

NIKITA



AN ANNA & HUGH MASTERSON INTERNATIONAL MYSTERY
A Novel

by

G. Hugh Bedell

PROLOGUE

THURSDAY – 1/24 2008 - 11:30 AM - PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - TEHRAN, IRAN

In a private conference room, in the Iranian Presidential Palace, Vladislav Dubnikov sat across a beautifully inlaid conference table from Heydar Vahdani, the President of The Islamic Republic of Iran.

They were the only two people in the room. Vahdani had dismissed his bodyguards and sent them to wait outside the door.

“Mr. Dubnikov, the United Nations has once again sought to insult our country by publicly justifying your appointment and intrusion into our nuclear program as, and I quote, ‘...the IAEA has completely bungled the oversight responsibilities for the aggressive nuclear activities of Iran. There appears to be no improvement in sight. In order to avoid more horrors in the Middle East, I am appointing a special envoy, reporting only to me, with the full power of the United Nations office of the Secretary General behind him.’

“After that insult from Pham Dac Kien, the Secretary General himself, I am supposed to welcome you, afford you every courtesy and open access to our progress in developing nuclear energy.

“What do you want to do, Mr. Dubnikov, crawl around our construction sites and assure yourself that our efforts are only to produce energy?”

“I have said it before and I will say it again, my country wants to have access to nuclear technology. We want the security of sustainable energy.

“The most important issue of the world of tomorrow will be energy and it is my obligation to assure that the Iranian people have available to them energy, clean energy, endless energy.

“Do you understand?”

“The United Nations or the puppeteers controlling the United Nations are not going to interfere with that.

“Do you understand?”

Calmly, Vladislav Dubnikov responded. “President Vahdani, I do not doubt for one minute your determination to protect your people from decline due to lack of energy to power their homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and transportation.

“I believe that your country’s investing in sustainable nuclear energy is not only intelligent and far sighted, it is admirable for its daring in requiring you to stand up to those afraid of you.

“No, President Vahdani, I applaud this initiative of the Iranian people to head off a future disaster long before your country will be impacted by fossil fuel shortages. Further, Mr. President, it is a far wiser strategy to sell your substantial reserves of oil into what inevitably will be a rising market, while your country flourishes relying on a twenty-first century energy alternative.”

Vahdani’s eyes narrowed and he said, “Is that the official position of the United Nations?”

Vladislav Dubnikov had decided that he would waste no time being politically correct. He knew what Vahdani wanted and he had it.

“President Vahdani, I do not know, nor do I care what the official position of the United Nations is. The esteemed Secretary General, Pham Dac Kien, is on my payroll and has been since his first day on the job. I received this appointment because I told him I wanted it. If you will be so gracious, you may have your Minister of Energy write the reports I will send back to the General Assembly. No Mr. President, I do not want to crawl around construction sites. My mission here is concerned with further protection of your people.”

“Really, Mr. Dubnikov, and how is that?” he said with a sneer.

“I wish to revive the nuclear armament relationship your country had with the former Soviet Union prior to 1993.”

“How do you propose to bring that about?”

“Mr. President, you have been manufacturing Shahab-3 ballistic missiles for almost three years now and have stockpiled over one thousand of those efficient little rockets.

“Now as you are aware, your Shahab-3 is a modified version of North Korea's Nodong missile which itself is based on the Soviet-made Scud. There are, sitting in underground warehouses in my mother country, Russia, over four thousand nuclear warheads for the Scud missiles.

“My colleagues and I think that they are wasted sitting there since our mother country has over twenty thousand warheads for other missiles stockpiled.

“President Vahdani, we would like to see those four thousand Scud warheads put to better use.

“We feel your country may be a likely destination for some of our orphaned warheads. Further, maybe some of your allies, like North Korea and Venezuela, may be interested in those you do not want.”

“Mr. Dubnikov, your knowledge of our defense systems is interesting and your proposal is attractive, but I have two major issues with your entire proposition.”

“And they are, Mr. President?”

“Mr. Dubnikov, in view of the unusual way you arrived in this post, I assume you really do have a hold on the UN through their Secretary General. But the UN is not my major concern.”

“Who or what is, Mr. President?”

“The United States of course.”

“Mr. President, I told you that Pham Dac Kien, Secretary General of the United Nations, is my employee. Well, my group and I are about to hire another influential figure.”

“And who would that be?”

“The next president of the United States has been, is currently and will remain on our payroll, hopefully for eight years.”

“How, Mr. Dubnikov, do you expect to pull that off, the elections are not for another ten months and it appears to me that everyone who can raise a few dollars is running for the job.”

“Ahh, but Mr. President, that is just the issue, in order to win the Presidential election in the United States you don't need to be smart, brave or the best person for the job. What a candidate needs is to have access to a lot of money to buy a lot of media time to make the American voters think you are smart, brave and the best person for the job.”

“So!”

“My colleagues and I own one of the candidates.”

“Which one, there are so many?”

“Sorosh Saji.”

“The Afghan?”

“First generation Afghan American, his parents are from Afghanistan. He was born in the US, a requirement to be United States' President.”

“Right, so just how do you own him?”

“One of my colleagues has funded and overseen his development from childhood, beginning with his eleventh birthday party on to his political rise to US Senator.

“To assure his Presidential victory we have assembled a campaign war chest of over five hundred million dollars. These funds will be trickled into his campaign treasury, through small contributions from individuals,

via the internet. As we speak, the databases are being built to insure that the contributions appear to come from over 10 million little people, a requirement if he is to be put forth as the candidate for everyman.”

“And if he loses, you and your partners are out five hundred million US dollars.”

“He will not lose, Mr. President.”

“And you are assuring that how?”

“His only competition is another member of his party, the Democrats, who has been made independently wealthy with the caveat that he withdraw from the race for personal reasons. He will do that when it is only he and Sorosh Saji fighting over their party’s candidacy and it is too late for another to enter the fray. Then it is simply a lot of advertising and wait for November 4th.”

“November 4th?”

“Yes, their election day. Saji’s party would win, if they put up a trained monkey. The American public hates the current President and for the most part will just vote against his party, the Republicans, and Saji, our man, shall be the next man in the White House.”

“Well, Mr. Dubnikov, we too hate the American President, although I am sure Iran’s reasons are quite different than those of the American public. He has been a hindrance to all of our expansion and nuclear initiatives for eight years, we will be happy to see him go.

“But tell me, how do we gain from your control over the US President? Your objective is to sell me nuclear warheads. The new US President is not going to look on that any more favorably than the current pain in the ass. What’s in it for us?”

“Mr. President, when Sorosh Saji is elected the next President of the United States he will keep at least one of the promises he makes during his campaign. His first act will be to withdraw all US forces from Iraq in under six months.”

“And do what with them, Mr. Dubnikov?”

“He will move them into and along the borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, Mr. President.”

“Why would he do that, the outgoing President’s plan succeeded, Iraq is showing signs of peacefully becoming a democracy, why in the world would he pull out now?”

“Because, Mr. President, we will tell him to do so and by that time he will know where his funding has come from since he was eleven. That knowledge will force him to see that the interests of his sponsor are unequivocally his interests.”

“And those interests are somehow connected with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey? The only thing those three have in common is ...”

“Smack, Mr. President!”

“Smack?”

“An American slang expression for heroin, the source of the enormous cash flow that has been put at Mr. Saji’s disposal since he was eleven years old.

“Explain to me again, just what you get out of this?”

“Mr. President, let us not forget the primary objective of all this is to open the way to sell to your country four thousand Scud nuclear warheads at the bargain basement price of twenty-five million US dollars per nuke.”

“Twenty-five million per nuke, one hundred billion dollars, that’s rather steep don’t you think?”

“Considering Mr. President, that you could sell half of them with the missiles to your oil rich neighbors at four times that price, you will not only recoup your investment, you will make a very healthy profit and I will be glad to function as broker ... for a small percentage of course.”

“Of course, Mr. Dubnikov, but tell me, how do I know that this whole conversation is not garbage or your wishful thinking?”

“Because, Mr. Vahdani, if you receive me with great fanfare and welcome me as the solution to the ongoing distrust of Iran’s nuclear program by the UN and its American and European puppeteers, I will see to it that within a week, one of the four thousand Scud nuclear warheads is delivered to the destination in Iran that you designate.”

Vahdani silently stared at Vladislav Dubnikov for about two minutes then reaching into his breast pocket pulled out a cell phone, pushed a button and said simply “Come into my conference room,” and disconnected.

Within minutes, the door opened and a distinguished gentleman entered. “This is my Minister of Energy, Jalil Rastinpour.

“Jalil, this is Vladislav Dubnikov, United Nations Special Atomic Energy Oversight Envoy to The Islamic Republic of Iran.”

Jalil Rastinpour looked both angry and unhappy.

Vahdani went on, “Please plan a rally at Azadi Square, right at the base of the Azadi Monument to welcome Mr. Dubnikov. The theme should be ‘welcoming him as the solution to the ongoing distrust of Iran’s nuclear program by the UN and its American and European puppeteers’. Make sure that there are more than two hundred fifty thousand people attending and have all the foreign media invited.

“Please have someone see to appropriate accommodations for our guest. Since he will be here for an extended stay, arrange a villa with appropriate staff.

“Thank you, Jalil.”

Jalil turned to leave and President Vahdani interrupted his departure, “Two final points, Jalil, Mr. Dubnikov will be having an item shipped here in the next week or so, it is radioactive and should be handled accordingly, please work with him to make appropriate arrangements. Finally, Jalil, the reports to the United Nations on the findings of the United Nations Special Atomic Energy Oversight Envoy to The Islamic Republic of Iran will be prepared for submission by you; Mr. Dubnikov will provide the format.”

For the first time since his entering the room, Jalil Rastinpour had something to say, “Mr. President, am I to understand that I am preparing these reports for his review and changes?”

Dubnikov smiled and said “Jalil Rastinpour, unless you are a poor speller, there will be no changes.”

Vahdani and Rastinpour both laughed at this comment and Jalil Rastinpour left the conference room a relaxed and happy Minister of Energy.

President Vahdani turned to Vladislav Dubnikov and said, “Shall we have lunch, we have much to discuss.”

“An excellent idea, Mr. President.”

WEDNESDAY – 6/11 2008 - 9:24 AM - MASTERSON COMPOUND, LONG ISLAND, NY

Anna Masterson, Hugh Masterson's wife, walked out the French doors opening onto the terrace of the main building of their Long Island, New York compound. Anna, who had been told by Paulina the Masterson's maid at the Long Island compound, that Hugh was having breakfast on the terrace, headed quickly to join him.

Anna and Hugh are partners in Cayman Covert Cyber Reclamation, Ltd., the company through which the Mastersons' operate their business of recovering stolen funds for corporations, organizations and governments. Interesting and definitely rewarding work, but sometimes very dangerous work since essentially what they do is steal back money from bad guys and return it to the good guys.

Anna has been working tirelessly on a theory as to how to keep track of the whereabouts of the Russian villain that the Mastersons had labeled the Sinister One, aka Nikita, whose real name was Vladislav Dubnikov. Nikita hated Anna and Hugh and past efforts to kill them had made it clear that he would go to any end to destroy them.

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On January 18, 2008, in the early morning hours, Nikita launched a rocket attack against the Mastersons' Cayman Brac villa complex, Villa Serenity. The motivation for this arguably insane move was the recovery by the Mastersons of over forty billion of loot that Nikita and his partners had relieved the United Nations and its agencies of over the preceding thirty years. They had pulled this awesome villainy off with the cooperation of a long line of UN senior officials. Fortunately, the villa was (and still is) well protected with an array of weapons including defensive rockets. The attack did not fare well for Nikita and by the time it ended, the Russian's reasons for hating the Mastersons had expanded considerably. Anna and Hugh had no doubts that Nikita would be 'gunning' for them and spent a great deal of time attempting to keep track of his activities and location. Unfortunately, his new role of United Nations Special Atomic Energy Oversight Envoy to The Islamic Republic of Iran was totally out of character for Nikita's career choices. Anna was convinced it was a post he had arranged not only to regenerate his massive wealth, but also to gain a powerful level of global influence and of course to bump off the Mastersons.

A critical weapon in their defense against any new vicious attacks he may launch was tracking his movements.

Anna's efforts were centered on creating a tracking link to a communications device, something like a satellite telephone that Nikita and apparently his co-conspirators carried with them at all times and more importantly they were on at all times. The device, called a Weltall-Kommunikationen Tragbarer Sender-Empfänger-Prototyp Ein, loosely translated Universe Communications' Handheld Transceiver-Prototype One, was a remarkable piece of engineering. A concept product, developed by the German electronics and communications giant Weltall-Kommunikationen AG, it is best described as a walkie-talkie on steroids. Anna, always efficient, tagged the device with the far simpler name, Nikita's Megaphone.

It measures three inches long by two inches wide by one-eighth inch thick and looks more like a credit card with buttons than a satellite communications device.

There are six buttons on the face plus two miniscule holes covered by a fine grill. The two miniscule holes are at the top and bottom of the long side of the device and are for speaking and hearing. One of the six buttons turns the device on or off, powering it and raising or lowering the tiny antenna. Three of the remaining five buttons are for connecting to the other holders of the device individually. The fifth button connects the caller to all of the other three holders in a conference mode.

The sixth or final button is special, when pressed the device is essentially destroyed, not physically but technologically. Pressing that button erases the memory chip in the device.

This was exactly the condition that Anna had received one of the devices from a long time colleague, Patricia Finnerty, from their consulting days, who was now a special advisor to the Florida State Police. Patricia had received the gadget as part of the contents of the pockets of a very wealthy German businessman who had been murdered in a rather spectacular way on Christmas day 2007 at a beach party in Palm Beach. The Florida State Police labs could make nothing of the erased memory so when they suggested farming it out for research by

experts in data recovery Patricia immediately thought of Anna.

Anna has been for many years world renowned for her innovative application of technology to a broad spectrum of challenges including security, data recovery and transaction tracking using artificial intelligence in very creative ways.

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Anna was obviously excited about some accomplishment and since she worked well into the night starting again early in the morning, concentrating on tracking the sociopath bent on destroying them, Hugh assumed that she had achieved some success.

“Good morning, you look like the cat that ate the canary! Am I correct in assuming that we’re closer to pinning a tail on Nikita than we were last night when you finally came to bed?”

Anna had barely sat down when she began describing, with her eternal passion and enthusiasm, her success overnight.

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Through a process she had patented two years earlier, programs had been running for days digitally ‘peeling’ back layers of blank memory on the chips in Nikita’s Megaphone forwarded by the Florida State Police labs. Anna’s program digitally scans the gallium arsenide (the material now used in extremely high speed, super miniaturized memory) chip in the communicator searching for remnants of data. The data is accumulated at each new ‘level’ of the chip and via another artificial intelligence driven application, assembled into an ever-expanding library. The ultimate objective is to recreate as much as possible of the applications and information that were originally on the chip.

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“I’ve identified the signature ID of Nikita’s Megaphone,” she said with pride and animation, “and I’ve locked in on the satellite that the device uses as its global link. Now get this, Nikita communicates with his buddies by way of a satellite launched by the Russians at 4:31:59 on July 9, 1999.”

“That’s great,” Hugh, said, “I thought...” but he didn’t get a chance to finish.

“Wait, Hugh, let me finish, that was the launch of Raduga Gran # 34. The Raduga satellite program was begun by the Soviets in 1974 and taken over by the Russians after the breakup of the Soviet Union and # 34 was the last launch in the program.”

“Yeah, so, Nikita’s a Russian who, like the Raduga Satellite, used to be a Soviet,” Hugh began to laugh at his own joke, “what difference does it make who owns the satellite? You found the link and now you can track Nikita’s movements.”

Laughing, not at Hugh’s pun but at Hugh laughing at his own joke, Anna once again interrupted him, “Hugh, wait, listen, according to Roscosmos...”

It was now Hugh’s turn to interrupt, “Who the hell is Roscosmos?”

“It’s the Russian Federal Space Agency, something like our NASA. Anyway, according to Roscosmos the launch of Raduga Gran # 34 self-destructed at 4:33:44 on July 9, 1999, exactly 1 minute and 45 seconds after launch. It appears our boy Nikita and his brotherhood of Russian villains has their own private communications satellite.”

“Wow! You talk about secure communications no one even knows the satellite exists so no one would ever even try to hack into it, that is, no one except my beautiful genius. Now what? How do we keep track of the guy wanting to snuff you and me?”

“Well, since about 5:30 this morning, I’ve been scripting a program that tracks his movements in and around Teheran or anywhere else on the globe that he is, and further, via satellite imaging I’m literally looking at the streets he’s on.”

“You’re amazing, Anna, too bad we can’t get those satellite images real time, we could see who the hell he’s with.”

“More importantly,” said Anna, “after breakfast I start work on a program to monitor and capture the conversations he’s having on the device.”

“Holy shit,” said Hugh, “this could be very interesting.”

FRIDAY - 10/24/2008 - 11:16 AM - MASTERSON COMPOUND, LONG ISLAND, NY

Anna and Hugh are working at their respective workstations in the office complex of the Masterson Long Island Compound. Anna, wearing oversized sound reduction headphones, is focused intently on her computer screen. Hugh is deeply engrossed in researching wire transfers related to a new client of their company. Suddenly, Anna starts to talk louder and louder, “You have got to be kidding me, my God Nikita, show a little respect at least, after all, he is the Secretary General of the UN.”

Realizing that trying to get her attention by talking to her is useless with the earphones on her head, Hugh gets up from his workstation, crosses to the opposite wall and taps Anna on the shoulder.

Anna, being completely in ‘her zone’ nearly jumps out of her chair, then laughing, goes back to the screen, keys in some commands and takes the earphones from her head. Simultaneously voices come alive in the wall speakers on either side of the 60-inch LCD screen on the north wall.

“What am I hearing?” asks Hugh.

“Our nemesis Nikita having a very interesting conversation with none other than Pham Dac Kien,” answers Anna, smiling, with a triumphant look on her face. Hugh, his eyes widening asks, “The Secretary General of the United Nations?”

“None other!”

“Anna, you mean you’ve worked out the protocols to tap into the conversations to and from Nikita’s Megaphone?”

“Sure have! It was tricky. Every time I thought I had it straight, I had to wait for there to be activity on the device. Problem was, if I could hear nothing I never knew if I was off track or there just was no conversation. Three weeks ago, I started a method where I would set up my program to ‘listen’ for conversations then move onto another protocol to break into the secure communication channel. I would then do the same on a slightly different protocol, all the time letting the previous listening continue. The script included the capturing of the conversations, if and when the program found one.

“Well, after three weeks, I have one hundred nine experimental hacking protocols working at the same time and each morning I check to see if I’ve captured any communications.

“This morning when I checked the files of each of the tests I was blown away. Wow did I capture some interesting chatter. Fortunately, they are both using English otherwise the conversation could be in Russian or Vietnamese, neither of which I speak. If that were the case, I wouldn’t know who was chatting via Nikita’s satellite.”

“Anna, this means that not only will you know where Nikita is most of the time, you’ll know what he’s up to. Fantastic, you’re one unbelievable genius!”

“Well now that I’ve zeroed in on the channel that Nikita’s communicator uses, I’ll set up an application to monitor it twenty-four/seven and capture all of his communications with whoever is holding other similar devices. This will also give us the capability of tracking the other users on Nikita’s network and listening to their conversations, even if they’re not talking to Nikita but are talking to each other. That way we’ll ultimately identify all of the important folk in Nikita’s Club.”

TUESDAY- 1/20/2009 - 12:03 PM - NATIONAL MALL, WASHINGTON DC

Almost 1.8 million people crowded into the National Mall and the surrounding streets to witness Sorosh Saji, a first generation Afghan American, being sworn into office as President of the United States.

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Sorosh Saji grew up in the ghettos of San Francisco, specifically in The Richmond, the vast region north of Golden Gate Park.

He led what appeared to be a charmed life from the age of eleven, particularly for a boy from the ghetto and the child of uneducated immigrant parents from a third world country, Afghanistan. Both of Sorosh's parents worked as unskilled labor for a very wealthy Russian, thought to be the most powerful leader of the Russian crime syndicate in the US, a ruthless man named Vilen Ovinko.

Ovinko met Sorosh Saji May 5, 1979, the day Sorosh turned eleven, actually at a small birthday party his parents were giving him at their home. For whatever reasons, either good intentioned or calculated, the Sajis invited their boss, Ovinko, to the humble affair.

Again, for whatever reason, either good intentioned or calculated, Ovinko attended and spent hours talking to the eleven year old. He returned to the Sajis' home on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for four weeks, engaging the young Sorosh in three and four-hour conversations covering a wide range of subjects. For another four weeks, he sent his limousine for the boy on Friday afternoon and had him brought with one of his parents to his magnificent estate overlooking the bay in the Sea Cliff area of San Francisco. Once again, Ovinko's motives for introducing basically what could be described as a slum child, to the opulence of his life style, were unclear at the time to all but Vilen. For Vilen, he had found a diamond in the rough that with proper development and control could become an unbelievable asset. His objectives were as clear to him as the processes he used to plant, nourish, harvest and convert the poppy seeds in Afghanistan to the high grade heroin he manufactured to maintain his multi-billion dollar US drug distribution network, his empire's cash cow.

Ten weeks after meeting him, Vilen Ovinko arranged for the eleven-year-old future politician's transfer from his public school in The Richmond to the one hundred and forty year old internationally acclaimed Victor Mueller School for Boys in the Bay Area. The Mueller School was the educational resource of choice for the sons of the powerful in both industry and politics, not only in California but globally.

Sorosh Saji would remain in The Mueller School through high school and his record would indicate academic achievements placing him in the top ten graduates in 1986. He could have attended any Ivy League university, but Vilen's plans for his future called for him to remain in California. California was Ovinko's base of operations and power and it happened to be the port-of-entry for eighty-percent of the heroin he imported. From his first encounter with Saji in 1979, it was Ovinko's plan to 'manufacture' the most powerful politician in California for the simple objective of protecting and enhancing his empire.

Saji earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Law Degree from UCLA and on graduation in 1993 returned to an appropriate apartment in the Presidio Area and immediately started on the path of a stellar, if not conventional, political career.

A little over seven years later, his mentor, Vilen Ovinko, considered him ready for his first election. After a rise through community based organizations, all of which were funded by Ovinko, he ran for his first meaningful office, President of the Board of Supervisors for San Francisco.

At that time, the election process for that post was unique in that the Board of Supervisors was elected 'at-large'. That is, all candidates running (which could be as many as sixteen or twenty), were all on the ballot. The candidate who received the most votes was elected President of the Board of Supervisors, and the next four or five (a function of how many seats were to be filled) were elected to seats on the board. In 2000, the year Sorosh ran, there were eight candidates for five seats, three very popular incumbents, four fringe candidates and Sorosh Saji who had a campaign bankroll big enough to run for Governor of California.

To the shock of a vast percentage of the citizenry of San Francisco, but not to Vilen, the three incumbents

announced their withdrawal from the election at 3:00 PM, Monday November 6, 2000, sixteen hours before the polls opened for the November 7th election. The only name left on the ballot that the majority of the voters had heard in the preceding two months was that of Sorosh Saji. Most people did not bother to vote, but of the 147,653 ballots cast Sorosh got the lion's share, 128,431, almost 87%.

Sorosh Saji was the President of the Board of Supervisors but more importantly, Sorosh had learned from his mentor the secret of winning elections, have more money than any other candidate and use any means at your disposal to get rid of the other candidates.

The team of the puppet, Sorosh Saji, and the puppeteer, Vilen Ovinko, moved fast in an unprecedented climb through the California political labyrinth winning the special 2005 election for US Senator to replace the incumbent who drowned in a freak boating accident. Sorosh squeaked through by a narrow margin to become, in 2006, the United States Junior Senator from California.

As stated, the methodology was simple, using money and an orator's tongue, Sorosh managed by Ovinko, assembled a vast group of supporters to whom he promised everything, committed to and apparently delivered nothing and as a final safeguard eliminated the competition by one means or another. For the 2005 election, the day before the election, every media outlet in the US carried photos of Sorosh's much favored opposition meeting in a restaurant on San Francisco Fisherman's Wharf with a known heroin street dealer from The Richmond. No one heard her protestations of 'setup' and although her claims of innocence were later proven true, it was too late to save the election. She lost.

Next stop for Vilen Ovinko's custom designed professional candidate, The White House.

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To the shock of tens of millions watching on television and those in the mall, Saji's media entrancing demeanor seemed to slip away from him.

The oath, as prescribed by the US Constitution and administered by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is 34 words long. Repeating the words after the Chief Justice recited them, Sorosh Saji flubbed his lines by word four! The expected reaction for the 40 year old, the youngest President to take the oath, would be some level of nervousness. Surprisingly however, in the words of three different network commentators, the new President appeared of all things, to be distracted. At one point, it was so obvious his wife, standing next to him, had to nudge him to pay attention.

TUESDAY- 1/20/2009 - 12:33 PM - VILLA SERENITY, CAYMAN BRAC, CAYMAN ISLANDS

Anna came running into the conference room on the first floor of the western tower of the Mastersons' complex on Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands.

The large circular room has four 60-inch plasma screens, one each on the North, South, East and West walls. Hugh, together with the two men who head the Mastersons' security team, Alberto Martinez and Roger Taylor, are watching the inauguration of Sorosh Saji as 44th President of the United States. Each screen has a different perspective because each screen is tuned to a different one of the four major US networks.

The expression on her face is a mixture of fear, pride and anger. She hits a button on the conference table, which turns off the network coverage on the huge flat panel TV on the western conference room wall.

Since Anna had resolved the issues with security and encryption in monitoring the conversations involving Nikita's Megaphone in late October 2008, the computer banks in the Mastersons' Long Island compound had been capturing every conversation between Nikita and the close-knit group of villains sharing the very sophisticated communication method. Most of the conversations had to do with deals for narcotics and nukes amongst Russians, Afghanis and Nikita. Anna had taken her eavesdropping system one-step further; the conversations, once captured, are converted to text, almost instantaneously, using extremely sensitive and highly reliable voice/text conversion software.

Hugh wanting to know what the problem is said, "You look like you've seen a ghost." Anna didn't reply, instead she hit some buttons on the panel in the conference room table and the plasma screen changed to show a text message on the screen while the speakers produced extremely clear voices in the background.

Sorosh Saji (*angry and agitated*) – "Yes, who is this? I received this device this morning from one of my Secret Service people who said I am never to be without it and it is never to be off. Don't you know who I am? I'm about to be sworn in as the President of the United States!

"I'm not really interested in who you are or why and how you arranged to have this strange device delivered to me, but I can assure you it will not be with me and on at all times, in fact, it will not be with me at all in about 30 seconds!"

Nikita (*calm*) – "Sorosh Saji, please just be calm for those thirty seconds and listen.

"Your education, your campaigns, your elections, your marks in school, your jobs, your funding, hell your underwear have all been arranged and paid for by Afghan heroin money, a fact that has never been a secret from your Mamma and Poppa.

"Didn't they ever tell you, Sorosh? They apprenticed you to my friend, colleague and brother-in-law, Vilen Ovinko, at the tender age of eleven. Did you never wonder why he has paid for and directed your every move for these past 29 years or did you just never let your brain go to the unusual nature of that relationship?"

"I understand he will be joining you and Mrs. Saji, on the party rounds tonight. Feel free to discuss this conversation with him. Oh, if your Mamma and Poppa tag along ask them about why Vilen was invited to your eleventh birthday party, he and I have always been curious about that.

"Anyway, Sorosh, every bit of Vilen's funding and directing of your life since you were eleven years old has been documented. In fact, we have some lovely home movies with you and Vilen, but more about that at another time.

"Vilen's ambitions for you were not as grand as mine, but once you reached the US Senate you became interesting to me and my colleagues.

"When you get back to the White House tonight there will be a video in the DVD player in your bedroom. Make sure to watch it with Mrs. Saji, it will make it quite clear to both of you how devastating is the information we could provide to the media. It is a kind of retrospective on your rise in less than fifteen years from a law school graduate to the role of the most powerful leader in the world. Once you and Mrs. Saji see it, try to imagine just how quickly will be your fall from that role.

“Congratulations on your new and prestigious position. Enjoy it. Tomorrow I will talk to you, and we will start the process of shaping the United States to fit mine and my colleagues needs...no correct that, desires. Goodbye, Mr. President, relax and enjoy the ride. We will tell you what to do regarding every aspect of your new job just as Vilen has been doing for the past 29 years.

“Don’t worry you are in good hands, our hands. Oh and, Sorosh, do not, I repeat, do not do anything with that strange device as you call it, other than have it with you and on at all times.”

Nikita’s Megaphone went silent.

Hugh, Anna, Alberto and Roger stared at the screen in horror.

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