

UNDECEIVED: EXCERPT

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UNDECEIVED: PRIDE & PREJUDICE IN THE SPY GAME

East Berlin, GDR

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*H*is vision began to darken. He heard shouts again, a man's, no...there was a female voice in the mix, but he lacked the brainpower to muster a care for who it was. Was it English he heard? Or was his mind, so inured to translating, automatically interpreting the German? He was tired, so tired, but if he could only rest a while, he could recruit some strength and get...where? *Ah yes, West Berlin.*

The voices grew even as his consciousness faded. His mouth tried to form words like "over here" or "help me." But nothing came out except more blood—from his side, from his shoulder, from his hand. There were pinpricks behind his eyelids again, moving faster like a giant kaleidoscope, and the world continued to melt away. He felt movement when he slumped out of the pantry door and cursed when someone pushed him back up to a sitting position.

"Come on. Wake up, old chap! We're getting you out of here. Stay with me. My car is right outside."

“USBER. Hurry.” His speech slurred as if he’d been on a three-day drunk.

“Yes, straight across the border.”

His lips twitched. “Fitz?”

“I’m here. You’re going to be fine. Hang on.”

William Darcy forced his eyes open, but it wasn’t Fitz he saw in front of him.

“You arrogant bastard,” *she* said in a clipped tone. “What don’t you understand about ‘stay put’? We’ve been looking for you for flipping ever! You’re damn lucky Fitz remembered the location of this safe house.”

“Hi, little cutie. What are you doing here?” His head lolled about on his shoulders.

“I’m saving your overconfident, egotistical hide.”

“Aww, honey, don’t nag. Hey, how you gonna get us out of this one? How good is your German?” He grinned, inwardly laughing at the asinine situation in which he’d found himself.

“You know it’s damn good, *danke*. And I’m going to get us out of here ’cause, unlike you, I’ve got my ducks in a row,” she quipped then gasped as she drew back her hand, covered in his blood. “Holy shit!” She stared at her blood-soaked fingers. Apparently, he’d bled through his last attempt at a bandage. She heaved him toward her and ran her hands over his torso, assessing the damage as he groaned again.

“Fitz”—she spoke with a forced calm—“find something to check this. We’ve got to get him out of here. And there had better be a medical team waiting as soon as we get across the border.”

Fitz disappeared and returned with a couple of musty towels, one of which she slipped under Darcy’s armpit and tied firmly.

“Good god, woman!” he said through gritted teeth.

“I have to stop the bleeding.”

“If you put a tourniquet on there, I’m liable to lose my damn arm!”

“Stop being such a baby. It’s not that tight.”

“Is...too.” He was losing the burst of alertness fostered by the hope of rescue and the pain in his shoulder.

She tried to pull his shirt up to see, but it was stuck to the side wound. Looking at it, she sat back, horrified.

“Bad?” he whispered.

“Not so bad.”

“Liar,” he murmured.

Over her shoulder, she spoke in a low voice. “We have to go—now.”

“Chief said they’re sending an ambulance from a hospital near Zehlendorf. No sirens. Should be there when we arrive.”

“But first we have to get him into West Berlin.”

Darcy clutched at her arm. “Set up...” He gasped.

“What?”

“Sniper at the drop. Shooter at my flat”—Darcy indicated his side wound—“traitor...they’re gone now. Took them out. Both of ‘em. Natalia...she played me. Damn it, she played me!”

“Traitor? Who is Natalia?”

“Wilhelm,” he said, becoming agitated.

“That’s your name, Darcy.”

“No! Said...Wickham...no! Wilhelm.”

“Okay, okay, shh now. We’re loading you into the car. Try not to draw attention to yourself.”

They hustled him to the curb as if carting him home from a night full of booze and debauchery. He felt weightless—like a baby might, being carried in its mama’s arms.

Once in the car, there was only silence as she worked to stave off disaster. There was the occasional unintelligible mumble from Fitz behind the wheel and a low response from the woman tending Darcy’s wounds with quiet, efficient desperation. He clung to the sounds; hearing was the only sense left to him, the only thing that told him he was still in the land of the living. He no longer felt anything, no longer could see.

“It’s the end,” he whispered, still incredulous that this could happen to him, of all people.

“You’re too full of yourself to die,” she said in his ear, grasping his uninjured hand, now cold and clammy.

The car rumbled quietly through the calm Sunday morning traffic of East Berlin.

She looked away. "Can't you go any faster?"

"Going as fast as I can." Fitz met her gaze in the rear view mirror. "They have good medical facilities on the other side, probably better than anyplace he's been assigned in the last five years. Don't worry about our friend."

"I'm not worried," she snapped. "And he's my colleague, not my friend."

Fitz gave her a kind smile. "Of course he is, love."

Darcy's last thought before he lost consciousness wasn't fear but an overwhelming sorrow. His life really was over, a done deal; he was going to punch his ticket at last. He was down for the count, slipping under for the third time. All the euphemisms in the world couldn't soften the cold, hard fact.

William Darcy, aka Liam Reynolds, aka Darby Kent, aka the London Fog, veteran of the CIA, recipient of the Distinguished Intelligence Cross, was dying.

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