AN EXCERPT

THEY ARE DYING TO KNOW

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ONE

Langley, Virginia · 2009

The United States flag is the only familiar thing in the room. It stands in the far corner, beyond a conference table long enough to seat twenty. I take the chair beside its head and rest my hand on the cool walnut. Coffee lingers beneath the sharp scent of lemon polish.

A woman's voice reaches me through the door to my left, followed by a man's quieter reply. Their footsteps approach, and the conversation stops. I sweep my hair behind my shoulder, the ends brushing the middle of my back, and straighten the flag pin on my lapel. By the time the latch clicks, I'm standing.

The woman enters first, blonde, in a fitted charcoal suit. The square-jawed man behind her carries a manila folder. Neither face is familiar.

"I'm Claire," she says in an English accent, giving me a brief nod. "This is Adrian."

I return her nod. They leave the head chair empty and sit across from me. As I settle into my seat, he places the folder in front of her and withdraws his hand. She keeps her eyes on mine. I wonder how many times she's already read what I'm about to see.

"We need to ask you about someone, Kathy." She slides the folder toward me without opening it.

I look at her, then lower my eyes to the cover. When I lift it, my brother looks back at me from a photograph clipped to the first page.