

03 New Question (@elen)

They drove to the airport and got into the air without further problems. Selena was thankful for that. Her knees were still shacking. In her entire life no one had ever pointed a weapon at her and the shock fell off slowly. It was a short flight from Brussels to Saarbrücken and the little airport came quickly in sight. It was late at night and the sleepy security agent just waved them through. Charles had phoned his contact again from the plane and when they entered the empty arrivals hall, a young woman was waiting for them. She looked from one brother to the other. "Charles Barker?" Barker was shocked. How did this woman knew him? "You are Barker, aren't you? I am sorry, but I have only a very old photo." Photo? Charles was confused. All this sounded neither very professional nor like the FBI. On the other hand the woman did not look very threatening. She was only about 1,50 m tall and she couldn't under any circumstances hide a weapon under the summer dress she wore. Charles sighed. Why not? Their situation could not get much worse. "I am Charles Barker. Agent....?" "Agent? Dear God, no. I am not an FBI agent. My father had given me a list with three names some years ago and told me that if any of these persons should ever contact me, I have to help them without asking questions. You told me that Eric Bradshaw is dead, and the third person had died a long time ago. So you must be Charles Barker." "What's your name?" "Oh, I am sorry. My name is Elen Fraser." "Jamie Fraser's daughter?" "Yes." That seemed to make sense to Charles. He had met Jamie at Quantico. They had been working together for many years, till Jamie went to the CIA. He relaxed a bit. "Thank God, how is Jamie?" "My father is dead. Killed in action, about three years ago." "Great God, I am sorry. I did not know..." Charles felt very lonely in this moment. One of his best friends was dead, for three years. And he didn't even know. "We should not be standing around here," William said. "Yes, sure. I wanted to book a hotel, but my family has a holiday home in the area." "Very good. Thank you, Miss Fraser." Selena smiled. "There are two rental cars outside. Just follow me."

They arrived at the small house. "I am sorry, but I did not have the time to do some shopping. But there is a bakery in the village. It should be opening soon. I have to leave now, my kids are waiting at home. Call me on the phone if you need something." Elen said good-bye. The holiday home was small, but cozy. "I

will go to search this bakery. I am hungry,” William said. “I'll go with you,” said Julia. Selena started to undo their luggage. Charles was sitting on the sofa, holding his head in hands. A dozen thoughts went around in his head. Eric was dead, Jamie was dead. In this moment he saw his entire life as a sequence of dead. Too many friends he had lost. Too many people he had killed. And again and again he saw this guy in the hotel room, putting the weapon to Selena's head. He definitely wasn't sorry for this dead. If anything would had happened to Selena..... He shuddered. “What is it, Charles?” He looked up and for a long moment he simply looked at her face. She withdrew a strand of hair from his face. In the next moment she was in his arms. Charles knew, he had to let her go. He would let her go. One more kiss and he would let her go. He could not do it.....

„We are back,” William said. No reaction. “Charles? Selena?” William looked around in panic. No one was in the living room and the kitchen door was wide open. There only remained the bedroom. William opened the door, prepared for anything. Anything.....except the thing he saw. Charles and Selena laid closely enlaced on the bed, sleeping. William wanted to ask if he had not told them over and again not to play around, but Julia grasped his arm and shake her head. “Look at them.” Julia was right. Selena laid totally relaxed in his arms and Charles had a mien, he had not seen in his brothers face for a very long time. Peace was in his face and he smiled in his sleep. “Oh my God,” it become clear to him that his brother was not at all playing around.... Before he could do or say anything, he heard noises from the front door. Damn it. This was really the wrong moment. He took his brother at the shoulder. “Charles, wake up. There is someone outside.” Julia gave a look at the clothes, which were lying all over the room and smiled. “We wait outside.” She pulled William out of the room.

Charles had his weapon ready, while William opened the door. The intruder seemed to have rested on the door from outside, because he felt down to Charles feet with a load noise. Charles put away the weapon, relieved. “Ellis, what in hell are you doing here?” “Nice to see you too, partner.” Charles smiled and helped him to his feet. Before Charles could help it, Ellis gave him a short and close embrace. “Great God, we thought that you are dead. Conrad sends me.” “Conrad? That's good. What is going on in Chicago? You have to tell me all. But first: this is my brother William and the two ladies are Julia and Selena.

My partner: Ellis Dove.” They sat down together in the living room. Charles sat down on the sofa and Selena sat next to him. It seemed to be totally natural to put his arm around her and to hold her close. Ellis couldn't trust his eyes. He had never seen Charles like that. What had Charles said to him: you are not to have close bonds in this job. But a blind man could see that Selena was doing him very good. So he kept his mouth shut.

Charles gave a brief summary of what had happened. “Ok, Charles, things are like that. The FBI is a madhouse at the moment. Conrad had fumed like a madman, when they lifted your cover. He and Paulson had a terrible fight over this. First it looked like that Paulson had betrayed us. Conrad thinks she is Viper. But I am not sure. Anyway we can trust no one, except Conrad. We did not know how to contact you, but when Conrad was able to locate your mobile phone.” William gave his brother a reproachful look. “But when I arrived at Brussels, you had been already gone. But when Conrad got a strange phone call. A woman who knew exactly there you are.” “Elen. Damned.....we have to get out of here at once.” “Relax, Charles. She had called Conrad at home. Nobody knows, just Conrad and me.” “Ok, so what is the plan?” “Conrad has a contact for us. We shall meet him at Paris tomorrow.” “Paris?” Ellis gave him an envelope. “Paris is only about three hours in the car. I suggest we leave the plane here. These flight plans probably told the enemy how to find you.” Selena cursed. But it wasn't possible to fly without flight plan.

“It is nine o'clock in the morning. I suggest we get some sleep.” “Good idea.” “You can have the bedroom,” William gave his brother a sassy smile. Charles gave him an angry look. “Shut up, little brother.” William laughed. “They are mighty taken with each other.” Julia smiled. “You can say that again.”

Charles thought about how quickly his life had changed. Some hours ago he had felt very lonely and now he held this wonderful woman in his arms. Sometimes you receive a gift when you do not expect it. The sound of a shot was in his ears. When were was blood everywhere. It took him a moment to understand that it was Selena's blood. When he started screaming. “No.....”

Charles woke up from the nightmare. Selena? She laid next to him. Unhurt and sleeping. Oh, thank God. He took a deep breath. Fortunately he had not woke her up. It seemed that he had only screamed in his dream. He looked at her sleeping face. She was so beautiful. And so vulnerable. It had been only a

nightmare. But one day this nightmare might come true. He could not stand it to see anything happen to her. This must not happen. Especially not by his fault. He must not pull her into this. He forced himself to let her go. He would like to simply hold her close and forget about everything. But his enemies will not forget him. Never. He had to bring this to an end. Alone. As he was used to. So he could fight best. He rose and got dressed. He gave a last look to her sleeping face and emerged out of the room.

Selena woke up. "Good morning, Charles." When she saw that she was alone. She rose herself. She thought that he was with the others or in the bathroom. She went to the living room. William was in the kitchen and Julia came out of the bathroom. "Where is Charles?" "Is he not with you?", William asked. "No." He looked at the coffee table. One of the car keys was missing. "This damned fool."

William cursed and blustered. "Don't panic. Conrad expected something like that, I managed to smuggle a GPS transmitter into Charles jacket. We will find him." Ellis opened his laptop. "He is on the highway to Paris." "Let's go." Selena didn't spoke a word during the entire journey. They parked the car and approached the Eiffel tower. Charles was waiting in the line at the cashpoint. William felt sick with relief. Charles was fine. He had been afraid that he would never see his brother again. He could have killed him in this moment. Selena started to run, as she saw him. "Charles." He turned around. "Selena." Before he could say anything, Selena gave him a sounding slap in the face. "Don't you dare to ever again run away like that. What did you have in mind to run away like that? Are you crazy?" "I....." Charles looked at his brother for help. "She is totally right. You are a fool." Ellis shake his head and Julia gave him an angry look. Selena continued to call him names. He did the only thing that came to his mind to stop her. He kissed her. She returned his kisses. And in this moment, he didn't care about that someone might ambush him. He didn't care about that half the population of Paris was starring at them. All that counted was Selena. "I love you, you idiot. Never to something like that to me again."

Charles stood at the platform of the Eiffel tower. Selena gave him an encouraging smile. Ellis and William protected his back. Come what may, he felt prepared. A man approached him and for a moment Barker doubted his own

mind. "Jamie?" "Hello, my old friend." "But you are dead." Charles knew in the same moment that he sounded like an idiot. "Dead?" Jamie laughed. "How do you come to this?" "Your daughter..." "Ellen? She is at Stanford to study law." "What? But who is that Elen with whom I talked yesterday?" Barker told him what had happened the last days. "I have no idea who Elen is. But she seems to risk a lot to help you." Jamie opened his backpack. "So let's see what I have for you." Jamie had money and new passports for all of them. "Call me if you need the plane. I can let your flightplans disappear." "I do not know how to thank you, Jamie." "Hogwash. You saved my head more than once, when God knows who had been after me. Conrad told me that he will phone you if anything happens. I suggest you return to that house for the moment." "Ok, I think we can trust Elen." "Yes, I think so too. But something else. Who is that gorgeous woman? And what kind of stupid thing have you done to make her beat you?" Charles turned red in the face. He told Jamie about Selena. "I am happy for you, my friend. It is damned time that you learn that there are other things when the job in life. I will give you an advice. I saw how the two of you look at each other. Never let that woman go."

Charles said good-bye to his friend and went to Selena. She stood with her back to him, watching the skyline of Paris. He embraced and kissed her. "Beautiful, isn't it?" "Yes, I always wanted to see that." "Selena. I am sorry that I run away like that. This was stupid and mindless. I was scared for you." "And I was scared for you. I am sorry that I beat you." She kissed him. "Have you talked to your contact?" "Yes, things are clear for the moment." "Let's go than." She took his hand and they went together to the others.