

EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By Homer Kizer

Chapter Eighteen

Seven hours of flying plus an hour on the ground in Atlanta, another hour on the ground in Seattle— when coupled to his one a.m. departure from Cincinnati, the flights west and north make for a well-worn morning following a worn-out day. But the morning, like an ebbing tide, has receded before him as his flights crossed time zones with hardly a bump. It is now, according to the pilot when they entered the approach pattern, only 5:17 a.m. Alaska Standard Time. It's 22 degrees at the airport. Minus 6 Celsius. A Siberian temperature.

As the 727 descends into the thin fog obscuring Anchorage, suspended somewhere below him, either ahead of him or just behind is Jim Calkins, an agent he must clear from the field. He can thank Peggy for Calkins' name, but he had expected someone to be sent, just as he expects Peggy to have trouble for driving him to Cincinnati. He will be surprised if she isn't prosecuted, but she isn't his concern today. She'll be merely another casualty of global containment, a game played on the Plains of Shinar when history was young and Titans crushed resistance. A game still played on the Plain of Shinar, where Persians attack Chaldeans for control of oil fields and shipping lanes.

His Delta flight from Atlanta to Seattle had been nearly empty so he'd been able to sleep a little. But this Alaska flight north connected with a flight from Houston and is filled with roughnecks returning to Prudhoe Bay, taking what they've dubbed the *red-eye special* back to the Slope. These oilfield workers, most aging men with overhanging guts, have about them the unrefined look of new wealth. Cowboy boots and hats and fur-ruff parkas— they cluck to each other like sandgrouse at a water hole, their voices just loud enough that he has to listen carefully in order to hear what is said about pissing in green plastic bags. Drilling mud must be troweled into plastic barrels to be shipped Stateside for disposal. They feed Arctic foxes T-bone steaks, or so they tell each other.

If they spoke either louder or softer, he might have been able to ignore their conversations for the past three hours. But it's the misalignment of his internal clock that causes him the most problems this morning. His past three days, Jerusalem time, have been compressed into two. His body argues for going to bed, not beginning a new day, the snow-covered mountains across the Inlet already glowing pink above the fog.

The embassy made reservations for him in, judging from airport advertising, Anchorage's finest hotel, the Captain Cook. He hurries to claim his single bag; he hurries past a standing full-mount of a brown bear and of a moose and of red foxes, of a perched bald eagle and of king and coho and chum salmon. He glances at each animal without feeling a desire to harvest a member of the specie. Rather, he must bag a Magician, a far more dangerous adversary than any bear, more cunning than any fox, and more determined than all salmon. *Itzak, I will find you. Pray for me, for Israel.*

Itzak, do you remember the story you tell about a Polish rabbi and the Death Angel? The Angel had come for the rabbi who'd just married a very young wife. The rabbi tried to debate with the angel, citing the Law about humoring a new wife for one year, but the Angel would hear none of his arguments, no matter how cunning or reasoned. Finally in desperation the rabbi asked the Angel to wait only a minute while he dressed. To this, the Angel

agreed. But in that minute, the rabbi ducked out of his the backdoor and ran to his brother's house. He beat on his brother's door until his brother let him in. Then telling his brother to come quick, he grabbed his brother by the arm and dragged his brother back to his hovel. Meanwhile, the Death Angel had grown impatient and had decided to pounce on the rabbi as soon as the rabbi came through the door.

The rabbi stopped outside his door and told his brother, "I am old and the Death Angel awaits me. You are my brother. And it is written, 'Go in unto our brother's wife and marry her and raise up seed to our brother.' It is the Law."

The rabbi's brother remembered the words of Judah to his son, and he remembered his own wife's wrinkled face and shriveled breasts, and he lusted after his brother's young wife. So he said, "It grieves me to hear that the Death Angel awaits you, Brother. I will, of course, raise up seed unto you." And the rabbi's brother enters first the rabbi's hovel.

Like a cat on a mouse, the Death Angel pounces on the rabbi's brother, and the Angel doesn't realize his mistake or the rabbi's trick until the Angel has taken the life from the soul of the rabbi's brother. Then the Angel says to the rabbi, "Don't think that you have escaped me. I will be back for you when it is your brother's time."

Itzak, don't think that you can escape me. Your magic may deceive demons, but I will find you and will complete this terrible task I've been assigned.

A long line of Yellow Cabs waits in front of Anchorage's International Airport. He half expected to be greeted by an Eskimo with a dog sled, but the city appears like every other world city, except Jerusalem, the stumbling stone. He asks a cab driver to take him to the Captain Cook.

Streets are wide and lined by young trees, and the cabbie drives too fast. Buildings appear new. Pickup trucks outnumber cars, and traffic sits on green lights and runs the reds. *Midnight Sun* seems to be the most popular name for businesses, followed closely by *Northern Lights*. White seems the dominant color for everything from houses to hoarfrost to melting snow berms to the bark of naked birches.

The Captain Cook Hotel is brown rather than white.

His room is in Tower One and on the fifth floor, and its price is far higher than its elevation. For the cost of one night, he could lease a castle overlooking the Rhine for a week or a house in Madrid for three months.

He has a telephone call he must make—

Listen, Itzak, the lineage of Eli the priest ended because he wouldn't slay his sons who sacrificed to Belial, the lesson of our heritage. I have to do this thing that I hate. Don't make this harder than it is.

You shouldn't have rubbed off your shadow. Now you must show yourself before I find you. And the demons who advise presidents and premieres know where you are and what you are doing. They will make everything known.

A female voice answers, "United Jewish Appeal."

His first part of his code is the parole: "Is this where I give blood?"

"All gifts are accepted. Do you wish to speak to someone about your gift?"

"My gift is spoken for."

He hears the rerouting of his call to the embassy's basement and hears special services' scrambler pick up his call. Good, the receptionist recognized the parole that, even now, is being monitored by Central Intelligence. So his encoded cipher begins with time and temperature, then the code rackets forward the number of minutes past the hour, and with every passing minute again advances the number of minutes past the hour, a simple schema for relaying time-sensitive information.

"Any seed of Jim Calkins?"

"No, but Peggy Sax was arrested this morning. We didn't see theatre."

"Keep plowing the files for the agent. What about the Magician?"

"Our whiskers feel nothing."

"Does the cat have cheese?"

"Not known. None has been offered on the market since the shadow was shaken."

He wonders what else he needs to know before terminating this call with its odd idioms, a part of preventing rapid decryption. "Instructions for green?"

"No red lights showing. The caboose is on its own trestle."

"Keep this line available." He hangs up without waiting for a reply.

Well, that call wasn't productive. No news of Calkins, nor of Itzak. No additional uranium offered on the world market. No orders other than not to jump off a bridge. And Peggy arrested? That happened a little quicker than he expected, which isn't good news. *Itzak, you old rascal. How do you blind those demons of high places so that they won't cry, "Here he is," huh? Is this something you deliberately didn't teach in those cellar workshops beneath the streets of Hafia? or is this a new skill you learned while I was being slain in the Urals?*

If you were after you, tell me where you would begin so early this morning. Would you hunt for the one name we still know, Hugh McCarver, now that the fisherman lost his memory? Where else might you begin?

The information he has is scanty at best, the reason he is here rather than another agent. Miracles are expected from him, and quickly locating the Magician will take a miracle.

What he knows is that another agent is on his way North, an agent probably traveling under his given name. And on a hunch, the type of manifestation of his subconscious the Magician taught him to utilize, he calls the hotel's desk: "Say, this is Room 512. My friend Jim Calkins should've checked in a little while ago. Could you give me his room number?"

"Just a minute."

There is a saying that *a stone slung will hit something*, a poor translation of the Hittite expression found on stones carried by Assyrian captives to the marshes of Baikal, those stones reminders of David's defeat of Goliath and the promise of an heir to sit on his throne as long as there is night and day. And this stone query of his strikes the skull of Washington—

"I'm sorry, Mr. Calkins hasn't checked in yet. Would you like to leave a message?"

His instinct is to say, No, but he still has a pebble in his pouch: "Tell him Les Jones called and will get back to him."

"Very well, Mr. Jones. I will put your message in his box."

He thanks the desk clerk, an older man, then returns the receiver to its cradle... he arrived in Alaska without a weapon. Each year, airport security worldwide makes traveling with weapons more difficult. But he has a contact who will sometime today receive a package shipped by overnight express from New York. That package will contain his Uzi, silenced and modified to function with subsonic loads; and a couple of pistols, a military Eagle and a little Mauser in 9x17, the Mauser also modified for squib loads. So he doesn't want to meet Mr. Calkins until after that package arrives.

He's now hungry more than he is sleepy. There's is a restaurant on the ground floor; so rolling around the coins in his right front pants pocket as if those coins were stones, he descends another slow American elevator. When it finally settles and its door opens, he steps forward far enough to see that only a young woman is on the front desk. Instead of continuing on to his right to cafe, he wheels left and says, "Say, Les Jones just called down here to leave a message for Jim Calkins, who hasn't yet checked in. I'm supposed to have you add where and when they should meet."

"Let me see." The clerk, Sheri, according to her nametag, checks their reservation book, notes a number, then turns to the board behind her, finds the message, and asks, "What do you need to add?"

The room number is 1236 in Tower Two: "Say that Les will meet him at eight tonight," he glances over his shoulder, "in the cafe over here," he points over his shoulder with his thumb.

"In *The Pantry* then, eight o'clock?"

"You got it."

"I'll make sure he receives the message."

See, Itzak, you taught me well. I learned from you. Now you must learn from me... you don't know the terror unleashed in an atomic blast. Oh, you might be able to compute the energy release on a chalkboard, but you don't know what it is to live without flowers, without a blade of grass anywhere. You don't know what it's like to live with

plutonium in your lungs, one speck killing the whole body. You and your generation have slain the future with the terror your brilliant minds devised. Repent, Itzak. Do not teach others your ways of war. Surface, please.
I leave you a riddle, Magician. Solve it if you can. Among dead men, who remembers the past?

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