

Honor Killing

HONOR KILLING

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The Plot until here....

Rahimi, an Iranian Revolutionary Guards Colonel, has come to Dubai to provide intelligence to an Iranian exile group on suspected weapons shipments by Iran to the United States. He believes the weapons will be used by terrorists to attack America...

1930 hours, Sunday, May 20, Dubai

Colonel Rahimi looked very small in the fisheye of the hotel room door. He was wearing a cheap grey business suit and a starched but collarless white shirt, buttoned up to his neck in the style approved by the Islamic Republic, which banned neckties and shirt collars as signs of *ghobzadeh* – corrupt Western influence. He was clearly nervous, constantly flicking the ash off his cigarette with his thumbnail, although he had

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allowed no ash to accumulate. His skin was sticky with sweat.

Manoucher Amir opened the door and waved him into the suite. But Rahimi stopped in the doorway when he saw the big dark hair of the woman's head, seated with her back to him in the sofa in the next room. "I am here just to see you," he whispered hurriedly. "I am not here for other things. Please."

The woman stood up and approached them as Manoucher closed the door. Pointedly, without a word, she extended her hand, shaking the hair from her face with a quick movement. Rahimi didn't move. Her large dark eyes, set deep in high cheekbones, held him like the two deliberate ends of a see-saw, appraising him. "You will not shake a woman's hand?" she said.

"It is forbidden, *haram*."

"Then take off your jacket. I want to see your weapons," she said.

He raised his hands in innocence, palms facing her, smiling indulgently to Manoucher, his friend. "I have no weapons. I am here- "

"- I know why you say you are here," she said icily, cutting him off. "*I* am Kourosh. Manoucher, search him."

Rahimi looked stunned, clearly not expecting the head of the National Freedom Party intelligence outfit to be a woman, especially not one like this. A classic Persian beauty, but somehow too thin, too hard, too intense. Instead of mystery and invitation, her eyes were hard and penetrating, full of contempt. He submitted without another word as Manoucher had him lift his hands higher, then carefully patted down his sleeves, the lining of his jacket, the breast pockets, his

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shirt, trousers and both sides of his legs. He found nothing.

“Empty your pockets,” the woman said. “I want to see everything.”

When Rahimi had placed his wallet, passport and other papers on the coffee table, she picked up his Pasdaran ID card and handed it to Manoucher. “Is this him?”

Manoucher put on reading glasses and examined it slowly, opening the document, examining the seal, the way the photograph was attached. He knew these documents well, and knew also that if the regime wanted to fake one, they simply had to issue a real one in a fake name to their own agent.

“It’s a real ID,” Manoucher said finally. “But it proves nothing.”

“What is your full name,” the woman asked.

“Abd’al Rahman Rahimi Golpour,” he replied.

“Why did the regime send you here?”

“I came here with information,” he said quietly, nodding to the CD-ROM on the coffee table that Manoucher had taken from his pocket. “I want to come out.”

“If there is anything of importance on that CD, why did you bring it with you? How do you know the regime did not intercept your message to us?”

The questions came in a quick staccato burst.

“They would have gotten to me by now,” he said. “They always do.”

“Not if they wanted to use you as bait.”

Rahimi was burning with shame. She couldn’t know – and he would never tell her! – just how close he

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had come to arrest. He avoided looking at her as he mumbled replies to her questions. As all Pasdars had been taught, he believed it was *haram* – forbidden - to look at a woman who was not your wife or a member of your own immediate family. The eyes were the portals of the Devil, and the Devil was everywhere, tempting. Somewhere inside of him, a steel door slammed shut.

“Why don’t you sit over there,” she said finally, indicating a deep sofa. She went into the bedroom and brought out a laptop computer, which she placed on the coffee table across from him. “Let’s see about your information.”

Rahimi submitted, looking down at his hands. He kneaded them together as she clicked on the keyboard, scrolling through the directory on the CD.

“What’s this?” she said, squinting instinctively when the dark pictures Rahimi had taken with his cell phone appeared on the screen.

“I don’t know,” he said simply. “But they came to load it in the middle of the night. Men from Tehran. From VEVAK, Section 12.”

“How do you know they were Section 12? Surely, they didn’t tell you that.”

Section 12 was the counter-intelligence and security department of the *Veżarat-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, generally known in the West as the Ministry of Information and Security, MOIS. They interrogated suspected spies, and provided security for top officials, and were among the most dreaded of the regime’s many killers.

“No. But they were giving orders to the Pasdar officers who brought the object. I believe it is a weapon of some sort.”

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“Why is that?”

“The truck. It came from the Self Sufficiency department of the Sepah navy. That is where we experiment on new weapons systems.”

Kourosch didn't believe him, and she let it show. She had seen dozens of fake “defectors” before, whose real goal was to lure opposition leaders into private meetings where they could be killed.

“If it was a weapon, why so little security?”

“So not to attract attention,” Rahimi said. “Whatever they are doing, they wanted it done as quietly as possible. That's why I have brought you the pictures. Surely your friends in America will know what it's about.”

She let his comment ride, pushing back the memory his words called up to her.

“One of them was an Arab. We call him *hajji*. It is said that at the end of Ramadan, he personally slaughters the lamb for the *aid al-fitr* feast, and smears blood from the knife on his own children's necks.”

Kourosch raised an eyebrow at this, letting her skepticism show. But behind the mask, her mind rapidly calculated the possibilities. If this were the *hajji*, Rahimi's information could be worth gold. The *hajji* was the regime's top operations officer. Born in Lebanon, exfiltrated to Iran after blowing up the U.S. Marine barracks in October 1983, he was deadly, efficient, and – until now – completely untraceable. He used seventeen different identities, and had undergone extensive plastic surgery. The last known sighting of him outside of Iran occurred ten months before the September 11 attacks, when he escorted a group of future al Qaeda hijackers onto an Iran Air flight from

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Damascus to Tehran. And even then, only one of his aliases showed up, no passport photos. She copied the pictures from the CD onto her hard drive, then closed the computer. She knew exactly who she needed to see in Washington, and just the thought of him made a faint smile come to her lips. She could still trace the muscles along his spine, burned like a map into her fingertips. How many years had it been?

“I want to come out,” Rahimi said again, staring down at his hands. “My daughter – ”

“Then you should leave,” Kourosh said simply. “We don’t run a welfare program. It’s a hard life out there, once you’re free. Nobody’s going to catch you when you fall.”

“But will you help?”

“That depends on this,” she said, tapping the CD. “But if I know the Americans, they’re going to want you to stay in place, to see what you can pick up.”

Rahimi looked panicky. “If I have contact with the Americans, the *etelaat* will find me.”

“I know,” she said. “But you won’t.”

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