JAMES COMEY

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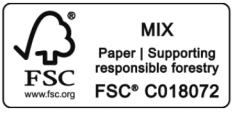
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To the dedicated prosecutors and agents who kept our country safe,
yet were wrongly forced from public service.

GLOSSARY

CD-4: FBI counterintelligence squad focusing on members of the GRU

CD-5: FBI counterintelligence squad focusing on members of the FSB and SVR

CD-9: FBI counterintelligence squad focusing on North Korea

CIPA: Classified Information Procedures Act

DUSA (*doo-sah*): Deputy US Attorney

FISA: Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, a federal law that provides a framework for the surveillance and collection of foreign intelligence on domestic soil by government agencies

FSB: Russian domestic security service

GCA: Grand Central Avionics

GRU: Russian military intelligence service, reports to the Minister of Defense

IC: Intelligence community

NOC: Non-official cover spy; intelligence officers that do not have diplomatic immunity

RGB: Reconnaissance General Bureau, North Korean foreign intelligence agency

SCIF: Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility; an enclosed area in which electronics and recording devices are prohibited so that classified information can be discussed

SOG: Special Operations Group, composed of armed agents specializing in surveillance

SSG: Special Surveillance Group, composed of unarmed FBI employees, skilled at blending in

SVR: Russian foreign intelligence unit, reports to the president

PROLOGUE

Morningside Heights buzzed in ways Edgar Perez could never have imagined a couple decades ago. The life of the neighborhood was one of the reasons Edgar looked forward to the nights he taught his corporate finance class. In what seemed like a different age, he had been a graduate student at Columbia, spending four years in upper Manhattan to get an MBA and a law degree. Now, he walked down Broadway marveling at all the activity on the street after nine P.M.

Edgar glanced toward the noise coming from a café jammed with tables of people drinking craft beers and playing Settlers of Catan or Monopoly. He shook his head slightly from side to side. *No board-game beer halls in my time*, he thought, focusing on the sidewalk just in time to avoid crashing into the line at the Häagen-Dazs ice cream shop. It was all so much more alive now, and definitely more fun than his day job. Right out of Columbia, he had joined what was then called the Grand Central Rocket division of the conglomerate General Electric. GE sold the rocket division to Lockheed Martin, which was later pressured by the Department of Defense to spin it off into its own company, because the the government didn't like all its key suppliers being controlled by a single owner. And so it became the modern-sounding Grand Central Avionics, known in the defense world as GCA.

GCA had recently become the US government's primary supplier of armed military drones, especially those that could attack an enemy in autonomous swarms using AI brains to talk to one another and decide on their own how to get through enemy defenses. To Edgar, it felt a bit like science fiction.

His own work was less cool. For two decades, he had worked in the company's Manhattan offices, climbing the ladder of the finance department, which he now ran as the chief financial officer. He didn't make drones; he made sure the money the company spent and earned was accurately tracked and reported to the shareholders, and to the government—GCA's best customer.

But that was okay, because Edgar loved numbers. They were the fun part of his job, which had other drawbacks, one of which came to mind as he walked down Broadway and felt the weight of his phone bouncing in his suit jacket pocket. He wondered if he should turn it back on. He knew it would hold texts and maybe a voicemail or two from his CEO, who reached out to him constantly after business hours to ask numbers questions or, more often, to gossip about people at GCA. Only Edgar's wife knew that he had come to hate the guy. He moved a hand for the phone but stopped himself. *No*, he thought, *not until after Fumo*.

Truth be told, the casual Italian eatery on Broadway at 108th Street was another reason he loved Wednesday nights. There, he could sit alone facing the street and savor their delicious penne alla vodka with a glass or two of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo.

He was a creature of habit. By the time Edgar's class ended on Wednesdays, the little restaurant—which, despite the name, prohibited smoking—wasn't crowded and he could always get what he had come to think of as his personal seat. As he stepped through the door, the hostess simply smiled and turned, sweeping her hand to offer him

the usual spot, a small table at the end of a cushioned bank. He slid onto the soft mid-back banquette, facing the empty bentwood hairpin chair and Broadway. A familiar waiter—one of a group of Latino men whose names he didn't know—paused at his table and chuckled when they each said "The usual" at the same time. Five minutes later, Edgar sipped his red wine and looked around, trying to imagine what the other patrons were discussing and where they taught or studied at the university. He could still sense the weight of his phone, but the brief feeling of guilt was interrupted by the arrival of his steaming shallow bowl filled with short tubes of al dente pasta with angle cuts drenched in creamy orange sauce. It was the best part of the day—of the week, actually.

"Can I get you anything else?" the waiter asked.

Edgar looked up with a smile. "I think I'm all set."

As the waiter hustled off, Edgar reached toward the condiment caddy in the center of the little table, then turned quickly back, saying, "Oh, yes, the pepper flakes are missing." But the waiter was gone. Edgar didn't eat penne alla vodka without first covering it in the spicy red flakes. He looked to the nearby tables, trying to decide if he could borrow one. Before he could lean over, a waiter set a glass shaker of flakes on the table, nodded with a tight smile, and disappeared toward the back. *Never seen an Asian waiter here before*, Edgar thought.

Edgar turned the shaker upside down and shook it repeatedly, releasing a red pepper blizzard onto his pasta. Then he put the shaker into the caddy and briefly admired his pasta. He lifted his fork and carefully slid tines into the openings of two tubes—always two pieces for his first taste, always on parallel fork tracks. He lifted the hot pasta, blowing on the fork before using his lips to pull the penne into his mouth. *Delicious*.

As he chewed and watched people pass on the street, Edgar returned to a familiar daydream: What if he could convince his wife to leave the city, move to Maine, and open the pottery business they'd talked about for years? She really was talented and he could run the operation, selling her stuff locally and all over the world. They had saved enough to give it a go, to let the kids inhale country air. And he could escape from the pressure and the awful corporate politics.

Three bites later, Edgar's hand and fork fell into his lap. He couldn't breathe. He wasn't choking; he simply couldn't make his chest expand to get air. He thought to lift his hands to get help but they wouldn't move. His head had fallen back, his torso held upright by the soft bench cushion behind him. He was looking up at the leafy plants suspended on shelves that separated the bar area, frozen, unblinking, terrified. Seconds later, his heart stopped and Edgar's world disappeared.

CHAPTER 1

Nora Carleton slid into the front passenger seat and smiled at the enormous man behind the wheel. "Happy Friday, big guy."

"And to you," Benny Dugan replied in his deep Brooklyn accent, before exhaling loudly. "Remind me why you live in this depressing place? Nobody lives in 'Midtown East' or whatever the hell they try to sell this as."

Nora smiled and leaned toward the windshield, looking up at the tall building she just exited. "First," she said, using a television announcer's voice, "I'll have you know it's called the *Turtle Bay* neighborhood of Manhattan. Second, that's forty floors of fine people who've *chosen* to live here."

She leaned back in her seat and dropped the fake voice. "Third, why so grumpy this morning? The wife bugging you?"

Benny smiled as he steered the car away from the curb and into the eastbound traffic on Forty-Fourth Street. "I'll have you know that 'the wife'—a term I never use and that you should never use to refer to your mother—is the best thing ever happened to me. No, what sucks is today's traffic through the Midtown Tunnel. Don't get me wrong: I like livin' out on the island to be near the grandkids and all, but sometimes the drive into the city is a bit much. Still, beats this dark canyon."

"Hey," Nora replied as they turned onto Second Avenue, "if I were on the other side of my building, I could see the Chrysler

from my place, and if I were higher up I could see the UN. So there's that."

Benny laughed. "So bottom line—you can't see shit. Is that the pitch the rental guy gave you?"

"Nah," Nora said, "I didn't need a pitch. I just needed to be close to Grand Central for my ladybug. And the apartments with no view whatsoever were cheaper."

"How's the Connecticut life treatin' Sophie so far?"

"Good, I think. Being back at Greens Farms Academy has been great for her. And Westport's such an easy train ride from Grand Central, which I live near, as you may have heard. Nick seems to be doing a good job as a parent and it's nice for Sophie to have a half sister around all the time."

The car was quiet as Benny steered onto Forty-Second toward the UN and joined a long line of traffic. He spoke first. "Sitting over here waiting for the big 'but.'"

Nora chuckled. "*But* I miss the heck out of her and worry she's not getting the kind of engagement she got when she was living with me and Mom—the wife—"

"Nope, nope," Benny interrupted with mock seriousness, "don't make me tell you again."

"Kidding," Nora answered. "Look, she's in ninth grade now. That's such an important transition year. Sure, I see her every weekend, and we FaceTime like crazy, but I'm not there with her every day to *feel* her, even *smell* her. I can't do any of that on a video. You know how important it is to be in the room with a witness."

"I do," Benny said, "and of course I realize you don't mean to suggest your beloved child is some perp we're tryin' to flip."

The car inched forward across First Avenue toward the FDR Drive. Benny glanced left at the tall United Nations headquarters building.

"You ever feel weird when we go by here?"

"Me?" Nora said, gesturing to her right. "I'm not the one who nearly died on the next block. How's it make *you* feel?"

"Seems like another life, honestly. Maybe it's marrying your mom and moving out of the city, but that version of me seems faraway. Although my fuckin' ribs still hurt, so there's that. You?"

"Same, I think, but for different reasons, including that I didn't go through what you did. With Mom on Long Island now and Sophie with her dad during the week—and me single—I feel like work is my life now."

Nora paused and looked out the window, running a hand through her auburn hair before continuing. "Which is different, but also good. I love the work, I love the office—keeping the world safe and all that. I actually want it to be my life during the week."

"So no progress on the apps like your mom suggested?"

Nora shook her head quickly from side to side. "Stop, stop. I love you and I'm glad you're now married to my mother, but I am the Deputy United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York and you, Special Agent Dugan, are the office's chief investigator. We are *not* going to talk about my dating life. No way. If Mom wants to know, she can ask directly."

"Fair enough," Benny said quietly, adding in a whisper, "I'll take that as a 'no.'"

They were both quiet for a bit as the car snaked through the FDR Drive's southbound turns. Then Benny broke the silence. "And despite the awkwardness between us, I enjoy the days when I can give the DUSA"—he pronounced it *doo-sah*—"a ride to work. And it keeps you off the subway, which is filled with ne'er-do-wells."

Nora laughed. "First, there's no awkwardness. There are only appropriate boundaries between colleagues. Second, the subway is

fine, thank you, and only a four-minute walk from my apartment. But I do get to see more of you this way, which I appreciate. My life as an administrator these days doesn't give me enough time with the people who are actually out there making the cases."

"First, thank you for the compliment. But second, as I've told you, we ain't makin' many cases these days. Since I started helpin' the national security unit with some of their spy-versus-spy stuff, it's been slow goin', to put it mildly. There's more waitin' around and surveillance in that line of work than even the mob stuff. And at least the Mafia idiots spoke English. The stuff I've touched has been Farsi and Mandarin, but they deal with all kinds of weird languages."

Nora smiled. "I've heard that about the counterintelligence world. They're slow to build, but sometimes you get to make a case and the Department actually decides to prosecute someone.Remember when our office locked up a bunch of those Russian sleeper agents a few years back?"

"Yeah, and then we traded them for some innocent Americans the Russkies scooped up to use as bait. But don't get me wrong: even locking someone up short-term would be a welcome development. I won't say more because I know we aren't supposed to talk about the work outside the SCIF. There's some cool stuff, but it's slow going."

Nora looked at the side of his head, the gray hair now crowding out the blond in his crew cut. "Look at you, Mr. Intel, using fancy terms. Couple years ago, you'd never heard of a SCIF."

"Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility," Benny said, nodding his head. "We don't say shit unless we're in the right place, talking to someone with both an appropriate clearance and a need to know. Hey, I've done the training. Only thing I refused was the bullshit polygraph that all the FBI people have to take. Seen too many liars skate on those things

and too many innocent people get jammed up on them. About as good as readin' the bumps on somebody's head. Forget the name of that stupidity."

Nora laughed. "Phrenology. I used to say polygraphs are as reliable as throwing suspected witches down a well, although I like your phrenology reference better. But I hope you know that getting you out of it went all the way to Carmen, who had to go to Main Justice on it. She had to sign off on you getting the same exemption from the poly that all department lawyers get."

"For which I'm grateful," Benny replied. "And I don't mean to argue against my own position, but it makes no damn sense that everybody in the FBI has to do a poly, but no lawyers at Justice, of which the FBI is a frickin' bureau, last time I checked."

"That sounds right," Nora said, "but, as one of those DOJ lawyers, what I take from that is that *nobody* ought to be doing it. The US government has never caught a spy with a poly but they *have* ruined a lot of careers. And it makes security people lazy because, rather than looking for indicators of untrustworthiness, they're reading squiggles on a chart that's so unreliable it isn't admissible in any court in the land."

"Again," Benny said, "here I go undermining myself, but what I like about the polygraph is that a lot of people *think* it detects lies; those people don't go sideways because they're afraid they'll blow a poly if they do bad shit."

The conversation ended as Benny stopped at a checkpoint outside their destination, the forty-one-story office building directly across Foley Square from the Thurgood Marshall Courthouse—the Jacob K. Javits federal office building—known inside the FBI as "26 Fed," short for 26 Federal Plaza. The large windows of 26 Fed offered spectacular views and now the criminal division of the US Attorney's office had those views, two floors above the FBI. It was supposed

to be temporary—while their regular home across the street was renovated—but Nora always felt like a couch surfer in the FBI's home.

Benny displayed his credentials and was directed to drive across the hydraulic wedge barrier as it dropped into the ground. He turned left, waved to another guard, and entered the steep driveway to 26 Fed's underground garage, where he steered into a reserved space by the elevator bank.

"I still don't understand how you got a parking space down here," Nora said, opening the car door. "They told us there wasn't even room for all the FBI supervisors."

"Helps to know people," Benny replied over the top of the car.

"What people?"

Benny grinned. "Strictly need to know. I could tell you but I'd have to kill you."

Nora was tall but she still had to look up at Benny as they stepped into the elevator. "That would be a federal crime."

"Not if the Bu's counterintel people worked it. I'd be free forever while they dicked around following me to restaurants and whatnot."

The elevator stopped at thirty-eight. As the door opened, Benny said, "Have a great day, Ms. Smooth," a nickname he had long used because she was good on her feet in court.

"You too, Mr. Rough," she answered—a nod to his complete lack of diplomatic skills. And as she frequently did, she added in a tone of mock apology, "Don't mean anything bad about you."

Benny gave her the sideways look she expected. "I'm not as good a person as you think I am."

As Nora turned down the long hall toward her office, she delivered the final piece of this schtick over her shoulder: "Did I say you were a good person?"