

David

"**M**arch, damn you; do not fall." David pulled his friend and companion, Jay, along with him. Both men were bone tired, hungry, and at the end of their endurance. They were on a forced march to Camp O'Donnell located in Cabanatuan of the Philippines. As prisoners of war, the Japanese systematically shot anyone who fell or who could not continue. He intended to see that his friend was not one of them. Jay was not only a friend but a very valuable asset, to be protected at any cost. Not only was he one of the famous wind talkers, but he was white. He was a genius with languages. His grandparents, being Navajo, had taught him their language when he was visiting them as a youth. They had mixed blood as his parents did. Because of his ancestry, his skin was as white as David's. Jay knew Navajo, Japanese, German, Spanish, French and Italian, as well, as he knew his own, English. The Japanese must never learn that Jay knew the wind talkers code.

David held his friend up as they continued to march. The camp had to be close; they had walked for over sixty miles. Please God, let it be close.

Ten years later

"Don't, oh God, no, please no." And then, the fire, the smell of burning flesh. One hundred and fifty American soldiers burned alive in trenches they had dug. A scream tore at his throat but would not come out. The fear gripped him as he watched helplessly. The horror of seeing what humanity did to another human brought him to his knees, dry heaves wracking his body. The horror of knowing he was trapped with people who would do this as he curled into a ball on the hard ground. Finally, the scream escaped, waking him.

David sat up in bed, his eyes huge, sobs tearing from his soul. Sweat was running down his chest, and he heard whining, which meant his friend's faithful dog had been trying to wake him.

Jake licked the tears on his face, trying to bring him back to the living, back to Thatcher Island where he now lived. The nightmare slowly went away, leaving him shaking with tears still running down his face. With his face in his hands, he sobbed like a baby. Would the nightmares ever stop?

Jake laid his massive mastiff head on David's blanket covered lap until the tears stopped.

With a huge sigh, David gave this faithful dog a pat on the head. "I'll feed you, boy. You deserve a treat this morning." He got up, put on his robe, and found the dog food. Giving Jake a huge bone from the day before, he started the coffee. He would not go back to sleep. With a cup of hot coffee, he stood in the doorway of his home on Thatcher Island. The witness protection plan had decided this was the best place to hide him. His father was a hit man for the mob in New York. When he was killed, his mother had hidden him with a distant aunt. When David left for the army, he had given the feds valuable information, and one of

the mob families had put a hit out on him. He had pissed off some seriously dangerous people.

Dawn was at least an hour away yet. The smells and sounds of the ocean calmed him. The sound of the waves breaking over the rocks, the seagulls' call as morning was breaking all calmed him. He walked to his favorite chair, sitting with his coffee, watching the dawn break. He let his head fall back and closed his eyes just for a moment. Thinking back to his childhood, he could see his father arguing with his mother to be allowed to take his son out on a hit at the age of thirteen. He could see his mother putting her foot down and his father leaving without him. David smiled at the thought of his tiny five-foot mother scolding his father like a child, shaking her spoon at him. The same spoon used to dust his own britches from time to time. She was formidable and took no prisoners, whether it was his father or himself. His father loved her enough to let her be who she was. David remembered how his father would always kiss her goodbye when he went out on a job and the worried look on his mother's face. He would always pat her bottom on the way out and tell her not to worry. His mother still lived in New York, now remarried to the don, himself. David was sure she had something to do with Don Michilini giving up the search for him. By all accounts, the man was very much in love with David's mother. She had come to live with him and his ailing wife. She took care of the wife after she was diagnosed with lung cancer. His mother took loving care of his wife after her own husband had been gunned down. After she had sent her son away, the don had come to respect her and, in the end, to love her. In return, he had basically turned a blind eye to her son.

Both Jay and he were working undercover for the FBI and hiding out on Thatcher Island. Manning the lighthouse by night and trying to bring the mob to justice by day, David stayed away from Antonio Michilini, keeping information about him to himself. It was an unwritten and unspoken deal they both had

come up with because of his mother. They did not touch one another. David had plenty of others to take care of. He didn't need to interfere with the don's family when he could pick and choose which family to fuck with. They had made plenty of powerful enemies and put many very bad people away in the pen—Jay, with his ham radio, codes, and languages and David, with his disguises. He drank the last of his coffee before he returned to the house. Jay had lighthouse duty last night, which meant David had breakfast duty. Jay would have breakfast and go to bed for a few hours. David sighed as he put his cup in the sink. He walked to his bedroom and pulled a new shirt and pants and underwear from the dresser and headed to the shower. As he passed the full-length mirror on the door, he gave himself a critical look over. Rubbing his hand over his face, he decided he needed a shave. He looked over his big, lean, muscular body, nodding his head in acceptance. Neither he nor Jay had an ounce of fat on them. They worked out continuously, either running around the fifty acres that made up Thatcher Island or rowing to shore. At a little over six feet, with his dark brown hair and blue eyes, he knew the ladies looked at him in appreciation. He never had any trouble getting important information from any woman. Jay was the opposite; his six-foot frame came with black hair and brown eyes. Both men had killer smiles. Only if you looked hard, did you see the hard, cold look of men who had seen too much pain and horror.

Jay walked in just as David was finishing his breakfast of bacon and scrambled eggs. Both men had learned to cook as a matter of necessity. Jay sat at the table and gave his friend a once over.

"I saw you early this morning, having coffee. Did you have another nightmare?"

David looked up from his eggs to answer, "Yes, and don't start on me, brother. I'm okay. Jake and I took care of it just fine."

Plans

Jay knew the demons that kept coming at David. He was there, too. David had kept him safe. Some of the men would take pieces of a radio when they fixed the Japanese radios for them. They had put them together secretly. By the end, they had several. With the radio and Jay's knowledge of Japanese, they had kept informed of the war. The Philippine underground collected quinine tablets to help the prisoners like Jay who had malaria. They smuggled them in secretly, at great peril to their own safety.

The torture and cruelty David saw while Jay was sick in the barracks most of the time with malaria was too much for any human. David had saved his life many times, and in return, Jay had given them a heads-up and saved many of their fellow prisoners. The Japanese didn't know Jay talked their language and talked freely in front of him.

David had been Jay's "babysitter" while in the army. Each of the Navajo wind talkers had a soldier to keep them safe. Jay knew that David had orders to kill him if they got captured. He couldn't do it. Instead, he did all he could to keep his secret and keep him safe. When they were rescued and returned to the states, they had become closer than brothers. When David was given the opportunity to help the FBI and to be under their protection, Jay asked to accompany him. Although highly unusual, his reputation convinced them he could be a valuable asset. He manned the ham radio that kept them in touch with the FBI as well as with other informants. It was his turn to watch over his brother. Together, they were the FBI's biggest advantage on the war against the mob. He shook his head. He had asked David to see a counselor many times to try and give him some ease from his nightmares, but David always refused.

"We haven't heard from Fred in a while. I'm starting to get worried. I've tried to call the club, but I haven't gotten an answer."

David finished his breakfast and put his things in the sink to be washed before he returned to his coffee.

"I know. I am worried, too. I think I need to make a trip to the club and check out the situation. Maybe you could call Jason and have him meet me on shore with the Buick. I think a business man needs to call on Fred."

Jay knew this meant David would go in the disguise of a businessman to talk to Fred, who was one of the owners of the Diamond Club, a very classy bar and nightclub.

The nightclub was very pricy, to keep out undesirable kinds of customers. The mob frequented the classy club with beautiful women nearly every night. The men dressed in suits and the women dressed in thousand-dollar dresses and were dripping with jewels. It was a place for the upper echelons of the mob to come and not be bothered, to do business with the other higher ups in the family or other mob families. Many deals were made there. Only the very important information was used, in order to maintain Fred's secrecy. Fred discreetly listened in on conversations with bugs under certain tables, passing information on to Jay with the ham radio. Jay then passed the information along to the feds, who decided to do something about it or to put the information in files to wait for bigger deals.

DAVID NEEDED to take the edge off. It had been a few months since he had visited the club. Maybe that was why he'd had a nightmare again. Visiting Janie usually kept them at bay for a while. She liked it rough, and David needed to give it rough to chase away the demons that nipped at him at all hours. She liked

the spark of pain to get her off. He needed the control to ease his demons.

"I'll call Jason and have him get the Buick ready for you. You go and get ready, and I'll sleep on the couch down here next to the phone while you are gone."

David agreed. He walked to his room and got out his suitcase with all of his disguises, taking his time and being meticulous as usual. His life would depend on it. When he was finished, he looked in the mirror critically. He didn't recognize himself—the mustache and darker eyebrows, a little make up here and there. Different colored contacts finished the job. He thought about a bigger nose but changed his mind.

He closed his suitcase and put it away before he picked out an expensive suit and an attaché case with some fake order forms. Making sure his new shoes were shined and his hair slicked back, he came out of his room.

Jay whistled as he came out. "I don't know how you do it, but I am amazed every time you come out as someone else."

David laughed. "I'll be home tomorrow sometime. I plan on taking the edge off tonight. I hope Janie is waitressing."

Jay waved him away as he undressed to his underwear and lay wearily on the couch. He pulled up the blanket and sighed contently. The nights were long and lonely in the lighthouse, but it was a good job and it kept them hidden.

"Lock up when you leave. I'll see you tomorrow. You know to call if you need help."

David nodded on his way out. He would take the ferry that connected the island with the main land today. He didn't want to look scuffed up when he got to the nightclub. It was early yet and by the time he reached the club, it would be noon—plenty of time to see Fred before he had some fun. No one but Fred knew that he and Jay were silent partners. Very silent partners but still partners.

David hummed as the ferry carried him to shore where Jason

would be waiting with the blue Buick. David greeted him as he put his things in the back seat. Making note, as usual, that the car was full of gas, he waved as he pulled out and soon was on the road to Boston. Turning on the radio to his favorite station, he listened to Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, and Bill Haley and the Comets as he and his car ate up the road, tapping his fingers on the steering wheel in time to *Shake, Rattle, and Roll* or *Papa Loves Mambo* or *Young at Heart*. He felt his heart lighten as he drove from the country to the big city of Boston. He was going to enjoy his stay at the club to the utmost. He only hoped Janie was available. She was his favorite waitress and always ready for him and his rough brand of sex and he needed a release in the worst way. Janie could take whatever he gave her and love it. He began humming to the music until, finally, he was singing along, anticipating a wonderful night.