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**Post Mortem – Tears of Blood**

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Chapter 1 pp 13-18; chapter 2

**SUNDAY**

*Come home  
and avenge  
our deaths*

## 1 Somewhere Near Munich

The dark, threatening dawn was like a painting by Hieronymus Bosch. Leaden clouds loomed in the sky, as far as the eye could see. Only a distant shimmer of light on the horizon announced the break of day.

It had stopped raining now, but it had poured all night and the road was still wet. It glistened in the beam of the car headlights while a ghostly mantle of mist rolled across the fields on either side of the road.

Avram Kuyper sat behind the wheel of his BMW making sure he didn't go too far over the 100 km speed limit. He was in a hurry. In fact he'd never been in such a hurry in all his life. But he wasn't going to risk being stopped by the police this close to his destination. He didn't have the time.

He glanced at the dashboard. 5:32 am. The journey from Amsterdam to Munich had taken far longer than he'd hoped. An accident near Cologne and night works on the A8 cost him at least an hour. Avram drummed his fingers nervously on the steering wheel.

He drove on through a small wood, up a hill and then back out into the open after the next bend. The road stretched out straight ahead of him and he could see for miles. No sign of the police. In fact there wasn't a single car to be seen anywhere on this early Sunday morning.

He had left the motorway just before Munich, twenty minutes earlier, and then headed south at Fürstenfeldbrück. In daylight, if the weather was good, you could often catch a magnificent view of the Alps from here, but at the moment the visibility was down to a couple of hundred yards.

It started to drizzle again and Avram turned on the windscreen wipers. His steely grey eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses stared intently at the beam of light from the xenon headlights shining on the road. A lot of people were afraid of those eyes. They radiated ruthless determination. But today there was something else there, too. Something that Avram

Kuyper had not experienced in a very long time: Fear. And the closer he got to his old home, the more it grew.

What was waiting for him there? His brother Goran had left an alarming message on his answering machine. Avram's stomach clenched as he recalled listening to it just seven hours ago. He'd tried to call Goran back straight away but had only reached his brother's answering machine, and a recorded message on his mobile saying that there was no reception available - Avram had left Amsterdam at once.

He was still in Holland when he called the Bavarian police and asked them to send someone over to check on Goran. An hour later they had called back to say that no one was at home, but that nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary.

The report did nothing to calm Avram's nerves.

Now he'd been on his feet for over 36 hours and the tiredness was beginning to get him. But his fear for Goran, Nadja and their two children kept him awake. The idea that something might have happened to them was unbearable.

His eyes were burning and he couldn't stop yawning. To keep the tiredness at bay, he rubbed his fingers through his close-cropped greying hair and over the thick grey stubble on his dented chin.

Deep lines appeared to have been chiseled down his sagging cheeks and across his brow. A two inch scar across his left eye - a souvenir from Bolivia - was less visible.

His stomach rumbled. It was at least ten hours since he'd had anything to eat. When he stopped for petrol on the A 61 he hadn't felt like eating anything. But he was starving now. Still, there was no point in stopping so close to home.

He ignored the hunger pangs and tiredness and drove on. He kept turning over Goran's message in his head. Goran wasn't the kind of person to ask anyone for a favour. Especially not his older brother. That hadn't happened in the last ten years. Until now!

Avram Kuyper saw a village sign saying ‘Oberaiching’ up ahead and slowed down. As he drove past the first houses and farms, forgotten memories came flooding back. He had spent most of his childhood in Oberaiching, This was where he went to school and where he kissed a girl for the first time behind the shed at Bergler’s farm. That was more than forty years ago! The village had grown since then, but it hadn’t lost its rural charm.

Avram tried to remember when he had last been back. It had to be at least seven or eight years ago. He hadn’t kept in touch with Goran or his family much since then. Which made it all the more odd that Goran had tried to reach him now.

The village looked deserted at this early hour, except for the light on in the bakery. Avram wondered if old Mr Wiedmüller still baked the loaves of bread or if he had passed on his job to his son by now. He toyed with idea of stopping for some breakfast. But he decided not to. There wasn’t any time.

He drove out of Overaiching and headed east. Shrouds of mist wafted across the fields on both sides of the road. An army of ants seemed to be crawling through his intestines.

At the next turn-off to the right, a small lane headed up hill. This was the main entrance to the estate farms, although you could only see the lights of Bott’s farm and cowsheds from the main road. The Kuyper’s farm lay in a dip on the other side of the hill.

Avram stayed on the main road until he came to the next turning less than a mile away. He turned onto a track which wound its way through orchards and fields before ending in a wood where he parked the BMW and got out.

He was wearing gumboots, moleskins and a thick woollen jumper- it was a frosty morning although it was June. He removed the side panelling in the boot and took out a shoulder holster and his Glock 22. He strapped on the holster, checked to make sure that the gun was loaded and put it away. Then he put on the padded bodywarmer he kept in the back of the car, put his binoculars into his pocket and set off.

It was freezing and his breath clouded in front of his mouth, but the cold air shook him awake and cleared his head. That probably wasn't a bad thing, considering.

The path through the wood was waterlogged because of all the rain. The muddy ground made a slurping sound every step he took. Avram had to slow down so as not to slip.

It was dark in the woods and he could hardly see a thing. This made progress more difficult, but it also meant that no one would be able to see him. That was why he hadn't taken the direct route along the farm road but had chosen to walk through the woods instead.

Ten minutes later he left the path and headed cross-country through a dense grove. The breaking dawn was gradually seeping through the dense cloak of dark grey clouds and starting to leach through the boughs of the larch and pine trees. The shapes of the trees looked like dark sculptures against the brightening sky. Wisps of mist lingered between the branches like ghosts. That's what Goran and he used to think when they were kids. They used to play here all the time, even in this kind of weather. And this scary haunted wood had frightened them. Especially Goran, who was five years younger than Avram and who used to follow him everywhere like a shadow all the time. Sometimes, Avram used to hug him to make him feel better, but usually it was more fun to scare his brother a bit more by running off and hiding behind a tree or down in the undergrowth. It was almost as if he could hear Goran's high little voice now: 'Avram, Where are you? Come back! Please!' He'd been so scared. He'd even wet himself once.

And now he might be dead, and Nadja and the kids, too. The mere idea was suffocating him.

## **2 Frankfurt, Hotel Estoria**

Her headache was killing her. She'd already taken three pills during the night, but the throbbing pain behind her eyes simply wouldn't go away. It had been a terrible week and now she was paying for it.

Emilia Ness stood in her hotel bathroom and pressed a damp towel to her forehead. It felt as if her head was about to explode at any moment. To make things worse, Emilia was dead tired. She hadn't slept a wink all night, because her mind was whirling with the trial where she'd just been a witness.

Did I do everything right? she wondered. Is Robert Madukas going to get convicted?

She didn't doubt that he was guilty, not for a minute. But she had a bad feeling as far as the possible verdict was concerned. Maduka's lawyers knew every trick in the book. During the cross-examination, they had kept managing to sow seeds of doubt about him being guilty. If they succeeded in getting a suspended sentence or an actual 'Not guilty' verdict, then all her hard work over the past few months would have been in vain.

Emilia sighed and gently rubbed her throbbing temples, but it was no use. It felt as if someone kept stabbing a dagger into her head. Damn!

It wasn't just the trial getting to her. She was worried about her daughter as well. Emilia had promised to take her out of school for the weekend for a trip to the Europa-Park. But then the trial had been adjourned unexpectedly on Friday and had recommenced yesterday – on a Saturday! Becky hadn't shown much understanding for the cancelled mother-daughter weekend. First of all, she said she'd go to Rust by herself, anyway. She wasn't a child anymore, she was fourteen years old after all. But Emilia had refused to allow that. She'd tried to comfort Becky by promising to come and see her on the Sunday. 'We'll have a lovely day,' she'd said. 'We can go swimming or watch a film.'

But the option of going swimming or to see a film didn't sound like much compared to a weekend at the Europa-Park, and Emilia knew it. So it was no surprise when Becky brought out a whole arsenal of teenage anguish to show her mother what a loser she was. Becky had sulked, she'd cried, she had yelled at Emilia and accused her of sending her away to a boarding school to be out of the way. And, of course, she'd remembered a dozen other times when Emilia had broken her promises.

Even if Becky was being overdramatic, Emilia had to admit that she wasn't totally wrong. That was precisely why everything she said felt like a slap in the face. She'd spent over an hour using all her powers of persuasion to placate the teenage fury she'd provoked, but in the end she gave up. Now she was being plagued by a guilty conscience and felt like the worst mother in the world.

She clasped the back of her neck with both hands and started to massage her tense muscles. It was no use, it was maddening. Feeling annoyed, she dropped her hands.

She eyed herself critically in the bathroom mirror.

Usually, she didn't mind her looks. Paul, one of her colleagues from Lyon, had told her at the last Christmas party that she looked like Winona Ryder and secretly, Emilia thought he could be right. But now she felt more like Winona Ryder's older ugly sister. Her shoulder-length brown hair seemed all limp and brittle to her and her face looked a bit bloated. The rings beneath her eyes testified to the lack of sleep over the past few days. And if she looked closely, she could see little lines around her eyes and the corners of her mouth. They weren't exactly attractive either, but probably not unusual for a woman in her mid-thirties. Especially considering her way of life. Her regular seventy-hour weeks were starting to show.

The first signs of physical deterioration. I look like a zombie.

Perhaps the pain will be more bearable if I have some breakfast, she thought. What time is it?

She went back to her bedroom, sat down on the bed and picked up the mobile lying on the bedside table. Nearly half past six. If she was lucky, the hotel restaurant would be open. A cup of coffee might do her the world of good.

She was about to put down the phone when she noticed that she'd missed an incoming call. It was the number of her boss at Interpol - Frédérique Tréville. He'd tried to reach her just a few moments ago.

What does he want at this time of the morning?

Emilia had no desire to talk to her boss. What she needed was a cup of coffee and a croissant and to get rid of her headache at last. But she knew that he wouldn't be calling her without a reason at this time of day on a Sunday morning.

She pressed the dial key.

'Sorry' he said and came straight to the point. 'I have to ask you to stay in Frankfurt.'

'Is this to do with the trial?'

For a moment Tréville didn't seem to know what she was talking about. Then he said, 'No, this is nothing to do with Madukas. It's about a death in a Frankfurt hotel.'

Emilia sighed audibly – loud enough for Tréville to hear. Why shouldn't she let him know how she felt? 'Frédérique, I've had a pretty hard week. I'm still dealing with the trial, my daughter hates me and I think my head is going to explode.'

'I wouldn't ask if didn't think it's important.'

'I know, but I promised Becky a weekend at the Europa-Park. That turned into just Sunday afternoon; going for a swim or to see a film. And now you expect me to tell her I'm not coming at all?'

'You can make it up to her next weekend,' Tréville said unwaveringly, 'the Frankfurt police need your help.'

'What about Louis? Can't he cover for me?' She was referring to Louis Verbier, her right-hand man in the Madukas case. He had also testified in court on Friday and Saturday. He was asleep two doors down the hall. And he owed Emilia a favour.

'The police in Frankfurt have expressly asked for you,' Tréville said quietly.

Emilia was surprised despite herself. That sort of thing didn't happen. 'Me? Why would they want me?' she asked.

'Because the dead person left a message,' Tréville said. 'For you.'