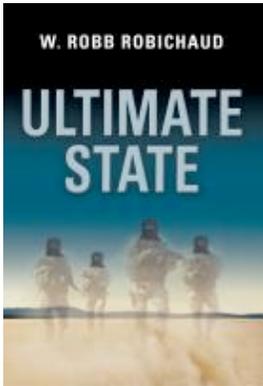


W. ROBB ROBICHAUD

ULTIMATE STATE





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W. Robb Robichaud

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CHAPTER ONE

As he sat at his desk staring out the floor-to-ceiling window, absorbing the beauty his Rocky Mountain ranch offered during the winter months, Daniel could never get over how fortunate he was. He was quietly reflecting back over the events of the past year. There was the accident that changed his life forever, acquiring a unique gift making him one of a few most powerful people in the world. While he was recovering from his injuries in the hospital, he met his future wife Crystal. He adopted her son Jesse, whose Navy Seal father was killed on a mission in Afghanistan, when Crystal was two months pregnant.

There were the covert/black operations in Iraq and Syria where he and his associates planned and assassinated top ISIS leadership. To this day, it still remains a mystery who murdered them. He and his team members even initiated a war between ISIS and al Qaeda.

The deaths of fourteen prominent politicians and five bodyguards still has unsolved parts in the investigation. It was one hell of a year.

Two months had now passed since Daniel had last talked with President Michael Stanford. He was sure he had convinced Stanford that his involvement with covert operations was over. So, when his cell phone rang this Friday morning and he saw the Commander-in-

Chief's number on the display, he smiled. He reached into the desk's middle drawer, grabbed and connected his secure scrambler to the phone and answered.

"Good morning Mike. How are you?"

Daniel and the President's twenty plus year's relationship was very close and in private conversations, the President insisted he address him by his first name.

"Daniel, good morning to you. Are you secure?"

"Yes. Locked in."

"Good. I'm well and still fighting the inner belt-line battle. There is always something new every freaking day," Stanford said with a laugh.

"Well, you asked for the job and the American people gave it to you. It appears they've made a good choice. Your approval ratings are pretty impressive!"

"Thank you. It's a tough job, but more changes still have to be made. This country is getting back on track since the last administration screwed everything up. Still ... we have a lot of work to do."

"Hang in there. So, what's this call about?" Daniel inquired.

"Any chance you could fly into Andrews this Sunday morning?"

The request caught Daniel a little off guard. "Ah ... sure. I don't have anything going on right now. Can you give me a hint what this is about?"

"You know me well enough to know I'd rather talk about certain things face to face."

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Daniel chuckled. “Okay. Got it. So, what’s the agenda?”

“I would like to meet on your jet. Fly into Andrews, and instead of being on the tarmac, I already have it set up for your plane to be hangered. Once inside, the doors will be closed. Other than your aircraft, the hangar will be vacant.

We’ll meet alone with the doors on your aircraft closed. Secret Service will be inside the structure. I can’t get around that.”

“Geeze Mike, are you serious about this?”

“Very serious, Daniel. This is the most top secret. Actually, it’s classified.”

“Why not meet at the White House, in the situation room?”

“Because I want to eliminate the possibility of anyone knowing we are meeting. I would like to do it Sunday morning. Most of the news media will be focusing on the morning press shows and their guests, leaving less scrutiny on me.

I’ll be in my running gear and will jog around the airport a little. Even the Secret Service people won’t know what is going on until I go into the hangar. I’ll give them instructions then.”

“So, we land and taxi into a hangar.”

“Yes. Hangar three. Taxi straight in. There are doors on both ends of the building, and when you leave, the ground crew will be instructed to open the doors off the jet’s nose. Your pilot will be able to fire up the engines and head straight out.”

“And my pilots?”

“After the engines shut down, they get off and will be escorted to a private room. Once they are there, I will leave from another room and get on board. The Secret Service will close the stairway and door.”

“No need for that Mike. The door and stairway are hydraulically operated. I can do that from inside as long as auxiliary power is hooked up to the aircraft.”

“Okay. I’ll make sure it is. Sounds good.”

To say that Daniel was concerned was an understatement. This was a totally unusual situation that he never experienced. It appeared that something extremely important was going to be discussed.

“Who else knows about this Mike?” Daniel asked with a serious tone.

“No one. Like I said, I haven’t even discussed this with the Secret Service team yet. I’ll let them know early Sunday morning that I want to jog at Andrews. Once we get there, I’ll give them further instructions.”

“Okay. Any special time you want me there?” Daniel asked.

“I’d like to meet around 6:00 AM, DC time. The earlier the better to keep away from prying eyes.”

“Okay. I’ll be there. Anything else?”

“No that’s it. Just come alone, with the exception of your crew.”

“Got it. See you Sunday morning.” Daniel disconnected the call.

CHAPTER TWO

A strange sense of unease regarding the conversation bothered him. A meeting with just the President and him under secret circumstances had his mind spinning. Was there a new terror threat on the horizon? If so, where?

He called his Chief Pilot, Jim Binash (aka Beeny) and informed him to schedule a flight to Andrews Air Force Base. Though Beeny was not up on the pilot-rotation, Daniel told him to break protocol and make sure he was the captain for this flight. Take off from Grand Lake airport was scheduled so they would touch down at Andrews around 5:30 AM eastern time on Sunday.

Crystal was off work on Fridays at the clinic in Grand Lake. Daniel found her in the bedroom and told her about the trip.

“You really have to fly into Washington to meet with the President ... on a Sunday?”

“Yeah. I just got off the phone with him. This has to be kept quiet. I mean top secret please. I’m not sure what is going on. But, for Mike to call and set something up like this, it must be important.”

“What time are you leaving?” she asked.

“It’ll be real early Sunday morning. I’m thinking I’ll leave here around midnight or so because of the time difference. Beeny will have the Gulfstream at Grand Lake.”

“You coming back here after the meeting?”

“Not sure about that. I’ll just have to see what this is all about. I’ll call you after the meeting and let you know my plans.”

“Okay. We’ll be staying home. Mom and Dad were talking about coming over on Sunday to spend time with us and Jesse.”

“Just let them know I had to go out of town on business. Don’t say where.”

“Sure. It won’t be a problem.”

Daniel kissed Crystal and returned to his office. He decided to call his computer genius, Michael Connell, better known as “Rooster.” He received the nickname years back while in college. At that time, he had tattooed arms, legs, sported diamond studded pierced ears, and his appearance was highlighted by a multi-colored Mohawk. He said he didn’t want to be associated as a geek.

After college, he worked for a few years at NSA and became disenchanted with the organization restricting his creativity. Daniel discovered him and offered him a position with his non-profit charity organization. It was one of Daniel’s better decisions.

Rooster’s change came on Daniel and Crystal’s wedding day when he arrived with his head shaved. He stated that he was now in touch and comfortable with his identity and decided to let his hair grow out.

The man graduated with his doctorate degree in Computer Engineering from MIT at twenty-one years old. Having an IQ exceeding 200, he was down to earth and at times hilarious.

“Hi, Daniel,” Rooster answered, recognizing Daniel’s cell number.

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“Rooster, how’s it going?”

“Great!”

“Where are you?”

“At SAL.”

SAL is Daniel’s non-profit foundation located at Centennial Airport in Colorado. The large office area, staffed with 28 people, is located above the hangar that shelters a Gulfstream 650 corporate jet, two Sikorsky S-76 helicopters and a fleet of vehicles.

“Can you go secure?” Daniel asked.

“I am now. Always do it when you call. So, what’s up?”

“I’m a bit curious. Have you been monitoring stuff in the Middle-East?”

“Yes, constantly watching it. There has been an increase in activity all over the place. ISIS in Syria and Iraq are up to the same old crap. They beheaded four Kurds a week or so ago and posted it on YouTube. They are still trying to take back Mosul. The Russians and French are bombing the hell out of them and our drones are still striking them on a continuous basis since the bullshit that happened in Paris. Then there is the fucking crap with al Qaeda in Mali.

There has also been an increase in activity in Libya, Yemen and surprisingly in the Sinai after the Russian Airbus crash. Man that was horrible. 224 people killed. And Paris ... I just can’t fathom what these cowards are doing.

Daniel, there will be more shit like this. It appears that the European countries are also ramping up against ISIS. It’s too bad that it takes a tragedy to wake up the world.

It also seems like al Qaeda and Boko Haram want to take the limelight away from ISIS.”

“Yeah, I agree Rooster. It’s really bad. We’ll discuss it more at our next meeting,” Daniel answered.

“When?”

“On Monday. Do me a favor and contact Dainan and Xi. Mamoru is still living with Xi. Ask all of them if we can meet at the ranch ... say around 9:00 AM. You too.”

“Will do.”

“Have you picked up on anything from our government agencies that is strange ... the CIA, FBI, Homeland or any others?”

“Not anything of importance. I do know they are sending more undercover agents to the Mid-East area. It might be support for the special forces we sent over there.”

“What about the war between ISIS and al Qaeda we started?”

“It has calmed down now. Not sure what is up there. But, when al Qaeda goes quiet, like they are now, they are usually up to no good, maybe planning something big. Their recruiting has increased, which may add to my theory of something big.

Are you looking for anything in particular, Daniel? If you are, I’ll focus on doing a deep search.”

“No ... nothing special. Just a little curious. I have a feeling that something is up though.”

“Maybe it is time for a trip.” Rooster added.

“Maybe. We’ll see. Anyway, keep your eyes and ears open and let me know if anything weird is happening.”

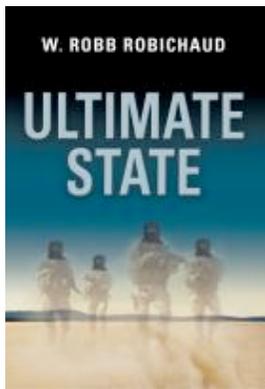
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“Okay, will do. Anything else?”

“No, that’s it. Thanks and we’ll talk later.”

“Check,” Rooster disconnected the call.

Daniel had a feeling and his intuition was usually right on. The President’s call, along with the sense that either ISIS and/or al Qaeda were up to something to capitalize off the Paris and Mali incidents, was in the works. Rooster might be right. Maybe it is time for a scouting trip.



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