

Chapter One

Jillian sat on the terrace tapping her fingers on the tabletop as she watched the sun set behind the buildings. She was nervous. She hoped she wasn't being paranoid. Her fingers moved faster as her patience ebbed. *Where was James?*

He was supposed to meet her here at eight, well after his shift on the base ended and more than enough time to change into his off-duty clothes. James, her only confidant in West Berlin, was the one person who could tell her if she was being crazy. It was a weird feeling, that she hoped that's what he thought. She'd rather be a lunatic than know she was being targeted.

It had been such an intense year for her. She'd taken this assignment in West Berlin because she wanted to travel, to do something different. She hadn't wanted to spend her whole life in Ottawa doing the same job day in and day out, then waking up thirty years later not noticing that time had passed. She wanted to do meaningful work, but she also wanted adventure. A signals intelligence assignment in West Berlin had seemed like the answer. She could use her skills, her knowledge, to help her country, but do it on the front lines.

Overseas assignments weren't that common for SIGINTers. She'd had to fight for this one. The last year had given her more than she bargained for, and even though she would trade some of it away, she knew there was no going back to the person she'd been. She was more cautious now, but also more committed. She wanted to see her mission through to the end. And she wanted to take everything she'd learned and do something useful with it.

Where is James? He's supposed to be here by now. He's not usually late. The anxiousness about what she wanted to tell him was making her heart pound. Hopefully he's just been held up at work. Hopefully he isn't being targeted as well.

Jillian took a long gulp of her beer. When James got here, she could order another one. West Berlin was beautiful in September. It was still warm enough to walk around in short sleeves, and the light was almost golden. Everything had a crispness to it, like it was all coming into focus before it disappeared into winter.

She breathed a sigh of relief when James loomed over the table before taking the seat opposite her.

“Sorry about being late. I lost track of time at the end of my shift. We got a new shipment of records in today.”

James was a radio broadcaster for the British military. Officially called psychological operations, or psyops, he was winning hearts and minds over in East Germany one rock-and-roll song at a time.

“It’s fine,” Jillian said. “I missed you last week. Don’t let it go to your head or anything, but I get lonely when you’re not here.”

James grinned. “That’s not the first time I’ve heard that.”

Jillian rolled her eyes. “You know what I mean.”

“Aye.” He sighed. “I suppose I do. Would replace me in a heartbeat, wouldn’t you, for that spook you’re still dreaming about.”

She knew he was teasing her. She and James were friends—the best of friends after what they’d been through, and she wouldn’t trade him for anything. But she missed Quentin too. Missed him in a way that made her heart ache, which scared her. Quentin—real name Tom, which she was never supposed to use—employed by the CIA, had left her in West Berlin to go deal with his past. Her rational self thought it was better that he’d gone. She knew she should let him go. She barely knew who he really was. But the less rational part of her admitted she wanted desperately to find out.

The three of them had been through so much that she felt bonded to both of them, James and Quentin, in ways that neither time nor distance were likely to erase.

“No need to look so sad, Jillian,” James said. “It was just a bit of a jest.”

“I wouldn’t, you know. Replace you. You’re stuck with me now.”

He smiled. “Just what I need, then.”

“It’ll be good for you. Being around me will stop you from turning into an impossible, cantankerous old man.”

“I’m not sure how you’re going to manage that. But it might be proper fun to watch you try.”

Jillian waited until he got himself a beer, with another one for her. She leaned in closer, so she could lower her voice for a little more privacy. “So, you know, I don’t have any self-esteem issues.”

James looked confused but didn’t interrupt her.

“What I mean,” she continued, “is that I’m fine with the way I look. I don’t really even often think about it. But at no point in the history of me have I ever been asked out three times in one month.”

“You’ve got a bunch of blokes chasing you, then?”

“Guys I don’t know. That I’ve never seen before. These are not students at the institute that I see in the hallways. Three times—once when I was just sitting in the Tiergarten reading and twice when I was having a coffee at a café close to campus—these guys have just appeared out of nowhere and asked me out.”

“And you don’t think it’s real? You aren’t a bad-looking lass, you know.”

“I’m not fishing for compliments. I’m telling you something is weird about it.”

“What, then? You think the Stasi are trying to honeypot you?” James asked.

“Would that be so farfetched? After what happened? You warned me they might get interested, and Frank was surprised I hadn’t already been detained, which is why he forbade me from ever going back east.”

James took a slow sip of his beer. “It isn’t outside the realm of possibility. The Stasi could very well be curious about you. We don’t know what that man Victor Smith told them, and we also don’t know if Lisa’s father had to give something up about you to help his daughter get out of the country.”

Jillian didn’t know what to do, and she was sick of not knowing what to do. These assignments should come with a manual. That spring, when her friend Lisa had disappeared into East Berlin, Jillian had risked a lot to find her. Risked her career. Risked being detained by the Stasi. Risked being tortured to give up everything she knew about Western signals intelligence, including the copied satellite collection she was currently processing out of the West German Science Institute.

Every time she’d made a decision while trying to help Lisa, she’d been told by Quentin, James, or her old boss Frank that she was making a mistake. It was a mistake to

help anyone. The sensitivity of her mission meant she was supposed to lie low, not attract any attention, and stay well out of reach of the East Germans or the Soviets.

Except she hadn't. At first she'd been terrified that Lisa, who knew what Jillian really did for a living, would give her up. Then she'd been scared that Lisa needed help and no one else was going to offer any. Jillian had made it out of that situation by the skin of her teeth. Yes, the ending had been happy, as in Lisa had survived. But Jillian knew she'd raised a bunch of flags with the adversary, and her position in West Berlin had become precarious. She'd also made an enemy of ex-CIA officer Victor Smith by exposing his fraudulent activities, and she had no idea if there were going to be repercussions.

With Quentin gone and Lisa home, she'd hoped she could just focus on her job and not attract any attention. Now she was nervous that it was too late for that.

"What do you think I should do?" she asked James.

"I don't know why you keep asking me about stuff like this. I didn't have a bloody clue when it was the American spooks all over you, and I certainly don't have a clue now."

Jillian sat back in her chair. "Well, how do we get one?"

"What?"

"A clue."

"What is this 'we' business?" James asked.

"Oh, come on," Jillian said. "I hang out with you all the time. Anyone interested in me is going to wonder about you."

"I'm tired of being your friend."

"No, you're not. I keep your life interesting."

"Too bloody interesting." James scowled. "I wish you'd be after asking me for something I could actually help with. A walking tour of the history of Berlin. How to use a microphone."

"What about you?" Jillian asked.

"What about me, what?"

“Have any beautiful women hit on you recently?”

“Are you serious?” James’s eyebrows shot up.

“Why not? You’re a good-looking guy.”

“That I am.”

“So?” Jillian asked.

“Have I got a bunch of East German trained honeypots crossing my path all the time?”

Jillian rolled her eyes. “What I mean is, have you been getting hit on more than usual? Even someone as charming and attractive as you must have an average.”

“Well, Jillian, this is certainly new territory for us.”

“Look, I think you should take this seriously. As for the rest of your romantic life, I don’t really care. But it would be better for me if you didn’t have an affair with a Soviet.”

“Aye, I can well appreciate that. It might take everything I have to resist someone so well trained, though.”

“Fine. You clearly want to be all mysterious. Suits me. I don’t ever have to meet anyone you sleep with. As far as I’m concerned, you can be as chaste as a priest.”

James laughed. “That I’m most definitely not. But you are a right pain. Now I’m going to be suspicious of any attractive woman I see.”

“From my perspective,” Jillian said, “that’s not all bad.”

“How you live like this, I don’t well understand it.”

“You don’t have to. But now you have me curious. What was your last girlfriend like? What attracts you in a woman?”

“One who talks less than you. And who doesn’t get attention from the Stasi or the CIA every five minutes.”

Jillian smiled. “So I’m not your dream date. I can live with that. But since I’m supposed to be keeping busy these days with innocuous stuff, setting you up with someone might be something to do.”

“You wouldn’t have the first clue who I’d be interested in,” James said.

“I don’t have to knock it out of the park on the first pitch.”

“Ah, I see you’ve been brushing up on your baseball knowledge in case your spook comes back.”

Jillian didn’t want to think about that. “You’re changing the subject.”

“Let it alone, Jillian.”

“No. Tell me something. You must have a romantic past.”

“You really are a tenacious pain in the arse.”

“Something we all found out earlier this year.”

“Well, since you’re looking for something to do, I’ll leave it to you to figure out what you can.”

“How am I supposed to do that?” she said.

“It’s not any fun if I tell you everything in one night over a couple of beers.”

“Okay, tonight I get one question. A start. Tell me the name of the first woman you loved.”

“Daisy.”

Jillian laughed. “Let me guess. You were both sixteen, and it was when you had her shirt off in the back of your car that you realized you were in love.”

James returned her smile. “Fair guess, but too much like a movie.”

“Behind the barn? In the back of the church?”

His laugh boomed around the restaurant. “Fine. We were fifteen, and it was her smile. She used to smile at me like she wasn’t sure if she should, and I couldn’t imagine there was any better feeling in the world.”

Jillian looked at James. Like, really looked at him. His gray eyes, the stubble filling in his cheeks, his large hands curled around his pint glass.

“What in the hell are you staring at?” he asked.

“I wasn’t expecting that.”

“What? That I have a past?”

“No, that you are so sweet.”

“Are you planning to make everything awkward, then?” He sighed.

She smiled. “Fine. But I like you. That was a really beautiful thing to share.”

“You’re welcome, then.”

Jillian felt the temperature cool as the setting autumn sun dipped lower in the sky.

“All that aside, I mean it, James. I really believe that someone’s gotten curious about me. So watch yourself.”

“Does it ever end?” he asked.

“Not for me. Not until I leave, if you want to take a break from hanging out.”

James shook his head. “No, Jillian. You’re stuck with me as well.”

She felt her anxiety ebb. West Berlin in 1975 was a difficult place to be in her line of work, and it meant so much to her to not be alone here. She wasn’t sure she’d be able to do it otherwise. She wasn’t a spy, not in the traditional sense. She had no proper training in human intelligence. She was an engineer tasked with collecting signals intelligence. The problem, as she’d learned all too well, was that out in the field, there sometimes wasn’t that much difference between the two.