

# INSIDE PASSAGE by Burt Weissbourd

## EXCERPT

“Wouldn’t you like to get married in your own backyard?”

“Of course I would. You know that,” she snapped. “But I can’t.”

“Why not? Because Nick Season says you can’t. You have the right to live the life you want to live. Don’t give it up for that son of a bitch. Hell no. You don’t have to do that.” Abe leaned closer. There it was, those laser-like light blue eyes. “It won’t be easy, but together, we can figure out what to do. You and I can do this. We have to.”

“My God, what are you thinking? This isn’t like psycho-therapy.” She held his eyes. “We can’t ‘figure it out’ or ‘work on it.’ It’s not a head game. We have no evidence. Nothing. Nick’s a foolproof liar and a stone-cold killer. And he’s going to be Washington’s state attorney general.”

“And he has to be stopped.” Abe looked into their fire. “It’s not just about what you’d have to give up ... think about what he’ll do if he ever finds out that you and Billy are alive. And though you might be okay for a year, or even two, eventually, he’ll start to wonder. And then to worry. It’s who he is. You’ve told me that. And then he’ll never stop checking. He’ll have me followed. Every year, he’ll run your prints, and Billy’s, through some Canadian database. And that’s just the beginning ... unless we stop him.”

“And how do you propose to do that?”

Abe’s bushy brows furrowed in a “V” until they almost touched. “I understand the problem now.” They touched. Corey had never seen that. Very cool. He meant business. He turned to her, full face. “To begin, I’ll comb my hair and look this devil in his shiny black eyes.”

What? What was that? Corey was dumbstruck. Eventually, she softly mouthed, “What?” And louder, before he could answer, “Aren’t you afraid of him?”

“He’s very frightening, and I’m painfully aware of what’s at stake. And of course I see how very dangerous he is and yes, that scares me.” He scowled. “But I have other feelings that are even stronger than my fear.”

“What does that mean?”

“What I’m afraid of, what keeps me up at night, is losing you. Nick wants to kill the person I love most in the world. That makes him my archenemy, my nemesis. What I feel for Nick is inexhaustible rage.” He tapped his pipe against the log, emptying it into the sand, then he carefully set it down. When he looked up, his expression had turned fierce. Abe took both of her hands. “Nick Season be damned!”

“You’re being crazy.” She had never seen Abe like this.

“No, I’m telling you how I feel. I want to marry you Corey. I want to live with you and Billy in Seattle. I want to go to parent night at Billy’s school. I want to take you guys to dinner at Tulio and for pizza at Via Tribunali. I want to fish at your favorite spots near Bainbridge —”

“He’ll kill us all.” And Abe was really scaring her.

“I have to keep that from happening.”

“This isn’t a storybook. Nick isn’t like anyone you know. And this isn’t an insight kind of deal. Look what happened the last time you tried to help. They almost got Billy, and I had to kill someone. Look what almost happened last night. This time you and Billy and I, we could all die. Do you understand that?”

“Yes, I do. But I won’t let that happen.”

“Won’t let that happen?”

“No, I won’t.”

“How?”

“I’m working on that. “

“Working on it? How? You’re going to comb your hair? Look this devil in his shiny black eyes? What is that about?”

Abe considered her question. “It’s a way of starting.”

Corey put her head in her hands. She didn’t know what to say.