

## Anniversary Decision

“Bill I have found the most gorgeous idea for celebrating our Golden Wedding Anniversary, You know the . . . .”

Alice’s voice faded away as my mind switched off. Anniversaries, birthdays and Christmases . . . I’d had enough to last quite a few lifetimes. Meaningless remembrances . . . .

I’ve always found exchanging gifts to be an embarrassment, not to mention the torment of trying to figure out what to buy Alice. For years I’ve told the kids, who insist on giving presents, *anything that I can consume in ten minutes.*

The mere word ‘*celebration*’ sends me into paroxysms of fear. My idea of ‘*celebration*’ is a glass of wine, a CD of poetry and me. Dinner parties of more than six are beyond my endurance. Any gathering of more than six, ditto.

My mood lifted as I remembered my stroke of genius when I had the proceeds of a lucrative secret government contract paid in Sterling into an Isle of Man account without telling Alice. If I bought an annuity with that . . . bingo, a plan was forming.

Fifty years is a double life sentence and I’d served my time.

I returned from my reverie in time to catch, “. . . don’t you think that’s a brilliant idea?”

“Absolutely Alice. But I think we should hire Sandy’s outfit to deal with the arrangements. After all, it’s our celebration and someone else should do the work.””

“Brilliant idea, I’ll call her right away.”

As she bustled off to the phone I recalled that shady, smarmy Rockoff – one of the planets slipperiest arms brokers - whose butt I’d inadvertently saved on that secret contract. He had said, “I owe you big time Bill. If you ever need anything, simply anything, just call me.”

I used the secret number he’d given me and called. On the answering machine I recorded, “Hi Stanislav this is Bill Rowling. I have a requirement which I neither want to record on cellphone nor internet records. My number is 087 768 0009. Many thanks.”

With his usual efficiency I received a call from one of his henchmen less than an hour later. We arranged to meet for coffee.

In the meantime I began checking the details of the professor I’d worked closely with on that secret government project on sound weaponry. There on the web it was:

Fernando Garcia,

Director of the Acoustics and Electroacoustics Laboratory  
National University of Rosario, Argentina.  
[FernandoGarcia@unr.edu.ar](mailto:FernandoGarcia@unr.edu.ar)

I sent him an e-mail giving my date of arrival and requested that he book me into a hotel of his choice.

The next morning over coffee I explained to Rockoff's henchman what I required, "I want a false passport in this name as well as an air ticket to match," and slipped him a note. "I will be able to live comfortably off an investment I have but I also need a permanent residence permit as I have no intention of ever leaving there."

"By when do you want it?"

I gave him a date which to him seemed eminently reachable.

The next day there was an e-mail from a delighted Fernando. He was looking forward to seeing me again and, as it was the university vacation, he would put me up there until I chose a place I liked.

Soon all the documents I'd requested were delivered and all that was left was to wait for the due date.

The evening before the anniversary I made an excuse to go to the local mall. There I parked the car in a remote spot, took my suitcase out of the boot, closed it, and left the keys in the boot.

Then I walked over to the taxi rank.

"You for hire?"

"Yes sir. Where to?"

"The airport."