I need a white.

“A dog with a ball in the street. That’s what you said when I first asked why you are here. But in eight sessions we haven’t talked about the dog.”

A month ago, I went looking for the perfect psychiatrist and I found Carrie Howard. She had the right credentials on her website.

“Well, you ask me that every time and I will say the same thing I always do, if you believe, I believe. Your life sounds like a movie, and your stories have been pretty fantastic. But to get better we have to connect, and we can’t connect if one of us doesn’t believe in the other.”

She was the fourth one down on the search. She was an hour away from where I live. And she had a good phone voice. I don’t. I probably sound like a shaky lunatic.

“I don’t think you have an irrational fear of dogs, right? But if you don’t want to talk about the dog, at least let’s talk about the street. What street was this?”

She’s attractive, in her fifties. Blonde. She deals mostly with trauma, PTSD and anxiety.

“When you say a street in Ecuador, do you mean like you were there, or is this more of a dream thing?”

Her address had her at major cross streets close to the freeway. Plus a small patch of woods behind her building. So, lots of escapes, on foot or in a car.

“You had one of your jobs there? On this street?”

I saw in her bio she had worked with hardcore cases, schizophrenia, reality detachments, paranoia, all that. But that doesn’t apply. I don’t think it does. I really need a white.

“Hold on, I don’t know what you mean by wetwork.”

The therapist office we are in she shares with a marriage counselor. Two doors, windows, I don’t like it. I choose to sit in the couch in the middle of the room and she never even asked why.

“Okay, but even if it is an industry term for . . .uh . . . killing, why did you say it to me? Are you using a term to find out if I’m familiar with it? Do you think I’m working for this government agency you used to work for?”

Flowers bother me. We use flower names as code words. We would rotate the names job to job.

“I have told you at length about my past. All my years are accounted for and documented. I am who I say I am. Why do you keep looking at the wreath? What bothers you about that?”

Say the flower name and the TacEx-T blows a whole in the wall and you're gone. Tactical Extraction Teams are no joke. One flower name whispered and it's like the wrath of God comes through windows, walls and doors and takes the target.

"It's just a wreath, I assure you it's harmless. You really do notice everything. Remember last week when you asked why the clock was moved out of the windowsill?"

She thinks I think the wreath is bugged. I don't care about that. They could bug anything in the room. But the wreath has a flower in it. And if she says the flower name, even by accident . . . TacEx-T . . . wrath of God . . . yeah, I don't like flowers.

"You just seem a little extra jittery today. Did you use the sleeping pills I told you about? I know, I know. And them pumping drugs into you to control you, I understand why you wouldn't want any more. But you need to sleep. Um, the sleeping pills are yellow, does that matter?"

I need a white. I'd even take a blue if I have to. But the blue will probably put me in a coma if I'm not coming down off a red. And I don't take the reds anymore. They give me a red and people start dying. Give me a red it's a bloodbath.

"It's time we talked about that dog. Did the dog have the ball in its mouth?"

I'm tired. Tired of the running. Of the constant knot in my stomach. Tired of being afraid of every person.

"That's a horrible thing to happen. Actually, I don't know crime bosses get blown up all the time. But it's still horrible to the guy and to the dog, even if the dog was an accident. But why do you keep calling the dog a 'he?' How do you know it was a male?"

She doesn't help. Maybe she's a civilian and I've made a huge mistake. But I'm tired and I can't go on like this. It's time to find out.

"I'll stop you right there for a moment. You looked right at me talking about the Ecuadorian crime boss. You looked at me when you told me you quit your job as a spy and assassin. You looked right at me when you tell me they are hunting you. But why won't you look at me when we talk about the dog?"

I'm so tired.

"Hmmm. That's a bit odd for me. You said he was reaching for the ball under the car before it exploded. Now I'm going to tell you something. Something you know deep down. Dogs don't reach. They don't reach for balls. You know who would reach for a ball? A kid. A boy. Is that what happened? Is that why you're here?"

Is that why I'm here? I don't know anymore. It's time to tear down the curtain.

I take out a red.

Our eyes meet and hold.

I speak to her, "Yeah, I think it was a boy . . . with a ball in the street."

I pop the red pill in my mouth and swallow.

She speaks, “thank you for your service”

She gives me a sad half smile as she looks down and says, “lilac.”