

"A raw, intense, and authentic experience that pulls back the curtain on a world most will never see."

JACK CARR

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Red Sky Mourning*

A THRILLER

SILENT HORIZONS

CHAD WITH JACK STEWART

ROBICHAUX

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SAVING AZIZ*

Praise for *Silent Horizons*

Silent Horizons is more than just a military thriller; it's an unflinching look at the clandestine warriors who operate in the most dangerous environments, setting the stage for the battles that follow. Robichaux and Stewart deliver a raw, intense, and authentic experience that pulls back the curtain on a world most will never see. A read you will not forget!

Jack Carr, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Red Sky Mourning*

Silent Horizons gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at the dark side of special operations and the toll it takes on those who navigate the battlefields of spiritual and mortal warfare. A riveting thriller you won't want to put down!

Shawn Ryan, former US Navy SEAL, CIA contractor, and host of *The Shawn Ryan Show*

Chad Robichaux's latest book, *Silent Horizons*, eloquently depicts a warrior's journey on and off the battlefield. It's the human side of the operator that hits hardest and resonates with my own experience. This book doesn't glorify war—it shows what it really means to those who live it. I'm proud to call Chad a friend and fellow warrior that's sharing his journey to help others—maybe even you.

Mike Glover, US Army Special Forces (Retired), founder of FieldCraft Survival and national bestselling author of *Prepared*

Propulsive and inspiring! Robichaux and Stewart clearly know firsthand the world of special operations and the toll it can take on those who serve. They also know how to keep you turning the pages! Absolutely fantastic storytelling.

Marc Cameron, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Bad River* and *Tom Clancy Red Winter*

Balancing commitment to family and commitment to the mission is a duty made harder by the secrecy surrounding clandestine operations and the work that feeds it. In *Silent Horizons*, Robichaux and Stewart show what reaches deep into the soul of every operator and reveal what many never get to say about the missions of elite operators.

Marcus Luttrell, US Navy SEAL (Retired) and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Lone Survivor*

Real experience, valuable lessons, and exhilarating moments are captured in the pages of *Silent Horizons*. It's uniquely told through the lens of fiction by Robichaux and Stewart, men who have survived the pinnacle of military operations. But this is more than just a good story; it's an opportunity to see into the lives of those who chose sacrifice over peace and comfort.

Chadd Wright, former US Navy SEAL, ultrarunner, and founder of the Three of Seven Project

If you're looking for a military thriller that strips away the gloss and glamour, *Silent Horizons* will feel like an intense debriefing from a covert mission. There are few men, and fewer authors, who have walked in those shoes, and the authenticity is undeniable. This is what it's really like when you're operating behind enemy lines and carrying the weight of family and unspoken duty on your shoulders.

Andy Stumpf, US Navy SEAL (Retired) and host of the *Cleared Hot* podcast

The tension, the terminology, the thrills, the tradecraft—this is as real as secret intel ops get. Chad and Jack have opened a door to a world only a select few get to see. You won't be able to stop turning pages.

Andrew Bustamante, former CIA intelligence officer and founder of EverydaySpy

Silent Horizons is an amazing, heart-pounding thriller, but it's so much more. It's a deep dive into the personal battles we fight when the mission ends and the reality of life as a husband, father, son, brother, and teammate kicks in. I still often miss the relentless focus and comradery of a career in special operations, and this novel really tells the whole story.

Jason Redman, US Navy SEAL (Retired), *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Trident* and *Overcome*

Silent Horizons is a high-octane thriller that plunges readers into the gritty, dangerous world of special operations with breathtaking authenticity. Foster Quinn isn't just another action hero—he's a man grappling with loss, loyalty, and the weight of responsibility, making him as emotionally compelling as he is tactical. If you're looking for a gripping military thriller that offers both emotional depth and tactical brilliance, this is it. Fans of Brad Thor and Mark Greaney will love this book!

Ryan Steck, *The Real Book Spy* and author of *Gone Dark*

This story is brimming with authenticity and a jet-fueled pace. Robichaux and Stewart crushed it with *Silent Horizons*. I can't wait to see what these two write next.

Connor Sullivan, acclaimed author of *Wolf Trap*

Silent Horizons is a gut-punch of a thriller. Yes, it's an adrenaline rush of authentic action and suspense that takes us inside the secret world of special operations, but Robichaux and Stewart have also managed something much deeper (and more difficult): an exploration of the warrior spirit, the meaning of honor, and the costs borne by those who serve. Force Recon Marine Foster Quinn is the real deal.

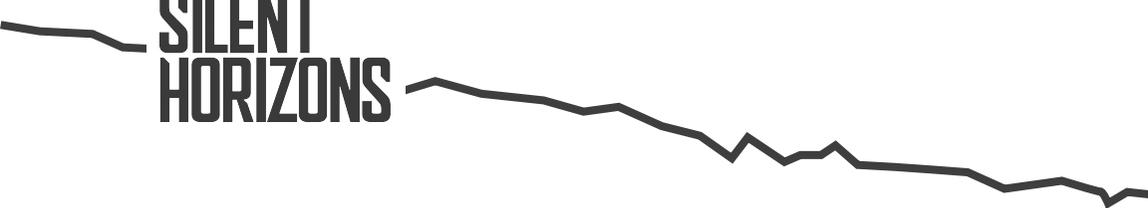
David McCloskey, former CIA analyst and author of *The Seventh Floor*

Silent Horizons captures the unrelenting intensity of covert operations while honoring the quiet struggles that follow. Robichaux and Stewart have crafted a story that resonates deeply with anyone who's operated in the shadows. This is fiction, but it hits close to home for those of us who have lived it.

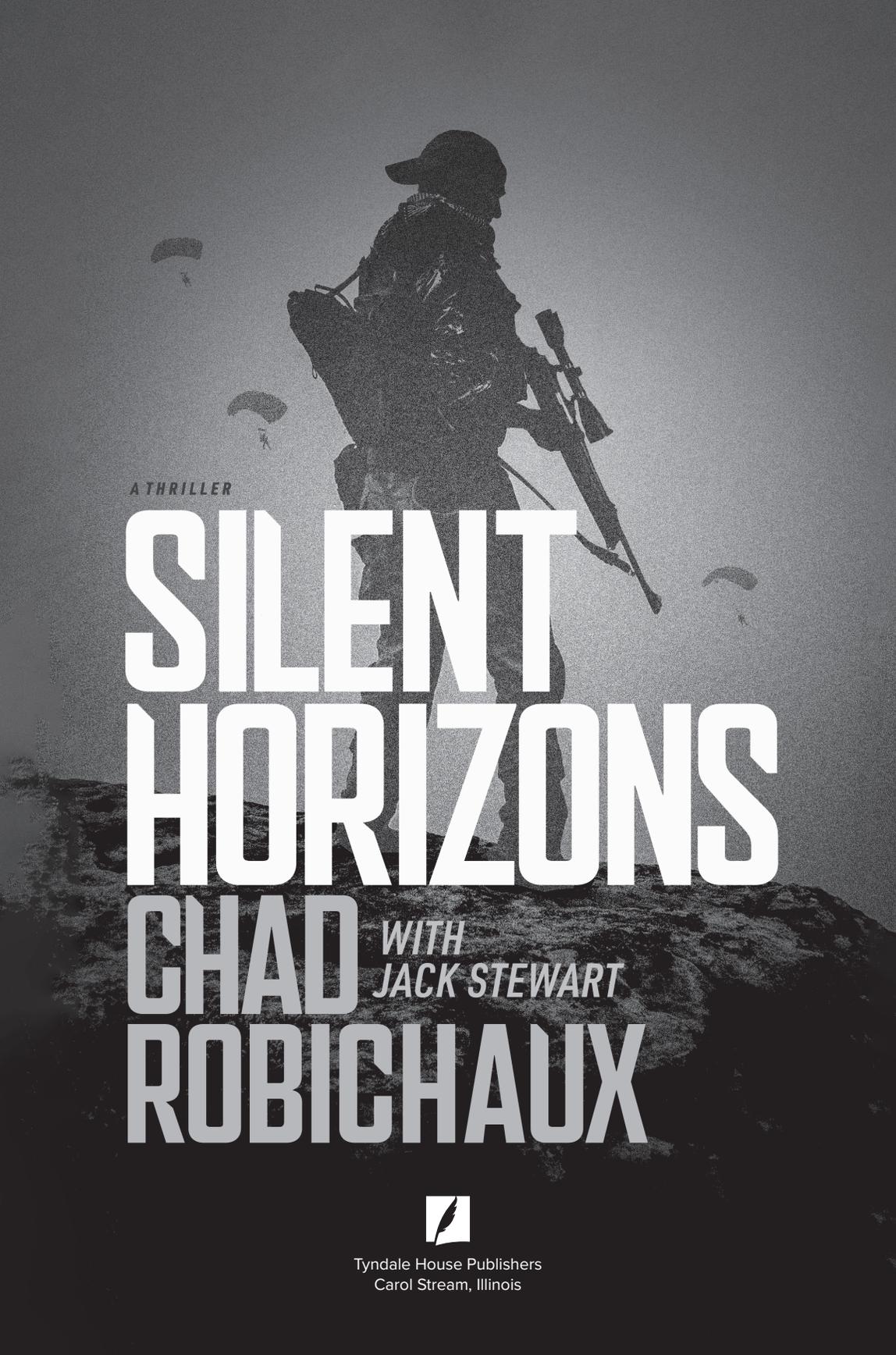
Sarah Adams, Former CIA targeting officer and author of *Benghazi: Know Thy Enemy*

Silent Horizons is an inspiring, fearless look at the unsung heroes of covert warfare. It takes you inside the missions but also into the hearts of the men who have to leave it all behind both when they deploy and again when they come home.

Mark Smith, CEO of Smith & Wesson



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HORIZONS**



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CHAD *WITH*
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ROBICHAUX



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Every man and woman who has put on the uniform and served honorably deserves special recognition for the roles they played in the defense of our nation. While it would be impossible for us to name every person who has done so within the pages of this book, we chose to honor the legacies of four individuals who impacted our lives:

Sergeant Foster L. Harrington

United States Marine Corps

Force Recon Marine

3rd Force Reconnaissance Company, 4th Marine Division

September 5, 1973–September 20, 2004

Sergeant Major Robert J. Cottle

United States Marine Corps

Force Recon Marine

4th Force Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Marine Division

February 18, 1965–March 24, 2010

Chief Special Warfare Operator William “Ryan” Owens

United States Navy

Navy SEAL

East Coast–based Special Warfare unit

March 5, 1980–January 29, 2017

Commander Seth A. Stone

United States Navy

Navy SEAL

Special Operations Command Pacific

September 17, 1976–September 30, 2017

From time to time, God causes men to be born—and thou art one of them—who have a lust to go abroad at the risk of their lives and discover news—to-day it may be of far-off things, to-morrow of some hidden mountain, and the next day of some near-by men who have done a foolishness against the State. These souls are very few; and of these few, not more than ten are of the best.

RUDYARD KIPLING

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

MATTHEW 26:14-16

Prologue

FOSTER QUINN STOOD AT THE EDGE of the fifty-meter pool with his toes wrapped around the bullnose tile coping. He wore only goggles and a pair of sand-colored UDT swim shorts with the front pull strap cinched tight around his trim waist, and he shivered as the wind whipped down the hills from the north and crossed the exposed pool deck. He carried one hundred and ninety pounds of lean muscle on his six-foot frame, and the just-completed twelve-week course had erased any remaining fat, as if God Himself had sculpted a model Marine from stone.

“Enter the water!” The instructor’s voice boomed from over his shoulder.

Foster took one last breath and filled his lungs with the crisp morning air, then stepped off the deck into the deep end. Despite the water’s bitter temperature, he felt instant relief at being insulated from the wind. The ten-pound brick he held in both hands

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carried him quickly to the bottom. There, he set it on the solid line of miniature black tiles and started swimming while pushing it in front of him.

Nice and slow, he reminded himself.

He knew it was counterintuitive to move slowly when the objective of the exercise was to reach the other side without surfacing for a breath. Slower meant he had to hold his breath longer, but if he moved faster, his body would burn through his oxygen quicker. The only way he could complete the test was by remaining calm, and he forced himself to look down at the black tiles and ignore the wall that seemed impossibly far away. He tamped back the fear that was certain to cause his heart rate to spike.

Left . . . right . . . pull . . . relax.

Pushing the brick out like a spear, he scissored his legs and pulled with his free hand in a modified sidestroke. It moved him the greatest distance while exerting the least amount of energy. Nothing could be easier. And yet, it was so hard.

Left . . . right . . . pull . . . relax.

The pool's bottom sloped upward, and despite his best effort to ignore the enormity of the task, his mind registered the first of several landmarks that keyed him in on his progress.

Fifteen meters, he thought, then he exhaled a thin stream of air to relieve some pressure on his lungs. His feet continued churning at the same slow cadence he had set out on, and his free arm continued pulling him onward.

The brick slid across a black line perpendicular to his path, and again his mind announced its significance.

Twenty-five meters.

He exhaled a second stream of air, more forcefully than the last, and the bubbles shot to the surface as the fear he had kept at bay beat against his resolve.

You're almost there.

His heart thundered in his chest, its sound drowning out everything else around him in his liquid cocoon.

It's too far!

Left . . . right . . . pull . . . relax.

Each stroke was a battle of wills, pitting the hardened and competent Marine against the terrified boy held hostage in his mind. While one fought with each pull to reach the objective, the other fought to give up. All he had to do was let go of the weight, push off the bottom, and he could taste the fresh air once more. He could be free from his watery prison before it became his watery grave. All he needed to do was give up.

The end was now in view, but before he could rejoice in being nearly two-thirds of the way across the pool, his vision narrowed until only the black-tile line remained.

Nice and slow, the Marine pressed.

But the frightened boy countered, *You won't make it!*

Left . . . right . . . pull . . . relax.

Foster's body screamed at him to give up. His chest spasmed and expanded, trying to draw breath into his lungs, but he kept his mouth clamped shut. His heart raced faster, fueled by the trickle of adrenaline that had become a torrent. He moaned and let another burst of air escape to the surface, but still he kept moving forward. One kick. Then the next. One pull. Then another.

Forty meters.

He was almost there, but his vision continued closing in on him, leaving him with only a soda straw to look through. He no longer sensed the other Marines around him or felt the sting of the frigid water and the rough plaster beneath the brick. He felt only a warm, comforting embrace as his thrumming heart consumed every other sensation. Even the fear that had gripped him seemed to have vanished.

Forty-five meters.

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Suddenly, his vision returned. It was as if somebody had flipped a switch and turned on the lights, unveiling the wall just in front of his face. His shoulders sagged with relief, and the tension he carried in his muscled upper back dissolved into the water around him as his classmates on either side surfaced. He reached out with both hands, inching the brick closer to the pool's edge, then stopped.

Fifty meters.

The frightened boy was gone.

Foster twisted his body and placed both feet on the wall, then pushed off with the brick stretched out in front of him. Even starved for oxygen, his powerful legs propelled him another five meters before the weight carried him back to the bottom. One leg. Then the other. Slowly, he scissored his legs together and resumed his swim.

Left . . . right . . . pull . . . relax.

He had completed the task, but something compelled him to go farther. It wasn't vanity or boastful arrogance, but the discovery of an untapped reservoir of determination. Unbidden, the words of the Recon Creed echoed in his mind and drowned out even the deafening cacophony of his heart's beating.

Exceeding beyond the limitations set down by others shall be my goal . . .

One kick. Then the next. One stroke. Then another. Foster pulled and pushed his body farther along the black line, beckoning him back to the deep from where he'd come.

Sixty-five meters.

To quit, to surrender, to give up is to fail. To be a Recon Marine is to surpass failure . . .

BOOM!

The sound resonated through the water and seemed out of place as the bottom again flattened out, but Foster just tilted his head forward and sighted in on the black line that was his goal. It had never been his ambition to break the record. He hadn't dropped

into the deep end intending to go more than fifty meters. It was as if he felt a direct connection to those who came before him—to James Roosevelt and Merritt Edson, to Samuel Blair Griffith and Alan Shapley.

Foster Quinn was a Recon Marine.

I shall be the example . . .

He opened his mouth to shout in triumph as he reached the seventy-five-meter mark, but . . .

BOOM! BOOM!

He squinted with confusion, and his world went dark.



Foster bolted upright in his bed and gasped at the booming sound still echoing in his ears. It took him a moment to realize where he was—in his one-bedroom flat in Isfahan, Iran—and he clamped his hand down over his racing heart and clawed at the matted hair on his chest.

The nightmares had become more frequent, but he didn't have the luxury of slowing his frenetic pace to figure out why. Maybe it was just stress. Or maybe it was because he was alone, deep behind enemy lines, and subconsciously longed to be a member of a team again—just one of many.

But now, it didn't really matter. Now, it was just him.

Just one man.

Alone.

BOOM!

Foster looked left and right at the shadows in his room, identifying and dismissing them. His heart rate slowed, but his lungs burned as if he had just surfaced from the weighted underwater swim, not from the dream of its distant memory.

He swung his legs out from under the thin bedsheet and set his bare feet on the dusty floor. Even in the dead of night, the ornate

ceramic tile still retained a modest amount of heat from the previous day. He wiggled his toes, almost surprised to discover the tile's smooth touch and not the pool's rough plaster.

Groaning, he leaned forward and rested his forearms on his thighs, a thin stream of light falling on the bracelet Haili had made for him. He steepled his fingers and stared at the solid ground underfoot as if expecting to see the same black line that had beckoned him to test his limits. There was no line, but he knew he was still on its path.

Foster Quinn might not be a Force Reconnaissance Marine any longer, but he still embodied the same principles.

Honor. Perseverance. Spirit. Heart.

Those were the things that had guided him during his twelve years in the Marine Corps. Just like that day in the pool, Foster set the standard in everything he did. And he demanded the same measure of excellence from his teammates.

Yet here you are. All alone.

BOOM! BOOM!

The loud banging on the front door downstairs returned his focus wholly to the present, and he rose silently from the twin mattress and crossed quickly to the window. Pulling aside the rug he had hung in front to insulate his room from the sun's brutal rays, he peered through the dirty glass onto the street below. Two red Toyota Hilux Vigo trucks were parked directly beneath his window, and a quick scan in either direction revealed similar trucks with armed men in the back at both ends of the block.

He considered going for the hunting rifle he had locked away in a case across the room. But there were too many of them, and he was just one man.

The racing heart and crippling fear returned, plunging him once more into the deep end. But, like he had done in the Camp Pendleton pool, he confronted his fear head-on.

Nice and slow, he thought.

Foster's heart rate dipped as he drew a long slow breath in through his nose and held it for a beat before exhaling. Like any good Marine, he wanted to fight. Just over thirty years old, he was no longer the chiseled specimen he had been after completing the Basic Reconnaissance Course, though he was still in remarkable shape. But he knew it was a fight he wouldn't win. He had made his way into Iran under a nonofficial cover, and he would use it to get himself out.

The pounding on the door resumed, and Foster resigned himself to his fate and turned to the chair in the corner where he had draped his clothes. He stepped into a pair of faded jeans and pinched the coin pocket's left rivet to activate a distress beacon. It would be active for an hour before self-destructing and becoming nothing more than an inert fleck of metal and silicone. He pulled a partially buttoned solid blue shirt over his head, then slipped his feet into a pair of leather boots.

The door crashed open, and Foster slowly turned for the stairs as his heart pounded in time with the beating of feet running up the worn treads. When the first man appeared, he feigned shock and held up his hands.

"Don't shoot," he said, letting a quiver of fear break through his otherwise calm baritone voice.

The first man reached the top of the stairs and swung the butt of his rifle up into Foster's chin. His head snapped back, and stars ringed his vision, but he had expected the strike and had already begun moving backward to soften the blow. It still hurt like the dickens, but it hadn't knocked him out cold.

A second man reached the landing and darted around the first to grab Foster's arms and wrench them behind his back. The man was strong, but his technique was flawed. Had there not been more men scrambling up the steps in reinforcement, Foster could have broken the hold and turned the tables on his assailant.

"Why are you doing this?" Foster pleaded, letting a hint of fear

and confusion intermix with genuine pain. But he knew why, and he had expected somebody to come for him eventually.

They yelled at him in Farsi, but his mastery of the language was marginal at best, and he only caught bits and pieces of what had them worked into a frenzy. Unfortunately, he caught enough to know his fears were warranted. Somebody had ratted him out.

He'd thought that somebody was a friend.

"You are an American spy," a third man said in surprisingly good English. He stepped forward and placed a thick hood over Foster's head.

"What? A spy?" He shook his head against the rough burlap. "N-n-no," he stammered. "I'm just a hunter!"

"No! You are a spy!"

An invisible fist slammed into Foster's stomach, and he doubled over at the blow, despite half expecting it. The punch wasn't very well placed, and he suspected the offending wrist had probably taken the worst of it. But it still took the breath out of him.

He opened his mouth under the hood, trying in vain to inhale, but the punch had seized his diaphragm. His heart rate ticked up with another injection of adrenaline, but so far, he had kept the frightened boy banished from his mind. The Recon Marine was still in charge, and after only a few seconds, his heartbeat slowed again.

Unseen hands gripped his upper arms and the back of his belt, lifting him slightly off the ground as they carried him to the stairs leading down into the warehouse. He shook his head and continued asserting his innocence, slowly twisting and jerking his body to resist his captors' efforts to abscond with him. He knew enough about how this usually went to abandon hope of surviving through the night.

They would beat him and question him, then torture him and interrogate him until he gave them whatever answers they sought. Whether at the behest of MOIS or worse, in the end, they would kill him and dump his corpse somewhere public as a gruesome warning.

Unless Seth got the message.

“Please,” he moaned. “I’m just a hunter. I’m not here to hurt you. Please, let me go.”

“Just a hunter!” the third man scoffed.

Foster protested, “Call Director General Ghorbani! He’ll confirm I’m only a guide—”

The man struck him in the side of the head, ending the conversation as they reached the warehouse floor. Foster felt the cool night air wash over him as they carried him through the front door and out onto the street, where he heard only the soft pattering of a truck’s idling engine through the thick burlap over his head. He knew what was about to happen.

“You’re no guide . . . *Foster Quinn*,” the menacing voice said in his ear. He had the presence of mind to recognize that the man had used his true name, confirming his fears that somebody had discovered who he really was. There would be no chance of talking his way out of this.

He just needed to survive. At least long enough for Seth to send help from Abu Dhabi.

A rifle struck the back of his head, and that hope disappeared along with the world around him.

