

~Jakob~

Wednesday. 2:30 p.m.

Jakob Rizk didn't notice the concrete sidewalks of downtown Indy. He didn't see the people. His body was on automatic pilot, his mind back in the office of the Marion County prosecutor.

They'd worked a few cases together back when he, Jakob, was a senior attorney in the criminal department.

Which was last week.

Then Jakob had stepped into the role of interim attorney general after Harrison Stanley died unexpectedly. The death and appointment were as much a surprise to him as the rest of the state. From assistant county prosecutor to the state's top attorney in three years. The change left no time to plan, to think, to grieve. Noon Monday, the governor publicly announced the interim appointment. An hour later, Jakob sat behind the shiny desk in the office with Harry's name on the door, scouring through emails and hand-annotated notes to pick up where Harry had left off on Friday.

A shoulder bounced off his arm.

"My apologies," he said automatically. Lifting his head, he saw a swarm of young teens in identical blue T-shirts. He bobbed and weaved, feeling like he was swimming upstream.

The metaphor applied to more than the sidewalk. He reached an intersection, pressed the "walk" button, and waited.

Three hours ago, his mobile rang. Glad to see a familiar name come up, Jakob had answered without hesitating. But he wasn't calling as a friend, he was calling as a county prosecutor. He had a problem and needed Jakob's advice. Could he come over to talk?

So, Jakob went.

“Walk. Walk. Walk.”

Jakob obeyed, staying between the white lines out of habit rather than intent.

The problem was a dead woman named Lucy Torok. Her body had been found in her truck, parked under the interstate bridge where she worked as a construction inspector. The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department had a suspect but evidence was so thin the odds of securing a conviction were single digits. On the surface, the case was murder. But beneath the waters lurked a political bear trap. Should he hold out for more evidence or move forward to appease the well-connected family? And that was where his friend needed advice.

*What would Harry do if he'd gotten the call ...*

“I like your shoes.” A rough, worn voice pulled Jakob from his thoughts. He glanced at the Italian leather on his feet. “Thank you,” he said to the man sitting against the nearest building. Likely homeless, the clothes were oversized for the man and too heavy for the hot June afternoon. But his shoes, those were pristine. A point of pride. “I like yours. It’s a challenge to keep white clean.”

“It is, but worth it,” the man said. “Yessiree. I like those shoes. But truth, I liked your other ones better.”

Jakob’s mind raced to decode the comment. Had the man seen him before and noticed his shoes? He had a collection that would be embarrassing if anyone but his wife saw it. More likely the man suffered from a mental illness. Addiction. Delusional disorder. What else could make a man imagine shoes? Didn’t matter. He needed to get back to Harry’s office.

“I like those, too,” he said, playing along. “But you have to mix it up sometimes. Have a good one.” Jakob hurried along to discourage conversation. One more street and he entered the

building through the revolving door. Crisp cool air greeted his face and hands. He was tempted to pull off his suit jacket, but knowing he'd been sweating, he left it in place.

"You're back again," Anthony Raymond called out. The security guard was one of Jakob's favorite people, always having a smile to share. "What a surprise."

"That's me," Jakob said dryly as he put his phone in the bowl, backpack on the table. "Just full of surprises." He walked through the metal detector, then waited on the other side for Anthony to clear his bag.

"I guess your plans fell through."

"You mean my meeting? No, I had it. It didn't take long."

Anthony's face betrayed his bewilderment.

"Meetings do occasionally end early," Jakob chuckled. "It's rare, but every once in a while, we get a few minutes back in our day."

"No, sir. I mean, yes, sir, I'm sure they do." Anthony pushed the backpack toward Jakob but didn't let go. "I just have to ask. Why did you change clothes again?"

Did Anthony get him mixed up with someone else? He felt a little hurt. He saw Anthony as a—well, they weren't friends, but acquaintances. Apparently Anthony saw him as just another suit.

"The governor expects us to dress when we're in the building. We need to paint the right picture, you know. Have a good afternoon, Anthony."

"You, too," Anthony called after him.

Jakob headed to the elevator, grateful the doors opened nearly instantly. They closed and he was alone with his ego, dented after the reminder he wasn't special at all. He shared the short ride up with his reflection. A familiar stranger. Neither different nor the same, who was he now?

The doors opened and he put on a façade that included his confident smile.

He walked through the glass entryway that had been the gateway to his work for the last three years. The receptionist, Ivy O’Neil, wasn’t at her post. A rarity. He headed left, to the office of the attorney general. He nodded to a staffer, who blinked without nodding back.

Jakob was beginning to think there really was something different about this upcoming generation of attorneys and it wasn’t their overwhelming social skills.

The desk and area outside the AG’s office was the territory of Executive Assistant Lisa Hastings. The most senior person in the office, who was also conspicuously missing.

“Where is everyone?” Jakob had a moment of panic. Had he forgotten a meeting? An event?

Voices came from behind the door to Harry’s office. A dull thump. Something heavy hit the floor. What the hell was going on in there?

Jakob sucked air in, then narrowed his eyes at the closed door. Someone was looting Harry’s office. Confidential information was everywhere, valuable to both sides of the aisle, to corporations, to plaintiffs and defendants.

Not on his watch!

Jakob shouldered the door open, leaping inside. “Stop what you’re doing!”

The desk fell from two pairs of hands, the muted slap of wood against carpet. Four faces turned to him. Three wore slack-jawed expressions. The fourth grinned like a pirate looting treasure.

“Seth?” Jakob stepped inside, blinking to see if his twin brother was really there or a figment of his overloaded mind. “You’re in Miami.”

“Jakob.” Seth looked around the large corner office. “I almost like the digs.”

“Jakob?” Lisa Hastings took a step away from the man who looked strikingly like her boss. Her head was on a swivel.

Jakob. Seth. Jakob. Seth.

Amusement washed over Jakob and brought a smile to his face for the first time in days. “I apologize, Lisa. I should have warned you that if I showed up shouting ridiculous orders, you were to call an ambulance and have them bring restraints.”

Seth chortled.

“You’re twins,” she said, now shaking her head. “Identical.”

“I’m better-looking,” Seth said as Jakob said, “I’m smarter.”

Jakob scowled as he covered the distance to his brother in three strides. “You show up, unannounced, and you rearrange my office?”

Seth’s smile grew until it reached both ears. “You nailed it in one, Counselor.”

“God, I missed your stupid head.” Jakob grabbed his twin, pulling him in for a hard hug.

“Well, don’t think I missed your ugly face,” Seth said but hugged him just as hard.

Ivy picked up the law book from the floor. “We can put it all back,” she said, looking to the law clerk who always seemed to be lending the young woman a helping hand.

“Absolutely. Just take a minute.” Jakob lifted one end of the desk.

“Leave it where it is,” Seth ordered.

Jakob gave his brother the look that had gotten him accused of witness intimidation.

“This is my office. I say where Harry’s desk goes. Put it—”

“—where it is.” Seth dragged him until they were face-to-face. “Haven’t you learned anything about security? Your desk does not go in front of the door. It gives a shooter a direct line of sight.”

“Ohmygod.” Ivy dropped the book in her hands. The dull thud was louder on this side of the door.

Jakob held out his palms as if to calm a frightened child. “It’s okay. Leave it for now. We’ll decide where to put Harry’s desk later.”

“We all have work to do.” Lisa herded Ivy and the clerk out of the office. “And you two ... behave.” She closed the door behind her.

Seth pulled his arm back and dropped onto the long leather couch now positioned to face the door. “I bet nothing gets by her.”

“That’s it?” Jakob threw up his hands. “Are you just going to pretend like you didn’t appear out of thin air? What are you doing here, Seth?”

“I came to see you. It’s not every day I become related to the attorney general of a whole state. These are moments to be savored.” He stretched, inhaling deeply. “Feels good. I like it. How about you?”

Jakob gave his brother his perfected “don’t mess with me” stare.

Seth gave up the pretense with an eyeroll. “Put away your weapon. I give up, Counselor. I’m here for Harry’s funeral.”

“Thank you, Seth, but we talked about this,” he said, walking to his desk. “I told you not to come.”

Seth snorted. “Since when has that worked? I’m here and you’re stuck with me until I book a return flight. Now, how’s it feel to be the attorney general for Indiana?”

“I’m the interim AG, and it’s fine.” Jakob slid his hip onto the corner of his desk. “When did you get in? How was your flight?” The conversation drifted into the usual commentary on air

travel and Indianapolis traffic. When it came to accommodations, there was no discussion.

“You’re staying with us. We have plenty of room. Let me call Courtney and tell her you’re here.”

“I have a better idea.” Seth’s grin became mischievous. “We’ll trade clothes.”

“It’s not going to work. We’ve been trying to pull off a switch since Courtney and I dated at Indiana University. We’re 0 for, like, twenty. She won’t fall for it. She never does.”

“She doesn’t know I’m here,” Seth argued. “I’m darker, but as long as your olive ass isn’t next to me, she won’t notice the difference.”

Jakob shook his head. “She’s smarter than both of us.”

“I’m not denying it, but she can’t *always* win.” He studied his twin, head to toe. “Why did you cut your hair so short? I hate our hair short. We look like a lawyer.”

“I am a lawyer. Why is yours so long? We look derelict. You working vice or something?”

“Something.” Seth ran a hand through the thick, wavy black hair their father passed on to them. Their build and features came from their father’s Mediterranean ancestry, with one notable exception—their eyes. They both had their mother’s Scottish misty gray eyes.

Seth hadn’t answered the question, but Jakob let it go. For now. “I’ll bet you a dollar Courtney knows it’s you in under a minute.”

“A minute? Done.”

His cell phone rang. His friend the prosecutor was calling back. Good news didn’t happen that quickly in Jakob’s experience. He looked to his brother.

Seth popped to his feet. “Come find me when you’re done. I’ll be wherever Lisa says you’re buying me lunch.”