

Entering the Republic



*ENTERING THE
REPUBLIC*

E.A. Maynard

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CHAPTER ONE

Fire was burning everything around me and I could not see any way out. I ran to my bedroom and back to the living room looking for anything that could help. Looking at the window, I decided I could climb out and deal with the two story drop to the ground. But the windows would not open. As I struggled with it, I noticed my family and everyone I cared for standing down below waving.

What kind of sick joke is this, why are they not helping me? I could not think of anything else till the ceiling covered in fire came crashing down towards me. My screams must have been louder than I have ever screamed.

Just before the flames of the ceiling crashed on top of me, I sat up in the front seat of a Ford F-150. Mr. Stone was driving and he gave me a look as I annoyed him. Even looking around and seeing a major city all around me and traffic heavier than I had ever been in, it took me some time to realize it was only a dream.

Looking around again to see if I could tell where we were, I had no clue. Honestly, I did not expect to know. It was not that my life up to this point had took me out of Ohio much. It's kind of was that way for a lot of people I had known.

"We are in Virginia, just outside of DC. We are going to the office where you can talk to Mr. Folk and he will make the final decision what to do with you. Maybe he will think you're too much of a bother and kill you." Mr. Stone smiled after the last part and looked as if he wanted to laugh. I was not sure since I had come to the conclusion, he was an uptight ass hole. On the other hand, he did decide not to kill me.

It was not long from then that we pulled into a parking garage that had three levels. The top level where we parked had a walkway bridge that connected to a tall white building with lots of glass. It must have been early in the morning. The sun was just coming up and washing away the night.

Mr. Stone lead me to an elevator and we went up to an

office. the entrance had double glass doors trimmed with metal and a logo with no name. I don't know why but watching Mr. Stone grab the bar running from top to bottom of the door and pull it open; I thought how heavy the doors look.

Once we got in, the lobby looked nice. It was not what I expected. There were pictures of soldiers on the walls and one wall had a recessed gun case. It made me smile seeing a P-90 in the case. I knew that gun and had mine in the back of seat of Mr. Stone's truck.

To get out of the lobby, we walked to a door that was about five feet from the gun case. The door looked like any other wood door I had seen, but the lock was something out of a TV show. I watched a card be swiped over the front of box that had a keypad on top of it. A light turned yellow but turned green after some numbers were punched into it. Then I got told to open the door.

That door was heavier than any other wood door I had used. Walking down a hallway, I was told that were in something called stage one. The door to enter had a solid three inch thick metal plate down the middle of it and if someone types in the wrong code to get in after swiping their card, two armed guards will come check out what is going on.

We passed cubicles and some offices lining the wall. It was a depressing feeling. These people spent the whole day not seeing the outside while some asshole director or manager talks down to them for a power trip. This was also my assumption. That is until I meet the Office Director. He acted as if he was trying to be humble, but he also tries to give the impression he was in charge of everything that happens.

Mr. Stone told me after we got rid of him, he was in a crappy marriage and took a job four hours away from his house so he could get away from his wife. They also will not put anyone with kids to work under him. He would treat them poorly because he could not have any.

We came to another door with Cameras, another key card and pin, and a fingerprint scanner. From what was suggested, the guards don't ask if they come to this door. It was made clear that I should not test these guards. They are the guys that did not seem to be all there in the head but were good soldiers. Four of these guards were always on duty.

Now we were in stage two. its ways easy to see the difference. The main room did not have cubicles but had six offices in the center of the room and three rooms along the wall that had the door we came through. In the center of the wall with all the windows was a single office. The name tag read "Mr. Folk" and it was clear that he was the man in charge.

As we walked to his office, people standing at some tall tables giving me a not so friendly look. These guys looked as they were used more for their muscle and not as much for what they had in their head. I would have guessed they had seen or done some horrifying things.

After seeing the guys in the open area, I expected Mr. Folk to look rough too, but he was an average size guy with no scares or tattoos. He did not look to have any unwanted fat on him. If I would make a bet on who would win in a fight, I would bet on him over me.

As I sat down, Mr. Stone walked out of the office and closed the door behind him. Mr. Folk leaned in towards me and said "Did you know that this morning, Scott Bearman was declared dead. The report is saying that a group out of Detroit is expected for the murder. Do you know why?" He got up and walked over to a wet bar he had in the corner.

I went to answer him, but he started talking again. "I am aware that your two friends made a deal to save themselves. they provided information about the people you dealt with in Ohio and the group in Michigan you sold the guns too. From Mr. Stone's inside guy, there is enough information and evidence that will lead to a lot of arrest."

There was not much that came to my mind, but I said, "Oh shit". I did not notice that Mr. Folk was standing by a wall with guns hanging on it till that moment. The number of guns on that wall would have made anyone I knew drool. I would of too, expect the thought that he might use one of them on me. That gave me a different feeling. That is when I got up and had my hands up.

He told me to sit down and explain what I did. So, I told him. "I paid my lawyer to make a deal that would keep them out of trouble. Once I knew that I would be leaving and everything would be hitting the fan, I had them go to my lawyer." I was going to keep going, but Mr. Folk stopped me. He walked down his wall of guns

looking at them. He told me that my actions had destroyed years of work for their client. I built up a network of dealers, girls, gangs, & thugs to make lots of money for everyone. Now everything would have the FBI, Ohio Attorney General, and God knows who else getting involved.

I reached in my pocket and put a few sheets of paper on his desk. I was happy to see him walk away from the guns and back to his desk. When he sat back at his chair, he reached across the desk and took the pages. While looking at the pages, he wanted to know where they came from. I explained that I pulled them out of my book with all my information before giving it to my friend. Mr. Folk has a creepy smile. It must be something he does not do too often because nothing about it looked natural.

While putting the papers in his desk, they told me about the business I was about to enter. The company is currently known as Republic Incorporated. The list of small companies under their umbrella help to show they are just any other company. The division I was sitting in was for protection services and Military support. I found that interesting but had yet to see how I fit into the company. That was till I was told that was as far as the public saw.

The oldest part of the company went back to mid evil times. It started as a group that would secretly remove anyone a king or queen would want gone. They would not touch a king or a queen at that time. From there, they grew more powerful and began to work on changing the path governments were on. I was even told how they had put socialist in charge of some countries to have them collapse.

They ran a company in eighty countries under different names, but they work together to keep the world going as they had planned. I would now be part of that group. The fact that I was the first in over a hundred years to join without a family connection or trained from birth was an odd thing to hear.

Mr. Stone and Mr. Folk were part of the family line. They both had been trained to have certain skill sets as soon as their parents could figure out what that was. The whole thing seemed a bit strange to me.

Since I would become a new bloodline as they said, the only way out is an approved retirement or Mr. Stone likes to say

found naked and dead on the side of the road. He must like doing that to people. He told me about several times he had to dispose of people and he would do that.

I knew we'll enough from what Stone told me, if I don't join, he was ordered to put a bullet in my head. That was not an option I wanted to choose. So, I agreed to everything I was offered. I was sent to human resources after that. I had to walk out of stage two and back in stage one where I was directed to Human Resources.

Walking down the hallway in my jeans with holes and a tee-shirt, people dressed up in suits walked past me and giving me a funny look. I looked so out of place it was not funny. I was happy to reach the door for Mrs. Holly Wolfe. She waved me in as soon as she saw me. Mrs. Wolfe was a pretty lady in her late thirties. When she stood up to greet me, she had nice legs, long light brown hair, and a wonderful smile. It was also hard to miss the ring on her finger when she reached her hand out to shake my hand.

Once we got the how do you dos and small talk out of the way, she asked for my past identity and my new identity. That felt strange, but considering I was filling out paperwork to become a member of a secret society, what should I expected. This whole week had been strange. I went from a small-town guy who use to run a region for the mob. Then before I left Ohio with Stone, I killed someone I once considered a friend. Now I am sitting at a desk learning to sign as Thomas Norris as Mrs. Wolfe creates a file for Mr. Norris.

After filling two blank sheets of paper with my new signature and putting the final version on a bunch of forms. Mrs. Wolfe told me that from that moment on, I should never use the name Scott Bearman. My code name would be just Bearman and only her or people from stage two would know that. She smiled and told me that Mr. Stone was waiting at the entrance of Stage two.

I was back in the hallway walking around the cubical farm. I could see the people at their desks wearing khakis and dress shirts or the girls wore a nice dress. The one thing they all had in common was none of them seemed happy to be there.

It did not take me long to get back to the door for stage two and Mr. Stone. I was led back into the large open space and

directed to a small conference room along the wall. Walking into the room, it was plain as could be. There was no pictures, plants, or plugs. The room only had a four foot by six-foot wood table surrounded by metal chairs. A speaker phone sat in the middle of the table. The phone made me think about how it looked like a spider as I pulled out a chair to sit down.

The phone had boxes attached with small cables going back to the phone. I started to play with one of the boxes when Mr. Stone and Mr. Folk came in the room. Mr. Folk told me to put down the receiver box and pay attention. When they sat down, they put their guns on the table. I think I surprise them by reaching down to my ankle and pulled my .380 from its holster. Putting it on the table, Mr. Stone asked how long I had that on me.

Before I answered, Mr. Folk told me that putting our guns on the table show that we all are not there to fight. It was a tradition to put your weapon on the table. I got another ten-minute lesson on the traditions I would not have to follow.

After that, I was told what the plan they had for me. It was made clear that I would be Mr. Stone's shadow. My training would start with a fact-finding mission for a congresswoman in DC. After that, I would be going under training in fighting and defense, anti-interrogation, and something about how to use poisons.

We discussed about my future with the Republic for another thirty minutes. By the time Mr. Folk was done, I had a feeling that I would be seeing a whole lot of bad and in a short amount of time.

Mr. Folk left and Mr. Stone followed him, leaving me to watch cars drive past on the road below. There was nothing special about the cars going by. None of them were fancy, but I did not see a single pickup truck. While watching for just one truck to drive by, I thought about what Mr. Folk said.

When I asked about having to shoot someone, I was told that I would not have to worry about that. As long as I do my job right. They decided to have me learn the old traditions of assassination and intel gathering. Maybe I did not have much of an imagination, but I thought you killed someone by putting a bullet in them or stabbing them.

I was trying to figure out what other ways and came up with some interesting ways, as far as I thought. Being so focused

on what I could have to learn, I jumped when the door shut and clicked when Mr. Stone came in. After the door clicked shut and as I turned to see who came in, a hand landed on my shoulder.

A static shock got me to flinch and got for some reason, gave me a strange feeling. I looked to see Mr. Stone smiling while putting his hands behind him. He finished walking to the other side of the conference table and sat down. He looked creepy with his smile and sitting across from me not saying a word. It went on for about a minute till I got tired of it. I asked "What the hell is going on? You sitting there giving me a creepy look doesn't tell me what is going on."

Just as I finished, I had an urge to rub my neck. It felt tense and a little warm. I wanted to think Mr. Stone was not as much of a hard ass when he asked if I was feeling OK. That was until he followed up with "The compound must be kicking in." I had been trying to watch what I said all day. I didn't want my first day to set a bad first impression.

Since I found out that I had been drugged and had no idea what was happening, I let it go and went off. "What the hell did you put in me. Why? Why did you do this? IF you wanted to kill me, you could have done it back in Ohio with less effort."

Stone got up and walked towards the door while saying he would not be killing me. Then he knocked on the door and one of those thug looking guys I saw at first came into the conference room. The thug got behind me and Stone leaned against the table next to me.

I was quickly told that there are a few ways to learn how to interrogation someone. The long way would be to read the different ways, watch videos, and train under someone. The quicker route is to be on the receiving end and learn what the pain does to a person's mind. Feel what the different techniques do to a man's body.

I started to feel weak and sleepy. My body started to slump and the thug put his hands under my arms. I was starting to fall asleep when I heard, "You can guess what way you will learn and it starts today."

The last thing I remember before I was out was thinking I am royally screwed. Then everything went dark for me and I had no control of my body.

CHAPTER TWO

Opening my eyes, I was in a room with the white panels that you would see in the kitchen of a restaurant. If you don't think that is scary, think about those panels are meant to make it easier to clean the walls. I only was hoping nothing of mine would need cleaned.

As I got my senses back, a feeling of cold metal pressing against my back came to my realization. Also, the fact that I was strapped down and could not move really made me think that Stone was a sick son of a bitch. He had to drug me and while I was passed out, I got strapped down to a metal table.

Being left alone in this room for some time, I had time to wonder if some bad joke was being pulled on the new guy. Then it hit me what Stone said. He wanted me to learn how to torture someone by enduring it myself. That means that I was about to have a whole new world of pain. From past experiences dealing with people the way I had to, I know that making someone wait is a foreplay.

I could imagine that others I made wait for me to deal with them were doing the same thing I was doing laying on that table. Thinking about what might be done to me. Then wondering how bad it will be. The difference of what the people I dealt with and the situation I was in, they knew the end goal. I wanted my money and to remind them not to cross me.

My heart started to beat so hard, I felt every beat in my ears. My adrenalin must be running high and that was not a good thing. I read an article once that talked about how the body will try to protect itself when it's in danger with increase adrenalin. It was meant to allow mankind to get away from a threat. Even though the body was able to push on and run away, it also has the senses raised to help avoid additional threats. That means the sense of touch will work in make sure everything is felt.

To try and save myself some pain, I worked to calm myself down. This was no easy feat and being only in my boxers didn't

help. When a guy walked into the room looking like a short version of Popeye. He was rough looking and his skin was rougher than an old leather belt.

It took me for a surprise when he said "Good afternoon, I will be your trainer and your future mentor in the area of enhanced interview. Just let me know if you have any questions. I know the first three days will be hard on you."

So now I know that the next three days will be miserable for me. Not sure how to take it, the guy who was about to put me through lots of pain was telling me that how he would be a mentor to me. He kept telling me about how he loves the classics and how he will teach me to use common items.

He kept telling me about some what he wanted to teach me. I thought he was joking when he said he had a version of the Tucker telephone that he found does wonders. I even laughed and asked if I had to call someone named Tucker.

He did not find my joke funny. This guy did smile when he sat a box with a crank and wires coming out of it on the table next to me. I don't know why, but he felt I needed to know how the Tucker Telephone was invented in the sixties for prison in Arkansas. What I did not like was when he told me how they used it.

He put on latex gloves and showed me two round stickers with a little thing sticking up to connect wires to. As he connected the wires, he seemed to be getting excited. I heard it in his voice too when he said that the box will make an electric charge and stored in some battery, then it sends out a shock to the victim.

I could handle some electric shock. I told him it sounds like grabbing an electric fence. Thinking how I had done that before; this will be more annoying than painful. That was until he put the stickers on me. The first one he put on the bottom of my bare foot. The other sticker, he reached down my boxers and put it on my soldier.

He had to notice the change in my facial expression. There was no staying calm and he made it worse by telling me that it would be more like pissing on an electric fence. Then he laughed while saying "Over and over and over again."

I began to wiggle and shake as much as I could in hope to knock off the wires. This guy picked up the black box and pulled

up a chair to sit next to me. I didn't realize there was any above me out of sight till that moment.

He told me how his job for the next three days is to get three answers out of me. He would be informed if he had got the proper answer by a knock on the door. My job was to lie and endure. That is when he started to crank the handle on the box.

It made an odd sound and a jingling, but no shock. Then came the first question. "I know you will go by code name Bearman, what is your code name?" I responded with asking "What" and the first shock came. The pain was not like anything I had felt before.

The same question was asked four more times followed with another shock. On the fifth time he asked, promised a five-minute break if I only would say Bearman. At that time, I didn't understand how important the first question was.

It went on for another ten times before I finally said Bearman. After the five-minute rest, I was asked what color my hair was, followed with what state we were in. I lasted about fifteen to twenty shocks each question before answering.

At the end of the third question, I realized this process is more than just about the pain. I was also embarrassed and sickened that it caused me to make a mess of myself. It was a longer break than five minutes once I said Virginia. The guy enjoying his work left the room and came back ten minutes later with a mask over his mouth and nose.

If my anger was not so high, I might have cried from everything. That was until I heard how bad I made the room smell and that could be a sign of bad eating habits. That got me to struggle and try to free myself. If I would have gotten free, I might have bashed that guy's head in the mess until he was dead or close to it.

This time he moved the box on my chest and asked what was my first name. He told me a story about why he loves to know someone's first name. The story he told seem completely pointless, but he was enjoying himself. When he finished his story about first names, he told me he goes by Terry Jones.

Terry then picked up the box again and asked what my first name was. While I was strapped on that table, I remember that I was not to tell anyone my old name or the name I would be

using in public. I would only be known as Bearman. Knowing that I could not tell anything other than Bearman was not a comfort. It was in fact caused a sickening feeling.

This was the true test and I had no idea when it would end. I had to believe that it would end. As he turned the crank and it made that sound, I loudly told Terry my name was Alex. There were no words, just the shock and my screams.

I opened my eyes after the shock to see Terry waving his hand as to say come on. He was not happy as I listed Albert, Allen, Adam, Bryan, Bret, Brian, Brennan, Chuck, and on down the alphabetical list of names. I got all the way to the G's when there was a knock on the door.

That must have been the sign to stop; since the shocks stopped and the wires were removed from me. Terry with his little device in hand started to walk towards the door. He stopped somewhere out of my view. He said "Don't worry, some guys will be in shortly to spray you down and take you to the next phase.

I tried to keep track how long I was in that room till someone came, but I lost track when I started to think about what the next phase would be. I fully knew that guessing what was next would be impossible and there was nothing I could do, even if I knew.

I settled on water boarding and was thinking how to deal with it when two guys walked in. One was the same guy who was in the conference room when I was drugged. These guys didn't show any expression. Anyone could see that it was a job for them, they were the hired thugs. I had to think they knew that too.

These guys looked at me and went back above me where I could not see. That is when I heard water running and the guys talking to each other about some job they had coming up. As I try to listen, I got a new shock. This one was about five gallons of cold water being thrown on me.

They did this five more times and by the end, I was cold, wet, and had no more fight in me. It was clear to see that after I was unstrapped from the table and walked down the way to an empty holding cell. Each guy held an arm and swag me like a bag of potatoes. I slid across the floor like on too.

After a few hours of laying on the floor, I pushed myself up and looked around. It was a white room with a bed painted white

and covered in white sheets. There were no windows and no color. The only thing that was not white was the black darkness between the vents and a camera globe. That globe was just an off white, but it stood out in the room.

Other than being cold from a breeze coming in through the vents, it was not bad. It was very boring, but nothing like what I just went through. I did wish I knew what time it was. After some time, I fell asleep and woke up to a white plate with rice. It also seemed like the room had gotten colder.

This went on for a few more days and it was not till it was over I realized the toll it took on me. After losing track of time and feeling as focusing on anything was not realistic, I stayed on the floor wrapped in a white sheet. I can say it is not clear to me, but I was shown a video where I began talking to someone who was not there.

Whoever I thought I saw, I asked them to help me escape. Then I told someone that I was not sorry for killing him. I knew who that must have been, but I was surprised by the things I said. The things I said could have been used against me in my old life, but that version of me was dead. I guess none of that matters now.

There is no explanation that came to my mind of why that room put more fear in me than the electric shocks. What I was told was that any longer in that room, I could have gone insane.

This all was explained to me in the conference room I was drugged in and removed. The last torture was a mixture of two forms used, but they normally were used apart from each other. The white room was used for sensory deprivation and isolation. They also used what they called the cold room. This was just to make a person feel miserable and make them hate life.

Stone and Terry told me how each worked and how to use each of the three forms to achieve a goal. As they talked about how they have used them, I sat there thinking about jumping up on the table and going after both Stone and Terry Jones. That was another thug knocked on the door and entered through the door behind me.

“We’re ready whenever you are.” is all the guys said and he was gone again. Stone and Terry stood up, then said their goodbyes to each other. Terry left but stopped and told me how he is looking forward to training me. That is when it was just Stone

and me.

Stone didn't wait any time and walked towards me. He reached out his hand again towards me. I was not going to be knocked out twice, not if I could help it. That is why I jumped up to my feet and grabbed his wrist. We looked each other in the eyes and I knew Stone was about to teach me another lesson.

He got a smile on his face that seem to go up to his eyes and it happened. He moved his arm in a way that broke my grip and put my forearm into his hand. The next move he made was smooth and I didn't even realize what happened. That was until I was pushed against the wall with my arm pressed to my back and being pushed upward.

It was painful, but not something I had not dealt with before. Just not in such a smooth action I didn't know what was going on until the pain came shooting through my shoulder. This time, I knew that Stone might put that little extra pressure needed to break something.

Luckily, he let go and I relaxed. While I rubbed my shoulder, he told me that we are leaving. He walked out the conference room and I followed him. Walking past some more thugs, I notice one of them smirk at me. He must have found humor in me rubbing my shoulder, but damn it hurt.

When we reached the door to go back into stage one, Stone told me the first of rules. "When you come here and when you are out on a job you are Bearman. You don't get by any other name and you don't tell anything more than Bearman or Mr. Bearman. Once you are out with the public, you use your other name. If you see someone from this company in public, you act as you don't know them. Now let's go."

I was led back out of the building and to Stone's SUV. When I asked what happened to his truck, he told me I will see it again since it is company vehicle. The SUV he led me to was black and dark tinted windows and no markings on it to tell me what kind it was.

After an eight-hour drive together and forcing me into several days of torture, I think Stone was warming up to me. We didn't have a long drive, but he answered questions I asked this time. He even told me about his first day as an official member of the Republic. The story ended with how he was upset because his

clothes were trash with the blood of some guy that try to blackmail a congressman.

We pulled into an apartment building and as he turned off the SUV, Stone said a trick of the trade was to wipe off the blood before it dried. As I thought about the comment, we got out of the truck and I followed Stone in the building and into the elevator. My thoughts shifted as the light for the eighth floor lit up. I could not help to notice how nice the lobby we walk though looked.

To get to the elevator, we walked past an office with all glass walls and guy in a suit sitting behind a desk. Across the way there was a large room with a large TV, pool table, and some other things to entertain a person. Next to that room was a glass door with a white haze coating it. There was a sign that read "Resident's Gym".

The elevator doors opened and we walked down a hallway. The doors we passed were solid wood doors with engravings on them. None of them looked the same, but they looked amazing. When we got to the middle of the hallway, we stood in front of a plain door. There was a metal door at my back with a sign saying it was for the stairwell.

Stone held out a key ring with two keys and a small square plastic card on it. I figured the keys were for the door in front of me, so I took them. When I opened the door, the room lead into what is my new home.

CHAPTER THREE

I was pushed into the two-bedroom apartment. As I stumbled into a large hallway, I was told that this would be my home until I was told I was approved to relocate. I thought about that for a moment and asked why. I didn't understand at first why I would not be able to move if I found a place, I liked better. Then it was made clear when Stone said that the building is owned by the company.

Stone didn't wait for me to ask any more questions when he walked into the living room at the end of the hallway, which was bigger than my apartment back in Ohio. The windows stared two feet off the floor and went up to a foot from the ceiling. These ceilings were also ten-foot height and painted a sky blue. What really got me was the pictures around the living room.

There were pictures of people who looked like we could be related, but I had never seen them before. Walking over to a picture that must have been six inches by nine inches, I heard Stone tell me how proud the documentation department was of making that one.

It was a picture of a brown-haired woman and a guy with black thick hair. The woman looked like a schoolteacher and the guy looked like he could have been a car salesman or sold insurance. What bothered me the most about the picture was how I was sitting in front of them in clothes I know I had never worn. All the pictures had these people in them and a few of them had me with them.

It was explained to me later that the pictures of me were made from pictures taken of me while I was passed out and video of while I was in the white room. This made me wonder how long I really was put through the lesson they had to teach me. I felt as if it was longer than three days, but I had no idea. I lost track of time and dates by the time I got out.

What I did like was what Stone showed me about all the family pictures. He walked over to the picture I was looking at and pushed the bottom left corner of the picture frame. That is when it made a quiet click sound and came away from the wall. Then I saw two loaded guns behind it. The first was a Smith & Wesson 4006 looking like it was polished. The other gun was a black double barrel twelve-gauge pistol.

After that, he showed me the other features of my new home. Like how the oversized TV had a hook up to the cameras in every hallway and stairwells. I didn't know what to say as I watched a couple kissing against a door on the fifth floor and a woman crying in the stairwell a floor below me. The other floors people just walked around as nothing in the world was wrong. To them, life was good.

Before Stone left me to explore the rest of the place, he took me in the kitchen where there was a cellphone and a set of car keys set on the counter. Next to them were three bottles of bourbon with a note from Mr. Folk. A bottle of Four Roses was the first bottle Stone picked up and said he will take it if I didn't like it. He looked at it and sat it down next to a bottle of Maker's Mark. That is when he grabbed a bottle of Blanton and walked over to the cabinets looking through them till, he found the glasses. With his creepy smile, he opened the bottle and poured us both some.

Considering I had never heard of two of the bourbons, I figured they were higher end than what the old small town carryout sold. So, when he handed me my glass, I sipped it and held it in my mouth a bit longer than I normally would. The flavors were different than I had and the taste was something else. That is the best I knew how to explain it. I would add that is when I knew my new life would include the finer things in life to make up for the pain I would have to endure.

Stone and I sat in the living room on some very comfortable chairs that reminded me of that chair in a commercial where a guy sat in while speakers in front of him pushed everything back, but him. They were black leather chairs with high arms. When I took another sip, Stone told me that now would be a good time to tell me the last few things I needed to know.

Stone made it clear that I was an investment to the Republic and I need to remember that everything I see belongs to them. If I

ever decide to leave, they will send someone to find me and if that happens, I would not be given an option. Retirement is an option, but with approval. Most people who are part of the organization tend to have family become part of the team.

What caught my attention was when he said “This is not a bad life; we mostly do things to get rid of bad people. We are the means to the end. I am happy when I do things like the job I did before coming to meet you. It was a two-month project that was ordered by a congressman that had an issue with girls from fifteen to mid-twenties being abducted in his state. I found the group who was doing it and made sure they would never see the light of day again. I also got information about the operations that went on above them. That led to a contract from the CIA with a lot more money.”

So basically, I am being told that I could justify the bad I do, so I could do good. I honestly couldn't say anything after what I did before. We sat without saying another word for about twenty minutes while we drank our drinks. I know Stone was hoping I was thinking about what he said. What I really was thinking about was how likely I would be able to retire from this place. They start my training with torture and I had only walked in the door.

I still had some of my bourbon left when Stone stood up and walked out the door without a word. I had only got halfway across the living room when the door closed behind him. Then I was left in my home all alone.

Now that I was by myself, I went into the bedrooms looking for my duffle bags. To my relief, they were laid on the queen size bed in the master bedroom. Without hesitation, I opened them up to see my three hundred thousand dollars lining the bottom and my personal guns filled the other bag. I pulled everything from the two bags and laid them in piles on the bed. The guns I put in different areas of the apartment so there was something in reach everywhere.

Next, I got some zip-lock bags from the kitchen and bundled up the money. Once I had the money how I wanted it, I cut a hole in the sidewall of the closet. Putting most of the money in the duffle and the duffle into the open wall space. I made a mental note to go and get some stuff from a hardware store to cover up the opening.

That left me with nothing to do but to look out the window and sip what was left in my glass. I watched people walk by on the sidewalk below going on their way. I had to wonder why so many people were walking around and not home with their families or friends. So, I decided to get cleaned up and go out to see what was out there.

In my mind, I thought about how I was an alien among these people. They all were dressed in brand name clothes and expensive accessories. I on the other hand had a pair of Carhartt jeans from the tractor supply store and an old flannel covering a plain gray tee shirt.

There were nice restaurants and stores all over the area, but I stopped at a little place that looked to be a whole in the wall. It had good food and I got to know the owner well. It became my main place to get dinner.

The next morning, I found my car and it was an Infiniti QX. My life seemed to be great in public. The life I lived for the follow eight months were not as great as people would think. My Mondays were consumed with torture and interrogation training, then Tuesdays and Thursday I learned how to research about people or missions, and Wednesday and Friday were defense & elimination.

The weekend was spent reading and self-education. I made sure I kept my distance from everyone in public. That was everyone, but the staff at my regular restaurant. There was a waitress that who would flirt with me, but flirting was as far as it went. It didn't hurt that I spent twelve hours a day at the Republic. My reading list came from Stone and what he thought I should learn.

My home time during the week was spent reading books that I would like for pleasure. It was a Thursday about nine at night when my schedule changed. I was getting close to finishing Atlas Shrugg and got a call on the cell phone from Stone. He had told me that I would need a week of street clothes and I had to be at the office by midnight. It didn't take anything more being said, I knew I was going on my first mission.

I rushed around and grabbed my clothes and a few toiletries and started towards the door. I was about to walk out when I realized that I forgot my keys and my .380. I didn't go

anywhere without it strapped to my ankle. It had saved me before and I wanted to have it in case it was needed again.

It seemed as everyone was in for the night as I walked down the hall, I heard people playing music or some kind of tv show. I even heard a few people laughing and talking loudly. I had been invited to join a few of these people for different types of things, but as Stone told me. I kept to myself and only let these people know my name is Thomas Norris and I would lend a cup of sugar. They also knew that I didn't invite anyone into my place.

I had also got very use to keeping people away and started to really like it. I kept a friendly exterior so my neighbors didn't talk too much about me. Even with that said, there was still some nights that I thought about the people I left behind.

When I walked by the apartment with what sounded like a small party, it got me thinking about the get together with my friends. Since I was thinking about those past events is why I didn't notice one of my neighbors when I got into the parking garage.

The dim lighting of the garage hides my SUV back in the corner by a stair well. When I got four parking spots when I heard someone yelling. I knew the guy's voice and something about the guy I just didn't like. I thought many times about using my new skills to teach this guy some manners.

Then he got close enough that I could not ignore him when he yelled again. "Tommy, hey Tommy, wait up. I need to talk to you." Being called Tommy rubbed me the wrong way. It was like someone trying to call me "boy" or "son".

I put my bag in the back seat of my Infiniti and turned around to deal with this guy. When I turned around, he stood a few feet from me. "Yes Jimmy. What can I do for you?" I knew well enough his name was James, but he kept calling me Tommy after I told him I didn't like it.

"Tommy, I wanted to tell you that I have a seat open for a dinner party I am putting on and I am giving you first chance at it." To me, I took it as he could not get anyone to come. The ass hole could not even call me by the right name.

So, I simply told him "James, I will not be coming. Again, my name is Thomas Norris. The people I like call me Tom. But that is only the people at the corner restaurant and some of the other neighbors. You can call me Mr. Norris. I am done telling you my

name is not Tommy and I am done with your disrespect.”

James didn't say anything but walked away in a huff like some overgrown child that didn't get his way. That made me feel happy. I only wished I could do it again. The funny thing is, I had a feeling his ego would not let him accept that someone talked to him like that.

There was an upside to James bothering me, it got me to think about my upcoming mission instead of the past I left behind. It took a few lefts and right turns before I got on the beltway. I never understood why they called this highway the beltway. The 495 expressway wrapped around Washington DC. Other than that, there was nothing special about it, unless you consider the constant traffic special.

Since it was almost ten, there was not much traffic. I got so use to the beltway always having so much traffic, I didn't account for how fast I would get to the office at that time of night.

When I got into my parking spot in the private parking garage, I saw one of my instructors. He was loading some guns into the back of the Ford F-150 that Stone brought me to Virginia with. It was a good looking truck, but there were some differences. There had been some side toolboxes added and looked as if it sat a little lower.

Walking up to the instructor, he turned to me and tossed an Accuracy International L96 sniper rifle to me. It was a nice-looking gun and well built. I had been working on my shooting with handguns and had not yet done anything with this type of gun.

I had shot hunting rifles and shotguns growing up, but nothing like this. I could not help but look at it and try to learn every bit the gun had to offer. That was till I saw a handheld out waving for me to give it back.

As I gave up the beautiful gun, I was given a full detailed history of the gun being load up. There were the first ten kills it got as a stock gun back on an operation he did down in Mexico. That was followed by how many kills per modification. If I kept a good count, had a hundred and thirteen kills and this mission gave a chance to add to its count. The excitement in my instructor's voice was nothing I heard from him before.

“Let me tell you, I have two mods on this girl that I would

love to try. The first is a new scope that we are working on with the army rangers. It's a thermo scope that is able to see a heat signature of a flea from two hundred yards.

Man, the other mod gives this girl a balance that a high wire walker wishes for. I am telling you all I need to do next is hide the flash better. Then this will just be the perfect gun."

I found that whole speech a little odd, but he did make guns his life so I could grab one and have the best for the job. There was a story that he took toothpicks and soaked them in some kind of poison. The story says that took those toothpicks and put them in a makeshift pen gun. Then killed his target while he stood next to a US Vice President.

Considering I would now be going on missions that I would be putting my life on the line; every story could help me live. I paid attention to his next story, but I could not tell you what it was about. After that, we talked about the upcoming mission and some advice he had for me.

The basic thing my instructor kept saying was to look at everything as a weapon. This way you are never disarmed. We even played a little game of it. The game went that I would say an item that came to my mind and he would tell me how he would use it.

Most of the items I could think of how to use the items as a weapon, but a few items surprised me. Like he gave me two examples on how to use napkins that I didn't believe could be done. His loss of the chopsticks and details he gave left no questions.

After those disrupting images, I had in my mind at that time left me speechless. It was a good thing as Stone had walked in and waved me to follow him. It did take a second thought and I was up trying to catch Stone as he walked down a hallway.

When I did catch him, he told me that we were going to Atlanta for our mission and he will be the point, but it's my mission. "Let's call this your first test." was all he said before climbing into the F-150.

You want to talk about being pissed, I was there. After months of being tested, tortured, and physically beaten; what did he mean my first test. Hell, my first day at the Republic still gives me nightmares. But what was I going to say, Stone was much more of a fighter and killer than I was.

Without a word, I got in the passenger seat of the truck. By the time I got my seatbelt on, Stone had pushed a folder into my chest. When I grabbed it, he told me that I better know everything in the folder before we get to our safehouse.

Opening the folder, a title sheet with big letters going across the top of it read Bearman. There was nothing more on the front sheet. My name or should I say my code name took up most of the page.

When I flipped to the next page, I saw a bio about some guy named Santos Jesus Ramos Nolasco. The guy was five foot six and wear an earring. What I found most bothersome was the guy was in his late thirties and had a thing for girls between fourteen and sixteen years old.

CHAPTER FOUR

The sound of semis and the glaring of the morning sun woke me with a sore neck. I looked in the back seat and there was Stone sleeping. He almost looked normal. That was expected for the fact that his gun was sticking out from under his pillow. What could I say though, I had a .380 on my ankle and a colt in the back of my jeans.

Stone must have called it a night as we got into Georgia and stop at the rest area we were at. The only reason I knew we were in Georgia was all the welcome to Georgia signs. I will say when I walked into the welcome center looking for some coffee, I got welcomed by two Georgia peaches that looked to be more dangerous than some of the guys teaching me how to kill. That might of why I was drawn to flirt with them.

Hey, showed me where the coffee was and since they worked there, they got me some free breakfast. It was fun to have these girls to flirt with and I think they was as entertained as I was. After twenty minutes, I gave them my phone number and offered to show them around DC if they come to town. I told them I would be back home in a month and they said plans would have to be made for a month out.

Once we all felt good and I walked away with two coffees and a bag of food, I headed back to the truck. There was Stone standing next to the truck stretching. He gave me a look that seemed to say, "What the hell has you been doing?" That look went away when I handed him his coffee. After Stone got a few sips of his coffee he started to eye the bag of food. I started to tell him how I got us breakfast for free, but Stone made it clear he didn't care. I couldn't take it any other way when he said, "I don't care what you did, just give me my food and shut up."

We eat our sandwiches and hash browns in silence. Once we finished, Stone went into the welcome center and came back out with two more cups of coffee. It was a good thing; I was about to finish up the first cup I got.

Stone got into the truck, sat down the coffees in the cup holders, and looked at the folder with the all the details of my mission. As he was reading it, I cleared my throat and asked him if I understood my mission correct. I am eliminating this guy while he looks me in the eyes.

The reply I got was to the point with a nodding head followed with "Make sure there is no question he was the target. It is your choice how to do that. You could shoot the guy in the nuts and consider it says he likes little girls. Hell, any thirty-year-old guy who drug and rape fourteen girls according this file, so he deserves a special punishment." With that said, he put the folder on the center console and started the truck.

We were back on the road and since I didn't want to read the folder anymore, I started to talk to Stone. It was more of me talking and Stone would just make a handful of noises that was till I asked him about his first mission with the Republic.

Stone sat there driving for about five miles without a word and a look on his face as if he was back there. Finally, after I said, "Well Stone, what happened?" Stone cleared his thought and started to talk.

"There are somethings we do to get a mission done. Before I joined the Republic, I was in the Army where I did things that ensured I would never be a saint. I did have rules to follow and things were laid out. I knew what had to be done and how it was expected to be done.

Then I came to the Republic and I had been told what the end result needed to be. My Uncle was my contact like I am yours. He was given the same order I was given for you. If the mission fails, you are subject to the same first op standards. So, you know, that means I have no say in the matter and I have to kill you."

That stopped me from listening to him for a moment wondering why I didn't know that was a standard. So, I knew at that point that I could be killed by doing the op or by not doing it well enough. Then Stone gave me a push on my shoulder.

"You know I don't want to kill you, so I will help you get through this, now pay attention, it might help you prepare for your op.

I had to kill a congressman. He was having an affair with a sixteen-year-old girl and from what I was told, he had cross too

many lines. With everything he was doing, if one thing came out, then the other stuff he was doing would follow. The problem was that several other politicians would be discovered to be doing the same thing.

I followed the guy for two weeks and saw everything he was doing. Let's say I had no issues with killing him after that.

One night, I followed him and the teenager to a hotel in Bethesda Maryland. It took me some work, some promises, and a hundred dollars to get the room number. That guy still supplies me information we use to blackmail people in DC.

When I got up to the floor he was on, there was a young couple making out at the end of the hallway and another guy looking as he was passed out drunk sleeping in his doorway. The door held open by his hip. I dragged the guy into his room and found a bottle of Jack Daniels almost empty sitting on the stand by the TV.

That is when it came to me. I took a drink of the whiskey and took the guys shirt he was wearing. The drunk had to be sweating everything thing he had drank and his shirt soaked it all up. With the guys shirt on and my breath smelling of liquor, I went to the congressman's room.

Once I was at the door, I try to use the drunk's key card to get into the room. When it didn't work like I knew it won't, I started to knock on the door and asked for a Lisa to let me in. After a few failed attempts, he must have got tired of the noise. When the door started to open, I pushed my way into the room. The congressman fell back and the young girl covered herself.

I moved quickly pulled my knife and cut his femoral and radial arteries. While he bleeds out, I began to punch him so that it would look as he was attacked in a violent rage. Then with him inches from death, I stabbed him five more times. That meant the mission was complete and I was about to leave. Until I heard a whimper. It was the girl and she knew what I looked like.

With her in tears, I sat down in a chair that was across from the bed. I wanted to think about what I could do to make it easier on her. While I sat there, she started to tell me about how she didn't have a choice. Her Parents rented her to men for three hundred a night and it has been going on for two years.

It was hard but she told me who handled the exchange and

set up everything. I knew that she couldn't help me with anything from that point. So, I put my hands over her nose and mouth to cut off her ability to breath. She didn't fight me, but almost felt as she welcomed it.

When she was dead, I could not help but look into her eyes and wondered if I would have done it differently. I still see her dead eyes looking at me."

He sat there without saying anything for another few miles. It didn't sound like a tough mission for him, but he seemed to take it hard. He picked up his cup of coffee and took a drink from it. It had to be cold from how it looked as he was forcing himself to swallow it.

Stone asked me about what I picked up from the story and how could I use it. I didn't realize I would be tested on his story.

I thought about it and told him that I believed it would be best to be able to adapt. I figured Stone would tell me how wrong I was and would go on a rant about it.

Instead, he told me I was close to what he wanted to have me learn. He told me about how there are two things I need to understand. The first thing is that a simple plan can turn complicated in a hurry. The second was how some people we have to kill is not as easy as we would like.

We didn't have anything more to say for the rest of the drive. I watched buildings and trees pass us by. Time had dragged on and it felt as every passing minute took an hour to go by. I lost track of how long we drove that morning. We ended our drive by pulling into an old building. It was a commercial building that had to be empty for several years. The windows had been broken out on every level and the interior had walls falling down. The walls still standing were covered with spray paint.

We drove through the parking garage till we got to the lower level of the parking. There was.