

TOM CLANCY

**TRUE FAITH
& ALLEGIANCE**

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MARK GREANEY

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK

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The man sitting at the restaurant with his family had a name familiar to most everyone in America with a television or an Internet connection, but virtually no one recognized him by sight—mainly because he went out of his way to keep a low profile.

And this was why he found it so damn peculiar that the twitchy man on the sidewalk kept looking at him.

Scott Hagen was a commander in the U.S. Navy, which certainly did not make one famous, but he had earned his notoriety as the captain of the guided missile destroyer that, according to many in the media, almost singlehandedly won one of the largest sea battles since the Second World War.

The naval engagement with the United States and Poland on one side, and the Russian Federation on the other, had taken place just seven months earlier in the Baltic Sea, and while it had garnered the name Commander Scott Hagen significant

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recognition at the time, Hagen had conducted no media interviews, and the only image used of him in the press featured him standing proudly in his dress blues with his commander white officer hat on his head.

Right now, in contrast, Hagen wore a T-shirt and flip-flops, cargo shorts, and a couple days' stubble on his face, and no one in the world, *certainly* no one in this outdoor Mexican café in New Jersey, could possibly associate him with that Department of the Navy-distributed photo.

So why, he wondered, was the dude with the creepy eyes and the bowl cut standing in the dark next to the bicycle rack constantly glancing his way?

This was a college town, the guy was college-aged, and he looked like he could have been drunk. He wore a polo shirt and jeans, he held a beer can in one hand and a cell phone in the other, and it seemed to Hagen that about twice a minute he glared across the lighted patio full of diners and over to Hagen's table.

The commander wasn't worried, really—more curious. He was here with his family, and his sister's family, eight in all, and everyone else at the table kept talking and eating chips and guacamole while they waited for their entrées. The kids had soft drinks, while Hagen's wife, his sister, and his brother-in-law downed margaritas. Hagen himself was sticking with soda because it was his night to drive the clan around in the rented van.

They were here in town for a club soccer tournament; Hagen's seventeen-year-old nephew was a star keeper for his high school team, and the finals were the following afternoon. To-

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morrow Scott's wife would drive the rental so her husband could tip back some cold brews at a restaurant after the game.

Hagen ate another chip and told himself the drunk goof-ball was nothing to worry about, and he looked back to the table full of his family.

There were many costs associated with serving, but none of them were more important than time. The time away from family. None of the birthdays or holidays or weddings or funerals that were missed could ever be replaced in the lives of those who served.

Like many men and women in the military, Commander Scott Hagen didn't see enough of his family these days. It was part of the job, and these few times when he could get away, get his own kids someplace with their cousins, were few and far between, so he knew to appreciate the night.

Especially since it had been such a tough year.

After the battle in the Baltic and the slow sail of his crippled vessel back across the Atlantic, he'd put the USS *James Greer* in dry dock in Norfolk, Virginia, to undergo six months of repairs.

Hagen was still the officer in command of the *Greer*, so Norfolk was home, for now. Many in the Navy thought dry dock was the toughest deployment, because there was a lot of work to do on board, ships did not regularly run their air conditioners, and many other creature comforts were missing.

But Scott Hagen would never make that claim. He'd seen war up close, he'd lost men, and while he and his ship had come out the unquestionable victors, the experience of war was nothing to envy, even for the victorious.

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Russia was quiet now, more or less. Yes, they still controlled a significant portion of Ukraine, but the Borei-class nuclear sub they'd sent to patrol off the coast of the United States had allowed itself to be seen and photographed north of the coast of Scotland on its return voyage to port in Sayda Inlet, north of the Arctic Circle.

And the Russian troops that had rolled into Lithuania had since rolled back over Russia's borders to the west and to the east, ending the attack on the tiny Baltic nation.

The Russians had been embarrassed by their defeat in the Baltic, and it would certainly surprise everyone in this outdoor Mexican restaurant in New Jersey to know that the average-looking dad sitting at the big table under the umbrellas had played a big part in that.

Hagen was fine with the anonymity. The forty-four-year-old was a pretty low-profile guy, anyway. He didn't hang out with his family in his uniform and regale them with tales of combat on the high seas. No, right now he goofed off with his kids and his nephews, and he joked with his wife that if he ate any more chips and guacamole before dinner, he'd sleep in tomorrow and miss game time.

He and his wife laughed, and then his brother-in-law, Allen, got his attention. "Hey, Scotty. Do you know that guy over there on the sidewalk?"

Hagen shook his head. "No. But he's been eyeing this table for the past minute or two."

Allen said, "Any chance he served under you or something?"

Hagen looked back. "Doesn't look familiar." He thought it

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over for a moment and then said, "This is too weird. I'm going to go talk to him. See what's up."

Hagen pulled the napkin from his lap, stood up, and began walking toward the man, moving through the busy outdoor café.

The young man turned away before Scott Hagen could make it halfway to him, then he dropped his beer in a garbage can and walked quickly out onto the street.

He crossed the dark street and disappeared into a busy parking lot.

When Hagen got back to the table Allen said, "That was odd. What do you think he was doing?"

Hagen didn't know what to think, but he did know what he needed to do. "I didn't like the look of that guy. We'd better leave. Take everybody inside to the restaurant, use the back door, and go to the van. I'll stay behind and pay the bill, then take a cab back to the hotel."

His sister, Susan, heard all this, but she had no clue what was going on. She hadn't even noticed the young man. "What's wrong?"

Allen addressed both families now. "Okay, everybody. No questions till we get to the van, but we have to leave. We'll get room service back at the Hyatt."

Susan said, "My brother gets nervous if he's not sailing around with a bunch of nukes."

The *James Greer* did not carry nuclear weapons, but Susan was a tax lawyer, and she didn't know any better, and Hagen was too busy to correct her because he was in the process of grabbing a passing waiter to get the bill.

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Both families were annoyed to be rushed out of the restaurant with full plates of food on the way, but they realized something serious was going on, so they all complied.

Just as the seven started moving toward the back door, Hagen turned and saw the young man again. He was crossing the two-lane street, heading back toward the outdoor café. He wore a long gray trench coat now, and was obviously hiding something underneath.

Hagen had given up on Allen's ability to manage the family, and Susan wasn't proving to be terribly aware, either. So he turned to his wife. "Through the restaurant! Run! Go!"

Laura Hagen grabbed her daughter and son, pulled them to the back door. Hagen's sister and brother-in-law followed close behind with their two boys in front of them.

Then Hagen started to follow, but he slowed, watched in horror as the man on the sidewalk hoisted an AK-47 out from under his coat. Others in the outdoor café saw this as well; it was hard to miss.

Screams and shouts filled the air.

With his eyes locked on Commander Scott Hagen, the young man continued walking into the outdoor café, bringing the weapon to his shoulder.

Hagen froze.

This can't be real. This is not happening.

He had no weapon of his own. This was New Jersey, so even though Hagen was licensed to carry a firearm in Virginia and could do so legally in forty other states, he'd go to prison here for carrying a gun.

It was of no solace to him at all that the rifle-wielding ma-

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niac ahead was in violation of this law by shouldering a Kalashnikov in the middle of the street. He doubted the attacker was troubled that in addition to the attempted murder of the one hundred or so people in the garden café in front of him he'd probably also be cited by the police for unlawful possession of a firearm.

Boom!

Only when the first shot missed and exploded into a decorative masonry fountain just four feet to his left did Scott Hagen snap out of it. He knew his family was right behind him, and this knowledge somehow overpowered his ability to duck. He stayed big and broad, using his body to cover for those behind, but he did not stand still.

He had no choice. He ran toward the gunfire.

The shooter snapped off three rounds in quick succession, but the chaos of the moment caused several diners to knock over tables and umbrellas, to get in his way, even to bump up against him as they tried to flee the gardenlike café. Hagen lost sight of the man when a red umbrella tipped between the two of them, and this only spurred him on faster, thinking the attacker's obstructed view could give Hagen a chance to tackle the man before getting shot.

And he almost made it.

The attacker kicked the umbrella out of the way, saw his intended victim charging up an open lane in the center of the chaos, and fired the AK. Hagen felt a round slam into his left forearm—it nearly spun him and he stumbled with the alteration to his momentum, but he continued plowing through the tables.

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Hagen was no expert in small-arms combat—he was a sailor and not a soldier—but still he could tell this man was no well-trained fighter. The kid could operate his AK, but he was mad-eyed, rushed, frantic about it all.

Whatever this was all about, it was deeply personal to him.

And it was personal to Hagen now. He had no idea if anyone in his family had been hurt, all he knew was this man had to be stopped.

A waiter lunged at the shooter from the right, getting ahold of the man's shoulder and shaking him, willing the weapon to drop free, but the gunman spun and slammed his finger back against the trigger over and over, hitting the brave young man in the abdomen at a distance of two feet.

The waiter was dead before he hit the ground.

And the shooter turned his weapon back toward the charging Hagen.

The second bullet to strike the commander was worse than the first, it tore through the meat above his right hip and jolted him back, but he kept going and the shot after that went high. The man was having trouble controlling the recoil of the gun. Every second and third shot of each string were high as the muzzle rose.

A round raced by Hagen's face as he went airborne, dove headlong into the man, slamming him backward over a metal table.

Hagen went over with him, and both men rolled legs over head and crashed to the hard pavers of the outdoor café. Hagen wrapped his fingers of his right hand around the barrel of the

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Kalashnikov to keep it pointed away, and it the hot metal singed his hand, but he did not dare let go.

He was right-handed, but with his left he pounded his fist over and over into the young man's face. He felt the sweat that stuck there, soaking the man's hair and cheeks, and then he felt the blood as the attacker's nose broke and a gush of red sprayed across his face.

The man's hold on the rifle weakened, Hagen ripped it away, rolled off the man, heaved himself up to his knees, and pointed it at him.

"*Davai!*" The young man shouted. It was Hagen's first indication this shooter was a foreigner.

The attacker rolled up to his knees now, and while Hagen shouted for him to stay where he was, to stop moving, to put his hands up, the man reached into the front pocket of his trench coat.

"I'll *fuckin'* shoot you!" Hagen screamed.

A long knife appeared from the attacker's coat, unsheathed, with a six-inch blade, and he charged with it, a crazed look on his blood-covered face.

The kid was just five feet away when Hagen shot him twice in the chest. The knife fell free, Hagen stepped out of the way, and the young man windmilled forward into the ground, knocking chairs out of the way and face-planting into food spilled from a table.

The attack was over. Hagen could hear moans behind him, screams from the street, the sound of sirens and car alarms and crying children.

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He pulled the magazine out of the rifle and dropped it, cycled the bolt to empty the chamber, and threw the weapon onto the ground. He rolled the wounded man on his back, knelt over him.

The man's eyes were open—he was conscious and aware, but clearly dying, as compliant now as a rag doll.

Hagen got right in his face, adrenaline in control of his actions now. "Who are you? Why? Why did you do this?"

"For my brother," the blood-covered man said. Hagen could hear his lungs filling with blood.

"Who the hell is your—"

"You killed him. You murdered him!"

The accent was Russian, and Hagen understood. His ship had sunk two submarines in the Baltic conflict. He said, "He was a sailor?"

The young man's voice grew weaker by the second. "He died . . . a hero of . . . Of the Russian . . . Federation."

Something else occurred to Hagen now. "How did you find me?"

The young man's eyes went glassy.

"How did you know I was here with my family?" Hagen slapped him hard across the face. A customer in the restaurant, a man in his thirties with a smear of blood across his dress shirt, tried to pull Hagen off the dying man. Hagen pushed him away.

"*How*, you son of a bitch?"

The young Russian's eyes rolled back slowly. Hagen balled his fist and raised it high. "Answer me!"

A booming voice erupted from near the hostess stand at

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the sidewalk. "Freeze! Don't move!" The naval officer looked up and saw a New Jersey state trooper with his arms extended, pointing a pistol at Hagen's head. This guy didn't know what the hell was going on, only that, in a mass of dead and wounded lying around the nearly destroyed restaurant, some asshole was beating the shit out of one of the injured.

Hagen raised his hands, and in doing so, he felt the wounds in his side and arm.

His brain went fuzzy, and he rolled onto his back. Stared up at the night.

Behind him now, over the shouts and screams of shock and terror, he was certain he could hear his sister crying loudly. He could not understand this, because he thought he'd given his family the time they needed to run.

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Unlike his famous father, Jack Ryan, Jr., did not have any fear of flying. In fact, he rather trusted airplanes—certainly he trusted them *much* more than he trusted his own ability to fly through the air without one.

His relative comfort with aviation was at the forefront of his mind now, chiefly because in mere moments he planned on throwing himself out the side door of a perfectly functioning aircraft, into the open blue sky, 1,200 feet above the Chesapeake Bay.

Jack had packed his own parachute, following the instructions and oversight of Domingo Chavez, the senior operative in his clandestine unit, and he felt certain he'd packed it exactly right. But his mind wasn't working in his best interest now. While he needed his brain to reinforce his certainty that everything would go off without a hitch, he couldn't get out

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of his head the fact that on his last trip out of town, he'd forgotten to throw his favorite pair of running socks into his carry-on.

He thought he'd done a fine job packing *that* day, too.

Not the same thing, Jack. Stuffing a carry-on has no relationship to packing a damn parachute.

His imagination seemed intent on giving him an ulcer this morning.

Jack was in the middle of skydiving training, not as part of a military or even a normal civilian-based course, but a course developed by the cadre at Jack's employer. Jack worked for The Campus, a small but important off-the-books intelligence organization; it was populated with former military and intelligence types, a few of whom were seasoned free-fall experts.

And it was decided that Jack Ryan, Jr., needed to pick up this critical skill, because although he had begun his work at The Campus in the position of intelligence analyst, in the past few years his job had morphed into an operational role. Now he wore two hats; he might spend weeks or months at a time working in his cubicle unraveling the accounting practices of a corrupt world leader or a terrorist organization, or he might find himself kicking in a door at a target location and engaging in close-quarters combat.

Jack's life did not go wanting for diversity.

But he didn't have time to think about the ironic course of his life right now. No, now he began quietly reciting his checklist once he stepped out of the aircraft in exactly—

Someone at the front of the plane shouted now. "Ryan! Four minutes!"

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In exactly four minutes. “Step out, head forward, arms away, body flat, knees slightly bent. Arch back, pull the rip cord, ready yourself for the snap, and check for good canopy.”

He mumbled his extraordinarily important to-do list softly as he sat in the side-facing seat that ran along the fuselage of the plane.

This wasn't his first solo jump. He'd started out with ground school two weeks earlier, then moved outside the classroom to begin leaping off a slow-moving pickup with his gear, and tumbling onto a grass strip. After this he jumped tandems for a couple of days, riding through the sky attached to Domingo Chavez or strapped to his cousin and the third member of the Campus operational team, Dominic Caruso. Chavez and Caruso were both free-fall experts, trained in both HALO (high altitude, low opening) and HAHO (high altitude, high opening), and they put him through his paces in the beginner portion of his training.

Jack did what was asked of him, so he moved quickly on to static line jumps—Ding Chavez referred to these as “dope on a rope”—where the chute was pulled open automatically as soon as he left the aircraft.

The next stage in his skydiving course involved low-level jumps into water, where he pulled his own rip cord, but did so immediately upon exiting the aircraft—these Chavez called “hop-and-pops.”

He'd been through five hop-and-pops so far; they all had gone to plan, as evidenced by the fact Jack was not lying face-first, dead in some field in Maryland. And while he was by no

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means a natural, nor had he even graduated to his first free fall yet, he'd earned a few attaboys from John Clark, director of operations for the small unit.

This in itself was quite an accomplishment, because John Clark knew his stuff—before The Campus, Clark had been a Navy SEAL, a CIA paramilitary officer, and the leader of a NATO Special Operations antiterrorism force, and he had performed more covert and combat jumps than all but a few men on earth.

Even though Jack had been doing hop-and-pops for the past two days, this morning's jump would be very different from the others; because as soon as he hit the water he would swim to a nearby anchored yacht and join up with the other two men on the team, already on board. Together they would perform a training assault on the vessel, which was filled with a Campus cadre performing as an opposition force.

With just a few minutes before his jump, Jack looked across the cabin of the Cessna Grand Caravan at the two other men who would be involved in today's exercise. Dominic Caruso was head to toe in black—even his parachute harness, his goggles, and helmet. His chest rig was filled with thirty-round nine-millimeter magazines, and he wore a SIG Sauer MPX submachine gun with a silencer strapped behind his right shoulder.

Jack knew that the mags for Dom's sub gun and for the Glock pistol on his hip were filled with Simunitions—bullets that fired a capsule full of paint instead of lead, but bullets nonetheless, which meant they still hurt like hell.

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Clark and Chavez's mantra was "The more you sweat in training, the less you bleed in battle." Jack understood the saying, but the truth was he'd bled in training many times, and he'd bled in real fights as well.

Jack was decked out in much the same gear that Caruso and Chavez wore, with a couple of notable exceptions. First, Jack wore swim fins strapped tight on his chest. He would put them on his feet when he hit the water. And second, the two men sitting across from Jack wore MC-6 parachute systems, special rigs outfitted with the SF-10A canopy designed for U.S. Special Forces that would allow them to fly great distances and land with precision, even giving them the ability to back up in the air.

Jack's parachute, on the other hand, was much a more basic T-11 model, giving him very limited mobility. He'd fall at nineteen feet per second and land pretty much where his aircraft's velocity, the wind, and gravity sent him.

The other two guys were going to hit right on the deck of the boat, while Jack simply had to hop and pop and make sure he didn't miss the vast waters of the Chesapeake Bay directly below the aircraft. Jack was still in the "training wheels" stage, so he'd have to swim to meet up with the other men to take down the boat. It was a little embarrassing having to swim to the target, but he knew exactly *zero* other beginners to the world of skydiving ever incorporated mock combat assaults into their jumps on their second week of training, so he didn't feel too much like a lightweight.

Ding Chavez sat next to Caruso, facing Jack, and right now he wore a cabin headset so he could communicate with

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the flight crew, the regular pilot and copilot of The Campus's Gulfstream G550 jet. Helen Reid and Chester Hicks were slumming, flying the much less powerful and much less high-tech Cessna Caravan, but they both enjoyed today's change of pace.

Dom Caruso noticed that Chavez was in communication with the cockpit via the headset, so he leaned over to talk confidentially with Jack, speaking into his ear. "You good, cuz?"

"Hell, yeah, man." They pumped gloved fists, Jack doing his best not to show his unease.

Jack felt he pulled it off, because Caruso said nothing about Jack having a pasty white face or jittering hands. Instead, Caruso double-checked to make sure Chavez had his headphones on and couldn't hear Dominic. Then he leaned forward to Jack again.

"Ding says we are facing an unknown number of opposition at the target, but between you, me, and the lamppost, there are going to be five bad guys on that yacht."

Jack cocked his head. "How do you know that?"

"Process of elimination. Look at the people we have in The Campus who could possibly be drafted into shooting it out against us. Adara will play the role of the kidnap victim, she let that slip yesterday. Clark, obviously, will lead the OPFOR. He'll be down there with a gun. That leaves our four security guys; Gomez, Fleming, Gibson, and Henson." The Campus contracted well-vetted former military and intelligence assets to serve as facility security personnel. They were all ex-Green Berets or ex-SEALs. Additionally, Gibson and Henson had served with the CIA's Global Response Staff, a tier-one

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security service that protected Agency installations around the world. All four men were in their fifties but as fit as Olympic athletes and tough as nails, and they had been friends of Chavez's and Clark's going back many years.

In addition to site security, the four also helped out with training from time to time, as they were all experts with firearms, edged weapons, and even unarmed combat.

Jack said, "You could be right, but Clark has thrown curve balls at us in the past. A couple guys from the Campus analytics shop who used to be shooters might be down there helping out. Mike and Rudy, for example? They were both Army infantry."

Caruso smiled. "They were Rangers, I'll grant you that. But Rudy called me first thing this morning from the office. He's thinking about buying my truck, and he asked me to leave the keys under the seat so he could go by my place and take it for a spin on his lunch break. He said Mike would come along with him."

Jack tried to think of others involved in their organization who might have driven the two and a half hours from the office in Alexandria, Virginia, to play the role of bad guys this morning. "Donna Lee was FBI. She knows her way around a submachine gun."

Dom said, "Adara told me Donna tweaked her knee at CrossFit on Wednesday. She's on crutches for the next couple weeks."

Jack smiled now. "You've really thought this through, haven't you?"

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“You and I run into enough assholes who want to shoot us out there in the real world. I’m not looking to take a Sim burst to the junk today. I’ve got plans this weekend. I’ll game the system if I have to.”

Jack laughed now, glad for the diversion that kept him from thinking about his parachute packing skills and the jump to come. “What do you have planned for the weekend?”

Dom looked like he was considering whether or not to answer the question, but just then Ding pulled off his headset and Dominic leaned back away from Ryan.

“What are you two knuckleheads conspiring over here?”

Both men smiled but made no reply.

Chavez raised an eyebrow. “Two minutes out, Jack. You’ll be dropped three hundred yards or so from the boat, at the stern, to avoid detection. Obviously it’s daytime, and any sentry in the real world looking aft would see you, but this is training. The OPFOR on deck knows to keep their eyes in the boat. You get a free pass to swim up, as long as you don’t make it too obvious.”

Dominic said, “Yeah, don’t dog-paddle up in a big yellow rubber ducky.”

Jack gave Chavez a thumbs-up.

“Once you’re out the hatch, Helen will take us up to six thousand and we’ll jump from there, sail right onto the deck. We’ll spot targets on the way down and try to take them out on landing. By the time we hit the deck and strip away our harnesses, I want you climbing up the sea stairs ready to stack up with us.”

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“You got it,” Jack said. This was going to be an arduous swim. The waters of the bay looked choppy from the window behind him.

Just then, Chester “Country” Hicks climbed out of the co-pilot’s seat and moved back to the cabin door. He flipped the lever and slid the big hatch open, filling the already noisy cabin with the locomotivelike drone that came along with the air rushing by the aircraft moving at ninety knots.

Hicks held up a single finger, indicating one minute till jump, and Jack pulled himself to his feet, along with Chavez. Jack and Dom pounded fists again, and then Jack walked closer to the open hatch.

Chavez leaned close into Jack’s ear as he moved up the cabin with him. “Remember . . . Don’t forget.”

Now Jack cocked his head, leaned into Chavez’s ear. “Don’t forget what?”

“Don’t forget anything.” Chavez smiled, slapped the younger man on the back, and pointed toward the open door. “You’re up, Jack. Time to fly like a piano!”

Jack fought a bout of queasiness, waited for the signal from Country, and then leapt out.

Seven minutes later Jack bobbed in the water at the sea stairs at the stern of the *Hail Caesar*, a seventy-five-foot Nordhavn yacht owned by a friend of Gerry Hendley's, director of The Campus. The yacht was anchored off Carpenter Point, at the northern aspects of the Chesapeake Bay, a few miles east of the mouth of the Susquehanna River.

Jack was tired from the swim, and he blamed the Susquehanna, as well as the North East River, which flowed south into the deeper water here, for messing with his stroke. He hadn't been wearing diving gear, just the fins and a snorkel/dive mask rig, so he'd done the majority of his swim on the surface. The waves forced him to work for every yard, and they also caused him to drink a substantial amount of seawater down his snorkel, and now while he stowed his excess gear on the sea stairs and readied his silenced submachine gun, he gagged a little.

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He checked his watch and saw he'd made it just in time. And then, as if on cue, his waterproof headset came alive with Ding Chavez's whispering voice. "One is in position."

Caruso then came over the net. "Two. On time. On target."

Jack's transmission wasn't as macho as his cousin's. "Three. I'm here. Headin' up."

"Roger that," Chavez said. "We're right above you."

Jack climbed the sea stairs and saw Ding and Dom in their black gear. Their chutes had been rolled and stowed under a thick spool of line on the main aft deck, and just a few feet in front of them, Dale Henson, one of their security men and a member of the OPFOR, sat with his back against the starboard-side gunwale. A pair of red splotches adorned the breast of his khaki jumpsuit, and a submachine gun lay on the teak deck next to him.

Henson had taken a candy bar out of his pocket and was now eating it, looking up at the three assaulters with no pretense of playing dead for the duration of the exercise.

He winked at Jack, then rolled his eyes back, jokingly feigning taking two gunshots to the chest.

"Cute," whispered Chavez. Then he said, "Fleming is on the fly bridge. Dom stitched him in the back before he knew we were overhead."

Jack nodded. Two OPFOR were down with minimal noise, and neither had had time to broadcast a warning on their radios.

Silently the three Campus operatives formed up in a tactical train and moved up the starboard-side deck toward the door to the main salon.

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Ding was in front, Dominic right behind him, and while Jack brought up the rear, he saw Dom hold up his right hand and extend three fingers. It was Dom's covert way of letting his cousin know there were only three more to deal with in the opposition, based on the theory he put forth in the Cessna.

At the hatch to the main salon Ding stopped and waved Jack forward. He ducked below the little portal, pulled an HHIT2—a handheld inspection tool. It was a mini-video camera with thermal capability and a long, flexible neck that ran between the lens and the device itself. Jack bent the neck, then slowly raised the eye up to the portal while looking at the cell-phone-sized monitor. The half-inch-wide camera showed Jack the scene just inside. There, the other two training cadre, Pablo Gomez and Jason Gibson, sat on chairs, watching TV. Both men had eye protection on, pistols on their hips, and sub guns positioned within reach.

Jack held two fingers up for Chavez and Caruso.

While he watched, Gomez reached for the radio on the table next to him, spoke into it, and then adopted a look of concern. Jack assumed he hadn't received a reply from Henson or Fleming on deck.

Gomez dropped the walkie-talkie, launched from his chair, and went for his SMG, and Gibson took the hint, doing the same just an instant behind.

Jack took his eye out of the device, stowed it in a drop bag hooked to his belt in the small of his back, and hefted his MPX. As he did this he turned to Chavez, and in an urgent whisper he said, "Compromised!"

Ding reached for the latch, Jack readied his SIG, flipping

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the selector lever to fully automatic fire, and then Ding turned the latch and pushed the door open with his foot.

Jack fired quick controlled bursts at the two men, dropping Gibson first with three rounds to his well-passed chest rig, then taking Gomez in the same area just as his MP5 began to rise at the threat. Both men fell back into their chairs, put their guns in their laps, and raised their hands.

Jack moved quickly into the room, swung his weapon to cover the blind spots, and was immediately passed by Chavez and Caruso, both of whom began rushing for the ladder that led down to the lower deck.

Jack caught up to the others. They all hurried now, because while Jack's weapon was suppressed, it still made significant noise, and there was a hostage on board this yacht who would be imperiled by the sounds of the thumping full-auto fire.

They cleared staterooms quickly and efficiently; all three men worked together for each room instead of splitting up. Then, at the third of the four rooms, Dom pushed down the latch silently and shoved open the door. Inside, Adara Sherman sat on a bed with a mug of coffee in her hand and a magazine in her lap.

She didn't even look up from her magazine. "Yay, I'm saved." The comment was said with playful sarcasm.

Adara was the transportation manager for The Campus, among other duties, but today Dom knew that she was here to play the role of the hostage. Still, no one knew if she'd been booby-trapped or armed with a pistol and orders to fire on her rescuers in a mock Stockholm-syndrome scenario, so Dom ap-

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proached her with his weapon shouldered and pointed at her chest. He did this with an apologetic look on his face, and it took him out of his game for a moment, just long enough to miss clearing the head off to Adara's right.

His mistake came to him suddenly, but just as it did he heard his cousin's voice from behind, back in the passageway. "Contact!"

The door to the remaining stateroom flew open, and John Clark stood there with an MP5 submachine gun at his shoulder and goggles over his eyes. He opened fire, but managed to squeeze off only a single round before Domingo Chavez shot him with a three-round burst to the chest. Ding knew his rounds would strike in the thick old canvas coat Clark wore over his two layers of thermal Henleys, minimizing the pain from the impact of the Simunitions.

Clark had been shot by Sims many times before, and Chavez knew he was no fan.

In the stateroom with the hostage, Dom heard Chavez call out that he'd ended the threat in the passageway, and he lowered his weapon a little, feeling certain he and his team had eliminated all the shooters in the opposition force. Then he turned back to Adara to search her, just as he would any recovered hostage.

While he did this, Jack covered him from the doorway between the stateroom and the passageway, but Jack didn't know the tiny head with the toilet, sink, and shower on the left had not yet been cleared by his cousin.

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With his back to the head, Caruso did not see the pistol that emerged from behind the shower curtain there, and the shower was just out of Jack's sightline.

Only when the crack of a pistol filled the room did both Dom and Jack know they'd screwed up. Dom took the shot straight between the shoulder blades, pitched forward onto Adara, and then caught a second round before he could raise his hands, signifying he was down.

Jack Ryan, Jr., burst into the little stateroom, dove past Dom and Adara on the bed, and fired a long, fully automatic burst into the head, desperate to end the threat before the hostage was also hit.

His rounds slammed into the shower curtain, shredding it just like they were real metal-jacketed bullets.

"Owww! Okay! Ya' got me!" The voice had a distinctive Kentucky drawl, and instantly Jack's blood went cold.

Gerry Hendley, former *senator* Gerry Hendley, director of The Campus Gerry Hendley, stepped out of the shower now, covered in red splotches and rubbing a vicious purple welt growing by the second on the side of his neck. "Holy hell, Clark was right. Those little bastards *hurt!*"

"Gerry?" Jack croaked. Hendley was in his late sixties, and other than maybe some quail hunting, he was *not* a shooter. He'd never even been present for any of the Campus training exercises, much less taken part in one.

Jack could not fathom why the hell he was here. "I am so sorry! I didn't know—"

John Clark called out from the passageway, "Cease fire! Exercise complete! Make your weapons safe!"

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Jack safed his weapon, thumbing the fire selector switch, and let it hang free on his chest.

Adara launched from the bed now, ripped off her safety glasses, and rushed over to Gerry. “Mr. Hendley, let me get you topside to my med kit. I’ll get the worst of those cleaned and bandaged.”

Jack tried to apologize again. “I’m sorry, Gerry. If I had any idea you were—”

Hendley was in obvious pain, but he waved the comment away. “If you had any idea I was in the OPFOR, this wouldn’t have been good training for you, would it? You were supposed to shoot me.”

“Uh . . . Yes, sir.”

Gerry added, “Of course I would have appreciated a little better marksmanship. I wore a padded vest because John assured me I’d catch a round or two right in the chest, and that would be that.”

Jack had tagged Gerry in both arms, his neck, chest, stomach, and right hand. The hand and the neck bled openly, and Gerry’s shirt was torn at the arm.

As Adara led him out of the stateroom and back to the ladder up to the main deck, Gerry Hendley looked at Clark in the small passageway. He said, “You certainly made your point in one *hell* of a dramatic fashion, John.”

Jack looked up at Clark now and saw the always unflappable sixty-seven-year-old looking utterly embarrassed.

“Sorry, Gerry. It shouldn’t have gone down like that, no matter what the circumstances.”

Jack sat next to Dom on the bed. Both young men looked

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like students in the principal's office just after getting caught skipping class.

Chavez leaned against the wall in the stateroom. "Damn, Jack. You just sprayed your employer at close range with a dozen rounds of Sims traveling five hundred feet per second. He's going to feel like he tripped into a hornet's nest for the next week."

"What the hell was he doing here in the first place?" Dom asked.

John Clark entered the master stateroom and stood by the door. "Gerry was here because I wanted him to see for himself. The Campus cannot operate safely in the field with only three operatives. We've been lucky lately, and that luck is not going to last. Either we get some new blood in the operational ranks to help us out or we severely curtail the types of missions we take on."

Chavez nodded. "I'd say we illustrated the point. Dom's dead, two in the back. You didn't clear the head?"

Dom said, "I came into this expecting five bad guys. When the fifth went down, I dropped my guard."

"Which means?" Chavez asked.

Dom looked at him. He didn't try to excuse his error at all. "Which means I fucked up."

Clark wasn't happy about how things went today, and he didn't hide his feelings. "That started well enough. Jack's jump was good, I watched it with my binos. You all three hit the boat with authority, got down to the hostage quickly, and used your speed, surprise, and violence of action to take down five opposition. But the only thing that matters in combat is how

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you finish, and you lost one-third of your number in that drill. That's a fail in anybody's book."

No one replied to this.

Clark added, "Clean all your gear, return it to the lockers at The Campus, then all three of you have the weekend off. But you all have homework. I want to bring two new members into The Campus's operational staff, and it's your job to each come up with one candidate. Monday morning we'll meet and discuss. I'll vet the prospects, talk to Gerry, and make my recommendations."

Caruso said, "One of the security staff might work."

Clark shook his head. "All men with young families. All men who have served decades already. Ops is a twenty-four-seven, three-sixty-five job, and the guys up on the deck aren't the right fit."

Jack agreed with Clark's assessment—they needed new blood, and they had to look outside The Campus to find it. Clark had retired from operational status a couple years back, and Dominic Caruso's brother, Brian, had been on the team before that, but he was killed on an op in Libya. He'd been replaced by Sam Driscoll, who then died in Mexico. Since then, it had been just the three operators.

Jack decided he'd think long and hard this weekend about who he would like to bring into the unit to help out, because the hot spots of the world weren't getting any cooler, and it was clear that with the depleted numbers, The Campus wasn't as strong as it needed to be.

Ten minutes later Jack was back on deck. He'd apologized to Gerry again, and again Gerry waved off the young man's

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concern, except now he did it covered in bandages with a cold bottle of Heineken in his hand.

Jack wanted to throw up. Gerry Hendley had just recently allowed Jack to return to The Campus after spending six months on probation for disobeying orders, and now this.

Jack knew this wasn't exactly the best way to thank Gerry for showing his trust in him.