**David Baldacci Paragraphs**

*Excerpt from Baldacci’s “The Simple Truth”*

1. The somber group of men sat in a large room that rested far belowground, accessed by only a single, high-speed elevator. The chamber had been secretly built during the early 1960s under the guise of renovating the private building that squatted over it. The original plan, of course, was to use this "super-bunker" as a refuge during a nuclear attack. This facility was not for the top leaders of American government; it was for those whose level of relative "unimportance" dictated that they probably wouldn't be able to get out in time but who still rated protection afforded no ordinary citizen. Politically, even in the context of total destruction, there must be order.
2. The bunker was built at a time when people believed it possible to survive a direct nuclear hit by burrowing into the earth inside a steel cocoon. After the holocaust that would annihilate the rest of the country, leaders would emerge from the rubble with absolutely nothing left to lead, unless you counted vapor.
3. The original, aboveground building had been leveled long ago, but the subterranean room remained under what was now a small strip mall that had been vacant for years. Forgotten by virtually all, the chamber was now used as a meeting place for certain people in the country's primary intelligence-gathering agency. There was some risk involved, since the meetings were not related to the men's official duties. The matters discussed at these gatherings were illegal, and tonight even murderous. Thus additional precautions had been necessary.
4. The super-thick steel walls had been supplemented by a copper coating. That measure, along with tons of dirt overhead, protected against prying electronic ears lurking in space and elsewhere. These men didn't particularly like coming to this underground room. It was inconvenient, and ironically, it seemed far too James Bondish even for their admittedly cloak-and-dagger tastes. However, the truth was the earth was now encircled with so much advanced surveillance technology that virtually no conversation taking place on its surface was safe from interception. One had to dig into the dirt to escape his enemies. And if there was a place where people could meet with reasonable confidence that their conversations would not be overheard even in their world of ultrasophisticated peekaboo, this was it.
5. The gray-headed people present at the meeting were all white males, and most were nearing their agency's mandatory retirement age of sixty. Dressed quietly and professionally, they could have been doctors, lawyers or investment bankers. One would probably not remember any of the group a day after seeing them. This anonymity was their stock-in-trade. These sorts of people lived and died, sometimes violently, over such details.
6. Collectively, this cabal possessed thousands of secrets that could never be known by the general public because the public would certainly condemn the actions giving rise to these secrets. However, America often demanded results---economic, political, social and otherwise---that could be obtained only by smashing certain parts of the world to a bloody pulp. It was the job of these men to figure out how to do so in a clandestine manner that would not reflect poorly on the United States, yet would still keep the country safe from the pesky international terrorists and other foreigners unhappy with the stretch of America's muscle.
7. The purpose of tonight's gathering was to plot the killing of Faith Lockhart. Technically, the CIA was prohibited by presidential executive order from engaging in assassination. However, these men, though employed by the Agency, were not representing the CIA tonight. This was their private agenda, and there was little disagreement that the woman had to die, and soon; it was critical for the well being of the country. These men knew this, even if American presidents did not. However, because of another life that was involved, the meeting had become acrimonious, the group resembling a cadre of posturing members fighting on Capitol Hill over billion-dollar slices of pork.

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