

Conspiracy of Terror

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Thermodynamics

Thermodynamics is a branch of physics that deals with heat, work, and temperature, and their relation to energy, entropy, and the physical properties of matter and radiation. The behavior of these quantities is governed by the four laws of thermodynamics which convey a quantitative description using measurable macroscopic physical quantities but may be explained in terms of microscopic constituents by statistical mechanics. Thermodynamics applies to a wide variety of topics in science and engineering, especially physical chemistry, biochemistry, chemical engineering, and mechanical engineering, but also in other complex fields such as meteorology.

*Conspiracy of Terror**The Black Liberation Force**(The BLF)*

<i>Colonel Marshall Emery</i>	<i>Commander Chico Stefan</i>
<i>Agent Tracy Grant</i>	<i>Major Debra Crystal</i>
<i>Capt. Carmen Rodriguez</i>	<i>Capt. Annette Sykes</i>
<i>Capt. Diane Sneed</i>	<i>Lt. Guy Cooper</i>
<i>Lt. Steven Colter</i>	<i>Lt. Shana Wolf</i>
<i>CPO Michael Cross</i>	<i>CPO Rhonda Hackett</i>
<i>Sgt. Lance Dunbar</i>	<i>Sgt. Henry Jackson</i>
<i>Sgt. Jan Phillips</i>	<i>Sgt. Ruben Cades</i>
<i>Sgt. Mark Conway</i>	

Prologue

The White House

June 1, 2028

Sitting on the sofa, legs crossed, the President listened to his friend. He enjoyed the passion and conviction, with which he spoke. He and Guttenberg shared a friendship going back over thirty years.

“The environment is getting worse with each passing day. We have holes in the Ozone Layer turning the world into virtually a living hell. The ultraviolet ray from the sun is causing skin cancer at alarming rates. People are afraid to go out in the daytime. Most factories and companies have even changed operating hours, with workers going in at six in the evenings until two and three in the morning,” Mueller Guttenberg

said, as he re-hashed the state of the world. He paused and took a sip of water.

“Mueller, thank you,” the President said.

“Please, continue.”

“Thank you. Acid rains have become a common experience for the Eastern and Northeastern. states. The acid rains were recognized in the 1990s. By the mid-2000s, studies lead to experiments. By 2010, the realization had taken hold that the acid rain situation was uncontrollable. The world had no way of controlling the acid rain effect, no more than it could switch day and night. During the rain, people are shielding themselves with protective clothing,” the scientist stated, sounding a bit subdued, yet passionate. He continued.

“Our agencies are stretched thin. The Environmental Protection Agency is dealing with the severe droughts engulfing most of the land due to the greenhouse effect. The Mid-West is known for its

agriculture, but the fastest growing thing in the great American farmlands now is deserts. The bio-sphere experiments that took place in the mid-2000s have become the future source of food for America. The subsidization of the biosphere experiments has left the farmers' lifeblood in the sand,” Guttenberg concluded, as he took his seat

“Don’t forget the falling land prices have opened the doors for foreign entities, such as the Japanese. They’re buying as much of the farmlands as possible. Their technology has allowed us to create our greenhouse projects above and below ground,” the President stated and then continued.

“California is at the forefront of our agricultural industry. It’s the most powerful political state in the Union, as their political leaders in the North and South, have aggressively disagreed with the policies in Washington,” the President said, and then continued.

“Remember, in 2014, California attempted to succeed

from the Union. That was in part due to the government's subsidizing bio-farming. The agricultural monopoly California has on the rest of the country is now threatened. The succession was a failure, but the battle lines have been drawn. My home state is a powder keg.”

“Mr. President, if not for your grit, for lack of a better word, we’d be in worse shape.” Mueller Guttenberg injected.

“The government stepped in and nationalized the automobile industry, considering the big three motor companies were in a business shamble. The oil, insurance, and finance companies that were not nationalized when the three filed for Chapter 14 bankruptcy were now trying to recoup their losses. This was mandated by the people, who felt the economic disaster threatening their livelihoods,” the President concluded.

“OPEC is aware that America no longer depends on the Middle East. Our oil fields, the reserves, and the Trans-Alaskan pipeline are providing everything we require. America is leaning towards thermodynamic energy, and not oil. OPEC feels threatened by that. That opens another black hole,” Guttenberg commented.

“The world is confronting problems of the past as it forges into the future. However, the savage attacks by the Islamic Rashidun Army, the famed IRA, are slowing that transition to the future. Terrorism must be eliminated. America is prepared to fight the terrorists with its brand of warfare. The future is now!” The President proclaimed, enjoying the conversation with the little scientist.

*Chapter 1**Detroit, Michigan**June 1,*

Settling in to enjoy a quiet and peaceful dinner, Tracy Grant was relieved to have some time to herself. She needed the break. The past few weeks had been stressful, to say the least.

Chasing rumors of terrorists in Detroit sparked a lot of tension and concern. The case was assigned to her. Following lead after lead, and finding nothing, she was beginning to think she was chasing ghosts. Even so, where there's smoke, there's fire. Old, but true.

"Ms. Grant, are you ready to order?" A young waiter asked as he held his pad and pen.

Just then, her cell phone vibrated on the table.

“I’ll check back in a few minutes,” the waiter said with a smile and disappeared.

Tracy returned his smile and then answered the phone. She listened carefully to the urgent voice on the other end. All the data she’d compiled over the past few weeks may pay off, after all, she hoped. Hurriedly, she left the restaurant and briskly walked to her car.

She became aware of the cool summer breeze blowing ever so softly against her face. She enjoyed the warmth, smell, and beauty of summertime. At thirty-four, Tracy had a head for business and a body for sin. Her shoulder-length black hair framed her caramel complexion, set off by her mesmerizing smoky gray eyes.

After nearly half an hour of fighting traffic, she arrived at the Plaza Hotel downtown. The area had been cordoned off in all directions. She slipped her FBI credentials over her head, allowing her access to the scene.

Having spent ten years in the Detroit Police Force, she wanted to do more. Tracy didn't want to end up like so many other officers that didn't make a career change. She left the force, as one of the top police investigators in the State of Michigan.

For the past five years, she'd been with the bureau. She'd expanded her knowledge and ability, graduating in the top three of her academy class. Her specialty was covert infiltration. She was immediately placed in the field. Breaking her chain of thought, was a familiar face.

"I heard you were in charge of this operation," Captain William O'Connor stated.

"How are you, Bill?" She asked her old boss and friend.

"I have a headache and my feet are killing me. Other than that, I'm just peachy," he replied in his usual grumpy manner.

"What's the situation?"

“We have gunmen on the forty-second floor. They have hostages. Willis is setting up a command post on the thirty-second floor,” Captain O’Connor informed her.

“Captain O'Connor!” An excited uniformed officer standing near a squad car called out. The officer was motioning for the Captain to join him.

“I’ll catch you upstairs,” O'Connor said, as he was walking away.

Entering the hotel, Tracy headed straight for the elevators. Her mind was racing. Lost in deep thought, she had many questions. How many gunmen they were facing? What kind of weapons did they have? And most important, how many hostages? The opening of the elevator doors brought her out of her reverie. Stepping onto the thick beige carpeting, she searched the corridor for Willis. But there were just too many bodies.

“Tracy!”

Hearing Willis call out to her, solved her problem of searching for him.

"It's good to see you again, Tracy." He said sincerely, as he approached her.

"It's good to see you too, Willis."

"We've got big problems. There are at least three guys up there, and they have thirty-two hostages. They say the entire floor is booby-trapped, and they'll blow it if we try anything. I have the ten floors above, and below them cleared out," Willis informed his former partner.

"Is SWAT in place?" Tracy asked, not waiting for an answer. "Also, get me the blueprints of this building." She took control of the situation with professionalism and confidence.

"We've already taken care of that. Now, we wait for them to make their next move," Willis replied.

Captain O'Connor headed towards them from the elevator. He had a puzzled look on his tired face.

O'Connor was about to tell them about the Calico Laboratory incident but was interrupted by an urgent voice!

"They've made contact," came a voice from their rear. "They want a news team and someone in authority."

Willis turned to one of the uniformed officers, telling him to get a news camera. Tracy and O'Connor fitted themselves with bulletproof vests. They were now the news team. Willis joined them, as they climbed into the elevator.

Entering the corridor of the forty-second floor, they could see the explosives plastered to the stairwell doors! A message was spray painted in red on the walls, read, 'The Islamic Rashidun Army has served noticed!' Casting a glance at each other, they knew they had to play their hand carefully.

Out of one of the rooms, stepped a short man. He appeared to be in his middle thirties, with wavy

black hair and a swarthy complexion. He was carrying an AK-47 assault rifle. He motioned for them to come forward.

A door behind them opened. Two more gunmen entered the corridor. They were surrounded. The tension, coupled with the odds, made Tracy feel alive. All her senses were magnified.

"I'm Captain William O'Connor of the Detroit Police Department. This is the news team you requested." He said, pointing to Tracy and Willis.

"Shut up!" Came a sharp, commanding voice from a room in front of them. Then the man the voice belonged to, walked confidently into view.

He wore a three-piece gray suit, with wire-rim glasses and styled a pencil-thin mustache. He could've passed for a college professor. But the AK-47 he held said otherwise. He held the weapon as if it was alive, caressing the barrel while his other hand gripped the stock.

From experience, Tracy recognized the tell-tale sign that the man was nervous. His confidence lay in the weapon he held, and not in his heart. Another of her specialties was reading body language. Right now, she needed to find a way to use that to their advantage.

"I want to see the hostages," O'Connor demanded.

"I told you to shut up! I will not tell you again, " the apparent spokesman for the group replied.

The tension in the corridor was near the boiling point. Tracy knew they had to act quickly. She stole a glance behind her, catching Willis' eye. She knew he'd be ready when the opportunity presented itself.

The spokesman said, " I am Iranian-born, and follow the Islamic Republican leadership of Raja Abdul-Javad. My name is Calid Akbar."

Akbar ordered a fifth man, one they hadn't seen, to bring out the hostages. The twenty women and twelve men were terrified. Akbar ordered them to stand

in two columns, and he stood in the middle of them.

They were human shields.

“You, with the camera. Come here,” Akbar ordered.

Willis slowly moved forward, with Tracy beside him. Once in position, she held the microphone toward Akbar. She looked him in the eyes, causing him to turn his head away. Muslim men do not like strong, independent women. Tracy knew he would try to kill her.

Gathering his composure, Akbar looked at Tract, but wouldn’t make eye contact. He immediately launched into a stereotype tirade, blaming the United States and its allies for the problems in the Middle East. No one, not even those who lived in the Middle East believed that rhetoric anyone. Their rulers were responsible for their troubles.

Tracy, seeing the expression on O'Connor's face, knew he was about to do something. She told

Akbar that her microphone wasn't working and turned to Willis. Pretending to adjust the microphone, she cut her eyes in O'Connor's direction. Not thinking they would try anything, Akbar moved toward them, standing in front of the hostages.

O'Connor calmly reached for the Uzi machine pistol he was carrying under his jacket. He hoped like hell the two men behind him wouldn't react. Then prayed he'd be able to help Tracy and Willis. Without a second thought, O'Connor pulled the Uzi! He spun, and dropped into a crouching position, catching both men off guard. Bullets slammed into their upper torsos. Their bodies did the death dance before falling to the floor.

Using the screams of the shocked and terrified hostages to their advantage, Tracy and Willis began firing! Each of them killed one of the terrorists. Akbar fled to a room further down the corridor. O'Connor shouted for Tracy to get the hostages to the elevators.

Moving quickly and calmly, she ushered them to the elevators. Tracy turned as Akbar gunned down O'Connor and Willis! It all happened so quickly, that she didn't have time to warn them. Watching in disbelief, she could see Akbar moving towards her slowly and deliberately. He didn't seem to have care or worry in the world, as his insane laughter echoed in her ears. Her heart was pounding!

She stopped her mind from running away from her and fired! The first bullet tore into the right side of his face, leaving a ragged mass of bloody tissue and bone fragments. The second bullet ripped into his throat! Four more bullets exploded in his chest as he was falling backward.

*Chapter 2**Detroit**June 1,*

At four o'clock in the morning, Colonel Marshal Emery was en route to the Calico Laboratory. So much for another military secret, he thought grimly to himself. He took in the early morning stillness of the Motor City, finding it peaceful. Arriving at the lab, and showing his ID, he passed through the main gate.

Getting out of the car, he was still wearing his dress uniform, with medals adorning his chest. He'd attended a banquet earlier, and never had the chance to change. Entering the massive complex, Emery stopped to allow another sentry to inspect his ID. That allowed him to look around. Satisfied, the sentry allowed him entrance.

Emery could see military personnel and white-coated lab technicians frantically moving about. He knew he was in for a long day, and he hadn't even had his coffee yet. Emery was forty-five but looked thirty-five. He stood about six-three, and from his physique, he probably tipped the scale over two-hundred. He was an expert in martial arts, a linguist, as well as a master tactician.

Emery's Puerto Rican and Black ancestry gave him an almost Arab appearance. Something he'd used many times in the past. However, he was quick to point out that he was black. No matter what mixture a person was if either parent was black, you're black.

"Corporal? Who's in charge here?"

"Captain Wentworth, sir," the Corporal replied.

Casually strolling about the laboratory, Emery saw the blood smears on the floor and bullet holes in the walls. On a crate nearest him, painted in red, read the words: 'Islamic Rashidun Army'. He was familiar

with the IRA, Kasim's little army. They were a crack fighting unit formed by Iran's Vice-Premier, Abdullah Kasim. In essence, the IRA was a mobile assassin unit, numbering in the hundreds.

Emery spotted Mueller Guttenberg, the senior scientist on the site. He was talking with a young officer with the railroad tracks on his collar. That should be captain Wentworth, Emery reasoned. He headed towards them.

"Major Emery, how nice to see you again! It's been, what, five years," the surprised Guttenberg said, in his thick German-accented English.

"It's been six years. I'm a full bird Colonel now," Emery said, pointing to the spread eagle on his jacket lapel.

"Yes. You're right. It has been six years. Time flies when you keep yourself busy. So, tell me, what brings a big fish like you to Detroit?"

Guttenberg was the same talkative little man that he'd come to like over the years, Emery noted. Emery gestured with his hands, indicating the laboratory. That gave the little scientist his answer.

"I see. Oh! This is Captain Wentworth. He's in charge here for you gentlemen. He's been a tremendous help to me and my staff," Guttenberg replied.

"Yes, I know. Ah, I need to speak with the Captain. We have some rather important matters to discuss," Emery informed the scientist.

"Yes. Yes, of course," the scientist said, dissecting himself from Emery and Wentworth.

Wentworth knew he was in hot water. If for other reason than him being in command. The captain figured he could kiss his army career goodbye after eight short years. Hearing Guttenberg refers to the Colonel as a big fish, he knew things were going to get very uncomfortable for him.

“What happened here?” The Colonel asked in a calm, but deliberate tone.

“I received a call at zero-two hundred hours informing me of a little mishap,” Wentworth said, immediately wishing he’d used a better choice of words than *a little mishap*.

"A *little mishap*! Do you call losing the plans for the most advanced thermodynamic energy facility a *little mishap*? Captain, you might not understand the seriousness of your *little mishap*, but if we don’t get those plans back, a lot of innocent people are going to die. This country is heading into a new future, and those plans are an important part of it." Emery was about to lose his composure. He struggled with himself to not let that happen.

"Sir, I was informed by Sergeant Torrez that ten to twelve armed men dressed as MPs, attacked the lab. He said they then opened fire. I can understand you’re upset, and I do understand the seriousness of the

situation. This troubles me also. I lost eight damn good soldiers, with three more in critical condition. I want the sons-of-bitches just as bad as you do," the young Captain voiced, his tone reflecting his emotions.

"I want your report in my hands by twelve hundred hours, today. I know the feeling of a Commanding Officer losing people. I've lost people too." Emery replied, letting his censorious tone soften.

"Colonel, an FBI Agent Grant, is looking for you," a sentry announced.

"Thank you," Emery responded.

"You have your orders, Captain."

Approaching Agent Grant, Emery couldn't believe this was the woman who'd taken out Akbar. He also couldn't help but notice how beautiful she was. The FBI had made considerable changes, at last.

"Agent Grant, I'm Colonel Marshall Emery."

They shook hands, their grips professional.

"Colonel, I'm aware of the IRA, but none of this makes sense. Why attack the hotel?"

"Wow! You don't waste time," he said, referring to how she launched into the situation.

"My apologies," she said, taking a deep breath. She was hyped and wanted more action.

"No apologies necessary. Making sense of the illogical using logic is the name of the game. It's organized confusion, which equals chaos. There's a reason for it, that, you can be assured of," the Colonel told her, answering her questions.

"That does make sense. That's what's been bugging me. They were planning this," she said, decompressing, presenting him with a smile. "It's just that I've been chasing these bastards for a while, and they slapped me in my backyard."

"Not quite. You did take out Akbar. That speaks volumes to me. We were on his trial for six months,

then lost him four days ago,” Emery informed her, and then said, “I know how bloodthirsty they are.”

“Akbar killed two of my friends tonight,” she rebutted.

“I’m sorry about that,” he said, and then continued. “Agent Grant, I’ve been waiting for this opportunity for quite some time. We’re ready for them, ”Colonel Emery stated, as he looked her dead in the eyes.

Chapter 3

London, England

June 2, 2028

The early morning light unveiled an unusually thick fog. It engulfed Heathrow International Airport. Air traffic had been stopped dead in its tracks! However, things inside the airport were busy for a few.

Two airport attendants in gray cover-alls exited the baggage area carrying silver attaché cases. People moved about, but most lolled about on their makeshift bedding. They proceeded through the airport. Even security was relaxed, as no one paid any attention to them.

Suddenly, the PA system cracked to life. Long-awaited flights were being announced. People quickly became awake, some disoriented, and began searching

for their new flights. The flurry of activity was a major diversion for airport security.

Walking briskly towards the baggage bay of Flight 712, the two men sat their attaché' cases on the floor. They proceeded to work among the other baggage handlers. Next, a young caramel complexion stewardess approached them.

Following a brief conversation, the men retrieved their cases and boarded the 747, along with the stewardess. Minutes later, they exited the aircraft, empty-handed. The men returned to the baggage area, and the woman headed to the stewardess' locker room.

Another announcement informed passengers to report to Gate-13A for Flight 712. At least eighty-five people filed into the boarding area, with more following. Many just wanted to get on the plane and settle in for the transatlantic flight from London to New York.

The stewardess locker room was in the bowels of the airport. Sari Muhammad stood in front of the locker with the nameplate of Elizabeth Carnes, replacing the stewardess's uniform. Looking about the locker room, she found it deserted.

Sari unzipped the British Airways carrying bag. She found an Uzi machine pistol inside. She inspected the weapon and attached a silencer. She placed the gun back in the bag.

Dressed in her clothes, she picked up the carrying bag. Sari slung her black jacket over her right arm and quickly left the locker room. Heading to the Security Wing, she blended in with the massive flow of people. She continued her journey, listening to the flight announcements.

Rounding the corner, she rejoined her comrades, Qadir Shabazz, and Zamil Hassan. Moments later, they entered the Security Office, branching weapons. They took control of the security office in less than a minute.

"Please do not attempt to reach for your weapons," Sari said, her voice soft and sultry.

"For the love of God! What is the meaning of this?!" An elderly, overweight white-haired man exclaimed.

"Who are you?" Sari calmly asked.

"I am Chief Superintendent Meyers! I'm the Director of Security," he replied, presenting a false sense of confidence. He was downright scared.

"We are messengers of the Islamic Rashidun Army. In less than fifteen minutes, Flight 712 will explode. At that time, the IRA will have delivered an ultimatum to the world. Withdraw all foreign military forces from our homelands of the Middle East or be destroyed! There are no exceptions." Sari informed her captive audience.

"You're nothing but a band of bloody, murdering bastards! The world will not stand for this

type of butchery!" The Chief Superintendent exclaimed in anger, forgetting his fears.

He knew they were going to kill him. Then he made a foolish attempt to reach his weapon. The gun was in his desk drawer two feet away. The soundless mules from Sari's Uzi delivered his death instantly! The long burst from the automatic weapon zipped him across the chest before he could get out of his chair!

Qadir, calmly ignoring the murder, stated," The world does not have a choice!"

Sari moved the remaining security personnel to the other side of the room. Fazel produced a laptop, quickly tapping in a series of numbers and letters. Qadir removed a remote-control device from his pocket. A red light flashed. Immediately the voices of the pilot of Flight 712 and the Control Tower filled the room.

"Flight 712, you are cleared for take-off," came the Control Tower.

"That's a roger," the pilot responded.

The atmosphere in the security office was eerily silent. The security personnel wanted to do or say something, but they were frozen with fear. The Chief Superintendent had been their friend and their leader. Then they heard the explosion of Flight 712! That was followed by the chaotic chatter of the Control Tower. On board had been two-hundred and thirty-nine passengers and crew.

“Bloody bastards! You blew it up! You’re all sick. Sick, I tell you!” A young freckle face security officer screamed out!

Looking at the distraught young man, Qadir smiled. “Yes, some will say that.”

“Now, the rest of you shall join you’re brave but stupid, Chief Superintendent” Sari stated, her words harsh, as she squeezed the trigger. Qadir and Fazel open fire also!

They mercilessly gunned down the remaining security personnel. Pleased that everything had gone as

planned, they spray painted the walls, 'The Islamic Rashidun Army has served notice', in red. Then they departed.

The Rashidun army was the core of the Rashidun Caliphate's armed forces during the early Muslim conquests in the 7th century. The army is reported to have maintained a high level of discipline, strategic prowess, and organization, granting them successive victories in their various campaigns.

In its time, the Rashidun army was a powerful and effective force. The army was a key component in the Rashidun Caliphate's territorial expansion and served as a medium for the early spread of Islam into the territories it conquered.

*Chapter 4**Mediterranean Sea**June 5, 2028*

The USS Obama was busy with night operations. The Obama was the latest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and by far the largest and most advanced. It carried a crew of eight thousand. It was the second carrier in the Ford Class carrier class.

Rendezvousing with the USS Blue Gill, Admiral Bolden, the Commanding Officer was a bit jittery. He'd received a message that all US military personnel were on Red Alert. That coupled with the fact that a special military envoy was coming on board. Yeah, he was tense. Regardless of how he felt, he remained calm and in control. If not for himself, he did it for his crew.

Captain Green, his Executive Officer, came onto the bridge. He handed the Admiral a message. The captain assume command of the bridge, as the Admiral made his exit. The Captain stared after the Admiral, as he too, was concerned about the unfolding events.

"Sir, we rendezvous with the Blue Gill in two minutes," came the clear and confident voice of the Radioman.

Captain Green nodded his head in acknowledgment.

"Attention on deck!"

The Admiral saluted, as he returned to the bridge. Staring down at the flight deck, the last F-35C took off. The F-35C was the first, and the world's only long-range stealth strike fighter. It was designed and built explicitly for Navy carrier operations. Now, Admiral Bolden waited patiently for his guest.

"Blue Gill at twelve o'clock" the Port Look-Out informed the bridge.

"All engines back two-thirds," the Admiral ordered.

"All engines back two-thirds," the Helmsman sounded, complying with the Admiral's orders.

Having Captain Green oversee the boarding of their special guest, Admiral Bolden could read his Executive Officer's facial expression as one of confusion. It was an unusual order, but the Captain carried it out. He had little knowledge of their mission; other than it included oil platforms.

Running parallel to the carrier, the submarine linked up with the floating city. As Captain Green waited patiently for the VIP to come on board, his gut told him their guest was high-up on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations. After he climbed on board, Captain Green escorted him to the Admiral's quarters.

Entering the Admiral's quarters, Admiral Bolden moved his bulk to the big green leather chair behind a huge oak desk. He looked across at his guest.

He then extended his large weather-beaten hand, indicating that he wanted the Top-Secret documents that the visitor had in his possession.

“Mr. Crewe, report to my quarters,” the Admiral ordered over his intercom. Seconds later, Operations Officer, Lt. Crewe, a tall lanky black officer, was standing before the Admiral’s desk.

The Admiral exercising caution was sending a ‘For your Eyes Only’ message to the CNO at the Pentagon. He was requesting verification of his newest crew member. One factor causing his request was, Stefan was only a Commander. For such a mission as they were undertaking, Navy regs specified the rank of Captain and above to command such mission.

As they waited for a response, the Admiral and Commander discussed the most recent attacks by the Islamic Rashidun Army in London. They shared the same views and agreed that OPEC and the IRA had to be stopped at all costs.

Admiral Bolden discovered Commander Chico Stefan was one of those Seal nuts. They'd do anything, anywhere, any time, and enjoy it! The Admiral admired the seals but thought the whole outfit was crazy. Their back-and-forth banter was cordial. A knock at the door interrupted them.

"Captain Green, please," the Admiral said, indicating for the Captain to open the door.

The Captain received a black leather notebook from the man at the door. He closed the door before turning to the Admiral. Holding the notebook as if it were alive, the Captain handed it to the Admiral. Quickly scanning the contents, the Admiral took a deep breath and got to his feet. He came around the desk and stopped. He looked Stefan dead in the eyes.

"Commander, I sent a message to the CNO regarding your orders. Quite frankly, they're rather unbelievable. However, that be as it is, I was informed that you're now, the Commanding Officer of *Operation*

Burn,” the Admiral stated. “I’m to give you full cooperation and whatever assistance you may require in the order to carry out your assignment.”

“Thank you, Sir. I hope they also informed you that if any portion of this mission fails, that you, nor your crew, will be held responsible. In the unfortunate event that it does fail, you are to disavow any knowledge of my existence.” Stefan calmly stated.

"Alright. I hope that God is on your side," the Admiral responded.

"Since that’s cleared up, I want you gentlemen to know what my part of this mission is."

"I feel that would be in order," the Admiral replied, his tone one of curiosity.

“As you know, OPEC, particularly Iran, is attempting to force the other Third World countries into buying their oil. They know the United States is moving towards thermodynamic energy. If they can keep those countries dependent on oil, then they can force the

United States to re-evaluate its present course. OPEC's power is eroding due to America and its allies taking a bold step towards the future," Stefan explained.

"I don't quite follow you, Sir," a confused Captain Green voiced.

"Gentlemen, my duty to Uncle Sam over the past five years has been assisting the US in stockpiling oil during the transition period from oil to thermodynamic energy. In polite circles, if I were a civilian, I might be called an oil broker. But the truth is, I'm what you would term a pirate. A modern-day pirate that is," the Commander informed them with a cunning smile.

"WHAT?!" Came the shocked and questioning response of the Admiral.

Stefan continued. "I have been responsible for the hi-jacking of over seventy-five ships coming out of the Middle East. I then turn those ships over to our allies in Greece and France. After the ships are off-

loaded, their cargo is transferred to other vessels heading for parts unknown.”

“That’s remarkable,” Captain Green uttered, as the words escaped his mouth.

“What happens to the ships?” The Admiral asked out more curiosity than a need to know.

“They’re either renamed and numbered or sunk. The idea was derived from the Somali’s at how easy it was for them to hi-jack a fucking ship,” the Commanding excitedly said. “Oh, please forgive my language Admiral. This is a serious game we’re playing. Mistakes are not allowed, at least not where I’m concerned,” Stefan said. He paused and looked at the Admiral and Captain before continuing. “That’s why we’re going to blow-up one-hundred and seven oil platforms!”

Staring at the Commander, the Admiral couldn’t believe what he was hearing. While at the same time, he understood it. “Blowing the platforms should break the

strangle hold OPEC is trying to establish. It will also force everyone to do business with the west and its allies, which includes China,” the Admiral stated, nodding his head as he began to see the bigger picture.

"That's more or less correct, Admiral." Stefan stated. He moved to the map of the Persian Gulf, hanging on the bulkhead behind the Admiral's desk. He began to explain what was going to take place. "By using the carriers Obama, Nimitz, Vinson, Eisenhower, Truman and the Lincoln, with each of their respective Task Forces, this mission seemingly cannot fail," Stefan explained. "We're stretched over a thousand miles, which covers the outlets to the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea."

"Commander, there's still one question puzzling me," the Admiral admitted.

"What's that, Sir?"

“If all of this is going to go as you say, and I personally don’t see why it shouldn’t, why are you here?”

“Sir, there’s one platform that’s critical to the mission. This one here,” he said pointing to a dot on the map, representing the coast of Libya. “It’s a main pumping platform. Even if the other are taken out, this one has an automatic shut-off valve to the rest, closing the well below. It can’t be attacked from the air, but it can be from the sea. With Libya and the other countries concentrating on the bombings, I’m going after that platform,” Stefan explained to them.

“That’s a suicide mission!” The Admiral blurted out.

“Only if I don’t make it back,” Stefan said, with a chuckle.

“You’re insane,” Captain Green chirped in.

“What can I say?” He shrugged his shoulder, palms up. Then he continued. “Their sea patrols will be

assisting the other platforms. That should make it possible for me to get inside the five-mile radius, known as the 'Line of Death'. It was re-established by Libya's new Ruler, Amir Qaddafi, the grandson of the late Muammar Qaddafi. Once there, I'll set the charges, and try like hell to get out before they go off. That's why I'm here, Admiral," the Commander told them.

An hour later, he was inspecting the single man submersible. The US military first used submersibles for special operations with the OSS, the predecessor of the CIA and the Army Green Berets, during World War Two. OSS' maritime branch had a primitive submersible capability in the form of underwater canoes. The British had developed more advanced technology, which the OSS was able to study, paving the road for the modern SDVs.

As always, Stefan considered the consequences if he failed. However, like always, he pushed those thoughts from his mind. He knew the F-35C's would

nail their targets, and give the carriers, and their Task Forces whatever air cover they required. He never ignored the flip side of life, but he didn't dwell on it either.

Satisfied with his equipment, Stefan made his way to the bridge. He gave the Officer-of-the Day orders to sound General Quarters, and to be clear that it wasn't a drill. Without question, his orders were carried out. It was now zero-four-fifteen hours. At zero-four-thirty hours, the first bombings would commence.

Along with the Admiral and Captain Green, Commander Stefan went below to the Radio Room. He waited for the first bombing attack. Precisely at zero-four-thirty hours, the Nimitz's bomber squadron made first contact. They also reported to have shot down three enemy aircraft. The entire radio room listened in silence as the bombing intensified.

"Sir, we're two miles from the drop," the Radioman stated.

With that, Stefan felt his stomach knot up. This was his wake-up call to wreak havoc. Deep down, he wished that there was another way, but there wasn't.

“May God bless you, Commander,” Captain Green said in a sincere voice.

Moving towards the main deck, Stefan could see the birth of the sun peeking over the horizon. Checking his equipment for the final time, the SDV was hoisted, allowing him to climb in. Once inside, he looked like he was in a full body cast. His arms and legs remained free. Being lowered into the deep blue calm Mediterranean Sea loaded with satchels of explosives, the Commander disappeared into the dark void of the sea.

Checking his compass, he was approximately one-hundred yards from his target. He'd covered the distance quicker than anticipated. The bottom of the platform emerged like an angry creature rising from the depths of the sea. He set his watch, giving him sixty

minutes to set the charges, and get away. That was cutting it close, but that's the way he liked it, on the edge!

Fifty-eight minutes later he broke the surface of the water. He was two miles from the platform. Looking at his watch, he had exactly one minute before the first charge was set to go off. He cast his eyes upward as a helicopter dropped out of the clouds.

A rope ladder was lowered. He grabbed it and was hoisted up. He felt relief wash over him as he began laughing. Once aboard the helicopter, he reached for a pair of binoculars just in time to watch the first charge go off. It was followed by a chain reaction, creating a tidal wave in the sea.

He'd just completed his toughest mission to date. Stefan could still feel the adrenaline rushing through his veins. He was feeling alive! The time was zero-five-forty-five hours, the beginning of a new era in world domination.

*Chapter 5**Camp David**June 6, 2028*

Staring out of the window, President Martinez's thoughts were running rampant through his mind. He wondered how many of his predecessors had looked out of that same window when the problems of the world were on their shoulders. He'd accomplished many things in the short time he'd been in residency at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the White House, but there was so much more to do.

Antonio Sanchez Martinez had been the Commanding Officer of the 2023 Philippines Campaign. General Martinez then, had led American and allied forces to victory. After liberating Manila from rebel forces, backed by Iran, introducing the

Islamic Rashidun Army, Martinez had warned of future terroristic attacks. He'd been right. The IRA came to prominence during that campaign and continued to grow.

Returning to his home state of California, he was approached by several influential people that wanted him to run for Governor. Having developed close ties with key people during his lifetime, Martinez called upon them for his campaign. In the first weeks of his campaign, he'd put together a group of six powerful individuals, with expertise and influence stretching the globe.

Based on their advice, he set in motion what would prove to be the greatest turn around in the contemporary history of American politics. His *Backers* as they were referred to, met personally with leaders of each ethnic group in the country. Together, the *Backers* and ethnic leaders agreed that they'd back Martinez for Governor.

No candidate came close to defeating him. He implemented his strategy to correct the conditions of California, which was in a financial crunch. He brought in people that he felt could make a change.

He gave priority to education, wanting to become one of the best school systems in the world. He also developed plans that took the homeless off the streets; as well as bringing in foreign investments to California's shipping industry.

Martinez was a proven leader in the military. Now, he was a proven leader in State politics. One term as Governor was enough for him to be tabbed for the Presidency.

His *Backers* agreed that the political, and economic, climate was perfect for the first Mexican American President. To everyone's satisfaction, he won in a landslide. He was the face of the new Republican party.

Martinez setup a series of meetings with the Japanese Trade Commissioner, plus other foreign dignitaries. This resulted in strengthening the common bond between the United States and Japan. The countries were heading towards thermodynamic energy. With their combined technology, they felt their progress would be faster and more efficient.

The Japanese built new tech automobile assembly plants in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Arkansas. These plants created many jobs for Americans and produced a quantity of quality electric cars. The cars were affordably priced.

The big three in Detroit were also producing the new type of car. In the process, they created jobs, which increased the quality of life. The knock at his door, interrupted his line of thought. He re-focus on his meeting with his *Backers*.

"Sir, they've arrived," his Aide informed him.

“Thank you,” the President replied, as he prepared to join them.

*Chapter 6**Camp David**June 6,*

Seated in the air-conditioned study at Camp David was Daniel Jabots. He'd been Martinez's campaign manager when he'd run for Governor of California. Jabots was instrumental in eliminating other Republican candidates. There were those who leaked rumors to the press that Martinez was suffering from PTSD. Jabots found the source of the rumors, and quickly put them to rest.

The man responsible was a former Major. Martinez had brought up on charges of stealing valuable paintings from a museum in Manila. Jabots had a natural talent for ferreting out the malignant souls, especially when it came to protecting Martinez.

Somehow, other Republican rivals sniffed out the former Major, paying him to start the rumor. After all, when it all said and done, the former Major would be the only to pay the price. Greedy and revenge never worked out.

Sitting to Jabots' right was retired General, George Ritz. The General had been Martinez's Commanding Officer during the latter years of Middle East conflicts, and the early stages of the Philippines conflict. Ritz retired, and Martinez assumed command.

The General knew Martinez was a natural leader, and a pretty good strategist too. He'd seen those polished skills applied when the rebels and IRA attempted to split the US and allied forces after the sieged of Manila. At first, the high Command thought it was a planned move by the Chinese. However, Martinez was the only one who realized it was just an accident.

The rebels and IRA had split their forces, before initiating contact. They should have made contact first, then pull back, and split their troops. The blunder on the rebels and the IRA's behalf turned the tide completely, and so one-sided. They'd been captured in their own trap, positioning themselves in the direct line of fire of US and allied forces.

Martinez devised a plan. He turned the tables on the rebels and IRA. He ordered airstrikes on the enemy position. Ground troops attacked when they tried to fight through, and heavy artillery brought up the rear. They surrounded the rebels, forcing death or surrender.

However, the IRA fraction escaped. In effect, Martinez brought an end to the Philippines conflict in one bold and swift battle. He was given credit for the offensive strategy.

General Ritz knew then, Martinez was destined for greatness. He was like Moses leading his people to the promised land, and the type of person one would

have to study to find fault with. There were only a few men, of any ethnic background, that possessed the power of persuasion as Martinez did.

No sooner had he been sworn in as President, he contacted the General. He asked him to assemble four fighting *groups* of Americans. These *groups* were to be European, Asian, Hispanic, and Black. They'd be used to defend America.

Next to the General, was George Caster. He and Martinez were old friends. When Martinez had joined the Marines, Caster had turned his attention to politics, becoming very skilled at it.

During the Philippines conflict, Caster was the Ambassador to Indonesia. There, he and Martinez had several long discussions about the future of America. They agreed something had to be done about the resurgence of Iran. When he received the call from Martinez informing him, he was going into politics, Caster joined Martinez's staff immediately.

Yasuko Matsunaga was seated next to Caster. He'd served as the Japanese Trade Commissioner to the United States and was the foremost authority on Japan's economy. His views were valued by American scientists, who'd developed new means of tapping into the earth's core, to utilize thermodynamic energy.

The Japanese too were working with thermodynamics programs, using their supercomputer. With this information at his fingertips, Matsunaga had long urged the Japanese government to share their research with America.

When Martinez contacted him to get the Japanese government to join America in the future, Matsunaga considered the request a great opportunity. He resigned his position as Trade Commissioner and joined Martinez. Their trust and respect for each other was mutual, which made their alliance stronger.

In front, and across from Matsunaga was Jason Conwright. He was thirty-eight, and one of the

youngest Chief Executives Officers of any major corporation in the United States. The Getty Oil Corporation had incurred heavy financial problems, due to OPEC.

This affected Getty more than other companies, as they were still selling oil to some of same countries as OPEC. OPEC's philosophy was why should those people buy oil from America, when they could supply it cheaper. Of course, those countries agreed with the thinking of OPEC.

They couldn't see that they were being used as pawns on a chessboard. The undercutting of oil prices by OPEC was influencing all oil-producing countries. In eighteen months, Conwright had miraculously solved the company's problems.

He'd been recommended to the Getty Oil Corporation by the State Department. They in turn had hoped to recruit him to work for the government. Along

the way, he'd been introduced to Governor Martinez of California.

Conwright was aware of the financial problems the state was having. After several meetings with Martinez, he resigned from Getty and joined Martinez. While completing the final two years of his term as Governor, Martinez was amazed at the plans Conwright turned into reality.

The rate of inflation had been reduced by twenty-five percent, and foreign investments came to the aide of the gasping shipping industry. California had regained its economic clout, becoming once again, the *power* state. When Martinez informed him, he was running for the Presidency, Conwright agreed to stay with him.

Next to Conwright, was Mikhail Tesla. Though he was born in the United States, he'd always longed for his parent's homeland of Russia. A graduate of the

University of Southern California in 1994, he'd studied the Soviet Union in depth.

In the proceeding years, he'd become the United States leading authority on Russia. Tesla visited the country as often as possible. He met and married the daughter of a Russian farmer and lived in Leningrad for a while.

During that time, Tesla traveled back and forth from Russia to the US, compiling data that would help the US to better understand their counterparts. In January of 2004, he and his wife were banned from returning to Russia. That decision was based on the SVR's opinion that he was spying for America. The SVR was the Foreign Intelligence Service, the successor of the KGB.

Tesla had made several friends within the government structure, as well as the military. In 2018, the Politburo offered him an invitation to return, on behalf of President Vladimir Putin. He accepted the

invitation and lived there until 2022, when Putin invaded Ukraine.

During his last stay in Russia, he never did get to meet Putin. It was rumored that he'd finally succumbed to cancer in late 2026, or early 2027. No one knew for sure. What was for sure was, Russia had a new President and a new Prime Minister.

The birth of a democratic Russia was a dream come true for many Russians. Tesla had met Martinez at a charity ball in New York. Immediately, Tesla knew Martinez was a man that could make a change in the world. He felt his opinions, and views on Russia were sincere. When Martinez asked him to join his staff, Tesla eagerly accepted.

"Gentlemen, thank you coming. I'm pleased to see you all," the President said, as he took a seat at the head of the table.

"It's our pleasure to be here Sir," George Caster replied. The rest nodded their head in agreement.

*Chapter 7**Vice Presidential Estate**June 6,*

Ronald Coven, Vice-President of the United States, hungered for the Presidency. He was still awe struck that Martinez had selected him as his running mate. In 2018, Coven ran for the vacant Louisiana US Senate seat, and lost. It wasn't due to his lack of political knowledge, but because he was labeled as a racist.

He'd made a statement during the campaign about races shouldn't mix in marriage. As a result, a lawsuit was filed, landing on the desk of Justice Clarence Thomas. Thomas quickly dismissed the case, as it had a direct impact on him. Coven and Thomas were Trumpanites.

His statement sparked controversy, raising a question in the minds of many as to his future suitability for any public office. Coven thought his political career was over, then he was contacted by Martinez's people. They asked him to run as Martinez's Vice-President, which he couldn't believe.

He'd first met Martinez while he himself was Governor of Louisiana, at a Governor's conference in Chicago. He was influenced just by listening to the man. At the time, he couldn't image Martinez losing the Presidential election if he ran, regardless of who was running against him.

When he was offered the Vice-Presidential position, he knew he couldn't refuse. He'd met with Martinez after accepting, and the man was the same as he was during the Governor's meeting. He was poised, calculating, and a definite leader. Coven didn't agree with all his views on handling foreign policy, but he accepted the fact they were logical.

He'd made several trips to Russia over the past few months since the election. He was asked by the SVR why the white population had elected a Mexican President? He couldn't give them an answer.

However, they did get him to look seriously towards the Presidency. He knew he'd be in Martinez's shadow for the next three years. He expressed those same views to the Russians, former Putin associates.

The Russians knew he was a racist, greedy, and figured he'd do anything to get what he wanted. So, they approached him on his last visit. The plan called for him to give the Russians the locations of the thermodynamic energy facilities. In the process, they'd make him the President. He had the Trump syndrome

Chapter 8

Dover, Delaware

June 7, 2028

“Colonel Emery, I’m glad you could make it on such short notice,” General Ritz said, as they shook hands.

“It was no problem, Sir.”

“Colonel, you’ve done an excellent job in putting together our *groups*,” the General stated.

“Thank you, sir.”

“The Calico lab was supposed to have been a military secret. Only a select few knew about it.” The General didn’t mention the Backers.

“Who do you suspect gave the IRA information?” Colonel Emery inquired.

"We have an idea, but we can't move on it yet. It's like a spider trapping its prey, it's the long game."

When the General said *we*, Emery knew there were more people involved, powerful people. "I understand, Sir," the Colonel replied, not needing any further explanation.

"We know the IRA attacked Calico. The bastards left their calling cards painted in red all over the place. We also know there are rogue SVR agents working within the Iranian Government. To what extent, is unknown at the present time. I have information indicating that the remnant of the KGB is attempting to move in on one of the Russian republics," the General told him, and then continued.

"They're going to try to establish a government of their own, at the same, time make friends with America. There is no Central State to block them now. If the old Putin hardliners are the ones responsible, then we have a traitor among us," the General stated, voicing

his concerns. "Whatever the Russians are up too, I don't see how they can pull it off with Martinez in Office."

"Sir, then there is a strong possibility that the President's life is in jeopardy," Colonel Emery reluctantly stated.

"That's an astute observation on your behalf. Extra measures are already in place. The President is angered about the attack at the lab, as well as the vicious assault in London," the General concluded.

Emery realized now that the plans were only a minor issue. Things went deeper. How deep was the real question?" Where do you want me to start General?" Emery asked.

"Iran, Colonel. The IRA has hit this country hard. Now, we are going to strike back. War has been declared against us! We will respond! The President has decided to correct his predecessor's error and remove Raja Abdul-Javad from power."

Knowing that the IRA was the real issue at hand, Emery still had a nagging thought in the back of his mind. Cautiously, he broached it to the General.

"Sir, if we eliminate Abdul-Javad, wouldn't Abdullah Kasim, the mad bastard that put the IRA together, come into power?" The Colonel asked.

"Relax Marshal. We know that. But where is Kasim? He dropped out of sight after the attacks on us, and England. But as the Islamic Republican Leader, he'll have to make at least a token appearance. We both know, whenever the Middle East has a power shift, the pot boils with plots and counterplots. Who knows, maybe someone else will finish the job for us," General Ritz said with a sly smile on his face.

"I understand, Sir. Things may speed up if a word or two is dropped in the right ears," Emery added.

"I'll deploy the BLF at once."

"We must win this one at all costs, Colonel," Ritz stated.

Chapter 9

Red Pines Estates

Pocono, Pennsylvania

June 7,

The briefing room seemed small with the fourteen men and women, known as the Black Liberation Force. They'd completed another day of intense training, but were antsy, waiting for the call. They were training for the dark war.

"This place is state of the art, right? So, why didn't they put a window or two in this damned place," quipped Shana Wolf.

"Some things are meant not to make sense," Colter quickly replied, in his New York accent. He was a twelve-year army veteran, and one of the best IT tech experts in the military.

Emery stood before the Black Liberation Force, America's shield. All eyes rested upon him, as he began to speak. He's the man responsible for them being together for the past nine months. He paused as another man entered the room.

"Who's that?" Wolf asked.

"Commander Chico Stefan. He's led and survived more covert missions than anyone, including the Colonel. He's a dangerous man, but he gets the job done," the Sergeant informed her.

"Then, I'm glad he's on our side," she added.

"He'll surprise you before this mission is over. Don't allow his carefree manner to cloud your judgement of him," he said. "He's also our new Executive Officer."

"He's, our XO huh? I'll keep that bit of information in mind."

"Don't mention it," the Dunbar replied.

The sound of the Colonel's voice brought her mind back to the briefing.

"This is the day we've been waiting for. Officially, we are no longer a military special forces unit, but the Black Liberation Force! Are there any questions?" The Colonel asked. When no one said anything, Colonel Emery turned the floor over to Commander Stefan.

General Ritz had assigned the Commander to the BLF. Due to his unique skill set and many other talents, he was too valuable to waste on hi-jacking ships. Debra Crystal, who'd been the XO prior to the Commander's appointment, wasn't thrilled. However, she was a team player.

Crystal was a former team leader of the Delta Force during the Philippines Conflict. She was an expert with knives and heavy equipment. Plus, she was the first woman to win the Congressional Medal of Honor; one of the few living recipients.

"Thank you, Sir," Commander Stefan said, as he looked at the faces in front of him. He was no stranger to speaking to troops in rooms like now. He saw an eagerness in their eyes that told him they were deeply committed. "I'm Navy Commander, Chico Stefan. I'm your new XO," he said. He slipped his hands into his pants pocket and relaxed a little. He felt relieved. He was an outsider to them, and he wanted to ease any animosities.

He paused and stood straighter. They all noticed the change in him, especially Colonel Emery. He'd lost the easy-going mannerisms and was now presenting himself as the Naval Officer of his rank. "It's an honor to be part of your elite unit," he said, then gave a crisp salute. He spoke more by body language than with words.

Having returned the floor to Colonel Emery, Stefan felt drained from the intense eye contact he'd received from the members of the BLF. He'd lead many

missions, but never had his troops been so focused on what he had to say. Especially, when he hadn't really said anything. These people were special.

Not a word was uttered, as there was nothing to say. For some, this mission was the adventure of a lifetime. For others, it was a way that would allow them to contribute to America. Regardless of their reasons, they all had accepted Colonel Emery's invitation to join the elite unit based on his reputation.

The Colonel began by saying, "You'll be paired into two squads. So, get to know your team, as your life may come to depend on it. Each of you have been crossed trained to enable you to get the job done. That's the bottom line. I know each of you will do your duty. Alfa squad will be under my Command. Bravo squad will be under Commander Stefan," the Colonel informed them.

As he began calling out the names of Alfa Squad. He was interrupted by a sentry who entered the

room before he announce the last member of Alpha Squad. Emery looked at the sentry who had a puzzling look on his face.

"Commander Stefan, take over!" He ordered, as he exited the conference room.

Once outside, the Colonel inhaled the cool, fresh mountain air of the Pennsylvania countryside. He returned the salute of the sentry outside of his office, then informed the man military courtesy was no longer in effect. Entering his office, his first sight was Tracy, coolly sitting behind his desk. He verbally erupted!

"What in the hell are you doing here?!"

She patiently waited for him to run down. "It's good to see you again too, Colonel. To answer your question, General George Ritz. He told me that you might be a little upset. But he had this idea that I might fit in with your unit," Tracy replied, presenting an air of confidence.

"The General, you say."

“Yes Colonel. The General.”

“Did the General give you anything for me?”

"You mean this," she said, handing him a thick, brown envelope. The General's personal wax seal was on it.

The contents were orders from the General to add her to the BLF, and her report from the hotel incident. She was good, and deadly under fire. But he still needed more to justify taking her into the unit. Emery knew the General well enough to know he wouldn't sandbag him. He wouldn't have sent her if he didn't feel she could be an asset.

“Why do you want to join my outfit? Are you that eager to die? Being an FBI agent doesn't make you super woman, neither does killing a terrorist. Hell, I have a living Congressional Medal recipient not fifty yards away. I have the man that led the attack of the Persian Gulf oil platforms. We're not going after just any terrorist's organization, but the IRA. They're one of

the most vicious fighting units to come out of the Middle East in a long time. They make al-Qaeda and the Taliban look like amateurs," the Colonel caustically informed her.

"You're right, I'm not super woman, but I'm damned good at what I do. No, my FBI experience doesn't give me any advantage over your people, but I'm an expert in deep cover infiltration" Tracy stated pleading her case She joined the Colonel, who was still, standing in front of the desk.

You're right, I'm not super woman, but I'm damned good at what I do. No, my FBI experience doesn't give me any advantage over your people, but I'm an expert in deep undercover operations. Are any of your people qualified for that?" Tracy stated, pleading her case. She joined the Colonel, who was still standing in front of the desk.

“Look, you need to slow down. Emotions can lead to disaster. The General had a reason for you being here, so let’s stay focused,” the Colonel told her.

“I understand your people are highly qualified, and experts in phrases of warfare that’s foreign to me. I get that. I didn’t ask the General for a handout. If I didn’t think I could help, I would’ve told him so. The IRA must be stopped and eliminated,” Tracy concluded.

“You’re quite interesting, Grant” the Colonel replied.

“Whatever this mission consist of, I don’t care. Just give me the opportunity. I’ll follow your orders and hang with you until the end,” she said in a low voice.

“Lady, you have more balls than some men I know.”

" Colonel, I love the challenge of a fight, and the thrill of the hunt. I will not disappoint you,” she said with sincerity.

“Well, Agent Grant, I still have qualms about this. However, for now, you’re a member of the Black Liberation Force. Remember, if you fuck up, I’ll bounce your ass out of here so fast, you’ll think you’re a rocket. I don’t care where we are when, and if, that happens. We move out at 0330 hours,” Colonel Emery informed her.

“Where too?”

“Iran.”

Chapter 10

Teheran, Iran

June 8, 2028

The Islamic Temple's main courtyard was crowded with worshippers. They were waiting anxiously to hear the leader of the Islamic Republican Party, Raja Abdul-Javad. The western world considered him a cold-blooded murderer, as it did some Arab leaders.

He'd been a spokesman for the late Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, the successor of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Upon Ali Khomeini's death, Abdul-Javad took the throne, but not the title of Ayatollah.

Abdul-Javad secured his position by having several opposition leaders assassinated, beginning his

reign with fear and brutality. Over the past six years, he'd rejuvenated the Islamic traditions. He followed the path of the Taliban by re-instituting the Sharia.

The Qur'an is the principal source of Islamic law, the Sharia. It contains the rules by which the Muslim world is governed. It also forms the basis for relations between man and God, between individuals, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, as well as between a man and things that are part of creation.

The Sharia contains the rules by which a Muslim society is organized and governed. It provides the means to resolve conflicts among individuals and between the individual and the state.

When the Ayatollah's health began to fail, it was Abdul-Javad who stepped up. He prevented the opposition from taking advantage of the leader's situation. With the elements taking place in Saudi Arabia and Syria, Iran was caught in the crosshairs. The people were starting to lean towards the western world's

capitalistic ways, something Abdul-Javad wouldn't allow to happen.

Saudi Arabia and Syria had opened the gateways to allow such an atrocity to happen. For the Saudis, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was killed in a mid-air flight explosion, upon take-off. It was rumored that King Salman submitted to the US. As a result, the Jamal Khashoggi affair was closed, and the US re-established its military bases in the kingdom.

Syria, on the other hand, had no choice but to bow down to a greater power, without Russia and Putin's support. Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad granted the US permission to establish fully combat ready military bases. The United States controlled the Mediterranean Sea, therefore, controlling half of the Middle East.

Abdul-Javad's purpose was to rule Iran and the Middle East. However, the US was blockading the Mediterranean, and Iranian ships were being hi-jacked

by mercenaries. Abdul-Javad had one weapon at his disposal, the Islamic Rashidun Army, the IRA! He would allow Qadir free reign of the IRA!

Abdul-Javad understood, he'd need a strong right hand. That honor went to Abdullah Kasim, a master manipulator, and great influencer. Kasim was the architect of the IRA.

He had also played a major role in Abdul-Javad's plan to unify the Middle East. Kasim had also used his negotiating skills to persuade OPEC to join Iran in forming the OPEC- Iranian National Oil Company.

Kasim's plan was to be the Supreme Islamic Republican Leader of the Middle East. He was now doing things his way and with his people. The way was terrorism, the people terrorists!

Chapter 11

Teheran

June 8,

The BLF had been in Teheran for six hours.

Their safe house was near the carpenter's shop, that had built a wooden frame marble podium for Abdul-Javad. It was a personalized gift from Abdullah Kasim.

"Colonel, a jeep will be waiting for you behind the house when you're ready to leave. The jet packs are fueled and ready. Good luck," their contact told him.

"Thank you," Emery said, as the man exited the house through the back. "Commander, take Bravo squad to the carpenter's shop, then head for the rendezvous pick-up along the Caspian Sea. The Ultra-Lite aircraft will be waiting there," the Colonel said, pointing to an area on the map, north of Teheran. "I'll

take care of Abdul- Javad." Both men looked at each other. A mutual respect had developed between them in the short time they'd been together.

"I'll see you on the sub, Colonel," Stefan replied, as he joined Bravo squad.

Their window of opportunity came when they learned that the podium had fallen from the truck that it was being transported on. The carpenter had to repair it before the ceremony. The podium would be used as a decoy, giving Alfa squad the time and diversion, it would need.

The seven members of Bravo squad casually strolled through the streets, mixing in and out of the crowds of the marketplace. The heat was almost unbearable, and the kaffiyehs didn't help matters any. Stefan gradually made his way to the carpenter's shop, quickly stepping in.

Not a second behind him, was Cades and Cooper. Rodriguez and Wolf brought up the rear.

Jackson, Sneed, and Hackett stayed outside, camouflaged by the crowds. They had a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree angle of the street, weapons hot and ready.

Inside, no one said anything. They removed their concealed machine gun, with cyanide laced bullets. They froze as a shuffling sound came from the back of the shop. They quickly spread out in the confined space.

Coming into view, was a man wearing a dirty white baseball cap. A Mack Truck logo was in the middle. He was fixing his pants, having come out of the bathroom. Stefan suspected he was the truck-driver.

Swiftly, Cades grabbed him by the throat, slamming the man hard against the wall. Rodriguez hurried to the back. She re-appeared dragging the frightened carpenter with her.

The driver's first thought was the Islamic Leader had discovered his carelessness. Then he realized, too

late, that the people in the shop were not the IRA, or even Arab. Wolf jammed the barrel of her silenced machine gun under his chin.

As he questioned him, he began to panic. He jerked, trying to get away. She pulled the trigger! A single bullet exploded out of the back of his head in a wet, pink cloud. Like a puppet with severed strings, he fell to the floor without a twitch.

Stefan looked at her but didn't say anything. An odd thought crossed his mind, as he realized a female had drawn first blood. He would have to watch her, as she had a quick trigger finger.

The carpenter watched the gruesome scene unfold, thinking he'd be next. Stefan motioned with the barrel of his weapon, for the carpenter to sit down against the wall. The little man eagerly complied.

Cades rigged the podium with two remote-activated bombs. One was to be discovered, one to

blow. He rigged it where it didn't matter which one, the other one would blow.

He finished in less than three minutes, handing the remote to Stefan. Stefan told Wolf to tell the carpenter to deliver the podium to the Islamic Temple for the ceremony.

The carpenter didn't know if they were going to kill him or not. His only hope was to do what they told him to do. Placing added insurance on him to deliver the podium, Cades attached a similar, smaller remote device to the man's groin area. Wolf told him if he attempted to remove it, he'd die. They'd be watching.

Stefan was counting on him to alert the FOI once he was inside the Temple. The FOI, Fruit of Islam, was the security and disciplinary wing of the Nation of Islam. It had also been described as a paramilitary unit. The Fruit of Islam wears distinctive blue, brown or white uniforms, and caps and has units at all NOI temples.

The bomb in the podium was going to be used as a diversion. Their timing had to be perfect. When the carpenter arrived at the Temple, Abdul-Javad should be inside the courtyard.

The mass of people began to chant. Abdul-Javad's procession came into view, with him waving to the crowd as if he was the second coming of the Prophet Muhammad. He understood fear deadened the senses of right from wrong. He searched for that factor in all endeavors.

Briefly halting in front of the Temple's marble steps, the first part of the procession made its way up the speaker's platform. The Islamic Leader, Raja Abdul-Javad stopped as a FOI guard came towards him. The guard informed that a bomb was found in the podium. Abdul-Javad hesitated for a moment and decided it was safe. The bomb had been removed, therefore, he proceeded with the ceremony.

The attendees included Muslim leaders of many sects, from Yemen to Turkey. Most were there out of fear of the IRA. The saddest part is, they stood by and did nothing when the Ayatollah was passing on to paradise. The Germans had done the same thing when Hitler had come to power, stood by, and did nothing.

The crowd continued the chant. With all eyes focused on Abdul-Javad, no one noticed the five individuals flying toward the crowd until it was too late. One-hundred and fifty yards from the crowd, Emery, Conway, Dunbar, Phillips, and Crystal cut the power on their jetpacks, falling from the sky.

They landed on the rooftops surrounding the squared courtyard. Simultaneously, there was an explosion on the Temple steps. The podium had exploded. Seconds later, they launched rockets from the T27 rocket launchers.

Capped with magnesium heads, the entire courtyard was instantly engulfed in flaming, death! The

screams of those trapped in the inferno were barely heard. They sprayed the few stragglers who tried to escape with merchants of death! Unbeknown to the public or any government, foreign and domestic, the United States had retaliated! Iran would never be the same.

Igniting their jetpacks, Emery and the three members of Alfa squad lifted quickly away from the compound, disappearing in the sky. They flew half a mile to a waiting jeep. From there, they took the Ultra-Light aircraft to the Caspian Sea, rendezvousing with the rest of the BLF.

Chapter 12

Teheran

June 8,

By sunset, the Arab world was in an uproar! They wanted blood! Even western world powers were appalled by the horrid and heinous act. World leaders condemned the act, as the Middle East was instantly thrown into a power suction. Then the Iranian intelligence picked up chatter directed to the IRA. "For every IRA attack, the BLF will respond."

Abdullah Kasim stood on the marble balcony, of the Vice-Premier's Palace. He looked out at the crowd from behind a bullet proof glass enclosure. The people stared up at him. He was now the leader of the Muslim world.

Allah had smiled on him, he thought. The savage attack had propelled him into a position of unquestionable power. He was like a god. His main concern however, was the BLF? Was he on their list, also? Time would reveal the truth, and he would create the time.

Kasim wasn't upset with the ruthless attack. He'd in fact, anticipated it. The IRA had attacked every major power, with America and England being the last two. He knew they wouldn't wait much longer to retaliate. Abdul-Javad was their target. Logically, he'd be next. However, the attack hadn't only made him the ruler of a people, but of a nation!

He adjusted the microphone and began to speak. Immediately he began with the same dialogue of blaming the West for the massacre at the Temple. It didn't matter if what he said was true or not.

The mere fact that he was speaking to them after the savage assassination of Raja Abdul-Javad and many

respected Muslim leaders and scholars, was reassuring. To his amazement, he truly had the people behind him. The people had a common goal, and Kasim would use that goal to his advantage. They hungered for the destruction of the West, and they would have it!

Abdullah Kasim was a complete manic. Those who opposed his leadership and ideas, would be put to death, tightening his grip on his power. He'd devised a plan that called for more attacks against the America, England, and Japan.

As for the Russians, they too would pay for their interference with Iran. They were a race of weak people, with no respect, for the teachings and profound knowledge of Allah. The western world detested the Middle East, but not as much as Kasim detested the western world. He would reign down fire and brim stone. Abdullah Kasim was the dawn of a new era.

"We will destroy America! We will spill its blood, as it has spilled ours. But do not forget my

brothers and sister, America did not act alone. America was aided by England and Japan. They make these false claims that they stand for democracy and freedom of all people. We do not need democracy; we have the Sharia; we do need. Freedom, as we were born free! They too, will pay," Kasim told his emotional, faithful, blinded listeners. As he exited the balcony, he could hear the Shahadah being repeated.

"God is most Great. God is most Great. I testify there is no other God, but God and Mohammed is His Prophet. God is most Great. God is most Great. I testify there is no other God, but God and Mohammed is His Prophet"

Looking back out over the crowd Kasim, had a smile on his face. He was their savior. They'd follow him to the deepest depths of hell! Strolling to the center of his huge, luxurious office, he came to a halt in front of Qadir Shabazz, enforcer of the IRA.

Qadir was Kasim's right hand and longed to attack America. Now he would! The attack on London's Heathrow Airport, and the Calico Laboratory in Detroit was an introduction to their brand. However, it was nothing compared to the butchery that was forthcoming. He'd led the assault in Detroit, securing the plans for the thermodynamic energy facilities.

The Russians had arranged for his safe return. Qadir had decided to keep the plans, much to the displeasure of the Russians. They were not able to use the old ways of intimidation and force. Now, they were of no more use to the IRA, or Iran. Qadir had been raised by Kasim.

Whatever the Premier requested, Qadir would see it fulfilled. With the money and power of OPEC, and the IRA, at their disposal, they'd create more horror than the German death camps. In his own heart, Qadir considered himself the deadliest terrorist alive.

Qadir knew his friend, his brother, Mustafa Sahib had ambitions to take his place. It was fueled by his ego, which was understandable. However, Mustafa's fear of him kept him alive.

Mustafa was equally trained in the arts of terrorism, but he lacked that cunning, and manipulating edge. Mustafa's greatest thrills came from hi-jacking aircrafts, which came as a natural talent. He too, wanted a chance to see how mighty the Americans were.

"Premier Kasim, the people are ready and willing to fight back," Qadir voiced eagerly.

"You are correct. But the people will not do fighting. The IRA will!" Kasim exclaimed. "I remembered the war with Iraq vividly, and felt the *people* were responsible for Iran losing that war. I was a young then, but I still remember."

During the mid-1990s, Kasim decided it was time to escalate their fight. Assisted by Qadir, they created the deadliest and most brutal, terrorist

organization ever formed. Iran's Islamic Rashidun Army. They were an elite fighting unit, that allowed all Muslims to fight under their banner.

Later, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, Iran watched bitterly, as America responded to Kuwait's plea for help. However, the IRA's greatest challenge came during the Philippines conflict.

Kasim was their commander. The last battle turned into a massacre for the rebels. Eager to engage the Americans, they had a breakdown in communication.

The rebels were supposed to attack, then split the troops. They split the troops first. Before the IRA could get into position, the Americans attacked the rebels. They slaughtered them, forcing them to surrender or die.

When Kasim realized what had happened, reluctantly pulled the IRA out. They returned to Iran as heroes, but Kasim knew the truth. He was scared. In an

odd twist of fate, American President Martinez, was the General that forced the rebels to surrender. Now, Kasim had another shot at Martinez!

He gathered his thoughts and continued with the conversation. "Our mission in America was successful," Kasim boasted. "The attack in Detroit made our presence known to them. We possess the same technology as they do now. We will no longer have to depend on any country other than ourselves. We shall dispose of those, who at first opportunity would dispose of us. The entire Middle East belongs to us, its native sons, and daughters!"

The Premier stated, as flecks of spittle flew out of his mouth from the violence of his maniacal expression. There were moments when Kasim seemed to be two people at once. He'd just gone from dark and gloomy to jubilant and excited.

Qadir replied heatedly. "The Russians have been greedy. They take too much oil from our wells.

Now, we shall stop them from treating our people and homeland like it is a rug to wipe their feet upon."

"You are correct," Kasim said, and then continued. "The Russians are of little interest to us currently. They will be there after we complete our business at hand. They will know they can't defeat us. America has placed all her European military installations on *Condition Red*. They believe we will attack its precious installations. We do not want those installations, but America itself!" Premier Kasim excitedly exclaimed.

He saw the growing hunger in the eyes of Qadir, also. Hunger, not for food, but for vengeance! He would give Qadir what he wanted.

"Now Qadir, we must prepare to meet the Scorpion. In the desert of all places," Kasim informed his trusted warrior.

*Chapter 13**Teheran**June 8,*

Providing as much protection for Abdullah Kasim, Qadir, lay on a grassy knoll one hundred yards away. They were thirty-five miles North-West of Teheran. It was obvious that the Scorpion had surveyed the area. It was the perfect trap or the perfect escape.

Qadir wasn't surprised the Scorpion had left him a calling card. It came in the form of a bottle of French wine. The knoll, while not perfect, provided the only means for him to keep an eye on the Premier. Qadir admired the professionalism of the Scorpion.

The day was bright and clear, as the countryside was quiet. Then like a lightning bolt, a dust covered jeep pierced the serenity. It rolled up to the stone well

in the center of the village. The man driving, wore khaki's, a desert head covering, and mirror sunglasses. Qadir still couldn't get a clear look at his face.

The driver was hawking the area before the jeep ground to a halt. Stepping from one of the small huts, Abdullah Kasim made his presence known. He strutted across the stony ground, dressed in his full military garb. His style of dress was fashioned the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Kasim carried a grey metal attaché case, stopping in front of the Frenchman.

"I am grateful you agreed to meet with me face-to-face," Kasim told the Scorpion.

"You have asked me here to exterminate the American President, I believe," the Scorpion stated, getting straight to the point. "I do not like this form of meeting. But this is an exception, considering the target," he told the Premier. Kasim was one of only two people who could identify him. He'd taken that into consideration before accepting the Premier's invitation.

“Yes, I want him dead. Your price is two million American dollars, half up front and in cash,” Kasim confidently stated. He handed the Scorpion the attaché case.

The Scorpion opened the case, glancing casually at the stacks of bills. “I see you have taken the liberty of not wasting my time, but the price has changed. It is now five-million dollars,” the Scorpion sarcastically stated, then continued before Kasim could interject. “If not for the ineffectiveness of your infamous IRA, my price would not have changed.”

The Frenchman took pleasure in announcing his new price to Kasim. He received an even a greater joy at the shocked expression on the little man's creased face. His new fee was a spur of the moment thought. He just wanted to screw with Kasim's head.

"You insult my intelligence by your sudden change of face!" Kasim exclaimed!" I will get your money! I am the Premier! Obviously, you can't grasp

the over-all concept of my plan. You are nothing more than a hired killer!" Kasim angrily barked.

"That's something you should never forget. Now, you should learn to control yourself better, Mr. Premier," the Scorpion said with a smirk, satisfied in having caused Kasim to lose his composure.

Locking eyes with the Scorpion, Kasim lowered his head. The forcefulness of the man's black eyes affected him in an unnatural manner. A manner he didn't like.

Kasim's decision was made. Once the assignment was completed, he'd turn the infamous assassin over to the IRA for fun. Then he'd see how arrogant the master assassin would be.

"You'll make Martinez's assassination as dramatic as possible." Kasim told him. Reaching into his jacket pocket, he removed a leather pouch. He passed it to the Scorpion. "Everything you need is in here, along with further instructions."

Tossing the pouch onto the passenger's seat, the Scorpion hopped in jeep. He drove off leaving a trail of dust. Kasim reflected on the meeting, as he waited for Qadir to come down from the mountains. He didn't like the Frenchman's arrogant attitude, but he was pleased with the meeting.

"When the Frenchman completes his assignment, I want him," Qadir stated vehemently, joining Kasim.

Kasim heard Qadir's words clearly. He didn't reply. His trusted warrior would indeed get the infamous assassin, but that would come in due time. Kasim refocused his attention on the havoc that would be unleashed on America.

They killed Iran's leader, now he was going to return the favor by killing their leader. This would cause international chaos for decades to come. Abdullah Kasim, supreme ruler of the Middle East would control the world!

*Chapter 14**Moscow, Russia**June 9, 2028*

Thaddeus Groves enjoyed the Carte Blanc lifestyle as the head of the CIA. The appointment was secure by his friend, Vice-President Ronald Coven. President Martinez allowed Coven to appoint one individual as a courtesy. Surprised, but knowing the Vice-President's ambitions, Groves knew he'd at some point earn that appointment. That time had come.

" Welcome to Russia, Mr. Groves. I hope you had a pleasant trip, as well as a comfortable one," Major Viktor Bresnov stated in his thick Georgian accented English. He'd been the head of Putin's special espionage operations but was now the mouthpiece for the underground hardliners.

"Yes, it was, but the pleasantries can wait.

Considering the recent events, I want to know why your people have taken such a murderous route?" Thaddeus Groves asked, a frown creasing his brow.

"I take it you are referring to the attack in America and England by the IRA?" Bresnov stated, more than asked.

"The Vice-President wasn't prepared for you to move so quickly, and violently, I may add. Although I must admit, it was well planned. Having the IRA take all the credit was a stroke of genius on your behalf," Groves stated.

"I understand. However, we will be able to speak more freely once we arrived at our destination. Meanwhile, enjoy the scenery of Moscow."

Bresnov found it hard to believe Groves still thought they were responsible for the attacks. He'd debated with himself if he should tell Groves that the Iranians were operating independently. There were

distinct advantages to what Groves believed, as opposed to what he knew.

If he was under that impression that they were responsible for the IRA, then he'd use it to his advantage. Bresnov decided not to clarify the CIA chief's belief.

America's intelligence network was as smooth as ever. It was individuals such as Groves, who were so ill-informed. The American Vice-President was so intent on becoming President, that he didn't have Groves inspect the scenario closely enough. One man's ceiling is another man's floor. He was standing on Grove's ceiling.

Everything that was happening, the Americans, the CIA of all people, thought it was planned. Greed had no limits nor boundaries. After-all, Groves did deliver the plans for the thermodynamic energy facilities. They in turn, had given that information to the Iranians. In retrospect, that may have been a grave

error in judgment. However, those at the top of the food chain, welcomed the cooperation of the Iranians.

During the Trump administration, moles had been planted in the American Secret Service. Putin had created an espionage unit, geared for one purpose. Infiltrate the US secret service. With close ties to then, President Trump, the infiltration was a success. Four agents were selected. Bresnov had been one of those agents.

On March 29, 2020, a lone gunman penetrated the defenses of Mar-a-Lago, wounding several secret service agents. One of the agents shot, was Russian mole, Viktor Bresnov. A bullet had grazed his left eyelid, destroying the eyelid. The miracles of modern technology and science allowed him to retain his vision, with a cosmetic eyelid.

The Mercedes Benz came to a halt in an underground parking garage in Red Square. They were under Lenin's tomb. Groves realized they'd arrived at

their destination. He followed Bresnov through a dimly lit corridor.

Approaching the elevators, a soldier snapped to attention when he recognized Bresnov. The soldier removed a key card and swiped the elevator. The elevator took them to Bresnov's office. Settling in, they began discussing the business at hand.

The meeting lasted three hours but seemed longer to Groves. He never sensed his Russian counterpart was lying about the savage attacks by the Islamic Rashidun Army. Bresnov was surprised how naïve the Americans were.

They believed the Russians would be controlling any, and all future events. Bresnov reported his findings to his colleagues, regarding Thaddeus Groves. They would seek a way to use the information to their advantage in the future.

*Chapter 15**Vice-Presidential Estate**June 11, 2028*

"Thaddeus, how did the meeting go with our associates?" Vice-President Ronald Coven asked his CIA Chief.

"It went well. They've set things in motion. Now, we wait. Your, swearing in will be forthcoming," Groves retorted, raising his glass in a salute.

"I've been looking forward to this for a long time. Martinez will become a bad memory when I'm finished destroying his character and reputation," Coven sarcastically stated. He walked around the study, stopping to look out of the window.

"I find it hard to understand how you have such a deep hatred for Martinez. He did choose you as his Vice-President," Groves said, voicing his opinion.

"Sometimes things are not what they appear to be," Coven replied.

"Point taken" Groves said and drained his glass. "You seem confident the Russians are going to fulfill their part of the bargain," Groves added, skepticism in his voice.

Turning, he faced Groves. Then the Vice-President asked in an irritated voice, "What in the hell is that supposed to mean? You just said they're handling their end."

"I'm sure they are planning to uphold their end of the bargain. But I will not believe it until you are the President!"

"I don't like the sound of that," Coven said, sounding concerned. "Did they give you some reason for this renewed doubt?"

“Sir let’s be realistic. We’re the ones who gave those double-crossing bastards the information about those plans. I want you in the Oval Office just as bad as you do. But we are dealing with a situation that could explode in ours faces,” Groves stated, voicing his concerns.

“I don’t need to be reminded,” Coven angrily replied.

"I’m just being pessimistic. Once we complete this, you’ll go down as one of the greatest Presidents in the history of this great country of ours."

“You’re right. Yes, we did arrange for of this, and it’s worth it. Mr. Groves do not attempt to back out on me now. You got that?” Coven asked. He’d calmed down, and once more sounded confident.

"I understand completely, Sir. With that taken care of, what’s our next move?" Groves asked, smarting from the blunt threat.

“There is no next move. Everything is up to the Russians, and those blood thirsty bastard terrorists.”

The Vice-President sharply informed him.

Clearing his throat, Groves said, “I had the Oval Office, and Rose Garden bugged this afternoon. Even if Martinez discovers them, he’ll have to tell you about it. He can't take the risk of making the bugs known until he learns who planted them. By then, it’ll be too late. I hope you know what you're doing.”

" For your sake, you had better pray that I do. Your survival depends on it as much as mine does. Good day, Mr. Groves!"

*Chapter 16**Dulles International Airport**June 11,*

Stepping from the airplane and into the stifling Washington, DC heat, the Scorpion took a deep breath. He'd flown from Izmir, Turkey to Washington. The US had levied sanctions against Iran, as did most of the free world. He was amazed at how loose he felt after such a long flight. Glancing at his watch, it showed ten o'clock in the morning.

He passed through customs with no difficulties. Abdullah Kasim had provided him with a false diplomatic Turkish passport. He proceeded directly to the front entrance of the airport. He searched the crowd, looking for the man in the picture he'd been given. Making contact, they engaged in a brief conversation.

Once inside the car, the contact handed him a small shoe box size package.

He didn't speak as they drove away from the airport, instead, he on the contents of the package. Opening the box, he quickly scanned the contents. There was a de-bugging device, and his .9mm German Luger, making him feel less vulnerable.

Patting his jacket pocket, making sure his passport was secure, the Scorpion relaxed. He enjoyed the coolness of the air-condition Rolls Royce. Following a short ride, they pulled through the gates of a private estate in the Georgetown section of Washington.

Once inside his room, the assassin immediately swept the room for listening devices with the de-bugging scanner. It was mostly out of habit. Satisfied, he settled into his temporary quarters, and then checked the attaché case laying on the bed.

He popped the latches and opened the case, eyeballing the contents. Then he quickly assembled a special made camera, which would hold the customized designed four-shot derringer. There was a homing device in the form of a credit card. That was his link to his contact. His contact would be the unknowing decoy for the Scorpion's escape.

He didn't like the fact he needed the assistance someone, but for the plan to work, it was necessary. He knew the man would he caught and killed. Completing his inspection, he was pleased everything was as he'd requested. He closed the case and poured himself a glass of French sherry.

Lolling in a reclining chair near the window, he reflected on his last visit to America, forty-seven years earlier. Then too, it had been Washington. How ironic he thought. Once rarely gets the opportunity to correct a past mistake.

In 1981, he'd been contacted by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to assassinate then, President Ronald Reagan. It'd been his first major assignment since he eliminated the renown assassin, Carlos the Jackal.

The political atmosphere in America, and the world, was jubilant. Reagan had secured the release of the 52 American hostages held in Iran for over a year. However, the Middle East leaders didn't share in that joy. They joined Khomeini's fight for supposed freedom.

The events on the day of March 30, 1981, was branded in his mind. President Reagan's agenda for the afternoon was simple. He was at the Washington Hilton Hotel speaking before the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. He was the President of the working people.

The Scorpion had left his lodgings at 1:40 pm. Twenty minutes later, the President exited the VIP

doors of the hotel, surrounded by the Secret Service.

Reporters shot question after question at the President and the security was extremely loose.

However, before he could act, another man standing directly in front of him produced a gun. Without hesitation, the Scorpion timed his shot, matching the buffoon who was firing wildly. The silencer muffled the sound of the second gun.

The Scorpion's bullet hit the President, as Secret Service agents propelled him into his limousine. Four others were shot by the gunman who'd fired at the President. Hearing the click of the empty gun, the Scorpion violently pushed the man forward. He was later identified as John Hinkley.

The area was crowded with reporters and chaos, making his getaway easy. Hours later, he learned the President was still alive. That assignment remained a bitter taste in his being, fueling his determination to never fail again. The up-coming assassination would

atone for his one and only miss. The leaders of the world all misjudged him. They were under the impression he killed for the money and fame. The truth was, he killed simply for the power it gave him over another human being.

Finishing his sherry, he switched on the television. There was a special news report concerning the arrival of the President of France, Fracas Deschamps. The Scorpion detested Deschamps.

He had passive ideas, and treated the French people like they were nothing. Deschamps had plunged the country into despair. The Scorpion's anger towards the French President turned his mind's eye blind with rage.

To hit Deschamps would be a bonus. However, he'd have to pass up the golden opportunity. The American President was his target and he'd take great pleasure in claiming responsibility for it.

As for Kasim, the Scorpion had developed a growing distrust for him over the years. The time had come to eliminate the Premier. During their last meeting, he'd purposely antagonized him.

He knew Kasim didn't like his authority challenged. The Scorpion's instincts alerted him to the fact that the Premier would double-cross him. He always trusted his instincts.

Checking his watch again, the Scorpion began making his final preparations. He was now working on his timetable and wouldn't divert from it. He was confident that his contact was also making the final preparations for the mortar attack.

The Scorpion had changed his departure route from America. He'd use his own route. He took the liberty of arranging that portion of the plan before he left Teheran. He didn't trust Kasim.

His private Lear jet was fueled and waiting for him in Alexandria. There'd be no witnesses, which

included the contact. The American government would somehow find a way to tie the dead Iranian to the assassination. That would also be a calling card for Premier Abdullah Kasim

*Chapter 17**Dulles International Airport**June 11,*

Dozens of news teams from around the world, were herded inside a cordoned off area on the airport apron. The closer President Martinez came to them, the more frenzied they became. They bumped and nudged each other, trying to get in position for the best question or best shot in their small area.

Going against the wishes and pleas of the Secret Service, President Martinez insisted on speaking with the media. He was the first President since President Obama, who didn't attempt to evade them. Like all good politicians, Martinez recognized the power of the media.

Flanked by Secret Service, the President waved, greeting the gathering crowd. There were surveillance teams and marksmen in every concealable area of the airport. President Martinez approached his counterpart, President Fracas Deschamps, as he exited the Concord. They shook hands and posed for the media. It was a festive atmosphere.

The Scorpion, along with the other media hounds, stood less than ten feet from the President's walkway. The Scorpion inserted the credit card device into the camera. His heart was thundering in his ears and his palms sweating.

He took several deep breaths, seeking his center calm. He locked in on the LCD digital reading on the camera countdown from ten. Then an explosion erupted near the Presidential motorcade! Fear and chaos reigned supreme!

The famed assassin simultaneously aimed his custom-crafted camera at the President, quickly firing

two angels from hell in silence! His plan had worked perfectly!

As expected, the Secret Service located his contact within a matter of seconds. They foiled his escape with a barrage of gunfire. There were no loose ends.

Secret Service agents converged on the bodies of both Presidents! The media tried to get in closer to see what had happened. They were bull-rushed back by several Secret Service agents.

Secret Service agents peeled off President Martinez, revealing the reality of what had just happened. The media realized the President had been shot! President Martinez was gasping for air! The fact that he was still alive was a miracle.

It all happened so quickly. The scene became a media field day, as cameras zoomed in on the President's bloody body! It was one of the most

horrifying, and bloodiest acts of violence against an American President in decades.

A gurney was lowered, and he was lifted onto it. Surprisingly, President Martinez managed to raise his clenched fist in salute! President Fracas Deschamps had been lying face down on the pavement, too afraid to move. He was helped to his feet and swept away by Secret Service agents.

President Martinez was air-lifted to Walter Reed Army Hospital. A team of surgeons were standing by and rushed the President into the operating room. The surgeons quickly went to work using their skills to save him.

Social media erupted! The late comers were now watching the viral video of the attempted assassination! But the White House was calm, as panic, and hysteria was sweeping the globe.

Minutes following the attempted assassination of President Martinez, the Islamic Rashidun Army

claimed responsibility. The attempted assassination was described as a diabolical act against the free world!

Not since the 1963 assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and that of his brother Robert Francis Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, has the world been so appalled and disgusted in witnessing such a malicious act.

While the IRA was being branded as the disruptors of stability, Vice-President Ronald Coven was being sworn in as the President of the United States, under the 25th Amendment.

*Chapter 18**Phoenix, Arizona**June 11,*

Hours after the attempted assassination of President Martinez, the IRA, approached the five-star Imperial Hotel. Qadir observed the spectacular, ostentatious beauty of the man-made water falls in the front of the lavish building. “The things money can buy,” he mumbled to himself.

Their second strike on England, called the assassination of the Prince and Princess of Wales. They were guest at the hotel. Using the cover of darkness, Qadir penetrated the hotel through the kitchen. He saw two security personnel. They were armed with sub-machine guns! Qadir stopped! Qadir had expected more security.

He retreated into the darkness of the Arizona night. His sixth sense had kicked in. He now noticed the cylinder type object protruding from the window of a dark colored van parked in the parking lot. None of the reports he'd received indicated there would be any type of surveillance. He was upset. Qadir motioned for Mustafa and Sari to investigate the van.

Qadir watched his soldiers swoop upon the van, carrying out his orders. Mustafa was the first to enter, followed by Sari. Then there was bright flashes of light. Mustafa tossed two bodies from the van onto the pavement, then disappeared back in the van.

A couple of minutes later, Sari exited the van. Mustafa followed, carrying a video camera. Sari checked the pockets of the dead men, finding their ID's.

"They are local law enforcement," she stated.

"I took the video camera so the world will see that we, the Islamic Rashidun Army, mean business!" Mustafa said in an excited voice.

Qadir was upset that Mustafa wanted to film the assassinations. It was important to their cause that the world should see they showed no mercy. He knew he should've thought of the camera, but he hadn't. His pride was smarting from being outwitted by Mustafa. He forced himself to shield his anger and frustration as he went back inside the hotel.

The men in the kitchen were relaxed. Qadir, along with Mustafa, crept up behind them, and slit their throats! Creeping, Qadir entered the empty, dimly lit dining room.

He was positive the Royal couple had vacated the premises, which had to have been by coincidence. However, he didn't believe in coincidences. Something had gone wrong. No one knew of their plan other than the planning committee.

The IRA had spread out in the dining room, surveying the area. Suddenly, a man carrying a machine pistol stumbled upon them. He was thrown into a state

of shock by being caught off guard. He fumbled with the safety of his weapon but was too slow.

Mustafa fired his AK-47! The sound echoed throughout the dining room. Responding security rushed towards the gunfire, only to be trapped like animals in a cage.

They were welcomed by a vicious crossfire! Qadir figured they had at least ten to fifteen minutes before the hotel would be surrounded by the police. By then, they'd be finished and gone.

Mustafa and Qadir climbed the winding, marble staircase; lobbing grenades at doors temporally blocking their view of the other side. Small fires throughout the lower floors were beginning to grow, but it didn't deter the terrorists. The mad men continued their journey, destroying what was once a billion-dollar hotel.

Finally, they stopped on the third floor. The Royal couple's room was empty. They were not there.

Qadir could no longer restrain his anger and frustration. He began to rant and rave about a spy being in the IRA!

Then he motioned for Sari. She set up the video camera, and Qadir Shabazz began to speak. Mustafa stood next to him, with a terrifying glaze in his eyes.

“We are the conquerors of the free world! No person, or place is sacred to us! We will destroy all those who have dishonored and disgraced our people! This, as you can see,” Qadir said, indicating with his hands the ruins of the magnificent hotel. “...is what is left of your precious Imperial Hotel. Greedy Americans, we are here, and your President was just the beginning!”

*Chapter 19**Baytown, Texas**June 13, 2028*

Emery was surprised at how small the town was. It was nothing more than a giant gas station. There were a few shops and stores scattered here and there, but not much else.

Baytown was located outside of Galveston, featuring the largest refinery in Texas. Emery's last visit to the state had been on his honeymoon, which he preferred not to think about. He didn't have to many fond memories of Texas.

Take away the refinery, and the damn place would be a ghost town. Then he wondered what the sheriff was like. He just hoped he wasn't one of those

tobacco-chewing, fat rednecks that called everybody boy.

However, Emery was pleased the Sheriff had possessed enough sense to request a fingerprint check on the man he'd arrested. They needed a break in locating the IRA. Scoping out the jail, Emery knew it wouldn't hold any dangerous, or smart criminal for long. It wouldn't hold a member of the Islamic Rashidun Army, which they unknowingly had in their custody.

"Man, I hate these little tumbleweed towns. They make me feel like I'm in the Twilight Zone," Stefan voiced, bringing the car to a halt in front of the Sheriff's Office. Emery looked across the highway at the entrance to the refinery. He felt a chill slither down his spine.

Both men felt the blast of the hot Texas heat as they headed to the Sheriff's Office. In the far corner, a man whom they suspected was the deputy, wore a khaki

shirt with a badge pinned to it. He played checkers with another man, wearing a t-shirt, with his orange jumpsuit tied around his waist.

The man in the jumpsuit was no doubt a prisoner. The man with his feet propped up on the desk, with his hat covering his face, was more than likely the Sheriff. Emery and Stefan looked at each other with amused expressions on their faces.

"What can I do for you fellows?" The Deputy asked, his Texas drawl thick.

"I'm Marshal Emery. This is my associate, Chico Stefan."

"What kind of name is Chico Stepan?" The prisoner asked.

Stefan started to respond, but Emery gave him that stand-your-ground look.

"We're here for the prisoner you have in your custody," Emery said, gesturing with his hands, indicating the small building.

"Who said we have a prisoner?" The man with his hat over his face asked.

"I take that you're the Sheriff," Emery implied.

"Yes, I am. Now, who in the hell are you?" The Sheriff asked in an irritated tone.

"You ran a finger-print check on a man you arrested for speeding. That man is Zamil Hassan, a known terrorist. He's wanted in connection with the airplane attack in London a few days ago. We have authorization to take him with us for questioning."

"I don't give a good god damn about what you have. He's my prisoner, or as you called him, *terrorist*. He's going to stay that way until I say otherwise. Now, you boys can take your fancy authorization, and stick it up your asses!" The Sheriff rudely replied.

With a quickness, Stefan crossed the few feet separating him from the Sheriff! The Sheriff still hadn't removed his hat from his face. However, he did so with the assistance of Stefan. The hat fell to the floor.

Stefan grabbed the man by the throat, lifted him off the floor, and slammed him against the wall! Only then did Stefan realize how big the sheriff was.

Instinctively, he drove his knee into the Sheriff's midsection, knocking the wind from him.

He let the Sheriff drop to the dirty floor! The Sheriff gasped for air, cowering like a dog. The deputy and other man watched by in disbelief.

"Cut the bullshit! He was polite," Stefan said, as he pointed to Emery. "But my patience is thin. Now, get your fat ass up, and bring that prisoner out here!"

The Sheriff mumbled something as he got to his feet. Stefan kicked him in his ass, causing him to stagger. The Sheriff grabbed the keys from the hook near the cell block. He was more embarrassed than hurt, knowing this incident would be all over town by sunset.

Emery took the walkie-talkie from the leg pocket of his fatigues and gave the order. "Move in!"

Within seconds, three black armor-paneled SUVs ground to a halt outside the Sheriff's Office. The BLF set up a perimeter around the jail. Tracy and Ruben Cades went inside. They were dressed in black and armed with M4A1s, fitted with M320 40mm grenade launchers.

The Sheriff stumbled through the door with the prisoner and froze! He couldn't believe the sight he was seeing. They handcuff the Sheriff, the deputy, and the other man, and lock them in one of the cells. Seconds later, an explosion erupted outside!

"Get down! Stefan, Cades, take the rear! Tracy take him to the SUV," Emery ordered.

Emery opened the door of the Sheriff's Office and leaped out! He rolled to his right, coming to a stop in a prone position on his stomach. He held the Berretta APX Centurion 9mm in firing position. His eyes searched the area, his head remaining still.

"Where in the hell did that come?"

Another explosion erupted, followed by several more. The ground moved as the eruptions rocked the small Texas town. Then it dawned on Emery what was happening.

His instincts told him the IRA was the culprit. He felt helpless. They were attacking America right under his nose. That only ignited his anger.

“Commander, raise the General! Let him know the situation.” Emery was frustrated with himself for being a step behind the IRA.

But now, he knew they were still on American soil. The explosions continued, as there was no way to stop the attack. The refinery began to burn, filling the sky with thick black and gray smoke. Sirens wailed!

The acids and fumes would affect the South-West region of the United States, adding to an already deteriorating atmosphere. It would take days, if not weeks to get the fires under control. The IRA had struck again.

Emery told Tracy to get out of there with Hassan, just as automatic gunfire was heard near the refinery entrance. Not wasting time, he ran towards the area. As he closed in, he could see a white pickup truck as it sped along the winding road.

Bracing himself against the bullet-riddled security office, he peered in. He saw the bloody bodies of the security guards. His adrenaline flowed through his body like a waterfall. He fired at the Toyota truck. Bullets bit into the tires, causing the truck to swerve out of control, crashing into a bulldozer!

Four occupants crawled out searching for cover. Emery and the terrorists were no more than twenty yards apart. The shoot-out intensified. Annette Sykes ran for cover near an abandoned car. Unfortunately, she wasn't quick enough to escape the steel metal jackets of death that burrowed into her body!

For what seemed an eternity, her lifeless body seemed suspended in mid-air! Emery moved from the

security office, trying to reach her. He too, became a victim of hot lead, as bullets slammed into his body! His last thoughts were he was going to die, and the operation would fail.

Seeing the man that had become his friend in such a short time go down, Stefan took over. He, along with Cross and Shana Wolf flanked the terrorists, drawing their fire. Cooper fired the M142 HIMARS rocket launcher at the truck.

The rocket nihilating the back of the vehicle! The explosion left them to their fates. Bodies flew into the air and landed hard near the burning vehicle.

The gunfire had ceased. The BLF had paid a hefty price, but they'd won the first skirmish with the IRA. However, they knew there'd be more to come. They took out four IRA members and captured one. Unfortunately, they'd also lost one of their own, and the Colonel's condition was questionable.

Sirens wailed in the distance. Emergency vehicles began arriving on the scene. Stefan told the State Police Investigator what had taken place. If there were further questions, contact Washington.

The sun-burned State Police Investigator was dumbfounded hearing what had taken place. He was unsure, as to what to say, or do. Stefan watched the EMTs wheel, Emery, to the Medi-vac helicopter and the remains of Captain Annette Sykes to the corners wagon.

The IRA had ravaged America for the second time, as they were spreading across the country. After viewing the grotesque Imperial Hotel video footage, Stefan knew they were fighting insane killers. Now, the BLF would have to have that same mentality.

*Chapter 20**Red Pines Estate**June 13,*

"How many were with you?" Tracy asked, holding Hassan by his hair. He knelt before her with his hands cuffed behind his back.

Zamil Hassan had been arrested by the Baytown Sheriff for speeding. He hadn't resisted arrest, not wanting to draw attention to his comrades. He knew once the mission was completed, they'd come for him. He hadn't expected the Americans to show up.

At first, Hassan thought they were the American FBI, but quickly realized they were not. Qadir would need to know about these people, but he wouldn't be the one to tell him. The woman questioning him was cold. She reminded him of Sari. They were going to kill

him; therefore, he'd die on his own terms. He was loyal to Qadir, and to the Islamic Rashidun Army.

Without saying another word, Tracy slapped him hard across the face! Hassan fell on his side, receiving a sharp blow on the side of his head. Tracy suspected he could withstand the torture. There was nothing else, they could do to him.

She realized she was wasting time and energy with the physical assault. However, it was that animalistic release of anger and frustration that she needed. Hassan was the perfect target.

"Enough!" Stefan ordered.

Standing in the doorway, Tracy turned towards him. She seemed possessed. He nodded his head for her to follow him out of the room. Stefan wondered if that was part of her game plan.

He realized she was good and could handle herself under fire. She'd proven that in Detroit. Yet, he

had still needed to see her in action for himself. He'd gotten what he wanted when they were in Texas.

"I want you to know, I think you handled yourself well today," the Commander said sincerely.

"Thank you. I do get paid to do that," she said, failing at her attempt of making a joke.

Stefan just looked at her.

"Did he say anything?"

"No. He'd rather die first," Tracy stated in a bitter tone.

"I didn't think he'd talk. So, I have a little surprise for him."

Motioning to Debra Crystal, she came forward carrying a black medical bag. Rosa Cooper followed, holding a video recorder.

"Get him ready. I'll be there shortly," Stefan ordered.

"Is that your little bag of tricks?" Tracy asked, smiling.

"You could say that. It's something I picked up in China a few years back. You'll see. It's very effective. Oh, the Colonel should be rejoining us in a few days. His armor jacket saved his life. " Stefan informed her.

"I'm relieved to hear that. How about showing me what you have in your little bag now."

They walked back into the room. Hassan was still in a kneeling position. Only this time, his arms were stretched out, restrained by Crystal and Cooper.

"Now, my friend, I will give you one last chance to tell me what I want to know," Stefan told the captive man.

Zamil Hassan mustered what strength he had left, and spit in Stefan's face. The act didn't provoke Stefan, as Hassan had expected. It seemed to only make his captor more determined!

“Have it your way,” Stefan told Hassan. The man’s eyes got wide when he saw what was about to happen to him.

Two hours later, the BLF had the information they needed. Contacting the General, Stefan was ordered to take whatever actions he deemed necessary. They had the location of the IRA's next target. Stefan immediately began mapping out a plan of how to best confront the IRA. The final details would come once they arrived at their destination.

"What did the General say?" Crystal asked.

"He gave us the green light. The Colonel will re-join us in a couple of days," Stefan responded.

“ What about Hassan?” Tracy inquired.

“There’s a team on the way to keep him company. He’ll be close-by if we need him,” he told her.

Tracy nodded her head that she understood.

“Prepare to move out,” Stefan ordered.

*Chapter 21**Galveston**June 14, 2028*

Emery was reading the morning edition of the Galveston Daily. The refinery attack dominated the front page. The article spoke on the devastating effects, and how it would impact an already destabilizing world. Then, there were the immediate environmental and financial issues for Texas, and the Southwest to contend with.

However, there was no mention of the Black Liberation Force. Emery was pleased with the outcome of the skirmish. There was a knock at his door. General Ritz entered.

The General was wearing civilian clothes and looking rather debonaire. For some reason, Emery

thought that surprising. Maybe because he'd never seen the General out of his uniform.

"How are you, Colonel?" The General asked.

"I'm good Sir. The vest took most of the damage. I'm lucky their aim wasn't better."

"Yes, you are. Speaking of luck, we got a break. The IRA's last attack was costly, and efficient. But Commander Stefan informed me the prisoner talked. We know their next target. You'll be re-joining them shortly. But first, there's something I need you to do."

"I'm at your disposal, Sir."

"The last time we spoke, I touched on the fact there were others involved in this conspiracy of terror. The time has come to deal with those individuals. The Vice-President has made some type of deal with the Russians. As it turns out, the Russians were using the IRA as a smoke screen to carry out their part of the deal," the General told him.

So, the Vice-President is taking a page from the Trump Administration play book,” the Colonel commented.

“It looks that way, but something went wrong. There was a double cross, and the Russians came up on the short end of the deal.

“What’s next?” The Colonel asked.

“The Acting President has cut off all support to the Russians. We suspect he is involved with the attempted assassination of President Martinez. I believe you know this man?" The General said, handing Emery an 8x10 black and white photo. “He must be eliminated at once!”

“I understand, Sir."

*Chapter 22**Washington, DC**June 15, 2028*

The hot June sun unmercifully burned at the face of Thaddeus Groves. Since it was such a beautiful day, he decided to walk from the White House, even though he was aware of the health hazards. His driver didn't like the idea of him walking for security reasons.

Groves felt untouchable in the city of deceit and corruption that he embraced as home. He'd learned long ago power came in many forms. The real question is, how will that power be used? He wanted that power. Now, Groves reflected upon another unproductive meeting with Acting President Coven.

Coven was enjoying his role, even though it was temporary. He was projecting the Trump in him. The

reports of Martinez's recovery was excellent news on Capitol Hill, as Martinez was a man whom everyone respected.

Groves himself felt a tingle of relief at the speedy recovery of the sitting President. Coven was on the verge of setting America back fifty years if he followed through on his plans to deal with Abdullah Kasim. The Acting President had also ordered him to contact Bresnov, his Russian counterpart.

Groves was to inform Bresnov that the Russian people would suffer like never before. To add to the discomfort, he showed little interest when the Chinese forces began a massive build up along the Russian borders. The Russians were strong, but alone, they wouldn't survive a war with the Chinese.

Groves enjoyed the power he wielded. He would take great pleasure delivering the new American-Russian Pact to Moscow. He knew he'd reached the

point of no return. In his line of work, that made him a target.

His daydream shattered as he entered the foyer of the Central Intelligence Agency's DC field office. The coolness engulfed him instantly. The elevator climbed the ten floors to his office in a matter of seconds. He'd hated hot weather ever since his assignment in South Africa in the late 1990's.

"Sir, Mrs. Coven called. She'd like you to meet her at the House of Renee' in Georgetown at seven pm sharp. She said it was to your advantage," the buxom redhead personal assistant said, as soon as he stepped off the elevator.

She suspected he was having an affair with the now, First Lady. But that twinge of jealousy quickly passed. The only reason he kept her around, was she'd do anything for him. She was a lousy personal assistant. She seemed to always want the men she couldn't have.

"Thank you, Margo," he said as he entered his office. Initially, he'd hoped Mrs. Coven would've allowed him to back out of their arrangement. Now, he was glad she hadn't. If Coven found out he was screwing his wife, he'd have a fit.

Removing his jacket off, he tossed it on his chair. He sat and relaxed on the big leather couch in his office. He stretched his arms out and extended his legs, leaning his head back on the sofa. The coolness of the office was bringing his body temperature down, as he was feeling more normal.

Margo poked her head in. She reminded him of his meeting with the Director of the National Security Council in an hour. He acknowledged her with a nod of his head.

Rising from his comfortable spot, he fixed a stiff Scotch and soda. He set the glass on his desk and walked to a wall safe. He removed a thick red file. In bold black letters, BLF was stamped across the front.

Groves realized he'd forgotten to tell his driver to have the car ready. He called out to Margo but received no answer. He laid the file on his desk and opened the door. He ventured to the outer office, but she wasn't there.

Groves figured she must have gone to the rest room. Shrugging his shoulders, he went back into his office. He didn't hear the soft footsteps of the stranger behind him.

"Mr. Thaddeus Groves," a voice said.

Groves spun around! He nearly fell by the sudden intrusion. His heart pounded hard in his chest, that he thought he'd have a heart attack. Squinting, Groves didn't recognize the intruder.

"Who are you? How in the hell did you get in here?" Groves barked, as he stared into the man's eyes. He knew then he was going to die.

"You've been found guilty of treason against the United States of America. I'm here to carry out your execution," the man replied.

"I see, " the CIA man said in a shaky voice.

"Since I'm a condemned man, I have a final request."

"What might that be?"

"I'd like to know the name of my executioner."

Groves stated as he regained as much of his composure as he could muster. The cold sweat continued to flow across his forehead, and down his back.

"I'm Colonel Marshal Emery."

"Ah, the leader of the famed BLF. It's a pleasure to meet you, even under the present circumstances. I hope you die a horrible death!"

"I'll let you know if that happens when I see you in hell," Emery stated. He fired four demons of death into the chest and head of the CIA Director! Emery removed the SIM card from Groves' surveillance unit, as well as the BLF file

Outside, and into the balmy heat, Emery hailed a cab. He proceeded to Dulles International Airport. Taking a deep breath, Emery re-capped the past two weeks in his mind.

The attempted assassination of the President; the IRA attacking the oil refinery; and now, him having terminated the CIA director. The General had been right. Terrorism had grown out of control, as money and greed represented humanity.

*Chapter 23**Anchorage, Alaska**June 16, 2028*

As the plane taxied along the runway of the small airport. Mustafa soaked in the beauty of the snowcapped mountains. He'd never witness nature as beautiful as those mountains.

He'd taken many trips to Switzerland and France. But neither could equal the majestic beauty he was viewing now. Mustafa was pleased he had a few hours to look around before going to work.

Leaving the aircraft, he inhaled deeply. It was the freshest air to ever penetrated his lungs. It was invigorating! There had been few places in his life that he'd wished to return, and Alaska was at the top of his list.

Glancing over his shoulder, he watched the five members of the IRA gathered their bags. The mission was simple: secure the equipment they needed from the Russians and map out the airport. Mustafa had been obsessed with airports, and aircrafts since childhood.

He learned to fly by the age of ten and pulled his first hi-jacking at sixteen. Over the past twenty years, he'd hi-jacked over two-hundred aircraft, in all parts of the world. His greatest hi-jacking came when the Italians had captured Qadir in Rome, following the assassination of a member of Parliament.

Mustafa had commandeered a 737, with one hundred and fifty-four passengers. He pressured the Italians into releasing Qadir. Then he blew up the aircraft, with the passengers still onboard.

The Iranians presented the Italians with an economical arrangement. That prevented Rome from taking any retaliatory action against Iran. Since that time, no one in the world ever questioned his ability

again. Just as Quadir was branded by the Western world as the master terrorist, Mustafa was branded as the master hi-jacker.

"We will meet back here in three hours. You all know what you must do," Mustafa informed them.

He'd arranged to meet his Russian contact at a safehouse on the outskirts of the city. There, he'd inspected the weapons, and the other equipment. He was going to take great pleasure in attacking America's oil supply.

Leaving the safehouse, satisfied that everything was in order, Mustafa headed back to the airport. There was quite a bit of activity going on, as soldiers manned check points. That was expected considering the current events.

He parked. Mustafa grabbed his backpack and headed for the boarding gate. He sensed something wasn't right, as he cast a glance over his shoulder. He didn't see anything, but he could feel it.

He went to the lounge, taking a seat near the window. He watched for his people. He spotted two, then a third, followed by a fourth. He waited, but the fifth member didn't show up. That fifth member was his brother, Ahmad.

Something had gone wrong. He had to alert his comrades. Just then, the announcement for their Seattle flight blared through the speakers. The timing of the plan was the key element now.

Making his way quickly to them, Mustafa informed them what he suspected. They all understood and prepared for the unexpected. Boarding the aircraft, Mustafa again felt something wasn't right.

Mustafa took his seat and watched the other passengers carefully. He realized something about them wasn't ordinary. Leaving his seat, he proceeded towards the front of the plane. He'd made his decision. Mustafa was going to hi-jack the aircraft. He felt that

was his only alternative. He left his backpack on the window seat.

Two rows behind Mustafa, Stefan signaled Tracy and the others to get ready. He followed Mustafa, noticing the bag on the seat. He picked it up and gave Bravo team the signal to stand fast.

Stefan headed to the restroom. Opening the bag, he found himself staring at a bomb. However, it hadn't been armed, yet. Quickly, Stefan disconnected the wires.

They'd learned of the attack in Alaska from Hassan. Stefan had injected him with a powerful truth serum. The only possible target was the Trans-Alaskan pipeline. Breathing a sigh of relief, the Commander leaned back against the wall. There was no question about the intent of the IRA.

The BLF had the airport under surveillance for the past twenty-four hours. Having photos of the IRA, thanks to Red Pines, enabled them to capture Ahmad

Sahib. They learned the IRA was en route to Seattle.

Stefan had secured the airplane and waited onboard. He recognized Mustafa Sahib as soon as he boarded.

When Stefan came out of the restroom, his gun was concealed behind his right leg. As he was about to move to the front of the plane, two IRA members behind him jumped up! They fired their weapons into the ceiling of the aircraft! They shouted, "Death to America!"

Swiftly, Stefan spun, dropped, and blasted the terrorist in the back of his head! Another terrorist came from the front area, firing blindly. The terrorist never saw Stefan as he fell back on the floor. A stray bullet hit Stefan in his right thigh, as he shot the terrorist in the face!

Crystal took out the third terrorist. Two remained, one being Sahib. Just as Stefan turned his head, he watched Rodriguez's face disappear from a barrage of bullets! Before the terrorist could turn in her

direction, Tracy unloaded her .38 Smith and Wesson! The fifth member of the IRA, Mustafa Sahib, was still on board.

The gunfire subsided, replaced by an eerie silence. Then an explosion rocked the aircraft! The exit door had been blown off! Simultaneously, the cock-pit door burst open!

Mustafa Sahib ran towards the opening and jumped out before they realized what had taken place! Tracy watch with fascinated eyes, as she ran to the hole. Sahib was gone.

The BLF had killed four of the terrorists and captured one. They had also lost one of their own. They had served notice to the Islamic Rashidun

Army. America would fight until the IRA was no longer a threat to mankind!

*Chapter 24**Chicago, Illinois**June 16,*

“Claude, I’ve made a critical error in judgment,”
the Scorpion said.

His friend and mentor sat on the balcony of his apartment across from Wrigley Field. For the life of him, the Scorpion couldn’t understand the reasoning behind his friend’s choice of living arrangements. Claude could live the life of royalty anywhere in the world. However, for some reason he’d chosen Chicago.

The Scorpion being the young idealist that he was, was destined for fame. That fame would come at the price of loneliness and isolation. From childhood to adulthood, the only thing the Scorpion had ever known

was violence. At the age of fourteen, he claimed his first victim.

The man had been one of his drunken mother's boyfriends. One who disliked children. He was abusive and vile.

Leaving the parlor and going to the kitchen one evening, the young Scorpion returned holding a butcher knife. He didn't think about how he was going to kill him. He just jumped on him and began stabbing him in the chest!

The man was so shocked, he didn't realize he was being murdered! His mother was sitting beside the man on the couch wide eyed, unable to move. Finishing his psychotic deed, he showered and left the house. He never returned.

A few months after his arrival in Ireland, the Scorpion joined Irish Brigade. Even if the French Government did learn of his whereabouts, they'd go through hell to get him. That Irish Brigade would make

sure of that. He was one of them now, at fourteen years old.

The Scorpion enjoyed the thrill of taking another's life. However, he longed for something of a more personal challenge. That's when he turned to his fellow countryman and friend, Claude Monteau.

Their fates became entwined with each other. Claude taught the Scorpion everything he knew about the deadly art of murder. The Scorpion became a master assassin!

He learned all he could from the older man. After fighting Ireland's battles, they left the Irish Brigade as heroes. The Scorpion's name had become feared in England and France.

He was a living legend, the master of his profession. Monteau recognized that character trait and created a masterpiece around it. He introduced the young man to the world of assassins.

Solidifying his position, the Scorpion carried out assassinations in every country. His price was two-million American dollars, in cash, and half up front. Anyone who'd seen his face during a transaction died. Now, thanks to Premier Kasim, his reputation was in jeopardy.

"Yes, I know my friend," Claude Monteau said. "The Iranians have become an embarrassment to all. These animals, the IRA, show no honor. They must be stopped. However, I'm afraid this will not happen soon," the old man said, speaking to his protege.

"I've followed the path you set me on, but now, I've failed you. I failed you twice to kill my target. Those filthy bastards in Iran have taken credit for the attempted assassination on Martinez! I must do something, but I fear my time is running short. I've contracted the HIV virus," the Scorpion said, his tone distant. "The drug ATZ, coupled with my diabetic insulin is altering my judgment. I must kill Abdullah

Kasim! Then I will finish the American President. I cannot die otherwise!" He replied, his tone a mixture of grief and anger.

"I understand your situation. The IRA will be looking for you, as you look for their leader, Kasim," the old man stated. "I'll find Kasim for you. He's returned to his hole in the ground, as most cowards do. Do not fret Pierre DuBose, you still have me."

The Scorpion couldn't remember the last time Claude had called him by his real name. It sounded strange to hear. It also gave him the encouragement he sought to finish what he'd started. The Scorpion accepted that life is a mystery to be lived, and not understood.

"Good. I must meet a doctor in Richmond, Virginia. He may be able to help me. He's been experimenting with a possible cure for this HIV virus. I have nothing to lose by trying his drug," the Scorpion confessed.

“After all of these years and medical break
throughs, still there is no cure for HIV and cancer,”
Claude said in absent-mindedly tone.

*Chapter 25**Valdez, Alaska**June 16,*

“Qadir, we should have heard from Mustafa by now. The rendezvous with the Russians was scheduled to take place six hours ago. Something has gone wrong,” Sari stated, concern reflecting in her voice.

She’d begun to second guess the entire Alaskan Operation, and the developments with Mustafa didn’t help to change her mind. Sari was feeling more vulnerable than she wished, too. That also made her question her priorities.

“Do not worry. Mustafa will show up with, or without our equipment. In the event something has happened to him, we do have a back-up plan. Mustafa can handle any situation that may arise. If not, he will

not be taken alive," Qadir confidently stated. In his mind, he was uncertain of Mustafa's actions. His friend was fast becoming his enemy.

"I do not trust all our people, especially Ahmad. He talks too much at the wrong times. We should not have sent him with Mustafa," she said.

"I feel, maybe you are right," Qadir said, agreeing with her.

A young man of no more than seventeen entered the room. He informed Qadir that Mustafa was on the phone. Qadir rushed to the phone.

"Mustafa, what is going on? You should have made contact before now," Qadir stated, highly upset.

Qadir listened to his comrade. He interrupted the conversation when Mustafa informed him that the Americans were on the aircraft. "What do you mean? That is impossible!" The Americans do not have terrorists!" Qadir screamed into the phone. He was enraged by what he'd just heard! "How did you allow

this to happen? Where is Ahmad?" Qadir shot question after question at Mustafa but didn't get the answers he wanted. He was ranting and raving about how incompetent Mustafa was for failing so miserably.

"I don't know. I fear the Americans have him," Mustafa humbly stated.

Hearing Mustafa's reply, Qadir angrily slammed the phone on the floor and stomped on it! After all these years, he finally had the opportunity to get rid of Mustafa. With him out of the way, Qadir knew he wouldn't have to share power with anyone.

"What has happened?" Sari asked.

"The Americans have found us once again. I thought they were a military unit, but reports from Iran say they are not. Even their President has ordered them eliminated, but I do not think will be easy. They are good, but they are no match for the IRA. Come, we will hit America where it will feel it the most," he said, exiting the room.

Qadir knew sabotaging the pipeline would be the ultimate blow to America. The timberlands of Kenai, sixty miles south of Anchorage, would be destroyed. Additionally, the Gulf of Alaska and the Pacific Ocean coastline would be heavily polluted. That would also open the door for a possible Russian invasion.

Watching his people set the C-4 plastic explosive charges on the above ground section of the pipeline, sent a shiver up Qadir's spine. He kept his attention focused on his people. The others who were supposed to have set explosives at the main facility, should have returned by now.

Qadir, as Mustafa had earlier, felt something wasn't right. He couldn't place it but could sense it. He told Sari to join him, as they were returning to Cuba. He left the others to finish rigging the pipeline, and unknowingly, to fend for themselves.

Glancing at his watch, it was now 1845 hours. He had no intentions of being around when the Americans, the BLF, showed up. He sensed they would. They were good, and for the first time, Qadir felt sure of his Islamic Rashidun Army's ability to defeat the BLF.

Under different circumstances, the Americans learning of their attacks beforehand would have made him second guess himself. But that wasn't the case. Qadir knew how the Americans were getting close to them.

They had Zamil and Ahmad. Qadir suspected they, like those rigging the pipeline, would never be seen, or heard from again. Qadir understood that the IRA was only a pawn in this high-stakes chess game.

*Chapter 26**Anchorage**June 16,*

“Commander, this conversation is going to be brief. Our new President thinks he’s a man with the power of God. He’s ordered the BLF terminated. A CIA hit team has been deployed with seek and destroy orders,” General Ritz informed him. “However, you did a good job at foiling the attempts of IRA. But it’s not finished. I want you to stay in Anchorage for a couple more days.”

"I understand, Sir. We still have Ahmad Sahib and Zamil Hassan. They’ve both proven cooperative,” Stefan informed the General. He knew the General couldn’t see his trademark grin, but he suspected the General knew it was there.

"Very good, Commander. Carry on," the General said, ending the call. Stefan stared at the dead headset for a moment, then replaced it back in its slot. Exiting the make-shift radio room, he assembled the BLF.

"I've just been informed by the General that we've been sanctioned. There's a hit team out for us. It's also been confirmed that the IRA is still in Alaska. Possibly here in Anchorage. Mustafa Sahib has Russian contacts and access to weapons. There is only one reasonable target. The Trans-Alaskan pipeline," the Commander stated.

"In all likelihood, they'll go after the main storage facility in Valdez. That's one-hundred and sixty miles east of here. It's about two miles of the pipeline that's above ground. It will not be hard to get to," Ruben Cades clarified.

"People, we must find Mustafa Sahib. We'll start in Valdez," Stefan stated.

Chapter 27

New York City

June 16,

At 7:57 pm, Eastern Time, the IRA hacked the internet! They were live streaming, stating that at eight o'clock, the Trans-Alaskan pipeline would be burning. Working furiously, the media desperately tried to find out if the threat was real.

At eight o'clock, they got their answer. The world was watching the Trans-Alaskan pipeline burn! America was under siege!

The Iranian-borne terrorist group, the Islamic Rashidun Army, was waging a jihad, a holy war. They were attacking the most powerful country on the face of the earth. The fear they ignited in America, would lead to the destruction of Iran!

*Chapter 28**Seattle, Washington**June 16,*

Connecting with his Russian contacts, Mustafa Sahib returned to Seattle, only to find Qadir had deserted him. He was furious but faced bigger problems. The Americans would be looking for him. He knew he had to leave the country quickly, but first, he'd deal with Qadir.

He'd use the assistance the Russians had offered him. The American terrorists were good, seeming to be everywhere the IRA was. He knew they'd captured Ahmad and had gotten him to talk. The Americans were not only good, but they were shrewd, as well as ruthless.

"Comrade Sahib, we leave in one hour. We do not have much time. Arrangements have been made for you to stay in Moscow." The Russian told him.

Mustafa now realized he'd been set-up by Qadir. No. I have unfinished business here. I cannot leave until I get my revenge! Please, I need to get to South Carolina," told the Russian.

"That will be arranged," the Russian replied.

*Chapter 29**Seattle**June 16,*

"It is good to see you again, Colonel," Tracy said. "What's the plan?" She asked, as the others listened.

"Grant, you don't waste any time of getting to the point," he said, giving her a slight smile. "I have a possible location on Mustafa Sahib. We've identified what is believed to be a Russian safehouse, thanks to Ahmad Sahib," Emery informed them. "Move out."

"How long before we get there," Tracy asked, as the armor-plated SUV sped through downtown Seattle. She was amazed at how beautiful and clean the city was, and no rain for a change. It was everything she'd

heard. The Star Tower from the Olympics only added to its grandeur.

"It is about a half-hour drive. Relax and enjoy the view," he told her, as well as the others.

The SUV stopped in a wooded area, about one hundred yards from a farmhouse. Colter, Conway, and Phillips began issuing weapons. Cross and Crystal did the same with the grenades.

Accepting an M32 with a grenade launcher, Emery stuffed six frag grenades into the pockets of his windbreaker. Then he checked his Heckler & Koch MP5 submachine gun. It held a twenty-round clip.

Tracy inspected her .38 Smith and Wesson that she was so fond of. Finishing his inspection, Emery handed Tracy the M32 and grabbed the AK-47 assault rifle Conway was holding out to him. He preferred the AK-47's out of habit.

Blending in with the terrain, they made their way undetected to the barn. Seeing only one sentry,

Emery volunteered to take him. Attaching the silencer to his Berretta, he closed in behind the time the sentry. By the time the man realized someone was behind him, it was too late. A hollow point slug ripped through his cranial!

Waving the others forward, Emery along with Colter, Cross, and Phillips went around to the side of the house. Looking through the kitchen window, the Colonel saw two women and three men at the kitchen table playing cards and talking. About to signal Tracy, Emery stopped, as he spotted Mustafa Sahib!

He would get only one crack at the son-of-a-bitch. He was going to try to make it count. Finally, he gave Tracy the signal to hit the front door. Emery took a few steps back, then ran at full speed, diving through the window!

Catching the Russians off guard, he opened fire with the Ak-47! He took out both women and one of

the men. Colter and Conway stopped the other two men as they attempted to flee.

Emery heard an exchange of machine gun fire coming from the front of the house, then all was quiet. He knew Tracy was inside. Emery caught a glimpse of Sahib running for a room in the back. He took off after Sahib, with Tracy hot on his heels.

Standing to the side of the only closed door, Emery open fire with the AK-47! The gun fire brought him an unexpected volley of .50 caliber death merchants! He jumped back, as hot lead tore into the walls.

Tracy sent a blast straight from hell into the room with the grenade launcher. The Colonel reloaded. This time there was no return fire. Leaping into the room, Tracy sprayed everything in her line of vision! Emery covered her six.

They both noticed the bloody body of a young girl laying on the floor. She clutched an AK-47 in her

dead hands. Then there was the roar of a car engine!

Mustafa Sahib was getting away!

Chapter 30

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 18, 2028

"I hate Philadelphia. It's a dirty city," Ruben Cades complained.

"I agree but being here is to our advantage. I want you and Jackson to get everyone settled in. Ruben, we're not going to lose," Stefan stated, trying to reassure the Sergeant.

Going to his room Stefan thought about the events of the past eighteen days. He was glad the fragments from the MAC-10 had only torn the skin on Emery's chest. The armored coated vest they were wearing had saved his life. His leg wound was a through-and-through.

Opening the door, he noticed the room was completely dark. Immediately he drew his .44 auto Magnum, prepared for the unexpected. Standing to the side of the door, he reached for the light switch, when he heard a female voice.

"Please, don't turn on the lights."

He thought it was Shana. Then remembered she was downstairs with the others. "Alright," he said, unsure of the request.

"I didn't realize this was your room. I needed to be alone for a while. This was the first room I came too," she said, moving towards the window, allowing him to see her.

"We all need to get away at times," Stefan replied, recognizing Rhonda Hackett.

"I've been in the Army for eight years. I've seen and caused a lot of death. But being on that plane when the explosion went off, it really rattled me. I don't know why, but it did. This war is unlike anything I've ever

been involved with," Hackett said, as she walked closer to him. She could feel the heat of his body, causing her to want him even more.

" Rhonda, you're right. This war is different because there're no rules. It's personal," he said, taking her in his arms. It was the pleasure he desired and the comfort she desperately needed.

"Tough military brats are human, too," he said, bringing a smile to her lovely face.

"Just hold me," she said in a deep, sensual voice.

*Chapter 31**Philadelphia**June 18,*

Stefan was still laying on the bed thinking about Hackett. Now, he hurried off the bed and got dressed. There was a knock at the door.

"Yeah," Stefan yelled.

Opening the door, General Ritz entered the room. He looked tired, worried, and burned out.

"It's good to see you again, Commander. I'm glad your wound wasn't too serious," the General voiced.

"Thank you, Sir. It's good see you also. I've had worse," the Commander said with a light chuckle. "Has there been any word from the Colonel?"

"Yes. He'll be joining you shortly. Sahib got away in Seattle, with help from the Russians. The Colonel did get a location as to where Sahib may be heading. However, he and I feel it would be too costly to follow up," the General informed him.

"I don't quite follow you, Sir."

"We believe Sahib has split from the IRA. They're searching for him also. After the destruction of the pipeline, the IRA seems to have left the country," General Ritz explained.

"I see. General, how bad is the pipeline?"

"Bad. The main storage station, and two miles of the above ground sections, are gone. The pipeline had automatic shut-off valves, If not, everything would be burning. Oil is escaping into the Gulf of Alaska. Soon, it'll hit the Pacific Ocean. Military and civilian crews are working to block it off," the General said, sounding a bit dismayed. "To change the subject, we

have another problem. The Scorpion, we believe is still in the country," the General stated.

"The Scorpion! How's he involved?" Stefan asked. "Do we have a picture of him yet?"

"No, not yet. Ahmad Sahib told us Kasim hired the Scorpion to assassinate the President," the General told him. "London Intelligence believes he is a former member of the Irish Brigade. The FBI located a Claude Monteau," the General said.

"They were a terrorist organization of the late nineties, if I recall," Emery injected.

"Correct. They believe he was the Scorpion's mentor. Unfortunately, he was killed in a shoot-out before they could question him," General Ritz said, and then added, "We believe the Scorpion will attempt to assassinate the President, again."

"Somehow we need to get the Scorpion and the IRA together," Stefan spoke aloud, making the statement more to himself than the General.

"That may happen. After the attempted assassination on the President, the IRA claimed responsibility. We know the Scorpion will not allow his reputation to be assaulted, and the IRA can't let him live. If he's still on American soil, we may be able to force the IRA's next move," the General stated. "We put some seeds on the ground, hoping the IRA will pick up on the Scorpion's whereabouts."

"What about that psycho, Abdullah Kasim?"

The Commander inquired in anger.

"We have plans for him, but we must find him first. He's gone into hiding again. He seems to do a lot of lately," the General added.

"Not surprisingly," Stefan echoed.

"When the IRA returns to America, they'll more than likely come by sea."

"Why by that route?" Stefan asked.

"We want them to believe they can do whatever they want. They'll eagerly bring the entire Islamic

Rashidun Army! We'll allow them to enter, but they will not leave this time," the General stated, with conviction.

"What's the BLF's status with the Acting President?"

"It's still the same. He's informed the French that a group of ex-special ops personnel is working with the IRA, and they are to be eliminated. He knows if we win, his Presidency, as well as his political career will be over."

"I think I am beginning to put this crazy puzzle together.

"The IRA is operating independent, which the Russians tried to use to their advantage. Somewhere along the line, the Iranians cut them off. That puts the Russians in a position of having no bargaining power. General, I should've stayed in the hi-jacking business. It was less complicated, and not so dangerous," Stefan said, as he began to laugh at his own joke.

“You’re quite correct, Commander. But I couldn’t allow your talents to be wasted when there were bigger fish to catch,” General Ritz stated embracing the jovial moment.

“I agree, Sir. Thank you.”

“From the outset, President Martinez knew something out of the ordinary might occur. But he, nor I, figured on anything as drastic as the events that have taken place. The Colonel knows more about the situation,” the General informed him, and then continued.

“I’ve briefed him. He knows the location for the other safehouses. Commander we must get, and then keep the IRA on American soil. We can win if we continue to play in our back yard. If we lose them, they’ll disappear, and all of this will have been for nothing. They’ve caused a lot of damage and taken a lot of lives. Now, I want theirs. Red Pines will patch

through all messages from this point on," the General said, as he exited the room.

*Chapter 32**Havana, Cuba**June 18,*

Qadir stared out of the window of the 747. He realized he had the opportunity to become one of the richest, and most powerful men in the world. He relished that idea! He was becoming impatient with his famed IRA to stop the BLF. No, the BLF would not keep him from his riches.

He'd used his Turkish contacts to persuade the government to give him political asylum. In return, he'd give them the plans for the thermodynamic energy facilities. The plans would allow them to come out of the shadows and be a world power once more.

They agreed, but with a catch. They wanted him to remove Premier Abdullah Kasim from power at all costs. He was a danger to all Muslims.

"Qadir, there's a radio message coming in for you," a young man told him.

"Thank you," Qadir replied.

He proceeded to the cockpit. Qadir couldn't imagine what could be so important that he'd be contacted at thirty-five thousand feet. He knew something was wrong, but what?

"Yes."

"Qadir, how are you?" Premier Kasim asked.

"I'm fine. But I am curious as to why you contacted me like this."

"Yes, you should be curious. There has been a change in plans. It seems the Turks are no longer in need of Iran's assistance. Someone in our organization has made a deal with certain members of their

government. I want that person or persons! Do you understand Qadir?" Kasim asked, raising his voice.

"I will investigate the situation once we land in Havana," Qadir informed his leader.

"I will be waiting for you," Kasim said, and ended the call.

Qadir cursed loudly! He threw the headset down and stormed out of the cockpit. He'd have to find another way to get those plans to the stupid Turks. He'd told them not to say anything until they'd heard from him. They were stupid. Just plain stupid.

Was he losing his ability to manipulate? Still, he knew he must remain in control. The double crossing of the Scorpion, and the petty ideas of the Premier, now becoming complicating. He'd have to kill Kasim sooner than planned, whether he wanted to or not.

As the plane taxied down the runway, Qadir recognized the black Mercedes parked on the runway apron.

Qadir and Sari waited onboard, as the pilot and others exited the aircraft. Boarding the plane, exuding an air of power and wealth, Premier Abdullah Kasim took in the luxuriously furnished aircraft. He'd given the aircraft to Qadir as a token of good faith, and friendship when he'd came to power.

"Qadir my brother," he said, and paused, "You seem a bit upset. But I will not elaborate on that at this time. Before we get to the business of the Turks, I want to know where Mustafa and the Scorpion are!" Kasim demanded, angrily and disturbed.

He hurriedly grasped hold of the opening to eliminate Mustafa. Qadir now knew things would work out. The fact Mustafa hadn't contacted the Premier, was a sign of treason.

Qadir took advantage of the situation. He was a master manipulator. That talent had helped earn him the title of the master terrorist!

He and Kasim had already set-up the Scorpion. Now, he'd make Kasim see Mustafa as a traitor. Since the Turks were bold enough to inform Kasim they didn't need him anymore, Mustafa would make the perfect scape goat.

"I had hoped Mustafa would've made contact by now. But I take it he feels there is no need for that anymore," Qadir stated, seasoning his plan of betrayal. "He has used the IRA, and your kindness, just as those who we fight."

"Yes, you are correct. I should have listened to your wise advice with an open mind. I have reason to believe Mustafa has joined ranks with the Scorpion. Together, they will come after me," Kasim stated. "I also learned after I spoke with you, that Mustafa was seen in Turkey shortly after our attack against the Americans."

"I will dispose of the traitor, Mustafa Sahib!" Qadir exclaimed

"Good. That brings me to our next problem,"

Kasim stated.

"Which is?"

" American terrorists. Can you believe that?"

The Premier said in bewilderment. "They actually have terrorists. What is the world coming too?" Kasim couldn't believe what he'd just said. It sounded so awkward. He reached into his attaché case and removed a black leather file. He handed it to Qadir.

"What is this?" Qadir asked, a puzzle expression on his face. Looking at the pictures of the two black men, Qadir was a little taken back. "Who are they?"

"Marshal Emery, he's the leader of the Black Liberation Force," Kasim said, pointing to Emery's picture. "The other one is Chico Stefan. He's the one responsible for hi-jacking our ships. I want them both dead! You will be returning to America. The Cubans will supply a ship," the Premier inform his enforcer.

“You will be met by our contacts in Charleston, South
Carolina. Go with Allah.”

*Chapter 33**Boise, Idaho**June 19, 2028*

New CIA Director, Carmen McGee, stepped from the air-conditioned private airplane. She was instantly greeted by the hot, balmy Idaho heat. She looked out over the small runway.

They were in the middle of the barren potato country. McGee inhaled the dry, but fresh air. Four agents joined her on the landing ramp but kept their distance.

“Darn, it’s hot,” a young red-headed agent stated, wiping sweat from his brow with the back of his hand. He received no response, wishing he’d kept his mouth shut.

“Who in the hell says, darn?” McGee asked.

Drawing a tension filled chuckle from the others. It was like a slow leak, not enough to go flat, but enough to keep moving forward.

“Two cars approaching,” a tall agent with binoculars said, from behind her.

"Wait until they stop. Check both cars from top to bottom. I don't want any crap," McGee ordered.

At forty-five years old, McGee was the youngest and first black woman to hold the post of Director. She was also a decorated Philippines War veteran. The thought of becoming a company woman, so-to-speak, let alone the Director, had never crossed her mind.

That changed when her platoon leader, Thaddeus Groves, spoke with her one night in the jungle about her future. She was all in on the cloak and dagger game. Years later, she thought it was funny how she had joined the CIA in the middle of a war.

She'd performed several jobs for Groves. After his untimely death, Coven appointed her to the Directorship. She was going to use it for what it was worth and get what she could.

McGee believed no price was too high for what she had. Coven had declared himself the second coming of Trump, following the path of the former tainted President.

The cars came to a stopped, and the agents performed their security checks. There were four men in each car, all armed. They knew what was at stake.

"Cars clean," the tall agent called out.

Suddenly, another car was fast approaching. "Who's that?" McGee asked. The agents drew their weapons at the urgency of their boss's question.

"That's the Premier. He didn't know if he would be able personally greet you," the driver of the lead car explained. His English was perfect.

A steel gray BMW ground to a halt in front of the landing ramp. Premier Abdullah Kasim stepped from the rear passenger side of the car. He had a big grin on his face. His men snapped to attention.

President Coven stepped from the confines of the aircraft. He joined McGee. When Kasim exited his car, Coven took a couple of steps forward. The future of the free world stood only a few feet from each other.

“I’m sorry to be late, but other business developed at the last minute. There’s nothing for you to worry about,” Kasim stated, still maintaining his grin.

“For your sake, I hope not,” President Coven snapped. He was dressed in white pants and a light blue polo shirt. Coven could have passed for a Hollywood actor, as he resembled the legendary actor, George Hamilton.

“President Coven,” he said putting emphases on President. “How nice to finally meet the man behind the iron voice,” Kasim said.

“Can the crap Kasim. Get me out of this heat,” Coven grumbled. He walked stoutly down the ramp and shook his new partner's hand. “Why did you pick such a no nothing place?”

“To answer your question, because it is a no nothing place, as you say. I see America is still the beautiful,” Kasim stated, his grin never leaving his face, but his dark, cold eyes took in everything.

“With no thanks to you and your crazy IRA. Now, can we get the hell out of this damned heat, to some place cooler?”

“Yes. Yes.” The Iranian leader said. He gave orders to three of his men to assist the Americans in keeping surveillance of the area.

Flanked by Secret Service and Iranian Security, Kasim and Cove followed a path across a field. McGee walked behind Coven, ever vigilant. A hundred yards from the make-shift runway, was a farmhouse, that

feature d a gazabo. There, they conducted their business.

“We’ve been here for almost an hour, and all you want is more money! You don’t get anything if your people can’t stop the BLF! Is that clear enough for you Kasim?” Coven asked angrily.

“You Americans do whatever and say whatever you want. But do not attempt that with me! I am just as powerful as you, Mr. American President,” Kasim bitterly countered, his anger reflecting in his voice.

“You can’t honestly believe that. I can, and will, erase your camel shit country from the face of the earth. And you what, no one would give a damn! You created those murderous sons-of-bitches that’s running wild in this country as we speak! The only real power you have, and that is questionable, is in Iran,” President Coven replied.

“That’s true to a point, my friend,” Kasim said, having regained his composure. He lost the sharp edge

to his voice. “But I have OPEC at my disposal twenty-four hours a day. That makes all the difference in the world. My IRA is my insurance policy to make sure it stays that way. I’m preparing for the future.”

“Kasim, your IRA is the only thing preventing us from ruling the free world. If they don’t eliminate the BLF, and soon, neither of us will have anything to protect.”

Leaping from his chair, stung by the way he’d just been spoken to, Kasim was furious. “Do not ever forget who made it possible for you to be in the position you are in now! True enough, the Russians were your original contact, but they had to go through us, on our terms. When they came to me, wanting the IRA to attack the laboratory in Detroit, they sold their souls!” Kasim stated, becoming emotional. “You would do anything to get what you want, and so will I. You will play by my rules, because you are in no position to

threaten me, or anyone else. Is that clear enough for you, Mr. President?"

"We can go on and on like this, but nothing will get accomplished. We are in each other's debt. Neither of us can afford any mistakes. Especially during this critical time," Coven stated, easing off the intimidation tactics.

"We shall get on with our other business," Kasim said, having calmed down.

"I can promise peace between the America and Iran and deliver peace in the Middle East" Kasim said.

"When we unite as one, England, China, Japan, and your friends, the Russians, will be ours to control and destroy!" Coven confidently boasted.

"Yes, we will be the rulers of the free world. I must admit, there will be enough room for two kings," Kasim stated, as he broke out in a hysterical laughter.

"I've already begun assembling my Congressional support to amend our Constitution, to

make the Presidency an unlimited term in Office,”

Coven stated, as he joined Kasim in the laughter.

“Ah, you’re trying to do what Trump couldn’t do.”

“Trump was a fool. He didn’t understand the difference between politics and business,” Coven clarified.

*Chapter 34**Philadelphia**June 19,*

"Commander, assemble everyone now! We are going to the party," Emery stated in an enthusiastic voice. He could sense the change that was occurring.

Minutes later, the BLF had gathered in the living room of the safehouse on Osage Avenue. They were tired and stressed, but eager to get back into the game. The down time had allowed them time to regroup and re-focus for the coming madness.

"People, Red Pines intercepted a message out of Cuba. They believe it's reliable. However, nothing can be, or will be taken for granted," the Colonel emphasized. "What we have are two separate situations.

First, the IRA is reportedly en route to Charleston, South Carolina."

"Colonel, I think I may have an idea why they are going to Charleston," Tracy stated.

"I'm listening."

" For the final battle with the Black Liberation Force!" Everyone in the room looked at her and thought the same thing as she did. "If we're going to treat this as a set-up, then we must assume they're after us also. That message undoubtedly was meant for us to intercept."

"Why?" Emery asked. He was intrigued to hear her response.

"For years, the FBI and CIA had planted moles in Castro's government. Iran and Cuba are supportive of each other's endeavors. Cuba for providing Iran a haven during hostile times, and Iran for Cuba's geographic location. If we continue to foil the IRA's attempted attacks, then they'd certainly have to come

after us. The best way to do that is to let us find them."

Tracy concluded.

Emery looked at her for a moment, then over to Stefan. They'd come to the same conclusion as she had. Emery hadn't mentioned that the IRA was probably traveling on board a Cuban cargo ship.

"Colonel, you said there were two situations. What's the other?" Debra Crystal asked.

"Red Pines has located the Scorpion. He's in Richmond, Virginia. Although there are some prominent individuals there, I don't believe he's on an assignment. Red Pines believes he's meeting a possible contact."

"If he's meeting a contact, then he could be planning to strike again," Shana Wolf injected.

"After the IRA claimed responsibility for his assignment at Dulles, it'd seem logical for him to follow up on the President. If for no other reason, than to re-establish his reputation," Ruben Cades stated.

"Those are both strong possibilities. We must try to prevent either from happening," Emery said.

"What's the plan Colonel?" Tracy inquired.

"Alfa squad will go to Richmond. Bravo squad to Charleston. Commander, I'll leave transportation to your discretion," The Colonel stated. "Give me six hours. Providing things go right, we will be joining you in Charleston. You have the name of our contact there."

*Chapter 35**Richmond, Virginia**June 19,*

The stakeout was in its third hour of waiting. Emery had parked a block from their target. It was a three-story house on Monument Avenue. Emery surveyed the deserted cobble-stone street carefully. The house was registered to a Dr. Prescott.

His specialty was infectious diseases. His interest now was finding the elusive cure for the HIV virus. Technology and science hadn't conquered all. Emery surmised that the doctor was treating the Scorpion as a patient, or the doctor was his contact.

The night was warm but had a dark aura to it. Phillips and Dunbar took up positions on either side of the house. Colter took up his position across the street.

He used a four-foot-high stone wall for the placement of the .50 caliber machine gun.

Crystal and Conway covered the back. The moon cast little light, which was to their advantage. They studied the few cars on the silent street, nothing stood out. Cross stayed with the SUV.

Emery checked his watch. It was eleven thirty. Leaving the car, he and Tracy casually strolled up to the front of the house. Tracy eyes darted about the street.

She sensed something odd about the dark colored Mercedes parked further down the street. For some reason it seemed out of place. At the same time, it fit with the neighborhood. What bothered her about the car she didn't know, but she couldn't shake it.

The front door was slightly ajar. Cautiously, they entered the house, weapons drawn. They swept the first floor. They were looking for anything that would lead them to the Scorpion. Starting up the stairs, Tracy stopped abruptly in front of Emery.

Again, she sensed something was wrong. She told Emery to watch her back as she bolted up the stairs. He didn't like the situation they were in, as he covered the doorway. She rejoined him on the stairs.

"There's a body up there. His throat's been cut. I suspect he was the doctor."

"Do not ever take off like that again! "Emery told her, his whispered voice angry.

She was startled at his response, but quickly regained her composure. Before she could respond, they heard the front door close.

"Fuck!" Tracy exclaimed, knowing she may have unintentionally helped the Scorpion get away. She still hadn't learned how to rein herself in.

"Colter? Did someone leave?" The Colonel asked through his throat-mic.

"Yeah. A man. He's standing on the stoop. Wait a minute. Hey, something's not right here! I think we have a problem. Another car is slowly coming down the

street. It stopped. It's a dark colored Mercedes." Colter said in a low, anxious voice.

"Hold your positions," Emery ordered.

Pushing Emery out of the way, Tracy opened fire with her .38 Smith and Wesson revolver! The demons from hell devoured into the man's chest at the bottom of the stairs! He was dead before he hit the floor. Then bullets rained down around them!

"They must have hidden when we came in," Tracy said, keeping her head below the hot lead flying above.

"That'd be a fair assumption," Emery replied, regaining his balance.

"Cover me!" He yelled, as he bolted after the man outside. He stopped at the door, as bullets ricocheted around his head. "Where in the hell did, he go?" The Colonel asked through the throat mic, receiving no reply. Peering around the door frame, he

saw Colter laying over the stone wall. Dunbar and Phillips were caught in a crossfire!

Reaching Emery, Tracy stopped, then jetted out the door! She rolled, and came up firing, until the hammer hit metal against metal! Tightly gripping the empty gun, she ran towards the stone wall. Crystal and Conway provided cover, as they came from the rear of the house.

Leaping from the doorway, Emery joined Dunbar and Phillips. They changed clips, and continued firing. The blue Mercedes came to a grinding halt in front of the house, running up on the sidewalk. The man from the house jumped in, and the car sped away. Emery knew it was the Scorpion. He's a ghost now.

Dunbar tried to cross the street, but a long burst from the machine gun fire stitched him across the chest! The machine gun was mounted in the back of a van that pulled out of a driveway. Emery threw a 4.2 second

grenade at the van, sending it and its occupants to their final resting place in hell!

"Let's get the hell out of here!" Emery exclaimed seconds later. Cross brought the SUV up to meet them. They loaded the remains of Colter and Dunbar, then Alfa squad climbed in.

Tracy and Emery locked eyes. Even though she'd possibly saved his life, he still would put her in check. Her recklessness couldn't be allowed.

"Get to the airport! We need a plane and fast," Emery ordered.

The arid stink of cordite from the explosives lingered in their nostrils and clothes. Adrenaline pumped through their bodies like a roaring currents. They'd come close to their prey, but once again, they were a step behind.

"The man from the house, was that the Scorpion?" Tracy asked.

"I believe so. The bastard got away again!

Whatever is going on, we'll have to find out later. He must regroup, now that he knows we're after him,"

Emery said, casting a quizzical eye at her

"Where did all of those shooters come from?"

Cross asked, as he steered the van onto the freeway.

"They had to belong to the Scorpion. With as many people as he had with him, something has gone wrong in his organization," Emery explained, and then tossed in, "He doesn't have the luxury of working alone anymore."

"Every time we come in contact with these bastard, we lose someone," Conway somberly stated.

No one commented. They had to stop the Scorpion and the IRA before they lost every member of the Black Liberation Force before the mission was completed.

"He's got to be headed for the airport," Tracy said as an afterthought. "He's after the IRA also."

*Chapter 36**Richmond**June 19,*

Checking out the small planes carefully, Emery wasn't taking any chances. The last few hours had been bad. He'd lost two more of his people.

He felt responsible for Colter's and Phillip's deaths, but in his heart, he knew he wasn't. Emery also appreciated the General assigning Tracy and Stefan to the BLF. He knew he couldn't have gotten this far alone, as there was a lot of death yet to come.

Emery again scanned the peacefulness of the Richmond airport. He'd wait until he was sure there was no one around, then make a move for one of the planes. That plan was immediately put on hold when a

man staggered out of one of the hanger bays. He was heading for the airfield. Emery made his move.

"Ah, excuse me. Is this your airplane?" Emery asked, knowing the man probably didn't own the plane. He was one of those guys whose job was his home, and vice versa. He hoped the man would be at ease by the question.

"Do I look like I could own a damn plane?" The man asked in a hoarse, gruffy voice. "But I wish I did." He was greasy and dirty. From experience, Emery figured he was one of those guys that could take a plane apart and put it back together without any problems.

"Well, is the pilot around?"

"He sure is. But ah, he's passed out. He drinks to damn much. He called me to give this baby a tune up," the man said, gently patting the nose of the plane. "I've been here all day, and most of the night working on this baby. She's ready for open space," the man said, as he looked upward."

" I'll give you a thousand dollars to fly me and my friends to Philadelphia right now. There're no drugs involved," Emery said, presenting a disarming grin. He could see a spark in the man's eyes at the mention of the money.

"That's a damned tempting offer," the man said, as he rubbed his greasy hand over his bearded face. "Give me two thousand. I'll fly you and your friends to hell and back."

"You got yourself a deal," Emery said, as he pulled a wad of money out of his right front pants pocket.

The man's eyes lit up at the sight of the money. As Emery counted the money, Conway hit the man over the head from behind. When he came to, he'd tell the authorities they were heading to Philadelphia. Emery didn't want to kill him. He hoped that decision wasn't a mistake.

"Move out." Emery ordered.

Conway climbed aboard first, as he was their new pilot. Tracy, Crystal, and Cross, followed, as Emery brought up the rear.

"We should be in Charleston in a couple of hours Colonel," Conway informed him as he got the plane rolling. He ignored the pleas of the Control Tower, as they lifted off into the darkness of the night.

Emery looked over at Tracy, and said, "Thank you."

*Chapter 37**Charleston, South Carolina**June 19,*

The Russians had gotten Mustafa out of Alaska and to Charleston. He was mentally preparing for the bloody battle that lay ahead. There were members within the IRA, who at one time had pledged their loyalty to him. Now, they follow Qadir, therefore, too must die.

"Comrade Sahib, I must return. I have come to like you in the short time we have been together. I wish you success in your venture," the Russian sincerely said. He helped Mustafa remove two duffle bags containing weapons and explosives.

"Thank you my, friend. I have never enjoyed the feeling of having a friend until I met you. This situation

is my fate, but I'm grateful we had the chance to meet. May Allah bless you," Sahib said, as the Russian climbed back into the plane.

The Russians had arranged a vehicle for him. Tossing the duffle bags on the back seat, Mustafa cast an eye at the bags. He figured if he couldn't get it done with what he had, it couldn't be done.

He drove to the abandoned shipyard. There, he hoped to find and destroy Qadir Shabazz! His concentration was so intense on Qadir, that he was at his location before he realized it. The shipyard was dimly lit. He cut the engine and planned his attack.

Getting out of the car, Mustafa draped two ammunition belts over his head, letting them crisscross over his chest. Under the cover of darkness, he penetrated the security of the temporary IRA base. He knew from experience how the perimeter would be established, just as he knew the outpost towers were manned with .50 caliber machine guns.

He caught sight of a sentry coming towards him. Quickly, Mustafa ducked back into the darkness. He recognized the man. It was Shaman, one of the few men he detested. He would take pleasure in taking the fool's life. Silently, he thanked Allah. This would be the first death, but not the last.

Not expecting anyone, or anything, Shaman leaned against the building. With the shadows covering him, he lit a cigarette. Mustafa gave him a few moments to get relaxed and enjoy the cigarette. It would be his last.

Mustafa eased up behind him with the two-inch-wide knife blade leading the way. Roughly, he grabbed Shaman across the forehead! He plunged the blade of the knife into his neck!

The tip came out on the other side, nearly severing his head! Catching the body, Mustafa lowered him quietly to the ground. Wiping the blood from his blade on Shaman's shirt, he returned it to its sheath.

“Good-bye my old enemy.” Mustafa spit on his body, as he pulled the body further into the darken creases of the shadows. Looking down the body, Mustafa said, “We all get what we have coming in the long run, Shaman. You have and so will I.”

Lying flat on the roof of his new location, Mustafa surveyed the buildings. He searched for Qadir. The task became easy. His heart pounded heavily in his chest, as he watched Qadir storm into the Command Post.

*Chapter 38**Charleston**June 19,*

“Someone has murdered Shaman!” Qadir yelled. He didn’t say it aloud, but in his heart, he knew the man responsible, was Mustafa!

Glaring at the young girl in battle fatigues who’d found the body, he grabbed her angrily by the arm, throwing her to the floor. The others stood by as frozen spectators. They couldn’t understand why their feared leader was treating Mena so badly. They were all upset over the death of Shaman.

" Listen to me!" Qadir snapped. " We are going to destroy the famed Black Liberation Force. But first, we will destroy the murderer of Shaman. I want this man brought to me alive. If anyone, even accidentally,

kills him, I will personally blow their brains out! Is that clear?"

"Qadir, how will we know this man?" A man wearing a Converse sports jacket asked.

"You all know him. Its Mustafa!" Qadir replied in a low, cold voice. "Now, find him and bring him to me!"

No one said a word until they were outside. They found it hard to believe that Mustafa had killed Shaman. But the fact remained, whether he was responsible or not, Qadir wanted him, and they would get him.

They spread out searching for their one-time friend and mentor. Suddenly, a nerve chilling scream escape from one their comrades! They knew he'd found Mustafa. The night had taken on a strange silence.

Then explosions erupted, rocking the shipyard! It was followed by screams of agony, as men and women ran about seeking an escape from their fiery

deaths. The pre-set explosions had resulted in fires through-out the north end of the shipyard, blocking those trying to flee certain death!

Facing the entrance of his temporary command post, Qadir sat fingering the trigger of a Gatlin gun. He waited for his one-time friend to show his face. Then he'd blow it off!

"The IRA is good, but they're no match for me," Mustafa stated from the back of the room.

Qadir spun around, nearly tripping over the ammunition belt attached to the Gatlin gun. He was staring down the barrel of the MAC-10 trained on his upper body. He knew Mustafa wouldn't miss from this distance.

"I was wondering where you'd gone off too. The Premier would like to hear where you've been," Qadir stated, trying to find a way out of the spider's web.

"What did I do, to cause you to betray me?"

Mustafa asked.

"Believe it or not, you did nothing. Things happened. When they did, you became expendable."

"Things like leaving me for dead in Alaska, or framing me for making a deal with the Turks?" Mustafa asked, his words bitter and cold, as he circled his prey. He came closer to Qadir with each word he spoke.

" So, kill me. Get it over with! You have the weapon," Qadir stated calmly, though still frightened.

" Yes, I do have the weapon. It's the easiest solution to your problem. I want to kill you my way, " Mustafa said. He tossed the MAC-10 aside, then pulled the blood-stained knife. "I used this to cut Shaman's throat. Now, I will use it on you."

Qadir began to feel more comfortable, as he produced the straight razor from his shirt sleeve. "And this my brother, is what I'll used to cut your throat."

Qadir felt he had a fighting chance to survive, as they both had vengeance on their minds and in their hearts.

" You know you are going to lose Qadir, but I do expect a fight from you," Mustafa said, seeing that all too familiar look of insanity creep into Qadir's eyes.

"Maybe so my brother. I just might take you to hell right along with me," Qadir stated, then began laughing wildly.

"We shall find out," Mustafa confidently boasted.

"Yes, we will."

Swiping back and forth at each other, Qadir drew first blood. The straight razor sliced Mustafa's arm, leaving a long, bloody gash. Mustafa didn't attempt to close the wound, nor did he feel the pain. He'd been taught from an early age to ignore all pain. That included the pain of the heart.

"Not bad," Mustafa sneered, as he glanced at his bloody arm for the first time. "I had planned to

eliminate the entire IRA but decided it would be easier to come after you right away. Now, it is my turn."

The tide turned. Mustafa wield the giant knife as it made contact, catching Qadir on the back of his hand. He dropped the razor. The next swipe of the blade opened the right side of Qadir 's face! He screamed out in pain! He'd tried to move out of the way but was too slow.

Facing the reality of defeat, Qadir made a desperate attempt for the discarded MAC-10. Mustafa's speed, coupled with the force of a brutal kick to his kidneys, prevented him! Qadir lay on the dirty floor trying to suck in oxygen, as pain shot to his brain!

He was hurt badly, and his breathing was becoming difficult. Rolling onto his back to breathe, the only thing he saw was the big knife ready to come down into his body. He didn't try to block the blade, as he accepted defeat.

"Now, we know who has won," Mustafa declared, as he raised the knife higher for more of an impact. Then he felt something slam into his back! He never heard the shot. The blast sent him flying off Qadir, crashing into the wall.

Mustafa was disoriented and his vision clouded. He felt a horrible burning sensation in his back. It was painful to move. Clearing the cobwebs from his head, he raised his head and looked up. He saw only the barrel of a shotgun aimed at his face.

"It is you that has lost, Mustafa," Sari stated.

The mask of coldness had cracked. Sadness became visible on her lovely face, as she pulled the trigger. The shot sounded like an eruption straight from hell. Mustafa's body twitching on the floor like a snake with no head. Mustafa was like a brother to her, but he had betrayed them all. She turned to Qadir.

" You should get yourself taken care of. I will inform the others Mustafa has been eliminated," Sari stated.

*Chapter 39**Charleston**June 19,*

As Mustafa was making his presence known, Stefan stopped the Hummer at the southern end of the shipyard. He knew no one else would be there. The section of the shipyard they were in, had been closed since 2014.

"Alright people, it's showtime. It should take us ten minutes to get the other end of the shipyard. Keep your eyes peeled. Double check your weapons. Make sure silencers are in place. We don't need any unnecessary noise before its time," Stefan told his small band of warriors.

Stefan took point. Cooper brought up the rear. They watched for movement, as they stealthy made

their way to the north end of the shipyard. Coming to a halt, Stefan whispered to Hackett and Cades to check out the warehouse about a hundred yards in front of them.

Cades signaled Stefan that the warehouse was clear. Stefan and the others lined the wall of the warehouse. Knowing with each heartbeat and breath they took, could be their last. It didn't matter if they lived or died if they did their best. That was the bottom line.

Coming out of the shadows, a man stop to relieve himself at the far corner of the building. He muttered something to himself, as he slapped at a mosquito on his face. He held his hand, seeing the dead insect, and wiped the stolen blood from his jaw.

"I'll take him Commander," Hackett whispered and was gone. Quietly, in a crouching position, she leapt forward with the knife clenched tightly in her hand. She reached around the man's forehead, and

forcefully shoved the blade under the man's chin and into his brain!

Suddenly, another man appeared! He was no more than three feet from her. He was as startled as she but wasn't quick enough to act first. Without hesitation, she threw the knife, landing in the man's chest! Returning to the others, she told them about the second man. Then they heard shouts, followed by explosions!

Whatever had started the commotion, was the distraction Stefan had been waiting for. The BLF had broken off into pairs. Stefan and Shana Wolf made their way to the center of the shipyard, as 50 caliber slugs' bit into the pavement at their feet. They returned fire, as white-hot lead devoured the bodies of the IRA.

A man ran near Hackett's position but didn't see her until it was too late. She fired, stitching him from left hip to right shoulder. The impact of the bullets knocked him on his back! He was dead before his body fell to the pavement.

The bodies of the IRA were being blown in every direction. Stefan cautiously eyed the mangled bodies. They'd delivered a hell of a blow to the mighty Islamic Rashidun Army, or so he thought. As they moved forward, Stefan realized that the IRA was fighting themselves.

Two IRA members jumped in a jeep that had somehow survived the onslaught. Stefan threw a grenade in the back of it. The jeep exploded, taking more of the IRA with it! He and Wolf continued to move, hoping he'd catch the leader of the IRA, Qadir Shabazz.

*Chapter 40**Charleston**June 19,*

“We must re-group! It’s more of them than us!”

Qadir yelled out over the noise of the battle.

He used his bandage hand to hold his busted ribs as tightly as possible. The other hand helped keep the bandage in place on his face. He was in survival mode, as he hobbled to the command post. Sari accompanied him. Mustafa had delivered a significant blow to his plans and the IRA.

Although the BLF were few, the IRA were too low in numbers now to eradicate them. Thanks to Mustafa. He still found it hard to believe that the IRA was being knocked off like amateurs.

He'd teach them all, as they'd pay for their cowardly acts. However, he knew they were only as good as he and Mustafa had trained them. The Americans had caught them off guard.

*Chapter 41**Charleston**June 19,*

Stefan saw the terrorists break in the opposite direction of the battle. He knew they were re-grouping. Suddenly, from behind them, gunfire erupted! Another group of the IRA was attacking from the rear. Turning, he saw Shana Wolf go down. She rolled and came up firing!

“Wolf? You good?” Stefan called out.

“Took one in the leg. I need to tie it off,” she yelled back.

Seconds later, Stefan scrambled to Wolf’s position. Dodging incoming mortars from their rear, his worst fears came true. They were close to being trapped!

"Can you walk?" He asked, helping her tie off the tourniquet.

"I think so," she said, winching in pain as she got in a crouching position.

"Okay, hang on," he said, slinging her over his shoulder.

"I'm ready," Wolf responded.

"Let's do it," Stefan stated, and took off running, hard and fast!

They re-entered the fight, ducking and dodging more mortar shells. Stopping, he put Wolf on the ground and checked his weapons. "Shoot anything that comes your way," he told her.

"Where're you going? She asked, confusion in her eyes.

Stefan vanished into the night without responding. He doubled back, spraying angels of death to everything in front of him, until he reached the rest

of Bravo Squad. He knew they'd need a miracle to escape the certain death they were facing.

"I'm out of ammo," Cades shouted out.

Hackett crawled on her stomach to give him more, only to catch a stray bullet in her right arm. She was momentarily knocked off balance and dazed but was alive.

"Hackett!" Cades screamed amid the gun fire and explosions. He ran to her, pulling her to safely behind a bullet riddled truck. Ripping away the sleeve of her shirt, he quickly tied his bandana around her arm.

"How bad is it?" Hackett asked.

"It'll take more than a slug to put you down. It's a through-and-through," he told her, seeing the relief flood her eyes.

Calling out to the others, Stefan told them to use everything they had. They were getting the hell out of there! With the IRA to their rear, and to their right and

left, they had only one route; the one that brought them there. They re-grouped and got Wolf.

Using the remainder of their ammunition, they came up short by about twenty yards of the warehouse. They'd cut the odds down considerably. Unfortunately, not enough, as they sat behind a burning vehicle. Stefan wished he'd made the move sooner, but now they'd die without putting up a decent fight.

*Chapter 42**Charleston**June 19,*

Emery arrived at the Naval Station, heading straight for Officers Country, a term used in describing the officer's living area on base. He found the house he was looking for. He knocked lightly on the door, and a short, bull of a man, with a bald head answered. He gestured for Emery to come in.

"I'm glad to see you're awake," Emery said.

"Colonel, I get up at four every morning. Today, I get up a little earlier," the bald head officer stated.

"Did the Commander leave any messages for me?"

"Yeah," the officer replied. He walked to his desk, retrieved a white envelope, and handed it to

Emery. Emery quickly scanned the contents, then placed the letter inside his windbreaker.

"Can you get me a gunship?" Emery asked, and then added, "I have my own pilot."

"You are full of surprises," the officer commented. "Meet me at the helo pad in fifteen, Colonel Emery."

"Thank you for your assistance," Emery added.

Making his way back to the SUV, Emery updated Alfa Squad on what was happening.

"Commander Stefan is at the old shipyard. We have those murdering bastards this time, dead or alive!" Emery stated in a confident voice.

"How do we proceed?" Tracy asked.

"There's a gunship waiting for us," the Colonel informed them. "Bravo Squad will need all the help they can get."

"I hope we're not too late," Tracy commented, her voice distant.

"I highly doubt that. The Commander lives for situations like this. That's why he was assigned to the BLF," Emery said, hoping he was right, and that the others believed him. If they didn't, they didn't say anything.

*Chapter 43**Charleston**June 19,*

Suddenly, machine gun fire from overhead quickly wiped out the advancing terrorists! The odds had changed for those trapped on the ground. Death merchants blasted the IRA from the big olive-green helicopter above, forcing them to retreat.

Making two more sweeps over the area, the big bird landed between the BLF and the IRA. Tracy, Crystal, and Conway ran to the aide of Hackett and Wolf. The others disappeared deeper into the confines of the shipyard. A trail of bodies lined the path of death, as they approached the center of the battlefield.

Hearing the clatter of machine gun fire, they hit the black top looking for the direction it was coming!

“Where’s that coming from?” Emery asked sharply.

“Over there, Colonel,” Cross informed him. “I got it.”

Cross rushed the machine gun nest with a grenade in one hand and the M4 in the other, spitting out havoc in its wake. In a flash, a horizontal line of bullets zipped him across his chest! He dropped to his knees, falling face first. He pulled himself closer to his target and

lobbed the grenade. At the same time, a barrage of bullets tore into his head! The grenade landed in the machine gun nest, sending the IRA to meet Allah, as Cross to meet Jesus!

*Chapter 44**Charleston**June 19,*

The BLF had become a curse to him. They seemed to be everywhere. only heard of each other. They were good, and they didn't quit, which was Qadir's main concern. Could his hand-picked, and personally trained army of killers stop the pesky Americans?

Unfortunately, he already knew the answer to that question, as he replayed his escape route over in his head. The shipyard had become his prison. He knew he had to get out of there soon.

His attention was directed back to the renewed fighting. He heard the gunfire getting near his Command Post. He ran outside. He stopped, as the

American military helicopter came his way, destroying the IRA. Qadir ducked and screamed! The sudden movement sent waves of pain through his body.

The BLF had destroyed the three IRA helicopters sitting on the ground. What was initially planned as a trap for the BLF, had turned into the demise of the famed Islamic Rashidun Army. One man had destroyed everything out of vengeance, Mustafa Sahib!

Crossing the open space of the shipyard, Qadir re-loaded as he moved about. He was met by Cades and Sneed. All were caught completely off guard, but Qadir reacted first.

Bullets ripped into their upper torsos and faces, leaving large, gasping holes. Qadir had been taught when you kill, always go for the heart or the head. He went for both.

He continued his journey, only to see more Americans. He couldn't get over the fact the IRA was

losing this most important battle. It was impossible he thought, yet he was witnessing at the reality of it. Just then, Qadir saw Emery.

He recognized him from the pictures the Premier had shown him. Then he saw the woman with Emery. They had come upon the bodies of their fallen comrades.

*Chapter 45**Charleston**June 19,*

Emery quickly scanned the area.

"We have to stop these fuckers before they kill us all," Tracy angrily stated with conviction reflecting in her voice.

"I agree. I've seen carnage before, but these damned people destroy the bodies," Emery said.

"There're many horrors in this business, but I believe we will conquer most of them."

"Get down!" Tracy yelled out, as she saw a man taking aim at them. She fired but missed. The gunman took cover, allowing them to move forward.

"Come on," Emery yelled.

He took off after the lone gunman. Tracy followed closely behind, drawing gun fire from the advancing terrorists. She wanted to live, and the only way to do that was to kill!

A few yards behind Emery, Tracy was jumped by a dark-clad figure! She went down hard to the pavement. She quickly rolled away from her attacker.

Tracy managed to get to her feet, pulling a knife from her boot in the process. Her attacker rushed her, not seeing the knife. Tracy thrust the blade into the chest of the stark raving mad Sari and twisted it home!

Next, Tracy felt the impact of something hot bite into her thigh! It forced her to one knee. She dove for cover behind the remnants of a burned-out smoking car. She saw the terrorists, as she tied a tourniquet around her thigh. Then Stefan came upon her.

“Are you all right?” He asked, his head moving back and forth like it was on a swivel.

“Yeah! Go help the others. I’ll catch up,” she said, as she watched him disappear into the darkness of the shipyard.

The AK-47 Stefan had confiscated along the way sent death's messengers in all directions, as he spotted Emery and Phillips. Before he could close the distance between them, Conway, Cooper, and Jackson came into view. They were met by a savage volley of grenades being tossed from one of the docking bays.

Stefan watched through fascinated eyes, as his friends had somehow avoided being blown to pieces! Possessed with a newfound purpose, which was to live, Stefan charged the docking bay. The clatter of the AK-47 cleared a path for him.

He leaped into the hole of hell! His finger violently squeezing the trigger, until the magazine was empty. Climbing out of the docking bay hole, he threw down the assault rifle in disgust and anger.

The shipyard was finally quiet. The Black Liberation Force was victorious but had paid a heavy price. Stefan saw Emery and Crystal carrying Tracy. Wolf and Hackett came through the smoke, joining the others.

Stefan realized they were all that was left. For the first time in his adult life, he felt empty and lost. They'd won the war, with what he considered, the best-damned fighting unit ever assembled.

"Shabazz! Did anyone get Shabazz?" Emery called out in a frantic voice.

Before anyone could respond, they heard the roar of the helicopter, their helicopter. Shabazz was trying to escape. Stefan looked at Crystal, then they saw it lifting off.

"Clear!" Tracy shouted out. They turned around, just as she raised the grenade launcher and fired! The helicopter exploded in a ball of fire, lighting up the dark night sky. Qadir Shabazz was no more.

*Chapter 46**Havana**June 20, 2028*

For his final act, Claude had located Abdullah Kasim. The Scorpion knew he wouldn't see his old friend, and mentor again. That knowledge pained him, which was a first for him.

He'd never felt a void like he was feeling now. His life was coming unraveled and to an end. But there were others who'd face death before him.

The medication prescribed by the doctor in Richmond, could possibly add three to five years to his fast-fading existence. Now, he was truly alone. With Claude gone, it didn't matter if he lived or died. Finishing the assignment, was his only purpose.

There was a warm breeze to the Cuban night. It was touched off by the elegant fragrance coming from the flower garden near the sliding doors of the patio. He inhaled deeply and the coughing began. He had gone three days without coughing. The medication was working as expected.

Taking a small black kit from his pocket, the Scorpion selected the proper instrument. He went to work on picking the lock. Within seconds, the catch popped free, enabling him to slide the door open.

Standing up, he put the kit back in his pocket. A man suddenly appeared. He was standing only a few feet away from the Scorpion. He was holding an AK-47, the weapon of choice. The Scorpion searched the man's eyes. He saw fear.

He held the man's stare, who was nearly hypnotized by the time he realized he was going to die. The Scorpion fired two .22 caliber slugs from the derringer in his coat pocket. Instant death sailed quietly

through the warm night air, burrowing into the man's forehead!

Not hesitating, the Scorpion entered the house. Walking into the study, the Scorpion allowed a few seconds for his eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room. His fingers, a self-conscious act, rubbed the two small holes in his coat pocket.

His eyes having adjusted to the darkness, the Scorpion walked to the door. He put his ear to the door, listening for sounds of life. Hearing nothing, he opened the door enough to peer out into the hallway.

Drawing the 9mm, with a mask, the Scorpion stepped into the magnificent hallway of the luxurious house. He took another deep breath and continued. He thoroughly checking the first floor.

Satisfied, the Scorpion cautiously climbed rounding staircase to the second floor. There, he could hear voices. He suspected they were Kasim's bodyguards.

Easing along the wall in the direction of the voices, the Scorpion boldly jumped into the room! There were seven men and women sitting at a card table. They were all startled at the man in black. The Scorpion laid them all down in the blink of an eye!

Another man entered the room. He was holding a bottle of wine. Before he could react to the violent scene that greeted him, he was on his back!

The Scorpion's knee was pressed against his sternum! The man's eyes bulged. Not from fear, but from the pressure that was being applied to his chest.

"Where is the Premier?" The Scorpion asked in a cold voice, with a sharp edge.

"He is not here," the man cried through the pain in his chest.

"Tell me the truth. I may allow you to keep your stinking life, Iranian!" The Frenchman snapped.

The man's eyes grew even wider when he saw the knife coming toward his face. He knew the man

would kill him if he didn't tell him what he wanted to know. The Premier would kill him if he did tell. He was a dead man either way. But he had to take a chance if he wanted to leave Cuba.

"He is in the last room at the end of the corridor," the Iranian replied, hoping he'd saved himself.

"Thank you," the Scorpion stated. Then with a quick swipe, he brought the knife down across his victim's throat.

The Scorpion picked up one of the AK-47's and proceeded to the Premier's room. Kicking in the door, he could see the shock and disbelief on Kasim's face. A young girl jumped from the bed baring her young, nubile body as she attempted to escape death.

A single burst from the assault rifle tore into the soft, delicate flesh of her back. The impact of the bullet sprung her around, causing her to land on her back. Her eyes were wide open.

Kasim shrieked! The Scorpion forcefully yanked Kasim from the bed by his hair! The Premier was trying to bargain for his life, while trying to cover up his nakedness. His words fell upon deaf ears.

Not wasting time, the Scorpion slit Kasi's throat. Then he pulled his tongue through the gaping hole. The Scorpion had repaid the Premier in full for treacherous deeds against him. Now, he would finish what he'd started in America.

*Epilogue**The White House**June 24, 2028*

Staring out of the window of the helicopter, Marine One, Emery couldn't help wondering what would have happen if they'd failed. He turned and looked at the surviving members of the BLF. They were warriors.

Commander Chico Stefan, Major Debra Crystal, Lt. Guy Cooper, Lt. Shana Wolf, Sgt. Henry Jackson, Sgt. Jan Phillips, Sgt. Mark Conway, CPO Rhonda Hackett, and FBI Agent, and Tracy Grant. They all had survived hell!

"Colonel Emery, excellent job," President Martinez stated. "And from each of your reports, I must say you did America justice. Thank you."

President Martinez had resumed his duties two hours before the demise of the Islamic Rashidun Army. A few hours later, Cuban officials announced the assassination of the Islamic Republican Leader, Premier Abdullah Kasim. America had once again stepped up to defend against tyranny.

The IRA had caused damage beyond the realms of reality, but not irreparable. The Southwestern region of the United States was nearly unhabital. Aid was pouring in from all allies.

The refinery fires were finally under control, but a long way off from being functional again. Alaska received help from Mother Nature with the sudden changes in the weather patterns from the El Nino currents.

The acids and fumes from the Tran-Alaskan pipeline were being swept toward the North Pole and to the open sea. That relieved some of the environmental hazards for the northwest. Companies worldwide were

assisting in the oil clean-up in the Gulf of Alaska and along the Pacific Ocean coastline. Everyone had a stake in the fallout.

It would take time, but America and the rest of the world would continue its journey into the future! It was the nature of the human being, to survive at all costs. Stand fast and push forward.

President Martinez glanced in the direction of General Ritz. He was proud of his former Commanding Officer. The General was a little surprised when the President asked him to accompany the remaining BLF members to the White House.

"Mr. President, it's you who deserves the credit. Thank you for allowing us to defend our great country," the General stated.

"General, I knew when I asked you to form these groups, that I was making the right decision. The choice of people you selected is a sign of your strategic excellence. A job well done, Sir."

"Thank you, Mr. President," the General said, somewhat shyly.

Landing on the South Lawn of the White House, President Martinez's aides, followed by the BLF, were the first to be greeted by Vice-President, Ronald Coven. He was under an armed Marine escort.

Already having delayed the press conference to officially announce the defeat of the Islamic Rashidun Army, President Martinez held things up just a little longer. He knew his little ploy would aggravate the outgoing Vice-President even more.

When Coven had received word of Kasim's death, and the defeat of the IRA, he knew he'd lost. He immediately called President Martinez, seeking terms of surrender. The terms were stiff, but in his case, fair.

More than fair he thought later. First, he'd immediately resign as Vice-President; he couldn't seek any public office, state or federal; he couldn't be involved with any government or state agency in any

capacity for thirty years. If he violated any portion of those terms, he'd be prosecuted for treason. If found guilty, which he knew he would, he'd be executed.

Coven felt he'd fought a good fight, but not good enough. He thought, if he had to do it over, nothing would change. President Martinez was the last to leave the helicopter. He walked past Coven with no acknowledgment, stopping near Emery and Tracy. They stood next to the Presidential Podium.

"We pulled it off," Tracy whispered to Emery.

The sound of machine gun fire erupted from the crowd of reporters! A gunman had penetrated the defenses of the Secret Service! The gunman had killed three Marines, as well as Vice-President Ronald Coven.

On impulse, the BLF went into action but were too late. The assassin was shot repeatedly by Secret Service agents with automatic weapons. A quivering mass of bloody, mangle flesh that once was a human being lay on the ground.

Emery stood over the body, looking at the grotesque face of what he was beginning to think was a ghost. The infamous assassin, known as the Scorpion, was dead. But Emery didn't understand why he hadn't attempted to escape. The Scorpion died not knowing he'd missed the American President for the third time.

The End

About the Author

Tim Charity, aka, T. O'Neil Charity, writes African American fiction. He has written twelve (12) novels and five screenplays. His latest novel, *Conspiracy of Terror* was released in November 2022.

His debut novel, *Family Honor-The Seed (2014)*, introduces the legendary crime czar King Kole Konnor and the seeds he spawned. The second book was *Family Honor-II: The Divided Kingdom (2015)*. The saga for control continues as the seeds of King Kole Konnor attempt to solidify their grip on the Kingdom. The third book in the Family Honor series, *Family Honor-III: Genesis (2018)*, delves into the mind of Chase St. John, a master criminal, and assassin. The fourth installment, *Family Honor-IV: Armageddon (2019)*, introduces Canadian crime boss ECAM. He discovered the secrets of the thought to be dead Chase St. John! Putting Chase's strategy of urban warfare to the test, ECAM launches an all-out assault on the seeds of King Kole Konner, the Prince & Princess-Xavier Sands, and Danielle Seville! The Family Honor series is the cornerstone of his writing career. The Family Honor series has overtures of the Power and the action of Scarface!

He followed the Family Honor series with *Hazelton* in April 2020, *The Absalom Covenant* in September 2020, and *Sanctioned* in December 2020. In 2021 he introduced The Ebony Don series following the rise of Angelo De Luca, son of Salvatore De Luca, to Mafia dominance. *The Ebony Don: The Beginning* was released in March 2021 and *The Ebony Don: The Anointing* was released in June 2021, and *The Ebony Don: The Scepter* was released in December 2021. In 2022, he presented *Preacher Man* in April 2022 and *Mississippi Sam* in July 2022.

Tim has earned a BA and MBA in Business Administration from Argosy University and an MFA in Creative Writing from Full Sail University. He is a public speaker, earning his ATM in Toastmasters. Tim is a US Navy veteran, residing in Los Angeles, CA.

Books by T. O'Neil Charity

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The Descendants of Princetta Charity and Vandue Leon Charity, Sr.	(2022)
Mississippi Sam	(2022)
Preacher Man	(2022)
The Ebony Don-I: The Beginning	(2021)
The Ebony Don-II The Anointing	(2021)
The Ebony Don-III The Scepter	(2021)
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