The Recall

By Maryanne Peters

Chapter 1

I was close to him in age, which is why they called on me, I guess. I was still assigned as “Active for Operations”, but I had not done a whole lot. That work is for younger men.

It was just that he had worked in the Ukraine, and now that was the place everybody wanted to understand. A lot of intelligence is about experience, and old connections. It is the kind of stuff that people retire with.

He was only in his fifties, but people do leave. It can be stressful work, so you choose your time to quit. That time had not come for me, but I would never criticize another for leaving.

But you never really retire from the agency. What is in your head is Government Property, and if they want it, you have to turn up and hand it over.

I just went to the last address on file. It turned out to be a nice little cottage in a small street in a small town, a short walk from a modest main street. It had a white picket fence and tended rose bushes, and it looked well maintained and loved. That is the right word. It was lived in and cared for – it was a home. I know one when I see one, perhaps because I hadn’t lived in one since I was a kid.

I went up and knocked on the door, and she answered. I remember that my first thought was that she was a perfect match for the house – some age on her but somehow it made her more attractive to me. Well maintained in that she wore makeup, and her dark hair was styled nicely – down to her shoulders but well suited to her age.

Like the house she should be loved, and if not then she was worthy of it. Her smile warmed me.

“I am looking for David Stoddard,” I said, returning the smile as best I could.

“I am Diana Stoddard,” she said. “Perhaps I can help? Please come inside.”

There was no record of a wife, but why should there be. His personal life was his own, after he had left. Was there hope for me after all? Could I find a wife with all the baggage I was carrying after years on active service?. I had to enter, even though I sensed that she was alone, if only to get a glimpse of the life of the lucky.

“I work for the Agency,” I said, as if she might know what I meant. “I worked with David. I wanted to talk to him about coming back to his old job for a while, to help us out, on contract. Nothing dangerous. There would be remuneration, of course.” It was an old trick – tell the wife and she might put pressure on him.

“You didn’t work with David Stoddard,” she said, but not as an accusation – she was smiling. “I would know. I was David Stoddard.”

I was shocked. I mean I had heard all about transgender people and I knew that there were some real knock out girls who used to be boys, but I was not expecting this. She was attractive, and now I could see that she was not a small person, but to me she seemed totally feminine, and that thick dark hair had to be real.

“So, you are Diana now?” I said, to make light of whatever confusion was going on inside me. It had nothing to do with having lied about working together. We lie all the time, and he would know that ... she would know that. “I meant that we worked in the same organization even though we never worked side by side.”

“I know what you mean,” she said. “I just don’t know why you are here.”

“It’s about activities in the Ukraine,” I began. “You still have information and you could still help us with what we are doing. We are not expecting for you to go back into the field. It is back-room stuff. I am sure that you know what we need.”

“I do know, and I would have been happy to help. But knowledge or not, I am not the same person. Not anymore. I just can’t do it now.”

“Hey, once a spook always a spook, as they say,” I found myself saying.

“Next, you’ll be telling me ‘once a man always a man’,” she said. “I did all that was required when I was a man, but now that I am a woman, I have put aside manly things. I am not a destroyer - I am a nurturing person. That is the female nature. I look after my home and my garden, and I hope that one day I will find somebody else to care for.”

I suddenly became aware that she had fulsome soft breasts visible through her partly open blouse. I had a sudden urge to bury my face between them and shut out the light, even if only for a moment. I said – “We need you”, but I wonder if what I really meant was ‘I need you’, or ‘I want you’.

“You’ll find somebody,” she said reassuringly, in an almost maternal way that I found strangely sexy. “There are so many aggressive young men out there who would love to be asked by their government to destroy the world. I used to be like that. Now I am me.” She struck a little pose that made me want to kiss her.

“People will be disappointed,” I said.

“Including you?” she asked.

“Sure,” I said. “I would have liked to have got to know you better.”

“Are you in a hurry?” she said. “I do love company, other than my local lady friends. I could make some sweet tea? Or I have beer, or even some rye whiskey?”

“I’ll take a beer,” I said.

Chapter 2

I had been based in Sebastopol primarily to collect information about Russian navy operations out of that port (the largest in Crimea), when I received the call to head to Kyiv in the fall of 2013. It was the first stages of what was to become “the Revolution of Dignity” in the Ukraine. The then president Victor Yanukovych was pro Russian but all the opposition parties had united as the Maidan People Union in seeking a move to the west and ultimately joining the European Union. I was in the capital to see the protests that ousted Yanukovych on 22 February but then I got the call from Langly to hurry back to the Crimean peninsula.

“Dave, we are getting the word from Moscow that there is a buildup of Russian forces in Rostov.” Frank Panetta had been my handler for years, and he never called for action unless he himself had cross-checked the intelligence. But this time that delay may have cost us a few days. The same day that Yanukovych called to book his flight to Moscow - February 22nd 2014 – Russian President Vladmir Putin met with officials to demand “the return of Crimea o Russia”. By the time I was back in Sebastopol key sites in the north and the control of the Kerch Bridge in the east, had been seized by Russian troops.

It was not even a case of a lost opportunity – “If only we had acted more quickly”. The point was that there was never an opportunity. There was a power vacuum and nobody to fill it in Crimea, or nobody from our side – the opposite side to Russia. The fact was that Crimea had been subject to a program of being “russianized” since the end of World War 2 and the deportation of the Crimean tartars. Following that was the buildup of the Russian Navy Black Sea Fleet by encouraging settlement of ethnic Russians in this temperate landmass. They clearly outnumbered the original Crimeans many times over, and a good number of them worked for the Russian State.

But, the Tartars had a presence there still, so I stayed on the to agitate through the sham “Crimean Status Referendum” if only as a parting gesture. The result was always going to welcome the conquerors already holding all the power.

Although I did keep a low profile and attempt to push others forward, my staying there was becoming increasingly untenable. It was time for me to go – out the back door – through to Istanbul on a fishing boat out of a small port east of Yalta. That journey, along with others leaving Crimea to escape the Russians, would take us 36 hours, and it was a hard journey for me in so many ways.

On the boat were the leaders of several minority groups who had led protests against Russian invasion and occupation, and one of those was a woman who described herself as Hana, “The Matriarch of the Karaites”. I have to admit that despite my studies of the regions, I knew very little of these people other than that they were said to be Jews descended from those who ruled the Khazar Khanate in the 7th century. But it was clear from the way Hana spoke that their culture was rich in pagan history and philosophy, along with early Judaism.

“To pass the time, let me look at your hands and into your eyes and try to tell something of your future,” she said. And it was only for that purpose that I agreed – to pass the time.

She barely looked at my hands, which always seem to say so much to those sideshow fortune tellers. She simply took them in her hands as she sat across the table from me, and she looked me in the eyes, as if trying to see what lay behind the retinas.

She suddenly seemed a little surprised. She whispered to me, although it seemed like all the others in the cramped hold were asleep – “You are a woman!”

I was not sure how to react. In our training we are taught to learn a neutral expression to resort to when there is a risk of betraying yourself. I went to that. Then you have to consider your response based on the circumstances. The basic rule is to never admit the truth. That was drilled into us. And when in doubt, answer a question (if that is what It was) with a question.

“Why would you say that?”

“I don’t know what sits between your legs, but you are not a man,” she said. “You are pretending to be one, and it weighs heavily on you. But do not worry, the future will see you become the woman you are inside, and you will find great happiness in the arms of a wonderful man.”

“A man you say?” I adopted a snigger to conceal my truth. “Well, that will be surprise when that happens.”

“It will happen, before the Russians come back for more,” she said, which didn’t seem to make a lot of sense. “But you need to prepare for him, as you will not be happy unless you do. You cannot live this way. You need to free yourself from this lie.”

I just wanted to cry out that every word she spoke slammed into me like a body blow, because every word was true. My whole life I had felt as if I was not meant to be male. But I was raised by parents with expectations for me, and I had always delivered on those expectations. But the truth is that I liked climbing trees and playing ball, and boys did that. My girl time was reserved for my bed, when I would cry myself to sleep knowing that I would never be the woman I was meant to be.

I had hidden this for years, perhaps even to the point that I could forget this reality, although in moments of solitude it always came back. Now suddenly, I was confronted by somebody who could see right through me and know the truth.

I am a logical person. You need to be in order to analyze a situation without being swayed by feelings that might persuade you from reality. But in my work, I had met plenty of people with gifts that seemed beyond reason – persuaders, visionaries, hunch followers. It does not have to be gypsy magic. She just saw inside me. Some people seem to have that ability. The Agency could do with a few of them.

Her words rang again in my head – “The future will see you become the woman you are inside, and you will find great happiness in the arms of a wonderful man.”

Could I make it happen? I looked around me, as we sat in the hold of that boat, with the only sound being the hum of an ancient engine. Her eyes were still on me. She said – “What is your woman name?”

“Diana,” I said.

It was like a steel yoke had fallen from my shoulders, that had been hard and tense for all my years of life. Suddenly as I said her name – my name – I felt unburdened, and weak, like a woman. From that moment I found my true self, I was just wearing an overcoat I didn’t even like.

When we got to Istanbul, I simply sent through a message that I had got away from Crimea the people I had promised that I would, and now I would be taking some time off. Handlers being what they are there were howls of protest and insistence on informal debriefing, but I was not ready for that. I was not the same person they had dispatched into crisis. I was Diana.

I discovered that Istanbul had a thriving transgender community and some expert surgeons offering gender confirmation surgery. At the time it had become a center for “medical tourism” as the cost of a total transformation was a fraction of what it would cost in the United States. What is more, they were ready to do it without psychological reports or referrals from experts.

I was ready too. I was never more sure of anything in my life, even though days before I had been trying to stub out these thoughts. I decided to just do it. I am so glad that I did.

Chapter 3

I listened to her story as she cooked me a meal. It was something called “*gozleme*” that she explained was a Turkish dish she had learned to make during her extended time there. We ate the meal across the table, me with another beer, and her just sipping on a glass of white wine. For dessert she produced whiskey.

But alcohol played no part in what happened next. I had been looking at her as she busied herself in the kitchen and as she ate her meal, I suppose trying to look for just the slightest hint that she had once been a man. But there was no trace. She was all woman. There was nothing wrong with the way that I felt about her.

“You have such beautiful hair,” I said. There just seemed to be so much of it – dark brown down to her shoulders.

“My surgeon was also an expert on scalp surgery,” she said. “But I am very proud of my hair, and everything that I have invested in.”

“You are a very beautiful woman,” I said. She was.

“Would you like to stay the night?” she asked. “It seems to me that I have talked too much, which is not something the agency would approve of. Now it is late, and It would be better to drive back to Langley in the morning.”

“Does you invitation involve sharing a bed?” I felt I had to ask.

“It does, although if you don’t want to take that up, there is a couch.” She looked at me with eyes wide and wet. It was clear what she wanted, which is exactly what I wanted too. I stood up and she stood up. I walked around the table and took her into my arms and kissed her.

I could feel her body against me. It was wonderfully soft and feminine. I had enjoyed my share of stick thin women but her body was full and inviting, and her lips were hot and wet, and her tongue hungry for mine.

I am not sure how long we kissed in that spot or quite how we got from there to her bedroom, but there as a trail of clothes to collect the morning after. By the time she lay on the bed she was complete naked, and so was I. Her body was full and curvy and as smooth as silk, with only a very small unshaved dark diamond above her pinkness.

“I have some lubricant,” she said. “I use it daily.”

“Let me,” I said. I kissed her lips and her nipples as my finger works the gel into her tight vagina. By this point I was erect to the very limit of capacity, and she reached down to hold it softly, and perhaps to gently pull me towards its scabbard.

To enter her was like arriving home after a long and torrid assignment – all warmth and welcoming with an air of what can only be called love. To confirm it, she moaned softly threw her head back into the sea of soft brown perfumed hair, as it seemed her body was quietly sucking me as my hips went to work.

The mind seems to empty at times like that. The French call the orgasm *le petit mort* – the little death – the instant when you leave this life and have a small glimpse of heaven. That is what it was like, but with heat and joyful groans added.

I collapsed beside her, somehow spent, despite all the work I did to keep myself fit and stay on the active list.

“I suppose that you could say that you took my virginity tonight,” she said, looking up at the ceiling as I was.

“It has been eight years since Crimea fell,” I said, in disbelief. “Surely a woman as beautiful as you could not have waited as long as all that time?”

“What kind of woman do you think I am?” She snapped her head around to look at me in mock indignation. I turned to her and smiled apologetically. “But seriously, I didn’t change sex to have sex. I changed sex because the sex I had was just wrong. It wouldn’t have mattered to me if I died a virgin, so long as I was a female one.”

“So how was it?” I asked. It was something that I had never asked before and probably never could have, to talk to somebody after their first experience.

“It was wonderful,” she said. I noticed that her eyes were slightly wet with a single tear in each. “I have brought myself to orgasm before, but to bring you to that, and to feel your seed inside me – it was truly wonderful. I hope I was good enough?”

I stroked her cheek, as if trying to stem the tears before a drop could escape. I said, in total honesty – “I think that was probably the best sex I have ever had.”

“Maybe you are the man that Hana promised me?” she said. “Remember that the Jewish gypsy told me - ‘you will find great happiness in the arms of a wonderful man’? That was about as great as happiness can get, so I guess that she was right after all.”

“Do you think that maybe she was talking about just one act of sex, or something longer term?” I asked.

“I’ve told you what she said – what do you think?” she said, propping herself up and letting her hair drift across my face for a moment.

“I think it is time for me to retire too,” I said. “Maybe I could shack up with somebody with a similar past, who is a great cook and keeps a tidy house, and gives me the best sex I have ever had? What do you think about that idea?”

“I like it,” she said. “But we barely know one another.”

“Maybe we should work together for a bit? Just for a few months in the Ukraine section? Then we could both come here and just keep and house and garden and make love all the time?”

“Oh I see. This was your plan all along? Seduce me into coming back to the Agency?” But she was not shocked. She was trying not to smile.

“I came here to talk to David Stoddard,” I protested. “Meeting you and falling in love was not something I ever could have planned.”

“I will do it,” she said. “But we need a few more days. I will go with you on Monday, but if I ever find out that this was a trick to bring me back in, I will kill you. You have read my file – right? You know that I could do that?”

“I know that. And I am in no danger.” I rolled her over and smothered her with kisses as she giggled like a little girl.

The End

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