

Tom Brim Jr. (Brim), a decorated Marine veteran joins the Miami-Dade PD. He leads a task force to capture a hatchet and sword wielding killer named Hatchet Man, the head of an international drug cartel. It is an action-packed hand-to-hand finish.

BRIM'S JUSTICE

By Jerry Davies

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BRIM'S JUSTICE

JERRY DAVIES

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Chapter 1

Tom Brim, his two brothers and sister were born in Chicago after their father, Tom Brim, Senior, a Director of the Federal Labor Department, was transferred there from Washington, D.C.

After serving in the Marine Corps in WWII, Brim Senior was transferred to Miami to head up the Southeastern Division of the Department. Brim, his brother Sean and sister Megan attended middle and high school in Miami. Brim's brother Quinn remained in Chicago to attend Loyola University. Brim went to Loyola after graduating from Miami Elliott High School in 1948. He finished a year, then moved back to Miami where he enrolled in the University of Miami, and dropped out after a semester and a half. Now, he was in Korea, fighting for his life. "What the hell happened?" he thought. He held his hands out, grabbed a handful of snow and put it in his mouth. It felt good on his lips. His mind began drifting. He thought of the poster he saw in Miami that said, 'The Marines are looking for a few good men. Are you one of them?' Was it the poster or his high school buddy Allen Harris that got him to enlist in the Marine Corps? His mind raced to his days in boot camp at Parris Island. He was standing in front of his bunk in the barracks, rifle on his right shoulder. Suddenly, the drill instructor screamed, "Port Arms!" Brim's rifle came off his shoulder. His left hand grabbed under the barrel. Then his right grabbed the top of the butt, holding the rifle tight.

Brim shook his head to try to get the thoughts out, but the images stayed. The Drill Instructor walked slowly down the

bunks and stopped at Brim, who was standing in his skivvies, staring straight ahead.

“Private Brim, you piss puddle of puke. Do you have your rifle at port arms?”

“Yes, sir! It is at port arms, sir,” Brim screamed. Slowly, DI Johnson reached over the rifle, grabbed Brim’s right thumb, pulled it up to his mouth and chomped down hard below the knuckle. Blood spurted out over the rifle and onto Brim’s t-shirt as the DI threw Brim’s hand back in his face.

“Private Brim, you asshole! Your right thumb stays on the butt of your rifle; never extends away from it. Do you understand, you forgetful, stupid, screwed up monkey?”

“Yes, sir! Right thumb stays on the rifle butt, sir!” Brim screamed. “Port Arms, Brim,” the instructor screamed. In great pain, with blood pouring out of his thumb, Brim brought the rifle up with his left hand under the barrel and his right hand tightly placed on its butt, thumb snug to the butt.

His mind then wandered to his family standing at the train depot in Miami with disbelief on their faces. His mother was crying, his father shook his head back and forth. It was June 1950. Brim was on his way by train from Miami to boot camp at Parris Island in Beaufort, South Carolina.

After 14 weeks of boot camp and intensive combat training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, he was on his way to Korea with the 2nd Marine Division as a rifleman and radio operator.

In Korea, he found himself in the eastern extremity of the Chosin Reservoir, where two Marine regiments were being attacked. The Marines were fighting their way in and out of the 38th parallel along roads surrounded by North Korean troops.

Brim shook his head again, determined to get back to reality. He rubbed and slapped his face with his cold gloves.

Charley Company had set up headquarters two miles south of the 38th parallel in early November. Platoons went out each day to find and destroy the enemy. Captain John C. Walker, Camp Commander, ordered three rifle platoons, 117 Marines, to engage the enemy spotted near the group's encampment.

"Okay, men. Lieutenant Aikens will take the platoon out and up this trail," Captain Walker said, pointing to a map of the camp and surrounding area. "Last night, our point scout spotted an enemy platoon about two miles out headed this way, but they turned and went east. Lieutenant, take your platoon north two miles, then east and engage and destroy."

"Yes, sir," Lieutenant Aikens said. "Sergeant Jones, you take the second platoon. Sergeant Henderson, the third platoon. We will head out at 0500."

Brim was in the second platoon comprised of three rifle squads of 13 men each.

At 0900, the three platoons were spread out, patrolling on a trail near a burned-out ammo dump four miles from camp. As the three platoons trudged up the trail through the snow and ice, machine-gun fire opened up all around them. The platoons split, took cover and returned fire. The battle lasted less than ten minutes. Several North Koreans were hit. All went quiet.

Lieutenant Aikens screamed, "Anyone hit? My platoon is accounted for."

"No, sir, no one hit in the second platoon," replied Sergeant Jones. Henderson yelled, "Third Platoon all accounted for, sir." The snow started falling hard as the wind started to howl. "Ok everyone, dig in. Get the machine-guns loaded and ready. All hands, fix bayonets. I think we may be getting another round soon," Aikens ordered. Word went out to the second and third platoons.

Sergeant Billings handed the Lieutenant the Angra Nine radio. He cranked the handle as Aikens spoke.

“Charlie one, this is Charlie two. We are pinned down about four miles straight north of camp. One skirmish, no casualties. Dug in, awaiting possible return fire.”

“Roger that,” came the reply. “Please keep us up on your needs. We will stand by.”

“Roger that.” Aikens handed Billings the receiver and signaled for everyone to stay down and be prepared.

It was close to 1130 hours. They had been lying in their foxholes for almost two hours. The lieutenant signaled to send the second platoon forward to recon around the perimeter.

Sergeant Jones signaled his platoon to follow him and stay down. As they stood and started moving forward, a barrage of rifle shots started popping all around them. They dove back into their foxholes, set up their rifles and began firing into the woods. Mortar shells joined the rifle pops, sounding like a string of hotrods backfiring.

“Take cover! Take cover!” Brim screamed. The Marines returned with their M1s and Browning Automatic Rifles. They checked their bayonets, making sure they were secure on their rifles.

“I’m hit,” screamed Corporal Ray Cummings, grabbing the back of his leg and falling behind a small tree.

“Medic,” Brim yelled as he crawled closer to the edge of the trail to get a better look. The snow had slowed and he could see through the trees past the trail. He tilted his helmet and put a small pair of binoculars to his face when he heard someone scream. “Here they come!”

The sound of boots on snow travelling across the trail sounded like a herd of wild horses running on a rocky road.

With bayonets fixed, the enemy came screaming out of the brush toward the Marines. Brim stood up and opened fire. "Come on, you bastards!" he shouted as an enemy soldier came at him.

He quickly pointed his bayonet up and lunged at the soldier, stabbing him in the chest below the neck. "Up yours," he howled as he pulled his rifle back and opened fire on two more coming across the trail.

PFC Sam Striker was next to a tree firing as fast as he could as the enemy poured into the Marines. Bayonets thrust into flesh, Browning Automatic Rifles screamed, M1 with bayonets fixed were firing at will. Knives flashed. Fists flew. Enemy PPsh-41 burp guns and grenades blasted away as dirt and tree branches went flying and flailing into the wind and snow.

The ground shook as grenades and mortar shells landed around Brim. The snow quickly became painted with blood.

When the enemy retreated, six Marines lay wounded, five dead, and the remainder of the platoons were pinned down by two North Korean machine-gun nests laying tracers along a north-south perimeter at the feet of the Marines, who were now spread out over the brush and trees just off the trail.

Brim signaled to the platoon members nearest him to keep up the fire while he moved to the machine-guns from the left. Corporal Reyes gave Brim a thumbs up as he watched him begin crawling to his left to get out of the line of fire.

About 30 meters out, Brim pulled two grenades out of his ammo belt as he crept closer to the machine-gun nests. He jumped to his knees, pulled the pin out of a grenade and let it fly right into the closest nest. BLAM! Two bodies flew into the air and pieces of the machine-gun flew out of the nest in front of the tree branches.

The second nest, with three enemy soldiers, turned their machine-gun toward Brim. They screamed “die, die, die” as Brim ran forward and tossed his second grenade.

He fell and rolled behind a tree. The grenade landed to the right of the North Koreans and exploded with enough force to blow two of them straight up and their machine-gun to the side.

Brim rolled from behind the tree as a mortar shell landed to his rear. The surviving North Korean raised his rifle, aimed and opened fire, hitting Brim in the chest and leg.

Before the next rounds were fired, two Marines, who had watched Brim’s actions, had snuck up on the second nest and gunned the rifleman down.

Suddenly, all went quiet. Brim was lying on his side. He watched the North Korean who fired at him bounce off the ground, land, roll over, and lie still. It all happened in slow motion.

Chapter 22

Brim got to the car lot before dark. Rain had started to fall. He was wearing the brown raincoat he'd gotten for Christmas. It had a coffee stain that wouldn't come out on the right sleeve, but it fit well and he didn't care if anyone noticed.

The lot was closed, but Brim found the Cadillac parked in the third row in the rear. He walked around the car, looked inside, checked to see if it was open. It wasn't. He looked at the tires and under the car. Nothing suspicious. He looked carefully at both sides of the car for any tell-tale repair such as a bullet hole being filled in and painted or a scratch or dent that had been recently repainted. As the rain started to fall harder, he looked inside again. His eye caught a glimpse of something sticking out from under the right passenger seat. He couldn't quite make it out. What the hell is it, he pondered. Then it hit him. It looked like the finger of a glove. Yes, a black glove. "Maybe it's a match to the one I found at the shooting," he said out loud.

Suddenly, as he raised his head from the window, he caught the reflection of someone behind him. He spun around, reaching for his Beretta, which he had put in his raincoat pocket. Before he had a chance to grab it, he suffered a blow to the side of his head. He started to go down, shaking his head, trying to stay on his feet. Before he could straighten to meet his attacker, he was hit again. This time a blow to the other side of his head. He went down and was out.

It was raining and cold when Brim awoke two hours later lying in a mud puddle behind the car lot near a row of trees

and brush. He sat up. His head was spinning. He tried to stand, but had to sit right down again. He struggled to his knees, trying to remember what had happened.

It was dark and only the dim lights from the car lot flashed through the downpour. He looked around and spotted his car sitting in the street in front of the car lot. He remembered the Cadillac. It was gone. Damn.

As he staggered toward his car, he felt both sides of his head where he'd been hit. When he took his hands away, there was blood on his fingers. He unlocked the driver's side of his car, got in and grabbed a towel he'd left on the back seat after a workout earlier that week. He dabbed his head. He felt lightheaded, but okay to drive. He spotted a phone near the car lot office and called Sutton.

"Frank, I've got a problem," he said, as he rubbed his head.

"What's going on?" Frank replied, concerned.

"I went to the car lot and I was ambushed while I was looking at the car."

"What happened?"

"I got punched from behind. Didn't see the son-of-a-bitch. He hit me on both sides of my head and I went out. I woke up in a ditch behind the car lot. The Cadillac is gone. I'm heading home."

"I'll be right there. Stay put."

Sutton arrived in ten minutes. He took a look at the cuts on Brim's head, put him in his car and went to the emergency room at the hospital. While the doctors looked at Brim, Sutton called dispatch. He told the desk officer what happened and ten minutes later, two officers arrived at the hospital.

Brim was seated in a cubicle on a gurney when officers Singer and Brick Young came in.

“What happened?” Young asked.

Brim explained and said he was anxious to get back to the car lot. Young called dispatch and asked for a detective and forensics to meet them there.

Brim called Margaret and told her he had a lead on Hatchet Man and was still in a meeting at dispatch. “I’ll call when I leave here. Don’t worry. Call my folks.”

“Okay, I’ll be waiting,” she replied. Back at the car lot, two patrol cars, Detective Sampson and a forensics station wagon pulled up to join Brim, Sutton, Young and Singer. The forensics team searched the area where Brim had been hit and checked the parking area for any fresh tire marks. The rain had stopped, but it had wiped out any possible footprints or tire tracks. “Damndest thing, Detective,” Brim said. “I spotted something inside the Cadillac that looked like a black glove. It may have been the mate to the one I found on the street across from the Sports Drive Inn that day. As I looked in the window, I caught a glimpse of someone. But before I could pull my gun, ‘bam, bam, and down I went. I woke up over there by the ditch.”

“Okay. We’ve got patrols out now searching for any sign of that damn Cadillac. I think they were probably inside the car lot building when you drove up. They may have recognized you, Brim. Your picture was in the paper. The owner of the lot just got here.”

They spent the next half hour going over the paperwork on the Cadillac. The car lot owner bought the car from one Edward Freeberg from North Miami who had apparently bought the car originally from a lot in downtown Miami.

“I can’t tell you much more about the car,” the lot owner said. “Freeberg brought the car in. I looked it over and bought it from him. He gave me his address, but said he was moving.”

“Okay,” Sampson said. “You guys check out Freeberg while I finish up here.”

Brim and Sutton immediately dispatched to the Freeberg address. It was a small house on 49th Street. They arrived at 2200. The house was dark and there was only one street light in the middle of the block. Brim knocked on the door.

“Mr. Freeberg? Miami Police. We’d like to talk to you. Please open the door.”

They waited a few minutes, but there was no answer. Sutton walked around the house looking in windows. Brim waited by the front door and looked in the side window.

“I don’t think Mr. Freeberg is home,” Brim said when Sutton came back from behind the house. They waited two more minutes. Then Sutton went to his patrol car radio phone and called Detective Sampson. “Detective, we’re at the Freeberg house. It’s pitch dark and no response.”

“Okay,” Sampson said. “I’m sending out an officer to watch the house tonight. We’ll get a warrant first thing in the morning and go in. You’re both good to go on shift in the morning. Is Officer Brim alright?”

“Yes,” Sutton said.

“Okay. I’ll have the warrant delivered to dispatch by 0900. Then, you can head back over there.” Sampson replied.

“Thanks, will do,” Sutton said.

Sunday morning, March 28

Sutton was already at headquarters waiting at the dispatch desk when Brim arrived.

"Nothing last night from the officers on patrol around Freeberg's house," Sutton said. "Sampson also had a patrol car watching the car lot, but no visitors there, either. The lot opens at o-ten-hundred this morning."

At 0910, a young man in civilian clothes carrying a folder entered the front of the station. He went to the desk and asked for Officers Sutton and Brim.

"Here," Sutton called from the dispatch desk.

"Got an envelope for you from Judge Clevon's office," the young man said, as he handed Brim the envelope.

"Yep, it's the warrant. Let's go." Sutton called forensics and Brick Young and gave them a heads up that they were on their way to the Freeberg house.

"Thanks," Young said. "We'll meet you there."

Brim and Sutton pulled up in front of the Freeberg house at 0945. There were a few cars parked in driveways, but no cars on the street. They went to the front door. Sutton pounded on the door. "Mr. Freeberg, Miami Police. We'd like to come in and talk to you. We have a warrant. If you don't open, we'll force an entry. Do you hear me?"

A patrol car pulled up and officers Young and Singer got out with weapons drawn. They ran quickly behind Sutton and Brim. Sutton signaled he was going to kick the door in. Young ran to cover the back door. Singer went to the right and Brim and Sutton faced the front door.

His first kick jarred the door, but it didn't open. He kicked again as hard as he could and the lock popped. They entered screaming. "Miami Police. Hands up. Don't move. Miami Police." No response. Brim and Sutton checked the living room and kitchen. Young and Singer cut left and went to the family room and dining room.

"All clear," Brim called out as he headed to the rear of the house toward the bedrooms. The other three followed. The first two bedrooms were clear. Then, the four officers slowly moved to the end of the hall to the master bedroom. Brim ducked down and grabbed the handle. The other three stood away from the door with their backs to the wall. Brim pushed the door open and pointed his revolver around the room.

There was a large bathroom and walk-in closet. As Brim and Sutton walked toward it, they saw the body. It was lying face down on the left side of the bed by the back wall. Blood everywhere.

Brim holstered his pistol and leaned down to inspect the body. It looked like the body had totally bled out. Brim turned the body over and quickly stood up, backing into Sutton.

"My God," he said, just as Sampson and Brodsky arrived. "Freeberg, or whoever this is, has been hacked by a blade straight down the middle from head to crotch."

A completed search of the house was made by the forensics team and Brodsky, Brim, Sutton, Sampson and Young stood in the living room reviewing the facts. Singer had gone to the patrol car to call into dispatch.

"It looks like Hatchet Man, or whoever the hell he is, has been at work again," Sampson said. "What the hell is going on? You guys see the Cadillac last weekend. Then Brim, you see it in the paper for sale, you get knocked out investigating it, and now the son-of-a-bitch listed as its owner turns up face down in his house."

"Beats me," Brim said. "I think we need to talk to the car lot owner again and find out if anyone was with Freeberg when he bought the car from him."

"I've got a team talking to him already," Sampson said. "They called me just before I got here and said no one was with Freeberg. He just offered the Cadillac and the lot owner said okay, did all the paperwork, and paid him cash."

After finishing their reports at the station. Brim said, "I think we ought to visit the guys we interrogated earlier this week, Frank. I have a feeling they know a lot more about this Hatchet Man than they let on. It doesn't make sense. They're innocently standing in a parking lot of a drive-in and are attacked out of nowhere? I'll bet they're part of a gang involved in a war with the Hatchet Man gang."

"Might be," Sutton said. "Let's talk to Sampson tomorrow and see if we can meet with them again."

"Sounds good. See you tomorrow afternoon after class," Brim said.

He drove to Margaret's. "How is your head?" she asked as he kissed her at the door and came into the living room. "It looks horrible."

Not wanting to worry her, he'd told her he'd slipped and fallen on the wet sidewalk while giving chase.

"Just an ugly bandage. I'll have it off in a few days." They sat down to soup and sandwiches.

"I'm worried about you," Margaret said. "You've only been on the police force a year and already you've been shot in the foot, involved in a major shootout, and now you've hurt your head."

“Please don’t worry, Margaret. I know I’ve been through a lot, but I’m going to be just fine. I just have to learn how to walk on wet sidewalks.”

They laughed.

Monday, March 29

Brim got to the station at 1030. He had skipped his history class. He was pouring his second cup of coffee when Sutton came in from the locker room.

“Early again, huh?” he said, as he poured himself a cup. “Sampson will be in around twelve hundred. I have to check out the patrol car. It started skipping yesterday after we left.”

“Okay. I’ve got some paperwork to finish. I’ll meet you at Sampson’s office.”

When Sampson arrived, Brim and Sutton were standing near his office door.

“Good afternoon, men” he said. “Come on in. I just talked with Homicide on my way in. The body has been identified as Freeberg. He had a small wallet in his front right pocket with his driver’s license and a few other cards identifying him. Forensics and Homicide are checking for any priors and any other information they can get on him.”

“Detective, Brim had an idea about the guys we interrogated from the Sports Drive Inn shootout,” Sutton said.

“What is it?” Sampson asked.

“I have a feeling those guys know more about the gang that shot at them than they told us when we interrogated them,” Brim replied. “It just doesn’t make sense for them to say they were just standing there when they got shot and stabbed. Plus, the guy with the cut on his arm, Seymour, seemed mighty

nervous the whole time they were being questioned. And remember, he mentioned T-Ninety-Five-Y before Brighton shut him down.”

Sampson nodded. “I’ll tell Brodsky to get the Seymour kid into a room and interrogate him further. Then we’ll move on to the other two. I’ll keep you posted.

Tuesday, March 30

Sampson called Brim into his office before he went out on patrol with Sutton. “Brodsky and Kowalski are going through Freeberg’s house again this morning, and they have some known gang members out on the street they’ll be looking up. They said they’d keep me posted.”

“Thanks, Detective. I’m going through my files on the grocery store shootings to see if there’s anything in there that might give us a clue,” Brim said. “I’m really curious about this so-called T-Ninety-Five-Y gang. I’ve got a friend, LeRoy Johnson, an officer who might be able to help. He grew up in mid-city and was in the Academy with me. I told him I might look him up someday. I believe he’s in the North Miami station.”

“Good. Keep me posted,” Sampson said.

Brim joined Sutton for a Tuesday patrol ride. Sutton told him they had a lead. “Something to do with a gang. I picked it up from a couple of undercover guys yesterday. They mentioned T-Ninety-Five-Y. They said there’s a big gang presence in South Miami and Homestead and several years ago, there was a big gang war and three of the gangs were taken down. I was fairly new on the department then--maybe eight months--and a big shootout took place. I wasn’t in on it, but I got to talk to some of the detectives and read all the

reports. One of the gangs was called Grenoble, or something like that, and one other had numbers in its name.”

“Hmm. I think I’ll go into the files on that and see if I can find anything,” Brim said.

After patrol, Brim went back to his apartment. He called Margaret and told her he would be hitting the sack early. “My head is fine, I just need a good night’s sleep.”

“Okay, honey. Are you still good for Saturday’s party at Tonya’s?”

“Ahh yes. At Mrs. Brighton’s. Absolutely. What time is it again?”

“She and Sam will open their doors at 8:00 p.m. Her house is really neat. It’s on a canal and has a fantastic pool and seating out back, right on the water.”

“That does sound fantastic. I look forward to it,” he said. “And, especially meeting Mr. Brighton.”

Tonya Brighton and Margaret had become good friends. Sam was an attorney in the firm of Lawson, Millkin and Tamaroff. Brim learned more of Sam Brighton’s defense work and connections with drug kingpins from Detective Sampson and wondered just how deep the law firm went into defending criminals in Dade County and South Florida courts. He wondered if any of the drug dealers Brighton represented might be connected in some way to the Hatchet Man gang.

Chapter 46

Patrol cars, unmarked cars, and military trucks converged on the field. Haggerty, Taggert and Brim walked toward the fleet of vehicles.

“Hey, officer hurt here, some help please!” Taggert yelled. Two paramedics from a military truck ran to Brim and helped him into the back of the truck.

Within minutes McKinnon, Wesson, and officers from Miami-Dade, North Miami Beach and Miami Beach arrived at the scene.

News of a plane crash traveled quickly to the press corps waiting at police headquarters as well as to the Brim household. The scanners reported a large number of police heading for the scene along with paramedics, FBI, and military vehicles.

“This is connected to Brim,” reporter Crane yelled as he ran to the Channel 8 car. “Gary, let’s go!” The cameraman loaded his equipment and jumped into the Oldsmobile. “Get to Highway One and head straight north,” Crane ordered. As they pulled away from the building, several other news trucks and cars were already packed and on the move.

“Medic!” Officer O’Bannon screamed. “We have one of the passengers from the plane, and he has a pulse.” He was about 75 yards from the fire along the skid marks of the plane.

Brim, who had been sitting on the tail of the military truck getting his shoulder bandaged, jumped up and began running and limping toward the officer in the field. “Could it be? God,

let it be Hatchet Man!" he yelled as he ran. Once he had gotten close enough to hear the man lying on the ground moaning, he slowed his pace until he was directly over him. Paramedics were attending him as Brim looked and shouted. "It's him! It's Hatchet Man. It's him!"

Wesson came up to Brim's side. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, he's wearing a green bandana around his neck. He's the only one who wears it. It's like his general stars telling everyone in his gang who he is. Back at his compound, he has his swords, hatchets and daggers all over the place. Yes, that is the son-of-a-bitch. Is he going to make it?"

They lifted Hatchet Man onto a gurney and set him into a military truck. He had lacerations on his face. His right arm and leg were apparently broken, and his pants had been torn off on one side. His shirt had blood in the front from his face, mouth and neck. His left foot was twisted and almost facing backward. He was unconscious, but the medics were working to keep him alive.

"Are you alright?" McKinnon asked Brim.

"Yes, sir, I'm okay. I caught a piece of glass when the back window of the car shattered, but it's not bad. The medics got it out and stitched me up."

"Corporal Brim, I'm going to ask that you be taken to Jackson Memorial for observation. You have been through hell and we want to make sure you are totally okay," McKinnon said. "I'll contact your family so they can join you there. As you can imagine, they've been very anxious about you. By the way, your information on that military personnel carrier on Highway One was invaluable. Our patrol cars cornered it before it got to Miami Beach. There was a brief shootout, but we apprehended four of the gang members. One was killed and one wounded. No injuries to our crew. The remaining two are singing their heads off. Fortunately, we have Spanish

speakers on our team, although they say these guys are hard to understand.

We sent officers to the compound where you were held. They surrounded all of the buildings and arrested two men who were, I believe, inside the room you were held in. They were tied up, and we don't think one of them will make it. The other is in a coma but is expected to live. You did pretty well pounding them with that chair." McKinnon smiled.

"Thank you, sir. I'll head out in that paramedic truck. Can't wait to see my family."

Captain Wesson was standing by his parked car, facing the oncoming barrage of reporters. Four officers in front of him were signaling to the media to slow down and stop. Wesson then moved forward with his hand up. "I want you all to stay outside of this perimeter. This is a crime scene, and we must allow the officers to do their work."

The reporters attacked with a stream of questions, holding their microphones under his face, cameras whirring, newspaper journalists at the ready, pencils and notebooks in hand.

"Slow down," Wesson shouted. "Let me make a statement and bring you all up to speed."

As he spoke, a military truck with a medic sign on the side slowly pulled out of the field. The media didn't notice, but it was the vehicle carrying Hatchet Man and the body of his hit man from the plane. It made its way slowly to the street, giving the reporters the sense it was just another vehicle leaving the scene.

Wesson waited until all the cameras, lights and microphones had been set up. "Please, no questions until I have made my statement. First, Miami-Dade Police Corporal Tom Brim is safe and unharmed. He escaped from his captors

two hours ago at a spot in North Miami Beach. He was held captive by the so-called Hatchet Man and part of what is left of his gang for over five days. Hatchet Man has finally been captured. He was in the plane that crashed on this field approximately one hour ago. He has been taken to a medical facility where he is being treated. He is in critical condition. We will have full details for you as soon as they are available. You may all remain here on the scene if you wish, but behind the line. I really have nothing more to tell you at this time, nothing I am at liberty to say.

Chief McKinnon, the FBI and other agency heads will set up a press conference for you soon. We will issue a press release and notify all media when this can be arranged. I am guessing probably sometime tomorrow or Sunday because we have, as you can see, quite a bit of information to gather. Thank you all.”

Wesson ended the interview by walking under the rope extended to keep the media back, got into his patrol car and headed back to the plane wreck. He heard one, then two helicopters and realized the press had sent choppers to get film of the scene from the air. Their searchlights were on as they started to circle the area. Wesson went to a patrol car. “Sergeant Sampson, please call those damn TV stations and tell them to get those copters out of the area. We have military and police choppers up, and we don’t want them to interfere.”

“I’ll call right away, Captain.”

Then, Wesson walked over to the police command truck parked near the edge of the field. “I briefed the press,” Wesson said to Hester. “I only told them we had captured Hatchet Man and that Corporal Brim was freed and with his family. I told them you would notify them when a press conference will be held to give them more information. I said it would be tomorrow late afternoon or Sunday.”

“Good,” Hester said. “We need a full twenty-four hours to get this mess unwound. We have to debrief Corporal Brim and try to identify Hatchet Man. Don’t forget, we’re looking to get any info we can from Cuba, Mexico, South America and around the country. A press conference late tomorrow will give the press the weekend to get out the full details on what has gone on. We’ll probably have several press conferences before it dies down.

Hatchet Man was taken to a special Army Air Corps military facility near Hialeah,” Hester continued. “It’s the old hospital used during WWII and Korea. It has complete military, FBI and police protection. The two gang members captured in that military personnel carrier on Highway One are singing their heads off now.”

“Thanks,” McKinnon said. He turned to Wesson. “Captain, please check on Corporal Brim in the morning. I’ll be at the military base with Agent Hester tonight to be there when this Hatchet character wakes up. Hopefully we can get him to talk.”

Brim was wheeled into the emergency entrance at Jackson Memorial Hospital just after midnight. He’d been sedated and an IV placed in his right forearm. Before he even reached the emergency door, his family surrounded him. Margaret and his mother grabbed his free left hand. His dad, brothers and sister, Father Kirby and Uncle Henry moved as one around the gurney as he was wheeled into the reception.

“Hey, I’m fine, I’m fine,” Brim said reassuringly. “They’re just making sure I’m relaxed and hydrated. I feel sore and tired, but nothing’s broken except my nose.”

The family had to stay in the waiting room while he was taken into an examination area. The doctor told them that Brim would be sent to a private room as soon as the exam was over.

Midnight

The curtain around Hatchet Man's bed at the military hospital in Hialeah was closed. "We've taken his fingerprints and a blood sample and are checking now for identification," Agent Hester said to a group of FBI agents, Captain Wesson and Detective Sampson standing outside the room. "The report should come any time now."

"We're going to wait here until Hatchet Man wakes up so we can try to talk to him," Captain Wesson said.

The Brims remained in the waiting room until daybreak. At 7:00 a.m., Dr. Brewster came out and went to the waiting area. "Good morning. I'm Dr. Brewster. We have very good news for you. Corporal Brim is in good shape. All of his vitals check out nicely. He does have a laceration to his left leg and a broken nose and a glass wound in his left shoulder, but they have been attended to and he will heal just fine. We've moved him to a private room--number three oh six. In thirty minutes, you can visit him. We want to keep him here for at least twelve hours for observation. He should be able to go home later today or tomorrow."

"Thank you, doctor," Brim Senior said. The nurse allowed the family ten minutes. They flanked his bed on both sides, touching him gingerly, careful not to put any pressure on any of his wounds. Margaret leaned over and kissed him on the forehead.

"You look good," she said.

"We'll have a serious chat about your duties at the police department when you get home, young man," Brim Senior said. "I think you've been through enough."

The group smiled, and the brothers, in unison, said, "Damn straight."

“Okay, dad. Thanks, everyone. I love you all,” Brim said quietly. He reached for Margaret and kissed her.

Saturday morning 10:00 A.M., July 3

Agent Hester, Captain Wesson and two police interrogators entered Hatchet Man’s room hoping he’d be ready to talk. Instead, they were greeted with the sight of tubes down the gangster’s throat and his eyes swollen shut.

Hester went into the hall and signaled a nurse. “Is he able to talk?”

“I’m sorry, but he has a breathing tube down his throat as he stopped breathing during the night. He has a broken leg, foot, ankle, four ribs and internal injuries. He also has lacerations on over half of his body. We are doing everything we can to get his lungs going on their own and his vital signs up. He’s taking a lot of fluids and drugs right now.”

“Is he going to make it?” Captain Wesson asked.

“He’s in critical but stable condition. The doctors feel certain he will pull through, but he obviously can’t talk right now.”

“Crap,” Wesson said. The three men walked down the hall to an open area to talk.

“I have an idea,” Hester said. “Once he’s able to talk, let’s bring two guys that were in the military vehicle to his room and see if we can get them to talk.”

“I think it’s worth a shot,” Wesson said. “I’ll call Chief McKinnon and run it by him. I bet he’ll be up for it.”

“I’ll talk to my boss in Washington and we can coordinate through Miami Police headquarters,” Hester said.

Wesson stopped by at Jackson Memorial to see Brim at 1030. He was surrounded by his family. His color had returned and he looked alert.

“Hey, glad you’re looking good. Hello, everyone,” Wesson said to the family.

“Good to see you, Captain Wesson,” Sean said. “Yep, fever’s down, he’s eating well and seems to be getting his strength back. Doctor said he can leave later today or tomorrow morning.”

“That’s great. I want you to rest at home and get your full strength back, Corporal. Meantime, let me fill you in on what’s happening.”

He brought them up to date, explaining that Agent Hester thought the presence of the gang members might trigger a response from Hatchet Man. “It’s a slim chance, but you never know.”

“I’d like to be there when it happens,” Brim said. “I had two run-ins with the bastard in that room they held me in. Maybe if he saw me, he’d open up.”

“First things first. You get on your feet, Corporal,” Wesson said. He said goodnight to the family and left.

“Tom, you just get strong and healthy again. Remember, you’re finishing school and you want to go on to law school,” his dad said.

“Dad, I know and I will. I just want to hear the jury find Hatchet Man guilty and sentence him to the chair.”

“Hmm, kind of like burying the Hatchet?” Quinn said. Everyone paused for just a moment. Then they all broke out in laughter.

Sunday, July 4

Wesson and Hester met at headquarters at 0700. They went into Wesson's office to call the hospital to see how Hatchet Man did overnight.

"Morning. Miami-Dade Police and FBI. Is the patient able to speak this morning?" Wesson asked.

"He had a rough night, but Dr. Ramirez is hoping to take the breathing tube out this morning. He should be here around eight o'clock."

"Good," Wesson said. "We'll call back this afternoon. We are looking for a time that he will be able to sit up and answer questions."

"I will talk to Dr. Ramirez," the nurse said. "It may be several days."

Brim sat up on the edge of his bed. "What a beautiful morning. Happy Fourth, Honey," he said. "I feel good."

"Happy Fourth to you. They'll bring a wheelchair for you as soon as the doctor clears you and we can leave," Margaret, sitting by his side, holding his hand, said.

Dr. Thomas walked into Brim's room. "Well, sir, your charts are looking fine. Just need to take your vitals, write you a couple of prescriptions and you can be on your way. I want you to take it easy for a couple of days and let that nose and cheek begin to heal. Your shoulder and leg, in time, will come back to full strength."

"Thanks, doc. I appreciate your help. This is my girlfriend, Margaret LeClerk."

"Good morning, Miss LeClerk. Keep him down for a few days and he'll be good as new."

Brim was joined by his parents as he left the hospital. When Brim got home, his parents made sure he went straight to bed. They left after he was comfortable in bed.

Brim and Margaret watched the July Fourth parade on TV from downtown Miami and later from New York and Washington, D.C. Margaret spent the night and was set to spend the rest of the week keeping him quiet and rested.

Tuesday, July 6

Wesson and Hester checked in with the military hospital by phone and found that Hatchet Man's tube had been removed from his throat, and he was resting comfortably but couldn't have visitors for at least two more days.

They spoke with Hatchet Man's doctor who gave them permission to see Hatchet Man anytime after Friday. "He may not be able to speak, but by Sunday, his voice should be back and he can sit up."

"Dr. Ramirez, we'd like to bring a couple of Hatchet Man's gang members into his room, say around ten a.m. Monday morning if it's o.k.?" Wesson asked. "We want to ask some questions of them in front of Hatchet Man and maybe Hatchet Man will open up. It's not a court order, but something we'd like to do before he actually goes before a judge."

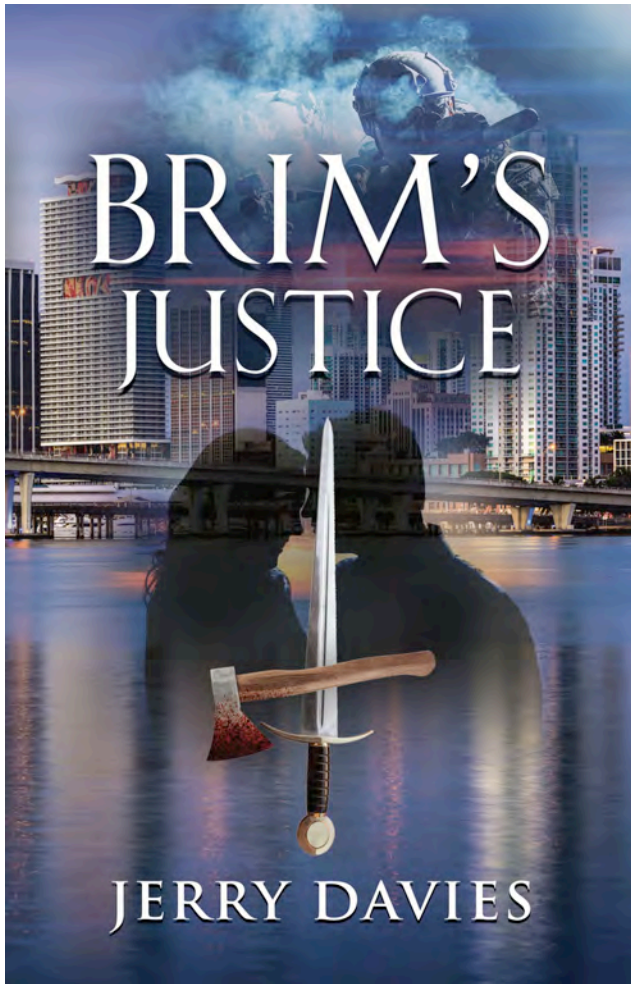
"I see no problem with that," Dr. Ramirez said.

Monday, July 12

At 0800, Wesson and Hester went back to the hospital to check on Hatchet Man. "He's still a bit weak, but I think in an hour or so he can receive a few visitors," Dr. Ramirez said.

“Thanks, doctor,” Wesson said. He went down the hall and called the brig. “Agent Milton, cuff and chain those two characters and bring them to the hospital at oh-ten-hundred. I will have two more agents meet you here at the west entrance, and we can all bring them up to Hatchet Man’s room.”

Hester turned to Wesson. “I’m waiting any minute for a report from Washington on Hatchet Man’s I.D.”



Tom Brim Jr. (Brim), a decorated Marine veteran joins the Miami-Dade PD. He leads a task force to capture a hatchet and sword wielding killer named Hatchet Man, the head of an international drug cartel. It is an action-packed hand-to-hand finish.

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