Chapter One
Both Names, Lease Signed

The notebook I keep for the Cyprus thread is the third one I have filled in this apartment. The first two are in the desk drawer to the left of where I sit, labeled in the upper right corner the way I label everything, and I know without checking that the second one ends mid-sentence on a line about the OPA-7 bilateral registration because I ran out of pages at 0230 on a Tuesday and had to get up and find the third.

This is what I know about the apartment. The shelf above the kitchen counter tilts four degrees left, which the landlord has not fixed and will not fix because I have not complained and he operates on the correct assumption that foreigners who do not complain about the small things are either content or distracted. In my case both. The water pressure drops at 0700 when the building above runs its showers, and if I want a full pressure rinse I need to be in before that window or after it. I have been here eight months. I know the window.

The mint along the east wall outside releases its smell when you brush against it. I brush against it every morning when I check the perimeter, which I do at 0615 before the heat comes

and the lane fills with the sound of the city going about itself. So I smell like mint every morning by 0620. Dilva noticed this approximately three weeks after I moved in and has mentioned it four times. Not as criticism. As observation. She observes things and then says them. It is her primary mode of interaction with the world and I find it more useful than most people's modes of interacting with the world.

The east wall of the compound across the lane holds a row of doves. They are there most mornings when I check the perimeter, arranged in the specific way birds arrange themselves when they have decided a surface is safe. I have stopped noting them in the log. They are part of the baseline.

* * *

The Cyprus thread had three open questions when I woke up at 0545 this morning. The first: the holding company's redacted ownership field, which Treasury is working on through Vance's contact. The second: the third co-signatory on the BPCO tasking order, whose name I have been building toward from three angles since August. The third: the financial routing between the Erbil address and the Istanbul accounts, which HSI has standing to trace and which I have been waiting on for eleven days.

Eleven days is not long. Some threads take months. What makes eleven days feel like pressure is that the appeal Maya filed for the fourth withheld FOIA page is at the final administrative step, which means it clears or it does not clear, and the specific authority reviewing it changes in thirty-two

days when its director rotates out. The incoming director has a different read on what falls under national security exemption. Maya and I have not discussed this directly. We do not need to. She filed the appeal structured for the current director's interpretive framework. She knows what she is working against.

I made coffee. I sat at the desk. I opened the notebook to the last entry, which reads: Cyprus registration filed March 2019. Bilateral channel. U.S.-KRI technical advisory framework. Personnel registration, advisory capacity, regional contracting liaison. The name matches the name in the Reyes deposition. He is operating legally. And below that, my own note from the night I wrote it: legally is not the same as cleanly. The distinction matters.

It was 0602. The water pressure dropped at 0700. I had fifty-eight minutes.

* * *

I was cross-referencing the third co-signatory angle against the HSI routing thread when my phone moved at 0714.

Maya.

I picked up before the second vibration.

She said: "It cleared."

Two words. The appeal. The fourth withheld page. After fourteen months of supplemental filings, administrative reviews, a procedural challenge in October, and a resubmission in January that Maya rebuilt from the statutory basis up after the challenge closed without ruling, the appeal had cleared the final administrative hurdle. The page was moving.

I did not say anything for a moment.

I was looking at the notebook, at the line I had written about legally and cleanly, and the way the morning light came through the window above the desk and sat on the page without doing anything in particular to it.

She said: “You there.”

“Yes,” I said. “When.”

She said the notification came at 0642 her time. She had been sitting with it for thirty-two minutes before she called because she wanted to be sure it said what she thought it said before she told me. It said what she thought it said. She had read the notification four times.

I understand that impulse. I would have read it four times too.

She said: “The page is being prepared for release through the standard channel. Estimated five to seven business days.”

Five to seven business days. Fourteen months of work down to five to seven business days. I wrote the date in the margin of the notebook, noted the time, and drew a box around both. I cap my pen when I draw boxes. I do not know when I started doing this. The pen was already capped by the time I finished the box, which means the action has become reflexive.

She said: “I’ll call when the page is in my hands. Nothing to say until it is.”

“Good,” I said.

She said: “Good.”

We ended the call.

* * *

I sat with it for four minutes.

The fourth withheld page names the authorized signatories on the BPCO tasking order. The first three pages gave me the commissioning structure, the contractor relationship, and the Reyes authorship chain. What I have not had is the names above Reyes. The names that connect the BPCO tasking order

to the OPA-7 bilateral framework. The names that close the distance between the document that authorized the suppression mechanism and the financial architecture that funded it.

Five to seven business days. The Cyprus thread had three open questions at 0545 this morning. After Maya's call it had the same three questions and one incoming answer that might close two of them simultaneously.

I opened the notebook to a clean page. I wrote: Fourth page clearing. Five to seven days. Co-signatory question may resolve. Hold the Cyprus angle until the page is in hand. I drew another box. Capped the pen again.

Then I called Thunder.

* * *

He picked up on the second ring. It was 2217 in Mill Valley. He had been awake. He is always awake when I call at hours that should have him asleep, which tells me something about what he carries when he is not carrying it in front of me, and which I have learned not to comment on because he does not comment on the things I do that tell him the same thing in the other direction.

I told him about Maya's call. I told him the page was moving. I told him the five to seven days.

He was quiet for a moment.

"I was three days out from coming anyway," he said.

"I know," I said.

"I'm moving it up."

"Okay."

"BJ," he said.

One word. Not a question. A statement about what he was going to do in the next five minutes, which was text BJ, who would respond in approximately eleven seconds because that is how BJ responds to operational activation, which I know from the three times I have been in the room when it happened and from the way Thunder's face looks when he reads the reply. Specifically, the way his jaw does not change at all, which with Thunder means the information landed correctly.

"Give me two days before you land," I said. "I want the Cyprus cross-reference finished before you arrive so we can read it together."

"Two days," he said.

“Two days,” I said.

We ended the call.

* * *

It was 0741. The water pressure had come back up ten minutes ago. The mint outside the east wall had been brushed at 0615. The doves on the compound wall across the lane were still there when I checked at 0620. The notebook had two new entries and two new boxes and the pen was capped on the desk beside it.

I had two days to finish the Cyprus cross-reference.

I opened the file.