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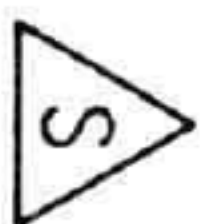
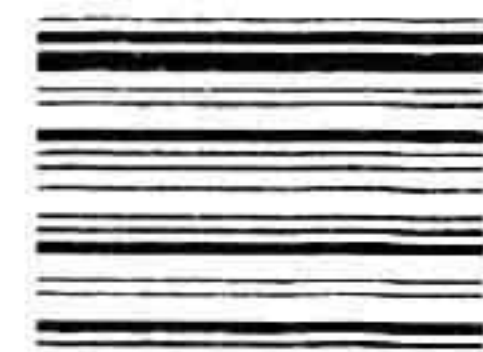
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To Kimberly
with love

*Allow the morning sun to warm
Your heart when you are young
And let the soft winds of noon
Cool your passion,
But beware the night
For death lurks there,
Waiting, waiting, waiting.*

Arthur Rimbaud

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MORNING

Chapter One

Dmitri asked, "Do you know we're being followed, Mr. Stanford?"

"Yes." He had been aware of them for the past twenty-four hours.

The two men and the woman were dressed casually, attempting to blend in with the summer tourists strolling along the cobbled streets in the early morning, but it was difficult to remain inconspicuous in a place as small as the fortified village of St.-Paul-de-Vence.

Harry Stanford had first noticed them because they were *too* casual, trying *too* hard not to look at him. Wherever he turned, one of them was in the background.

Harry Stanford was an easy target to follow. He was six feet tall, with white hair lapping over his collar and an aristocratic, almost imperious face. He was accompanied by a strikingly lovely young brunette, a pure-

white German shepherd, and Dmitri Kaminsky, a six-foot four-inch bodyguard with a bulging neck and sloping forehead. *Hard to lose us*, Stanford thought.

He knew who had sent them and why, and he was filled with a sense of imminent danger. He had learned long ago to trust his instincts. Instinct and intuition had helped make him one of the wealthiest men in the world. *Forbes* magazine estimated the value of Stanford Enterprises at six billion dollars, while the *Fortune* 500 appraised it at seven billion. *The Wall Street Journal*, *Barron's*, and *The Financial Times* had all done profiles on Harry Stanford, trying to explain his mystique, his amazing sense of timing, the ineffable acumen that had created the giant Stanford Enterprises. None had fully succeeded.

What they all agreed on was that he had an almost palpable, manic energy. He was inexhaustible. His philosophy was simple: A day without making a deal was a day wasted. He wore out his competitors, his staff, and everyone else who came in contact with him. He was a phenomenon, larger than life. He thought of himself as a religious man. He believed in God, and the God he believed in wanted him to be rich and successful, and his enemies dead.

Harry Stanford was a public figure, and the press knew everything about him. Harry Stanford was a private figure, and the press knew nothing about him. They had written about his charisma, his lavish life-style, his pri-

vate plane and his yacht, and his legendary homes in Hobe Sound, Morocco, Long Island, London, the South of France, and of course his magnificent estate, Rose Hill, in the Back Bay area of Boston. But the real Harry Stanford remained an enigma.

“Where are we going?” the woman asked.

He was too preoccupied to answer. The couple on the other side of the street was using the cross-switch technique, and they had just changed partners again. Along with his sense of danger, Stanford felt a deep anger that they were invading his privacy. They had dared come to him in this place, his secret haven from the rest of the world.

St.-Paul-de-Vence is a picturesque, medieval village, weaving its ancient magic on a hilltop in the Alps Maritimes, situated inland between Cannes and Nice. It is surrounded by a spectacular and enchanting landscape of hills and valleys covered with flowers, orchards, and pine forests. The village itself, a cornucopia of artists' studios, galleries, and wonderful antiques shops, is a magnet for tourists from all over the world.

Harry Stanford and his group turned onto the Rue Grande.

Stanford turned to the woman, “Sophia, do you like museums?”

“Yes, *caro*.” She was eager to please him. She had never met anyone like Harry Stanford. *Wait until I tell mie amice about him. I didn’t think there was anything left for me to learn about sex, but my God, he’s so creative! He’s wearing me out!*

They went up the hill to the Fondation Maeght art museum, and browsed through its renowned collection of paintings by Bonnard and Chagall and many other contemporary artists. When Harry Stanford casually glanced around, he observed the woman at the other end of the gallery, earnestly studying a Miró.

Stanford turned to Sophia. “Hungry?”

“Yes. If you are.” *Must not be pushy.*

“Good. We’ll have lunch at La Colombe d’Or.”

La Colombe d’Or was one of Stanford’s favorite restaurants, a sixteenth-century house at the entrance to the old village, converted into a hotel and restaurant. Stanford and Sophia sat at a table in the garden, by the pool, where Stanford could admire the Braque and Calder.

Prince, the white German shepherd, lay at his feet, ever watchful. The dog was Harry Stanford’s trademark. Where Stanford went, Prince went. It was rumored that at Harry Stanford’s command, the animal would tear out a person’s throat. No one wanted to test that rumor.

Dmitri sat by himself at a table near the hotel entrance, carefully observing the other patrons as they came and went.