



*Velden am Wörthersee, Day 1*

Police cars veered toward the lakefront promenade, sirens shrilling. *Thank You, God.* Blue rack lights strobed across the water, competing with the Velden Casino's purple-and-pink neon marquee. Jacob squinted toward the opposite shore. Would the sniper try to finish them off before the police reached them?

Or worse—wait and pick off everyone?

“Cavalry's on the way.”

“R-r-right.” Her face was as chalky as her sweater.

“Hang on, honey.” With erratic strokes he splashed toward her, grasped her sleeve. He couldn't lose her. Until she'd waltzed into his life, he'd given up hope finding the right woman to share his life.

An engine roared, and a motorboat hurtled from the dock, sped toward their dinghy. He shot up prayers for the policemen's safety.

The craft slowed and hove to near the dinghy's bow, waves slapping their faces. Gasoline fumes from the idling engine

stung his nostrils and clogged his lungs. *Thank God, they'd reached them in time.* He tried to squeeze Riles' shoulder, his fingers so numb it was a clumsy pat.

A policeman in protective gear faced the north shore, legs braced in the bow, assault rifle to his shoulder. Squatting at the side of the boat, a uniformed officer hauled Riles onto the deck.

Breath whooshed from Jacob's lips. If they'd arrived fifteen minutes later ... *Thank You, God, for sparing us.*

Leaden arms slapping the surface, Jacob thrashed toward them. His fingers grazed the hull, and strong hands yanked him on board. Rivulets of water sluiced down his body, pooled on the deck. "*D-danke.*" A few more chatters and his thanks would be unintelligible.

Someone threw a cover around his shoulders. He shuffled over to Riles in the cockpit, cocooned in a blanket to her chin. He draped his blanket over hers and clasped her to his side, their bodies shuddering on the seat.

"*Bundespolizei*, Federal Police Chief Inspector Helmut Schmidt." Beneath the man's beret, gray hair flecked his temples. He wore a loaded equipment belt, a bullet-proof vest over his dark blue jacket, and matching cargo pants. Cool, assessing eyes swept over them.

"Special Agent Jacob Coulter, Brussels Interpol." Parting the blanket, he removed his Interpol ID from his zippered pants pocket. As soon as possible, he'd check on Tracy, make sure Armand hadn't tried to harm his kid sister too.

"And the purpose of your stay in Austria?" Schmidt studied the ID and returned it to Jacob.

"My fiancée and I are here for a vacation. Then I liaise with Special Agent Margot Müller of the Vienna Interpol office to locate a French terrorist financier, Armand Découvrir, who escaped arrest in London two weeks ago."

"And you suspect this man is in Austria?" Schmidt signaled the helmsman to return to the dock.

“Yes.” The boat sprang to life. “We have sworn testimony pinpointing part of his operations in your country.” Some of the information from Tracy.

The flare in Schmidt’s nostrils was unmistakable. “What sort of operations?”

“So far, money laundering.”

“Then ...” Schmidt stiffened. “You think he’s operating in Velden?”

“No. I booked us at Sonnenhof Pension to relax. Until tonight, everything has been peaceful. Idyllic.” They so needed this time to patch their relationship with no interference from his job.

“The moonlight sail was my idea.” Riles laced her icy fingers in his. “I thought it would be romantic.”

Idiot. He never should’ve given in to her wheedling, ignored the boat company’s brochure she’d slid across the breakfast table every morning. Full-moon sails. Make a memory, she’d said. They’d made a few tonight. More like nightmares.

Interpol couldn’t provide police protection, and his bank account couldn’t cover the expense long-term after the London incidents. They’d agreed to pursue their normal lives.

Scoping the shoreline, Jacob pulled out his phone. How had Armand found them? “Excuse me, I need to call my sister. Armand put out a contract on her too. A thirteen-year-old kid.”

Schmidt’s intake of air was sharp. “Of course.” He glanced around the lake.

Jacob speed-dialed Tracy’s new Interpol-encrypted phone. A necessity after rescuing her from Armand’s clutches in the UK. And if her BFF, Armand’s daughter, tried to reach her, Interpol needed to know, ASAP.

When Tracy answered on the second ring, a few knots in his stomach loosened. *Thank God she was alive.* Taking in a rebellious teen while they were in Austria had been asking a lot of Riles’ landlady, but Mrs. DeBeers had insisted. *The girl just*

*needs a good dose of Belgian TLC*, she'd said. With their parents working as undercover missionaries in Iran, he'd agreed. Anything to help Tracy heal emotionally.

"Hey sis, how goes it?"

"Okay. I guess." Her voice huffed into the phone. "Nobody likes me at school."

"Give it time. Be your sweet self, and they'll come around." Boy, that was speaking something into being. Maybe if he kept telling her, she'd believe it. "Everything okay with Mrs. DeBeers?"

"Yes, she lets me call her Bomma."

"Grandmother, huh?" Maybe Mrs. DeBeers was right. A mother figure would bring Tracy around.

"Gotta go. We're watching a crimi."

Right. A crime show. He lived them every day. "Okay. Let me talk to Mrs. DeBeers for a minute. Love you." But Tracy had already disconnected the call. He dialed the older woman's cell. When she answered, he kept his voice low. "Don't tell Tracy, but we were attacked tonight. I'm hiring private security to keep tabs on both of you. Call me immediately if anything seems amiss."

Her quivering voice matched the tremor in her teacup when he'd dropped off Tracy. At eighty-five and reliant on a cane, she'd be no match for Armand's henchmen. He texted a Brussels security firm, set up twenty-four-hour surveillance on Mrs. DeBeers and Tracy, then turned to Schmidt. "Sorry to hold things up."

"No problem. You were wise to check on her." A smile flitted across the policeman's face. "What is your profession, Miss Williams?"

"I'm an opera singer." Stifling a sneeze, she tugged the blanket around her throat. "I debut with the Wiener Staatsoper in two weeks."

“Congratulations.” Schmidt shifted toward Jacob. “About this evening ... Who do you think was shooting at you?”

“Probably one of Armand’s assassins. He hired several men to kill us shortly before we left London.” Jacob glanced over the lake. “They came close to succeeding.” Just like tonight.

A muscle torqued Schmidt’s cheek. “Hopefully they’ll be unsuccessful on Austrian soil. If you’ll come to the station in the morning to make a formal statement ...”

“Of course. We’ll be there.” The engine idled, and the helmsman docked the boat. Jacob rose and cupped Riles’ elbow in his hand. Best get her to the Pension before she caught a cold, or a respiratory illness could cost her that Staatsoper debut.

“You know ...” Schmidt scratched his temple. “We’re close to the Slovakian border. Découvrir could’ve hired a foreign assassin.”

“Right.” Slovakia wasn’t the only nation bordering this side of Austria. The killer could easily be from Italy or Hungary. They might never find the sniper.

A fresh chill snaked down Jacob’s spine. He was supposed to be the hunter here, not the hunted.

One thing was certain, Armand wouldn’t give up until they were dead.