

Chapter One

Only a trickle of light filtered through the drapes and into her room, but Susan was intent on seeing. She searched through the dark shadows cast by unfamiliar objects, but she could not discern the source of her terror. She lay motionless on her back, on top of the bed, moving only her eyes while she mentally toured the room for the tenth time. “Nothing, nothing is here,” she thought to herself, but the same questions ran through her mind again and again, fruitlessly hoping for answers: “Where am I? Why am I here? What woke me up? Should I move? If I wanted to, could I?”

Such questions usually do not retreat unanswered, and Susan’s case was not unusual. Immobilized by fear without even knowing what she was afraid of, Susan searched, and searched again, into every shadow, not satisfied that nothing to fear could be found.

Then, just as she was about to sit up and have a better look, the phone by the bed rang, and Susan screamed. No one pounced on her, though, so a second later she looked around her again, and realized where she was. The phone rang a second time, but she did not answer it. Instead she tried to regain her composure, so utterly destroyed but two minutes before. While she did the question, “what woke me up?” ran through her mind again.

As the phone rang for the third time Susan glanced at her watch. It was just after three in the morning. “Perhaps it was the bells tolling the hour that woke me,” she thought to herself, and accepted that conclusion. Her fear disappeared quickly, though she still couldn’t remember when she had returned to the hotel. The last thing she could remember was that she had been walking along the Thames when the 1 a.m. bells had tolled.

The phone rang seven times before Susan finally answered it. When she did she merely said, “Yes”, and continued to try to piece

together her fear-fragmented memories of the recent past. “Why did I fall asleep without getting undressed?” she kept wondering. More than half a minute passed before she even realized that someone was talking to her.

“Mrs. Stanford. Mrs. Stanford. Are you there? Is something wrong? Answer me, Mrs. Stanford, answer me,” a male voice kept insisting.

“Yes, I am here,” Susan said as soon as she realized she had answered the phone, “but who are you?”

“Mr. More, Mrs. Stanford. I’m sorry to have disturbed your sleep, but—”

“Mr. More? What Mr. More?”

“Alan More. You *must* remember me. I was talking to you yesterday about the Association for the Advan—”

“Oh, Mr. More. Please excuse me.”

“It’s quite all right, Mrs. Stanford. It’s my fault for waking you at such an ungodly hour.”

“Oh, you didn’t wake me. I was already awake.”

“Really? Well, I couldn’t sleep either, Mrs. Stanford, for thinking about you, and about what I’d told you yesterday. There’s more to it than that. Much more. I’ve got to talk to you about it. It’s imperative, Mrs. Stanford, most imperative.”

“I’d be happy to come again today.”

“No. That can’t be done. Someone might suspect. I’ll meet you for lunch at Inigo Jones instead. Is that all right?”

“Certainly, Mr. More, if you think that’s better. But who is Inigo Jones, and where does she live?”

Alan More laughed. “Inigo Jones is not a she, Mrs. Stanford, he’s a he. And he’s been dead a long time. I meant the Covent Garden restaurant on Garrick Street—”

“Oh—that will be fine. Shall we say 11:30?”

“Splendid. Sorry again for disturbing you, but I couldn’t sleep until I had this settled. Cheers.”

“Goodbye, Mr. More,” Susan said, and then hung up the phone.

“I wonder what that’s all about,” she thought, but a second later someone came charging into her room, so she screamed again.

“What’s wrong, Mrs. Stanford? Do you need help?” the desk clerk of the Waldorf said. “We heard you scream and—”

The clerk’s agitation was so extreme that it made Susan laugh. However, she quickly regained her composure. “No. Nothing’s wrong, as far as I can tell. I’ve just been on edge. I’m really sorry to have disturbed you. It was kind of you to check, though,” she said as she gave him a pound note, “but everything is really all right. My phone rang and it startled me. That’s all.”

The clerk eyed Susan curiously as she explained away her screams, but once she had handed him the tip he was satisfied that she really had no need of his assistance, so he bowed slightly, and then left the room.

Susan was so lost in her thoughts that she did not even notice his departure. She sat near the head of her bed, still dressed in her dark brown pants and cream-colored blouse, and wondered why she was so uneasy. It was not like her to be so nervous. She had had tough investigations before, but none had set her mind reeling as this one had, even though the facts of the case gave little reason for concern.

Susan rested her head on her knees, which she held close to her with her arms, and sifted through her memories to see what was causing her so much alarm. The day before she had met Mr. More at the London headquarters of the Association for the Advancement of the Human Race, but the insinuations of her editor had seemed unfounded—at least at first.

The Association appeared to be what it claimed to be: an exclusive club of philanthropists, founded by the same Mr. More some twenty years earlier, which was devoted to giving away millions of pounds to worthy causes. The influence of aristocratic attitudes was obvious, such as the requirement that prospective members had to have given away at least one million pounds to charitable organizations before being accepted into the club, but that in itself was no crime. The monthly meetings at the Savoy were likewise no crime. But the suggestion of sinister intent was too strong in Susan’s mind to dismiss it, even though Mr. More himself seemed so frank, so genuinely kind, that he nearly had allayed all her suspicions—nearly, but not completely.

Something about the way Mr. More kept insisting that “we *always* give our money *exclusively* to educational institutions” had bothered Susan, and she did not miss the possible implications of the phrase, “at least that has been the Directors’ policy to date,” which Mr. More had added after having made his claim for the tenth time.

Of course, being an investigative reporter, Susan was trained to catch such implications, and in this case those were precisely the admissions she was hoping for. However, even if her editor’s allegations were true, she could see no reason for alarm. After all, who cared if a group of eccentric philanthropists helped finance anti-nuclear organizations?

Obviously, Max did. Max was more excited about this assignment than any other he had given Susan in years. She thought he must be hoping for a sinister plot, a conspiracy of some kind or other, with which he could titillate the readers of the New York Inquirer, but Susan thought the chances were good that no such conspiracy existed. Obviously Max disagreed. If he agreed, he would have sent Bill, his ace liar. Bill could write a good lie about anyone, and the readers would go for it, but Susan would have no part in such imaginative excursions into terror. She was honest, and wrote only what she was convinced was true. Max Fischer knew that, and relied on her reputation for honesty to sell newspapers for him.

Of course, Susan knew all this too, and that was what made her so uneasy. “He’s got to suspect something terrible or I wouldn’t be here,” she kept thinking, and Mr. More’s attempt to hide the club’s anti-nuclear donations added to her distress. “For what reason could he wish to hide such a harmless fact? And why is Max so excited about this particular case?” Susan’s thoughts ran on and on, seeking out answers, but finding none.

When the 4 a.m. bells tolled Susan finally woke from her reveries. First she massaged her right foot, which had fallen asleep, and then she got up and went into the bathroom. She washed her face and hands, slipped off her clothes, put on the old nightgown she had had since she was seventeen, and then returned to bed. She lay there for quite a while thinking, but she dozed off before

the 5 a.m. bells had tolled, and slept soundly until she was again startled out of her sleep by something.

“Where am I? What woke me?” she thought again, but this time the light streamed in through her closed drapes, and she knew at once it must be late in the morning. She also quickly realized that she had been startled out of her sleep by her own inner alarm, so she looked at her watch, and jumped out of bed. It was 10:17 a.m., and she had just enough time to freshen up before leaving for Inigo Jones.

As she pulled her blue dress pants on she suddenly thought that maybe, just maybe, this restaurant might be a stuffy British one, where a woman in pants would not be admitted. Her first impulse was to go dressed in pants anyway, to cause a scene, but she thought again, and realized it wouldn't help her get her story, nor would it prove anything, so she gave up her mischief, and put on a flower-print cotton dress instead. She combed her long, dark brown hair once more before she left, and then walked out of the Waldorf. Following the desk clerk's directions, she found her way by foot to Garrick Street, and the Inigo Jones restaurant. It was only 11:10 a.m. when she arrived, but as she approached the restaurant she recognized Mr. More standing outside.

“Good morning, Mr. More. I see you are a little early.”

“Well, yes—yes, I guess I am.”

“Well, I am too, as you can see,” Susan said, and then laughed to dispel Mr. More's nervousness. “Shall we go inside?”

“Perhaps we could go for a walk down Bow Street first. They aren't expecting us yet, you know.”

“As you wish, Mr. More, as you wish,” Susan said as they turned off Garrick Street and into the narrow lane.

Chapter Two

They walked down Bow Street silently for a while before Alan attempted to begin his explanation. “Please excuse me, Mrs. Stanford, for needlessly disturbing you this morning—” Alan began, but Susan interrupted.

“Never mind, Mr. More. But please, don’t call me Mrs. Stanford. If you must be formal, I prefer Ms. Stanford, but I would like it even more if you just called me Susan.”

“All right, Susan,” Alan said, and then began talking about British architecture.

Since his first attempt to explain had failed, Alan had decided to change the subject. He gave Susan a short tour of Covent Garden, and told her a few stories about Inigo Jones, the 17th century British architect. When they returned to the restaurant it was exactly 11:30. They were seated quickly at a reserved table in the back.

After they were seated, and the waiter had disappeared with their orders, Susan finally couldn’t stand the small talk any longer, so she interrupted Alan’s discourse on harpsichords, brought on by the restaurant’s own, and said, “excuse me for being so blunt, Mr. More, but what do you want to tell me? Certainly you didn’t call at 3 a.m. so that you could tell me about farmers’ markets, architects and harpsichords.”

“No, Susan, I didn’t. But it’s hard for me to tell you.”

“Well then, I’ll make it easier. In my years as a reporter I’ve heard almost everything, so don’t be squeamish.”

“It’s not that, exactly, but—but—I guess I really don’t have a good reason for having called you, you see. I just wanted—”

Susan sighed audibly. “Really, Mr. More, I wouldn’t have expected that of you.”

“Oh, I know. I’m quite ashamed of myself for wanting to see a married woman again—”

Susan interrupted this time by laughing. “That’s not what I meant, Mr. More. You can relax. I’m divorced, and have been for eleven years.”

“But your name is Mrs. Stanford.”

“No. Ms. Stanford. I never changed back to my maiden name. I was known as Susan Stanford, and I wanted it to remain that way. Besides, Susan Zwiefelhofer would never—”

Now Alan was laughing. “All that worrying for nothing. Why, I can hardly believe it.”

“And neither can I, Mr. More. You sounded far more concerned about something else. Some information you left out about the Association, I believe.”

“Oh, oh that. Well, yes, yes, there was something. Let me see now, what was it? Oh yes. I wanted to tell you that we occasionally make exceptions to the million-pound rule. Myself, for one. But there have been a few others, too, I believe—men who were devoted to charity but without a fortune in every case.”

“Is that what you called me at 3 a.m. for? Why couldn’t you have—”

“Well, I must confess, Susan, that I thought that if I made it sound more mysterious I’d get a chance to see you again.”

“But you could’ve just asked!”

“But I thought you were married.”

“Mr. More, you really are something!” Susan said, but she was thinking to herself that he was a terrible liar. She immediately concluded that Alan must have changed his mind since he had called, so she led the conversation back to harpsichords, and through the roundabout route of Bach, and the inventions of the printing press, the electric light, and the steam generator, to nuclear power.

“Don’t you ever wonder where this is all leading us, Mr. More? I personally think it is to destruction. Why, the nuclear wastes already produced are sufficient to—”

“Sufficient to what, Susan? They aren’t sufficient to do much damage at all, you know. Certainly not nearly the damage air

pollution and acid rain are causing. If only cost-cutting experts could be eliminated. They are far too expensive a luxury. No one ever does it right the first time, and that's our whole problem. The long-term economics aren't even considered. The industrialists are just too small-minded for their own good. It hurts their own profits, you know. They'll destroy themselves completely unless—"

"Unless they destroy us first," Susan said.

"No, Susan—they may destroy us, that is correct, but they made us as well, in a sense. Do you seriously think more than 2 billion human beings could live on this planet if there were no advanced technology—no development of energy? I doubt it. And that leaves the whole question of the improved quality of life out of it. The chance for life billions will have in the future is dependent on our ability to do an enormous amount of work—and that requires energy and advanced technology."

"But we'll use up all our resources—"

"Yes, if we depend on fossil fuels alone, we will—unless we choke ourselves with smog, or destroy our farmland with acid rain first. There are risks in all these forms of producing energy. Unfortunately, the research being done now is too small-minded, and may already be too late. What we need is imaginative research into new possibilities. Some way we can create energy from an abundant source—such as hydrogen. If only we could control fusion—"

"You really are intent on more energy, aren't you?" Susan said, to lead Alan on even further.

"Of course I am. Anyone who knows even a little about human nature would have to predict an enormous catastrophe for the 21st century if the supply of energy stagnates—not to mention the possibility that it could even diminish. No one will be able to turn back the clock gently. If anyone even tried, everyone else would ruthlessly grab for what is left—"

"And that would mean nothing would be left—"

"Precisely. That is why I think there is only one possibility for the human race to remain relatively tranquil, and that is if an abundance of energy is available for work. I'm convinced there is

more than enough energy for us to reclaim almost all the land on earth for farming, and to desalinate the oceans for water, too. If we were only intelligent enough to tap these resources, I'm sure the earth could support 100 billion human beings. And then—all of space is there for us to explore.”

“But we would ruin the natural environment—”

“Of course we would. We already have. Every change ruins the ‘natural’ environment, but if we are intelligent, our ‘ruination’ of nature will improve it. It certainly would make it more conducive to human life.”

“You are counting on us to be exceptionally brilliant, aren't you?”

“No. I'm not counting on that at all. Quite the opposite—I just *wish* that we could do it right, and I know that it is possible. However, I am aware that no one is willing to assume responsibility, to take the necessary risks.”

“Well why should anyone want to take such big risks?”

“Because by not making decisions we are taking far bigger risks. Certainly it's possible that a rocket designed to carry nuclear wastes on a collision course with the sun could explode on lift-off and cause severe radiation damage. Perhaps it might even kill 10 million people. But not dealing with this problem will probably do even more damage than the worst possible accident could. And such accidents are only possibilities. The other damages are *certain* if the wastes are allowed to remain.”

“But how can you support nuclear power if—”

“Because I support it only if it's done right. We just have to think bigger, that's all. We have to be aware of the alternatives we are dealing with, rather than comparing the present to an unrealistic ideal. If it is to be done right, we have to do it in the best possible way. Energy is the greatest expense in any operation, from food for our bodies to the transportation of our goods. We have to be willing to pay for it, that's all. And we'll have to pay far more for it later if we don't pay a reasonable amount now so that it can be done right. After all, how much are clean air and clean water worth? How much should we be willing to pay for an end to black lung

disease, and coal miner deaths, and city smog, and the increase in lung cancer it causes, and—well, as you can see, there are humanitarian arguments on both sides of this question. But it is only a wild, irresponsible longing which prompts well-meaning individuals to suggest we return to a simple, agricultural society. Such a move would necessitate billions of deaths—even if it were done peacefully. So, I favor more energy completely. Fusion, hydrogen, nuclear, solar, tidal—whatever will work best in the long run, but something's got to be done. Someone's got to think big.”

Susan pretended to think about what Alan had said for several seconds before she quietly said, “if you feel this way, Mr. More, why has your Association just donated more than a million pounds to anti-nuclear org—”

Alan was so shocked he stood up and stared at Susan. It took him several seconds to regain his ability to speak. When he did he nearly shouted. “How do you know that? How could you know that? Only two weeks ago—”

Alan caught himself, but it was too late. He sunk back into his chair as the other diners all stared at him.

A waiter swiftly walked up to their table, and insisted that Alan behave more decorously, to which Alan mutely agreed. The waiter then motioned to the harpsichordist to resume playing, and everything in the restaurant returned to normal within a few minutes, except as far as Alan was concerned. He neither said anything nor looked at Susan again until they had finished eating. After he had paid the bill, Alan finally looked at her. He stared deep into her eyes, holding her gaze for nearly a minute. Then he said very softly, with intense emotion, “I need your help. I need it very much. Please, Susan, please.”

Without saying a word Susan agreed to help, and then, to her surprise, Alan stood up, bowed politely without any further explanation, turned around, and walked out of the restaurant.

Susan was so confused that she sat there dazed, but excited. “It's true,” she thought, “they *have* donated money to the anti-nuke groups. And it's got Alan scared. My God, maybe Max is right. Maybe this is going to be a really big story. But what help

can I give Alan? Perhaps he just wants me to leave him alone. No, that can't be it. He—he loves me. I can feel it. But that's not the help he needs either. Oh, why didn't he let me know what I could do?"

As these thoughts ran through her mind, Susan stood up to leave. As she did, a crumpled sheet of paper fell off her lap. She leaned over and picked it up, tossed it onto the table, and started to leave. As she opened the door, however, she suddenly thought about that sheet of paper again, and walked quickly back to the table. She smoothed it out, and in the dim light she read:

It's too dangerous for me to meet you again. Go see Professor MacPherson in Edinburgh. He can tell you more. He lives in Brodie's Close, just off the Royal Mile. Good Luck.

Alan More