was McAra's manuscript, but Kroll said, 'No, it's not that. It's a book by a friend of mine. I'd like your opinion of it. Here's my phone number.'

Quigley went down in the lift with me. 'There's something not right about all this,' he said.

'Me, you mean?' I said.

'No, before you,' he said and gave me a cold look. Then he went on. 'It's odd that nobody's allowed to see anything. And I met Michael McAra - he wasn't the kind of man to commit suicide.'

The taxi journey home took an hour and I had time to look at the manuscript Kroll had given me. It was the memoir of a US politician and was very boring.

I had got out of the taxi and I was crossing the road to my flat when someone touched my shoulder. I turned - and immediately I felt as though I'd walked into a wall. In fact, someone had hit me hard. I fell to the ground and suddenly the yellow plastic bag was being pulled from my hands. The next thing I heard was two people running away.

I was in a lot of pain. It was a minute or two before I realized that a woman was helping me to sit up. She

wanted to call the police or an ambulance, but I said no to both. Instead I managed to get upstairs to my flat.

Some time later, I telephoned Sidney Kroll and explained what had happened. He was shocked but told me not to worry about the manuscript. It wasn't important, he said, he could get another copy.

Rick phoned minutes later. Once more, I described what had happened to me. He wanted to know if I was OK and still able to leave on Sunday. I said that I was.

'Well, here's another shock for you,' he said. 'Rhinehart Inc. are going to pay you 250,000 dollars for the book.'

'What?' I replied.

'This book could change your life!' said Rick.

He was right. It did.

CHAPTER 3

A Bad Book

At Heathrow Airport on Sunday morning, I sat in the American Airlines lounge with a cup of coffee and a newspaper. A television was on in one corner and I had heard the TV newsreader say the words 'Adam Lang'. Suddenly interested, I listened. To begin with, the story didn't seem that important. Five years ago, four British citizens had been 'kidnapped' by the CIA in Pakistan. The plan was called 'Operation Tempest'. The men - Nasir Ashraf, Shakeel Qazi, Salim Khan and Faruk Ahmed - who were all British citizens, had been taken from the Pakistan city of Peshawar. All four were moved out of the country to a secret place and tortured. Mr Ashraf died during questioning. The other three men were later put in prison at Guantanamo for three years. Only Mr Ahmed was now in prison in the United States.

But now a Sunday newspaper was suggesting that Adam Lang had ordered the men to be kidnapped and given to the CIA. A spokeswoman for Lang appeared on the screen and said that he had no plans to make a statement about these reports.

I called Rick on my mobile phone. He was sitting in the British Airways lounge not far away, waiting for a flight to New York.

'Did you see the news?' I asked him.

'The Lang story? Yes,' he said.

'Do you think it's all true?'

'Who knows or cares?' said Rick. 'I don't.'

'I've been thinking,' I began, 'When I was attacked on Friday, they left my money and only ran off with the manuscript. Perhaps they thought I was carrying Lang's memoirs. Maybe Kroll gave me the manuscript to look as though I was leaving the building carrying Adam Lang's book.'

'Why would he do that?' asked Rick.

'Maybe Kroll thinks somebody in the UK is desperate to get it,' I said. 'Maybe he was using me to see if it was true.'

'You're crazy!' he told me. I could hear him laughing.

'OK, OK! Maybe I am crazy,' I said.

* * *

During the flight to Boston, I picked up every Sunday newspaper I could find in the seats near me and read all that had been written about Adam Lang and those four suspected terrorists.

At Logan Airport, there was a message for me on my mobile phone. I had to take a bus to the ferry at Woods Hole and a car would meet me when I got off the ferry at

Martha's Vineyard. The message was from Amelia Bly, Lang's personal assistant.

From the deck of the ferry, I watched the evening lights of Woods Hole disappear and thought about Michael McAra. At Vineyard Haven, a taxi was waiting to take me to a hotel in quiet, wintry Edgartown. It was an old, wooden hotel and I could hear the sea somewhere nearby in the darkness. The girl at the desk gave me a message from Lang's office. A car would fetch me at ten o'clock the following morning.

* * *

My taxi arrived after breakfast and drove me out of Edgartown. After about ten minutes, we went down a narrow forest road to a closed gate. A security man appeared and looked carefully at my passport. He said - or I think he said - 'Welcome to the crazy house.'

Rhinehart's house was a long, low, modern building. There were a few other buildings next to it. Another security man opened the front door and checked the contents of my shoulder bag.

From somewhere inside the building I heard a woman with a British accent shouting, 'This is stupid!' Then a door banged and an attractive, blonde woman in a dark blue jacket and skirt came clicking down the corridor on high heels.

'I'm Amelia Bly,' she told me. She was probably forty-five years old, but looked ten years younger. I recognized her as the spokeswoman I'd seen on the television news the day before. 'Unfortunately, Adam's in New York and won't be back until later this afternoon,' she said.

The same woman's voice sounded again. She was still shouting.

Amelia tried to smile. 'I'm so sorry,' she said. 'I'm afraid poor Ruth is not having a good day.'

Ruth. I had not expected Lang's wife to be here.

'Come and have a cup of coffee,' said Amelia, 'and then I'll show you where we work.'

All the bedrooms of the house were on the ground floor, she explained, with the living rooms above. And the moment we entered the large, open sitting room, I understood the reason. The huge window opposite gave a wonderful view of a lake, the sea and the sky.

'Our office is in here,' said Amelia, opening a door at one end of the sitting room.

I followed her into a big study. There were two desks - one large, one small. A secretary was sitting at a computer at the smaller desk.

'Three of us work with Adam,' said Amelia. 'Myself, Lucy here' - the girl in the corner looked up - 'and Jeff the driver who is in New York. He'll bring the car back this

afternoon. There are also six security officers from the UK - three here and three with Adam at the moment.'

'How long have you worked with him?' I asked.

'Eight years. I worked with him in Downing Street and I still work for the government.' She unlocked a big filing cabinet and took out a box file containing the manuscript. 'You can't take this out of this room,' she said, putting it on the desk. 'Nor can you copy it, but you can make notes. You have six hours to read it before Adam gets back. I'll send a sandwich up for your lunch. Lucy, come with me.'

After they had left, I opened the file, pulled out the manuscript and started to read.

All good books are different but all bad books are exactly the same - they don't feel true. Adam Lang's memoir was clearly a bad book. The facts were probably right, but the whole book - all sixteen chapters of it - felt false.

I quickly read the chapter called 'War on Terror', searching for words like 'torture' or 'CIA' or 'Operation Tempest', but found nothing. I had finished reading the manuscript by mid-afternoon. I put my head in my hands and, when I finally looked up, I saw Ruth Lang standing in the doorway.

'Is it as bad as that?' she asked.

I nodded. 'I'm afraid it is.'

'Let's go for a walk,' she said.

Quarter of an hour later we were walking along the windy beach with a security man following us. 'So, how bad is it?' she asked.

'You haven't read it?' I said.

'Not all of it.'

'Well, it needs some work,' I said, politely. 'But I've only got four weeks.'

'Four weeks! You'll never get him to sit still for that long.' She laughed.

A few moments passed and then she said, 'We stayed at Christy Costello's house in Mustique last winter and while we were there I read his memoirs. You wrote the book, didn't you?'

'Yes,' I said. Christy Costello was a pop star who had taken drugs, drunk large amounts of alcohol, then married a woman who stopped him doing both and saved his life. It all made a good story and the book was my first bestseller.

'It was very well written,' she said. 'So I said to Adam, "This is the man you need to write your book."' She stopped and looked at the sea, pulling back the hood of her coat and breathing in the sea air. She was more beautiful than she looked on TV.

'I miss home,' she said, sadly.

'Then why don't you go back to London?' I said.

She didn't speak for a while. Then she looked at me and answered, 'Because there's something not quite right with Adam at the moment and I'm a bit afraid to leave him.'

'Amelia said that he was very upset by Michael McAra's death,' I said.

'When did Mrs Bly become an expert on the way my husband feels?' she said, angrily. 'Losing Michael did make it worse, but it's more than that. It's losing power, that's the real trouble. And the TV and newspapers going on and on about the things Adam did or didn't do. He can't get free of the past. We can't get free of it.'

After a time, we walked back to the house and I saw two vehicles outside the front door - a dark green Jaguar and a black minivan with darkened windows. A grey-haired man in a cheap brown suit was standing by the Jaguar.

'Hello, Jeff,' said Ruth. 'How was New York?'

'Busy,' he said. 'I was afraid that I wouldn't get back here in time to meet Mr Lang at the airport.'

Amelia Bly came out of the house, speaking into a mobile phone. 'Yes, I'll tell him,' she said. She looked at Jeff and pointed at her watch.

'I think I'll go to the airport,' Ruth said suddenly. 'Amelia can stay here and paint her nails or something. Why don't you come?' she asked, turning to me.

'I'll travel in the other car,' Amelia said quickly. 'I can do my nails in there.' And she snapped her mobile phone shut.

Jeff opened one of the Jaguar's rear doors for Ruth while I nearly broke my arm pulling at the other.

'It's an armoured car, sir,' Jeff explained to me as we moved away. 'Bomb-proof.'

The minivan followed close behind as we came out of the forest and onto the main road. Within minutes, we were at the airport.

A Gulfstream private jet was dropping down out of the sky. Myself, Ruth and Amelia and one of the security men went into the little terminal building. An Edgartown policeman was already waiting there.

The private jet had the word HALLINGTON written in gold letters on the side. After it landed, the door opened and two security men came down the steps. One came straight to the terminal building, the other waited by the plane. After a few minutes, Lang appeared. He looked around and saw us looking through the window of the terminal. He waved and grinned, then walked quickly towards us. We walked forward to meet him as he came in.

'How was New York?' Ruth asked him.

'Great,' he said. 'Hi, Amelia.' Then he turned to me. 'Hello,' said Adam Lang. 'Who are you?'

'I'm your ghost,' I replied.

CHAPTER 4

Adam Lang

'It's not the best thing to say when you're replacing a dead man,' said Amelia, as we drove back to the house. We were sitting in the minivan with the three security men. The Langs were in the Jaguar ahead of us.

'I know. I'm sorry,' I said.

'But Ruth seems to trust you,' she said. 'Perhaps she thinks that you'll do what she tells you. So, tell me what you think of the manuscript.'

'It's bad,' I said.

'Poor Michael,' she said. 'He went to Cambridge to do the research and was there for almost a year. The Lang Papers are kept there, two thousand boxes of them. Michael didn't look through all of them, but he went through enough to make him very tired and depressed. His suicide left everyone feeling guilty.'

It was dark by the time we arrived back at the house. I waited beside the minivan, not sure what to do. Then Lang said, 'Come on in and have a drink, man!'

I followed him into a room with white leather furniture and we both sat down.

'Call me Adam,' he told me after we had talked for a while. 'Now, how do we do this?'

'Well, I ask you questions and I turn your answers into a book,' I said. 'I usually do fifty or sixty hours of interviews.'

'But, listen man, we've already got a manuscript,' he said.

'Yes,' I agreed. 'But it's not publishable. It's just sixteen chapters of research notes.'

'You heard about Michael?' asked Lang.

'Yes,' I said. 'I'm sorry.'

'He was with me a long time,' he said.

I didn't know what to say, so we were silent for several moments. Then he said, 'The sooner we can get this done, the better. Ruth wants to go back to London, but I can't leave here until this is finished. And she won't leave without me.'

* * *

'Well?' asked Amelia later, when she walked with me to the front door.

'It was all very friendly,' I said. 'He keeps calling me "man".'

'He always does that when he can't remember someone's name,' she said.

Some time later, one of the security men drove me back to the hotel. As I opened the door of my room, my mobile phone rang. It was Kate.

'Did you see yesterday's papers?' she asked, coldly.

'Yes, of course,' I snapped. 'I'm going to ask him about it.'

'Yes, do,' she said, angrily. 'Ask him why he illegally kidnaps British citizens in another country to be tortured by the CIA! Ask him what he plans to do about the wife and children of the man who died.'

'Wait a minute,' I began. 'I...'

'I've met someone - a man,' she said, interrupting. 'He and I are...'

'Good,' I said quickly and then I turned off the phone.

I needed a drink. I went downstairs to the bar and asked for a beer.

'You're English, then,' said the only other person there, a man sitting in the corner. He must have heard me order my drink.

'And so are you,' I said.

'Are you here on holiday?' he asked.

'No. I'm working,' I said. I didn't want to talk.

'I've heard that Adam Lang is on the island,' he told me.

I looked at him. He was in his middle fifties, with grey hair. 'Is he?' I said.

'Yes,' he answered. 'Do you know where he's staying?'

'No, I don't,' I said. 'Excuse me.'

I turned away to watch the television and suddenly I heard him swear at me. Moments later, he walked out of the room.

CHAPTER 5

Lang's Story

The next morning, Lang and Amelia were waiting for me in Rhinehart's study.

'Hi, man,' he said. 'Are you ready to start?'

I opened my shoulder bag and took out my mini-recorder, my laptop computer and two notebooks. 'I've loaded Michael's manuscript onto a Memory Stick,' Amelia said as she handed me a small, black object. 'You could copy it onto your own computer, but then you would have to leave the laptop here each night.'

'You've got my whole book on that?' Lang said to her.

'We could get a hundred books on it, Adam,' said Amelia and then she left the room.

'That's the worst thing about my life,' he said to me. 'I don't know about things like this because everything's done for me.' He shook his head, sadly. 'And I never go into a shop, or carry any money.'

'That's exactly the sort of thing we need to put into your book,' I said excitedly. 'Let's tell people what it really feels like to be prime minister. Readers are interested in the little things about another person's life, not politics.'

I pushed RECORD on my mini-recorder and my work began.

'You weren't interested in politics when you were growing up,' I said. 'Is that right?'

'Yes, that's right,' said Lang. 'I liked films and the theatre, and I thought people who were interested in politics were strange.'

'So what changed? What made you become interested?' I asked.

'After I left Cambridge I lived in a cheap little flat in London and worked in a bank,' said Lang. 'One wet Sunday afternoon, someone knocked on my door. I was still in bed because I'd been out very late the night before. But at last I opened the door and this beautiful girl was standing there. She started talking about the local election and I pretended that I was interested. I invited her in and made her a cup of tea. And as quick as that - I was in love.'

'The girl was Ruth,' I said.

'Yes,' he said. 'And I knew that the best way to see her again was to go to the political meeting the next week and join the same political party.'

After that, we worked all morning. By the time we stopped for lunch we had talked about his childhood and had reached the part of his life when he was seventeen and was hoping to become an actor.

Lang left to play tennis with one of the security men and I went downstairs to the secretary's office where Lucy was typing. Earlier, I had asked her to be ready to type the interview up as we went along and she was working from the first recordings. Amelia was looking over Lucy's shoulder as the words appeared on the computer screen.

'I've never heard him talk about any of this before,' she said, as she read.

I went through to the kitchen where there were some sandwiches waiting for me. After I had eaten I went outside and used my mobile phone to call Rick in New York. 'We've had a good morning,' I told him. Then I went back inside. It would be much easier to work on the book in my hotel room, I decided, and I'd had an idea.

I went upstairs to the study and closed the door. I pushed Amelia's Memory Stick into my laptop, then connected my mobile phone to the computer. Next, I used my phone to connect to the Internet and sent myself an email - with McAra's manuscript attached to it. Just as I was finishing I heard Amelia calling my name downstairs.

I quickly went back into the sitting room and, after a minute, Amelia came in.

'Where were you?' she asked. 'I lost you.'

'It's a big house,' I said.

She looked at me coldly. 'It's not a good idea to go wandering around on your own. The security people don't like it.'

Amelia left the room and at that moment, Lang appeared. His face was red and he had a towel round his neck.

'So, are you ready to get back to work?' I asked him.

He looked angrily at me. 'Work? You think what we're doing is work?'

'Well, I certainly call it work,' I said, sounding annoyed.

After a moment, he grinned. 'All right, man, let's do it.'

We went back to the study and talked about his family. His father had died when he was sixteen and his mother had then become seriously ill.

'How did your father die?' I asked.

'He died of a heart attack, working in the garden,' said Lang. 'I found him after I came home from school.'

'That must have been terrible,' I said. 'And your mother?'

'I was still a student at Cambridge when she died,' he said. 'Shall I tell you something? I saw two dead bodies when I was a teenager. But despite being prime minister

and ordering men to fight in wars, it was thirty years before I saw another. And that was Michael McAra's.'

'Why didn't you send one of the security men to identify him?' I asked.

'I felt that I had to do it... for Michael.' He paused, then said, 'Let's talk about something different.'

'OK, let's talk about Cambridge,' I said. 'You went there to study, but you also enjoyed acting.'

'I wasn't very good,' he said. 'But I joined the Footlights, the theatre group.'

'But you were very good,' I said. 'People say that you could have become a professional actor.'

'Perhaps,' he said. 'But actors can't change things, only politicians can do that.' He smiled at the memory. 'I loved it - going out on stage and pretending to be somebody else! What could be better?'

'That's good!' I said. 'We'll put that in the book.'

'No!' he said, angrily. 'The book is about a prime minister. All my political life my critics have accused me of being an actor! The day I announced I was going to retire as prime minister, one of the newspaper headlines was "Adam Lang leaves the stage." So we won't put in a lot about my time as a student actor. Leave it exactly the way that Michael wrote it.'

For some minutes, neither of us spoke. I was remembering Ruth Lang's words: 'There's something not quite right with Adam at the moment and I'm a bit afraid to leave him.' I was beginning to understand what she meant.

CHAPTER 6

Bad News

Amelia guessed that something was wrong when I took the next disc downstairs to Lucy.

'What's happened?' she asked.

'He seems nervous,' I said. 'He suddenly got very angry with me about nothing.'

She nodded. 'There's something worrying him. He had a phone call just after you finished with him this morning.'

'Who from?' I asked.

'It was on his mobile phone,' she said. 'He didn't tell me. I wonder...'

She sat down in front of Lucy's computer and began to type quickly. After a few moments there was a report on the screen from a news website.

27th January, 2.57pm

NEW YORK - Britain's Ex-Foreign Secretary, Richard Rycart, has asked the International Criminal Court (the ICC) at The Hague to investigate the reports that ex-prime minister Adam Lang illegally gave orders for four British citizens to be given to the CIA for torture

five years ago. Mr Rycart, who was dismissed from Adam Lang's government four years ago, has passed various documents to the ICC.

At that moment, telephones began ringing. Lucy reached for the phone on the desk. 'Don't!' shouted Amelia. Then she said, more calmly, 'It's the newspapers and we need to decide what to say. Switch off all the phones, then check all the TV and radio news programmes to see what else Rycart is saying.' She looked at her watch. 'Is Ruth still out walking? She is, isn't she?' She half-ran from the room and I followed her. 'Barry!' she called.

One of the security men came out of the kitchen. 'Barry, please find Mrs Lang and get her back here,' Amelia told him. Then we went upstairs to the study. Lang was sitting exactly where I had left him. 'So, Rycart's spoken to the papers, has he?' he said.

'Why didn't you tell me?' said Amelia, annoyed.

'I needed to tell Ruth first,' he said. He looked at me. 'Sorry I got angry earlier.'

'Don't worry about it,' I said.

'What did Rycart say when you spoke to him?' asked Amelia.

'He said that he felt he couldn't stay quiet about it any longer,' said Lang. 'He could have been recording the

call, so I just said, "Thank you for letting me know, Richard," and hung up.'

'We've switched off all the phones because we need to decide what we're going to say,' said Amelia.

Lang nodded. 'OK, what about this? "Adam Lang says that when it was popular in the United Kingdom to support the American War on Terror, Mr Rycart approved. When it became unpopular, he didn't approve. And when he was sacked from the Foreign Office, he decided to support suspected terrorists." End.'

Amelia was staring at him with pain in her eyes. He stared back at her with warmth in his. There was a moment of silence as they just looked at each other. And suddenly I knew... that he loved her and that she loved him.

Lucy came in with a piece of paper and Lang took it and began reading. A few moments later Ruth walked into the study. Lang finished reading and gave the paper to her. 'The ICC will be giving a statement tomorrow,' he said.

'Oh, Adam!' cried Amelia.

'Why didn't your friends at Downing Street warn us about this?' Ruth asked her. 'The only reason you're here is so you can tell us about things like this!'

'The ICC is very careful not to let a suspect know that they're investigating him,' said Amelia. 'They don't

want them or the suspect's government to destroy any evidence.'

Her words seemed to shock Ruth. 'So now Adam is a suspect, is he?' She turned to Lang. 'You need a lawyer. Talk to Sid.' She looked at Amelia again. 'Get Sidney Kroll on the phone.'

'What about the newspapers and television people?' asked Lang.

'Give them a simple statement, just a sentence or two,' Ruth pointed at me. 'He can do it. He's supposed to be the writer.'

'Wait a minute...' I began.

Amelia held up her hand for us to be quiet and spoke into the phone. 'I have Adam Lang to speak to Sidney Kroll,' she said. 'No, he won't wait.'

* * *

I went downstairs with Lucy. She sat in front of her computer and waited for me to tell her what to say in Lang's statement. I suddenly realized that I hadn't asked Lang if he had ordered the kidnap of the four men. That was when I knew that he had, or he would simply have said that he hadn't when the story first appeared in the newspaper.

'I have always supported the work of the International Criminal Court,' I began, and Lucy started to type. Had he? I didn't know. 'I'm sure the ICC will realize

that there is a political reason behind this hurtful story.' I needed another line. 'The international War on Terror is too important to be used as one man's revenge against me.'

I took the typed statement up to the study, where Lang was talking to Sidney Kroll on the phone. I walked past Amelia and gave it to Ruth. She read it and nodded, then pushed it across the desk to Lang. He looked quickly at it then pushed it back to me with a nod of approval.

'Am I allowed to see it?' asked Amelia, as we went downstairs. I gave it to her and she read it. 'Very good,' she said. 'You could be the new Michael McAra.'

The telephones were switched on again and immediately began ringing. In the middle of all this noise, my own phone rang. It was John Maddox from Rhinehart in New York.

'I've just heard the news,' he said. 'Get him to talk to you about it, but not to anyone else. We need to keep it just for the memoirs.'

'Perhaps you should talk to Sidney Kroll,' I suggested. 'Maybe Adam could say that his lawyers have told him not to talk.'

'Good idea,' said Maddox. 'We need to get this book published more quickly now that people are interested in Lang again.'

'Are you saying that you want the book in less than a month?' I asked.

'I know it's difficult,' he said. 'It probably means using most of McAra's manuscript, instead of rewriting all of it. But nobody's going to read most of that anyway. Can you do it in two weeks?'

'No! Are you crazy?' was the right answer. Instead I said, 'I can try.'

I went to look for Amelia. She was standing outside the front of the house in the cold, winter darkness, smoking a cigarette.

'John Maddox just called,' I said. 'He wants the book finished in two weeks.'

'Good luck,' she said. 'But don't expect to talk to Adam again today.'

'OK,' I said. 'Then can someone take me back to my hotel? I'll do some work there.'

She looked at me. 'You're not planning to take the manuscript out of here, are you?'

'Of course not!' I said.

'All right,' she said. 'I'll get one of the men to take you.'

She went back to the ringing telephones and I climbed the stairs to the study. As I got nearer, I heard Ruth and Adam shouting at each other. I didn't want to interrupt, but I knocked on the door. The shouting stopped and suddenly Lang said, 'Come in.'

He was sitting at the large desk. His wife was at the other end of the room.

I pointed towards my laptop and notebook. 'I wanted...'

'Yes, all right,' said Lang.

'Excuse me,' Ruth said, pushing past me to get to the door.

At that moment, Amelia appeared in the doorway, holding a telephone. 'Adam, it's the White House. The president of the United States wants to talk to you.' She put her hand on my arm and gently pushed me towards the door. 'Excuse us, please.'

* * *

It was nearly dark when I got back to the hotel. I went up to my room and took my laptop from my bag. I used the hotel phone to connect to the Internet and check my emails.

Something was wrong. There were various messages, but the email with the manuscript that I had sent myself that afternoon wasn't there. I stared at the screen in shock. Had the security people removed it?

CHAPTER 7

A Dead Man's Room

Early the next day I woke up to the sound of the telephone ringing. It was Amelia. 'Things have changed,' she said. 'You need to leave your hotel immediately. There's already a car on its way to you.'

I pulled back the curtains that January morning and looked out at a sea and sky as grey as death. Below, two cars drove up and stopped outside the hotel. Two men got out of the first car and one of them was holding a television camera.

I got dressed, packed my suitcase and was downstairs by 8.45am - an hour after the first ferry had arrived at Vineyard Haven. By that time, the lobby was full of newspaper and television reporters.

I bought a newspaper and went into the hotel restaurant to read it. Lang was on the front page.

EX-FOREIGN SECRETARY SAYS ADAM LANG APPROVED THE USE OF TORTURE BY THE CIA.

The article said that 'the White House fully supports the ex-prime minister at this difficult time'. But it was the last paragraph that made me forget to drink my coffee:

Mr Lang's memoirs will now be published at the end of April. John Maddox, of Rhinehart Publishing, said, "This is going to be a world publishing event. Adam Lang will be the first leader to give the real story about the War on Terror."

I went out through the lobby to the front of the hotel and telephoned Rick.

'He's not in the office. He's on holiday,' I was told.

* * *

The minivan took me out of Edgartown. As we got nearer to the forest, I could see a group of demonstrators at the side of the road. They saw the minivan and ran towards us. 'Lang! Lang!' shouted a woman. 'Liar! Liar!' The Edgartown police tried to get us through the crowd, but people were hitting and kicking the minivan. There was a man in the crowd being interviewed by a TV reporter. He turned and looked at the minivan and I thought he looked familiar. Then we were past and moving through the trees towards the house.

Once I was back inside the house Amelia took me to a bedroom at the back of the building.

'It's Michael McAra's old room,' she said. 'I'm afraid his clothes are still in the wardrobe. We haven't had time to do anything with them yet.'

'Isn't there another room that I could use?' I said. There was something about using a dead man's room that I didn't like.

'There are only six bedrooms in the house,' said Amelia. She looked at her watch. 'Sidney Kroll will be arriving soon and the ICC will be making a statement in thirty minutes. Come up when you've unpacked your things.'

Kroll had flown in from Washington on a private jet and when I got to the sitting room, Adam and Ruth Lang were sitting opposite him. Amelia and I sat down in chairs near them. The large TV on the wall showed a picture of the house. The cameraman taking the picture was in a helicopter. We could hear it in the sky outside.

'I talked to John Maddox and he's right,' said Kroll. 'We really have to explain everything in the memoirs now. It's the best way, Adam.'

'What exactly are they planning to investigate me for?' asked Lang.

'War crimes, probably,' said Kroll and there was a moment of silence. 'The ICC can't bring American politicians to trial because America doesn't accept the ICC as a court of law. So instead, they're going to investigate one of America's closest friends - you, Adam.'

'But I didn't order anyone to be kidnapped or tortured!' said Lang. 'Perhaps they could charge the United States with that, but not Great Britain.'

'A person can be punished for helping to make it possible for someone else to do or try to do that,' explained Kroll.

'And Rycart's given the ICC documents which show that Adam did help the CIA,' said Ruth.

'Well, Adam's not in danger if he stays in America,' said Kroll.

'Wait a minute,' said Lang. 'Are you saying that I can't leave the United States?'

'It's best that you don't travel to any country that accepts the International Criminal Court as a court of law, yes,' said Kroll.

'But that's nearly every country in the world!' said Lang.

'Not America,' said Kroll. 'Or China, Iraq, North Korea, Indonesia, Israel and some parts of Africa.'

'I think something is happening,' Amelia said suddenly and she turned up the sound on the TV.

And so we heard the ICC's Chief Prosecutor announce that Adam Lang was going to be investigated. Afterwards, the TV picture went back to the helicopter's view of Rhinehart's beach house.

'You should go to Washington immediately, Adam,' said Kroll.

Lang was still staring at the TV. 'We shouldn't have come here,' he said. 'It looks as if we're hiding.'

'I agree,' said Kroll. 'We'll say that you're going to Washington for a meeting that was arranged weeks ago.'

'I think that's a terrible idea,' said Ruth. 'The British people will think Adam's running to the president for protection from the ICC. We should fly back to London. The British government will have to support you.'

'You're wrong,' said Amelia. 'Look.' She pointed at the television.

The words moving across the bottom of the screen read: BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO 'COOPERATE FULLY' WITH WAR CRIMES INVESTIGATION.

'And will they "cooperate fully" if the ICC arrest me?' asked Lang.

'They have to,' said Kroll.

'Then I don't have a choice. I have to go to Washington,' said Lang.

'I still think it will look bad,' said Ruth.

'Not as bad as being arrested as I arrive in London,' said Lang.

'But better than running away,' said Ruth.

'So fly back without me!' said Lang, angrily. 'I'll stay here, where people want me. Amelia, tell the security people we're leaving in five minutes. Get one of the girls to pack a bag for me. And you'd better pack one for yourself.'

'Oh, why don't the two of you share a suitcase!' screamed Ruth.

Silence.

Then a red-faced Amelia picked up her notebook and walked quickly out of the room. Ruth waited until she had gone, then left without speaking.

Lang sighed heavily and stood up. 'I'll see you tomorrow,' he said to me.

Kroll also stood up and then grinned at me. 'Happy ghosting,' he said.

CHAPTER 8

Lambert's Cove

I watched the pictures on the television and saw that the Edgartown police were keeping the demonstrators on the opposite side of the road to the house. Suddenly, the Jaguar drove out through the gates. It stopped and Lang got out and went across to the TV cameras and reporters.

'I'm sorry you've had to wait so long,' he told them.

'Lang! Lang!' came the shouts of the demonstrators. 'Liar! Liar!'

'I support the International Criminal Court,' said Lang. 'And I'm not afraid because I've done nothing wrong.' He looked across at the demonstrators. 'I'm travelling to Washington to continue with my work, but to everyone watching this in the United Kingdom let me say this. I shall always fight terrorism - even in the courts.'

Then he turned and walked back to his car.

It was like watching a great actor, I thought.

I went downstairs to my room. As I was passing one of the other bedrooms, I heard the sound of a woman crying. It was Ruth.

There was a box file on my bed and a note that read, 'Good Luck! Amelia.' I opened the box and saw 'MEMOIRS, by Adam Lang' printed on the first page.

I took the manuscript from the box, then took my laptop from my shoulder bag. Next I took out the typed pages from yesterday's interviews with Lang.

After some minutes thinking, I took a deep breath and began to write.

Chapter One

Early Years

I became a politician out of love. Love for a woman who came knocking at my door one wet Sunday afternoon...

I looked out of the window and saw Ruth walking quickly towards the beach, her head down against the wind. Her security man was behind her. I watched her for a minute, then went back to work.

At around lunchtime I stopped writing and stood up. Moments later, I found myself taking McAra's clothes from the wardrobe and putting them on a chair. It suddenly seemed important to get everything of his out of that room. There was a big, old suitcase inside the wardrobe, so I took it out and opened it. It was empty except for a large, thick envelope addressed to McAra with the words 'Adam Lang Papers - Cambridge' on the front. I opened it and pulled out some photographs. There were a number of pictures of Lang when he was in the

university theatre group, the Footlights. There were also some newspaper reports about the elections in 1977 and Lang's first party membership card, which was dated 1975.

1975? That was two years earlier than the London elections.

I started to look more carefully at the election reports then. In one picture there was a group of election volunteers and I could see Lang among them.

So Lang had lied. He was pretending that he'd gone into politics because he'd fallen in love with a pretty girl. But he'd been a party member for two years by the time he met Ruth.

Did it matter? Lang probably thought it made a better story. But McAra must have had suspicions about the story - he had asked for these extra photos and papers to be sent and the story certainly wasn't in Lang's memoirs. And that surely wouldn't have pleased Lang.

I looked again at the Footlights photographs. One was a picture of eight young people on a stage - two women and six men. Their names were on the back of the photo: G. W. Syme, W. K. Innes, A. Parke, R Emmett, A. D. Martin, E. D. Vaux, H. C. Martineau, A. P. Lang. Under the names was a telephone number, probably written by McAra. I hesitated for several moments, then dialled the number on my mobile phone.

From the ringing sound, I realized it was an American number. A man answered. 'Richard Rycart,' he said. 'Who is this?' He sounded suspicious.

Shocked, I hung up immediately and dropped the phone onto the bed. After thirty seconds it began to ring. I picked it up and switched it off without answering it.

Had McAra written down the number? I couldn't be sure. I looked at the envelope to see when it had been sent. It had left the United Kingdom on 3rd January - nine days before McAra died.

I put the photographs and newspaper election reports back into the envelope, pushed the package under the bed and went down to the kitchen.

I ate a sandwich and took some time to think. Ruth hadn't arrived in London until 1976, when Lang was already a party member. So what had made him join the party? I knew now that it couldn't have been Ruth. So I'd spent half the morning writing about something that hadn't happened.

Then I began thinking about McAra and how he had died. Did he hit rocks, or was he thrown straight up onto soft sand? What was the name of the place where he'd been found? Lambert's Cove. It was about sixteen kilometres away, according to a map I'd found at the house. Maybe I would go and have a look at it.

The housekeeper told me that there were bicycles kept in the garage for guests to use. When I opened the garage door, I saw the Ford Escape SUV that McAra had taken onto the ferry. For a moment or two I thought about using it instead, but I left it there and took a bicycle.

* * *

When I got to the gate I saw that most of the demonstrators had gone. There was just one man left and I recognized him immediately. It was the man who had sworn at me in the hotel bar. He saw me and shouted, 'Wait a minute!' but I didn't stop.

The sky was dark with storm clouds and the wind was getting stronger. Most of the houses on the road down to Lambert's Cove were holiday homes and were closed up for the winter.

After I had been cycling for about an hour, it started to rain so hard that I couldn't see where I was going.

I left the bicycle by a gate and ran up to the veranda of what I thought was an empty house. But a moment later the door opened and an old man with thin, white hair looked out. I started to say that I was sorry to disturb him, when he said, 'That's OK, you can shelter from the rain. Are you British?'

'Yes,' I said.

'So what are you doing in this part of the island?' he asked.

'I'm going to Lambert's Cove,' I said. 'I knew the man who fell off the ferry.'

'That was a strange thing,' he said. 'The sea would never have brought that guy this far west at this time of year.'

I turned to look at him. 'Really?' I said. 'Did you tell that to the police?'

'Young man,' he said. 'At my age I have better things to do with my time! But I did tell Annabeth Wurmbrand. It was she who told the police about the lights.'

'The lights?' I said.

'The lights the night the body appeared on the beach,' he said.

'What sort of lights?' I asked.

'Flashlights, I suppose,' he said. 'Moving around on the beach.'

'The newspapers and TV didn't report anything about flashlights,' I said.

'That's because Annabeth has never spoken to a reporter in her life,' he said.

'Can you tell me how to find her house?' I asked.

'Sure. But she's not there, she's in hospital,' he said. 'She fell downstairs two weeks ago and she's in a coma - the doctors say she'll never wake up again.'

I stared at him, suddenly feeling sick. Then I said, 'Thanks for letting me shelter on your veranda.' I turned and ran towards my bicycle.

'Hey!' he shouted. But I didn't look back.

About half a kilometre further down the road near the beach, there was a big, low house. There were no lights on inside it and I guessed that this was Annabeth Wurmbrand's home. Could it be true? Had she seen lights? It would certainly be possible to see the beach from the upstairs windows.

I cycled down to the beach. The sound of the crashing waves was very loud now. I thought about McAra, alone and face down in the sand, his clothes full of water. I imagined his body being thrown from a small boat and pulled up the beach by men with torches. And then I imagined those same men coming back a few days later to throw Annabeth Wurmbrand down her stairs.

Some distance along the beach, two people were walking towards me. The tall one was a man, the short one a woman. After a minute, I saw that the woman was Ruth Lang.

At first, the noise of the wind and sea made it impossible to hear her until they got nearer. 'What are you doing?' she shouted. 'The housekeeper told me you had come here.'

'I wanted to see the place where McAra was found,' I shouted back.

'Why? You didn't know him.'

'I was curious,' I replied.

'We've come to fetch you back before the storm gets worse.' She turned and shouted at the security man with her. 'Barry, bring the minivan round and meet us on the road. We'll bring the bicycle up and find you.'

'I can't do that, Mrs Lang,' he shouted back. 'I have to stay with you all the time.'

'Don't be stupid!' she shouted. 'There are no terrorists here! Go and get the van!'

He didn't look happy, but he turned and began to run back the way that they had come.

Ruth and I walked up towards the road.

'I've come here once or twice myself,' she said when we were away from the noise of the sea. 'I usually bring a few flowers. Poor man.' She stopped and looked at me. 'Do you think Michael's death was suspicious?' she asked.

'I'm not sure,' I said. I was surprised by the question, but stopped myself telling her about the old man or about Annabeth Wurmbrand. This was not the time or the place, so instead I asked, 'Why was McAra on the ferry?'

'I don't know,' she said.

We walked on silently. Suddenly, I had a thought. Had McAra left the island to visit Richard Rycart in New York? That would explain Rycart's telephone number on the back of the photograph and why he hadn't told the Langs where he was going.

Barry was waiting for us on the road. We put the bicycle in the back of the van, then I sat next to Ruth on the journey back to the house. She didn't speak, but she did something unexpected - she put her cold hand in mine.

CHAPTER 9

The Photograph

I went to my room and decided that I needed a hot bath. While I was in the bathroom, lying in the water, I was surprised to hear someone come into the bedroom.

'It's me,' called Ruth. 'I've brought you some dry clothes. Dinner will be ready in an hour.'

'OK,' I called back. 'Thank you.'

After she left the room, I got out of the bath. She had put a shirt and a pair of jeans on the bed. The shirt had Lang's initials, APBL, on the pocket. My wet clothes had gone.

I looked under the bed. The envelope was still there. I put on the dry clothes, sat down at the desk and looked through McAra's manuscript. I read to page fifty before there was any mention of Ruth:

I first met Ruth Capel at the time of the London elections. She was very politically active and was much cleverer than me. I immediately liked her and after several evenings knocking on doors and giving out election leaflets, I persuaded her to come to a pub for a drink. A year after the elections, I asked her to marry me and our wedding was in June, 1979.

I looked through the rest of the chapters and put a line under the places where she was mentioned. There were very few. Perhaps she had guessed that I'd want to put in more about her and that was the reason she wanted me to write the new memoirs.

I checked my watch and saw that it was already time for dinner. I put the manuscript away and went upstairs.

Ruth was reading a magazine and there was a bottle of white wine on the low table in front of her. I sat down on the sofa and she poured me a glass of wine.

'We'll eat in twenty minutes,' she said, switching on the television. 'First we must watch the news.'

A picture of Lang in Washington, DC with the US Secretary of State appeared on the TV screen. Amelia Bly was standing behind the two men. The Secretary of State began to speak.

'Adam Lang has worked with us in the War on Terror and I'm proud to stand beside him this afternoon,' he said, holding out his hand. 'Adam, it's good to see you.'

'Don't grin, Adam,' Ruth said to the television.

'Thank you,' said Lang, grinning and shaking the hand, it's good to see you.'

Ruth swore and was about to switch off the TV when Richard Rycart's face appeared on the screen. He was

nearly sixty - a little older than Lang - and had grey hair, but was quite good-looking.

'I watched the announcement in The Hague today,' he said, 'with great shock and sadness. Adam Lang was, and still is, an old friend...'

'Liar!' Ruth shouted at the television.

'...but this is about justice,' he finished.

Ruth turned off the television as her mobile phone started to ring. She looked at it.

'It's Adam, calling to ask me what I think.' She turned off the phone. 'Let him wait.'

'Does he always ask your advice?' I said.

'Always,' she said. 'He used to listen to it, but not now.'

'You were right,' I said. 'He shouldn't have gone to Washington.'

'We should never have come here,' she said.

We had dinner at the long table by the window, silently at first. Then Ruth said, 'How are you getting on with the book?'

'Not very well, to be honest,' I said. 'I find it difficult to understand Adam. At the age of eighteen he goes to Cambridge with no interest in politics at all. He spends all his time acting and drinking and meeting girls. Then,

suddenly, by the time he's twenty-two or twenty-three, he's a member of a political party. Why?'

'Didn't you ask him?' she said.

'He told me that he joined because of you,' I said. 'He said that he followed you into politics because of love. I could understand that, if it were true.'

'Isn't it true, then?' she asked.

'You know it isn't,' I said. 'He was a member of the party for at least a year before he met you.'

'Was he?' she said. 'But I do remember knocking on his door. After that he did start coming to meetings.'

'Maybe he joined in 1975, wasn't very interested in it, then he met you and became more interested. But what made him join in 1975?'

'Is all this important?' she asked.

'Yes, it is,' I said. 'Because it means he isn't quite who we think he is. I'm not sure he's quite who he thinks he is and that's really difficult when I've got to write his memoirs.'

'How do you know that he joined in 1975?' she asked.

There seemed to be no reason not to tell her. 'McAra found his original membership card and some newspaper reports about the 1977 elections. They were with all the other papers in Cambridge.'

We ate in silence for some minutes. Then she said, 'In 1975 his mother and father were both dead and he'd left university. Many of his acting friends were getting work, but he wasn't. He got very depressed. I think he went into politics because he couldn't succeed as an actor. Quite a lot of people become politicians because they can't succeed in other jobs.'

'Did you ever want to be a politician?' I asked.

'Of course,' she said. 'I've always understood more about politics than Adam has. But I soon realized that he was the great speaker, not me, and that people liked him. Now, show me this research of Michael's. I'm interested.'

I went down to my room and got McAra's envelope. When I returned, Ruth had moved back to the sofa. I opened the envelope and took out the photographs, Lang's membership card and the reports about the London elections. She picked up the membership card.

'Well, that's definitely his signature,' she said. She looked through the photographs slowly, smiling. Then she held out the picture with the telephone number on the back. 'What's this telephone number?' she asked.

I felt my face getting hot. I should have told her about it earlier. Now I looked guilty. 'It's Richard Rycart's,' I said quietly. 'I rang it.'

She looked shocked. 'You've been talking to Richard Rycart?'

'I haven't,' I said. 'McAra must have written the number down.'

'When did you discover this?' she asked.

'Earlier today,' I said.

'And then you went to Lambert's Cove,' she said quietly. 'Why did you do that?'

'I'm not sure.' I told her about the old man I'd met near the cove and also about Annabeth Wurmbrand. 'She's in a coma,' I said, 'so she can't tell the police anything. That's all I know.'

She was silent for a moment and then she said, 'I'm going for a walk. This is serious and I need to think.'

'I'll come with you,' I said.

'No,' she said. 'I need to be on my own.'

* * *

Very early the next morning, I heard someone knocking on my bedroom door.

'Are you awake?' said Ruth, quietly.

'I am now,' I said. 'Wait a minute.'

I put on the dressing gown that was hanging up in the bathroom. Then I opened the bedroom door.

'What time is it?' I asked, when she came in.

'I don't know, I couldn't sleep. I've just spoken to Adam.' She was also wearing a dressing gown and she

was shaking. 'I haven't told anyone this, not even the police...'

'What?' I asked.

'The day before Michael died, he and Adam had a terrible argument,' she said.

'What was it about?' I asked.

'I don't know,' she said. 'When I asked Adam about it, he refused to tell me. But a few minutes ago, when I told him that Michael had talked to Rycart before he died, he didn't even pretend to be surprised. He knew.'

'He said that?' I asked.

'He didn't need to,' she said. 'I knew by the sound of his voice. He said that he couldn't talk about it on the telephone, but we should talk when he gets back. Dear God, what has he done?'

We were silent for a few moments while we both thought about the situation.

'What are you going to do about all this?' she asked. 'About Adam?'

'Nothing,' I said. 'If he wants to tell the truth about things that have happened. Then I'm here to help. If he doesn't, that's OK, too.'

'But if something illegal has happened...'

'I don't know that anything illegal has happened,' I said. 'All I have is a phone number on the back of a

photograph and the words of some old man. If anyone has any evidence, it's you. What are you going to do about it?'

'I don't know,' she said. After a pause she added, 'I'll get a divorce, then Mrs Bly can visit him in prison.'

I looked at her for several moments, then put my suitcase onto the bed and opened it.

'What are you doing?' she said.

'I'm going back to the hotel,' I said. 'I can work better there.'

She stared at me. Then, without speaking, she turned and walked from the room.

I looked at the manuscript. I wasn't supposed to take it from the house, but I couldn't really work without it. I put it in my suitcase.

It was raining outside and I didn't want to walk all the way to Edgartown. But nor did I want to have to ask Ruth to arrange transport.

Then I remembered the Ford Escape SUV in the garage.

It was still there and the key was in it. I put my suitcase in the car and then got into the driver's seat. As I drove down the forest road, the little map on the satellite navigation screen suddenly came on. 'In two hundred yards,' said an American woman's voice, 'turn right.' Then: 'In fifty yards, turn right.' And then: 'Turn right.'

She was silent for the next few kilometres and I forgot about her. But as I was about to turn right to enter Edgartown, she said, 'In two hundred yards, turn left.'

Her voice made me jump.

'In fifty yards turn left. Turn left.'

She was beginning to annoy me. 'No,' I said and turned right into Main Street.

'Turn around,' she said.

I stopped the car and tried to switch the voice off, but the screen changed from the map to a menu of different choices: ENTER A NEW DESTINATION, RETURN TO HOME ADDRESS or REMEMBER LAST DESTINATION. I stared at it for a few moments, then chose REMEMBER LAST DESTINATION.

'Turn around,' came the voice again.

I sat thinking for a short time. Had McAra been the last driver to put in an address? I couldn't be sure.

I turned the Ford around.

Once I was out of Edgartown and onto the Vineyard Haven Road, the voice stayed silent for several minutes. I drove on through the rain until the road got narrower under the trees.

'In two hundred yards, turn right,' she said.

'In fifty yards, turn right.'

'Turn right.'

I turned down the hill into Vineyard Haven and then found myself on the dock, where a queue of cars was driving onto the ferry. Someone knocked on the window next to me. It was the man from the ticket office.

'You'll have to hurry,' he said. 'The ferry leaves at 8.15 am and the weather's getting bad. There may not be another for some time.'

After a moment's thought, I got out of the car and bought a ticket.

* * *

I got a coffee on the ferry and sat in a corner of the bar so I could think. I knew that I should phone Rhinehart's house and tell Ruth I'd borrowed the car. But I didn't want to give my reasons for being on the ferry. Also, was I in any danger? If McAra had put the last address into the satellite navigation, then he hadn't returned from that journey alive.

When I drove the car out into the wind and rain of Woods Hole, the satellite screen told me to go north in the direction of Boston. So McAra hadn't been driving to New York to see Rycart, I thought.

I drove on for over an hour, still following the instructions from the satellite navigation. Finally, the voice told me to turn right onto a very quiet road through

some woods. Some minutes later, the voice simply said:
'You have reached your destination.'

CHAPTER 10

Paul Emmett

I got out of the car and started to walk along the road. After about fifty metres, I came to a gate and a private road leading to a house half-hidden behind some trees. There was a mailbox full of letters next to the gate. Were the owners away? I looked at the names on two of the envelopes. 'Professor and Mrs Paul Emmett' and 'Paul and Nancy Emmett.' One letter had been re-addressed from the Arcadia Institution, with an address in Washington, DC.

Emmett... the name was familiar.

I returned to the car and took McAra's Cambridge envelope from my bag. A few minutes later, I found the photograph of the Footlights members. P. Emmett was one of them and Lang was also in the photograph.

After some time a small Japanese car drove past me travelling in the direction of the house. A dark-haired woman was driving and a man sat next to her. He was about sixty years old and he turned to stare at me. I knew at once that he must be Emmett.

He got out of the car and took the envelopes from the mailbox, then the car drove through the gate and on towards the house. I waited for a few minutes and then I drove up to the gate. There was an intercom next to the

mailbox and I pressed the button. The answer came immediately. 'Hello?'

It was a woman's voice.

'Could I speak to Professor Emmett?' I said. 'It's about Adam Lang. I'm helping him with his memoirs.'

There was a silence and when the next voice came, it was a man's.

'This is Paul Emmett. I think you've made a mistake.'

'You were at Cambridge University with Lang,' I said. 'I've got a picture of the two of you there.'

There was a long pause. Then the electric gate slowly opened.

I drove through and parked next to Emmett's car. I got out, carrying my bag. Emmett was waiting at the open front door of the house.

'We just flew in from Washington, so I'm a little tired,' he said. 'But you've made me curious. Please come in.'

Once inside, I could hear his wife speaking on the telephone in another room. 'Yes,' she said. 'He's here now.'

Emmett closed the front door behind us. 'Can I see the photograph?'

I took it from my bag and gave it to him.

'Well,' he said, after a moment or two. 'I don't remember this at all. But yes, it is me. How did you get it? You must tell me.'

'I'd be happy to,' I said. And again I waited.

'Yes, well, come into my study,' he said after a moment.

I followed him into a room with dark green walls and shelves full of books. On the walls were photographs of Emmett pictured with several famous people. I noticed a picture of him with Lang.

Emmett sat down behind his desk and I sat in a chair opposite him.

'I'm sorry about Lang,' he said. 'Rycart was the worst Foreign Secretary since the 1940s and the ICC is going to make a mess of this situation.'

'How well do you know him?' I asked.

'Lang? Not very well,' he said. I pointed to the photograph on the wall. 'Oh, that. It was taken at a dinner for the Arcadia Institution - an organization I used to be a member of.'

'But you knew Lang at Cambridge,' I said. I took out the other photographs. Now that I looked at them again, I could see Emmett in several. In one, Lang was with some other students and Emmett was standing behind him. 'That's you, isn't it?'

'Yes, I think it is,' he said after a moment.

'Can you tell me the names of any of the others? The girls, perhaps?' I asked.

'No, it's all a long time ago,' said. 'Where did you get the pictures?'

'Do you know the name Michael McAra?' I asked.

'No,' he said, a little too quickly, I thought. 'Who is he?'

'He was the writer hired to write Lang's memoirs before me.' I said. 'He drove here to see you nearly three weeks ago and died a few hours later.'

'To see me?' he said.

'The satellite navigation in the car he was driving had your address in it,' I told him.

'But that doesn't prove that he came here,' he said. 'How did he die?'

'He drowned,' I said. 'Were you here that weekend - 11th and 12th of January?'

Emmett sighed, then went to the door. 'Nancy!' he called. 'Where were we on the 11th and 12th of January?'

She was carrying a diary when she came in. 'We were in Colorado, at the Aspen Institute,' she said.

'Oh yes, I was the speaker at the dinner,' Emmett told me. 'I flew back on Sunday. My wife stayed for a few more days.'

'So you could have seen McAra,' I said.

'Yes, I could have, but I didn't,' he said. 'Now, Nancy will take you to the front door. Be sure to turn right at the gate, or the road will take you into the woods and you'll never be seen again.'

* * *

Instead of going back to Martha's Vineyard, I drove into nearby Belmont and found an Internet cafe. I got a coffee, sat down in front of a computer, then clicked on a search engine and typed in 'Paul Emmett' and 'Arcadia Institution'.

Ten minutes later I knew that the Arcadia Institution had been started in 1991 to 'encourage democracy and freedom of speech and continually improve the friendship between Britain and America'. It had offices in London and in Washington, DC. Paul Emmett was the institution's first president. He had been born in Chicago in 1949, went to Yale University and St John's College, Cambridge, and was a lecturer at Harvard University between 1975 and 1979. Nancy Cline was his second wife.

Next I typed in 'Arcadia Institution' and 'Adam Lang' and got a report from a newspaper website about a dinner Lang had attended at the Arcadia Institution. Then I went

back to the Arcadia website and discovered that one of Arcadia's trustees - Mr Arthur Prussia - was President of the Hallington Group. I remembered seeing 'Hallington' on the side of Lang's jet. I typed in the name 'Arthur Prussia' and 'Lang' and got a one-year-old newspaper report:

LONDON: Arthur Prussia of the Hallington Group is pleased to announce that Adam Lang, ex-prime minister of Great Britain, will be joining the company as a consultant.

I had never heard of the Hallington Group, but I learnt that it had twenty-four offices around the world, and that two of its most important members had worked for the CIA. And when I typed 'Arcadia Institution', 'Hallington Group', 'CIA' I got a report from another newspaper:

Hallington jet used for CIA 'torture flights'?

THE HALLINGTON GULFSTREAM Four jet aircraft was photographed at the Stare Kiejkuty military base in Poland on 18th February. It is believed that the CIA have a secret detention center there.

This was two days after four British citizens - Nasir Ashraf, Shakeel Qazi, Salim Khan and Faruk Ahmed -

were supposedly kidnapped by CIA men from Peshawar, Pakistan. Mr Ashraf died during questioning.

Between February and July of that same year, the jet made 51 visits to Guantanamo and 82 visits to Washington.

Dulles International Air Force Base as well as visiting at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, DC, also US air bases at Ramstein and Rhein-Main in Germany. The plane is also known to have visited Afghanistan, Morocco, Dubai, Jordan, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, Azerbaijan and the Czech Republic.

A spokesman for Hallington said that the Gulfstream jet was often hired by other organizations, but he said that he did not know what these organizations used it for.

Next I typed 'CIA' and 'Emmett' - and got my biggest shock from a website called 'secret agents in universities'. There was a list of suspected CIA contacts. Among the entries I found: 'Paul Emmett is reported to have joined the CIA as an officer in either 1969 or 1970.'

'Oh no,' I said quietly. 'That can't be right.' I stared at the screen for a full minute before I noticed that two short-haired men at another table were looking at me. One was speaking into a mobile phone.

Trying to look calm, I pretended to drink the last of my coffee. Then I walked out.

The two men also left the Internet cafe as I hurried to the Ford Escape. When I was inside the vehicle, I locked the doors. I looked down the street but I couldn't see the men.

I took out the photographs again and found the Footlights picture with Lang and Emmett. Then I looked at the phone number on the back of the photograph.

I took out my mobile phone and called Richard Rycart.

CHAPTER 11

Richard Rycart

He answered within a few seconds. 'Hello,' he said quietly. 'I tried to call you back a couple of times.'

'I know,' I said. 'I'm sorry. It didn't seem right to talk to you. I'm working for Adam Lang. I...'

'Don't tell me your name,' he said quickly. 'Don't use any names. Where did you find my telephone number?'

'On the back of a photograph,' I said. 'The person who was doing my job before me had it.'

'Did he?' said Rycart, sounding shocked.

'I've been to see one of the people in the photograph. Perhaps you can help me.'

'Where are you now?' he asked.

'In New England,' I replied.

'You know which city I'm in, don't you?' he said.

'Yes.'

'Get the first plane that you can. Flying is safer than driving,' he told me. 'I'll get someone to meet you when you arrive.'

* * *

It was late afternoon when I parked the car at Boston's Logan Airport. My telephone rang. It was Ruth.

'What do you think you're doing?' she said, angrily. 'You're not at your hotel.'

'I decided to go to New York,' I said, 'to see John Maddox about the book, now that things have changed.'

'I was worried about you. Adam's still in Washington, as far as I know,' she said. 'He keeps calling me, but I don't answer the phone. When will you be back?'

'I'm not sure,' I said. 'Maybe tonight.'

She didn't say goodbye.

* * *

New York's LaGuardia airport was busy. I couldn't see Rycart or anyone that I recognized. But then I was shocked to see a man holding a piece of paper with the name 'Michael McAra' on it. He was in his fifties and was tall with dark hair. I followed him to his car.

We drove out of the airport and, within minutes, stopped outside a big hotel near Grand Central Parkway.

'If you need to call, use this,' he said, giving me a new mobile phone. 'Turn your old phone off and pay for your hotel room with cash. You're staying one night.' He gave me a small piece of paper. 'This is the name you should use and the telephone number you can call us on. Give the hotel an address in England, but not your own.'

Don't use the Internet and don't speak to anyone you don't know, especially any attractive women who show interest in you.'

'You sound like my mother,' I said.

Once I was inside the hotel, I checked the name on the piece of paper: Clive Dixon.

'You have a room for me,' I said to the hotel clerk. 'My name's Dixon.'

My room was on the sixth floor, with a view across Grand Central Parkway to LaGuardia and the East River.

Twenty minutes later, my new mobile phone rang.

'It's me,' said Rycart when I answered it. 'Are you alone?'

'Yes,' I answered.

'Open the door,' he said.

He was waiting in the corridor outside my room with my driver from LaGuardia.

'OK, Frank,' he said to the other man. 'Go and wait in the lobby.'

Frank went away and Rycart walked into my room.

'So, how long have you been working for Lang?' he asked.

'Since Monday,' I replied.

'Then you probably know him as well as anyone,' he said and laughed. 'I worked with him for fifteen years, but never really knew him. McAra didn't either. Let's sit down.'

There were two small, comfortable chairs and Rycart sat opposite me.

'You know who I am,' said Rycart. 'So who are you?'

'I'm a ghostwriter,' I said. 'I was hired to rewrite Adam Lang's memoirs after McAra died.'

'You mentioned a photograph. Can I see it?' he asked.

When he saw the envelope, he got quite excited. Then I showed him the photograph.

'Is that it?' he said. He looked disappointed.

'Why is your telephone number on the back?' I asked.

He looked at me for several moments before saying, 'Why should I help you?'

'Why should I help you?' I answered.

We stared at each other. Then he smiled. 'You should have been a politician,' he said. He started walking up and down in front of the bed. 'Everything done in this War on Terror is illegal under international law. Iraq, torture, Guantanamo,' he said. 'But proving it needs evidence and I've been looking for that evidence for years.'

Suddenly, just before Christmas, it came through the post. No letter with it, just a "Top Secret Memorandum from the Prime Minister to the Secretary of State for Defence." It was a clear order from the prime minister to the special armed forces to kidnap those four men in Pakistan and give them to the CIA.'

'A war crime,' I said.

'A war crime,' he agreed. 'So I took it to the ICC.'

'Who sent it to you?' I asked.

'At first, I didn't know. Then McAra phoned me. "Hello, Richard," he said. "Did you get the present that I sent you?" I quickly stopped him talking because the phone was bugged. I work at the United Nations and all their phones are bugged. I gave him a new telephone number that I'd not used before and told him to phone me again.'

'And what did he tell you?' I asked.

'He said that he'd been doing research in Cambridge for Adam's memoirs,' said Rycart. 'He'd found the memorandum about Operation Tempest, but also something much more important. Something that explained everything that went wrong while Lang was prime minister.'

'What was it?' I asked, suddenly excited.

'He wouldn't tell me on the phone,' said Rycart. 'He wanted to meet me. But he did say that the answer could

be found in Lang's autobiography, if anyone checked carefully. He said that it was all there in the beginning. He sounded very depressed. He told me that he'd call me in a day or two to arrange a meeting, but about a week later I heard that he was dead.'

'He was depressed because he'd just discovered that one of the men in that photograph was an officer in the CIA,' I said.

'What?' said Rycart.

'His name is Paul Emmett,' I said. 'He was a professor at Harvard and then he became the president of something called the Arcadia Institution. Have you heard of it?'

'Yes,' he said. 'And I've always thought the CIA were involved with it.'

'But would someone join the CIA and then immediately be sent to do research at a University in England?' I asked.

'It's very possible,' he replied. 'It's a good place to look for future politicians, or even prime ministers. Show me the photograph again. Which one is Emmett?'

I pointed to Emmett and said, 'I got the information from an Internet website, so it may or may not be true. Apparently he joined the CIA after he left Yale University. That's about three years earlier than this photograph. Could it be true?'

'Oh yes, I can believe it,' said Rycart. 'What's suspicious is that he knew Lang.'

'No, what's really suspicious is that only hours after McAra found Emmett at his house near Boston, McAra was found dead on a beach in Martha's Vineyard,' I said.

After that I told him everything I'd discovered and how I'd discovered it. And the more I talked, the more excited Rycart became.

'Maybe it was Emmett who suggested to Lang that he should make a career of politics,' he said. 'What year did Lang join the party?'

'1975,' I told him.

'1975!' he said, excitedly. 'Do you remember Sir Reginald Giffen?'

'I think so,' I answered.

'He's dead now,' said Rycart. 'But he was an MP who was always making speeches supporting the Americans. When he suddenly retired, everyone was surprised - except a young party member who had moved into Giffen's constituency six months earlier.'

'And became the party's candidate and won one of the safest parliamentary seats in the country when he was only thirty - Adam Lang,' I said. 'Are you really saying that the CIA asked Giffen to retire to help Lang get into parliament?'

'Listen,' he said. 'I was already in parliament and I watched just how fast Lang became party leader. Of course he had help. Tell me one thing he did as prime minister that Washington and the US government wouldn't have approved of. Quite the opposite - he did everything to support them, even when it made enemies for us in other parts of the world. And more than that, he sacked any minister who didn't agree with his support of the United States. People like me.' He paused, then went on. 'But all this is understandable if he was working for the CIA. The question is: what are we going to do about it?'

'We don't have any proof,' I said. 'We can't be sure that Emmett was in the CIA, or that he persuaded Lang to join.'

'You'll just have to get some proof,' Rycart told me. 'Lang lets you ask him questions, right? OK, we'll write some questions to get him to say something that makes him look guilty. Then you'll have it all on the recordings.'

'But the recordings belong to him, not me,' I told him.

'The war crimes court can legally ask for them,' he said.

I didn't like this. I didn't want to become involved in a war crimes trial. 'Maybe I won't make any recordings,' I said. 'Maybe I'll say I didn't know anything about all this.'

'Then I'll give the court a recording of this conversation.' He opened his jacket to show me a small microphone on the front of his shirt, with a wire going into the inside pocket of his jacket. 'Frank is recording every word down in the lobby,' he said. 'Oh, don't look so shocked! Did you think that I'd come to a meeting with a stranger without recording everything that was said? A stranger who's working for Lang?' He smiled. 'But you aren't working for Lang anymore, you're working for me.'

CHAPTER 12

A Ball of Fire

I wanted to hit him, but my phone started to ring. Not the phone I'd been given to contact Rycart, but the phone I'd brought from London.

'Don't answer it,' Rycart warned me. 'It will tell them where we are.'

I looked at the number on the phone. 'It's Amelia Bly,' I said. 'It could be important.' I answered it. 'Hi, Amelia.'

'Good evening,' she said, coolly. 'Adam wants to speak to you.'

Then, I heard Lang's voice: 'I was just speaking to Ruth. She tells me that you're in New York. So am I. Where are you?'

'I'm not sure,' I said. I looked at Rycart. 'I haven't found a hotel yet.'

'We're at the Waldorf,' said Lang. 'Come over.'

'Just a moment, Adam.' I put my hand over the phone and spoke to Rycart. 'He wants me to meet him at the Waldorf hotel.'

Rycart thought for a moment. 'Go,' he said. 'Or he'll get suspicious. Tell him yes quickly, then switch off the phone.'

'OK, Adam,' I said.

'Why are you in New York?' he asked.

'I wanted to see John Maddox,' I lied. Rycart was signalling at me to switch off the phone. 'Listen, I've got to go now.'

'We've had a good couple of days,' Lang went on. 'The Americans have been great. You discover who your real friends are when things get difficult.'

Was that some sort of message for me? I didn't know.

'I'll be with you as soon as I can,' I said.

I ended the call. My hand was shaking.

'Get your things ready,' said Rycart. 'We've got about ten minutes to get out of here.'

* * *

The lift to the lobby stopped at every floor and Rycart got more and more nervous. As we got out at the ground floor he said, 'We mustn't be seen together. Wait here a minute then meet us in the car park.'

He walked on and Frank met him on the way out. After a minute or two, I joined the crowd near the main door. That's when I saw Emmett. He had a man on each side of him and was walking into the hotel. Luckily, he didn't see me.

Once I was outside, I ran with my suitcase and shoulder bag into the car park. Rycart's car drove towards me and stopped suddenly.

'Get in,' said Rycart.

'I just saw Emmett,' I said, as the car drove off at speed.

'Did he see you?' asked Rycart.

'No,' I replied. I was very worried. 'Maybe it's not a good idea for me to go and see Lang now. Emmett might have told him about the photograph. He'll know what I've been doing.'

'So?' said Rycart. 'You're just researching his Cambridge years, like McAra. Don't act so guilty.'

The tall buildings of Manhattan appeared against the night sky. I said, 'You realize that Lang's going to get ten million dollars for his memoirs and then retire here in America where the war crimes court can't get him.'

'Maybe he will,' said Rycart. 'But then he won't be able to travel anywhere in the world. Not even to the countries that don't recognize the ICC. Because there'll always be a danger that his plane might have to come down somewhere with engine trouble. And we'll be waiting for him.'

Each time the car stopped in the traffic, I thought about opening the door and running away. But where would I go?

'If you're worried, you can call me using the phone that Frank gave you,' Rycart said.

There were police cars and a small crowd of TV reporters outside the Waldorf hotel. Frank stopped the car on the corner of East 50th Street to let me out. The last view I ever had of Rycart was the back of his head as the car moved back into the traffic.

I went to the lobby desk and asked one of the clerks to phone Amelia's room. The clerk was just picking up the phone when a group of security men came across the lobby, with Lang in the middle of them. Amelia and Lucy were behind them. Amelia was using her mobile phone, but when I moved towards the group she saw me.

'I was just trying to call you,' she said. 'We're flying back to Martha's Vineyard.'

'Why?' I asked.

'I don't know,' she said. 'You'll have to ask Adam.'

Lang had reached the hotel entrance. The security men opened the doors and we heard the shouts of reporters.

'I'll go with Adam. You get into the second car,' Amelia said. 'Adam will want to talk to you on the plane.'

I felt sick with panic. We were now outside and I saw Lang get into his car. I climbed into the back seat of the second car, next to Lucy. A security man climbed in next to the driver and the car moved away.

* * *

At the airport, I walked to the plane with Amelia.

'Adam says he wants to go back to see Ruth,' she told me. She sounded surprised. 'There's something he needs to talk about with her.'

Once we were up in the air, Amelia told me that I could go and speak to Lang. He was sitting at the back of the plane, drinking brandy.

'Hi, man,' he said.

'Hello, Adam,' I said. I remembered that Rycart wanted recordings, so I sat down opposite him and pulled out my mini-recorder.

'Found out anything interesting?' he asked.

Does he know something? Does he know about Rycart and me? Something about the half-smile on his face made me wonder.

'I'm not sure,' I said. 'How was Washington?'

'It was great,' he said. 'The Americans are going to help me in every way they can.'

'And could you stay here and live in America?' I asked.

'Oh, yes, they'll let me stay here. But they're also going to give me something more important. Evidence.'

'Oh,' I said. I had no idea what he was talking about.

He nodded towards my mini-recorder. 'Is that working? Because this is important. We can use it in the memoirs.' He moved closer to me. 'Washington is ready to tell the court that no British people were involved in the capture of those four men in Pakistan.'

'Really?' I said.

'Yes,' he replied. 'The head of the CIA will say that this was an American operation. OK, we had special forces in Peshawar at the time and it was they who found the four men. But there's no proof that we told the CIA.'

'But we did tell them,' I said.

'There's no proof that we told the CIA,' he repeated.

'Then how did they find out?' I asked.

'That's a difficult question,' he said. 'But it wasn't from me.' He smiled. 'What do you think?' He drank some of his brandy.

'Well... you wanted the four men to be captured,' I said. 'And our special forces did find the men. And when the CIA got them and tortured them, you didn't try to stop it.'

He looked at me coldly. 'I'm not sorry about what happened to those four men,' he said.

'What about the man who died?' I asked.

'Oh, him,' said Lang. 'He had a heart problem. He could have died at any time.'

I said nothing and pretended to write in my notebook.

'Look,' he said. 'I don't approve of torture, but it does work. Anyway, what are a couple of minutes of pain for four people when it stops the deaths of thousands?'

'But those men said that they were innocent,' I said.

'Of course they did!' he shouted. 'What else were they going to say?' He looked at me closely. 'I'm beginning to think that you're too naive for this job.'

'Unlike Michael McAra,' I said.

He laughed. 'Michael was naive in a different way.'

The stars disappeared as the plane began to drop down through the clouds. I wondered if Lang was a little drunk.

'Is it true that you had an argument with McAra just before he died?' I asked.

'Michael made some serious accusations,' he said.

'What kind of serious accusations?' I asked. 'Were they about the CIA?'

'But you must already know,' he said angrily, 'if you've been to see Paul Emmett.' And this time there was a very long pause before he went on. 'I want you to understand that everything I did as party leader and prime minister, I did because I believed it was right. Emmett said that you showed him some photographs. Is that true?'

My hands were shaking as I took the photos from the envelope and pushed them across the table to him. He looked through them, pausing at the one that showed him with Emmett, and then at a photograph of a group of students at a picnic by the river.

'I remember her,' he told me, pointing at a girl. 'She wrote to me once, when I was prime minister. Ruth wasn't pleased. Oh God.' He passed his hand across his face. 'Ruth...'

I thought that he was going to cry, but he looked up at me. 'Where did you get them?' he asked.

'McAra got them from Cambridge,' I explained. 'I found them in his room.'

'He never told me about them,' said Lang. 'What happens next?'

'Well, it's your book. You decide what goes into it,' I said. 'But I remember what happened to McAra. Was he killed because of some of the things he knew, and to stop him putting them into the book?'

'I don't know. You must believe me, his death had nothing to do with me,' said Lang. 'But what was he doing driving up to Boston to accuse Emmett?' he went on. 'In a way, he did kill himself. It was a suicidal thing to do.'

'That worries me,' I said.

'You really think that the same thing could happen to you?' he said. 'It won't.' He must have guessed that I didn't

believe him. 'Oh, come on!' he said. 'What kind of people do you think we are?'

'I don't know,' I said. 'What kind of people are you?'

We were coming in to land now. He looked out of the window at the airport below, then back at me, a shocked look on his face.

'My God, you've already told someone!' he said.

I could feel my face getting hot. 'No,' I said.

'You have!' he said. 'Who have you told?'

'Richard Rycart,' I said after a moment.

He must have known then that it was the end of everything. He was silent after that and seemed to become smaller in his seat.

The plane landed and stopped near the terminal building.

For once, I did something clever. As Amelia came hurrying towards us, I removed the disc from my mini-recorder and put it in my pocket. Then I put a new disc into the recorder. Lang was too busy with his thoughts to notice. Amelia didn't see either. She was looking worriedly at Lang.

'Ruth's waiting in the terminal,' she said.

After a minute, he got up, staring around him. He looked lost. Amelia helped him put on his jacket. She

looked angrily at me over his shoulder and mouthed silently: 'What are you doing?'

It was a good question. What was I doing?

I put my mini-recorder and the photographs into my shoulder bag and followed them to the door of the plane. The four security men surrounded Lang. I could see Ruth waiting on the other side of the window in the terminal building.

'Would you wait here a minute?' Lang said to Amelia and me. 'I need to speak to my wife.'

We watched him from inside the plane as he went down the steps. There was nobody around except the security men and an airport worker. Someone must be working late, I thought.

Lang was about ten metres from the terminal when the airport worker shouted, 'Adam!' and waved. The voice was English and Lang must have recognized this because he walked several metres towards him with his hand out, ready to shake the other man's hand.

And that is my last memory of Lang. Seconds later, there was a huge BANG! and a growing ball of white fire that seemed to swallow him up. It was followed by flying broken glass and a terrible heat. And then there was complete silence.

CHAPTER 13

The Return to London

I saw nothing more after that because there was too much glass and blood in my eyes. And it was several hours before I could hear again. A helicopter took me to a hospital near Boston. For the next day or two, I lay in my hospital room with bandages across my eyes and a policeman on guard in the corridor outside.

Some days later, Special Agent Murphy of the FBI came to ask me questions. With him was an Englishman from the British Security Service, MI5. After my bandages were removed, they showed me a photograph of the suicide bomber. It was the crazy man who had sworn at me in the bar of the hotel. His name was George Boxer, a retired British Army officer. His son had been killed in Iraq and his wife had been killed six months later in a suicide bombing in London. Boxer blamed Adam Lang for their deaths and had followed Lang to Martha's Vineyard just after McAra's death had been reported in the newspapers.

He would have known that Lang was returning from New York when he saw the bomb-proof car leave for the airport to meet the ex-prime minister. But nobody was quite sure how he had got into the airport and close to the aeroplane.

'Mrs Bly tells us that you recorded an interview with Mr Lang on the plane,' said the MI5 man.

'No, she's wrong,' I said. 'I had the mini-recorder in front of me, but I never switched it on. We just talked.'

My shoulder bag was next to my bed. I watched nervously as the MIS man took out the mini-recorder and removed the disc. 'Can I take this?' he asked.

'Yes, but there's nothing on it,' I said. 'How is Amelia?'

'She's fine now,' he said. 'She flew back to London last night.'

'What about Ruth?' I asked.

'Your government sent a plane to fetch her and Mr Lang's body,' said Murphy. 'They're on their way back to England today.'

* * *

Two days later, I watched Lang's funeral on the television news. The Queen, the prime minister, the US vice president and several European leaders were there. Ruth looked very good wearing black, I thought. I looked for Amelia, but didn't see her.

The next day, when I was ready to leave the hospital, Rick came from New York to say goodbye and take me to the airport.

'Sidney Kroll just called,' he said. 'Ruth Lang wants you to finish the memoirs and Maddox will give you another month to work on the manuscript. You can work in London.'

'So now I'm the ghost of a ghost,' I said.

After a moment's silence, Rick asked, 'Did you like him?'

I was feeling guilty. If I hadn't gone to see Emmett, he wouldn't have warned Lang about the photograph. Then maybe Lang wouldn't have flown back to Martha's Vineyard that night to see Ruth. Then I wouldn't have had to tell him about Rycart. And then, and then...

'Yes,' I said to Rick. 'Yes, I did like him.'

* * *

And so I returned to London and spent the next six weeks working on the memoirs. I wrote nothing about Emmett, of course. And I followed Ruth's suggestion and said that Lang had entered politics almost accidentally, because he had been feeling depressed when he'd first come to London. And that he'd only really got interested in politics when he'd met Ruth, two years later. Maybe it was true.

I sent Ruth a copy of my manuscript and a week later received a letter from her:

You have done all that I ever hoped you would do - and more!

You have brought him back to life. Please phone or come and see me when you have the time. Thank you again.

Much love,

Ruth

For some weeks after that, I stayed in my flat most days, watched television, ate very little food and didn't answer the phone. I was depressed and confused about everything that had happened. Then about two months after finishing the book, I put on a jacket and realized it was the same one I'd worn the night Lang was killed. In one pocket was the recording of my last interview with Adam. In the other pocket were the keys to the Ford Escape SUV.

The car! I'd forgotten about it. It was still parked at Logan Airport!

I telephoned Rick.

'It's OK,' he told me. 'The men at the car park got suspicious and phoned the police. They called Rhinehart's office and Maddox paid the parking bill. You sound terrible. Listen, I know a good doctor...'

I put down the phone.

A day or two later, I phoned Amelia on her mobile phone. She didn't seem surprised to hear from me.

'I was just thinking about you,' she said. 'I'm reading your book - Adam's book. It's good. No, it's better than good. It's like having him back. There's only one thing missing.'

'What's that?' I asked.

'I'll tell you when I see you,' she said. 'Maybe at the party tonight.'

'What party?' I said.

She laughed. 'Your party, for the publication of the book. Haven't you been invited?'

'I don't know,' I said. 'I haven't checked my mail for weeks.'

'Come as my guest,' she said. 'I'll meet you at the end of Downing Street at seven o'clock. Don't be late.'

After that, I checked through my letters carefully. There was no invitation.

* * *

Amelia came out of Downing Street just after seven o'clock. She looked older and tired.

'I didn't realize you were back working in Number Ten,' I said.

'I've been working here since Adam... died.' She seemed about to cry and I put my arm round her. 'Sorry,' she said. 'I can't seem to forget...'

'Neither can I,' I said.

We walked across Whitehall to the Banqueting House, through the crowds of spring tourists. The moment we stepped inside, I knew that it was a mistake to have come. A ghostwriter is never welcome at publishing parties. And I didn't know anyone.

'I can't see Ruth,' I said.

I took two glasses of champagne from a waiter and gave one to Amelia.

'It's Ruth who is missing from your book,' she told me.

'I know,' I said. 'I wanted to put in more about her, but she wouldn't let me.'

'I loved Adam and I think he loved me,' Amelia said. 'But I knew that he would never leave Ruth. He told me that during that last drive to the airport. She was the one who understood power. She was supposed to go into parliament, not him. Did you know that?'

'No,' I said. 'Tell me something. Before Adam died, why was it so important to keep that manuscript locked up?'

Amelia looked around and then spoke quietly. 'We weren't worried, it was the Americans. They told MI5 that there might be something at the beginning of the manuscript that might be dangerous to national security.'

'How did they know that?' I asked.

'I don't know,' she said. 'But after Michael McAra died, they asked to see the book before it was published.'

'Did they see it?' I asked.

'Again, I don't know,' she said.

What had McAra told Rycart before he'd died?

The answer could be found in Lang's autobiography, if anyone checked carefully... it was all there in the beginning.

I suddenly had the feeling that something important had just changed, but I needed time to think about it. Suddenly, I saw Ruth and she saw me. She looked surprised and began to walk towards me.

'I think Ruth's coming to speak to me,' I told Amelia.

'Then I'm getting out of here,' she said. She moved away quickly to talk to somebody else.

'Hello,' Ruth said when she arrived beside me. Sidney Kroll was just behind her.

'Hello, Ruth. Hello, Sid,' I replied.

'Somebody told me you didn't like parties,' she said. 'So I didn't invite you. Did you get my letter?'

'Yes, thanks,' I said.

And then she looked over my shoulder and I saw a look of alarm pass across her face, followed by a tiny shake of her head. I turned around and saw Paul Emmett, only a few feet away.

'Hello,' said Emmett. 'I think we've met.'

I turned back to Ruth. I tried to speak, but no words would come.

'Paul was my tutor at Harvard,' Ruth told me calmly. 'You and I must talk.'

'Ah...' I said, walking backwards. Then I turned and almost started to run as I left the room.

* * *

The moment I got outside, I knew that another bomb had gone off. There was smoke coming from somewhere behind Trafalgar Square and policemen were turning people away from that end of Whitehall. I ran to Trafalgar Square where I was able to get a taxi by pushing two people out of the way.

...the answer could be found in Lang's autobiography, if anyone checked carefully... it was all there in the beginning...

Once inside my flat, I picked up a copy of the finished book and started looking through the first few chapters. But I found nothing.

Next I went to my desk and got out McAra's original manuscript and began reading.

Chapter One. Langs are Scottish people originally and proud of it... Chapter Two. Wife and child with me, I decided to make our home in a small town away from London... Chapter Three. Ruth saw that it was possible for me to become party leader a long time before I did... Chapter Four. Studying the work of other politicians, I decided... Chapter Five. In looking back, I can now see that the general election... Chapter Six. Seventy-six separate security agencies looked after the security of... Chapter Seven. Was there ever a land like Northern Ireland... Chapter Eight. Recruited from all sorts of backgrounds and... Chapter Nine. As is usual, all countries... Chapter Ten. A big problem for the new government... Chapter Eleven. CIA opinions about the threat of terrorists... Chapter Twelve. Agent reports from Afghanistan... Chapter Thirteen. In deciding to order an attack, I knew that... Chapter Fourteen. America needs friends who are prepared to... Chapter Fifteen. By the time... Chapter Sixteen. Professor Paul Emmett of Harvard University has written...

I took the beginnings of all sixteen chapters and laid them out on my desk. I stared at them for a few moments. Then I put a line under the first word of each chapter. And suddenly there it was - a hidden message from McAra, who must have been afraid for his safety.

'Lang's Wife Ruth Studying In Seventy-six Was Recruited As A CIA Agent in America By Professor Paul Emmett of Harvard University.'

CHAPTER 14

No Way Back

I left my flat that night and never returned. Since then, a month has passed. I've stayed in four cheap hotels and, as far as I know, nobody has noticed. But about three weeks ago, after a long day's writing, I heard on the news that Richard Rycart had been killed in a car accident in New York City. I knew then that I could never go back. I've written and thought about the things that happened, but I still don't know how McAra found out the truth. It may have been when he was researching in Cambridge. Rycart suspected Emmett's involvement with the CIA, so it wouldn't be surprising if McAra had also.

But McAra knew other things, too. He would have known that Ruth had been to Harvard and he could easily have discovered Emmett had been her lecturer. He clearly felt that he had to tell Lang his suspicions during the argument the night before he left to see Emmett.

Almost every day I listen to that disc of my last conversation with Lang. The answer to everything must be there, I'm sure. But the whole story is still a mystery. Near the end of the recording there is a long pause as he looks at the photograph of the girls on the picnic. When he speaks again, he sounds very sad.

I remember her. She wrote to me once, when I was prime minister. Ruth wasn't pleased. Oh God, Ruth...

I can hear that he's worried about his wife and not himself. I guess that she had called him that afternoon to report that I'd been to see Emmett and shown him some photographs. She would need to see him urgently because the truth was about to be known. 'Oh God, Ruth - what have you done?' is surely what he meant to say. Because that, I think, was the moment when he realized that McAra's 'serious accusations' must have been true. His wife was a CIA agent.

I would like to write more, but I need to move to another place. Strangers are starting to be suspicious of me. My plan is to put a copy of this manuscript into an envelope and give it to Kate. I shall put it through her letterbox in about an hour, before anyone is awake. There will be a letter with it which asks her not to open the envelope but to look after it. And if she doesn't hear from me in a month, or discovers that something has happened to me, the letter then asks her to read the manuscript and try to get it published.

Am I supposed to be pleased that you are reading this, or not? I'm pleased that, at last, I am speaking in my own voice. But I'm also disappointed, because it almost certainly means that I am dead.

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- THE END -

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