

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

April 3, 2002

Langley, Virginia

Arguably, the three most powerful men in the world were sitting at the Trilateral Commission roundtable a hundred feet below the historic Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan.

If the dictionary were to describe what an average middle-aged, white male banker looked like, Bernard Schwartz's picture would have saved Mr. Webster from wasting words to capture the definition. Bernie as he was called was definitely not what Hollywood would call your leading man type, standing flat footed at five-seven, with a vampire complexion, one hundred sixty pounds and that's with two wet bricks in each pocket. Bernie was far from being a physically imposing figure. But what his physical attributes lacked his mental prowess more than made up for. Akin to beautiful people sleeping their way to the top, Bernie used his analytical prowess and sociopathic cunning to rise to his now Wizard of Oz like status as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank. Bernie was a planner, everything in his life, his successes, his failures, all he had planned down to the minutest detail. That's why it was odd to see him seemingly lost in thought as he stared straight ahead at the gray concrete underground walls while the head of the CIA, known as the National Director of Intelligence argued his case.

"XR13 has had five assignments since nine eleven, five. All executed flawlessly. Eight kills. In those months he has not done anything to suggest that he has ulterior motives," Gerald Bush, the director of the CIA explained from his chair.

General Maurice Lesure's quick temper would have derailed his NSA appointment six months ago if he hadn't had a garbage dump full of dirt on one too many movers and shakers in government. The physical opposite of Bernie the NSA chief was a former standout college hoops star. At six-five he had the height but his width and muscular disposition made him the prototype profession NFL lineman. To this very day, Lesure still held the record for heaviest starting basketball player in Rutgers history. Thirty-five years after leading Rutgers to its first NCAA championship Lesure's Three hundred pound iron man physique had jellied into three hundred sixty pounds of Michelin man fat. Like his weight redistribution, his hair had done the same. As time went by his hair slowly started to relocate from the top of his head to his ears, back and nose. Although his hair and weight had made a transition, his penetrating blue eyes and the force of his baritone voice still had the power to make the strongest man quiver.

"Are you frigging kidding me?!" General Lesure hammered his melon-sized fist on the Walnut oak roundtable before extending an arm out toward the CIA director. "All you need is a friggin' mini skirt, a halter, and some frigging Pom-Poms. For Christ's sake, Gerald, we found a thumb drive in his mother's home on September second, nine days before we took out the towers. A thumb drive that had an unauthorized conversation with you and him on it."

Gerald leaned forward, clasped his hands in front of him and stared in to the riveting blue eyes of the NSA chief. The stare down lasted fifteen seconds before the director spoke. "Your feeble attempt to belittle and emasculate me, your loud accusatory tone, the tintinnabulation of your fist banging on the table, nor does your unwanted presence intimidate me in the least, so I would suggest that if you really must open your

mouth and regurgitate the pre-school thoughts that are swirling around in that liver spotted bald head of yours the least you can do is exercise some modicum of respect when speaking in my presence. I respect your opinion and your passion for what and how you believe,” he pointed a finger in the air, “but, remember, at the end of the day,” he pointed the finger at himself, “you answer to me.”

The NSA chief bounced out of his seat. “Who in Sam hell...”

Bernie retrieved his titanium briefcase from the floor beside him before standing up and slamming it onto the dark wood conference table. “Gentlemen.” His neutral position shifted to the NSA chief. “Sit down Maurice.” Once the NSA chief was seated, Bernie sat down and turned his attention to the Director. “Give us the facts, Gerald.”

“The facts are this... I personally ordered the investigation into XR13, not because I suspected him of foul play. I ordered investigations into any and everyone that was involved with our plans to take out the towers and the pentagon. It was an added security measure. Do I know why XR13 had a recording of him and I innocently speaking about nothing on a thumb drive, no, but what I do know is that if XR13 knew that we tortured and killed his mother he would come for us by any means necessary. Do I think he suspects us? Yes I do, but he will not act out of suspicion. Do I think his mother was innocent? Yes I do, but in war there are always innocent casualties, and although we are not at war, we would potentially be in a civil war if America knew what we did on nine-eleven.

“We even put his mother through some of the most painful torture techniques... that is, until her heart gave out. Her torture was a waste of the government’s time and resources. She didn’t give us anything because she didn’t know nothing.” The director

turned to the NSA chief, “And before you ask, we did not interrogate XR13 because he would only tell us what he wanted us to know. No amount of torture or sodium pentothal would loosen his tongue.”

“And how do you know this?” Bernie asked.

“Because I trained him.”

“In the end, Frankenstein turned on his creator,” the General said.

“First, General Lesure, Frankenstein is a fictitious figment of its creators imagination, XR13 is a living, breathing problem.”

“Bottom line Gerald,” The bookish looking chairman of the Federal Reserve interjected, “What would be the potential fallout if XR13 were to go rogue?”

CIA director Gerald Bush took a deep breath and exhaled before answering. “As you know XR13 has been with us since ’68. He was one of the recruits after we eliminated the agents that were involved with taking out King. We recruited XR13 right out of the military. Navy Seal. For the last thirty-four years, he’s been the number one sharpshooter in the world, and one of only a handful of people that can build a nuclear bomb. In the over thirty years he’s been with us, he’s taken down 413 targets.”

The head of National Security rose from his seat. “Gerald, stop pussyfooting around the real issue. Bernie asked you what the bottom line was.”

“If you would sit down and let me finish Maurice.”

The grossly overweight middle-aged NSA chief pointed a finger at the gray haired, Mitt Romney look alike. “You are finished, Gerald. You’re the one who cultivated the relationship between the Bin Laden’s, the Saudi government and XR13. I voted against the terror campaign. I warned you.”

“I’m what? You warned me?” The director pointed a finger at himself before continuing, “General Maurice Jefferson Lesure I am your superior, what you just said is insubordination.”

“I don’t work for you.” The NSA chief’s face twisting into a mask reminiscent of someone swallowing spoiled milk. “I just answer to you. Like yourself, the department of defense pays my salary. You don’t have the authority to remove me.”

Gerald nodded. “You’re right. I don’t, but I can make your job hell. Now if we wanna start pointing fingers, you,” the director pointed at General Lesure, “you wrote the AFOC bill. The American Foreign Oil Campaign is your baby.”

“I never agreed to take out the twin towers or the pentagon.” Lesure shook his head.

“You didn’t have to. The dollar was and still is on the verge of collapsing. We have nothing to secure the national debt and we have nothing to back the American currency that’s in circulation. If China calls in our debt America is screwed. We had no choice.”

The NSA chief exploded. “There’s always a choice. At the end of the day, XR13 was your man. You don’t even know how much or what he has recorded over the years.”

Bernie Schwartz stood up and said, “The only way to contain this is to eliminate XR13, his family and every agent he’s worked with over the last five years, which is about the time we began planning nine-eleven. Unfortunately, time is of the essence and we don’t have time to interrogate his family, just the agents he’s worked with.

“I agree, but before we go after his family or the agents we have to take out XR13 first,” The CIA director said.

“I detect a little trepidation in your voice, Gerald,” The General said. “Scared that the big bad Black 007 is coming for you.”

“No, I’m scared that he’s coming for you Maurice. You see when he comes for me, I’m sending him to your doorstep. I’m sure he’d enjoy inserting his big black manhood into Jessica and Janine. I wouldn’t be concerned about Julie, if she’s too ugly for the dog to play with, then I’m sure she’s too ugly and let me add, too fat, for XR13’s taste.”

“My wife and girls...” The chief pointed a finger at the director. “As God is my witness, Gerald, one day I am going too....”

“Sit down and shut up so we can get this over with,” Bernie said. “Gerald please continue.”

The director said, “XR13 knows that we know that he knows something.”

“Friggin’ idiot,” the General mumbled.

Bernie made a stopping gesture with his left arm while shuffling some papers in front of him. “Gentlemen, placing blame gets us nowhere.” He looked down at a paper in front of him. “XR13 has a ten year old son, Zion Uhuru Jones by off and on girlfriend Malia Jones. Eliminate her and the boy. That will draw him out.”

“He’ll know we did it. Do we really want to risk him going to the press?”

“With what?” Bernie asked. “Is he in possession of some damning evidence? Is there something you haven’t told us, Gerald?”

“Of course there isn’t. But, we don’t know what hard copy Intel he has in his possession. He did have a level four security clearance?”

“Level four!” Bernie sounded surprised. “No agent should ever have that high of a security clearance,” Bernie said. “Too late to cry over spilled milk. We just have to clean this mess up and fast.” The chairman turned to the director. “Get to the family, we get him.”

“Bernie,” Gerald explained, “XR13 is by far the best counterintelligence specialist we have ever trained. If we get close to his son, he’ll know and he will be ready.”

“We are talking about one man, Gerald. I don’t care how good and well trained he is, we are the American friggin’ government. Our resources are unlimited.” The NSA chief gave the CIA director a stern look before continuing, “So, do you know where the woman and the boy are?”

Gerald nodded, “I do.”

In a calm quiet tone, Bernie said, “Gerald, make sure this woman and the boy don’t see another sunrise. I don’t care how you do it, but do it today. And by the end of the week, I want XR13 and everyone associated with him dead or we will begin to questioning your loyalty.”

“You can’t threaten me. I’m the director of the CIA,” Gerald burst out.

“I know who you are, where you live, what church you attend and what school your children go to. I even know where your mistress gets her nails done every Tuesday. You’re right, I can’t threaten you. I’m just the chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank.” Bernie took off his glasses and leaned forward. His voice dropped to a decibel above a whisper. “But, let me tell you what I can do, Gerald. I can use the resources of the American government to do to you what needs to be done to protect this nation. And if this means arranging for you to fall on the pointy end of a bullet head first and replacing

you with someone competent enough to do as I ask, then I will not hesitate to act in whatever way I deem is in the interest of America.

“And the recordings?” Maurice asked.

“Find them Maurice and any other evidence implicating the American government in any wrongdoing. I don’t have to tell you what will happen if XR13 has physical evidence of the government’s involvement with nine-eleven.