

Thirty years ago, **Tom Clancy** was a Maryland insurance broker with a passion for naval history. Years before, he had been an English major at Baltimore's Loyola College and had always dreamed of writing a novel. His first effort, *The Hunt for Red October*, sold briskly as a result of rave reviews, then catapulted onto the *New York Times* bestseller list after President Reagan pronounced it "the perfect yarn." From that day forward, Clancy established himself as an undisputed master at blending exceptional realism and authenticity, intricate plotting, and razor-sharp suspense. He passed away in October 2013.

Mike Maden grew up working in the canneries, feed mills, and slaughterhouses of California's San Joaquin Valley. A lifelong fascination with history and warfare ultimately led to a Ph.D. in political science, focused on conflict and technology in international relations. Like millions of others, he first became a Tom Clancy fan after reading *The Hunt for Red October*; he began his published fiction career in the same techno-thriller genre with *Drone* and continued with the sequels, *Blue Warrior*, *Drone Command*, and *Drone Threat*. Maden is honored to be "joining The Campus" as a writer in Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan, Jr., series.

TOM CLANCY

LINE OF SIGHT

ALSO BY TOM CLANCY

FICTION

The Hunt for Red October
Red Storm Rising
Patriot Games
The Cardinal of the Kremlin
Clear and Present Danger
The Sum of All Fears
Without Remorse
Debt of Honor
Executive Orders
Rainbow Six
The Bear and the Dragon
Red Rabbit
The Teeth of the Tiger
Dead or Alive (with Grant Blackwood)
Against All Enemies (with Peter Telep)
Locked On (with Mark Greaney)
Threat Vector (with Mark Greaney)
Command Authority (with Mark Greaney)
Tom Clancy Support and Defend (by Mark Greaney)
Tom Clancy Full Force and Effect (by Mark Greaney)
Tom Clancy Under Fire (by Grant Blackwood)
Tom Clancy Commander in Chief (by Mark Greaney)
Tom Clancy Duty and Honor (by Grant Blackwood)
Tom Clancy True Faith and Allegiance (by Mark Greaney)
Tom Clancy Point of Contact (by Mike Maden)
Tom Clancy Power and Empire (by Marc Cameron)

NONFICTION

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Armored Cav: A Guided Tour Inside an Armored Cavalry Regiment
Fighter Wing: A Guided Tour of an Air Force Combat Wing
Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit
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with General Fred Franks, Jr. (Ret.) and Tony Koltz

Every Man a Tiger: The Gulf War Air Campaign
with General Chuck Horner (Ret.) and Tony Koltz

Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces
with General Carl Stiner (Ret.) and Tony Koltz

Battle Ready
with General Tony Zinni (Ret.) and Tony Koltz



TOM CLANCY
LINE OF SIGHT
MIKE MADEN

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Europe today is a powder keg and the leaders are like men smoking in an arsenal. . . . A single spark will set off an explosion that will consume us all. I cannot tell you when that explosion will occur, but I can tell you where. Some damned foolish thing in the Balkans will set it off.

—ATTRIBUTED TO OTTO VON BISMARCK
AT THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN, 1878

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Jack Ryan: President of the United States

Scott Adler: Secretary of state

Mary Pat Foley: Director of national intelligence

Robert Burgess: Secretary of defense

Jay Canfield: Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

Arnold Van Damm: President Ryan's chief of staff

THE CAMPUS

Gerry Hendley: Director of The Campus and Hendley Associates

John Clark: Director of operations

Dominic "Dom" Caruso: Operations officer

Jack Ryan, Jr.: Operations officer / senior analyst

Gavin Biery: Director of information technology

Adara Sherman: Operations officer

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Bartosz “Midas” Jankowski: Operations officer

Lisanne Robertson: Director of transportation

OTHER CHARACTERS

Dr. Cathy Ryan: First Lady of the United States

Kemal Topal: Turkish ambassador, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tarik Brkić: Commander, Al-Qaeda in the Balkans

Shafiq Walib: Captain, Syrian Arab Army

Aslan Dzhabrailov: Lieutenant, ground forces of the Russian Federation

Aida Curić: Owner, Happy Times! Balkan Tours

Emir Jukić: Happy Times! chief operating officer and tour guide

Dragan Kolak: Officer, Intelligence-Security Agency (OSA-OBA), Bosnia and Herzegovina



SEVEN CORNERS, VIRGINIA

Dr. Guzman rubbed her tired eyes. She became a doctor to heal the sick, not to file endless reports. But here she was, typing away after hours.

Again.

No matter. It was the price she paid to run the free clinic for the poorest of the poor in the area, mostly immigrants.

She checked her watch. The delivery was late. As soon as it arrived, she'd finish up this last budget report and head home for some needed shut-eye.

A noise in the back room startled her. She glanced up from her laptop, listening.

Nothing.

Probably just the rats again, she told herself. *Gross.*

She made a mental note to pick up some more traps at Lowe's tomorrow on her way in.

She settled back down into her spreadsheet, her bleary eyes

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focused on the empty columns she still needed to fill with numbers. Her fingers froze.

She smelled the acrid tang of sweat and dope before she felt the blade against her throat.

The man stood behind her. Grabbed a fistful of her hair.

“The drugs are in the safe. I can’t open it,” she said in Spanish, her first language.

The voice behind her laughed. “Don’t want the drugs, bitch,” he said in English. “We gonna party.”

Guzman whispered a prayer and cursed her stupidity. She’d left the back door unlocked for the delivery. That meant no alarm. That’s how he got in.

And with no alarm, no help was on the way.

The man grabbed her shoulder and spun the chair around. He stood over her, flashing a gold tooth in a nicotine-stained smile. His bare, ropey arms were slathered in tattoos, but it was his shaved skull that shocked her. His entire head, from the neckline up, was a tangle of blue ink, with MS splashed across his throat and 13 emblazoned on his forehead.

She recognized him. He had come in last week, a wreck. Hep C and gonorrhea. He gave a name—Lopez—but no ID. She assumed it was fake. Didn’t matter. He was sick, she was a doctor. She treated him. Even if he did give her the chills.

But now?

“You don’t have to do this,” she said, steeling her voice.

“Don’t have to. Want to.” He smiled. He stepped closer, thrusting his belt buckle close to her face. He laid the blade flat against her cheek. “So do you. If you want to live.”

“Not like that.”

A soft whistle from behind.

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The gangbanger whipped around, pulling a chrome Ruger .357 out from beneath his shirt. Fast. A real gunslinger.

But a larger hand was faster. It grabbed the four-inch barrel and yanked it up toward the ceiling, then outward and away.

Fast, but not fast enough.

Tendons snapped in the banger's wrist, but his index finger smashed against the cocked trigger. A magnum round fired with a deafening roar into a ceiling tile, superheating the barrel in the big man's right hand. He didn't let go.

The big man's left hand crashed into the banger's jaw, buckling his knees. He crumbled to the floor, out cold.

It had all happened in a flash.

Dr. Guzman didn't have time to scream, let alone help. She stared wide-eyed at the man standing in front of her now. Six-one, one hundred and ninety pounds of lean muscle. Black hair, blue eyes.

Still in shock, all she could manage, was, "Who are you?"

The man tucked the Ruger into his waistband.

"My sister Sally sent me. With those." He pointed at a backpack on the floor a few feet away, where he had set them down. "Antibiotics. Said you were running short."

"Dr. Sally Ryan?"

"Yeah."

"Then you must be Jack Ryan."

He shrugged and smiled.

"Junior."



IDLIB, SYRIA

The Syrian fighter stood on the roof of the apartment building, shielding his aging eyes from the western sun as he watched the children playing in the street seven floors below. They sweated and laughed in the long shadows of the fading light, swarming after the ball like bees chasing a dog, ignoring the calls of their anxious mothers to come in and clean up. He smiled.

Kids everywhere, the same.

The truce was a mercy. “Thanks be to God,” he whispered to himself. He checked his watch, a nervous habit. By the fading light he knew the muezzin’s voice would ring out over the loudspeakers, calling for the *maghrib*.

He had raged when his battalion commander, an Iraqi, first announced the truce with that butcher Assad and his paymasters, the godless Russians. But the last nine weeks had given them time to rest and regroup with smuggled weapons, food,

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fuel, cash. Now they were ready for anything up close, and their Stinger missiles kept the dreaded Russian jets and helicopters out of the skies. The senior Al-Nusra commanders were all stationed here; even the emir was living in Idlib, just three blocks away. This was the safest place in Syria, as long as the truce lasted.

The war seemed far away now. A distant, painful memory. So much blood. And for what? Life was better than death, was it not?

He craved a cigarette, even after all these years, but cigarettes were *haram*, and men in his unit had been executed for smoking them. But perhaps a strong coffee after *maghrib*, he thought, his eyes tracking the black-clad women scurrying into the street, clapping their hands and shouting, trying to herd the laughing children back to their homes.

The *adhan* began, a strong voice calling the faithful. Its familiar words warmed his soul. The mosque would be full tonight.

He picked up his rifle and headed for the stairs. Perhaps the war was indeed over and these children would finally know peace.

Thanks be to God.

NINE MILES SOUTH OF IDLIB

A bead of sweat trickled down the side of Captain Walib's face despite the A/C unit blasting overhead. The Syrian captain stared at the monitor in front of him, his right hand poised near the master launch button.

The monitor verified the ready state of the fire-control computers on the six TOS-2 Starfire launch vehicles stationed

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nearby, each composed of a seventy-tube box missile launcher fixed on a heavily armored T-14 Armata tank chassis, and all linked to his command console.

He and Major Grechko sat at their stations inside the cramped BMP-3K armored personnel fighting vehicle, Walib's mobile command post. Technically, the Russian major was only an adviser on today's operation. But in reality Grechko was evaluating Walib's combat command capabilities along with the new TOS-2 Starfire system.

Walib stole a quick glance at Lieutenant Aslan Dzhabrailov sitting near the doorway. The young, broad-shouldered Chechen was the platoon leader of the commandos guarding his unit. There was a fierce intelligence in the man's pale gray eyes and a well-used ten-millimeter Glock on his hip. The Chechens were savage, brutal fighters—a breed apart, the best in the war, at least on his side. Dzhabrailov was a man to be feared.

The major checked the GLONASS receiver—the Russian version of GPS—one last time, along with the laser guidance beam. “Targeting confirmed. Free to fire, Captain.”

Walib smoothed his mustache with his thumb and forefinger, hesitating.

“Something wrong, Captain?” Grechko asked.

Walib was a Syrian patriot. He had no problem killing terrorists, especially foreign ones. The Syrian “civil war” was fought by everyone but Syrians these days. But they were all just proxies for the Americans and Russians, who happily sacrificed the Syrian people on the altar of their superpower ambitions.

He hated them all, especially today.

“There are no civilians in Idlib, Captain,” Grechko said. “Only Al-Nusra bandits, the women who breed them, and the

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children who become either bandits or breeders. This is a war of demographics. We must fight accordingly.”

This wasn't the war Walib had volunteered to fight. He never imagined the terrible weapons under his command would be used to slaughter innocents.

But if he disobeyed Grechko's order, the Russian would pull his nine-millimeter Grach pistol out of its holster and splatter his brains against the BMP's steel hull, and simply order one of Walib's lieutenants in the other vehicles to fire.

Nothing would be accomplished except that Walib would be dead in exchange for a few minutes of respite for the doomed civilians.

He hated himself. He hated this war.

But he hated dying needlessly even more.

“Just checking the spin on the number-eleven gyro,” Walib said. A convenient lie. “Good to go.”

“Then you're free to launch. Proceed at once.” Grechko's drooping bulldog eyes narrowed.

“Yes, sir.” Walib flipped the safety cap on the launch button and jabbed it before he could change his mind.

Instantly, the French-designed, solid-fuel motors on the 122-millimeter rockets fired. The roar was terrifying, like the shout of God himself, even inside the idling command vehicle. Each half second, another nine-and-a-half-foot-long missile screamed out of its tube. A full-throated chorus of death.

Thirty-five seconds later, all 420 missiles had launched, lofting nearly fifteen tons of thermobaric munitions into the air. The TOS-2 master fire-control computer coordinated the launch timing and trajectories so that all of the warheads arrived on target simultaneously, avoiding warhead fratricide and increasing the explosive effects.

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Grechko stared greedily at his monitor displaying a live video feed from the Israeli-designed Forpost-M aerial drone circling high over Idlib, which also provided the laser guidance beam for the missiles.

“Any second now,” Grechko said, grinning. “Time to burn out those cockroaches.”

But Walib didn’t want to see it. He was already outside, barking orders to his men, who were scrambling to prep for rapid “shoot and scoot” redeployment, the only defense against counter-battery fire, real or imagined.

Walib marched through the billowing clouds of exhaust and debris still swirling in the air, rage and shame welling in his eyes.

Lieutenant Dzhabrailov stood outside the command vehicle, studying the Syrian captain with keen interest.

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The laser-guided TOS-2 Starfire rockets struck inside a kill box two hundred eighty meters square—about eight densely populated city blocks. A much tighter pattern was possible with the new guidance system, but it would have resulted in far fewer casualties.

The cascade of crashing warheads released clouds of combustible fuel mixed with finely powdered aluminum, PETN high-explosive, and ethylene oxide gas into the open streets. The incendiary clouds also penetrated through the cracks and crevices of nearly every mosque, apartment building, and shop in the eight-block area. Basements, attics, kitchens, toilets, and bedrooms filled with the toxic mixture in nanoseconds, leaving nowhere to hide.

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Timed scatter charges of conventional explosives within the warheads detonated next, igniting the explosive fog into a blazing plasma cloud. The few people standing outside and nearest to the points of impact were instantly incinerated.

They were the lucky ones.

The shock wave produced by the explosion caused the first surge of destruction, producing thousands of pounds of pressure per square inch—enough to crush the hull of a World War II submarine. Those who weren't initially killed by the striking force of the overpressure waves suffered terribly. Limbs were torn away or broken; alveoli and bronchioles ruptured in the lungs; emboli formed in coronary and cerebral arteries; bowels perforated; inner ear structures were crushed; eyes were ripped from their sockets.

The crushing force of the expanding overpressure waves smashed walls, broke windows, shattered doors. The city itself became a form of shrapnel, hurling shards of burning brick, glass, wood, and iron through the fiery winds, lacerating soft tissues and exposed flesh.

Yet this still wasn't the worst of it.

The powdered aluminum in the expanding plasma cloud slowed its burn rate, resulting in the total consumption of the atmospheric oxygen. This created both a massive vacuum and a fireball of nearly 3,000 degrees Celsius—twice the melting point of steel. But it was the vacuum that caused the most destruction.

The buildings and other structures still standing held no protections against the fast-forming negative pressure, equal to its opposite in energy and violence, generating fiery, hurricane-force winds. Shrieking survivors were crushed beneath tons of crumbling debris, buried alive in basements, crucified beneath

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falling rafters and collapsing floors. Anyone still alive in the rubble spent their last few minutes suffocating to death, gasping like carp for oxygen that no longer existed.

There were no more laughing children in the streets.

The last of the thermobaric munitions burned out just as the explosions of gas mains, petrol tanks, and other urban flammables began, stoking the burning rubble and the still-living bodies beneath into an inferno of unquenchable fire.

Within seconds, thousands had died, and thousands more suffered. Within a few hours, many of the wounded survivors would perish as well.

It was the explosive equivalent of a tactical nuclear device, but entirely conventional, and perfectly legal, according to international treaties.

It was also Hell on Earth.



THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON, D.C.

Jack Ryan, Jr., spooned up the last of the Burgundy beef stew, earthy and rich, scraping the bowl as he fished out the last piece of savory meat.

“More, son?” Dr. Cathy Ryan asked.

“Always, but two helpings are enough,” Jack Junior said. This was his favorite meal, and his mother made it better than anybody. It was just Jack and his parents tonight—the twins were on an ecological field trip to the Virginia wetlands for the next three days and his older sister was on ER duty at the hospital, so she couldn’t join them.

Jack and his parents were seated at the round table in the first family’s private dining room, formerly known as the Prince of Wales guest room before Jacqueline Kennedy converted it to its current function for her own young family. Cathy Ryan re-decorated it in a transitional Craftsman style, favoring the

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clean lines and sturdy functionality of an original American art form.

“I hope you saved room for the apple pie,” she said, standing.

“Are you kidding me?” Jack said. His mother’s apple pie was his all-time favorite dessert. His suspicions grew. “What’s the occasion?”

“Does a mother need a special reason to cook for her son?” she said.

“When a mother is as busy as you are, yes, she does need a special reason.”

“I haven’t had a chance to see you in forever, and I know you’re off to Europe in a few days. I knew the only way I could get you over here was to bribe you with a home-cooked meal. Besides, it’s something I love to do.” She glanced at her husband, a pair of reading glasses perched on the end of his nose, his mind buried in a file folder on the dining room table. “Isn’t that right, honey?”

Senior grunted. “What? Yeah. Dinner was great.”

Cathy fake-frowned. “Hey, Bub. What’s more interesting than us?”

Senior kept staring at the file. “I’d tell you, but you don’t have the clearance.”

Cathy Ryan leapt out of her chair and plopped into her husband’s lap, wrapping her arms around his neck. She leaned in close to his ear, whispering heavily. “Vee hav vays of making you talk, Mr. President.”

Senior laughed, shut his file, and pulled off his glasses, wrapping his arms around his wife’s slender waist. The two exchanged a glance. He whispered in her ear. She giggled and swatted him. A lot of years, a lot of love. They were as steady and solid as the Stickley oak table they all sat around.

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Junior watched them canoodling like a pair of frisky teenagers. The most famous power couple in the world. His father was arguably the greatest president of his generation, exercising selfless leadership on behalf of the national interest through every crisis in a town notorious for ruthless, self-aggrandizing ambition. His mother was a brilliant physician in her own right, and bore the responsibilities of being First Lady with dignity and grace. She was his father's rock.

But to Jack, they were just Mom and Dad.

He felt like a little kid again sitting around the familiar table, but in a good way. Hard as they worked, family always came first for them. Whatever strength or honor or virtue he possessed, Jack knew, he got it from these two. He envied them. He and Yuki had to put a hold on their budding romance; their schedules and careers were both too demanding, and Skype just wasn't cutting it. It was becoming a painfully familiar pattern in his personal life. He already felt the void of Yuki's absence, brief though their affair had been. His mother and father were married by the time they were Jack's age. Hell, John Clark, the eternal warrior, was married and had been for many years, and one of his daughters was married to Ding. Even Jack's cousin Dom and Adara were together. Nobody on The Campus seemed to suffer performance-wise by being in a stable relationship.

So what was wrong with him?

All three Ryans stood and cleared the table, hauling the dishes to the kitchen. Senior made a pot of decaf coffee while Cathy served up the pie and Jack fetched the vanilla-bean ice cream out of the freezer. It was a small kitchen but perfectly adequate for the First Family on the few occasions they cooked for themselves. With some of the finest chefs in the country

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available around the clock, and the two senior Ryans working more than full-time jobs, cooking at home was a rare luxury.

Ten minutes later, Junior scraped up the last piece of Granny Smith apple from his plate and forked it into his mouth, savoring the sweet and tangy bite—just the way he remembered it.

“I wish you’d shave that awful beard,” his mother said. “I miss your face.”

“Just keeping it real,” Jack said. He didn’t tell her that he changed his looks just to keep people guessing. He was, after all, the son of these two famous people, and because they had worked hard to keep their kids out of the limelight, he wasn’t nearly as well known as some might think.

But he wasn’t completely anonymous, either, so he took the extra step every six months or so to comb his hair in another direction or grow it out long, or let a beard or mustache do the camouflage work. Sometimes he even wore contacts to change the color of his eyes.

After the last ragged op, he thought about going for the clean-cut look of a stockbroker, which he sort of was. But no facial hair made him feel a little exposed, even if it was sometimes safest to hide in plain sight. He decided to keep the beard, but trimmed it close.

Senior’s attention was buried back in his classified file folder.

“Another piece of pie?” Cathy asked her son.

“No, thanks. I’m stuffed.” Junior smiled. “It was perfect. Thank you.” He sipped the last of his coffee and set his cup down. “Well, I need to get going. Got a plane to catch tomorrow.”

“You’re off to the former Yugoslavia, right?” Cathy asked.

“London first, then to Ljubljana, Slovenia.”

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"I've heard it's beautiful over there."

"It's on the southern border of Austria, near the Adriatic coast. You get the Alps and the ocean for one low price."

"Send pictures, for sure. I'm curious, though. What financial interest does Hendley Associates have over there?"

Senior again glanced up over the glasses perched on his nose. His wife didn't know about The Campus—the "black side" special ops team that Jack also served with. All she knew was that Jack was an analyst with the "white side" financial firm, Hendley Associates, which funded The Campus special operations through its highly successful investments and fiduciary services.

"There's a company over there that wants to offer an IPO on the NASDAQ, and they hired us to do the preliminary financials."

"Sounds . . . boring," Cathy said.

"Numbers tell a story, if you know how to read them," Senior offered. He looked at Jack. "Financial analysis has its own particular rewards in that regard . . . and risks."

Junior smiled at the double entendre. Gerry Hendley was in charge of the personnel decisions, and he didn't always inform the President when his son was deployed on a dangerous op. Neither did Jack.

"The only risk in Slovenia, from what I hear, is eating too much cream cake."

Jack's father smiled. "Good to know." He returned to his reading.

Only a handful of people knew that it was the President's idea to create the firm, or that it was his friend and former senator, Gerry Hendley, who ran both sides of the company.

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The Campus was a private intelligence organization created to carry out black ops missions that regular government agencies couldn't or wouldn't do, serving at the President's discretion.

In a perfect world, The Campus shouldn't have to exist, but the dysfunctional swamp of unscrupulous self-interest known as Washington, D.C., was considerably less than perfect, even in the estimation of its slimiest inhabitants. In the President's mind, D.C. was one giant Hungarian cluster dance, with occasional interruptions of clarity and purpose, but only when the national interest was properly communicated to and understood by the preening peacocks on the Hill.

"So, I was wondering if you might do me a favor while you were over there," Cathy said.

"Sure. Name it."

Cathy stepped over to a chair in the corner, where a brown leather folder was perched. She picked it up and carried it back to the table. She pulled out a file folder and set it down in front of Junior before sitting down herself.

"I was cleaning out some of my old medical files from Johns Hopkins and came across this."

Jack opened the file dated 1992. Inside the stiff green cover was a picture of his mother, twenty-six years younger, in her white doctor's coat, holding a little girl in her arms, with luminous blue eyes and blond hair, grinning at the camera. Well, one blue eye. The other was heavily bandaged.

"Her name is, or was, Aida Curić. She was just three years old at the time, when they brought her to me for eye surgery for a shrapnel wound. It was during the war."

"Which war?" Jack asked. "From what I remember reading, Yugoslavia had several after the breakup in 1991."

Senior closed his file. "Your mother is referring to the

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Bosnian civil war, when Serbs, Croats, and Muslims fought one another for independence—and survival. You know the term ‘ethnic cleansing’?”

Jack nodded. “Sure. One group of people trying to exterminate another one. Evil stuff.”

“Well, Bosnia is where the term was invented. Civil wars are the worst. It was the bloodiest conflict on European soil since World War Two—even worse than the Ukraine invasion a few years ago. By some estimates, one hundred and forty thousand Yugoslavians perished because the UN and the Europeans dragged their feet. It took NATO airstrikes to finally end it.”

“If my two history wonks can spare a moment, I’d like to finish my story about Aida, if that’s okay.”

“Sorry,” both Jacks said.

“Anyway, by some miracle I managed to save her eye and her vision. After the war her parents took her back home to Bosnia, but they stopped writing to me shortly afterward.” Cathy began to tear up. “I’ve seen those blue eyes of hers in my dreams a thousand times, and I can’t tell you how many candles I’ve lit for her over the years. Sometimes when I stared into your sister, Sally’s eyes, I saw hers. I don’t know why Aida had such an effect on me, but she did, and I finally had to let her go. But seeing this file again yesterday stirred something up in me and I can’t stop thinking about her.”

Cathy opened up her leather folio again and produced a sealed envelope. “I was wondering if you had any spare time while you were over there, if you could find a way to get down to Sarajevo and look for her and give her this for me.”

She handed it to Jack. Only Aida’s name written in his mother’s graceful and meticulous hand was on the blank envelope.

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“Did you try Googling her for an address?” Jack asked.

Cathy shrugged. “Sure, but Curic is a common name, and it wasn’t very helpful. Facebook wasn’t any better—or Twitter, for that matter.”

“The FBI is the world’s greatest detective agency, and you’re married to the boss. Why not call them?”

“This is personal business. I’m not going to ask my husband to deploy public resources for my personal benefit.”

“Well, I’m not on the government payroll, so I’m happy to do it. I’ve always wanted to visit Sarajevo. I hear it’s an amazing city with a lot of history.”

Senior nodded. “Yeah, a lot of history, for sure.”

As President Durling’s national security adviser, Senior had seen the photos and read the firsthand accounts of the atrocities on all sides when the wars broke out in 1991. He’d urged Durling into action, but the Europeans told the Americans to back off, promising to handle things on their end. Three years later, a suicidal Japanese pilot slammed into the U.S. Capitol building during a joint session of Congress, killing hundreds, including President Durling, the justices of the Supreme Court, and many others, soon followed by a new Middle East war breaking out. By then, there wasn’t anything the newly sworn President Ryan could do about the Yugoslavia situation. Still, many had suffered and died needlessly, and Senior still felt guilty that the United States hadn’t tried to stop it unilaterally when it first began.

Senior repeated himself, almost in a whisper. “A lot of history.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind, dear?” Cathy asked her son. “I hate to be a bother.”

“It’s not a bother at all, Mom. It’s going to be a lot of fun.”