

**YESTERDAY,
TODAY
AND
TOMORROW**

PROLOGUE - YESTERDAY

FIRST MURDER

IRELAND: A YEAR AGO . . .

It would be her first kill. Until now, all the operations she had performed with such precision had stopped short of murder. Corporate espionage, the theft of industrial secrets, blackmail and sabotage had all been part of her stock-in-trade, part of her arsenal in the cut-throat warfare of globalised business.

But this wasn't business, not anymore.

This was personal.

Yukiko Funakoshi moved her weight in the crook of the tree branch, feeling the frost-hardened lichen crunch beneath the palm of her hand. Above the darkened bowl of the valley the last stars twinkled faintly against the dawn. On the far side of the lake, massive cliffs, worn to ragged scree by the passage of time, towered over the water. And just below her on the hill, standing guard like a stone sentry was the old farmhouse.

Yukiko could see the layout as if it had been a model in a training exercise; the track, curving down from the Dublin road, the gatehouse, the security fence around the cluster of laboratories and out-buildings, and the main courtyard. Two cars were parked there side by side, his and hers, a sleek BMW and a yellow Mini.

In one of the pockets of her black cotton suit was a remote control unit, no bigger than a matchbox. It had three settings- Safe, Automatic, and Manual- the triggers of a bomb.

It would be her first murder, but it was not the first death.

Yukiko watched the light of dawn tint the high clouds with yellows and pinks. But the colours she saw were those of her mother's best kimono,

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glimpsed crumpled through a half-open door, the milky-white skin of an outstretched arm, and the red-wine stain of blood.

And in reflections from the lake, Yukiko saw a dark Tokyo night, splashed with neon and a cheap apartment near Shinjuku station, where her father had died in her arms.

“I was weak, little tiger, but you’re strong . . . aren’t you? We trained you to be that way, your mother and me, before your uncle Gichin took you to be his . . . his guided missile. I have one more target for you now . . . that calculating swine . . . Gilkrensky!”

Yukiko closed her eyes against the visions and focussed on her target - the man who had killed her parents as surely as if he had put a gun to their heads and pulled the trigger.

Gilkrensky!

He was less than a hundred yards away!

She raised a pair of night-vision binoculars to her eyes and scanned the out-buildings around the farmhouse. In the ghostly green of the image-intensifiers she could clearly make out the electric fence with its razor wire, the small black mushrooms of motion sensors and the painted sign which read Gilcrest Radio Corporation - Advanced Electronics Facility - Keep Out!

Yukiko smiled beneath her black cotton hood, lowered the binoculars and lifted a slim laptop computer onto her knees.

Keep out indeed!

She had already been inside, thanks to the electronic jamming device planted by her accomplice inside the farmhouse. Now she was on-line and wired to every security system in the place, in complete control. She carefully opened the computer, shielding the glow of its display against her body. There in front of her was full access to the GRC security system, a mosaic of images from a dozen closed-circuit TV cameras, and each one of them expertly jammed with a recorded digital image of an empty vista.

It had been worth the price, worth seducing that spineless slug Delgado who would now be pacing his bedroom in the farmhouse below, waiting for her to steal Gilkrensky’s new supercomputer and make them both rich.

Fool! Gilkrensky’s death would bind Delgado to her forever, as she worked her way along the line of people who had to pay with their lives.

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She raised the binoculars again. A single light still glowed from a window above the courtyard. It was Gilkrensky's workroom, where he had been labouring all night to overcome the software problem that was the last hurdle to success.

Her eyes travelled back again to the two cars in the courtyard. Why did Gilkrensky's wife cling to that little old car? What kind of woman was she, who flouted wealth this way?

Then, there was movement in the courtyard. Two figures had emerged from the guard-room and were looking up at the security cameras. Who were they? Did they know that something was wrong?

Yukiko lowered the binoculars, pulled out a cell phone and pressed a quick-dial key. The number answered instantly.

"There are two men in the courtyard," hissed Yukiko. "Who are they?"

Tony Delgado sounded frightened. "I don't know. Describe them."

"One is short and stocky. The other is taller and dark. They look ex-military."

"Does the short one have a moustache?"

"Yes."

"Then that's Crowe, the man Gilkrensky brought in to upgrade security and protect the Minerva. But he's not supposed to be here until this afternoon. He must have arrived late last night and parked around the back."

The two men walked out through the farmhouse gate, making their way around the perimeter of the security fence, inspecting it carefully as they went.

"Is he good?"

"He's ex-army," Delgado said, "and so are the people with him. If you have the Minerva, just move away and run. There's no way they can catch you on foot."

Yukiko sat motionless in the tree as Crowe and his partner waded through the heather towards her. The perimeter fence would bring them within a few metres of the tree in which she hid. She thought of the powerful motorcycle concealed in the bushes behind her. Should she stay and trust in her absolute stillness, or run? She had not yet taken her revenge. Gilkrensky was still alive.

A light blinked on in Gilkrensky's living quarters. The computer on Yukiko's knees gave an almost inaudible "bleep". She looked down.

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Someone else was awake and sending an e-mail message on the farmhouse network. Yukiko lowered the volume of the machine to a whisper and called up the message on the screen.

She was staring at the face of a woman with long red hair, speaking to a web cam mounted on an unseen computer. The woman's green eyes were bright with tears as she said, "Theo. You knew what I'd do if you went back to that bloody machine of yours last night. So I'm recording you a message on the only thing you ever listen to. I'm going, Theo. I'm leaving you! I can't take this anymore . . . this being alone."

The face on the screen turned away. Behind it, Yukiko saw an open wardrobe. There was a rucksack, packed and ready, near a door. Then the woman stopped and faced the camera again. This time the tears were flowing. "Theo! I hate this! Why can't we just talk like we used to? I know we're so different, you and I. But I love you, Theo . . . I really do!"

Yukiko watched as the recording ended and the screen reverted to the images from the security cameras.

Love! Yukiko had not known love- real love- since the death of her mother. For twenty years she had known nothing of warmth, understanding or belonging. In her father's country she had been a half-caste "Jap" taunted and bullied. In Japan she had been an "outsider", a gaijin, to be despised and ignored.

But who needs love, when you have hate? And what greater pleasure can there be than the consummation of a lifetime's hatred in an exquisitely crafted act of revenge?

Crowe and his partner were fifty metres away. If she melted back into the shadows, protected by her suit and her years of training in stealth, then she could still be ready when Gilkrensky finally emerged and got into the car.

Then Yukiko remembered . . .

The bomb! The woman could trigger the bomb!

She squinted through the binoculars just in time to see Gilkrensky's wife stride out into the courtyard, heading past the BMW to the yellow Mini. She watched her wrench open the door, throw in her rucksack and haul on the ignition, again . . . and again . . . and again . . . The laboured heave of the starter

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motor echoed across the valley. A pheasant whirred into the air. Crowe and the man beside him looked back towards the farmhouse.

Yukiko cursed. She had planned this moment to perfection - and now her strategy was falling apart!

Delgado was a fool. She should never have trusted him with a plan like this.

Then the woman collapsed in tears over the steering wheel of the little car. Yukiko trained her binoculars on the guard-room door. It was still shut. The door of the Mini flew open. The woman dragged out her rucksack and ran to the BMW. Yukiko saw her rummage in the bag for a moment, unlock the door of the car and get in. The moment she turned the key in the ignition, a kilo of carefully placed explosives would blow her and the vehicle to kingdom come. Yukiko's hand slid down to the bomb control. If she disarmed the device, it would eventually be found and security around Gilkrensky would tighten even more.

Then she saw him, at the window of his workroom, looking down at his wife.

Yukiko saw their eyes meet.

She thought of the blood on her mother's best kimono. She remembered the words her father had mumbled to her before he died . . . and drew back her hand.

This way was better. This was justice!

She would make Gilkrensky suffer the agony of loss, as she had, before she killed him.

Then the silence of the valley was shattered by the roar of an explosion, the crash of splintering glass, and the screams of the man at the window . . .

TODAY

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NAZCA, PERU - PRESENT DAY

Jessica Wright watched the flat desert slide beneath the old Huey helicopter as the drum of its engine pounded on her skull. She was tired, thirsty and jet-lagged. But above all she was angry- angry that she had been forced to fly half-way round the world on a mission that should have been accomplished by a simple phone call.

What the hell was Theo Gilkrensky playing at?

She squinted into the sun, now low on the horizon to the west, and cursed that she had been in too much of a hurry to pack her Polaroid clip-ons. The closed cockpit was like an oven. She wiped the sweat from the bridge of her thick-framed glasses, and pushed her long brown hair back behind her ear-phones to give herself some air. As she moved, she noticed the pilot eyeing her legs. He was a tiny nut-brown man who looked as if his whole body had been shrivelled by the sun, like those dried tomatoes she could buy back in London. "Dehydrated Man," she thought. "Just add water and serve!"

He was pointing at the ground, while his black eyebrows rose in question above the mirrored lenses of his sunglasses. "You wanna go higher, maybe?" he shouted above the clatter of the engine. "Look at the lines before the light fades?"

"What lines?"

"The lines! The Nazca Lines! Everyone who flies in my helicopter wants to see the lines. Your boss, Doctor Theo, El gringo rico. He go crazy about them."

Yes, thought Jessica. Crazy! You have that right.

"OK," she yelled back. "Have it your way. Let's see the lines!"

The pilot twisted the throttle and the helicopter climbed into the sky. As she watched through the Perspex panels, Jessica saw that they were flying over a narrow coastal strip. On one side, the Pacific Ocean was turning red beneath the sinking sun. On the other, the Andes Mountains rose dark and mysterious into the dusk. Below them, the desert stretched flat and featureless, broken here and there only by the giant rifts of geological faults, stretching inland from the coast.

The pilot grinned at her.

"There!" he shouted. "The lines."

Jessica peered through the panel at her feet. At first, she saw nothing and then, as she stared at the barren landscape, she could make out lines, some random and some in definite shapes, as if a giant hand had used the ground as a doodle-pad. There was a massive drawing that looked like a supersonic jet with swept-back wings, huge straight lines and vast geometric shapes. Then, on a smaller scale, there were pictures; a spider, a bird, a monkey with a whirlpool spiral for a tail. But even these must have been hundreds of metres long.

And Theo had spent millions to study this?

"Somebody's idea of a joke?" she shouted above the din of the engine.

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The pilot scowled at her. "No joke, lady. These lines are over two thousand years old, and nobody knows how they were drawn. There! See those little towers. They're for the tourists who can't afford a plane ride to see the pictures."

"But they're just . . ." And then, as Jessica looked at the giant drawings so far below her feet, the mystery hit her. How could a pattern that only made sense from the air have been drawn on the desert floor two thousand years before mankind learned how to fly?

Then she knew why Theo was interested. It was all part of the crazy quest he had embarked on six months ago. She should have known!

"Pretty neat, huh?" shouted the pilot. "Your boss and me, we fly over them many times, with all sorts of fancy equipment, measuring this and that. Then he decides on a spot and flies in millions of dollars' worth of gear from Lima by private jet. Had to get clearance from the military at the highest level to work here, he did, really throwing his money around in all the right places. Still, that didn't stop him causing a lot of trouble."

"Trouble?" asked Jessica. "What trouble?"

The pilot shrugged. "They're a superstitious people around here, lady. They don't like rich gringos messing with things they don't understand. Nazca is a holy place for them. Maybe they're afraid your Doctor Theo will ruin the lines and bring bad magic down out of the sky. Maybe they're afraid he'll frighten the tourists and put them out of business. Maybe they're scared he'll make the Pachamama, the earth mother they all worship, angry. Whatever it is, they don't like him. And then, of course, there's Sendero."

"What?"

"Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path, communist guerrillas, terrorists . . . you know. They haven't been too active since their leader was captured in '92 and the government declared the amnesty. But this is just the sort of cause they could still get mixed up in . . . a rich gringo, paying off the government, upsetting the locals, causing trouble. I tried to warn him, but he wouldn't listen. Every day, at dawn and dusk, he uses a computer to draw big pictures in the sky. The sky is alien to the people here, lady. They fear it. They love the earth. He's causing a lot of trouble, your Doctor Theo."

"He won't be causing it much longer," shouted Jessica. "He has to come back with me!"

The pilot nodded, and pointed to the ground again.

"There! See what I mean?"

Looking down, Jessica saw a huddle of caravans, glittering against the sand. They were arranged in a crude semicircle around a large square of marked ground and in the centre was a metal tower, taller and newer than the other viewing platforms. It looked for all the world like an experimental drilling rig, or the test site for an atom bomb.

She saw armed guards around the perimeter.

"That's it," shouted the pilot. "You wanna land now?"

"That's what I'm here for."

"You got it!" And the engine noise made another head-splitting octave change as the machine settled towards the desert floor in a cloud of flying dust.

"Miss Wright! You shouldn't have come here!"

A short, thickset terrier of a man with a bull neck and a barrel chest, ran from the caravans to greet her, or was it to intercept her? His formerly neat moustache had been joined by rich desert stubble and his skin was darkly tanned. Sweat stained the armpits of his khaki shirt.

"Where is he?" she said.

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Major Jonathan Crowe, head of security for the Gilcrest Radio Corporation since Maria's death, and more recently Theo's personal bodyguard, glared at her defiantly.

"He's busy, Miss Wright. He's asked me to escort you back to Lima and says he'll talk to you after the experiment."

"I have to speak to him now, Major. I've travelled right across the world."

Crowe glanced at his watch. The setting sun turned the desert pink around them.

"It isn't safe here, Miss Wright . . ."

But Jessica had already pushed past him, striding across the hard-packed crust of stones to the caravans. She saw technicians busying themselves at the four corners of the marked square. Their heads turned at the sound of raised voices. Crowe ran after her, but she kept going. She had to talk to Theo. She had to make him see sense.

And she was going to do it right now!

"Miss Wright. I must insist!"

Crowe stepped in front of her, blocking her way.

"I am the Chief Executive Officer of this corporation," she said slowly.

"And I report directly to Dr Gilkrensky on a private contract," Crowe said. "I don't work for you anymore. Now, for your own safety, I must insist that you leave."

Jessica looked beyond him. The caravan was only a few yards away. "I don't give a shit!" she spat, and pushed past him again.

"Miss Wright!"

This time he grabbed her painfully by her left arm.

"Crowe! Get your hands off me!"

"It's all right, Major," said a voice from the caravan door. "She's come this far. You won't stop her now."

Gilkrensky stood in the doorway of the caravan, dressed in dirty brown slacks, worn running shoes and an old leather jacket over a grubby white shirt. His long dark hair and sparse beard, almost hid the long scar running from his left temple to his chin. The hands that held the doorframe were scarred too, badly burnt from his desperate attempts to pull his wife's body from the burning car.

Jessica still had nightmares about those hands.

"Theo! We have to talk."

"Come on in then."

She looked past him, into the control van. In the darkness beyond his shoulders, she saw out the flashing indicators of a dozen instrument panels. As he moved to one side to let her in, she also saw a big laptop computer, the size of a briefcase. The words *Minerva 3,000*, glared at her from its lid.

"Not in there," she said. "I'm not talking to you in front of that . . . that thing!"

Gilkrensky frowned, and looked at his watch. "All right then, we'll go to my own place. Follow me!"

"It'll be sunset in twenty minutes," said Crowe, speaking past her.

"I know," Gilkrensky said. "But this won't take long."

He pushed open the door on the next caravan and led her inside. There were books and papers everywhere, a simple metal bed, a table, and a pair of chairs. The only colour in the place came from the setting sun and from a picture in a simple wooden frame. It was a photograph of a woman with coppery red hair in a forget-me-not blue dress against a deep green backdrop of trees. Jessica scowled at the picture as Gilkrensky stepped over to the refrigerator and pulled her out a bottle of mineral water. She popped the cap, took a long pull and rolled the ice-cold glass across her forehead, while

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Gilkrensky shovelled a pile of books onto the floor from a chair. She sat down, with her back to the photograph.

“Why didn’t you answer my calls?” she asked.

“I was busy. And besides, I thought you weren’t speaking to me after that row when I got back from Florida.”

“That was personal. This is business. We have to talk about the corporation. It’s been months since you’ve been at a board meeting. The other shareholders have lost confidence and the Japanese case is coming to a head. You have to come back and sort this out.”

“What’s the problem? You’ve got lawyers and consultants on contract. Put them on it. You’re my CEO, Jess, my top manager. Go manage it!”

Jessica banged the glass bottle down on the Formica table, splashing water on the books and papers. Yes, it was her corporation, her life’s work. And now he was throwing it all away.

“Jesus Christ, Theo! I’ve travelled thousand of miles to talk to you, and that’s all you can say?”

Gilkrensky sat down on the other side of the table. His brown eyes stared into hers for a moment.

“There’s nothing else to say, Jess. I’m selling out.”

“What!”

For Jessica, the whole world suddenly stood still. Every detail of Theo’s face froze in front of her. Every sound inside and outside the caravan, from the purr of generators, the crackle of footsteps on the desert crust, to her own breathing, seemed to reach her from another planet.

“I’m selling my shares,” he said. “They don’t matter to me anymore.”

A tiny distant voice, that she barely recognised as her own said, “Why?”

Suddenly, Theo Gilkrensky looked old. She saw the grey flecks in his dark hair, the deep lines around his eyes, the tiredness.

“Like I said, they don’t matter anymore. Besides, I need the money for something else.”

“For what? What could be more important than the Corporation?”

“It’s personal.” Outside the caravan, the lower edge of the setting sun touched the horizon. Gilkrensky glanced at his watch. Then he got up from the table, took a radio headset from a shelf and put it on.

“You have to come back and discuss this with the Board,” she said, shaking her head. “You have to meet them and talk it through.”

“I’ll talk to them on the phone. My lawyers can take care of the rest of it.”

“You don’t understand, Theo. Your shares won’t be worth the paper they’re written on unless you come back and sort out this mess with the Japanese. The Mawashi-Saito lawsuit isn’t going to go away. I’ve spent months getting them to agree to talk. There are going to be preliminary negotiations in Tokyo, next week. But you have to be there. It’s you they’re suing!”

Gilkrensky stared out of the caravan window towards the metal tower and the setting sun.

“You can handle it, Jess. That’s what I pay you for.”

“Not without you, Theo. It’s gone too far now.”

Gilkrensky looked at his watch again.

“Jess. You shouldn’t have come. I wanted to tell you all this back at the- ”

Then his hand went to the ear-piece of his radio headset.

“I’ll be there in a minute,” he said into the microphone. “Start the countdown without me.”

Jessica reached out across the table between them and took his hand.

“Theo. Please! We have to talk this through!”

“I’ll see you back in Lima, Jess, tomorrow.”

“No. I won’t go back without you!”

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“You have to. It’s dangerous here. Major Crowe will take you back in the helicopter.”

“I see. A military escort, is it?”

“Jessica,” he said, turning to face her. “This experiment is the last of a very expensive series. It’s important to me.”

“I know!” she snapped. “It’s been the only thing in your life since Maria died, hasn’t it! Well, let me tell you something! Since you dumped me after Florida, this corporation has been the only thing in my life. I built it, I’ve kept it together while you’ve been chasing around the world after a ghost, and I won’t see you flush it down the toilet.”

She stood glaring at him. Everything they’d shared on a personal level was gone. She felt nothing for him anymore but anger, that he could put this stupid quest for a dead woman before what she had built for him, a business empire worth billions.

“No!” she said flatly. “I’m not leaving here without you. Mister Chairman!”

Gilkrensky stood framed in the doorway against the setting sun.

“All right then,” he said. “Wait here, and don’t go outside. This shouldn’t take more than an hour.”

She watched him turn and walk back to the control van. Crowe stepped over and blocked her way.

“I’m sorry about grabbing you earlier, Miss Wright. But there are bandits around here. That’s why the guards are armed. It’s not safe to go out after dark.”

“You’re very loyal, Major,” she said. “But I know bullshit when I hear it.”

“Perhaps. But, like I said, I work directly for the Chairman now.”

Jessica saw the door of the control cabin close.

“I know,” she said. “And I work for the Corporation. Perhaps I always have.”

Gilkrensky shut the door behind him and ran his eyes over the banks of controls, monitors and data-recorders that clicked and purred all around him. He was alone in the cramped compartment.

“Is everything ready?”

“Yes, Theo,” said a woman’s voice from a speaker in front of him. “All systems are operational. I will commence the initiation sequence in ten seconds to synchronise with local sunset time.”

“And the holographic projectors?”

“All on line. Image creation commences in five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one!”

Gilkrensky stared out through the Perspex window of the caravan across the marked square on the desert. The sun dipped below the horizon. Its deep red fire glistened on the polished metal of the test tower. In a moment the world would be in darkness . . .

There was a flash of light from each of the four hologram projectors. Towering into the blackness like a mirage was the colossal image of a pyramid, a hundred and sixty metres high. It burst above the desert floor, shimmered for a second, and then hardened into a perfect crystalline shape, a flawless ancient creation, timeless, mysterious and alien.

From a bank of loudspeakers, three notes boomed out across the desert.

Dim! Dom! Dim!

“Hologram initiated,” said the voice. “Sound signal emitted! Synchronous wave-form peak predicted in thirteen minutes and fifty seconds. Nothing can stop it now.”

“And the test material?”

“In place on the tower. The recorders are starting to pick up the first signatures of the energy wave. It’s working.”

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Outside on the desert floor, the towering shape shone brightly against the dying glow of the sun. In the clear sky above it, dark clouds began to form out of nowhere. There was the roll of distant thunder, getting closer.

“Can we maintain the image?”

“That is not a problem. Image strength is one hundred percent and stable.”

Gilkrensky glanced down at the rows of energy recorders below the Minerva computer. The faintest pulse of power was dancing in the low ranges of the instruments.

“Time to event?”

“Ten minutes and five seconds.”

“Good. Maintain the recorders at maximum sensit- ”

He heard a loud smack, as if the plastic window had been hit with a hammer. Behind him, on the wall of the caravan, a digital video recorder shattered, fizzled, and died.

Gilkrensky looked up.

Staring down at him, from the centre of a spider’s web of radiating cracks just a foot above his head, was the single unblinking eye of a bullet-hole.