

CHAPTER 11

Random Act of Violence

March 18th, 2015 AD, Somewhere in the central Nevada desert near Elko

“S1 is twenty-seven minutes from approach.” Greg Tannen, a tall 6 foot 6 inch former Celtics pro basketball player had the controls of the remote, unmanned Stealth-1 insurgence plane. The aircraft was less than six feet long, with a wing span of 10 feet. It was nearly invisible from the ground without binoculars and completely hidden from radar. It utilized the super quiet scramjet engines, which had the ability to travel long distances at high speeds using very little fuel. The idea behind the scramjet propulsion system, or Supersonic Combustion Ramjet, was that the oxygen needed by the engine to initiate combustion was taken from the atmosphere as it passed through the vehicle. It didn't use an onboard fuel tank except for takeoff. This allowed the craft to be smaller, lighter, and faster. Scramjet speeds could reach fifteen to twenty times the speed of sound. For example, a trip that normally took eighteen-hours, like a trip to Tokyo from New York City took about two hours. This gives the S1 the capability to perform reconnaissance missions from anywhere to anywhere in the world using Google maps as an inboard guidance system.

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The S1 was equipped with a guided weapons system. It could fire from as far away as three miles using a variety of guided weapons and it never missed its target. Today, Greg had the S1 configured with a rifle for precision hits and an S1-V8 missile, which was only two inches thick, but packs the wallop of twenty grenades. The human target wouldn't see either of these coming until it was too late. Using the S1-V8, made sure there won't be anyone left to tell the story. Not even the missile would remain. The casing and all the components would be completely incinerated in the explosion, leaving no trace of its source.

Greg was a member of the IOM, which stands for International Order of Mercenaries. This was a fringe group from the historic organization previously known as the Templar Knights. Over the years, the Templars had become extremely wealthy. In an attempt by Kings and rulers to confiscate some of this wealth, the Knights were subjected to unwarranted image degradation and physical attacks. In the end, the Knights were disgraced, with their reputations unjustly tarnished. Eventually, the IOM Knights evolved into what everyone branded them as: mercenaries. The Knights realized their military skills had market value and they made these skills available to the highest bidder. However, in order to differentiate the Knights involved with the IOM and to avoid mislabeling the non-IOM Knights, or from disrespecting their mother organization - the Masons, they assumed the name IOM. Any member of the IOM had to first be a Knight, and any Knight must first be a Mason in good standing. Hence, members of the IOM were extremely elite.

Ironically, hardly anyone had ever heard of the IOM. Only key individuals, like heads of state or captains of

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industry, who had the money to pay for their services, knew of their existence. Whenever clandestine activities needed to be performed, or when total secrecy was important, the IOM was brought in to do what they do best.

Today's mission was clandestine. Hired by a rich banker family from the UK, the IOM had been tasked to eliminate a political leader in France who opposed the organization and operation of the Federal Reserve Bank of France. This politician had gone so far as to threaten that if he were to gain control of the political machinery, he would nationalize the nation's Federal Reserve Structure. This brought chills to the bankers who enjoyed controlling the nation's money. They especially feared that a trend of this nature may catch on in other countries.

The Federal Reserve was an independent banking organization that was free from government regulation and which controlled the nation's flow of money, held the majority of the nation's debt, and controlled interest rates. Anyone who opposed the Federal Reserve Bank, opposed a critical source of revenue for the Banks. Barjet, the French politician who strongly opposed its existence, had to be eliminated.

Greg didn't care about the reasons or the politics. For him, this was just another job and his team was the best. Greg was the handsome bachelor that all the girls considered a good catch. He was however, the type of guy that was so involved in his work, he would often miss the passes thrown his way. He loved being the "technical guru" of the IOM and unlike most "techies" he didn't dress down or grow a lot of hair on his face. He kept a military appearance: short hair, well groomed, polished shoes, and neatly pressed pants and shirt. He just

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liked it better that way. When he looked good, he felt good and when he felt good, his attitude and his actions reflected it.

Greg was a self-made man. He grew up in a broken home, his mother deserting both him and his father, to run off with another man. He rarely saw her after that. His father was in the Air Force, which meant he moved every two years. His father was stationed in numerous international locations. He had spent time in Germany, Korea, Guam, Alaska, and at several bases on the continental U.S. Greg had come to enjoy the travel. Sadly, his father was killed in Iraq and at age seventeen Greg was left on his own. He was an odd character and was considered a sport's jock, probably influenced by his father's love of sports. It was basketball that earned him the scholarships that would get him into the best schools and later onto a professional team. However, at age seventeen, he buried the sorrow of the loss of his father, by diving into books and eventually getting degrees in Mathematics, Physics, and Electrical Engineering. He also became captivated by the secret societies that claimed intellectual superiority, like the Masons and the Rosicrucians. Eventually, he settled on the Masons and drove himself to get as advanced as possible. He eventually became a 33rd degree Mason, referred to as the Templar Knight degree, the highest level achievable in the Masonic order. After this achievement he learned about the IOM, the secret order within the Knights Templar and it became his personal mission to become a part of this group. After retiring from his basketball career, he focused on joining the IOM and eventually worked his way into becoming the lead researcher for the IOM. This role included flying the S1 since most of its

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missions were scientifically based. However, today the S1 would be an assassin's tool.

This would be a good day for an assassination. Barjet was scheduled to be outside, at a soccer stadium in Southern France near the Riviera. He was presenting his anti-banking message to a large, receptive audience.

The secret to a good assassination was not simply to eliminate the target, but more importantly, that someone else, like Al-Qaida or the Taliban, or possibly the Basque separatists, would be blamed. The blame had to be credible and reasonable. This would be accomplished by dropping off some "residue". The S1-V8 missile was designed to carry some "residue" for all of its missions. In this case, the residue was tell-tale materials left behind that would point a finger. The residue was an explosive trigger similar to one used in suicide bombings. The trigger would, of course, contain the fingerprints of a French dissident who has disappeared --- this disappearance also being the earlier work of a separate IOM assignment. As a result, the authorities would be kept busy looking for someone who no longer existed.

"Twenty minutes to target," was Greg's update. Around him were his teammates, each glued to their personal pair of computer terminals. One terminal was for messages and instructions. The other allowed them to observe progress from a remote camera on the S1.

Greg had the controls that flew the S1. However, the autopilot programming, along with the mapping software, controlled most of the mission and flight activities. Only in the case of an emergency, or in the event of a last minute change in plans, would Greg take over the controls.

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Dawn, working next to Greg, monitored the targeting and weapons launch systems. She was “built like an Ox,” as Greg often said. She was trained as a US Navy Seal and she had maintained her strength and build. Even though she was only 5’ 11”, she was a force to be reckoned with. Even Greg, with his 6’ 6” frame, thought the better of taking her on. However, in spite of her strength, she was soft spoken and very personable. Greg enjoyed spending time with her off work, as well as on.

Greg often referred to Dawn as being “her own kind of woman”. She was independent and free-thinking, but she was also wise enough to show sensitivity and dependence when it was appropriate. Her attitude was that there was “a time to lead and a time to be led,” and that an individual needed to know how to succeed in either environment.

Dawn had met Greg several years back when he was about fifteen. His father had been stationed at Hickam, AFB in Hawaii, and Dawn was stationed at Pearl Harbor. The two bases shared facilities and the active duty personnel would often visit each other’s restaurants or recreation facilities. Dawn was about ten years older than Greg, but he was always extremely impressed with her and they had become good friends. By the time Greg joined the IOM, Dawn had put in her twenty years with the Navy and was ready for retirement. So, when the need came up in the IOM to find someone with both the toughness of a seal and with highly developed analytical skills, Greg immediately thought of Dawn.

Approaching Dawn had to be done carefully. Greg had to ask her about her specific employment interests after her retirement. He told her he had a need for her specific skills, but there was a lot of secrecy involved and

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she would need to become a part of a clandestine secret society. Rather than becoming discouraged, Dawn became intrigued. She wanted to know more. Excited, Greg explained as much as he could without breaking the bonds of secrecy. Eventually Dawn became initiated and trained, and now she was Greg's right hand woman.

The other teammate on the S1 flying team was Alan, who monitored the surrounding communications systems and networks, to make sure there were no surprises. The IOM insisted on avoiding detection. If detected, they would immediately abort the mission. Alan was the true techie-geek of the group. He was an information manipulation genius and much to the dismay of those around him, he looked the role as well. He lived in a baseball cap, wore glasses, and had the token pocket protector in his shirt pocket where he kept his mechanical pencils. It was his abilities that had salvaged many a mission and both Greg and Dawn greatly respected these abilities.

Alan got involved in the IOM through his father. His father was a 33rd degree Mason, and he wanted his son to follow in his footsteps. Eventually, Alan also became a 33rd degree Mason. That's when he learned about the IOM and he, like Greg, wanted to get involved. Although he wasn't the James Bond type and initially the IOM was hesitant to accept him into their fold, Greg emphasized his organization's need to get a computer geek onto his team and he eagerly brought Alan on board.

"15 minutes," said Dawn.

"Mission hold," Alan blurted out. This meant he had heard something that may influence the mission, but not necessarily abort it. "I just received communication that

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Barjet didn't make it to the stadium. He's still en route. Our timing will need to be reset."

"What do you recommend?" asked Greg.

"Let's go up to fifty-thousand feet and circle until we know for sure he's there," suggested Dawn.

"I don't like that," came from Greg. "This area is high in air traffic. We'll get detected."

"If we get detected, then we abort," instructed Alan. "But let's at least try to wrap this up today. We may not get this good an opportunity for quite some time."

"Good enough." Greg took control and banked the S1 into a near vertical climb until he reached the desired altitude. He then maneuvered the S1 into a circle around the Riviera.

Suddenly Greg blurted out, "What's going on? My cameras went completely blank. I've lost visual and all my other sensors as well. It's as if the S1 completely disappeared from existence."

Alan went to work, performing his magic. Using satellites, he zoomed in on a visual of the area where the S1 was last reported. "There's a small airplane right in the vicinity where we were flying the S1." Using altitude detection sensors, Alan quickly estimated the flying altitude of the small aircraft. "And it's at the right height. I wonder if it crashed into us."

"I would have received some kind of indication if that was the case, like a free fall, or some noise. But not just total, sudden emptiness," blurted Greg, showing frustration in his voice. "This is really strange."

Suddenly and unexpectedly a message popped up on all three of their terminals: "THANKS FOR THE PRESENT. IF YOU WANT IT BACK, REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. WE NEED TO MEET!"