

The Recall

Tages Anzeiger

Weltpräsident Tsien und sein Pilot Opfer eines Flugzeugabsturzes

"Sarah! Sarah! Wake up!"

"Mmm? What's going on? It's still early, apparently", she said with a glance at the window...

"Look at what I just read in today's edition of the *Tages Anzeiger*! Looks like you were right. The *Eleven* must have found a way to get rid of *Tsien* without being suspected. According to this article, the aircraft, a fast two-seater with vertical take-off, was seen flying exceptionally low by fishermen. Witnesses say it suddenly banked and then nose-dived into the sea where it disintegrated. Pieces of wings and various wrecks were found, but the fuselage and cockpit sank tens of meters deep. In any case, one thing is for sure, I will certainly be recalled at short notice."

"Yes, probably, but give me some time to wake up and we'll discuss it after breakfast. In the meantime, make us a pot of coffee and I'll meet you shortly."

[Damned, muttered *Sarah*. This is certainly going to ruin my short-term plans, but maybe it will speed things up in the right direction. We shall see. In the meantime, let's hurry... Anyhow, I would have preferred to avoid this development.]

Twenty minutes later, *Sarah* stumbles into the kitchen with a yawn and sits on a stool in front of the professor who is looking at his communicator while taking a sip of black coffee. She pours herself a cup with a little cream and waits patiently for him to set his device aside.

"So, she says, are there any details in the paper or messages for you?"

"Not yet, the professor replies, but it shouldn't be long. I guess this means I'll have to give up the congress and consider your research assignment proposal more quickly. I don't think they will object to the transfer in such circumstances, since there is almost always incumbent switching in the management staff, as soon as there is a change at the top level... The new designated leader wants to surround himself with a team of close associates that suit him. Moreover, this reassignment would remove me from the immediate seat of power while relegating me to what they would perceive as a demotion. Of course, they can't possibly know that this is our goal. I'll call them this afternoon if they don't do it before."

"In my opinion, the aircraft was flying low to escape detection. *Tsien* used to be angry and impulsive. He must have tried to evade confinement and leave the base to hide somewhere. It would only have taken a short while in the jungle without protection to have caught one of the deadly diseases (seeded intentionally, I believe) that haunt these places. Rapid contagion in the cockpit's pressurized enclosure and a sudden dizziness of the pilot at a critical moment will have done the rest."

"It's possible, says *Sarah*. Apparently, they assessed his character well and took advantage of it. No need to speculate about that for now, make us eggs and Röstli, I'm hungry, suddenly..."

"I'll do that, right now..." **Ping!* "Ah! That is already a message from Headquarters. My presence is required there within five days. They have already booked a (paid) flight via Dubai for me, the day after tomorrow. How nice of them," he says wryly. Well, there will probably be a mourning period and a funeral with the usual speeches! We might as well enjoy our breakfast and a day's respite before going back to the salt mine..."

"Okay, says *Sarah*. As for your reassignment, I'll take care of that. We'll pretend you're going to lead the small team we have in the *Mariana* lab and do some research on metallic hydrogen and on extremophiles, but it will be up to you to tell them and confirm the gambit!"

"Yes, my queen, replies the professor with the hint of a smile..."

[A week has passed. Professor *Van den Brook* is back at his post where he is expected to undergo a debriefing, because of the events narrated before. The head of the Special Security Services, the same one who orchestrated the plot leading to *Tsien's* confinement and his tragic end, is about to interview him]

"Welcome back home, professor, he says with a misleadingly smiling face. I regret having had to end your stay in *Geneva* so abruptly and I hope you had time to recover from your hasty trip back here, but the circumstances you know about left me little choice."

"I'm aware of that, sir. It was a shock to hear the news the very day after I arrived there, but I understand the imperatives of the service in such a situation. Was it possible to locate the wreckage and recover the bodies?"

"Indeed yes! Fortunately, there were witnesses and the sea was not too deep. In addition, the aircraft was equipped with an automatic distress transmitter that enabled locating the cabin quickly, making its recovery easier. The pilot and his passenger died instantly, but post-mortem tests showed that both victims were carrying a particularly dangerous virus that is unfortunately known to be endemic at the base where the President had been. I am afraid that this unfortunate accident was the result of recklessness or neglect of health measures... There is no need to tarnish the public's memory of the president, but the information will have to be included in the confidential report to be put on file.

The choice of a successor shall wait a little longer, but it goes without saying that we will have to make changes in the senior management team. I think you understand me, don't you? Do you plan to keep a job right here or to apply for a transfer?"

"My colleague in *Geneva* who is currently working at the *CERN* thought that this would be an opportunity for me to get reacquainted with Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED). She offered me a research position in a cutting-edge field, the production of metallic hydrogen. I would lead a small team in a secluded, secure laboratory near the

Mariana Trench. Since I have a personal interest in deep-sea species, this would also be an opportunity to take a closer look."

"Ah? Hum! Will this person accompany you?"

"No, sir. She holds an important position at the CERN and must stay there, but I will be under her supervision. Also, since I was unable to attend the conference, she will file a report about it for the Administration, and will contact the officials here about the reassignment, if the Directorate agrees, of course."

"It is not for me to decide, says the other, but I do not see why there should be any opposition to this move. I hope you will make some interesting discoveries there, he said, casting a brief, sarcastic look at him. We will probably meet again for the customary ceremonies."
