

# Sacrament of Fear

*“Truth never happens in real time. Events happen, sources are cited, authorities offer up explanations. But ‘truth’ requires time. Time to shed illusions. Time to fend off lies. Time to evolve. And in the end, after all have had their say, ‘truth’ will have the last word and continue to light our way.”*

Prof. Robert Reid Clark  
University of Edinburgh  
Co-Founder, The Cloister of Akhenaten, 1925

## 1

THE CLOUD OF WHITE SMOKE became slightly thicker as it was forced from the inner depths of his lungs, out across his lips, and into the cool night air of Port Rotterdam. Admiral Cor Boonstra, a tall man with gray-streaked hair, paced slowly up and down a ten-meter stretch of the old wooden pier, studying the lines of the anchored cargo ships, drawing deeply on a Player’s cigarette as he waited for Rob Kypers to arrive. Their earlier conversation had been brief and to the point.

“Rob, I have some documents that may be of interest to you.”

“Thanks, Admiral. I’ll be there within the hour.”

Now, a mere forty minutes later, the familiar outline of Rob Kypers’ auto was drawing near. The steel-blue Morgan Plus-8 turned purposefully into the parking space, bowing a greeting with its abrupt halt. As Kypers emerged, Boonstra moved toward the auto, casually using his thumb and middle finger to catapult the smoldering nub of his cigarette over the rail into the water below. The two men shook hands and walked casually toward the end of the pier a couple of hundred meters in the distance.

“What do you have for me, Admiral?”

“Perhaps nothing,” said Boonstra, unsure of exactly what his friend was looking for, “but you wanted me to call you if any unusual cargo came in from the Middle East and these two shipments fit the bill. They arrived early this morning.”

“What have you got?”

“Well, the first I mention only because of its source; the cargo itself seems rather benign, a shipment of baking flour headed for some Boulanger in Caen.”

Boonstra fired up another cigarette and blew smoke at the black horizon, staring out over the water as he continued.

“The shipment came through our new shipping line in the eastern Mediterranean; the Europe–Levant Express. It originated in Syria, most likely in or near Damascus.”

“Baking flour?” mused Kypers. “I didn’t know Syria exported grain,” he said, shrugging it off. “What else?”

“The other one came by way of a transfer. The Al-Shamir left Yemen last week with several crates designated as Computer Parts. She transferred her cargo in Tangier to the Celeste, which arrived here about 6:00 A.M. The cargo is scheduled to be unloaded tomorrow morning.”

“And?”

“And? Computer parts from Yemen?” said Boonstra, getting

little reaction from Kypers. “And I haven’t seen any shipments like this before, so I thought you would want to know. Here,” he extended a disk to Kypers. “It’s the bill of lading. Some photos of the cargo and markings, too.”

“Thanks, Cor,” said Kypers, studying the disk for a moment before slipping it into his pocket. “I’ll have a look at this when I get home.”

“When are you going to tell me what you’re looking for?”

Kypers ignored the question, staring into the darkness across the black water to where an unseen ketch was slipped. “Is she ready for this weekend?”

Boonstra smiled broadly. “Most definitely! New silk and a smooth bottom, a week’s provisions, and a lust for salt air.”

“Excellent! What did your people say when you told them you were taking a week off?”

“Don’t think I mentioned it,” said Boonstra with a guilty grin.

“What happens Monday morning when you don’t show up? Won’t they wonder where you are?”

“Let ‘em wonder. They can send the whole damn royal fleet after me for all I care. This week is mine. I’ve more than earned it this past year. For seven days you and I are going to sea and they can all go to hell. Besides, what good is getting away if everybody and his sister knows where you’ve gone?”

Rob laughed and slapped his friend on the shoulder, “Can’t say I blame you. You *have* been pushing yourself pretty hard—and you’re starting to show it, my friend.”

The Admiral gave a raspy laugh and let his tough-guy persona soften, “I sent an email yesterday. I’m clear to go. How ‘bout you? You clear it with the university?”

“No problem. I do just enough there to keep up appearances, anyway.”

“How about your friends at The Hague?”

“Yeah, well, I don’t like giving out my plans too far in advance,

if you know what I mean. I'll call Frans after I have a look at this," he said, patting his side pocket. "If there's anything interesting on it, I'll run it over to him in the morning. If not, I'll tell him over the phone."

"I thought he was keeping you on a tight leash these days."

Kypers shrugged dismissively. "He's been kind of paranoid the past couple of weeks. Something has him spooked. I don't really know much about it. I doubt it has anything to do with me, and even if it does, I'm not about to let it ruin my weekend. Anyway, what safer place for me than the middle of the North Sea?"

Boonstra smiled and exhaled purposefully at the night.

"Besides, they don't pay me enough to keep me on a leash—short or otherwise."

"Ha! That's not what I hear!"

Now it was Kypers' turn to laugh. "All right, so they do pay me enough. But The Netherlands can surely do without the services of the lowly Rob Kypers for a few days."

The two men strolled lazily back to the Morgan, going over the details of their upcoming sea voyage. Once back, they shook hands and said their goodbyes.

"So, Friday morning it is." said the Admiral.

"Yes, sir." said Rob, shooting a mock-salute. "O-dark-thirty we cast off. See you then."

Kypers took the disk out of his pocket, threw it on the passenger seat, and folded his lean frame into the cockpit of the Morgan. "Thanks again, Cor. See you in a couple days."

He started the engine, turned on the lights and exited the pier, turning right onto the quay, making his way easily through town until he picked up Highway A13 to Delft.

The road was all but deserted this time of night and the absence of a moon accented the sense of calm isolation. He drove nearly fifteen minutes in quiet solitude before seeing another car on the road. A set of headlights a couple of miles in the distance was the

first and only sign of life this time of night and would have been less of an interruption to his solitude if the driver wasn't apparently oblivious to the fact his high beams were on. It took a minute or so for the lights to grow intolerably bright, forcing Rob to look off to the side until the car *whooshed* past him, a shrinking pair of red dots fading softly behind him in the rearview mirror. The brief flood of light made the return to darkness even blacker than before, as Rob's irises struggled to expand under the moonless night.

The solitude of the road to Delft closed comfortingly around him again, his lone headlights diffusing against a faint night mist hanging above the dark asphalt. The blackness seemed to swallow what little light the Morgan generated until another set of lights appeared, this time in his side and rearview mirrors.

Rob looked away from the reflected glare as the new vehicle gradually gained on him. He gauged the time it would take for the driver to overtake and pass him. Shouldn't be more than a minute or so, he thought, inching closer to the side of the road to give the driver a wide berth. He was enjoying the solitary drive home and preferred to let this guy get around him and disappear into the night.

Suddenly, just seconds before the growing brightness of the headlights overtook him, Rob felt a sharp shooting pain behind his left shoulder blade that radiated quickly and intensely in all directions throughout his body.

Within milliseconds the bright lights in his rearview mirror were eclipsed by an internal flood of multi-colored lights, exploding like fireworks in his skull. His brain felt like it was revolving in a slow-moving centrifuge as the Morgan left the road and dived headlong into a drainage ditch.

Kypers felt his leg snap. His ribs cracked against the force of the steering wheel. His head grazed the rearview mirror and blood began to stream warmly down his forehead into his left eye. The pain was intense, as an internal explosion of images began bouncing around his brain, quickly capturing his full attention. The visions were

terrifyingly surreal, like nothing he'd ever seen. A fleeting thought that these incredible scenes were only imagined quickly evaporated as he succumbed to the intense reality of the visions. Rationality had no place in this new internal landscape, as indescribable pain radiated from every part of Kypers' body and mind.

The auto that had been gaining on him came to a gravel-crunching stop just off the pavement at the place where the Morgan had left the road. Down below, the reflection of the headlights in the cracked side mirror stabbed at Rob's eyes. A form emerged from the vehicle but Kypers could not focus his eyes or his attention on the image as it stepped around the vehicle and into the beam of the headlights. Its features obscured and shrouded in a surreal black halo created by the backlighting, the driver moved cautiously down the slope of the trench toward the twisted Morgan.

Kypers should have felt some sense of hope at the appearance of the silhouetted Samaritan but instead became even more terror stricken as the ever-changing image in the mirror moved nearer the inclined wreck. Each step toward him morphed the splintered image into a more threatening vision, so that by the time the bizarre form reached him, Rob was crazy with fear.

Cold from the loss of blood, nearing the point of losing consciousness, Rob sat horrified and helpless as a golden-ringed hand reached in through the broken passenger window. Large hairy fingers closed claw-like around the disk on the passenger seat, then withdrew, as if in slow motion. The dark figure pivoted and made his way back up the incline using his free hand to steady his ascent. The reflected and distorted image looked to Rob as if the two-legged human had changed into a four-legged animal. Rob's brain, free-wheeling on reality, interpreted every new detail in some new and more horrifying translation.

The hum of the stranger's car engine retreated into the blackness of the night, its soft rumble giving way to the sound of an inhuman wail in Rob's ears. Suddenly his mind filled with images of a new

threat. An animal was circling his car. He was sure of it. He could not see a thing in the void, but he could sense the predator, stalking the smell of fresh blood. He could hear the low, soft breathing of its approach. For a moment Rob thought he recognized the sound, like the low rumbling growl of a large cat. As he tried to listen more closely, it began to vibrate in his chest and ears. It was close, its breath hot and moist upon his neck. For a split-second Rob's rational mind cut through the psycho-contortions of his damaged brain and he understood the sound. There was no cat, no stalking predator. The sound vibrating in his chest was his own death rattle. That realization offered no consolation as his last hot breath escaped into the cool night air.

# 2

OSMAN GHAZI SAT IN THE DARKENED ROOM staring through the one-way window at the activity on the other side. Rubbing his thumb along the edge of a picture frame, eyes and throat sore from choking back tears, he watched as a half dozen of his employees silently removed the dead bodies of a dozen others. In the shadows of the room, he could barely make out the details of the photograph until the door opened and a sliver of light illuminated the black-and-white faces of a group of six men.

Ghazi looked up at the man in the door.

“Jafa, what the hell are you doing? Look at this,” he yelled, pointing through the window. “*This* is what you give me?”

Jafa al-Mansur could not look. Ghazi’s chief chemist had worked long and hard on the formula and knew this was not the result either his boss or he intended.

“I’m sorry, Osman...”

“Sorry!” screamed Ghazi. “A dozen more dead bodies and you’re sorry? Twelve more families I have to console—and compensate for life—and you’re sorry?”

“Osman, please, I’m very close.”

“Isn’t that what you said the last time, and the time before that?” The chemist remained mute. “Jafa, I’ve told you I do not want this



result, I do not want you to kill people. If I wanted people to die, do you think I would go to all this expense, all this time and trouble to do it *this* way? Don't you think I could just as easily have Saadalla shoot them, stab them, poison them—hell, run them over with a goddamned car! Don't you understand yet? Making people dead is easy; any fool can do that." Ghazi let his rebuke fade as his eyes drifted back to the photograph in his hands. "No, my friend. Dying is too easy; the dead do not fear." Ghazi remained silent for a moment but quickly snapped out of it and returned to his reproach. "I've invested a considerable fortune in the proper materials for you; I have given you everything you said you needed, and in return all I ask you to do is one simple thing for me: make them tremble, make them quake in terror, make their greatest fears come to life. *This*," he said, again pointing through the window, "is worthless. If you don't want to become part of your experiments, I suggest you get it right the next time. Am I understood?"

"Yes, Osman. I assure you I will have the correct proportions worked out soon."

Jafa al-Mansur retreated, closing the door quickly behind him, leaving Osman Ghazi to contemplate the future alone in the dark.

# 3

“ROOBEEK HERE,” he answered.

“Mr. Frans Roobeek of the Minister-President’s office?” asked the steady male voice on the other end of the phone.

“Yes, this is he. How may I help you?”

Frans Roobeek was the Special Assistant to the Minister-President of The Netherlands. At 6’2”, he was robust with an athletic build that gave him a generally younger appearance than his true age, but this morning he was feeling every minute of his fifty-seven years. He had been at his desk most of the weekend. He was stressed and tired—and this was only Monday morning. *Nice way to start the week*, he thought.

The ringing of the phone had startled him out of his concentration.

“Mr. Roobeek, this is Officer Oosterhuis of the Delft Police Department.”

“Ya, ya. How may I help you?” he said, impatient at the interruption.

“Mr. Roobeek, we found your card in the wallet of a Mr. Robert Kypers with instructions to contact you in the event of...”

“Is there a problem?” Frans asked before the officer could finish. “Is Rob in some trouble?”

“Mr. Roobeek, I’m sorry to have to tell you...Mr. Kypers was found dead in his automobile early this morning about halfway between Rotterdam and Delft.”

Frans was stunned.

“Dead? But...how? What happened?”

There was a pause on the other end, as muffled voices conversed in the background.

Frans yelled into the receiver, “Hello? Are you still there?”

“Sir, we believe he had a stroke,” came the reply.

“A stroke?”

“Yes, sir.” The officer didn’t elaborate. “Sir, we went to the address listed on his driver’s license but no one was home. I’m sorry to have to call you but your name and number were the only contact information we found on him, and, well, sir, because of your position, we thought...”

“Yes, of course, certainly, you were right to phone me. Tell me where you are and I’ll come right over.”

“That shouldn’t be necessary, sir. We were just hoping you might be able to help us locate someone in his family so we can notify them.”

“No, I’m afraid that won’t be possible. Rob was a bachelor, he lived alone. You did the right thing to call here. Now tell me where you are and I’ll come immediately.”

The officer gave Roobeek some general directions and ended the call.

Frans pressed the receiver against his chest as he thought for a moment, then cradled the receiver and sat quietly, his elbows on the desk, his chin propped against his clenched hands. After a minute he sat up in his chair and rubbed his tired eyes with the heels of his hands. He looked down again at the three notes in front of him, lying side-by-side in chronological order. He had been struggling with them all weekend, the original notes in Arabic accompanied by an English translation. He read the Arabic-to-English translations one

more time, hoping something in the vast warehouse of facts in his brain would somehow jump synapses and suddenly make sense of the cryptic messages.

Nothing.

Frans took a deep breath, stretched his eyes wide, and sighed in fatigue and frustration. He looked blankly at the intercom on his desk for a second, as if he needed time to communicate action to his hand. Finally he reached over and pressed a button.

“Pieter, come in here, please.”

A moment later the door opened and Pieter van Heusen stepped in. A man of modest stature, prematurely thinning hair, moderately rumpled clothing, and always about fifteen pounds heavier than he wanted to be, van Heusen was a man Frans could rely on, despite his rumpled appearance and sometimes abrasive personality.

“Sit down, Pieter,” said Frans, gesturing to the chair nearest the desk. “There’s been another one.”

Van Heusen looked puzzled for a second until it hit him what Frans meant.

“Oh, shit! Who?”

“Rob Kypers.”

“Son of a bitch. Not Rob.” Pieter van Heusen shifted in his chair, trying to contain his agitation, fighting the urge to pound the desk. “What is it this time?”

“Stroke.”

“Hmmpf, stroke. What’s that make it...five?”

“Edinburgh was five. This is six.”

Frans pushed a piece of paper toward van Heusen.

“That’s two this weekend, Pieter. You know I can’t wait any longer, right? I have to call him. Hell, for all we know, he’s already heard about the others and is on his way here anyway.”

Pieter van Heusen’s jaw tightened. “Look, Frans, you’re the boss and you can do what you want. I just don’t know why we need the American. We’ll end up spending half our time watching his back,

and the other half watching our own. He'll just be a damn trouble magnet. And we have enough of that without him."

Frans was tired and didn't need this resistance. He needed Pieter's full commitment to this. He needed the American, too. And what Pieter van Heusen needed to understand was, in this particular situation, if push came to shove, Frans needed the American more.

"Pieter, look at that list."

There was no response.

"Look at it, damn it!"

Van Heusen stopped staring into space and looked down at the list of names Frans had pushed toward him.

"You know what they have in common, right?"

"Yes, they're all dead."

"Goddamn it, Pieter. I don't need this shit right now!"

Van Heusen straightened a little. He knew he had just pushed his boss too far. It was time to suck it up and follow orders.

"Ya, ya," he said, adopting a more conciliatory attitude. "These guys all work together; they all belong to some kind of fraternity or something."

Frans sat back in his chair. "Yeah, well, something like that," he said, not letting van Heusen's sarcasm get to him. "They were all part of a source network. Rob was our closest contact but most of them provided valuable information to us at one time or another."

Frans let his eyes drop to the notes in front of him.

"I don't know what all this is about, but I think these notes and that list are tied together. Our friend in the States will have a vested interest in this matter. He can go places we can't, do things we won't."

"We're every bit as capable of handling this as he is," van Heusen protested.

"I know that, Pieter," said Frans, knowing better but not wanting to debate those differences just now. "But he has one important thing going for him that we don't—he doesn't have to answer to anyone,

he's completely independent. If we make a mistake, we could trigger an international incident. If he screws up, it's just his ass, no one else is connected, no one else gets the blame."

Van Heusen smiled faintly at the image of the American failing but let the thought pass.

"We at least have to call him," Frans continued. "For all we know his name may be the next one added to that list. And if he doesn't know what's happened..." Frans hesitated, lost in thought for a moment "...then we sure as hell better let him know before it's too late—for him *and* us."

Frans looked at his watch and did a quick calculation in his head. Nine hours difference. He'll still be asleep. I'll call him tonight.

"I need you to be good with this, Pieter. All right?"

Van Heusen nodded tentatively but offered one more objection.

"What if he isn't on that list, Frans? What if he isn't connected to this thing at all? Getting him over here could be the worst thing you could do. I don't care much for the guy but I sure don't want to get him killed."

Frans' eyes darted around the room, as various scenarios quickly played out in his head. He looked at Pieter and gave a slight nod of acknowledgment to the idea, but then gave his final thoughts on the matter.

"I'm more afraid of what will happen if I *can't* convince him to come here."

"What are you going to tell him?"

"I don't know yet. His name isn't on that list and I don't want to be the one to put it there. His connection to Rob has to seem like friendship, not business, just in case someone is eavesdropping."

"You don't really think our phones are bugged, do you?"

"Six people are dead, Pieter, and we don't have a single thing to go on. I can't afford to assume we *aren't* being listened to. Whoever is behind this...I don't know what they're capable of, so let's assume the worst and hope we catch a break."

# 4

WES FRANKLIN, HIS FACE STREAKED with green and black camouflage paint, knelt in the dense foliage of the Colombian rainforest. Twenty feet away, his good friend and bodyguard, Rouzbeh Aryana, hunkered down in the plush green vegetation, as well. Their senses were on full alert for any sign of the marauders' return. Two techs from their Doctors Without Borders contingent were similarly painted, both armed with semiautomatic hand guns; neither of them trained for combat. The four men had been standing sentry duty a couple of hundred yards from the clearing for the past three hours. Theirs was the fourth such security detail since the raid on the camp the previous morning.

The singing of the brightly colored birds and the friendly chattering of squirrel monkeys belied the tension of the scene.

The camp, still in some disarray from the recent raid, was buzzing with activity. Some local peasants were being treated for the general maladies that had brought the doctors and nurses to this remote location in the first place, while other support personnel busied themselves with cleaning up the camp. The communications truck, having suffered some grenade damage, was being attended to by Ashley Jordan, the site's chief technician and the special

companion to Wes Franklin.

Bob Pietrowicz climbed into the communications truck. “A.J., how’s it going?” he asked. “Anything I can do to help?”

A.J., holding a motherboard in one hand and a soldering iron in the other, ran the forearm of her lab coat across her forehead to wipe off the grit and blew a strand of blond hair out of her face. Even sweat and grime couldn’t hide her natural beauty.

“Hi Bob. Yeah, this thing needs a new microprocessor. Can you grab one for me? Over there, third bin on the right, bottom.”

The young man moved smartly toward the bins, slipping on a lab coat as he passed. “Looks like you have things pretty well in hand here,” he said.

A.J. said, “We got lucky. The grenade did mostly cosmetic damage to the outside. Wasn’t too bad in here.”

“This one?” asked Pietrowicz, holding up a small black square.

“That’s the one,” she answered. “Is Wes back?”

“Not yet. Their relief isn’t for another hour,” he said, adding “I hope those bastards *do* come back, though. I’m in the mood to kick a little marauder ass...excuse my French.”

“No excuse necessary,” said A.J. “I wouldn’t mind kickin’ beau coup guerilla butt myself. I didn’t take all those karate lessons just to win ribbons.”

Their moment of bravado was brought to a sudden end with the sound of gunfire in the jungle. A.J. spun in her seat, flashing a look of apprehension toward the door. Pietrowicz practically flew across the room, threw open the door, and jumped to the ground, his eyes fixed on the jungle.

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The band of six marauders, AK-47s slung over their shoulders, was moving single-file along the narrow path leading to the camp, when one of the armed techs caught site of them. They were almost even with the man, when his nerves got the better of him and he



involuntarily squeezed off a round into the dirt.

The first two marauders in the column jumped at the sound of the shot and spun round in panic. In their rush to retreat, they crashed into the men behind them before anyone could swing an AK-47 into action.

The confusion bought Wes and Aryana an extra step or two as they sprung into action.

Aryana ran screaming toward the men, his shoulder-length black hair flowing straight out behind him. His painted face and shirtless muscular torso struck immediate fear in the guerillas, as they stumbled into each other trying to run for it.

Wes set a bead on one of the fleeing men and started running. He took a long stride, leapt onto a fallen tree trunk, and dived headlong through the air, snagging a hanging vine in flight. He swung Tarzan-like at the fleeing man, planted his two feet firmly into the man's back, and smashed him into a tree. The man bounced off and crumbled to the ground, out for the count. A second marauder, seeing his comrade go down, turned and aimed his rifle at Wes. Aryana saw the developing danger and stopped dead in his tracks, swiveling to face the shooter. With a twist of his wrist, a throwing knife dropped into his hand from a homemade device strapped to his forearm. A discus-like sweep of his arm sent the knife hurtling through the air, catching the shooter in the arm, smashing the rifle into a tree. The net result was somewhat comical, though nearly fatal for Aryana, because as the rifle slammed into the tree, it discharged, hitting another marauder, who had started to take aim nearby. The second rifleman spun round as the bullet slammed into him, and in the process, fired his own weapon in Aryana's direction. The wayward bullet grazed Aryana's ribcage. Fortunately, the near miss only did enough damage to piss off the Persian strongman, who took off running into the jungle in hot pursuit of the last man.

Wes gathered up the weapons of the fallen men, while the two techs took the wounded into custody. A couple of minutes later,

Aryana walked back into view.

As Aryana came near, he heard Wes call out to him.

“Did he get away?”

“No,” answered Aryana.

Wes looked out over Aryana’s shoulder at the silent jungle.

“Where is he?” he asked.

Aryana cocked his head to the rear. “Back there,” he replied.

“Becoming one with nature.”

“I see you worked out that knife release,” said Wes. He grabbed Aryana’s wrist and raised his friend’s arm to examine the wound. “You may want to work out a technique where you don’t get shot in the process.” With a teasing smile, Wes let Aryana’s arm drop. “You’ll live,” he quipped. “Let’s get back to camp and get a dressing on that.”

As Wes, Aryana, and the other men emerged from the jungle, A.J. rushed out and threw her arms around Wes. Others from the camp swarmed to greet the returning heroes and escort the prisoners away. Cheers and congratulations sounded as everyone moved to the center of camp.

But just as they lowered themselves to the ground around a nice campfire, Bob Pietrowicz stuck his head out of the communications truck and shouted to Wes.

“Dr. Franklin, I have a call for you. It’s from The Netherlands, sir.”

Wes held a curious expression, raising his eyebrows to A.J. as he rose and headed for the truck. Once inside, he took up the handset and spoke into it.

“Wes Franklin, here.”

“Ah, Wes my friend, Frans Roobeek. I hope I haven’t caught you at a bad time.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The news of Rob Kypers’ death fell on Wes like a ton of bricks.

Aside from their association in the Ankh Network—the Cloister of Akhenaten—Rob was a good friend, so it took little convincing from Frans for Wes to come for the funeral service. A quick check of flights showed he could be there late Thursday. The two men agreed to meet at the Tasman Bar in the Victoria Hotel near Centraal Station about six that afternoon.

The next morning, as their bags were being loaded into the Jeep Cherokee, another of the doctors, Doug Ridley, came near. “Sorry to hear the news,” he said in an elegant British accent.

“Thanks, Doug,” said Wes.

“Actually, Wesley, I was talking about Ashley's uncle.”

A.J. turned to Ridley with a puzzled look.

“Professor Crombie,” he said, to A.J.'s blank stare. “I'm sorry, dear. I just assumed you heard.”

“Heard what?”

“It was on the BBC frequency this morning. Ian was found dead in his office yesterday. A heart attack, I believe.”

A.J. now turned to Wes with a troubled look. “Did Frans say anything about Ian?” she asked.

“No,” said Wes, the wheels starting to spin in his head. “Two Ankh members dead within days of each other.” he thought aloud. “Frans has to have known about Ian. He would've known you'd want to be told, but he didn't say anything.” Wes and A.J. studied each other's eyes. “How do you feel about Scotland in October?” She didn't need to answer. Wes turned to Aryana. “When we get home, tie up any loose ends for us, then meet me at the Bluebird Café in Amsterdam Friday night.”