

An American consulting firm sent a team of ex-special forces to South America to secure financial investments with a ruthless native business partner. Caught up in the country's turmoil, they become involved with a local woman. With their help she attempts to escape the truth of who she is only to become engulfed in lies and her terrifying truth.

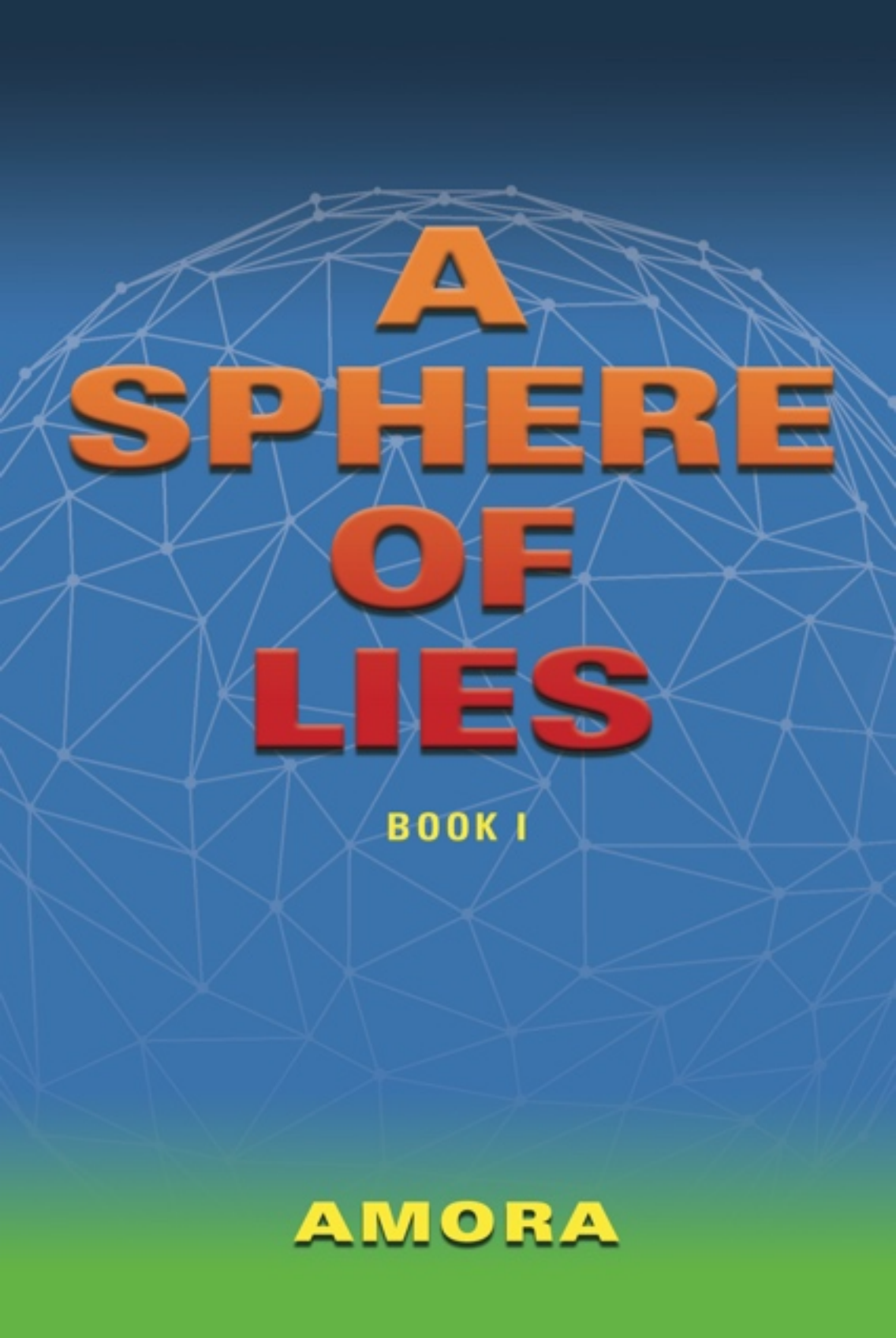
A SPHERE OF LIES

by Amora

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**A
SPHERE
OF
LIES**

BOOK I

AMORA

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Chapter 1

It was early morning and Marcus was beginning to stir. He stretched out his arm to feel the bed beside him, but Karen was not there. It was a scary thought to be alone. The idea tore at his heart leaving him confused. Marcus realized it was difficult to let go of someone who had been by his side through some of the most difficult times of his life. He found that letting go of that emotional commitment was hard and he was left wondering which direction to take; whether to stay and fight for their relationship or move on and walk away.

Marcus never thought he would have to fight for this relationship but now he realizes he may lose her, he tried not to panic. He opened his eyes and a sense of relief overcame him when he saw Karen dressing in front of the mirror. Marcus always believed he and Karen would end up together forever, but life doesn't always turn out as expected.

Today was the day Karen was leaving to New York for an internship in a large marketing firm. It was the dream of the big city life that she always wanted. Not Marcus, he preferred the small-town outdoor country life where he could hunt and fish. Marcus believes he loves Karen because she was there during the time in his life when he needed someone the most. Karen was his rock whenever things fell apart around him, and for that reason Marcus felt he owed her his support.

"Hey what are you doing?" Marcus asked as he rolled over.

Karen turned and smiled at him, "What does it look like I'm doing? I'm getting dressed."

"Why didn't you wake me?" Marcus sat up and waited for a response.

"Because if I did, you wouldn't have let me get dressed. You know that I have a plane to catch."

"Yeah, but we could have taken care of business first."

“No Marcus. I have a lot of things I need to do before I catch my plane. You know I don’t have time for this. We took care of our good-byes last night. This morning it is all about me getting on that plane. Besides I don’t want to wake up Maggie.”

“Hey my mom isn’t going to hear anything she hasn’t heard before.” Marcus straightened his sheet. “Well then tell me why you won’t let me take you to the airport?”

“Because then you will give me a million reasons why I shouldn’t go when you know full well that this job is the most important thing to me. I want to give it my full attention and I can’t do that with you as a distraction.”

“Oh, so that’s what I am, a distraction?”

“Don’t start Marcus. You know what I mean. Besides I want to leave on a good note. I’ll be back before you know it.” Karen walked over to Marcus to give him a kiss good bye.

“You know you don’t have to get messy. You could just use those luscious lips.” Marcus smiled and moved his eyebrows up and down.

“Forget it Marcus. I’ll be all yours the next time you see me. And then I’ll make you a very happy man.” Karen smiled and started to turn to walk away but before she could Marcus caught her arm.

“Get over here” he told her as he pulled her into bed with him.

“Stop Marcus” Karen yelled as she hit him on the shoulder. “I told you I have to go and I’m going.”

Marcus gave her a little kiss on the lips. “Go on then get out of here, you owe me and don’t think I’ll forget.” He let her up and smacked her on her rear-end before she could get away.

“Marcus, stop it that hurt.”

“Yeah, well it is either that or getting messy.”

“Marcus stop I don’t want to fight.”

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“Then don’t go. Stay here and marry me.” Marcus immediately realized that it probably sounded like an act of desperation to pop the question as she was trying to leave. Perhaps it was, but it was too late to take it back.

“Stop it Marcus. If this internship opportunity works out for me, why aren’t you willing to join me in a few months? We could get an apartment and you could easily find a job.”

Marcus looked at her and thought about what she said even though he had no intention of following her. He asked, “How long do you think I could take living in a big city?”

“Marcus, this is everything I worked for.”

Marcus realized he was being selfish so he said, “I know that’s why you should go. I’m sure you’re going to knock them dead.”

Karen smiled, finally getting the approval she wanted. “You think so?”

“Yes, that’s why I think you should go.”

Karen smiled, “Okay, I am going to make you so happy the next time I see you.”

“That doesn’t take care of me right now so you better go before I tear your clothes off.”

Karen blew Marcus a kiss as she walked out the door. She left him lying in bed contemplating the things that prevented him from seriously considering her offer. But then perhaps, being apart would strengthen their relationship. Marcus rolled over and thought *who am I kidding? Long distance relationships never work.*

**

It had been two weeks since Karen left for New York. When the phone rang Marcus was sure it was Karen but before answering he realized he had not missed her. It struck him as odd, but he was afraid that it might be true. Reluctantly, Marcus answered the phone only to be surprised when he heard a man’s voice. “Pack a bag,” and then the caller hung up on the other end.

Whenever Marcus received a call to pack a bag, no details were ever given and the men were trained not to ask. It was part of the job. They never knew the details or location of the mission until they showed up at the rally point. Marcus' packed bag consisted of two days of clothing and toiletries crammed into a small overnight duffle bag. It was not much but Marcus never worried because he knew everything, he needed would be provided during the intel brief.

Marcus was ready to head out when he heard a knock on the front door. He was heading up the stairs from his basement living area when the front door opened. Karen's faint voice called out "Marcus, Maggie."

As Marcus reached the top of the stairs, he called out to her, "Hey, what are you doing here? I thought that you'd still be in New York?"

"Yes, I was, but I had to come back to take of a few things. I'm leaving again in two weeks." Reluctant to give further details, Karen changed the subject. "Where are you headed?"

Marcus set his bag on the floor and placed his keys on the counter to free his hands. Pulling Karen close to him Marcus placed his arms around her waist and planted his hands across her rear-end. "Do you remember telling me to wait until the next time we were together?" he said, and then gently kissed her on the lips.

Karen returned the kiss then responded, "No, this is not the next time I was talking about."

Marcus let her go and pulled himself away. "You've got to be kidding me. I haven't seen you for two weeks." He quickly grabbed her pulling her hips against his groin so she could see how he responded to their kiss. "Now come on, I've got to go and the last thing you want to do is leave me like this."

At that moment, his grin made him so attractive to Karen that she almost gave in. But she was used to getting her way and she was not about to waiver. "Sorry," she told him as she pressed her finger to his lips. "But think how great it will be when you return. Anyhow, I don't want you getting tired of me and if we do it all the time that is exactly what is going to happen."

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There were plenty of times Marcus had strayed in their relationship, which never really bothered Karen. They both had an understanding that they were not married. Recently though, Marcus wanted to change that. He was tired of meaningless encounters, so he was trying to focus on Karen. However, it did not seem to be going the way he expected. In frustration, Marcus picked up his keys and bag, “I am getting tired of being played. I’m a grown man with needs that I can’t handle on my own.”

At that moment Maggie, Marcus’ mother, walked in the front door carrying her granddaughter Mattie. Marcus’ sister Veronica and her husband Eddie were in a deadly car wreck that took both of their lives leaving Maggie to raise their daughter Mattie.

As soon as the little girl saw Marcus, she reached out her arms to him. “Mik, Mik,” she cried, which was the closest thing to his name the two-year-old could muster.

“There’s my big girl,” Marcus said as he took her from Maggie.

Maggie eyed Karen and asked, “Am I interrupting something?”

Karen gave a curt response, “No,” then glared at Marcus as if to warn him not to repeat their conversation.

“Nope,” Marcus said as he kissed his mom’s cheek.

As Maggie eyed the bag and keys on the counter she asked, “Are you going somewhere?”

“Oh, well yeah I was just headed out for a few days.” Marcus managed to say as he kissed Mattie’s hands while she played with his mouth.

“You too?” Maggie turned and looked at Karen.

“No not me, just him.”

“Where?” Maggie continued to probe.

“Just a little rest and relaxation,” Marcus replied.

Maggie did not like the sound of that; it was too familiar. So familiar that it caused a pain in her chest. Maggie was afraid because she knew exactly what that response meant. Not wanting to say anything else, she kept quiet.

Marcus set Mattie on the floor and kissed her with exaggerated puckered lips. He told her, "I'll see you when I get back." Then gave Mattie another kiss on the top of her head. Marcus loved his niece, and as the man of the house he felt he was her protector since the death of his sister and brother-in-law. Even though Maggie was a strong woman, Marcus felt the need to take care of her as well.

It was hard for Marcus to keep all of the facts of his trip from Maggie. He knew Maggie believed that sometimes keeping a secret was just as bad as telling a lie. Marcus did not want to cause a confrontation with Maggie, after all she is his mother and he would do anything to keep from hurting her.

Marcus took Karen's hand and looked into her eyes. *Is this really the woman I want to spend the rest of my life with?* It was a question he was beginning to struggle with more often than he cared to admit. He let go of Karen as he moved toward the door to pick up his bag and keys, and then he gave Maggie another kiss on her cheek.

Maggie looked directly into his eyes and said, "Baby" as she pointed her finger at him.

"Yeah, yeah mom; If you haven't noticed, I'm a grown man."

"It doesn't matter how old you are. You will always be my baby," she told him with a scolding tone as he walked out the door. Maggie turned sharply towards Karen and gave her a look that let Karen know what she was thinking. Rather than speaking her mind, Maggie only said, "Are you still here?"

Karen pointed at the door, "I was just leaving" then rushed out after Marcus.

Karen walked up on Marcus sitting in his jeep. "Baby, B-a-b-y," she said in a very sarcastic tone as she put her face through the window of the jeep. "Yes, you are a grown man and I'm glad to see you finally stood up to her. It was about time. It isn't as though you are some teenage boy."

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“Get over it Karen.” Marcus never appreciated Karen’s resentment over his relationship with his mother. “She can call me whatever she wants no matter how old I am. I would have thought you got that by now.” And right now, he did not want to hear it. Deciding to take the conversation in a different direction, Marcus said, “I might always be her baby but I can be your baby on a whole other level.”

Karen kissed him on the lips and told him, “Just think about what you are going to get when you come back. That should make you a happy man.”

“NO,” Marcus spat back. “It would have made me happy if you would have taken care of business before I had to leave. And I am not talking about giving me a kiss good bye. By the way when did you get back?”

Without thinking Karen said, “I got back this past week.” Immediately regretting what she said as she bit her lip.

“Why didn’t you call me? Why wait until now to come and see me?”

“I told you I have a million things to get done before I go back to New York.”

“This is bullshit Karen. It’s getting old really fast.”

“Oh Marcus, come on you love me and you know it.”

“Yes, I do.” He smiled as he backed out of the driveway. “But that can only take you so far. I’ll call you when I get back.”

Karen waved at him, “Two weeks that’s all you get then I’m heading back to New York.”

**

As soon as the Karen and Marcus left the house, Maggie picked up the phone. She was upset and knew exactly who to blame. Maggie stood at the window waiting for Marcus to leave. As soon as he drove away, she dialed the number on a card she held tight in her hand. It took a few rings until someone picked up and when they did Maggie said, “I want to talk to Robert.”

The man on the other end recognized Maggie’s voice. He calmly said, “Hello Maggie, Bear’s tied up right now.”

When he tried to explain Maggie became irate. “Well then untie him,” she demanded. Anyone who knew Maggie knew that it was better to give her what she wanted or get someone who could, otherwise it would be a futile argument.

“Let me see what I can do,” the gentleman told her.

After a few moments a rough voice came across on the line. “Yeah Maggie what can I do for you?”

Wasting no time Maggie asked, “Where is Baby going and don’t give me any nonsense either.”

Sounding annoyed on the other end Bear replied, “Well did you ask him.” Maggie knew getting answers from him was going to be like pulling teeth. Bear was not someone to give out information, especially when it had something to do with his line of work. And when Bear answered a question, it was with a question.

“I’m asking you. So don’t play games with me.” Not knowing for certain, Maggie went with her gut. “I know that you’ve recruited him to run all over the place with you, on your missions.” There was a pause. “So help me Robert if you get that kid into trouble you are going to answer to me.”

Not wanting to answer right away, Bear waited a moment, “Listen Maggie, I did not recruit Marcus. If you hadn’t noticed your son is a grown man. Where he goes is up to him. Neither you nor I have any control over him. He’s going to make his own way in life no matter what we say.”

Maggie paused, trying not to cry. It was a hard fact to accept, but she had one question that had to be answered. “Robert just tell me if he is working with you?”

It was a hard question to answer because Bear knew how she felt. So, he made it quick and simple, “Yes.”

Maggie never felt more afraid. Unable to say another word, she hung up the phone.

The guys in the office waited for Bear’s reaction. He was quiet for a moment, only a moment. Bear slammed down the phone with a loud grunt then yelled, “Fuck!”

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Marcus had recently begun working for a consulting firm, C&C Inc. known as the company as the employees like to refer to. The founders of this corporation consisted of Robert Sampson, Christopher Crassus and Victor Vance, Marcus' deceased father. In the beginning it was the vision of all three men that led the way to what C&C Inc. had become, a multibillion-dollar operation. But today, it was Crassus who was creating a new frontier.

The company's current focus was on securing a high volume of Department of Defense government contracts, although they did have a few private sector clients. The company's management consisted mostly of ex-military leaders who were no strangers to life threatening missions. As a visionary, Crassus was an expert in using everyone's skill sets to accomplish his goals.

The company was not unlike a military organization. They were structured into operations, intelligence and support. Their missions focused on representing U.S. business interests on a global scale.

After Victor's death Robert Sampson, known as Bear, no longer wanted to participate in dangerous covert missions or the company's day-to-day operations. As team leader, he retired from the dangerous missions to only taking Intel operations. He decided to lead Intel missions consisting of strictly in and out, leaving no trace of ever being on the ground. Or delivery and recovery of high value assets, and ensuring those assets were delivered to the appropriate parties.

The company's compound was a large building approximately 20,000 square feet and filled with state-of-the-art equipment. It contained open cubicles in different areas of the building that separated different workout sections. With only one enclosed office space, there was not much privacy for management to conduct business. But it did not matter because this facility was not for suits. Its primary goal was mission readiness and keeping employees physically fit. There were four caged rings for hand-to-hand combat, seven heavy bags, speed bags, and reflex boxing punching bags. There was also an area with weights and numerous

strengthening workout machines and two separate rock-climbing walls. The opposite sides of the rock walls were converted into cliffhanging grip ledges. There was a couple of climbing dynos and campus boards. At the far end of the building four free-leg hanging ropes dangled from the ceiling. There was also a tractor tire for moving from the front of the building to the back and large battle ropes for fitness training.

The outdoor grounds consist of shooting ranges for both handguns and rifles. It has cross-country trails that ran for miles through the woods. To the right there was a small airfield with several hangers that held a couple of small jets and helicopters. Looking across the grounds it looked very much like a military basic training camp. However, the company was not interested in training new recruits. To make it through these gates you have to already be a top caliber individual with the right skill sets. This facility was for testing mission readiness.

When it came to testing, individuals who did not score high enough, were not cleared for mission readiness. It was each team member's responsibility to keep physically fit. This facility helped them do just that. It made the company's programs more viable. However, the physical aspect was only part of the company's mission capabilities.

Logistics was the major key to a team's success. The birth of a plan began months in advance and took a lot of foresight. Many players were involved. Once the company leaders devised the plan, key players were contacted. Those players had to be physically prepared. They were given two days of testing. Once testing began, all team members remained at the compound until everyone tested mission ready. It was a demanding organization, but the life of each member depended on the competency and physical capabilities of each member.

The company compensated their employees for their physical abilities and specific skill sets to ensure the success of the mission. A team member could easily live a whole year off of the salary of one mission. However, most of these men were not in the business for money but for the pure adrenaline rush.

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Gravel flew into the air as Marcus pulled in the parking lot. As he walked up to the front doors, he saw a familiar face eastside of the building.

“Hurry your ass up Marcus! Your girlfriend has two minutes on you,” Rick Stone, but everyone called him Stone, yelled. He was a big man and the years showed on his face. He stood tall with a clipboard and stopwatch looking out towards the woods. This man’s one and only job was to test each team member. Each member had to go through him prior to receiving mission ready status. If you did not pass, Stone would not sign off and you would stay grounded. Then it was up to him to drill you until you did pass; which to most team members was pure torture.

“You got it Stone, give me a sec and I’ll be right out,” Marcus yelled.

Marcus pushed through the glass doors and immediately pulled off his shirt. But before he could run back outside, he heard a voice from the office.

“Marcus get your ASS over here. NOW!” It was Bear. Before Marcus had a chance to respond, Bear had already turned and walked back into the office.

Coming through the doors Marcus asked, “What’s up?”

“What the FUCK do you think is up?”

Marcus looked confused. “I have no idea that’s why I asked.”

Bear was obviously upset, and when he turned Marcus realized he had just added fuel to the fire. “Listen here you smart ass, didn’t I tell you to let Maggie know where you were working? The last thing I want is that woman being hurt and getting pissed off at me! She went through enough hell when your dad and I went on missions all over the damn place.” Frustrated, Bear turned and rubbed his hand through his hair. “For now, get your ass outside.” Bear yelled pointing his finger at Marcus, “But when I tell you to fucking do something, you do it. Now get the hell out of here!”

Marcus was smart enough to realize when not say another word. Marcus nodded his head in compliance. But as soon as Bear turned and headed back to his desk, Marcus ran out of the office.

Stone teased Marcus when he returned. “What the hell took you so long sweet cakes? Your girlfriend is probably on her way back by now.” Marcus took off without saying a word; he kept running in a steady pace towards the woods. “There are SIX flags and your color is GREEN,” Stone yelled as he wrote down Marcus’ starting time.

Marcus continued running and when he reached the outset of the woods, he saw several tactical hunting vests lined up in a row. Taking a quick glance for the vest with green tape, Marcus quickly reached down and grabbed it as he continued his stride towards the woods. It was a dense forest with a path that the team never used. Marcus put his arms through the vest and pulled a map out of a pocket. He only slowed down to ensure he was going in the right direction and then immediately picked up his pace towards the dense trees.

This was the fun part for Marcus. It was a game of speed and decisiveness and Marcus was good at it. On this particular run he was unfamiliar with the terrain but it was not long before he collected all six of his strategically placed flags. Quickly, Marcus began heading back when he saw sunlight between the trees and his teammate Willie. The other guys often referred to Willie and Marcus as girlfriends. Marcus was more serious, while Willie acted like a fool. Willie was always joking and finding the light heartedness in every situation. Willie and Marcus were closer in age than any of the other teammates. When it came to youthful agility, Willie was Marcus’ biggest competition, and they were always trying to outdo each other.

Marcus was fully aware that he had already beaten Willie’s time. Even though Willie had a head start it did not matter. As soon as Marcus saw Willie, he began to sprint. It was not until Willie heard the brush moving and Marcus’ heavy breathing that he looked back to see who was coming.

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“Oh hell no, you are not getting in front of me,” Willie yelled. That’s when both men began running full speed. They were running so fast that when they came to the finish line, they did not slow down as they passed Stone.

“Are you bitches done fornicating? If you are, get your asses to the showers. You’re holding up the rest of the team. And by the way, Willie you suck!”

Breathing heavily while looking back Willie asked, “Now Stone why do you have to do me like that?” Both men laughed as they opened the doors to the building leaving Stone with a scowl look on his face.

There were only five men going on this trip. Bear was team lead, who had served in the military’s special forces along with Max. If you were going to work under anyone, Bear was the man you wanted leading the team.

Max was a hard man to figure out. He was so quiet you never heard him coming or knew that he was there. Max was the man in the shadows, and he was Bear’s right hand. Bear never went on a mission without him.

Then there was Nicholas, referred to as Nick who had many hidden talents, with the mastery of languages as one of them. His talents included the ability to talk to people to get what he wanted. Nicholas was coming on this mission to finalize a partnership between C&C Inc. and a known ruthless foreign businessman.

The youngest members of the group were Willie and Marcus. Willie was just an all-around good guy that everyone loved. He was married with two boys and a baby on the way. Everyone who knew Willie joked about how he never gave his wife a chance to breathe. But when it came down to business, you could always expect 100 percent from him. Willie had served in the Marines for four years, which was good enough for him.

Finally, there was Marcus, the baby of the bunch. Thanks to the lessons from his father Victor, Marcus was just as competent as the other members of the team even though he had no military experience.

As soon as everyone was present Bear and Max came out of the office. Bear was chewing on an unlit cigar and said, “Come on ladies get your bags and load

them up, the plane's awaiting." Bear threw his bag over his shoulder and headed out of the building while everyone else followed right behind him.

Willie and Marcus sat next to each other on the plane. As Marcus reached above to set the air, Willie asked about Karen. "So, has your girl moved to New York yet?"

"She went out there to find a place to live but she's back now. She takes off again for good in two weeks."

"Ahh, you two bumping uglies till she leaves?" Marcus shot Willie a dirty look. "Oh, shit dude is she still playing you? Ahh man that's got to hurt. No scratch for that itch just the big bang." Willie spread both hands open like an explosion. "I'd have balls sagging to my knees if I had to go without. You know if she's afraid of it getting too loose, they have exercises to keep that shit tight. Or she could use those big sweet succulent kissers lips to put a smile on your face instead of this ugly frown." Willie puckered his lips as if he was going to give Marcus a kiss.

Marcus pushed Willie's shoulder in anger, "Shut up you asshole."

"Ahh shit, am I turning you on?" Willie laughed.

Bear looked over at Marcus and asked him, "When are you going to realize that girl isn't the woman for you?" Marcus did not have an answer so he ignored Bear. After all it did not matter what the others thought. What mattered was how he felt.

Once the plane was airborne, Bear moved to a seat with a small table whilst the other men quickly followed. Placing a map on the table Bear looked up at the others. "Gentlemen we are going down south to do an airlift of some precious cargo. We'll switch our ride in Panama. From there we'll be jumping on a helicopter to head a little further south. We'll get put down here in a small clearing surrounded by jungle. Willie and Marcus will take front and rear positions throughout our stroll. Don't worry about Max and me. We'll be back and forth between the two of you. Remember we are only there to observe and scope out the area. It's an in and out mission, as if we were never there." Bear turned and put his hand on Nicholas' shoulder. "Nick won't be on our stroll through the jungle. We'll meet up with him

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later. This is an easy extraction. I'm only taking an extra day through the jungle because I want to scope the area to make sure we don't end up having any unwanted company at the pickup point." Bear pointed to a speck on the map then continued. "The pickup location is a small town about 50 clicks from civilization surrounded by jungle. What might come out of that jungle is my only concern. They say everything is calm but we'll see. You each have a map so get familiar with it. The plan is to spend the night in the jungle and then hike into this small town for the pickup," he said pointing to the map. "The extraction is in two days just outside the little town. That gives us one day hiking with an overnight stay at the Hilton then an overnight stay at the Ritz to enjoy the locals. Any questions?"

Willie raised his hand, "Is the cargo legal?"

"Yes," Nick quickly responded giving Willie a disapproving glare.

Willie retorted, "Just asking boss man."

"Does anyone else have any questions?" Nick asked but no one responded.

Bear reiterated, "Okay then get familiar with that map, and try to get some shut eye. We'll go over everything again before landing. At that time hold your questions until the end of the recap."

It was ten minutes until landing when Max woke Willie and Marcus to come back to the table. With everyone gathered Bear recapped the game plan in greater detail. With more time to digest the mission's logistics, everyone had questions this time around.

Once they were set, Willie pulled out his wallet. "Everyone fork up a couple of bucks. Come on now. I am taking donations to get Marcus laid at the sweetest Cantina in town."

Marcus turned to Willie, "You idiot put your money away." By this time the other men had thrown a few dollars on the table.

"Ahh hell, I guess its charity for me." Willie laughed picking up the money off of the table.

Max quickly grabbed the money from Willie whilst Bear put both fists down and leaned over the table getting into Willie's face. "You're married," Bear said with squinted eyes.

"Yeah, yeah I know. I just have to be reminded sometimes and I just thought what goes down south, stays down south." Willie waited for a response but was only met with disapproving glares. "I guess not," Willie said with a chuckle.

A taxi greeted the men once the plane landed. They were taken to a helipad where a helicopter waited. Each man received a small pack with everything needed for an overnight stay in the jungle. Their weapons consisted of an assault rifle with four additional magazines and a tactical combat bowie knife, except for Max. He was given a sniper's rifle, along with a large target scope capable of taking out threats from any distance.

The men immediately changed into hunting gear. When they were ready, everyone but Nick and Bear boarded the helicopter. Both men sat in the taxi talking. Nick again expressed the importance of not being detected. All he wanted was intel about the terrain. As for the mission, it was the first of many to come if everything went well. All of the men knew this was a volatile area, so no one wanted to do anything that might cause a conflict. The company's motto was "The best defense is to be undetected." As soon as Nick and Bear were finished talking, Bear boarded the helicopter while Nick left the runway in the taxi to return to the plane.

It was a short flight so the men knew they did not travel too far south. They were given the signal to jump out while the helicopter hovered a couple feet off the ground. Safely grounded, they headed for the woods in a southeasterly direction. Bear motioned to Marcus to move forward at a slow pace while the others trailed behind. Willie circled back, then slowly continued in the same direction as the other men. Everyone was spread out yet close enough to be side-by-side at a moment's notice. It was only a couple of minutes into the hike when daybreak began. The sun shone through the trees in the early morning hours, which was quite serene, except

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this was not a tranquil place. It was turbulent and full of ruthless people. But the men were hoping they went undetected as they trudged through the jungle.

Chapter 2

In a small town, on the outskirts of the jungle, three men drove a jeep up to a two-story building. In the front was a bar that had a two-door entry with a metal rolling door almost the size of the wall. One man jumped out of the jeep and pushed open the doors calling out, “Carmelita!

Carmelita, a middle-aged woman, came out from a small room under the steps. Looking at the man she asked, “What do you want?” But she was immediately taken back when she realized whom it was. “Beto I’m sorry, I didn’t know it was you. What can I do for you?”

“Where is the boy?” Beto barked back at her. “The boy, where is he?”

“I don’t know. The last time I saw him he was running towards the woods.”

Beto grabbed her by the arm to pull her close. Squeezing it tight he said, “You are supposed to be keeping an eye on him.”

“Yes, but he has gotten too big and doesn’t listen to me anymore!”

That only angered Beto more so he squeezed her arm tighter causing her a great deal of pain. As Carmelita tried to squirm out of his grasp, he told her, “If you can’t control him then we don’t need you anymore.”

“I’m sorry Beto!” she cried out.

Not caring about her apologies, he marched out the door. “Move over,” Beto told the driver pushing him out of the way so that he could drive. As Beto drove toward the jungle, he cursed under his breath.

Beto was an attractive man who just turned twenty-four years of age. He stood about 5 foot 9 inches with long black hair on the top of his head that he wore in a braid. Underneath his braid both sides and back of his head were closely shaved. Beto had dark skin like most people in the region. Most of the time his face was soft, but when his emotions took over his expression changed to that of a hardened

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killer. Beto was a ruthless man and would go to any extent to take care of business. The two scars on his left cheek were the only visible signs that Beto was experienced in hand-to-hand combat. However, it was the scars that Beto hid under his clothes that left no question in any man's mind that he was an adept fighter who had survived many battles.

Stopping the jeep at the entrance of the woods Beto told both men, "Get out! Go find the boy. Don't touch him; his ass is mine! I want him brought back. Start on the west side and work your way towards the east. When you find him take him back to the cantina. I am going back to jefe's to wait and when you return come and get me. If you don't find him, don't bother coming back!"

Both men jumped out of the jeep each carrying short rifles. One of the men, Joaquin said, "Si," with a disgusted look on his face. Joaquin had a bad reputation for mistreating the locals, especially the whores from the cantina. His scarred face made it hard to look him in the eyes. He was skinny and short but fast on his feet. "We'll be back soon," he said looking at his partner who could not have been much older than 18 years of age.

The boy they were after had taken off before and Joaquin was tired of being sent into the woods to bring him back. After all, why was there so much interest in him? There were dozens of boys in town. Joaquin only felt contempt for the boy. Once Beto drove away, Joaquin turned to the young man with a determined look on his face. "This will be the last time I go after that fat little bastard." Regardless of Beto's warning, Joaquin was determined to make sure the boy never ran again. "Come on, try to keep up with me." Both men took off running at a slow steady pace.

Unable to keep up, it was not long before Joaquin left the young man behind. When Joaquin came to a clearing in the woods he stopped to look around at the terrain. "Yes, this is where you were before. You little bastard, little bastard come out, come out. I know you are close. I can smell you. When I find you, I'm going to chop your fucking head off you little piece of shit!" As Joaquin started up the

hillside, he kept talking to himself as though the boy could hear every word he spoke.

The jungle was a treacherous place with many places to hide. There was a hill with an open area that had a narrow cliff off on one side. Up on the hillside was a shallow cave where the boy often hid. The cave had a small opening that was hidden by shrubbery. It gave the boy an unobstructed view up or down the hillside, making it impossible for anyone to sneak up on him. In an attempt to escape reality, this was where he chose to hide. Certain Joaquin could not see him, the boy watched him climb the hill. The boy knew Joaquin was an evil man so he would never freely give himself up. As Joaquin got closer, fear began to overtake the boy. But rather than leave his hiding spot, he quietly waited for Joaquin to pass.

As the boy grew older, he became more defiant as he tried to make sense of his life. He had a doll wrapped in his arms that had seen better days. When he was young, it belonged to his mother. Now it was old and tattered but he vowed never get rid of it. He kept it here in the cave away from everyone in the cantina because he believed they would only destroy it. The boy held it tight to give himself courage as he had done so many times before. Looking around, he saw some rocks the size of baseballs. Putting the doll under his arm, the boy picked up a rock in each hand determined to use so that Joaquin could not get a hold of him. He held the rocks tight, ready to defend himself. No matter how much he tried to be brave, he could not stop from shaking or the palms of his hands from sweating. Quietly he whispered, "God, give me strength."

Suddenly there was a noise right outside the cave so close the boy almost screamed. It was a man he had never seen before. Fearful that the man on the other side of the brush might have seen, him he quickly pulled himself back into the shadow of the cave.

The man immediately dropped to the ground but did not move towards the boy. The man knew he heard something but as checked his surroundings he did not see any threats. Yet, he was hesitant to move on so he waited. His heart pumped faster

because although he could not see anyone, he felt a presence nearby. After a few minutes he calmed himself before pushing his two-way communication to speak to the others.

“Bear, company on land—out.”

“Marcus go flat for visual—out,” Bear replied. Bear turned to Max and both men quickly proceeded to higher ground. Once situated, Max immediately began adjusting the scope to his rifle. Whilst Bear pulled out his binoculars and began to scope the area. Marcus remained still but slowly turned towards the brush to listen. For the first time the boy was in fear of being caught, but Marcus could not see him in the shadows of the cave. As the boy looked into Marcus’ eyes, he felt as though he knew him. It was a perplexing feeling.

“Marcus visual confirmed—out,” came across the two-way comm.

Marcus turned away from the cave and looked down the hill. Both Max and Bear had a fix on their unexpected company, Joaquin. “One hyena southeast downhill, too far for contact, proceed with caution—out.” Hyena was the term the men used to identify possible threats. Bear was confident Joaquin could not see Marcus. But to be sure Bear and Max maintained visual on both men as they moved along the hillside.

“Copy—out.” Marcus got up and proceeded up the hill at a slow pace.

Bear looked at Max and got a-thumbs-up as Max continued to look through the scope of his rifle. Bear knew if needed Max would remove the threat at any cost. He told Max, “Only fire on my queue.”

As Marcus continued up the hill, the boy stuck his head out of the brush. He could see Joaquin slowly pull his rifle off of his shoulder and point it in the same direction as the man. The boy did not know who the man was or what he was doing there, but he knew Joaquin all too well.

When the boy was younger, he watched Joaquin beat a girl until she could no longer hold her hands up to protect her face. Too scared to do anything at the time, the boy remained hidden and motionless hoping that Joaquin would not find him in

the room. Afterwards, for fear of Joaquin's wrath, the boy never told anyone what he had seen. Not that it mattered; even though the boy kept it to himself everyone in town had their own suspicion it was Joaquin who hurt the girl so badly.

Down the hill, Bear peered through the binoculars keeping an eye on Marcus. Before risking any harm to a member of his team Bear would not hesitate abandon the mission and do whatever necessary to keep his team safe. But this was different. Marcus was like a son to him. So, the stress of keeping him out of danger was much more nerve racking than any other assignment. Bear wanted to do everything he could to protect Marcus. If this meant taking the threat out and risk giving up their location, then so be it.

Bear whispered, "Visual Max?"

In a low voice Max replied, "Yes, he isn't in range." Max knew the type of rifle the man was carrying. He knew the man was not close enough to be able to hit Marcus. But he did not know the man or what he was capable of.

Bear adjusted the binoculars and told Max, "Make sure he doesn't get close enough to become a threat."

Max said, "Copy that." It was an unspoken understanding that this man would have to be taken out, but not before they ensured no other hyenas were in the area.

Oblivious to the others around him; Joaquin continued to creep up the hill. Bear quickly motioned to the right. "Moving threat Max! Second hyena moving fast!" Surprised to not have seen him earlier, Bear was not sure who it was. Was it a man? He was very small in stature and he was wearing a hat making it hard to make that determination. "Is that a boy?" Bear asked.

"Confirm," Max calmly replied.

A click on the comm Bear quietly said, "Marcus, find cover—out."

"Copy," Marcus immediately went between two trees and laid flat as he waited for his next order.

The boy was unaware of the other men. He was too preoccupied with Joaquin to notice anything else. While Joaquin was distracted trying to see where the man

disappeared, the boy knew this was his opportunity to strike. As quickly as possible, the boy ran towards Joaquin and threw one of the rocks. Striking him, Joaquin fell to the ground. As blood oozed out of his skull the boy came to Joaquin's side to examine the damage he had inflicted. Still angered the boy wanted to ensure Joaquin would never hurt anyone ever again so he pushed his body over the side of the cliff. Looking at the lifeless body at the bottom of the cliff, the boy threw his last rock at Joaquin's head.

Both Max and Bear looked up at each other stunned at what they had witnessed. "Marcus, back paddle NOW!" Bear yelled over the comm.

"Got it." Marcus was up and running without any delay.

"Willie report NOW," Bear shouted over the comm.

"Copy that Papa Bear. Roundabout in less than five." Willie stepped up his pace to get back with the team.

Hearing noise in the brush the boy felt his heart begin to race. Fearful it might be one of Joaquin's minions, he turned to run but it was too late. It was the stranger and this time he saw the boy. The boy immediately ran back towards the cave but lost his balance and fell. As hard as he tried to get up, he could not and before he knew it the stranger was upon him.

Marcus grabbed the boy's leg. "Get over here!" Marcus yelled. But in an effort to defend himself, the boy lifted the other leg. With all his might he gave Marcus a solid kick to his chest, stopping Marcus in his tracks. "Augh!" came out of Marcus as he lost his breath. The contact was so swift and hard it made Marcus loosen his grip. But after stepping back, Marcus immediately regained his balance. Marcus then reached down to grab the boy. Missing his arm, Marcus grabbed the boy by his pants. Marcus pulled so hard it broke the tie that held the boy's pants up. Caught off guard for a split second, Marcus quickly pulled his knife out of his boot and grabbed the boy by the shoulder to turn him over. But then suddenly Marcus stopped.

The boy held one hand up to defend himself and the other to hold his pants. He then cried out, "NO, NO! Por favor! Please no!"

Over the comm Bear shouted, “Marcus back down, back down NOW! Do not terminate. Marcus confirm damn it, do not terminate!” Bear and Max were in disbelief with Marcus’ reaction. They just witnessed the boy save Marcus’ life so there was no way they were going to allow him to harm the boy.

“Confirm—it’s a BOY,” Marcus said over the comm.

Suddenly Max came over the comm, “Hyena approaching. Marcus secure the package and find shelter—out.”

Bear fixed his binoculars to get a visual when he saw a young man running up the hill. Pointing at Max, Bear said, “On my queue.” Max steadily awaited his order to shoot. This was not what the mission was supposed to entail, but both team members had enough experience to be prepared for the unexpected. They knew the consequences of being caught in this area by unfriendly locals. The last thing they wanted was for Marcus and the boy to be discovered.

Marcus was trying everything he could to quiet the boy, but he was making it extremely difficult. Marcus grabbed the boy and pulled him close. As hard as the boy tried to free himself, he was no match against Marcus. The boy tried to squirm his way through the brush to try to make it back to the cave but Marcus fought to hold him still. The boy was making so much noise; Marcus had no choice but to muzzle him. Desperately Marcus tried to hold him still, but the boy resolved to fight harder and continued to make noise.

The other men could hear their scuffling over the comm. With grit in his voice, Bear whispered, “Silence Marcus now!”

Marcus knew that if he could not control the boy, he was more than likely going to get them killed. Smashing the boy’s face into the ground Marcus said, “Shut up or I am going to break your neck you fat ass!” It was a bit out of character, but Marcus meant every word. Without hesitation Marcus mounted the boy and laid flat on top of him to hold the boy still.

It did not faze the boy. Determined to get away, he continued to squirm. He lifted his hips upward in an effort to throw Marcus off. The harder the boy tried the

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harder Marcus thrust his hips to make the boy stay still. “Detenlo ahora!” Marcus ordered him. Just as determined, Marcus thrust his hips down on the boy once more to try to keep him from moving. Marcus looked down and saw that the boy’s pants had fallen slightly exposing his rear. “I am not going to hurt you. Just be quite or you are going to get both of us killed!”

Muffled noises continued to come out of the boy’s mouth as Marcus pushed his hand harder on his face. The boy jerked his hips harder. “Stop it damn it! What the hell, just stop,” Marcus had had enough. Unsuccessful in stopping the boy, he tried once more. Pushing his body down hard to make sure the boy did not move again; Marcus smashed the boy’s face into the dirt. Rough as it might have been, it worked because the boy stopped moving.

The second hyena ran up the hill towards the cliff. Looking back and forth hoping to locate Joaquin, he passed the cave. Oblivious to the men surrounding him, he continued up the hill. “Joaquin, ¿dónde estás? Joaquin, where are you?” The young man yelled. This is the location Joaquin was certain they would find the boy, but now the young man could not find Joaquin. *Where else could he have gone?* Confident Joaquin was not too far ahead, the young man continued to search the surrounding area. Startled as he looked over the edge of the cliff, he saw Joaquin’s body below in the basin. Frightened at the sight of the twisted body, the young man did not realize there was blood a few feet to the side of him. Scared he would be held accountable; the only thing the young man wanted to do was runaway. Alone and not sure what to do, the young man ran off.

When Willie joined Bear and Max, they were laying on the ground looking through the binoculars and the gun’s scope. Going to his hands and knees, Willie crawled next to them. Willie said, “Papa Bear, mama bear is here.” Max looked over at Willie and pointed his hand up the hill letting Willie know that he needed to take to take a midway position. Willie immediately took off up the hill in Marcus’ direction.

Meanwhile Bear came over the comm, “Marcus, all clear—respond.”

As Willie trudged through some brush, he chuckled over the comm, “Ahh, hell he’s been responding.”

“In route—over. Not letting go of the boy’s shirt, Marcus said, “Get up let’s go.” Turning back towards the boy Marcus was dumbfounded at the loss of emotional control. Marcus asked, “Are you crying?” Disgusted by the boy’s behavior Marcus yelled, “Shut the hell up you fat ass. You almost got us killed.” Dirt was smeared all over the boy’s face, in his mouth and nose from having his face smashed into the ground. His tears began to turn the dirt to mud. Angry and scared, the boy refused to look at Marcus.

“Come on! Move it, I want to get the hell out of here.” Marcus wanted to get back to his team as soon as possible so he began moving rapidly across the terrain. The boy had short and stubby legs and was unable to keep up so when he could not run, he was dragged. Once they caught up to the others Marcus pushed the boy at Bear. “Here is your package. Don’t ask me to babysit any longer. It’s your package. You babysit.”

Speechless, Max and Bear looked at the pitiful sight in front of them. After back tracking, Willie quickly rejoined the team, and he too was unable to believe what he was seeing. Jesting Willie said, “Damn, Marcus what the hell did you do to the poor kid. He looks like shit.” Willie took a closer look at the boy’s face, “Is that shit on his face?” Infuriated at Willie’s comment the boy turned away and began to cry again. “Oh, hell kid I didn’t mean it. Damn Marcus I didn’t know you liked to be so rough.”

Upset, Marcus yelled, “Shut the fuck up Willie.” Marcus did not find any humor in Willie’s comments and the more the men jested, the more the kid cried. Unable to control his emotions, the boy blew snot out of his nose as he began to cry uncontrollably. With one hand he pushed the snot to the side of his nose. “What the fuck!” Marcus screamed.

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“Yuck” Willie said in a condescending tone as he stepped back. “He’s not coming with me.” At that moment the boy blew his nose once more smearing mucus across his face. Gagging Willie said, “That is one disgusting little wangster.”

Bear sat down under a tree and told the kid, “Get over here.”

Marcus kicked him in the ass and told him, “Take your fat ass over there now.”

The kid ran to Bear and sat down. “What’s your name kid?” The boy did not answer. “Why don’t you take that stupid hat off?” The boy still did not answer. Bear glared at him, “I know what you did.”

Afraid to look at Bear the kid looked down at the ground. *What if he really did see what I did?* The boy looked up at Bear then put his head back between his arms and began to cry.

“Oh, stop crying. No one is going to hurt you. We don’t fly that way.”

The boy lifted his head enough to shoot a dirty look at Bear from under the rim of his hat. Bear just chuckled; while his gut told him there was more to this kid than what the eye could see. He decided to keep the kid close. Close enough to make sure he did not give up their location or throw a rock at any one of them. Bear decided he would let him go as soon as they got to their location but not a moment sooner.

Willie and Marcus were standing on the side taking a leak when Max walked up giving Marcus a dirty look. Still upset Marcus’s was short. “What?” he asked.

Max replied, “You owe that kid your life, that’s what.”

“Like hell I do.” Totally unaware of what happened. All Marcus wanted was to get going so he could put this whole incident behind him.

Bear told the men, “Let’s go. Marcus take your package.”

Spinning around Marcus spat, “NO! Bear, I am not a babysitter.”

Willie laughed, “Ah come on Baby don’t be like that.”

“I’m not fucking around. Take your package NOW,” Bear told him. “Get your ass over there kid. Now let’s go.”

They all picked up their gear and continued moving at a fast pace to make up the time they lost. About two hours in, the boy turned to Marcus and pulled the sleeve of his shirt, “Bano!”

Marcus retorted, “Shut up and keep moving.”

A few minutes later, the boy turned to Marcus again and said, “Bano!”

“No, shut up and keep moving.” Everyone continued moving until the boy stopped and pulled hard on Marcus’ arm. Disgusted Marcus got into his face, “Keep moving or I am going to kick your fat ass!” The boy looked down and started to cry. Frustrated Marcus turned and kept walking while the boy ran to keep up.

Then suddenly Max turned around and with wide eyes and said, “What the hell is that?” Marcus stopped and put his hand over his mouth and nose trying to stop himself from gagging.

Walking behind, Willie stopped. “Hoh, Marcus I didn’t know you were packing!” Laughing he turned covering his mouth. Once more the boy started to cry.

Up-front Bear stopped and turned back to see what was happening. “What’s taking you guys?” Unable to speak, Willie motioned for him to come back with the rest of the men. “Listen men, we don’t—whoa,” Bear turned his face because the smell was too strong. Giving rise the three men began laughing uncontrollably.

Very sarcastically Marcus told him, “There’s your package”.

The boy found nothing humorous in the situation so he shook his leg to make excrement fall out of his pants. “OHHH shit!” they yelled and quickly moved out of the way. Being too close, some of the excrement flew on Marcus’ leg then slid down to his boot.

“I say bano,” the boy shot back throwing his fists to his side.

“I am going to kick your ass” Marcus shook his fist at the boy.

Bear quickly jumped between them to grab Marcus’ arm, pulling Marcus back put some distance between them. “Take the kid down that trail, it has to lead to the river we hear. Get that shit washed off. I don’t want to smell that crap. We’re going

to look at settling down right over there tonight.” Bear pointed to an area that looked high enough to be able to see anyone approaching from either side.

“This is bullshit!” Marcus grabbed the kid’s arm and started walking off either dragging the boy or lifting him in the air so he could keep up.

Stopping at a pool of water, the scenery was beautiful. The water was clear and clean with a waterfall cascading from the hill that flowed rapidly into the river. There was an area by the side of the bank with a calming pool of water that slowly stirred from the river. The trees and shrubbery were lush and plentiful. *Wow, what a beautiful place.* If Marcus were here for any other reason, he might have considered going fishing but he could not lose focus. As a reminder he told himself, “There better not be anyone in those trees.”

The boy looked around considering Marcus’ comment but kept silent while Marcus sat down and took off his boots. It was one thing to step in shit but to have someone crap on you was totally different. It might have been funny had it been one of Willie’s pranks, but Marcus was not laughing at anything this boy did. All Marcus wanted to do was clean the crap off before it seeped between the laces.

The boy stood silently watching Marcus. For a moment he was pleasant but only for a moment. Marcus looked at the boy and said, “Get your fat ass into that water and get that shit washed off.” Turning around Marcus continued to talk to himself, “Fucking kid, what kind of asshole shits on themselves then shakes it on someone else?” Turning back to look at the boy Marcus continued to yell. “You are one sick little shit, you know that.” Marcus went to the edge of the pool to wash off of his boots. While the boy continued to stare not saying a word. “Do you understand me?” Marcus pointed to the water. “Go NOW!”

The boy turned and walked into the pool water without taking any clothes off. Upset he thought *I understand you cabron. Next time maybe you’ll understand when someone has to go to the bathroom.* The boy kept walking until the water came to his shoulders. Fully clothed he turned back to look at the shore. Not watching the boy, Marcus turned his back while he put his boots on. Perplexed the boy wondered

why these men were here but even more, why didn't they kill him. He knew they did not belong there. The boy was use to evil men; these men were different, mostly just rude.

The boy watched Marcus intensely. When he was sure Marcus was not paying attention, he swam towards some rocks and stood up. Taking off only his pants to wash, Marcus eyed him over his shoulder.

The boy laid his pants and shoes over the rocks so that he could wash himself. Before taking off any additional clothing the boy made sure Marcus' attention lied elsewhere. When he took his shirt off, he exposed a tightly wrapped apron that hung over his shoulders. Submerged, when he surfaced, he was freed from it.

Angry that the boy was taking so long Marcus yelled, "Hurry up!"

The boy simply ignored Marcus; he knew the gringo would not come in the water. The boy turned his body around with only his eyes showing from under that ridiculous hat. While Marcus turned away and began cutting a plant the boy took his hat off to let his hair fall down his back. It was beautiful long hair with thick curls.

The boy quietly dunked his head in the pool of glistening water. When he rose up out of the water his hair laid straight against his back. The boy looked back across the river, with Marcus being preoccupied he felt comfortable enough to expose himself as he stood up out of the water.

**

With plenty of daylight left Max was scoping the area to make sure they were not setting themselves up for an ambush. He knew the best defense would be to find a place to perch and keep watch. Max looked up at the top of the hill and said, "Bear up there." It was a perfect location to post a lookout.

Bear trusts his men's judgment, especially Max. "Let's go," Bear told him. "Willie keep a lookout. Max and I are going up the hill."

Willie responded, "Sure thing Papa Bear."

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Not sure what would be found; the men were making certain they would not be caught off guard again. The view up the hill would make it easier to cover more ground. Keeping their eyes open they were able to take in their surroundings. Looking out from the top of the hill Bear and Max were able to see where the waterfall cascaded to the pool of water below. It was the perfect location. This was where they would move the camp too and throughout the night take turns keeping watch. Satisfied with the location Bear said, "This will work."

The terrain was rough, so they had to be careful not to fall as they started back down the hill. Stopping halfway they saw Marcus ignoring the boy. Caught off guard with what they saw, both men turned and looked at each other.

Reaching for his clothes the boy heard Bear scream, "What the fuck!"

Marcus quickly jumped to his feet looking in the direction of the scream whilst both men began running downhill. Confused at what was going on, Marcus turned to see what they were looking at. Frantic, the boy grabbed his clothes and dove underwater exposing his bare ass as he did.

Bear pointed at the kid yelling, "GET HER!" Turning and looking at Max he turned back and yelled, "HIM!"

Max responded "HER!"

Bear and Max saw the boy come out of the water to grab his clothes. But he was not a boy. It was the full figure of a nude woman. In disbelief the men looked on at this beautiful woman, not some snot nose runt that went into the water. "How in the hell did we miss that?" Bear gasped as they ran down the hill.

Marcus ran into the pool of water when he saw a head pop out for air. "Get your ass back here now!" Not heeding the kid dove towards the waterfall. Marcus had no choice but to dive. *I swear I'm going to kill this kid if he doesn't get me killed first.*

As Marcus swam towards the rushing water, the debris in the river made it murky and hard to see. Suddenly without any effort the force of the waterfall began to push Marcus down and the deeper he went the harder it was for him to see.

Allowing the water to overtake him Marcus saw the blur of another person swimming. *You little fucker I've got you now.* Swimming up on him Marcus grabbed for his ankles. Wrestling with his legs, the boy twisted around causing Marcus to release one ankle. *No, you don't.* There was no way Marcus was about to let him get away. In order to grab him, Marcus yanked the boy close. Not realizing it, Marcus placed his free hand on his hip and at that moment, he realized it was not a he. He was a girl. Freaking out Marcus swallowed some water. *What the hell this isn't a boy this is a girl!* Taking his eyes off of her mound and moving up her waist to her breast, *this is a woman.* Marcus gasped as he took in more water.

Smack! Marcus felt a hard kick to his face knocking him back. Caught off guard, Marcus let go allowing her to swim towards the surface. Needing air Marcus immediately took off after her. Light headed, everything became blurry.

Reaching the surface, the girl swam to the rocky shore. She was in a hidden cave underneath the waterfall. As far as she knew no one in the area ever swam deep enough to find it. Throwing her clothes onto the rocks she turned to see if the Gringo followed behind her. Scared when she did not see him, she wondered *did I kill him? Is he drowning?* Guilt shot through her veins, but why, he was not nice to her? But that did not mean he deserved to die. The girl admitted when she looked in his eyes, she was sure she saw a different man. Terrified she ran into the water to look for him when suddenly Marcus' lifeless body floated to the top. Petrified that he drowned, she swam to recover his body.

Pulling him by his jacket to the shore she screamed "AHHH!" *You have the nerve to call me fat ass!* With each breath, she used all of her might to pull him to the rocks. Then pushing him to his side she knelt next to his stomach. *If this doesn't work it's your own fault. You had no right to capture me like an animal. And I didn't tell you to follow me.* She was not as unforgiving as the environment and she did not know if Marcus deserved to die. She leaned her body over his and pushed on his chest in an attempt to revive him. It was bad enough that she had no idea what

she was doing, but to add Marcus' size to the equation. It seemed impossible. Then suddenly Marcus spit water and gasped for air.

Marcus opened his eyes and saw her thigh and bare ass over him. Blinking to focus he appreciated the fact that it was a woman's ass versus a boy's. Not letting on he was conscious, Marcus watched her through peeping eyes quietly letting her continue. Frustrated that he had not gained his wits, she grabbed him under his arm to pull him further inland. With all her might she tried. *How am I supposed to do this? You weigh too much.* As much as Marcus wanted to laugh, he held it in. He knew the moment she realized he was okay she would try to run.

Tired and discouraged she plopped on top of him and began to cry. Setting her head down on top of his chest, she said "No, no, no, no." Yet too stubborn to give up, she took a hold of his head and put her lips to his in an attempt to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. With all of her effort, she was only able to expand his cheeks.

Unable to hold back any longer, Marcus could not continue to pretend. It felt too sensual. Gently Marcus took her in his arms and turned her over. With a slow kiss on her mouth he wrapped his arm around her waist and mounted her.

He was amused because he did not understand how that disgusting little boy was actually this beautiful young woman. She had hips with a round rump and full firm breasts. *How did she conceal those breasts* he wondered as he rubbed his chest against them. Her tight-firm body was more muscular than he expected. But there was no question she was a woman. Right now he wanted her and nothing was in his way to stop him from taking her. A lingering kiss on the lips let her know his intentions. When she returned his kiss, he carefully spread her legs and began to undo his pants. Pulling his pants partially down over his hips he cupped her head in his hand.

This girl was not so naive that she did not know what men wanted. But her body had never felt this way. The blood in her veins began to flow faster causing a hot burning sensation throughout her body. She arched her back so that her breasts

could feel his chest rub against them. All of her senses of whom and where she was passed as if the two of them were suspended in time. Marcus began to move his hips up and down as he pulled her hips closer to him.

All at once, in a frantic state, she stopped kissing him and put her arms between them. Realizing what he was doing she yelled, “No, no, no! Please no! Please no!” In an attempt to get out from under him she tried to crawl backwards. Marcus lost his senses and the only thing he was responding to was his animal instincts. He did not heed her cries; instead he pulled her closer and continued. What was sweet and gentle quickly became rough and hard.

The girl began crying and shaking, “Please no, NO!” She pulled her legs up against his hips and tried to push him away but Marcus was too much for her. She could not get him off. As she continued to plead and cry, “Please no, alto! STOP!”

A faint voice in the back of Marcus’ mind made him come to his senses. Marcus realized she was pleading with him to stop what he was doing to her. “What?” he whispered. Breathless he lifted himself off of her.

“Please!” she cried.

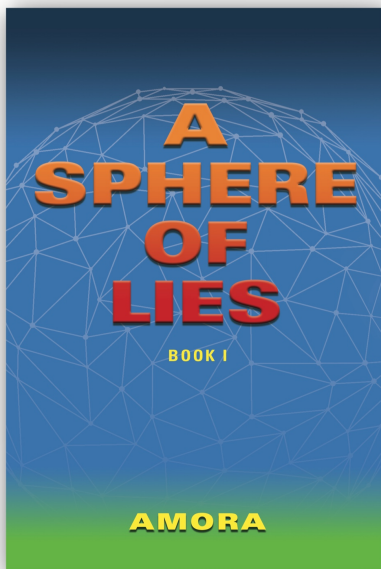
This time there was no question. Marcus heard her and understood. “Are you serious?” He looked down at her and saw a frightened little girl. A girl who disguised herself as a boy to hide from the world yet here she laid, a beautiful naked woman. “You’re shaking, are you afraid of me?”

“Please no please!” she cried out.

Moving away from her, Marcus pulled his pants up. “I’m not going to hurt you!” Then he whispered, “This crap is going to kill me.” Looking back at her he was not sure if he was more frustrated at her or himself or if he wanted to comfort her or choke her. What Marcus did know was how ashamed he felt that it was so hard for him to stop. No matter how much he wanted her he was not an animal. There was no way he would take her if she did not give herself freely. Marcus told her, “Get your clothes on!” Frustrated he wiped his face and sat waiting.

A SPHERE OF LIES

She had never known a man to stop merely because of a woman's pleas but he did. Scared but grateful, there was a sense of relief she was not about to question. So she jumped up and ran to get her clothes on.



An American consulting firm sent a team of ex-special forces to South America to secure financial investments with a ruthless native business partner. Caught up in the country's turmoil, they become involved with a local woman. With their help she attempts to escape the truth of who she is only to become engulfed in lies and her terrifying truth.

A SPHERE OF LIES

by Amora

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