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# WORLD GIDEON



GRISSOM & RUIZ





4



Adrift

Corporal Thomas Hugo was on a plane nearing Australia with a full commission and little information. Twelve hours earlier, he found himself with just enough time to shovel up a few civilian clothes. He was directed by Dr. Wise- a woman who was definitely not what she seemed- to keep his destination secret. *My squad is going to wonder where I am. If this covert unit wanted a dive master, why didn't they get a Navy SEAL?* he asked himself. *Maybe the Major worked this out. If so, why me?* Hugo knew David Hite would volunteer any of his men for anything no matter how dangerous or unqualified they may be for the job.

Once on the ground, Hugo had to make a minor adjustment to the disorder and inefficiency of a civilian airport. *I'm supposed to look for a white van just outside of baggage return three and tell the driver I'm looking to do some diving.* He could appreciate that the instructions were concise and specific.

The small blond and sickly looking man in the van introduced himself as Voltaire. He didn't know Hugo's name and advised Hugo not to use it. "Call me Gideon," the corporal said as they left Sydney Airport.

Dr. Wise told the Corporal to select a code name before he left Okinawa. Gideon was Hugo's natural choice because like Hugo, Gideon was a warrior of faith. It had personal value to him and no one else needed to get it.

"Let me inform you of how we operate," Voltaire began. The man sounded like he was from Eastern Europe speaking words from a textbook. "Turbulent Blue 2 is what is known as a dark cell. Four members. No one knows anyone else. We go by codenames only."

"Sounds like that leaves little to talk about."

"My friend- some things are best left unsaid."

"True. What's the mission?"

"There is something at the bottom of the ocean our bloc master wants to retrieve."

"Bloc master?"

"Bloc masters head up three cells each. Bloc master Enoch pulled TB2 for this job."

"Where do I fit in?"

"Secure the diving equipment and supervise the dive. Jibral is the one who gives the details."

Gideon had little to go on to inform himself about his colleagues. *Jibral is the Islamic form of Gabriel*, he thought. It was information all the same. "Jibral?" he asked inquiring about this person's importance.

"The cell boss."





Voltaire parked the van behind an abandoned six-story brick building with boarded up windows. "We have deadlines so introductions upstairs will have to be brief," he said.

Gilgamesh and Jibril occupied a bare and unlit top floor room. *Voltaire said dark cells have four members, Gideon thought. I've only see three so far.* The hardwood floors creaked as Gideon walked to the center of the room and stood. To his left, he could see divots dug out of the plaster wall.

Voltaire made introductions. "Gilgamesh," he said gesturing toward a tall muscular dark haired man dressed in a black short sleeve button up shirt and black slacks. He looked like Gideon would have imagined a member of the Mafia to look like. Gilgamesh barely acknowledged their presence before turning his view back between the boards on the windows.

A tan skinned woman stepped forward before Voltaire could speak. "I am Jibral," she said reaching to shake Gideon's hand.

He deduced she was Pakistani. "Gideon," he said shaking her hand.

Jibral went straight to the point not acknowledging anything Voltaire may have told him. "We are on a dive mission," she said producing a PDA phone. "This will tell you where to pick up the equipment and where you'll meet us once you have it. Take the van."

Gideon caught the van keys as Voltaire tossed them to him but didn't turn to leave immediately. "I'm sure you understand- there are more qualified dive masters out there."

"Enoch insists on you and that is enough for me," she said with flat certainty.

*I need to know this Enoch, then,* he said to himself. Gideon gave her a look that didn't reflect that certainty and left the room.



Gideon's contact was at a small and isolated marina which consisted of little more than a tin house and a boat dock. Gideon sat in the van and reexamined his instructions. *Tell him you're picking up some things a friend left here,* he read. He entered the shack to see a stubble-faced man with an eye patch and a Seabee tattoo on his arm. *A dive shop, Gideon thought. And that guy behind the counter*

*looks like his military career was well underway before Vietnam. But it's good to see another American.* The man eyed Gideon almost suspiciously.

"I'm here to pick up some things a friend left," Gideon began. His statement was met with a shotgun pointed in his face.

This was a different game from what Gideon was used to. The objectives were unclear and so were the enemies. Even other Americans were suspect.

"Who are you?" The tough, old Seabee spoke in slow and measured tones.

Gideon raised his hands slightly and looked the vet in the eye. This wasn't the first time a gun had been pointed at him. "You can call me Gideon." *Anyone operating in this job has incentive to keep everything about himself hidden*, he thought. *And he knows that. Why would he believe anything I say?*

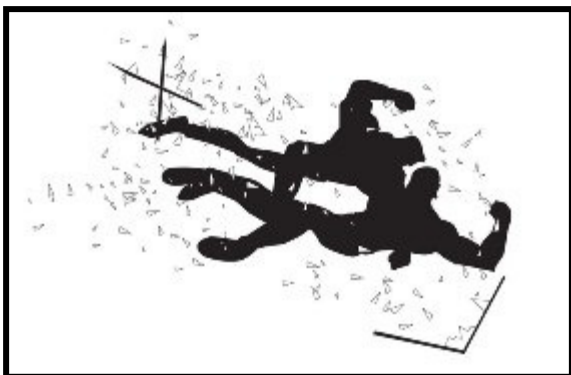
"Where's Icarus?"

The most obvious way out was to lie. That didn't sit well with Gideon. It felt wrong and dangerous. *Who knows what unanswerable questions that would bring up.* "I don't know who Icarus is," he said. *Icarus must have been this guy's contact. TB2's fourth member.* Gideon's aptitude for reading people in tense moments told him all he needed to know. *He doesn't believe me.* It was on the vet's face.

As the old sailor began to pull back on the trigger, Gideon grasped the barrel and diverted it away from his head. The shotgun went off an arm's length from Gideon's ear. Using Gideon's momentum, the vet forced the side of the butt of the gun into Gideon's face and leapt across the counter kicking him in the chest.

The vet lit upon Gideon with a clear intent to kill. Gideon didn't wish to hurt the man but defending himself proved hard. The old judo based Special Forces fighting style the vet was using still proved effective. Gideon found himself being thrown with surprising force and having to prevent leverage against moves that would cripple and break bones.

*This old Seabee is tough as nails*, Gideon thought as he flew into a rafter cracking it. Looking behind the vet now that there was some distance between them, the dock was maybe a ten foot drop below through a window. Bursting into a sprint, he concluded, *I know I'll weather this better than he will.*



The window exploded as the two men torpedoed toward the deck. Gideon felt the sickly smooch as two of the vet's ribs gave way under him. It was over.

"I can't believe... they sent a Marine," the vet said between pained breaths.

"How did you know..."

"Your bearing. The way you fight. I saw you coming a mile away. Get it over with, kid. My ribs are killing me."

"No. I really am who I say I am."

The old vet looked at Gideon's face for a moment and could see that the Marine really didn't know anything. *His boss is keeping him in the dark*, the vet said to himself. "You really must be new," he said with surprise and furrowed brow. Painfully raising himself up, he asked Gideon the crucial question: "Did it ever occur to you to find out what happened to Icarus?"



Directed by the vet, Gideon pulled the equipment from its hiding place and carried it to the van. "This is advanced stuff," Gideon observed with a touch of apprehension.

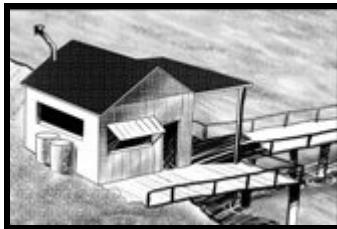
"You don't want to know where I got it," the vet replied. "Now promise me you'll make your boss- whoever he is- tell you what happened to Icarus. You need to know things like that."

"I promise," Gideon said shutting the back of the van. "Don't you want to know?"

"I don't need to know. You won't be seeing me again. Your boss screwed the pooch on this one, son."

"Are you going to be okay?"

"I was in worse shape in Hanoi," the vet said almost shutting the door on Gideon who was in the driver's seat. He was in a hurry to get Gideon gone and Gideon didn't ask questions.



Jibral, Voltaire, and Gilgamesh were waiting at the rendezvous point when Gideon delivered the diving equipment. He was on time. Jibral and Gilgamesh set to examining the equipment. Voltaire broke the silence. "Very good, Gideon. I would assume all is well."

Gideon exited the van and pushed the keys back into Voltaire's hand. "We can talk about that later." He looked ahead to the pier and out into the water beyond. There were deadlines to meet.

TB2 had obtained a fifty-foot boat with a grappling wench. The team had donned wetsuits before boarding the craft. A hot afternoon sun shone down on them during the long quiet ride. Gideon meditated on his situation. It seemed everything had turned into a murky game of tag among blind fish. But wasn't that what it had been all along? The only difference now was that like the apostle Paul, the scales had fallen from Gideon's eyes- before it had been too late. And for that he was thankful. But sizing up the fish in the pond didn't clear the water.

Gideon stood at the stern of the boat. He looked further afore at Jibral and Gilgamesh who were in furtive conversation. *Jibral and Gilgamesh are close, but she keeps Voltaire at arm's length*, Gideon observed. But other issues loomed larger. *What is Jibral hiding?* he asked himself. The bible had said it and he had seen it firsthand- people perish from lack of knowledge. After the incident with the old Seabee, Gideon was sure something was amiss. Everything in him wanted to walk away- but he wasn't going to do that. He had his integrity.

*And what happened to Icarus?*

The question burned at the front of his mind. But if Gideon had come into maturity in any area of his faith, it was the control of his emotions. The word and experience taught him it was best to confront issues one on one. If Jibral was in error, it would do no one any good to call her out in public.

Gilgamesh and Jibral finished their discourse and Gilgamesh walked to the fore of the boat where Voltaire was driving. They were slowing to a stop. Jibral put her arms about herself against the wind. If Gideon wanted answers he would still have to wait. *She needs to give me the whole story*, he said inwardly. Jibral looked over her shoulder where she saw Gideon staring at her. She avoided his gaze.

*I was a fool not to ask more questions*, he scolded himself. But that was not how he had been trained. Conditioned.

*I'll start asking them now.*

Swimming among other questions beneath the murky surface of things was who this man Enoch was. Gideon knew the Enoch of the bible to be privy to the secret knowledge of heaven. *This man obviously has access to information about me. But how much does he really know?*

Gideon moved forward to help Gilgamesh with his gear. Jibral looked flatly out into the ocean as Gideon passed.

As divemaster, Gideon had calculated the maximum safe stay time on the seafloor for Gilgamesh. Whatever they were looking for, it was between eighty and ninety feet down. "You've got just under two hours to find it, strap the wench line on, and get back up," Gideon told the diver. As Gilgamesh donned his weighted vest and mask and shoved off into the water, Gideon looked him in the eye and saw something he recognized. Depths and stay times meant nothing to Gilgamesh. *That's okay*, thought Gideon as the water calmed behind Gilgamesh's descent. He was prepared to go down after him if he had to.



Xiao Qing came to a halt on the glassy ocean. She had ridden her waverunner far out into the open sea. The machine wasn't meant for this kind of long-range trek. She had brought extra fuel but there was no guarantee she would get back to shore. "And what am I doing this for?" she asked herself aloud in her native Mandarin. "For a box at the bottom of the ocean?" *How did Legion even know someone was seeking it?* She asked herself. *Their organization hides a traitor.* For all she knew it could be the same one that had betrayed Aphotic Red 3. Her cell.

This was Legion's mess. But he had dumped it in Nietzsche's lap and Nietzsche in turn had dumped it on her. Nietzsche, of course, wouldn't know why Legion would suggest that Xiao Qing would be more pliable for this fool's errand. He could only guess that Legion had something on her- as Legion did all of the members of AR3. *What is Legion going to do? Throw my brother in a worse political prison? It is not possible.* She said to herself knowing that if Legion were to have her brother killed it would erase all leverage he had against her. And the result would be her going directly after *him*.

Her skin was burnt and her lips were cracked. Her very short hair was breaking and splitting in the intense sun and salty air. Vessels of steel had succumbed to lesser environs. But Xiao Qing was determined not to. Her will was stronger than that.

Her target was in sight. The boat was a tiny speck between her and the horizon. She had plenty of water left but the weight of it and her gear was eating up precious fuel. *If I succeed, I will push everything into the water and flee for the land.* Taking out a pair of binoculars, she counted the number of people on deck. *Three and diving gear. One must be in the water. It is another dark cell.* But it didn't matter who it was. They wouldn't get what was in that box.



With Gilgamesh on the dive and Voltire checking weather and drift, Gideon walked toward the stern to speak with Jibral. Voltaire put down his log book and looked on the situation with interest. Gideon looked back at him and Voltaire turned back to his charts.

"What happened to Icarus?" Gideon asked looking Jibral squarely in the eyes.

She averted her gaze to Voltaire sitting in the pilot house as if he may hear their conversation. She looked back at Gideon resolutely. "It is need-to-know information."

Gideon was about to address Jibral in anger when he felt something unmistakable in its sound and feel fly past his ear. It was distinctive and all too familiar. It was a bullet. Gideon pushed Jibral

hard onto the deck. "We're being fired on," he told her calmly but insistently. Another bullet came through the hull of the boat, passed between them, and exited the other side. Gideon assessed the situation. *Large caliber sniper rifle. The shooter was able to anticipate our position behind objects. He's good. Definitely trained.*

Voltaire turned his attention aft seeing fierce movement out of the corner of his eye. Jibril lifted her head from the deck and addressed him. "Go!" she exclaimed.

"But Gilgamesh..." he pleaded in tense exasperation. The anchor and the wench line were still on the ocean floor.

"Just go!" Jibril said almost angrily. Gideon could clearly see their issues but hoped they would put them aside if they wanted to live through the next few minutes.

Voltaire shot the boat full speed ahead. In the distance to the starboard side, Gideon could see a disturbance in the water. *The sniper,* he said to himself.

Xiao Qing cursed herself. She had missed twice and her target was retreating. Thoughts of Legion and her brother motivated her to give chase.

Below the ensuing chaos on the surface, Gilgamesh swam in darkness. His flashlight came to rest on a half-buried patch silver. This is what he was risking his life for. Had it been worth it? Doing the right thing was always worth it. *I've got a lot to make up for,* Gilgamesh told himself thinking of the chain that led him here. Unlike the way he had lived his life, in this environment, being organized and having a line to something solid had kept him on his path.

As Gilgamesh went to attach his wench line to the object he had been seeking, something familiar happened. His only link to anything substantial was wrenched from his hands and retreated rapidly into the distance.

Up in the sunlight, Gideon was working furiously to retract the anchor before the boat got too far. At a certain point, the weight of the anchor was going to stop the boat and they would be reduced to going in a circle. But he was having a hard time. The chain was proving much more difficult to reign in than it should have been. Jibril had picked up a rifle and was attempting to keep the distant sniper at bay.

As the distance between the boat and the sniper grew, Jibril looked over her shoulder to shout back at Voltaire. "We're almost clear. Keep going and we can devise a plan to retrieve Gilgamesh."

Xiao Qing found that her waverunner couldn't keep up with the more powerful engine of the larger craft. *Had this all been for nothing?* she asked herself. No. Nothing for her brother was for nothing. Someday she would free him. For now she must deal with Legion and her present situation. Xiao Qing stopped her watercraft and drew breath deeply. Closing her eyes for a moment and then opening them again, she concentrated intensely on the target before her.

Ever the vigilant Marine, Gideon's eyes were staid on the sniper. With alarm he noticed the distant dot in the water had stopped. "He's aiming!" Gideon shouted in warning to his companions. *Not now,* he thought. The anchor was almost up.

Jibril had not fully turned to face the sniper before a bullet went through her shoulder and came

to rest in Voltaire's ribs. Voltaire fell onto the throttle and then against Gideon who went over the side and had to let go of the anchor to avoid falling into the sea. Voltaire's weight had brought the throttle to full stop. Jibral was still conscious but was lying on the deck in shock. Voltaire floundered uselessly trying to reach the throttle to bring the boat back to speed. Finally giving up and out of breath, Voltaire turned his eyes through the grommets in the sideboard to see Gideon hanging overboard. *This is it,* Voltaire thought to himself. *For all I've done I didn't think it would end like this.* Voltaire gave Gideon a pleadingly determined look asking him to come back on board and at least go out fighting. Gideon shook his head and put a finger to his lips for silence. *The American obviously has a plan,* Voltaire thought. At this point he had no choice or ability to do anything else but lie still and bleed.

Xiao Qing glided up on the bow of the drifting boat with a sense of relief and satisfaction. Pulling herself onto the deck in front of the cockpit she saw blood. She was checking her work. Xiao Qing was nothing if not thorough. She walked slowly up behind the first body she saw; that of Voltaire. Voltaire could feel Xiao Qing's quiet footsteps approach him.

Peering through a grommet, Gideon could see the sheer horror in the man's eyes silently pleading for the Marine to act. Xiao Qing unslung her rifle from her shoulder. Voltaire heard a round go into the chamber and a bolt drive home. The terror became uncontainable. He would surely give himself away. It was only when the chilly steel of the barrel brushed past his ear that Gideon flung himself over the sideboard and tackled the assassin. The two of them crashed headlong over the bow.

Xiao Qing determined she would not go easily. If she could take but one of them with her for her brother's sake then so be it. This was more of a fight than Gideon had counted on. The small, thin woman fought like a shark and he could tell she wasn't intending to resurface. All she had to do was hold on to drown them both. As the need for air burned in Gideon's chest and the lights of consciousness began to fade, he saw Xiao Qing draw a knife. Blocking the first blow drew him further toward the depths of senselessness. Taking sure aim at his neck, Xiao Qing prepared to strike again. Her hand was arrested by another set of gloved fingers. It was Gilgamesh grasping the anchor chain and using it as foil to Xiao Qing's knife. Gideon understood now why he had such difficulty reigning the anchor in. The anchor had been Gilgamesh's only connection to the boat. Throughout the tumultuous ride, he didn't let go of his anchor.

Swimming furiously for the surface, the image of Gilgamesh clutching the anchor chain was not lost on Gideon. He would have to rethink some things in this world of lies and false faces. Values that shifted. People who weren't there.

Once on deck, Gideon rendered medical care as best he could to Jibral and Voltaire. His Marine way was rough and his bedside manner short but necessity bore him out. A hand on the sideboard behind Gideon disrupted his course medical practice. An arm and a head surfaced above the rail. It was Gilgamesh lugging a silver chest. Throwing it roughly on deck one handed, Gilgamesh gave Gideon a look that the Marine understood. That woman- whoever she was- wasn't here by accident. In an occupation played out beneath the shade trees of morality, someone was pruning the branches. They were exposed.



On shore, Voltaire and Jibril received treatment. A quiet Asian man in sunglasses and white shirt rendered the type of low key, unofficial, and anonymous service Gideon had seen from the old vet in the dive shop. The doctor- if that's what he really was- said nothing as he stitched and snipped and cauterized in the back of a van; and Jibril and Voltaire seemed to know better than to try and talk to him.

When the "doctor" had left the scene, Gilgamesh and Gideon loaded the metal chest into the back of a van. Voltaire- on a stretcher- occupied the other. No one was talking. Gideon got into the driver's side of the van with the chest and observed the scene. The ever angry-looking Gilgamesh was taking Voltaire somewhere. Gideon noticed the look on Jibril's face as she watched the other van drive out of sight. It wasn't quite disgust but it was almost there. Arm in sling, Jibril opened the door and sat in the passenger's seat. She let out a long sigh. Gideon sat merely looking at her. Half waiting on an answer he knew might never come. *What happened to Icarus?* He surmised it had a lot to do with everything that had happened today.

Jibril's dark hair covered most of her face. She was too injured and tired to care. She wasn't about to explain anything. But as if in reply to his gaze, she spoke. "There is someone you need to see." She handed him a PDA phone with a map on the screen. "Drive."

The two rode in silence. It was a heavy silence blanketing everything that had come before. Everything today, and- for Gideon- everything yesterday and every previous day of his life. It was his instinct to check his moral compass. Where was his heart in this? Had he done the right things? Had he stayed true to himself and his God? Gideon was disturbed to find that he could answer none of these questions. There were no answers for the simple fact that illumination along the path he was treading now was scarce. He didn't even fully know what was going on or why he was chosen to be here. Gideon glanced over at Jibril who was staring listlessly ahead. He couldn't be angry with her or anyone else for hiding the answers. He had chosen this assignment and carried it out like a good soldier.

It was dark and the road Gideon drove was becoming rougher. They were heading farther and farther away from any signs of civilization with no word to Gideon on their ultimate destination. That could be the way of things for me if this were my life, Gideon thought to himself. *I'm looking forward to getting back to my unit.* Through the canopy of code names and operational facades, it seemed to Gideon that the light of heaven trickled down to this world in dim diffusions. Or was he confusing heaven's light with knowledge of his circumstances? Surely the principles he had staked his life on weren't so fragile that they couldn't survive a vacuum of information.

But in spite of his vexation inside these alien conditions, Gideon could see a bothersome similarity between this sphere and the way he had chosen to walk his own straight and narrow path. *I don't know who these people are,* he thought. *But for that matter, does anyone truly know who I am?* It was a valid question. No one knew the real Thomas Hugo. His past. His background. What had happened to his community. To Anne.

In navigating his faith, he only kept one side turned toward the world. The side most comfortably fit with God's armor. But the thorn in his side was in the half not facing the world. The part he kept for himself. A side less easily reconciled with the cut of the plates the other half wore so well. He had not used his life now or before as the tool he knew his God required of him. Not that he didn't believe it to be a crucial part of his witness, but he was still struggling with what to make of it himself.

The most mournful thread in the incoherent pattern of this tapestry was Anne. He shielded her memory with jealous care. It was the thing he kept most for himself in the face of all the other demands heaven or earth could ever make of him. And he was sure it was the one thing he needed to give up to heaven for his own good.



Three hours. Gideon had a lot to think about. It was time well spent. He looked at the phone and saw that they were at the spot indicated on the map. It was dark. Dark in the sense many people never consider it can be. Away from the artificial illumination man creates for himself, this was a deep and profound blackness. Gideon had no hope of seeing anything outside the province of the headlights so he crept forward slowly.

Within a few hundred yards, Gideon was certain he spotted what he was looking for. In the middle of the Australian outback directly in his path stood three tractor-trailers facing in alternate directions with the middle one facing away from him. Three men with AR-15s stood before him. From the way they held their weapons and took positions on his approach, Gideon could tell they were formally trained. They moved like Americans but Gideon was learning not to be too sure of anything. He looked over at Jibral. She was asleep collapsed against the window.

Gideon knew the safest thing to do. Leaving the vehicle running, he exited slowly with his hands halfway up. For some reason in the dead of night, all three men were wearing sunglasses. One of them approached Gideon. Coming closer Gideon could see they were a little clunkier than normal sunglasses. *Probably some new compact night vision or heads up display*, Gideon judged.

"He's expecting you," the man said motioning toward the rear of the middle semi trailer truck.

Gideon proceeded forward. The trailer sections of each of these trucks were large modular shipping containers. *A simple but brilliant way to operate*, he observed silently. A full command center or weapons vault could be set up in any of these. You could change and retrofit them any way you wanted and ship them across the world in a matter of hours. Plus doing business in the middle of the outback at night eliminated visual satellite intrusion.

He stepped up onto the sheet metal stairway leading to the man-sized door in the cargo container. Behind him the three men converged on the vehicle and extracted Jibral. They killed the headlights leaving him in the dark just before he threw the latch on the door.

The outside of the container didn't give away the inside in the least. The trailer was bright and well lit. Plate thin screens and monitors lined most of the wall space. The floor was server farm quality network paneling. Raised to accommodate cables and power connections. At the other end of the trailer occupying a semicircular desk was a gray haired man. He wore a dark suit and had a fatherly look about him.

The man rose from the desk and approached Gideon. "Call me Enoch," the man said holding his hand out in introduction.

Gideon paused and shook it. "I'm Gideon."

"I know who you are Thomas Hugo."

It made sense that this man would know who he was since, presumably, this man had sent Ms Wise to recruit him.

"I know you don't know the current situation," he continued, "so I will be forward and honest with you as much as I can." He was interrupted by one of the men from outside opening the door and setting the metal chest on the floor of the trailer and leaving as abruptly as he had entered.

Gideon looked back at the chest. "Why did you recruit me to retrieve that," he asked pointing at the box.

"Because I liked the way you handled the situation in Afghanistan."

"What are you talking about?"

"The Shir Ahmad look alike."

Gideon looked at Enoch sidelong.

"I understand your wariness but I have to know such things."

"What happened to Icarus?"

"He was killed. In a war with another bloc master."

"What happened?"

"There was a leak. He was figured out."

"Who was the leak?"

"We don't know yet- which is what led to today. We're hoping you can help us with that."

"You want me to stay on?"

"Yes. Trust is the most valuable commodity in this occupation. I need a man of integrity."

"I don't think you know me that well."

"I know you were sticking by your convictions before those people came in and slaughtered your

community. That's what saved you. And I know you've stuck by those same convictions in dealing with Anne's people."

Gideon's breathing increased. He looked at Enoch with apprehension.

"What I'm offering you is a chance to bring the people who did this to your loved ones to justice. Are you in?"

Gideon was taken aback. The leak and the events of his past were related? He had always assumed the people who murdered a whole community and got away with it were out of reach. What would he do if he caught up with the killers? With Anne's killers? There was no question about the *right* thing to do. But what *would* he do? "I have to think about it," he said.

"Please be quick. An insider is playing against his country and time is of the essence. I'll see to it you get a leave of absence to make up your mind." Enoch handed Gideon an envelope. "You can take the van to the Sydney airport and leave it. Here is a plane ticket and a cover story to tell your unit when you return."

Gideon looked at the envelope. "I won't lie," he said. He turned to leave and stopped. Turning back to Enoch he asked, "What's in the box?"

"Hopefully a trail to the leak."

Gideon left without looking back. Outside the trailer was Ms Wise. She looked at him squarely.

"I had told Enoch not to recruit you."

Even though Gideon was not sure he wanted to be a part of this world, he took Ms Wise's comment a slight against his ability. He waited for her to continue.

"Don't get me wrong, I think you'd make one of the best agents we've ever seen but you're too moral. This job would eat you alive inside."

"Really?" Gideon opened the van door and got in. He was mildly surprised at her dark view.

"Prove me wrong choir boy," she said as he drove off.



Shir Ahmad woke up in agony in a strange place. From the bright and sterile environment he thought it could be a western style hospital. To his right were two western men in their western suits talking about something. They took notice of him and stopped their conversation to approach him. Standing off to one side was an Arabic man wearing a western suit. The first westerner had dark hair and a beard outlining his jaw line. He wore a black suit with pinstripes. The other westerner looked

older and had white hair. Ahmad was sure he had seen this second man on lists of important assassination targets. He was an American politician of some sort.

The Arabic man translated as the younger man in black began to speak. "I am Legion. You will be working for me soon."

Ahmad was incensed. If he could have mustered the saliva, it would be on this man's face. "Never."

The man laughed. The American politician with him also seemed amused. "That's a brave statement coming from a man who didn't have the courage to end it himself but instead sits here before me in a hospital bed," Legion said. "Besides, we have made sure you have become addicted to a very powerful drug you can only get from us. Withdrawal is almost always fatal. And I can already see you don't want to die."

Ahmad was so angry he didn't know what to do. If he were physically able to rise up and kill these men he would.

Legion went on to add to Ahmad's agony. "You know a lot of valuable people. So unless we can use you to use them, we withhold the drug and let you die. And if you had any thoughts about dying with honor, we can make it known that- on top of that mountain when presented with the opportunity for death- you tried to get some Afghani peasant to do it for you."

Ahmad would feed them lies. How would they know if he told the truth?

Legion knew what the man was thinking. *They all think they can lie*, he said to himself. "It's physically impossible for you to lie to us now. We *will* interrogate you under the effects of the drug. It messes with brain chemistry. The brain changes associated with deception are highly incompatible with this drug. You will experience pain as you've never felt if you try to lie to us."

Ahmad watched the two westerners and the Arab traitor turn to leave.

Legion lit a cigar. "Have a great rest of your life," he said. The Arab didn't translate.

Senator Grey broke the silence as he and Legion walked down the hallway. "What are we going to do with him first?"

"We'll let him circulate for a while. See what he's going to do. If he pans out, we need to get that incident in Iraq under control."

