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## Prologue

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**S**pecial Agent Lucy Harrison sauntered along the streets of San Cristobal, drinking in all the sights and sounds just like a typical American tourist. The pretty blonde kept tilting her sunglasses to gawk at this and that. It was all an act, of course. But Lucy didn't have to fake her admiring stares. All around her were gaudy little shops, vibrant with color. Throbbing drums stirred her blood, while the spicy smell of local cooking filled the air. For an ambitious young woman who spent most of her life chained to a desk, processing files in a windowless room, it was nice to get out of the office.

Unfortunately, Lucy didn't have a week to spend lying on the golden beaches of the tiny island nation. She didn't even have an afternoon to spend gawking and splurging in the local shops. Lucy was undercover, in the middle of her first real field assignment in ages. Right now, she was late for a drug deal.

Of course, being late for the meeting was just an extra, a dab of realistic acting on her part. Part of being undercover was that you took on an entirely new name and identity. Lucy didn't stride down the street in a sensible suit like the ones she wore at the office. Instead, she strolled along in a skimpy red bikini with a

see-through blouse thrown over her shoulders, carrying a big straw bag and wearing sunglasses and a floppy straw hat. She wasn't Lucy Harrison, a highly disciplined law enforcement professional who always put the mission ahead of her own life. She was Lucky Harris, rich and spoiled, a silly party girl from Miami looking for a brand new drug connection.

And there he was, sitting at the central table of the small, open air café. The drug lord they called the Dragon was just as ugly and fearsome as the mythical fire-breathing beast. But Lucy wasn't afraid of him. She had fifty thousand dollars in cash, tucked away in her big straw bag. But she also had a can of mace, as well as a tiny transmitter that would record the details of their negotiation. All she had to do was play her part, look pretty and stupid and ripe for the plucking. The greedy Dragon would take her stash of carefully marked money and set himself up for a major fall.

All of a sudden, Lucy's casual steps dragged to a halt. Quickly, the slender blonde slipped behind a rack of colorful dresses on sidewalk sale, peeking out to confirm her first disbelieving glance. The Dragon had half a dozen muscle-bound men lounging around the café, clearly armed. But that didn't matter. Lucy only had eyes for one skinny-looking fellow. He wasn't the Dragon's usual type, not a hard-hitting violent criminal. He was small time. In Miami, they called him the Weasel.

The Weasel was the one man in San Cristobal who would recognize Lucy at once, even in her silly tourist disguise. Her first major assignment had landed her in his club, when she was posing as a waitress in one of Miami's seediest red-light districts. She'd been assigned to keep tabs on the Weasel, to catch him dealing drugs. But she'd blown her cover when she intervened to protect a terrified topless dancer from a drunken mobster who liked to beat up women for fun. She'd arrested the creep, and he'd gotten five years for assault. But the Weasel had seen the whole thing.

"Code Blue," she hissed, pulling out her transmitter and trying desperately to get a signal. "Code Blue, mission compromised. I say again, mission compromised. God damn it, answer me!"

This was the problem with Uncle Sam trying to go it alone, without backup from the local government. Lucy's communication device was supposed to put her in direct contact with a navy ship out in the harbor. But the authorities in San Cristobal had no idea she was here. Uncle Sam didn't exactly trust the newly elected government, which meant that she couldn't turn to the local police. And so when her communications failed, she was on her own.

Right at that moment, she caught sight of the Weasel saying something to the Dragon. Three or four of the biggest musclemen at the table stood up and began casually crossing the street. Lucy didn't know if they'd spotted her. She didn't even know if the Weasel had recognized her. But she had to get out of here. She had to get down to the beach and get out a signal that she was in trouble, that she'd been spotted, and the big meeting wasn't going to happen.

Lucy slipped around the corner, quickening her steps but trying hard not to run. She wasn't sure she was being followed, but she didn't dare turn around to look. Just a few blocks and she would be down at the beach, where there were tons of tourists, people swimming and boats for rent. She was certain no-one would try to kill her on a crowded beach!

The horrible thing was that as she hurried along, hampered by her silly tourist get-up and nearly tripping in her ridiculous beach sandals, she began to wonder if she'd blown it once again. Maybe the Weasel hadn't seen her. Maybe the skinny man at the table wasn't even the man she remembered from Miami. In a way, Lucy was almost grateful that her communications weren't working, that no-one had received her first panic-stricken call. If she got back to the ship, she could just tell her handlers to

arrange some sort of diversion to get the Weasel out of the way. Then, in a few days, she could meet with the Dragon as planned. She didn't want to let the drug lord get away. She didn't want to blow two field assignments in a row.

"Hey, can I rent a boat, please?" Lucy hated the fact that she was scurrying back to the ship, like a terrified two-year-old running to mama's arms in the middle of a thunderstorm. It was hours before her scheduled pickup. But as the tiny outboard motor roared to life, she glanced over her shoulder and saw exactly what she had been running from all along. It wasn't her imagination. The big bruisers from the café were walking around the beach looking for her. At least they didn't seem to notice her frantic escape in the tiny, puttering motorboat. There were a lot of pretty American women in bikinis lying on the beach. The thugs seemed to be more interested in looking at them.

Lucy turned her craft in the direction of the U.S. Naval ship, which was no more than a long, gray shape on the horizon. It took a few moments for her to realize that there was actually quite a current, and it was pushing her back towards the beach she had just escaped from. Cursing, she struggled to push herself back on course, but the tiny little engine sputtered and coughed as if it had a terrible case of the flu. Swearing like an old-time sailor, a frustrated Lucy slipped into a sideways course, riding with the current and away from the crowds and excitement of San Cristobal itself.

Before long, she was well out into the blue waters of the bay, but it seemed the current was still pushing her towards the opposite shore. The terrain here was wild and beautiful, very inviting, yet seemingly untouched by man. Lucy was always very thorough in her research, and she knew that most of this land was owned by a reclusive billionaire named Sebastian DeMarco. DeMarco's grandfather had been a ruthless dictator who ruled the entire island with an iron fist. In those days, drug dealers were dealt with most severely, sometimes with public beheadings. Of course,

that didn't apply to the ones who paid the dictator off and helped him build his many glittering palaces. No wonder Uncle Sam bent the rules down here in San Cristobal!

But the younger DeMarco had distanced himself from all that. He was said to be a major behind-the-scenes player in the new reform-minded government and very critical of the United States. Yet he steadfastly refused to assume a high-profile role in the reform process. Was he ashamed of his grandfather's dark deeds? Or was he biding his time for a power grab of his own?

Lucy didn't know the answer, but she was definitely intrigued. Sebastian DeMarco might be friend or foe, but he definitely lived in style. By now, she could actually see the huge white DeMarco mansion facing the bay. Looking up at all that splendor, she took her eyes off the waves and was totally unprepared for the splintering crash as her tiny boat ran aground on the rocks near shore.

"No! No, no, no!" She had blown it for real this time, her career and maybe her life as well. Lucy was crying as she abandoned the sinking craft, realizing that her own mistakes had done her in. Suddenly, the face of her favorite weapons training instructor came back to her. She remembered the night after graduation, how the two of them had shared a drink in a seedy Quantico bar. It was the one time when crusty old Mac had lowered his guard and even given her a bit of personal advice.

"Don't kid yourself, beautiful, disaster will strike. You'll make mistakes and you'll be scared. But that's exactly when you have to take charge. Make every mistake look like part of the plan."

She had to take charge now. Though still in tears, Lucy scrambled onto a nearby rock, grabbing both her straw bag and her communications device. She had to get out one last message before she ditched her gear beneath the waves. "Code Green," she gasped. Her signal was weak, broken up by the rocky cliffs. But Lucy refused to panic. "Code Green! I say again, Code Green!"

The tiny device crackled, hissing nothing but static. Then at last, a male voice said, "Roger that, agent. We copy Code Green. I say again, we copy Code Green. Good luck!"

Code Green was very different from Code Blue. It meant she was going into deep cover and not to interfere, under any circumstances. It meant she was on her own. And it also meant that she wasn't sensible Lucy Harrison any longer. From now on, she was Lucky all the way.