

Chapter 9

‘You lied to me, to me, Mark!’, was the message left in Harris’s multi-box. His CTO was livid, having found out the Board was unaware of any of the recent developments and culpabilité. Worse, Schrek had informed the Chairperson, and there were requests for immediate meetings and above all answers from Harris. Neither of which he was prepared for, right now.

The answers laid with Jamestown and his unholy crew, thought Harris, but he had not been able to contact anyone, including Gonzalez and his ‘personal team’. Realising he would have to take the situation further into his own hands, he hired a Voc-Limo instead of his company Fly-Limo, just to be sure. As thoughts raced through his hyperactive mind, the Voc-Limo was speeding to culpabilité’s headquarters. Except there was no one there, just Dumb-Vocs manning reception, no one capable of answering his questions.

As he returned to the Voc-Limo, considering going to the relevant authorities, a land speeder drew up alongside his vehicle, a woman stepping out the far side. She was notable for her remarkably blue eyes, but his attention was on the opening rear passenger door closest to him, revealing Jamestown, beckoning him to enter. Harris didn’t need any further invitation before the trio were ensconced in the land cruiser, destination unknown. ‘Welcome, *welcome*, Mark, *how are you?* My condolences for your loss, *poor* Femi,’ the older man spoke quietly. Harris felt riled, but kept his cool. ‘*Jamestown*, I ought to wring your *neck*, but I need answers *first!*’, was his only response. ‘Steady on Mark, be careful with your words, and remember, it’s Vladimir, *Vladimir* Jamestown, Mark, *remember?*’, he emphasised, with an even quieter, hypnotic timbre. Jamestown’s hand was on Harris’s, reassuringly, as he looked purposely at the woman, an unsaid contact between the two. Her eyes flickered blue.

‘What the *fuck* is going on, what the *fuck* are you doing, and what the *fuck* are you involving me in, and, by the way, where the *fuck* are we going?’, Harris breathed out staccato in an unmollified tone, barely restraining his need to squeeze the older man’s neck with both his hands. ‘Hmm, I can answer all of those questions, in answering the last one – we’re going to *the heart of culpabilité*, Mark, where all your answers reside, where memories live and breathe,’ was the cryptic response. And with this Mark pushed back into this seat, his face a contortion of anger and a little fear, before it relaxed completely and his eyelids closed like doors at the end of a working day. ‘Thank you, my dear,’ Jamestown stated gratefully, as the blue-eyed woman withdrew a small device from Harris’s neck. ‘We’ll all feel better without arguing throughout the journey, and Mark will need *all his strength*.’

Harris’s body slumped in the chair, his head lolling, and the woman sat in hers with both her hands on her knees, her back straight and erect, blue eyes forward. As they sped out into the outskirts, the sand and the ruins, Jamestown looked with an oddly fatherly expression at the unconscious Harris. He patted one of his knees, ‘you’ll have all your answers, Mark, you will. I hope you will *accept them*, otherwise this has all be so wasteful, *especially for you*.’