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The Reclaimers' Reprieve

DEWLOGIC

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CHAPTER ONE

Firm, over ranges he breathed, and perturbations clicking the rhythm of progress awakened his path. That was the nature of Brandon Nard's work. He moved, swiftly, quietly, against the brushes until he stood above the plains and inclined against a quiet corner. He rested briefly; listening to the sounds within the nature invested within the forested area, of anything plants, plants-eating animals, and that beyond it, of any other being human. He knew the art of listening, he knew it to be essential to life and death, and stood to tune into the greatest perturbation ever productive—nature all around him. It was restive.

His greatest perturbation was always working. But working as the day slowly delivered night was hardly routine. He worked, always, but mainly watched nights. And watching nights held a mysterious foreshadowing, a time, a place, all thrown out of balance, interloping purpose, before the achievement intended on his missions. In the hidden plains of the Peruvian high roads, the night was hardly soft, although it knew much silence for its own good.

He was on site in a chattered chopper, had walked half a mile on wooded routes to the village, blended in with the locals with ease on his camouflaged darker appearance. A good looking Caucasian will be too noticeable. Such, he slept in a rundown motel plagued with classless prostitutes. And had wasted his time searching for two dead end Intels. Frustrated, he had almost given the mission up for lost, until the cook's brother. It was of accord, unsolicited, paid for nevertheless. He always paid for intelligence, an ever beneficial incentive, although sometimes an erroneous one.

Brandon held on to caution. The brother had claimed his sister's life was his main motive and had begged for her to be extracted first, or at least left untouched, in exchange for the external security details. Inside, he was on his own. He was in the habit of keeping his word. Or doing everything he possibly can to do so. And the brother had promised the maid will do her best to drug the alcohol in the home to make sure some of the men on hand had too restful a night. She could never risk her food. It would always lead back to her.

But extracting the woman whose picture he was shown and the kidnapped boy he was contracted for without the chaos needed to achieve his mission will be difficult. And there was the narrative that the surrounding land was rigged with M9 explosives, always an accident waiting to

happen. He maintained his instincts for reasonable precaution. It was his nature, but had merely sat on the Intel for a few hours.

He perched on some green bushes surrounded by trees, and thought briefly of the Amazon rain forest. Driving downhill through the winded Brazilian roadways, chased, shot at by the source that put him in the same location he was in at the moment put some life in the tranquil settings around him. He needed a sign of life in the least, something to tell him he wouldn't be walking into a perfect trap. Instead he got an isolated surreal sense of upscale Peruvian normalcy.

The hill peaked architecture. And it was the oddity that reinforced his suspicions of western influence, one that gave him hope his Intel was right. It also confused him. The architect had been careful with its modest appearance. But Peruvian born rich citizens will hardly pick the location to build a life. It was a hideout hard to find, which once found, becomes an instant easy mark. One of those poor houses among the many would have been a difficult mark. There, he would have worried about collateral damage.

His suspicions grew momentarily. He could be wasting his time endangering his life, and he had already wasted too much of it. He was running out. The Qatari diplomat's son who was also running out of time may have. His severed head, packaged and hardly preserved, could be on route to his father.

The Dec 2051 US acquired Melina file, secrets Qatari intelligence gathered on Iran, could barely remain Top Secret for a month before the telltale signs set in. Two top Qatari officials assassinated, and five people kidnapped in exchange for Dr. Alassane Ahmad, the mathematician code writer and key holder to the necessary hit list embedded within the texts. Chaotic.

After the mathematician died in an explosion along with the key, the US no longer held interests. The anonymous kidnappers didn't change their asking price. And thus, two severed heads later, it was apparent the impossible deal could not be compromised.

Intelligence operations, socio-economic, political power and money, Brandon knew intimately, were integrated. He was ready when he got the call from the I.N.E., an international network of elite operatives. The agency was exclusive and hardly interfered with governmental agencies, but with the key holder dead, they no longer worried about governmental interference. I.N.E. was contracted for the extraction of a seventeen year old son of a Qatari diplomat whose life was also in jeopardy, and he was contacted.

The boy was a ploy, a cheap target derivative of the high security surrounding his father, disabling the ease of his murder. And everyone had given the boy up for dead. The ransom: the father's head.

While the father couldn't earn the ransom, he was willing to pay exorbitant fees to bring him

back home alive. Success in the mission will be of pride and joy to the I.N. E., whose reputation will earn them more generous clients within the Arab world.

He didn't have to succeed. But he wasn't one to give up too easily, if at all.

The more chaotic aspect was the dangerous one, one which troubled him more at the sight of the obvious, well hidden house. Intelligence gathered information that the I.R.O., International Rights Operatives, a highly secretive elite operatives headed by Malcolm Pearl, the Caucasian South African with the relievable limp were contracted for the murders and kidnappings.

The legitimacy of his limp, as well as his being the intelligent head behind I.R.O. was yet unproven. But the effect of the Agency the I.N.E. believed he founded was astounding. He had managed a level of elitism, efficiency and clandestine nature of operations unexpected, for continually havoc reeking purposes. They camouflaged freedom for all in the achievement of governmental or individual intelligence operations. They did it without any moral imperatives applied. Ownership of rights operated with whoever could afford their exorbitant fees.

The I.R.O. was to be reckoned with.

And the sight of the house, the solemn confidence around it, the technological security surrounding it, almost assured him of I.R.O. involvement.

The house sat on a hill, three floors halfway to its peak, ill spectacular, but quite efficient. From its base, marked by surrounding trees to the infrastructure that was the house were security measures that could get him noticed, and maybe, kill him in an instant. If he failed in his approach, he might as well take a sky dive from the top. He was already dead. The cook's brother made him aware of the infrared sensors surrounding the perimeter. The remotely triggered firearms subject to interior video detection worried him more. If he risked the alarm to make his way in, they'll be waiting.

He waited.

He was alone for the mission but hardly oddly disadvantaged. He hardly maneuvered risky missions in isolation but rather through the agency's hierarchical network of operatives. Highly skilled, high yield special operatives were paired with less effective ones. He chose partnership based on companionship rather than skills. Tyler Jordan was humorous, cheerful, and was always handy with lookout, entry pawn and general trickery. Those qualities minimized his risks, but he was conveniently MIA at the moment.

It sometimes happened. He could, after the fact, blame the short time he took to necessitate the mission, or he could come up with some cock and bull story about having been kidnapped and gang raped by a militant group of Peruvian women. He'll laugh. So will other agents. That would be

the end of the story. And if he died on the mission, who's to say Tyler Jordan wasn't the unsung hero.

"Being a lookout could kill an idiot," he often said. But he was smart. He knew when to minimize his risks. And such he was conveniently M.I.A.

Brandon was on a lonely mission.

He waited.

The Intel detailed a safe path for I.R.O. operatives as within location of the oddest tree. He waited merely a split second after the thought, before he moved, swiftly at first, haphazardly, in search of the oddest looking tree, but soon picked up pace. The perimeter was large, and he walked it twice before he discovered the oddity.

V marked the spot. Inverted. The insecure zone was below the triangular apex. A linear ascent by the apex should be the safe zone, he thought.

He waited.

And decided at some time around 2 a.m., he'll secure entry. The whistles rang his hears to attention some half an hour later, while deep in strategic thoughts, and he was on his feet, in an instant, vigilant.

They were those of a tall Caucasian male who believed himself alone momentarily, self-satisfied and half drunk. He was headed in the secure zone, and Brandon changed his plans then, drastically. This one must have missed the drugged alcohol bottles to take to the local bars, Brandon thought,

and followed. He stopped short just below the inverted triangular apex.

A scuffle could alert those inside and downing the stranger could mean losing the secured means of entry he would rather not do without. And as the stranger approached the security screen, he didn't debate his choice of weaponry. The strategic biosystemic weapon was highly questionable within high tech communities and available only within that same community to select highest bidders.

But as far as he was concerned, intellectualized morality had little purpose in manners of life and death. The S2 serial, a highly specified gradual release parallel flow restraining pro-tranquilizer was partially paralyzing, pain inducing, and depending on the localized point of entry, deadly.

Brandon gave the stranger two quick shots, one in each leg in rapid succession.

He wobbled briefly, unsteady on his feet and quickly stiffened, realizing he was going to come to a quick fall without the use of his legs.

And as he came to a paralyzing stop, Brandon rushed heartily up the hill.

He faced the stranger, his back to the entrance.

"Who the hell are you?" the stranger, dark haired and hazel eyed, was furious. His tone was guttural, yet un-pained.

Brandon spoke in a carefree manner.

"How'bout it? Some way to greet a fellow."

“What the hell did you do to my legs?” he asked, swinging his upper body, as he stared down frantically at his continuing immobile lower extremities.

“Now that’s more like the appropriate question. But if I were you, I won’t move a lot at the moment. Or a bit,” Brandon replied.

“What the hell do you want?” he asked in a more pained tone than the last.

Brandon took two steps towards him. “Do you suppose the contraction and relaxation of the walls of a heart is muscular?”

The stranger deepened his frown. “What?”

Brandon held his worried eyes. “If you remain still within reasonable terms, you’ll realize the S2 is immobilizing you slowly. What do you think will happen when it closes in on the thoracic cavity?”

Pained, the stranger closed his eyes, realizing the impacting extent of his unfortunate predicament.

Brandon continued. “What happens when the muscles surrounding your heart meets with paralysis.”

The stranger’s instinct was instant. He slowly raised the gun he held in his hand to Brandon’s head.

Brandon hadn’t been ill-aware of the weapon, but had calculated on talking to the stranger. The screened security panel in front of him assured him of the need.

Brandon leaned backward and raised his arms. “What if I told you this is a do-do or die situation?”

“Do-do or die? What the hell is that supposed to mean?” the stranger asked.

“You do for me, I do for me. You help me with what I want and I’ll make sure the paralysis does not get above your abdominal cavity.”

“Which is where?” he asked in the moment’s confusion.

Brandon moved closer to touch his abdomen. “There. Just below your heart.”

Angered at his helplessness, the stranger rushed his working upper body towards Brandon with considerable force.

And Brandon’s impeccable instincts moved him backwards instantly.

Unable to reach him and riddled of his lean, he began to swagger on immobilized footing.

Brandon steadied him.

Steady on his feet, he shrugged. “What does it matter? You’re already dead.”

Brandon studied the closed panel he suspected was a security screen by the doorway, and watched as it flipped backward to reveal the touch sensitive screen. And by every indication, he needed an iris scan.

“I bet we’ll need your eyes to get in,” Brandon said.

The pained stranger held a sarcastic smile. “Am I dying?”

Brandon shrugged. “Depends on whether and how fast you can iris-scan the security process.”

“It doesn’t matter if I’m dead,” the stranger replied.

“Yeah but it definitely could save your life. You’re not dead yet, you’re going on dead,” Brandon replied.

The stranger was silenced briefly. “Help me through will you? Or you’re going to be completely useless?”

Brandon lifted him towards the screen.

The stranger woke the screen up with his fingers, leaned forward while Brandon restrained his lean, and with a level of steadiness unexpected of his inadequate pained position, exposed his eyes for a few admirable seconds to the machine assigned to the task of ensuring security.

Brandon heard the click before the crack. The door was opened.

“You’re going to need to gouge my eyes out to get through the other door. Good luck getting that,” the stranger said.

Brandon squinted, studying the defiant stranger. One of I.R.O.’s, he thought. And then he believed him. Going in the house alone without a good survival strategy would probably kill him. He had survived a lot of nearly impossible missions, but he was always careful. He had to be. He released the man intentionally, briefly, to put the scare in him.

“Ah! Ah!” the stranger gasped.

And Brandon quickly steadied him. “You underestimate my capabilities stranger. I can be quite barbaric.” He held on to the stranger as tightly as he could and leaned forward to stare down the hill. “If the S2 immobilizes your center of gravity, you’ll lose your equilibrium...that’s not good. You’ll have a long nasty fall down, all the way down. And without your legs you can hardly maneuver protective or defensive mechanism can you now?”

The stranger quickened his breathing rate. He maintained his resolute conclusion. “You’re still dead.”

Brandon squinted, studied him. “But are you? If I wanted you dead I would have shot you in the chest. You’ll be dead without landing, a rush you would never have seen coming. So, you can consider me cautious, or maybe even nice.”

The stranger frowned. “What does that mean?”

“The S2 used is localized within a certain radius. It will never get to your heart.”

The stranger widened his pained eyes and then narrowed it very fast. He lunged, still on unsteady footing, with all the force he possessed, at Brandon.

Brandon held onto his arms firmly and steadied him.

“Your promise had no basis!” he yelled.

Brandon nodded. “But you’re alive...consider that repayment.” He leaned the stranger against the nearest wall. “There. You should stay out of the

line of fire.” He dashed into the building and watched the door click shut behind him.

CHAPTER TWO

The interior was quiet, suspiciously so, becoming a rather crooked walk based on the structuring of the house. The corridor was large and long, yet crooked, as if it were some elongated part of a short house. And he didn't travel it with ease. He walked slowly, scanning for the remote camera location.

He found an upward moving stairway, and it was too open, too tempting at the moment not to be dangerous. He decided not to take it in the meantime, and continued down the crooked corridors.

And as he bended a slight enclosure and faced a straight corridor he met the dogs. The Pythora, a deadly breed of modernized dogs must have seen him before he saw them. They were headed

straight for him and once too close to him would tear him into pieces, as there were three of them to handle. And that was a lot momentarily.

He reasoned for a stealthier option than gunning them down one after the other, and wagered the possibility quickly. If the dogs were internally wired with QF, Quiet Faint, an electric pulsation device legalized to control the highly violent adapted dog breeds by incapacitating the motor reflexes wirelessly. It derails the motor circuits, and consequentially the vocal cords, discouraging them from barking. And if administered for a long period of time sends them into shock, shut down, and fatality.

He had to assume, given the energetic appearances of the violent breed, that they were adopted with QF. And with their approach it became apparent that the extremely violent breed didn't do much barking; they were engineered to attack and destroy, not bark and alert.

He had the universal remote controller for the QF devices and hardly considered rethinking his next action. He watched them, as night may watch the resurgence of darkness, of death. Their gallant strides rushed him as he triggered the QF Silencer. And the initiating dark predator breed leaped its stride in midair flight towards him before the QF effect penetrated its body. The three dogs chained an immediate effective whimper and like flees they fell.

He held on to the trigger to ensure either comatose or death for the duration of his mission, before he rushed to face the large and long corridor again, wondering if it wasn't designed as a death trap; past the first exit, a stairway. If his entry wasn't compromised yet, which he assumed it already was, by the inevitable hidden surveillance any safe house should have, it was about to be.

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