

Chapter from "The Journal" (Sneak

Chapter Four

THE JOURNAL

There was some staging to be done before Julia could recommence writing about Great Uncle Per.

She always sat at her oak desk with a world map spread out; she needed a physical frame of reference. There was a light from a single lamp that shown on the journal.

Her cognitive skills worked best with what she called her “other worldly abilities” after the sun set and the room took on mysterious moving shadows. Julia realized that the shadows were a manifestation of her intuition, like a silent black and white film playing right in front of her.

Julia began to write as the jazz music CD she’d chosen started to play. The first song on the album was “We’ll Meet Again.” The dulcet tones of Vera Lynn both soothed and saddened Julia; so very many lovers were separated during wartime. Julia knew the bittersweet taste of love and loss, and she would discover that her Great Uncle Per Lundgren knew that same sting.

The heartache of others was what drove him to risk his life to save people from the depths of hell in Europe in the early 1940’s.

The music faded into the background, “. . . we’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t know when.” The desk lamp flickered once and Julia heard the familiar voice of her Uncle Per as clearly as if he was actually sitting with her.

He asked her to write his story exactly as he dictated it to her. He knew that Julia was more than capable. They shared the same clairvoyant abilities. In this case, he would be the sender and she would be the receiver.

She wrote in the first person - that of Per Lundgren:

In 1940 I was twenty-seven years old and a member of a Swedish diplomatic agency.

I was an expert mediator and therefore often asked to intervene when political tempers flared, particularly in Europe, but also in Canada and the United States.

It was a time of great fear and uncertainty - Hitler had already attacked and occupied Czechoslovakia, Norway and Poland. A political posture of appeasement by the major military powers allowed Hitler’s advances to go unchecked.

Initially, Sweden declared itself to be neutral. Their economy was in large part dependent on exporting iron ore and ball bearings to Germany.

Between 1936 and 1939 Sweden's defense budget was increased nearly one thousand percent, and the primary cigarette company had been nationalized to raise government funds for defense as well as for government pensions.

Suffice it to say that Sweden was prepared to defend itself if necessary.

I was asked to arrange diplomatic talks in Berlin between Sweden and Germany in the spring of 1940.

Talks were going fairly well after the first week. My objectives were to keep Sweden out of war with Germany and to negotiate within Sweden's policy of neutrality.

The sticking point was that Germany wanted to maintain trade relations and use the Swedish railroad system to access occupied Norway for its strategic military position and resources.

In the end, Sweden agreed to the German demands. It was the lesser of two evils - to get along economically with the Germans or risk being attacked by them.

What that meant to Sweden was that they were no longer considered neutral, but non-belligerent. Sweden did not openly help Germany in the military sense but did not block access across Sweden to Norway. I had accomplished only the objective of staying out of war with Germany.

After three long weeks of talks in Berlin ended, I decided that I needed a break from work. I had heard that there was a jazz club downtown called the Blue Tango - it sounded interesting.

I went alone to the club after dining with my associates at the inn where we were staying. We were scheduled to travel back to Stockholm on an early flight the next day.

I intended to have a drink and enjoy the music for only an hour or so; it was already late by the time I headed out.

The Blue Tango was a very popular club, especially with the military. It was crowded, smoky and noisy.

As I stood in the entry looking for a place to sit, I thought, "I can't hear myself think in here. This was a bad idea."

The crowd pushed me toward the only seat that was available - directly in front of the empty stage which was at the same level as that one seat. I sat at the tiny round table right in front.

A waitress asked what I'd like to drink and I ordered a stein of Berliner Pilsner Boch Beer.

When she returned with my beer, she leaned close and said, "The gentleman at the next table has paid for your drink and sends his regards."

I looked to my right and I recognized the uniformed man as Hans Hermann. He nodded as he caught my eye. He had been involved with the German diplomatic team that I'd been in talks with over the previous weeks.

I nodded in return and toasted him with my beer stein. I wondered why he would be so agreeable after being the most argumentative one at the talks from beginning to end.

My thought was interrupted when a singer stepped onto the stage. She stood barely two feet from where I sat.

She had lush chestnut-colored hair that fell in soft curls over her bare shoulders. The flowing sky blue material of her strapless gown accentuated every curve of her petite figure.

She began to sing "Dream a Little Dream of Me." Her deep brown eyes drilled into me. It seemed that she was singing only to me.

Before I knew it, her song ended and she spoke into the microphone, "I'm Raya Simone and I thank you for joining me here tonight. Before I leave you, I would like to sing one more song called 'We'll Meet Again.' I hope you like it."

Raya still sang directly to me and my heart felt as if it was in my throat! For me, time stood still and flew by all at once. If I could have stayed in that time and place indefinitely, I would have done so.

Suddenly, I heard clapping and cat whistles from the crowd and I became aware that Raya was no longer singing. She had walked into the audience and was talking to Hans, the man who had sent me a drink.

The patrons were leaving, the lights were turned up and Hans came to my table with Raya at his side.

I stood. Hans shook my hand and said, "Per Lundgren, please allow me to introduce to you my sister, Raya Simone.

"Raya, this is Per Lundgren, he is the Swedish diplomat that I told you about."

Raya offered me her delicate hand. I was struck by her strength and by the electrical current that shot straight through me.

She spoke first, which is fortunate because I was quite speechless.

"Per, I've been anxious to meet you. My brother has related to me how instrumental you have been in assisting Germany in the talks. You are quite an accomplished negotiator."

I could not decide how to respond. She was obviously pro-Hitler and I was in Berlin to protect Sweden from Hitler.

I simply said, "I enjoyed your singing very much, Raya.

"It was so nice to meet you and I'm afraid that I must take my leave as I will travel back to Stockholm early tomorrow morning.

"I will say good evening to you both."

With great reluctance, I let go of Raya's hand and headed for the door.

I took a step and turned back to see who grabbed my right arm. It was Hans.

He was smiling but his eyes were very intense, and he had not taken his hand from my arm.

Hans leaned in and spoke into my ear. He said, "Raya and I would like you to join us at the after-hours club with some of our friends. I'm certain that you will find that this meeting will benefit both of us."

Without waiting for my answer, he added, "There is a car at the back door right now waiting to drive you to the place. We will be there by the time you arrive. You will need a password in order to be given access; it's 'zodiac.' Speak to no one until you see us again."

He left me standing alone. There was no reason for me to trust Hans Hermann, and I didn't know who his friends were.

I could not think of a scenario that could benefit me. This was far too mysterious and dangerous for my taste.

Add to that the fact that I had no idea where I would be taken. If this was a scheme to abduct me, it was likely to be quite effective. I would simply get into a car in an alley and disappear into the night.

That was my logical mind at work - the left side of my brain.

I chose to focus using my right brain. Those ideas did not occur in the same way; they weren't really thoughts but did add a certainty to the creative thought process.

My decision to ignore what both sides of my brain warned me not to do, would alter my life in unimaginable ways.

On high alert, I slipped out the back door of the Blue Tango Club and saw the door of a limousine being held open by a man in Nazi uniform.

He motioned for me to get in.

My mouth was dry and my heart was pounding. I knew that what I was doing was foolhardy, but there was no turning back now.

I got into the back seat of the limousine, the door slammed shut and seconds later the car screeched out of the alley toward my destiny.

The lamp on the desk flickered and got brighter. Julia sat in stunned silence. Uncle Per had “left the building” so to speak. Apparently, he had finished telling his story for that night.

She touched the world map on the green “X” where Manhattan was, to confirm that she was completely in her apartment - body and mind. A second before, she was sure that she was in Berlin.

The music CD had looped and was replaying, “We’ll Meet Again.” It was haunting, and it was confirmation that she had been writing for nearly an hour.

She shut off the music, folded up the map and turned off the desk lamp.

Aloud, Julia said, “I will read what Uncle Per dictated when I wake up tomorrow.”

She walked to the bedroom, promptly dropped onto her bed fully clothed and fell fast asleep.

End of Sneak Peek Chapter from "The Journal"

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