

# *Waltz in Syncopated Time*

## *Part 2*

*Vienna - August 12, 1987*

With her shadow at her back, she stood on the banks of the Danube as tourists milled in the park behind her. Enjoying the warmth of the sunny, late-summer day, they were oblivious to the drama unfolding on the river.

She watched as policemen in powerboats hooked a body with a long pole and struggled to bring the waterlogged corpse onboard. She watched as a young lieutenant vomited into the blue-green water upon seeing the body's condition. She watched, feeling neither guilt nor pride about her part in the events.

Drawn by the commotion, a small crowd began to gather near her. With her, they too watched as an apparent veteran of the department briefly comforted the shaken greenhorn and then began to inspect the body. They watched him cry out in shock upon discovering the papers tucked in a waterproof pouch inside her clothing. "Mein Gott! Sie ist Amerikanerin!"

She lowered her head and mouthed a brief, silent prayer. Then, tucking a lock of auburn hair behind her ear, she ducked around the crowd's fringe and stepped onto a streetcar just as it began to pull away from the curb.

*Washington, DC - August 13, 1987*

"Billy, I want to go to Vienna," Lee announced resolutely before the door to his boss' office had closed behind him.

"Lee . . ." Billy began. His tone that conveyed not only that there was no room for argument, but also that Lee should be aware of the unreasonableness of his request.

Lee interrupted, "It's been three days since we've heard anything from her." He began pacing, his fists clenched tightly at his sides. "It just doesn't seem right. If anything happens to her . . . If . . ." Lee trailed off, his thoughts returning unbidden to California, to the moment of panic when his life seemed to be bleeding away just as surely as his wife's blood.

"If what?" Billy asked gently.

"If she were . . . hurt, or . . . Billy, I . . ." Lee's pacing had stopped and his hands began to beat a frantic tattoo on his thigh.

"She's fine, Lee," Billy pushed away from his desk and tipped his chair back. "You saw her wire. There've been some complications and she's gone contact zero. She'll let us know when she's ready to come in."

He righted his chair and leaned over his desktop to regard Lee seriously. "She's a good agent, Lee; you need to start looking beyond your personal relationship and give Amanda the respect she's earned."

"Billy!" Francine ran into the office without knocking and immediately began talking. "This just came over the wire from SBIR. Austrian police found a body in the Danube -- American papers -- they think it's . . ." Francine trailed off. Her eyes, resting on Lee for the first time, widened in apparent shock.

"Who?" Lee asked, although already suspecting the answer. His heart was racing and he tasted his morning coffee in the back of his throat.

"It's hasn't been confirmed . . . I don't think . . ." Francine began again, avoiding eye contact. She began to back toward Billy's desk as Lee strode in her direction, his hand outstretched for the report.

"**Who** is it?" he repeated more forcefully.

"They found Amanda's papers on the body," Francine answered the question while avoiding any clear assignment of identity.

Lee plucked the shiny facsimile paper from her hands to read over the cursory report and study the grainy, black and white autopsy photos. He could make out a slender woman with dark hair, but that was all. Her face had been blown off with what the coroner had ruled was a shotgun blast.

He laid the papers on his boss' desk. "I'm going."

"Scarecrow . . ." Billy held up a hand to stop him.

"I'm going, Billy. I'll do it whether you give me permission or not." He spoke with an exaggerated calmness that was in direct contradiction to his inner turmoil.

Billy studied him only momentarily before answering, "Then you're not going alone. I'll make the flight arrangements; I'm going with you." He nodded to dismiss both Lee and Francine and reached for the phone.

Francine reached for Lee's forearm as they entered the bullpen. "Lee, I'm . . ."

"I know," Lee answered tonelessly, cutting her off before she could say 'sorry.' "I need . . . I need to go . . . pack now."

"Is there . . . can I . . . umm, do . . . anything?" Her grip on his arm tightened.

"No," he answered, still without emotion and pulled away roughly. "Thank you."

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She was okay. The thought entered his mind as he slipped behind the wheel of his car and turned onto the highway. It was quickly replaced with another one. He had to get to Vienna.

At his apartment, Lee packed hurriedly. Leaving shirts and slacks on their hangers, he threw them into his suitcase and forcefully held it closed to fasten it. As he walked into the living room, he stared at the phone. He needed to call her family -- their family, he mentally amended -- but what would he say?

"King residence," Jamie's voice broke as he answered the phone and Lee found himself smiling in spite of himself.

"Hi, Jamie," he forced himself to sound cheerful. "I just wanted to let you know that I'm going to be out of town for a few days. Your mom ran into trouble on the shoot in Austria, so I'm gonna go help her out."

"You talked to my mom?!" The anxiety in his stepson's voice was apparent.

"Well, the overseas connections aren't always so reliable," Lee tried to come up with an effective cover, "but she did get word to us."

"Oh . . ." Jamie answered quietly, and then asked, "Lee?"

"What is it, Sport?"

"You sure she's okay?"

He felt for his stepson; it was the same worry he was facing, and neither of them were able, or willing, to admit it. After a moment's hesitation he said, "I'm doing what I can to make sure."

"Alright," Jamie answered and hung up the phone quietly.

**END PART II**