

# *THREE DAYS IN VIENNA*

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## **Logline**

In Vienna to learn more about her Jewish family murdered in the Holocaust, Elizabeth McCreary begins a dangerous affair with an Israeli Mossad agent; back in London, she strives to bring justice to her husband, victim of his father's involvement with an extreme right-wing political party with links to Nazi Germany.

## **Plot**

*February 2000*

While clearing out deceased family friend Charlotte Brown's flat in London, Elizabeth finds paperwork revealing that Charlotte's real name was Eva Schlesinger, the Berlin-born daughter of a decorated Luftwaffe pilot. Shocked, Elizabeth also discovers a painting done by her secretive mother Lillian, depicting her traumatic escape to England as a child of the Kindertransport. Inspired to learn more about the Frankls, her mother's family, Elizabeth flies to Vienna for three days on an impromptu visit. These few days turn her life upside down in every way, leading her to uncover a long-held mystery and to learn a great deal about herself. This is her awakening.

Israeli secret agent Gideon Halevi puts her in contact with elderly survivors Freda and Ernst Hirschman. From them, Elizabeth learns for the first time about her mother Lillian's disabled older sister who was left behind when Lillian escaped to England via Kindertransport. The Hirschmans disparage Elizabeth's Great-uncle Theo since he allied himself with the Germans in order to enrich himself and save his own skin. The stigma attached to his name lives on.

The true purpose of Gideon's assignment in Vienna becomes clear: it is to help organise the assassination of Austria's hugely popular right-wing leader Oscar Gruber. However, Elizabeth's extensive research has revealed that Oscar is her second cousin - and he is half-Jewish! Theo was briefly married to an Aryan woman named Lisa Gruber, before he was deported. They had a son, Ozzie (Oscar), who later adopted his mother's maiden name.

Elizabeth now faces a dilemma: should she return to her family in London, or try to warn Oscar of the impending threat on his life? She decides to stay on in Vienna. After being caught up in a terrorist attack at Oscar Gruber's luxury penthouse apartment, she manages to meet up with him in person and reveal her findings, showing him proof of their family connection.

This accomplished, Elizabeth returns to London to her two children and her flagging marriage. Anthony's difficulties at work create the impetus she requires to bring the family back together. Her husband's loathsome father William has made his son a scapegoat for the large donations he has received from the Crediton Trust - a vast multinational pharmaceuticals company with a dubious past in Nazi Germany. The funds have been used to promote William's political ambitions within his right-wing British Independent Party. The stress of the unearned disgrace causes Anthony to suffer a minor stroke.

Assistance comes from freelance newspaper reporter, Richard Overton, who believes that the best way to achieve justice is to expose Crediton's hidden links with the British Independent Party. Overton then uncovers its Nazi roots. Assisted by Elizabeth, he tracks down a former senior executive, Jacob Holtz, who was involved in medical

experiments during the Holocaust. Overton intends linking that testimony to Freda Hirschman's own concentration camp experience and will then release it to the press.

The plan backfires. A writ is taken out against the *Daily Herald* by lawyers acting on behalf of the pharmaceutical company, and Richard Overton finds himself out of a job. Worse, Jacob Holtz dies before he's able to give evidence in court.

A glimmer of light appears when Crediton, in the middle of sensitive takeover talks, acknowledges the harm done to it by recent adverse publicity and attempts to take steps to restore its reputation. Contact is made with the *Herald*, proposing a deal whereby the company would withdraw the writ, in return for an article stating that they were the innocent party in their dealings with the BIP. The paper jumps at the idea. Richard Overton, given the chance to salvage his career, sees an opportunity for Anthony to clear his name by claiming he's also a victim of his father's British Independent Party.

Funding is immediately withdrawn from the right-wing party. William McCreary is discredited and forced by the members of his executive committee to resign. His political aspirations up in flames, he wreaks his vengeance on Crediton by informing the World Intellectual Property Office of industrial patents that had he'd researched as a young attorney that clearly proved they had been obtained surreptitiously from Jewish owners during the war. He then commits suicide.

The story is already far too widespread for the company to prevent an immediate run on its shares. Oscar Gruber meanwhile has followed events closely ever since finding out that his Cousin Elizabeth was somehow connected - and is eventually persuaded by her to get involved.

Elizabeth finally sees the chance for Freda to get compensation for the loss she and others like her had suffered. She convinces Anthony, who has now been reinstated in his

law firm, that this is just the type of high-profile case he needs to restore his firm's reputation; they secure a multi-million-pound settlement in the process.

The trial is reported by the opportunistic Oscar Gruber's newly acquired *Herald* newspaper, which has enabled him to secure a substantial foothold in the UK.

On a visit to Vienna with her mother for the unveiling of a statue of her Great-uncle Theo Frankl that has been commissioned by Oscar, Elizabeth is unexpectedly thrown together again with Gideon Halevi. This is when she realises that everything she had discovered in Vienna had been orchestrated by the Israeli agent; Gideon had been in the background the entire time, bringing his influence to bear on Freda Hirschman and particularly on Oscar Gruber.

Elizabeth's mother Lillian achieves closure for the trauma she suffered seventy years previously, when she left her family behind at the railway station in Vienna, never to see them again. Meanwhile Elizabeth attempts to return to her family life knowing she still hasn't managed to get the Israeli out of her system.

### **Main characters:**

**Elizabeth McCreary.** Early forties. Attractive redhead with a film-star figure.

Elizabeth gave up a successful career in music publishing when she opted instead for a settled family life, something she'd been deprived of by a troubled childhood. Married with two children to staid lawyer Anthony McCreary, her impulsive visit to Vienna, ostensibly to discover her Austrian-Jewish roots, projects her into an affair with an Israeli Mossad agent and involves her in a top-secret mission.

Putting her own happiness on hold to support her husband through a crisis that threatens their livelihood and family stability proves only a temporary halt to a long-overdue awakening.

**Anthony McCreary.** Early forties. A lean clean-cut individual with public-school education.

Anthony's career path was mapped out for him by an overly dominant father in a City law firm. Left holding the can for a financial scandal of which he is innocent, Anthony's health suffers and he is forced to rely on his wife to keep the family together despite harbouring deep suspicions about her long-term loyalty.

**William McCreary.** Aged sixty-five. A born bully, with a razor-sharp mind.

William's flawed personality eventually brings about his downfall. Behind the guise of a respectable City lawyer lies an individual with a massive chip on his shoulder after a failed military career. Using his considerable influence, he secures the financial backing of a vast pharmaceuticals company (Crediton) and an established City bank (Meredith's), both of which share his right-wing views, to support his British Independent Party. Callously, he uses his own family to provide an acceptable front behind which he can carry out his sinister agenda.

**Richard Overton.** Late thirties. A good-looking freelance journalist with a nose for a big story.

Well-connected with the City's regulatory authorities, he comes into contact with Elizabeth McCreary whose lawyer husband Anthony has just been charged with a serious breach of the solicitors' code of practice. Sensing that there's far more to this story than meets the eye, Overton establishes a link between the Crediton Trust and the far-right political party run by William McCreary, whose nationalistic ideals Crediton shares and to whom the Trust provides a major source of finance. By pulling all the threads together,

Richard manages to bring justice to Anthony McCreary, whilst securing his own career in the process.

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