

ST. BARTS  
LESSER ANTILLES

**H**arvath's target drove a beautiful Porsche 356 Speedster. It was vintage, probably a 1957, but had been painted a hideous electric green.

*Russians, he thought. If it weren't for their mouths, some of them would have no taste at all.*

As the tiny car wound its way through the lush, green hills, he caught glimpses of the turquoise water below. The stunning island defied description.

Lara would have loved it, and it would have been great to have her along, but considering with whom he was travelling, it probably wouldn't have been a good idea.

He'd barely settled into his new house back in Boston when Alexandra Ivanova had called in the middle of the night. She'd had an offer for him—an offer too good to pass up.

The Moscow crime syndicate that Malevsky worked for had an estate in St. Barts. Konstantin Slokavich, the mobster in charge of smuggling arms and antiquities for ISIS, was going to be on vacation there.

“So?” Harvath had said.

“So, it's Slokavich who recruited your doctor in Brussels, Salah Abaaoud, and then used him against you.”

Harvath had gripped the phone tighter. “What are you offering?”

“The chance for you to kill him.”

Several hours later at the White House, President Porter had asked, “Why don't the Russians just do it themselves? Why do they need you?”

Bob McGee, Lydia Ryan, and Reed Carlton were all there for the highly confidential meeting. They were seated in the President's study, just off the Oval Office.

Harvath looked at each of them before responding. “Because the Russians don’t know that she’s going to have him taken out.”

“What?” the CIA Director said.

“I told you two months ago that she’s ripe for recruitment and—”

“Wait,” McGee interrupted. “Have you had contact with her since seeing her in Germany?”

Harvath nodded. “Only a few times.”

“‘*Only a few times*’? What are you talking about? Who authorized you to—”

“I didn’t want the relationship to go cold.”

“You should have reported any contact with her.”

Lydia Ryan cleared her throat. “He did. Each time.”

McGee looked at his Deputy Director. “And this is the first I’m hearing of it?”

“Yes. Because it didn’t matter until now. And, we’ve been a little busy mopping up everything else.”

The CIA Director couldn’t argue. He’d been eating every meal at his desk and taking stacks of work home every night. The amount of information Joe Edwards had handed to Rebecca Ritter—and Rebecca Ritter had handed to the Russians—was devastating to America’s national security.

“Why should we trust Ivanova?” he asked.

Harvath looked at him. “We shouldn’t. Not one hundred percent. But I think we should take the risk.”

“You mean, *you* should take the risk,” Carlton clarified.

“Yes, sir. It would be me taking the risk.”

“Before I sign off on this,” the President interjected, making air quotes around the words *sign off*, “I’d like to be clear. Is she working on behalf of the Russians or not?”

“Yes, Mr. President,” Harvath responded. “She is.”

“Then, again, why aren’t they taking care of this?”

“Because several high-ranking members of her agency are getting rich off the smuggling operation and will never okay taking Slokavich out. The FSB and the Russian mafia are practically one and the same.”

“So she wants us to do their dirty work for them.”

Harvath nodded.

“And what specifically do we get out of this?”

It was a good question. “It helps close the loop on Anbar. It disrupts a significant ISIS smuggling—and thereby financial—pipeline, and it allows me a small way to pay back Ivanova for her help in Germany.”

“She’s the one who was undercover, posing as a nanny at Malevsky’s home in Bavaria,” said the President.

Harvath nodded again.

Porter looked at the others in the study. “Any reason not to go ahead?”

“She could be double-crossing him,” Ryan replied. “The Russians could put a bag over his head and try to trade him back for all of their operatives we now hold.”

“Or,” said Carlton, “this could be legit and move us one step closer to getting her to work for us.”

The President shifted his gaze to Harvath. “What are the odds she’s ever going to turn against Russia for us?”

“She’s not fond of her government, but she *is* fond of her country. I think there’s ways she can help us, but we’re going to begin by doing this for her.”

“So are you comfortable with it?”

“Yes, Mr. President.”

And with that, the decision had been made. The next day Harvath flew down to St. Barts on a private plane. He was in the capital city of Gustavia in time for dinner.

He stopped at Le Select, a laid-back bar with wooden tables and plastic chairs on Rue de France—the inspiration for the Jimmy Buffet song “Cheeseburger in Paradise.” He had finished his burger and was on his second beer when Alexandra walked in. She wore a short cotton dress that left little to the imagination. Her blond hair hung loose to her shoulders. In a word, she looked amazing.

It had taken a couple of days, but eventually Malevsky’s people had figured out that the German police hadn’t detained their boss. That left only two possibilities.

After several weeks without a ransom demand, Mrs. Malevsky resigned herself to the only possible answer—he had been murdered.

Closing up the house in Berchtesgaden, she had arranged for a plane to transport the family back to Russia. She wanted to be with her parents. They hated her husband, Mikhail, just as much as she did. Quietly, they would celebrate that the bastard was finally gone.

Mrs. Malevsky had acted as an art dealer and interior decorator for her husband’s real estate business and, as such, had socked a lot of money away. In fact, Malevsky had used his wife as a front for many of his money laundering operations, and a great part of his fortune had been parked in her name.

After everything Alexandra had been through at the hands of that brute Kumarin, and with her parents more than happy to look after the children, Mrs. Malevsky had offered her a vacation—anywhere she wanted to go. When Alexandra learned that Slokavich was headed for the Caribbean, she had politely asked if she could visit St. Barts.

Harvath and Alexandra had sat at the bar drinking and talking until Le Select closed. She was staying at the syndicate's estate. He was staying at a nearby hotel. She had floated the idea of going home with him. He had gotten her a cab.

There was still chemistry between them—a lot of it. But what he had back home with Lara mattered more to him than some fling in St. Barts with Alexandra.

To her credit, she tried to change his mind. But as sexy as she was, and as attracted as he was to her, it didn't happen. He wasn't that kind of guy.

He spent the next three days by the pool. Slokavich had been delayed. Alexandra came to see him. If he thought she looked incredible in that cotton dress at Le Select, it was nothing, compared to how amazing she looked in a bikini.

He wanted to tell her to go home until the target arrived, but he couldn't. He liked looking at her. He also liked the envious glances of the other men around the pool. She was an unbelievable woman.

He started to wonder why she hadn't found someone, but then understood. She was just like him—almost exactly.

She was one of the good guys, an idealist. She believed in the mission and protecting her people. It wasn't easy to scale that back, to find a balance. *Would she have moved to Boston for someone*, he wondered. He couldn't say.

What he did know, though, was that he respected her. She did what she believed to be right. So did he. And over an open bar bill at the hotel pool, he laid what he hoped was a solid foundation for her to begin working with the United States.

When Slokavich arrived, Alexandra went dark for two days. Harvath wasn't worried. In fact, he could picture exactly what was going on.

Slokavich had landed in paradise. Shortly after arriving at the estate, he had been handed a drink, and soon thereafter had spotted Alexandra. The rest was simply nature taking its course.

When it came to womanizing, Slokavich made Kumarin look like a piker. It was all Alexandra could do to keep him at bay until she could lure him into Harvath's trap.

The next morning, she was ready. She teased him over breakfast, flirting with him as he sat with his sixty-year-old gut overhanging his swimming trunks on the patio. He gobbled it up. He was in paradise: the sun was warm and he had a gorgeous woman in his sights. What more could a man ask for?

Alexandra told him she was going to see a girlfriend for coffee and then do a little shopping. They agreed to meet at a little restaurant along the port in Gustavia for lunch at noon.

Slovakich smiled as he watched her leave and waved the estate's houseboy over. He wanted some vodka to add to his freshly squeezed orange juice.

By the time he had showered and changed for lunch, Slovakich had a considerable buzz on.

The estate had a handful of cars to choose from. The only one that was off limits was the Porsche. It belonged to the head of the syndicate.

Slovakich didn't care. That was the one he wanted. Grabbing the keys from the key box in the garage, he hopped in and told the houseboy to get the hell out of his way.

Revvng the gas, he popped the clutch and peeled out, leaving two long skid marks in the driveway.

He couldn't remember the last time he had felt this alive. Aside from an army jeep, he'd never driven an open-air vehicle before, much less a Porsche.

It had been outfitted with a state-of-the-art stereo system. Powering it up, he hit the Play button. A second later, "Can You Feel It" by The Jacksons began playing, and he turned it up as loud as it would go.

The Porsche shuddered with the bass coming out of the speakers, and its tires squealed with each turn he took. Slovakich was punishing the little vehicle and loving every minute of it.

Coming around the next bend, he was tapping the steering wheel and singing, when he saw an accident up ahead. There was barely enough time to react.

Slamming on the brakes, he cranked the Speedster to the right and forced it off the road. Just ahead, he saw Alexandra lying facedown in the opposite lane, her scooter in the brush. There were packages scattered across the road.

She must have decided to come back and drop everything off before lunch.

Turning off the ignition, Slokavich leapt from the Porsche and ran to her. He hadn't noticed the vehicle that had been following him, nor had he heard it when it came to a stop not far behind him.

Skilled in battlefield medicine, he first felt for a pulse. Seeing that she was alive, he supported her neck so as not to exacerbate any spinal injury and carefully rolled her over.

As he did, she opened her eyes. At the same moment, he felt something cold press against the back of his skull, and realized that he'd been tricked.

"Get up," Harvath said, grabbing him by the collar and yanking him to his feet.

"What is this?" he protested. His Russian accent was thick.

"This is for Salah Abaaoud," Harvath said, spinning him around to face him.

No sooner had he done so than Slokavich produced a long, thin, extremely sharp knife and swung it at Harvath.

The blade missed Harvath's throat by barely a millimeter. Raising his pistol, he pressed the barrel against Slokavich's forehead. Before the man could slash at him again, he pressed the trigger.

Alexandra had already rolled out of the way before the man's body fell to the ground. Extending his hand, Harvath helped her up.

A splatter of blood had sprayed the side of her face, and he wiped it away with his sleeve.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Alexandra nodded. "I'm okay. Thank you for doing it."

"Get his wallet," Harvath replied. "I'll put your scooter in the back of my car. You drive the Porsche."

"And then?" she asked.

"How much cash does he have?"

Alexandra looked inside the wallet. "Almost five hundred dollars."

"Perfect. First, we're going to buy the most expensive bottle of wine we can find. Then we'll pick up two cheeseburgers from Le Select and head for the beach."

"And then?" she asked once more.

"And then you and I are going to finish our conversation about working together."