Political intrigue, treason, military battles, women Rangers, American girl's stoning, drug cartels, MS-13 gangs, kidnappings, assassination, patriotism, love of God, country and Constitution-final novel of Clash-of-Civilizations trilogy describes America's rebirth into a world forever changed by the terrorists' nuclear attack.

America Reborn

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America Reborn

A novel by

Lee Boyland

With

Vista Boyland

This book is a work of fiction that also references actual historical persons, places and events. The Soviet Union's atomic bomb program existed; however the author created a fictional Little Boy team, and all characters, incidents, places and events surrounding the Little Boy team are products of the author's imagination. A list of primary fictional characters is presented at the beginning of the book. Any resemblance between fictional characters in this book and real persons is purely coincidental.

America Reborn

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Prologue

***Riyadh*, Saudi Arabia**

Julie Summers, the daughter of Yacine and Roberta al-Jubeir, sat by the bedroom window in her father's palatial house. Julie, a precocious eleven-year-old, was very unhappy. She missed her mother and her real home in Kissimmee, Florida. Her father, a wealthy Saudi, had divorced Julie's American mother, Roberta, by simply saying "I divorce you" three times. Afterward, he walked out of their Florida home, and flew to Saudi Arabia. It seemed that Roberta had refused to accept her proper place in a Saudi household, and had thrown a fit when she discovered she was Yacine's third wife. After that, there was no way she was going to follow her husband's orders and move to Saudi Arabia.

Following Yacine's departure, Roberta reverted to using her maiden name, Summers, so Julie became known as Julie Summers. Two years after the divorce, Yacine called to reconcile—or so he said. He arrived in a limo, with expensive presents for Roberta and Julie. Since Yacine appeared to be contrite, Julie and her mother relaxed and enjoyed his visit. Two days later, Yacine departed in his limo. As the car pulled away, his expression changed into a satisfied smile.

Four months later Yacine returned—this time offering to take Julie to Disney World for her tenth birthday. At first Roberta refused to allow Julie to go, but finally agreed. When Yacine's limo arrived to pick Julie up, neither mother nor daughter noticed the diplomatic license plate. Instead of going to the Magic Kingdom, the limo took them to the Sanford airport where they boarded a Saudi Arabian private jet. By the time her mother realized Yacine's deceptions, Nadia bint Yacine al-Jubeir (Nadia, the daughter of Yacine al-Jubeir), Julie's new name, was on her way to *Riyadh*.

After reaching *Riyadh*, things had not gone to Yacine's liking. Julie, who refused to answer to Nadia, was stubborn. She rejected her new life with a passion. She refused to wear an abaya, left the house by herself, and improperly addressed her elders. Worse, she insisted on listening to American music—loud American music. Her last attempt at running away ended when the *Mutaween*—the Commission for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Kingdom's religious police—caught her and administrated a caning, leaving marks still visible on her back.

The *Mutaween* are widely feared in Saudi Arabia, where they roam the streets enforcing dress codes, gender segregation, and ensuring prayers are performed on time. Even foreigners are subject to their wrath. In 2002, they prevented the rescue of fifteen young girls from a locked-down, burning boarding school in Mecca, because the girls were not wearing abayas. All fifteen perished in the fire.

Following the caning, Julie had been confined to her room, which only made her more defiant. In an attempt to cow her, her father forced her to watch several public beheadings. Exasperated by her continued defiance, Yacine came up with a solution. He decided to send her to his brother, a strict adherent to Wahhabism (the dominant form of Sunni Islam practiced by the Saudi royal family) who lived in *At' Taif*, a lush mountain city in the Hejazi mountains sixty-five kilometers east of Mecca—a city the Saudi Royal Family used as a summer retreat. Their palaces were located north of the city, near the King Fahad Air Base. Yacine was sure his brother would make a good Muslim woman out of his obstinate daughter.

Not long after arriving in *At' Taif*, Julie, who was fluent in Arabic, overheard a conversation pertaining to her planned marriage to an old man. Once alone in her room, she sobbed, wondering if she would ever return to America and see her mother again.

Nine months later, Julie's spirit had been tamed, but not extinguished. Life with her uncle, Abdullah bin Faisal al-Jubeir—Abdullah, son of Faisal al-Jubeir—was hard. She lived in near isolation from the outside world. Her only contact with youth her age was the *madrassah*, Islamic school, she was forced to attend, and where she spent hours memorizing verses from the Qur'an.

On those rare occasions when she was allowed outside of the walls surrounding the house, she was accompanied by a male cousin or her uncle. Most of these outings were planned trips to see *Mutaween* inflicted punishments. On several occasions they took her to witness rebellious women receiving canings, like the one she received. One time she nearly fainted as she watched a woman beaten into a near coma. The stonings were horrific, but worst of all was the woman whose feet were cut off. Her cruel uncle had made her sit there and watch while the poor, mutilated woman bled to death. For today's outing, they would be watching the punishment of an eighteen-year-old married woman, who the *Mutaween* had observed standing alone near a man in the marketplace. She had been examining an item on display at a stall, and failed to notice her husband walking away, leaving her standing alone near another man. For this sin,

she was to be hanged—a punishment considered less severe than stoning. These viewings were arranged for one purpose only—to intimidate Nadia. Instead, they only reinforced her hatred of Islam, and her desire to escape.

My uncle tells me a woman's heaven is beneath her husband's feet. Well it's not going to be my heaven. I will not marry some old man—I won't! I'll die first, Julie resolved.

HQ, Egyptian Western Military Zone
Sidi Barrani, Egypt
5 June

Western Zone commander, Brigadier General Aly Maqsoud was worried. He commanded an armoured division consisting of two armoured and one mechanized brigades. The Western Zone faced Libya and had the lowest priority for equipment. Worse, Maqsoud's command had been stripped of equipment to support the attack on Israel. Syria and Egypt had planned a dawn attack on Israel on May 28th—another disaster. After Syria used chemical weapons on Jordan, Israel retaliated with two nuclear-tipped missiles. Maqsoud's *borrowed* equipment, and much of the other zones' armour, had been destroyed by the *Kennedy* Strike Group's aircraft and cruise missiles, while Egypt's Air Force and Army were preparing to attack Israel.

Maqsoud frowned and muttered to himself, "May Allah curse the fools who started another war with Israel and America. They never learn." Staring blankly at the wall, the general sat at his desk contemplating the future—a future that did not bode well for Egypt.

Brig Gen Maqsoud, Egypt's best armoured commander, had been trained by the U.S. at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, where he earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. in tank tactics. He'd demonstrated his ability in two Bright Star exercises—biannual multi-national military exercises the U.S. conducted with coalition members in Egypt. For that reason the clerics didn't trust him, and he'd been assigned to what they considered the least important zone—another error in judgment by small-minded men who evaluated others in terms of their religious zeal, rather than their ability.

Maqsoud grunted, stood, and walked to a large map of northwestern Egypt displayed on a wall. Reports of the U.S. bombing attack on Libya and Algeria were trickling in. If true, Tripoli and several other costal cities had been reduced to rubble. Clean-shaven and trim, the five-foot-ten,

forty-five-year-old general thoughtfully rubbed his chin. On his desk were several books dealing with WWII tank battles. *The new tanks may be bigger and faster, but terrain still dictates strategy,* he thought. *The U.S. won't begin its campaign with an invasion of Egypt or Saudi Arabia. No, they're going to establish a base of operations in Libya first. Tripoli's huge air force base is reason enough. They're in the process of destroying the rest of Libya's military—an easy task, because of its current disorganized condition—thanks to the purges ordered by the clerics. America's new president was an Air Force general, and he's demonstrated his willingness to use his military with ruthless efficiency.*

Maqsoud shook his head. *Now I must assume the role of England's General Montgomery and defend Egypt. Perhaps I can improve on Monty's tactics.*

In August of 1942, General Montgomery defended Egypt against the German's famed Afrika Corps commanded by General Rommel. The engagements took place at and near the town of *El Alamein*. Later that year, Montgomery defeated Rommel's depleted army and forced Rommel to retreat.

Maqsoud stood intently studying the large map showing the vast seventy-five mile wide by 180 miles deep *Qattara* Depression. Its northern rim, located forty miles south of the costal town of *El Alamein*, is 220 feet above sea level. The edge plunges down eroded sand bluffs to a depth of 440 feet below sea level, and the floor of the depression is covered with *sabkha*, mud flats that resemble quicksand—an impenetrable barrier for armoured vehicles.

A smile slowly spread across the general's face. Turning, he ordered his aid, Captain Amon, to schedule a battle staff meeting for 1500 hours.

General Maqsoud entered the conference room at precisely 1500 hours. The officers and enlisted men in the room jumped to attention. "Be seated," the general said, walking to the podium. His grim expression told the assembled men something important was happening. The large map of northeastern Egypt was now on the wall behind Maqsoud.

Not a man to waste words, the general began, "Gentlemen, it is our duty to defend our country, and our situation is precarious.

"The Americans foiled our attack on Israel, and much of our armour and artillery was destroyed.

"Now the Americans and their allies are invading Libya. They will use Libya as a staging area, then invade us and capture the Suez Canal."

Maqsoud paused, squared his shoulders, and then continued with an intense expression, "It is our duty to defend our country."

A soft murmur spread through the room. Such straight, blunt, talk was shocking. Finally a brigade commander spoke, "Sir, how much of our armour and artillery in the east was destroyed?"

The general frowned before answering, "Colonel, approximately forty percent was destroyed. The remaining units are being deployed to defend Cairo. We are on our own—and we must make do with what we have. Our new *leaders* in Cairo fail to grasp the situation. Now we have to make a plan that prevents the *Crusaders* from invading us along our coast." Maqsoud deliberately used the term Crusaders to push his commanders' hot buttons. Their angry reaction proved he was right.

"Sir," another colonel said, "Surely the Libyan Army and Air Force will throw them back into the sea."

General Maqsoud shook his head, his expression a mixture of resignation and sorrow. "U.S. B-52 bombers have destroyed Tripoli. At least three parachute divisions have been dropped, and amphibious landings are beginning. Libya is being conquered. It is our duty to prevent Egypt from being conquered too."

The general paused, and then continued, "We will be facing superior forces with better tanks than our M60A3s. Our one remaining company of M1A1 tanks must be used wisely, for they are the only tanks we have that can directly engage the American M1A2 and British Challenger-2 tanks.

"Our best defense will be deception and a well planed ambush."

Walking to the map and picking up a long pointer, Maqsoud pointed to *El Alamein*. "The Crusaders will have to attack through the sixty-four kilometer gap between the coast and the *Qattara* Depression.

"Our deception will consist of a blocking unit at *El Alamein*, and a large minefield, stretching from the town south for thirty-two kilometers to the *Ruweisat* Ridge. We will leave a twenty kilometer gap between the *Ruweisat* Ridge and the rim of the *Qattara* Depression.

"We will allow the Crusaders to discover this gap in our *hastily* prepared defenses—an apparent weakness they can exploit to bypass our positions. We want them to think we didn't have time to complete the minefield."

Maqsoud smiled and used the pointer to indicate the *Ruweisat* Ridge. "Here is where the first ambush will take place. Our M1s and anti-tank missile teams will be dug in on the north slope of the *Ruweisat* Ridge. The remainder of the division will be concealed in underground positions in the shallow *Munassib* Depression to the south. Units on the *Ruweisat* Ridge will begin the engagement. When the Crusaders turn to attack the ridge, our M60s will emerge and attack their tanks from their flank and rear—our

second ambush. Make every shot count. Once the enemy tanks turn into us, we will have to retreat.

“When the Crusader tanks give chase, they will be led into our third ambush—our main force of antitank missile teams and mechanized antitank vehicles in the *Munassib* Depression." Maqsoud paused to allow his words to sink in. A murmur of approval followed.

With a thin smile, the general continued, “Engineers will immediately begin construction of camouflaged revetments for our tanks and armoured vehicles. The roofs will be shielded with aluminum foil to mask IR signatures.

“Tanks and fighting vehicles will be deployed in small units, as soon as each revetment is completed. Crews will return, leaving a small staff to maintain the vehicles.

"Vehicles must remain cold so they cannot be detected with infrared sensors. Crews will be deployed when we learn the Crusaders are about to attack. The men must remain below ground in the shielded bunkers to avoid detection by satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles—they call them UAVs.

“There will be strict radio silence. Only the visible decoy vehicles will transmit, and they will only transmit messages about mine laying operations. A code will be developed to relay critical information embedded in these transmissions.

“Once our vehicles are in position, maintenance personnel will only start engines in the early afternoon, so that no infrared signature will exist at night.

“Deployment of our blocking unit—two tank companies, and one third of our APCs—to *El Alamein* will not begin until the Crusaders have established themselves in Libya. Our objective is to give the impression we are rushing in last minute reinforcements. Tank transporters, carrying dummy tanks covered with tarps, will help give the impression we are committing most of our armour to *El Alamein*. We want the Crusaders to think our defense is hastily prepared and poorly planned.”

Maqsoud paused, his eyes sweeping over the men seated before him, then continued, “If our trap is successful, the First Armoured division will be pulled south, and our *El Alamein* brigade can attack westward into Libya.”

General Maqsoud knew he could not win, and that most of his men would die, but he was a soldier sworn to defend Egypt, and they would do their duty.

The meeting lasted for several hours, then each commander left to

implement his portion of the plan.

Gibraltar
19 June

The final planning meeting for OPERATION BRIMSTONE, the destruction of the Islamic Empire was over. The Commander-in-Chief, SecWar Harry Simpson, Lieutenant General John Blankenship, Deputy Commander STRATCOM, and acting CIA Director Martha Wellington, the DCI, had flown in from Albuquerque, NM. British Air Marshal Sir James Murrell and Prince Harry were also in attendance.

President Alexander had begun the meeting by announcing the kickoff date for the first two phases of OPERATION BRIMSTONE. "A special cruise missile strike will be launched to take out TV stations and transmitters at 1900 Zulu Friday, 23 June. The main cruise missile attack will be launched to simultaneously attack the Empire's Air Force and missile bases at 0200 Zulu Saturday, 24 June.

"Following the cruise missile strikes, B-1B Lancers and the Raptors will execute simultaneous strikes according to their sealed orders. Additional data will be provided before the strikes. In addition, we'll launch one ICBM at Iran.

"Phase III of Operation BRIMSTONE, the land invasion of Egypt, will be launched as soon as it is safe to do so. Once Egypt is conquered, we will continue into Saudi Arabia and secure the oil. Israel will invade and conquer what's left of Syria. After that, Iraq and Iran.

"Marines will land in Israel and Lebanon. Israel controls the area and no resistance is expected. The *Truman* Strike Group will eliminate any remaining Iranian resistance and move into the Persian Gulf. Marines will land in Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. Reinforcements have sailed from our east coast. When they arrive, we'll occupy key locations in Oman and capture the main port in Yemen. Our invasion of Saudi Arabia will begin when Yemen is secured. Kuwait will be occupied as our staging area for the invasion of Iraq.

"So far, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE have avoided joining the Islamic Empire. Their citizens will be treated as allies as long as they do not cause trouble."

Alexander looked at each person to make sure they understood his orders. Satisfied, he continued. "If we encounter any resistance in these countries, put it down in a manner that will discourage further opposition. Mosques will be closed and destroyed. Copies of the Qur'an will be

confiscated and burned. Men and women will be forbidden to wear Muslim clothing. We're going to break the back of the Islamic religion. I expect resistance from the clerics. If it occurs, round them up. Eliminate them if necessary. If a mosque becomes a base for resistance, turn it into a pile of rubble. The rulers of each country will be informed of the rules. It they cooperate, they will remain independent countries. If not, they will become our possessions." Grunts and nods of approval greeted his closing statement.

Early the next morning, General Letterman, Sir Murrell, and Prince Harry watched Air Force One lift off from Gibraltar's airport. CIA Director Martha Wellington, a robust, fifty-two-year-old, five-foot-eight woman, given to conservative dress, was on board. As the president's C-37A disappeared in the sunlit, dawn clouds, Prince Harry turned to Sir Murrell and General Letterman and observed, "The United States has a real president, a man, as you chaps like to say, with brass balls." Smiling, the prince added, "It's time for us to find such a leader."

Addressing General Letterman, Prince Harry continued, "Sir, I think my armoured regiment should lead the invasion of Egypt. Egypt was once ours, and we would like to have it back."

Turning to Air Marshall Murrell, the prince continued, "Sir, I wish to join my unit. The United Kingdom is going to war. The Blues and Royals reconnaissance regiment should lead, and by God, a prince will lead them into battle. I request that my Striker unit be in the lead recon squadron."

Murrell suppressed a smile, *Young Prince Harry should be our next king. He's right, a royal should lead us back to glory.* "All right, I'll order you back to your unit. You know the Queen will have my head if you're killed."

Harry laughed, "I don't think she's up to swinging the headsman's ax. Thank you, sir. With your permission, I will leave to join my unit."

"God's speed, Prince Harry, and good luck."

Murrell and Letterman returned the young cornet's salute.

A cornet is equivalent to a second lieutenant.

Chapter 8

Casa Miedo, Central Mexico
Tuesday, June 27th

Hector "The Hulk" Gomez was pissed. Reclining in a lounge chair by his Olympic size pool, next to his sprawling hacienda, he was indifferent to the spectacular scenery afforded by the high mountains surrounding his fortress castle. Instead, The Hulk was intensely engrossed in the latest report on drug deliveries to the *Estados Unidos*. With every passing moment, he became more furious. Gomez, a six-foot-seven, 310-pound giant—most of which was muscle—was a stone-cold killer, *sans* morals or conscience. Even so, he was far from being a dummy. In fact, he was a highly intelligent sociopath, and that's what made him dangerous. The Hulk had earned his moniker by literally tearing a man apart with his huge hands. Gomez's goal was to become the most important drug lord in the Western hemisphere by combining the drug cartels into *La Federación.* His problem was how to do so.

Juan Garcia, a thin man of medium height, sitting in a nearby chair was so terrified he was shaking. He wondered if he would live to see the sunset, and silently prayed for a quick death, if that was to be his fate. He knew about the hacienda's underground dungeons and torture chamber, which featured some of the most insidious devices ever invented during the Spanish Inquisition. The Hulk laughed at waterboarding—no pain, no screams, and most importantly to him, no fun.

Juan was responsible for *Estados Unidos* drug shipments, which had fallen by sixty percent over the past two weeks. Worse, he didn't know why, so he sat staring at the ground, waiting for The Hulk to explode. It didn't take long.

Sitting up and fixing Juan with a cold stare, The Hulk uttered one word, "Explain," in a tone that turned Juan's blood to ice.

Slowly raising his eyes to look into Gomez's cold eyes, Juan replied, "I can't. Some of our aircraft and go-fast boats leave and are never heard from again. They never reach their destination. They just disappear. Señor

Gomez, I have contacted everyone involved. No one knows, nor will admit to knowing what happened to them—" Juan's voice trailed off, his gaze returning to the ground.

Gomez slowly stood, flexing his hands into giant fists. Three other men, who had accompanied Juan, silently cringed, waiting for The Hulk to tear Juan apart. None of them knew what was causing the disappearances and none wanted to be asked. All hoped The Hulk would satisfy his anger by beating poor Juan to death.

Shaking so hard his knees were knocking, Juan was literally saved by a song—the ring tone for Gomez's attorney. Slowly turning to the table, Gomez snatched up the Blackberry and scowled at the screen. The caller ID showed VICTOR FUENTES and a Mexico City phone number. "Yeah," The Hulk grunted.

"Turn on CNN," a cultured voice replied, completely unperturbed by Gomez's crude response. "You'll find it interesting. They're repeating the story at the top of each hour." Fuentes terminated the call.

Checking his gold, diamond-encrusted Rolex, Gomez noted the time was 2:54 p.m. Rising, he lumbered toward the house, motioning impatiently for the others to follow. *It has to be important for Victor to call me. I wonder if it has anything to do with my missing product.*

Juan and his three companions followed warily, all wondering what the caller had said.

Entering his study, Gomez grabbed the remote, turned on his 56-inch plasma TV, and changed the channel to CNN.

Taking a seat in a large recliner, Gomez waved for the others to sit on the leather couch and chairs.

"Welcome to CNN, I am Judy Scott," the striking brunette announced. "Our top story involves Homeland Security's interception of drugs. The president said during his speech that the agency had a new drug interdiction program that was getting results. The following video may explain what he meant. Rob Horton reports from CNN's affiliate in Miami."

The picture switched to a young reporter standing in front of a news helicopter. "Thank you Judy. Drug traffickers making runs from offshore Islands to Florida are finding things a lot more difficult these days. On Saturday, four go-fast drug boats departed from a small cay and were intercepted by Homeland Security. We are not allowed to report how they were spotted, but once identified, an armed helicopter was dispatched to intercept them. We were allowed to follow."

The picture on the screen changed, showing a Cobra helicopter

illuminating a Donzi go-fast boat traveling well over 50 mph. After hearing a drug enforcement officer order the boat to stop three times, viewers saw a tongue of flame leap from the helicopter's nose, and heard a loud roaring noise, like a small rocket motor. Next, they saw a line of water plumes explode in front of the boat's bow. Twenty seconds later, after it was clear the boat did not intend to stop, a second tongue of flame leapt from the helicopter's nose. This time the boat disintegrated. All that remained on the surface of the water was floating debris. When the picture switched back to Rob, he reported that there were no survivors.

Gomez's Blackberry began playing the same rap song. Answering, he heard his attorney ask, "Did you see the CNN story?"

"Yeah," Gomez snarled. "What the hell's goin' on. They wasted my go-fast boat. Who the hell gave 'em cowboys up north authority t' fire on civilians?"

"The new president of the United States," the cultured voice replied with a hint of mirth. I assume you did not listen to President Alexander's address last Friday."

"Why'd I waste my time listenin' to some damn gringo?"

"So you'll know why you're having problems. I'll e-mail you the part of his speech pertaining to drugs." Victor Fuentes broke the connection.

Gomez turned and looked at his men, "What'd the damn gringo say?"

All four shook their heads, wondering which gringo The Hulk referred to.

"Find out," The Hulk shouted, bringing his huge fist down on a table next to his chair, knocking over a table lamp.

An hour later, Gomez received an e-mail with an attachment containing part of the transcript of Alexander's speech.

> Excerpt from the June 23rd address to the Nation and World by George Alexander, president of the United States of America.
>
> I have also appointed Christopher Newman, to replace me as the acting Secretary of Homeland Security. Stand up Chris.
>
> Secretary Newman is a former Chief of Police for the City of Chicago. His extensive experience with border and port security makes him ideally suited to replace me as Secretary of Homeland Security. Securing our borders is one of our most

> challenging responsibilities—one that Chris has aggressively undertaken by implementing much needed changes to border security. I am pleased to report a significant drop in illegal drugs entering the country.

After reading the attachment, Gomez had another thought. *The other cartels must be losing shipments too. I can use this to my advantage. Now is the time to form La Federación.* The Hulk called his attorney and instructed him to arrange a meeting with the three major cartel bosses and "General" Miguel Lazcano, commander of the Zetas at *Casa Medio* to discuss forming a federation to increase profits. The Zetas consisted of military deserters from several nations, including the U.S. They also had connections to the Mexican military, and more than enough armament to arm an infantry brigade. Since Hugo Chavez's untimely death, caused by four U.S. JDAM bombs, funds and weapons from Venezuela had dried up.

"How dare *El presidente de los Estados Unidos* fuck with my business?" Gomez muttered. "I'll teach the SOB to mind his own business."

HQ, Egyptian Western Military Zone
Sidi Barrani, Egypt
1400 Wednesday, 28 June

Colonel Abdullah Sadat, the G-2 intelligence officer, was summarizing his briefing. "Our agents in Libya confirm major troop deployments. Units of the British Royal Armoured Corps are deploying to the south. The Blues and Royals Reconnaissance Regiment have relocated to a position in front of the gap. Two armoured tank regiments, the Royal Dragoon Guards and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, equipped with Challenger-2 tanks, are moving south. I expect them to attack through our gap." The colonel smiled, then continued. "A brigade of the U.S. First Armour is now positioned opposite *El Alamein*. I expect simultaneous attacks. Contact will soon occur, possibly in the morning."

After the G-2 finished his briefing, General Maqsoud sat quietly rubbing his chin. *It's about to start. Probably tomorrow morning. Looks like my plan is working. If the Crusader's satellites or UAV had discovered my hidden armoured vehicles, they would have bombed them. "*May Allah bless us," Maqsoud muttered as he stood and walked to the podium.

"We have reviewed our battle plan, and we are as ready as we can be. On command, crews will be transported to positions near their vehicles. They are to act like mine-laying personnel, until I give the order to mount vehicles. Men maintaining the vehicles are not to leave their shielded bunkers until the command is given. The Crusader's UAVs will detect any exposed heat signature.

"We must catch them by surprise. Otherwise, we will fail.

"May Allah bless us. Dismissed."

The next morning Colonel Sadat called General Maqsoud to notify him of British troop movements. "Sir, The Royal Dragoon Guards and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Armoured Regiments are now in position behind the Blues and Royals. The first Royal Tank Regiment is their reserve force. I expect them to begin their advance in the next twenty-four hours."

Maqsoud leaned back in his chair and grunted. "As we expected. Do you see anything we have not anticipated?"

"No, sir."

"Good. Keep a sharp eye on them. Have any of our spies been detected?"

"Perhaps. Two have not reported for twelve hours, but that doesn't mean they have been identified."

"Keep me posted."

After disconnecting the call, the general summoned his executive officer, Captain Amon. "Issue the deployment orders at 1400. Remind the crews to exit their trucks and armoured personnel carriers near their hidden vehicles, and then go about unloading the fake boxes of mines. We want the UAVs to report that our troops are frantically attempting to lay more mines—our last minute scramble to close the gap. When the Crusader's recon vehicles approach, crews will enter the revetments and mount their vehicles. The trucks and APCs that brought them will dash eastward. This will give the impression that we are not prepared and are running away.

"At the same time, our mobile artillery will move into position to shell the gap.

"Make sure all vehicle commanders know they are not to start engines until ordered to do so."

"Yes, sir. I will issue the orders immediately."

Chapter 22

Monday

U.S. Embassy, Paris, France
Monday, July 17th

FBI Special Agent in Charge Patrick Fletcher, the U.S. Embassy's Legate, stood at the arrival gate waiting for Special Agent Teresa Lopez's flight to land at Charles de Gaulle airport. The Airbus 330 touched down at 8:25 a.m. Director Clark had sent him instructions through the Bureau's secure e-mail system. Special Agent Lopez would be conducting an independent investigation to determine if the OPERATION BRIMSTONE plan had been leaked from the embassy.

Waiting near customs, Fletcher mentally reviewed Clark's e-mail. He'd been surprised to learn that Ms. Lopez was a twenty-eight-year-old junior agent, and, judging from the attached photograph, a very good looking one at that. The message had contained an abbreviated summary of Lopez's file. She was one of the two agents awarded the Medal of Valor by the president for foiling the terrorist plan to set off a radioactive dispersal bomb in Buffalo, New York. *Well, that's one surefire way to jump-start a career.* Reading further, he discovered she'd recently returned from an assignment in Russia—no details were provided. *It appears she was on some type of special assignment—just like she is here.* Fletcher had decided to call his friend and counterpart in Moscow, David Tuttle.

Fletcher's eyes focused on infinity as he remembered his telephone conversation with Tuttle. *"Dave, what can you tell me about Teresa Lopez?"*

Fletcher remembered that Tuttle had hesitated, then asked, "Why do you want to know?"

Uh-oh! I think I hit a nerve. "Dave, I got a message from the Director informing me Lopez is being sent to conduct an independent investigation, and that I was to provide her anything she needed. Hell, she's just a junior agent. What can you tell me?"

Tuttle had chuckled when he replied, "Oh, the Le Monde story. Now that I think about it, I'm not surprised. I received a similar message before she arrived in Moscow. Within a few hours she and a physicist that came with her were invited to meet Russia's president. Our Ambassador pitched a fit when he found out he wasn't invited. After bitching to SecState, he got on the same plane that brought Lopez and the physicist—a G-V—and returned to Albuquerque. We now have a new Ambassador."

"No shit. Whom does she report to?"

"As far as I could determine, the director and the president."

"Wow. How is she to work with. Conceited? Difficult?"

He remembered Tuttle laughing, "No. Just the opposite. The Russians loved her. But, don't underestimate her. Very bright, and very quick." Another laugh, "But you had better keep the Marines and your younger agents under close control. She is a looker."

Watching a young five-foot-six Hispanic beauty walking toward him, he understood Tuttle's last comment. *Yeah, we're definitely going to have to lock up the Marines.* Stepping forward, he said, "Good morning. I'm Pat Fletcher and you must be Teresa Lopez."

Flashing the million-watt smile she'd perfected in Moscow, Teresa replied, "I am. Thank you for meeting me, Mr. Fletcher."

Boy, she picked up on the "no use of titles." Tuttle was correct, she is quick. "It's my pleasure. If you were you able to sleep on the plane, we can have a late breakfast or early lunch, and discuss your assignment and requirements. If not, I'll take you to the embassy, and you can hit the sack."

"Lunch sounds wonderful. This is my first time in Paris, and I've heard so much about the food."

Smiling, Fletcher said, "Excellent, I know just the place to begin your education."

An hour later they were lunching *al fresco* of a small cafe on the bank of the river Seine. "How lovely," Teresa commented.

After determining Teresa didn't speak French, Fletcher ordered for both of them. When the waiter left, he said, "When do you want to begin your investigation?"

"As soon as I've unpacked and had a shower. I want to start with a list of everyone who's had access to the OPERATION BRIMSTONE plan. After that, I'll review each person's file."

"Makes sense. I have my staff compiling the list. I planned to do the same thing. Any reason we can't use the same material."

"I don't see why not," Teresa responded, sipping her wine, and

smiling as a thought occurred to her. Sensing that Fletcher might be wondering what she found amusing, she explained, "I'm smiling because I was thinking that if I was in Russia, we'd be drinking vodka. I finally acquired a taste for it, but this wine is perfect."

"Did you like Russia?"

"Yes, a very interesting country, but I didn't get to see very much of it, just Moscow and Sarov."

Fletcher's ears picked-up. *She visited Sarov! Hm ... and the other person with her was a physicist. They met with President Karpov. Yeah, I'm getting the picture. They were looking for the source of the terrorists' atomic bombs.* Looking at Teresa with new respect, he understood Dave's warning not to pry into her mission. Then he had another thought, *Maybe she can get rid of DeWolfe too. If she can, I'll send her a case of very good champagne.* Suppressing a smile, he excused himself to make a phone call.

Once away from the table, Fletcher flipped open his cell phone and called the embassy to order a VIP suite for Special Agent Lopez.

While Fletcher was meeting Teresa at the airport, Ambassador DeWolfe was sitting in the French foreign minister's ante-room, waiting to be admitted, and trying not to show his anguish. *I have to inform our host that the U.S. is disturbed by the Le Monde story,* he fretted. *I can't believe our secretary of state told me to tell the French that we are furious—and that the U.S. demanded the name of the person who provided the plan. That's just not diplomatic language. We'll ruin our wonderful relationship with the French. I can't wait for Governor Watkins to make his move,* DeWolfe groused, and then was struck by another thought. *I would make a perfect secretary of state.*

Ambassador DeWolfe was still smarting from his interview with the French foreign minister, when he arrived at the embassy at 11:15 a.m. Forty-five minutes later he departed for lunch at his club. Even though DeWolfe had watered down Keese's instructions to demand the name of the source who disclosed the war plan, the minister had been insulted by the request. DeWolfe didn't know how worried the French government really was over the affair. The president of France had called Claude Bataille and expressed his displeasure with the story. But no one in the government expected more than a diplomatic row, and the possible recall of the U.S. ambassador for consultations.

After a long lunch at his club, DeWolfe had returned to his office and was reviewing the weekend summary report. When he noticed that a female FBI Special Agent was scheduled to arrive at 8 a.m. DeWolfe

buzzed his new executive assistant, Lorie Ulbrik, to ask her the purpose of the agent's visit. When Ulbrik said she didn't know, DeWolfe snapped at her, "Well, *find out*."

Working for this SOB is going to be a real pain, Ulbrik sighed. Two phone calls later she used the intercom to inform DeWolfe that: (a) That Special Agent Teresa Lopez was in the Legate's office; and (b) she had been assigned a VIP suite—a fact the ambassador found infuriatingly unfathomable.

"Get Fletcher on the phone," DeWolfe yelled over the intercom.

Patrick Fletcher had been expecting DeWolfe's call and purposely answered cheerfully, "Good afternoon, Mr. Ambassador."

DeWolfe, who always lorded it over those he considered his inferiors, demanded, "What's Agent Lopez doing here. I didn't approve any request for transfer or for a new FBI agent."

"Mr. Ambassador, I received notice of her arrival on Sunday from Director Clark."

"*Acting* Director Clark," DeWolfe corrected.

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador, Acting Director Clark. I was instructed to cooperate with her and provide assistance in her investigation."

"*What investigation*?"

"Mr. Ambassador, Special Agent Lopez is here to investigate the source of the *Le Monde* story on OPERATION BRIMSTONE."

"I haven't been informed of her arrival, and I certainly haven't approved any such investigation. I understand she's in your office. Have her report to me immediately. And, *who* authorized a VIP suite?" DeWolfe hung up before Fletcher could reply.

Well, this should prove to be interesting, Fletcher thought.

Ten minutes later, Fletcher and Teresa entered the Ambassador's outer office. "Teresa, this is Lorie Ulbrik, the Ambassador's new executive assistant," Fletcher said introducing the two women.

"Welcome to Paris," Ulbrik said, "I'll inform the Ambassador you're here. Please have a seat. It will probably be awhile before the Ambassador can see you."

Teresa smiled at Lorie and replied in a pleasant but firm manner, "Please inform the Ambassador that I don't have time to be kept waiting. He asked for us to come to his office, so I expected him to be available when we arrived." Since her first meeting with Ambassador McGill in Moscow, Teresa had learned a great deal about bureaucratic posturing and pecking orders. Now confident of her position, she had no intention of putting up with the sort of petty bullshit that wasn't tolerated in

Albuquerque. Nothing was going to interfere with her mission in Paris.

Fletcher and Ulbrik looked at Teresa. Fletcher was amused and Ulbirk stunned by the young agent's statement. Pressing the intercom button, Ulbrik said, "Mr. Ambassador, Agents Fletcher and Lopez are here."

"I'll see them when I have time. Have them wait."

"Mr. Ambassador—uh, Special Agent Lopez says she doesn't have time to wait," Ulbirk said, looking at Teresa, who smiled at her and nodded. "Mr. Ambassador, Ms. Lopez said since you asked her to come to your office you should be ready to see her."

DeWolfe's blood pressure jumped thirty points. *Who the hell does this upstart bitch think she is?* "Tell her to wait. I'll see her when I'm ready."

Teresa smiled at Lorie, and then stood and started walking toward the exit door. Fletcher stood, wondering what was going to happen next.

"Mr. Ambassador, Agent Lopez is *leaving*."

"WHAT!" DeWolfe's blood pressure was now up forty points and rising. "*Send her in*," he snarled.

Smiling sweetly, Teresa and Fletcher entered the ambassador's office and found him standing, red-faced, behind his desk. Fletcher suddenly thought, *Damn, I wish I could video this,* as Teresa walked to the ambassador's desk, extended her hand and said, "Mr. Ambassador, thank you for seeing us. I am Special Agent Teresa Lopez."

DeWolfe glared at the well-groomed, confident young woman in front of him, who didn't appear to be slightest bit impressed by him. *Who the hell does she think she is?* Ignoring Teresa's extended hand, DeWolfe sat and demanded, "What are you doing here—and why didn't you report to me upon arrival?"

By now, Teresa had determined that DeWolfe was another McGill. *Where did the former administration find these idiots?* Looking sweetly at the red faced, panting ambassador, Teresa replied, "I arrived this morning on a special assignment—and my assignment does not concern you." Looking around, she asked, "Aren't you going to offer us a seat?"

Fletcher bit his tongue to keep from laughing. He was sure DeWolfe was going to have a heart attack. The man was trembling with rage. Teresa remained standing, smiling sweetly, waiting for the ambassador's reply.

After several seconds, DeWolfe pointed at two chairs. Leaning forward, he said, "I assume from your attitude that you don't work for Agent Fletcher." DeWolfe never used the proper term Special Agent. Teresa kept smiling and nodded. "Whom do you work for?" DeWolfe demanded.

"Mr. Ambassador, I report to Director Clark."

"*Acting* Director Clark," DeWolfe corrected her, "Shall I call him and report your impudent attitude?"

"If you wish, Mr. Ambassador. But perhaps it would be better if you called Secretary Keese."

DeWolfe smirked at the young woman. "And *why* would I want to call the *Acting* Secretary of State?"

"So Director Clark won't have to do so, Mr. Ambassador. We can call *Secretary* Keese now, if you wish."

"Ms. Lopez, do you know what time it is in Albuquerque?"

Glancing at her watch, Teresa replied, "Yes, Mr. Ambassador, it is 6:45 a.m." Then smiling sweetly at him, she added, "SecState is up and should be in his quarters."

Trembling, DeWolfe swallowed his fury, while Fletcher looked at the floor, using every ounce of self control to keep from laughing. Finally DeWolfe spluttered, "And *how* would you know *that*?"

Teresa gave DeWolfe another sweet smile that sent his blood pressure completely off the chart, and answered, "Because his apartment is four doors from mine, and I see him every morning when I return from my morning run."

DeWolfe's hands were shaking and beads of sweat had formed on his forehead and upper lip. Finally, gritting his teeth to refrain from shouting, he hissed, "Get out of my office."

With one last, sweet smile, Teresa stood and said, "Thank you for seeing us, Mr. Ambassador," and walked to the door. Choking back his laughter, Fletcher followed her.

The two waived goodbye to Lorie Ulbrik and exited the outer office. "Shall we get back to work?" Teresa asked with a warm smile that caused Fletcher to burst out laughing.

Fletcher met Gregory for a quick cocktail after work and recounted his and Teresa's interview with DeWolfe. "No shit," was Gregory's response. He couldn't wait to return to the Embassy and call his counterpart in Moscow. When he did, he learned that SecState Keese had given Teresa the use of the ambassador's G-IV in Moscow. *I gotta meet this gal,* he decided.

Later that evening, Teresa made a verbal report to her director, who shared it with Alan Keese.

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