

BLOODLINE

Books by Sidney Sheldon

Bloodline
A Stranger in the Mirror
The Other Side of Midnight
The Naked Face

SIDNEY SHELDON

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*For Natalie
with love*

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And to Jorja, who makes all things possible.

*"The physician will carefully
prepare a mixture of crocodile
dung, lizard flesh, bat's blood
and camel's spit . . ."*

—from a papyrus listing
811 prescriptions used
by the Egyptians in
1550 B.C.

原书缺页

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER

1

Istanbul.
Saturday, September 5.
Ten P.M.

He was seated in the dark, alone, behind the desk of Hajib Kafir, staring unseeingly out of the dusty office window at the timeless minarets of Istanbul. He was a man who was at home in a dozen capitals of the world, but Istanbul was one of his favorite cities. Not the tourist Istanbul of Beyoglu Street, or the gaudy Lalezar Bar of the Hilton, but the out-of-the-way places that only the Moslems knew: the *yalis*, and the small markets beyond the *souks*, and the Telli Baba, the cemetery where only one person was buried, and the people came to pray to him.

His waiting had the patience of a hunter, the quiet stillness of a man in control of his body and his emotions. He was Welsh, with the dark, stormy good looks of his ancestors. He had black hair and a strong face, and quick intelligent eyes that were a deep blue. He was over six feet tall, with the lean muscular body of a man who kept himself in good physical condition. The office was filled with the odors of Hajib Kafir, his sickly sweet tobacco, his acrid Turkish coffee, his fat, oily body. Rhys Williams was

unaware of them. He was thinking about the telephone call he had received from Chamonix an hour earlier.

“ . . . A terrible accident! Believe me, Mr. Williams, we are all devastated. It happened so quickly that there was no chance to save him. Mr. Roffe was killed instantly . . . ”

Sam Roffe, president of Roffe and Sons, the second largest pharmaceutical company in the world, a multibillion-dollar dynasty that girdled the globe. It was impossible to think of Sam Roffe as being dead. He had always been so vital, so full of life and energy, a man on the move, living in airplanes that raced him to company factories and offices all over the world, where he solved problems others could not deal with, created new concepts, pushed everyone to do more, to do better. Even though he had married, and fathered a child, his only real interest had been the business. Sam Roffe had been a brilliant and extraordinary man. Who could replace him? Who was capable of running the enormous empire he had left? Sam Roffe had not chosen an heir apparent. But then, he had not planned to die at fifty-two. He had thought there would be plenty of time.

And now his time had run out.

The lights in the office suddenly flashed on and Rhys Williams looked toward the doorway, momentarily blinded.

“Mr. Williams! I did not know anyone was here.”

It was Sophie, one of the company secretaries, who was assigned to Rhys Williams whenever he was in Istanbul. She was Turkish, in her middle twenties, with an attractive face and a lithe, sensuous body, rich with promise. She had let Rhys know in subtle, ancient ways that she was available to bring him whatever pleasures he wished, whenever he desired them, but Rhys was not interested.

Now she said, “I returned to finish some letters for Mr. Kafir.” She added softly, “Perhaps there is something I can do for you?”

As she moved closer to the desk, Rhys could sense the musky smell of a wild animal in season.

“Where is Mr. Kafir?”

Sophie shook her head regretfully. “He has left for the day.” She smoothed the front of her dress with the palms of soft, clever hands. “Can I help you in some way?” Her eyes were dark and moist.

“Yes,” Rhys said. “Find him.”

She frowned. “I have no idea where he could—”