

Army Intelligence Agents track down a Kurdish terrorist in Turkey.

## **The Eye of the Viper**

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## Chapter Two

### *The Trouble Shooters*

*July 8, 1968*

Dan's lungs burned and his legs became unsteady as he ran down a gravel road, somewhere near his family home in Baker. In the moonlit backdrop, he recognized the familiar silhouette of the Elkhorn Mountains to the west and smelled the spicy scent of sagebrush. In the distance at the end of the road, his fiancée Melissa waved frantically to him and screamed a shrill, brain-jarring cry for help. Just as he came within reach, his outstretched arms grasped at an empty diaphanous shroud. She laughed at him, taunting him and resumed her screams for help as she vanished into an ethereal void. His heart hammered in his chest and his breathing came in hot bursts when he stopped, bending at the waist, he tried to regain his wind. When he stood upright, he saw the road covered in a roiling tangle of black snakes, heads reared to strike. Their loud hisses failed to block out Melissa's cries. In spite of his intense fear of snakes, he plunged forward into the mass feeling them coil around his legs.

"Wake up Boss." Bull was elbowing him.

Dan jerked awake and tried to stand, but his seat belt had him locked in place. "Oh shit, was I talking in my sleep?" He rubbed his eyes, unfastened the seat belt, and glanced out of the window of the airliner. They were still over water.

"Talking? Hell man, you were starting to freak out everyone on the plane." Bull leaned over from the aisle seat. "The same nightmare?"

Dan rose from his window seat and started to climb over Bull. "Yeah. Let me out, I gotta take a leak."

Bull stood, his towering frame allowing him little standing room beneath the low overhead. Dan slid past, moving aft to the toilet. The Turkish stewardess asked if she could help him, and he accepted a

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glass of ice water. He entered the cramped toilet, locked the door behind him and leaned over the small sink to pour the ice water over his head. The travel-weary image looking back at him was more frightening than the snakes he had just envisioned. He lifted the toilet seat, relieved himself, closed the lid and sat, recalling the nightmare. He rubbed his legs, numbed from sitting, as if the coiling snakes had been a reality.

It had been six months since Melissa died. The best medical care in San Francisco could do nothing to stop the cancer that ravaged his fiancée's petite body. First one mastectomy, then another, followed by six months of radiation and chemotherapy, but all of that only made the last year of her life an agonizing hell.

Air turbulence, followed by the thump of the landing gear, brought him out of his melancholy. He stood, leaned over the sink again and splashed his face with tepid tap water, rinsing away the salty residue of his nightmare. His eyes were red rimmed, evidence of twenty-three hours of flight time with just a two-hour stopover in Rome. His five o'clock shadow was well past midnight, giving him a roguish look, the appearance of someone on a post office wanted flyer.

"Dangerous Dan Dailey," he mumbled. He finger-combed his wet curly black hair, straightened his shirt and tie, and returned to his seat.

They had taken seats in the rear of the half-filled Turkish airliner to allow them privacy, and more importantly, close proximity to the mini-bar.

Their cursory briefing at the Defense Intelligence Agency two days earlier did little to allay their suspicions that this special assignment in Turkey was going to be anything other than hazardous to their health. Their superior, Colonel Riley, tried to make it seem a routine intelligence assignment for his favorite trouble-shooters. Dan and Bull had become the DIA's 'Have Balls Will Travel' team. Take a couple of street-wise Army spooks, add a generous dollop of disrespect for authority, and you had a Special Ops team capable of resolving issues literally in the dark allies of international intrigue. For the DIA it was an ideal situation, covert action, backstopped by plausible denial if things went haywire.

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Bull sipped Glen Fidduch from a miniature bottle, smacked his lips, and dropped the empty into the seat pocket in front of him, where it clinked against its four brethren. He moved over to the window and let Dan take his aisle seat.

"Pardner, don't take this personal, but you need professional help."

"You telling me I've gone off the deep end? You can just shut the hell up and let me handle my own demons." Dan reached behind him and grabbed a couple of bottles from the beverage cart, one Cutty Sark and one Grand Marnier. He tossed the liqueur back into the cart, twisted the top off the scotch and downed it in one swallow. The liquid seared its way down his throat and exploded in his gut. He barely suppressed an urge to vomit.

"Forget it." Bull sat back, frowning, fiddling with his seat belt.

Dan thought they must be close to Izmir. He pulled out his passport and arrival declaration forms, perused them, and returned them to coat pocket. He turned to Bull; saw his friend's pursed lips, and a dark frown.

"Look Bull, if it makes you happy, I promise I'll talk to a shrink someday, okay?"

His buddy brightened noticeably, and grinned sheepishly.

"Alright, you're on. Before you started stacking Z's, you were trying to explain how DIA expects us to find a Jupiter missile; that may or may not have been stolen, probably six years ago by unknown Turkish subjects, for unknown reasons, and we have to do this without involving the Turks, right?" He took a deep breath, awaiting an explanation.

"That's the gist of it. We should know more, once we get on the ground and talk to our contact."

Dan pressed the button on his armrest to lower the seat back, but it just banged against the bulkhead behind him. He thought about the briefing at DIA short, sweet and to the point; get their asses to Turkey ASAP and find a stolen warhead. Don't expect any help from the Pentagon. Oh, and don't bother asking for help from NATO either. The key word in this operation was denial. According to official press releases, the US Forces no longer deployed missiles in Turkey; they

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had all been dismantled and shipped home five years ago. At least that's what they announced to the world.

"Who's this guy Clinkinheimer we're supposed to meet?" Bull asked.

"It's Clinkscales, Harry Clinkscales. He's the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, which is a fancy way of saying he handles the US Eyes Only stuff. He's 'our man in Izmir.'"

Bull made a vain attempt to stretch his legs under the seat in front of him. "Christ, I feel like one of them giant pretzels I ate in the airport yesterday."

The seat-belt sign flashed, and the companion bell indicated they were about to land. They leaned over and looked out of the window again. The airplane broke through the scattered clouds and swept past the azure bay and the city, approaching twenty miles east of the metropolitan area. Through the rain-spattered window, Dan caught sight of the recently opened terminal, its one story steel and glass structure sleek and contemporary. He had expected a ramshackle Quonset hut surrounded by barbed wire. The airport did not appear to be equipped with jetways; but with so few flights, and smaller passenger loads, they probably were unnecessary. Their plane banked to the right and then quickly to the left, coming in on final approach. A patchwork of alternating fields, dark green rows of plants, and stark white cotton passed beneath their plane. The pilot made a soft landing, reversed the props and braked, coming to a gut-wrenching stop. Turning at the end of the runway, they taxied to the main gate of the terminal.

In spite of a request to "remain seated until arriving at the terminal," passengers began opening luggage compartments, dragging down carry-on and lining up to make a rapid exit. Dan and Bull waited for the crowd to disperse, and then shuffled to the front of the plane.

It was a short walk across the tarmac to the terminal. Sweat stains quickly saturated their clothing in the muggy weather. Stopping top stretch, Dan saw that the dark rain clouds had moved west, giving hope for blue skies to follow. The passengers elbowed their way to be first in line at the security checkpoint. Avoiding a queue was a contact

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sport for most European travelers. They distained getting into a line; preferring to dash ahead to form a cluster at the target point. Dan and Bull, like the other Americans on the plane, dutifully attempted to form a single line, only to be outvoted by the others.

Waiting at the immigration widow, Dan looked around the terminal. He was surprised to see no gun-toting security guards or any military personnel in the building, something he thought will *de'riguer* in the Middle East. As the other passengers were quickly herded through the procedures, he assumed it would be a quick check through for him and Bull. Bored airport officials gave a cursory glance at the passengers, stamped random pages in their passports, and waved them on.

Dan reached the front of the line and pushed his maroon-colored official US passport through the slot below the glass. He smiled at the dour, bushy mustachioed Turk who held up his passport and compared the photo to the tall American.

Dan stared back at the official and smiled. The Turkish immigration official turned and looked back over his shoulder at a man dressed in a dark suit, standing inside a small office watching them. Perspiration began to drip down the official's temples, and when he handed the passport back to Dan, his hand was shaking.

"Everything in order?" Dan asked, wondering why the man had suddenly become so nervous. Just seconds before, he appeared indifferent and bored.

The Turk didn't answer, glaring at him and indicating with a nod that he should move on. As Dan crammed his documents back into his suit coat pocket, he saw the official reach for a push-button on the edge of the counter.

He stepped back and waited for Bull to clear immigration. The dark-suited official stepped out of the office and motioned for Dan to approach. Walking over to him, Dan said in English, "You want me?"

"Please, your passport again," he reached out, his palm up.

Dan gave him the passport and waited while he leafed through the pages. The man was short, probably in his 60's, gray hair. He had a neatly trimmed moustache, and was impeccably dressed in a dark blue suit. A button-down dress shirt set him apart from the other

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immigration officials. Warning bells clanged in Dan's head as he noticed the familiar outline of a badge and credentials case in the man's shirt pocket. He also wore a shoulder holster beneath the superbly tailored suit.

The man examined each entry in the passport carefully, turned to Dan's photo, and stared at him briefly. "How long are you staying in Turkey?"

"Our contract here," he said pointing to Bull behind him, "is for two years."

"Where will you work?"

"Trimbull Corporation, Security Office," Dan invoked his cover story.

The official smiled, handed Dan his passport, and then started to walk away. He stopped and turned. "Civilian employment does not usually require an official passport. You may wish to remind your superiors." He smirked and entered an office behind the counter.

Dan stepped back to wait for Bull. The Turk had taken an unusual interest in him and his lesson on cover documentation came across as a taunt, one spook to another.

When Bull approached the window, the now visibly nervous immigration official looked up in stunned amazement at the huge blond American. He glanced back toward the office window, received a nod from his superior and pummeled Bull's passport with a ferocity that sent the documents scuttling back across the counter.

In English, he inquired "Basketball man?"

Bull responded in his newly studied Berlitz Turkish, "Yes, Olympiad." He smiled broadly at the compliment.

"Bullshit," Dan said. The closest his pal had ever come to anything athletic, was skirt chasing at Oregon State, where he was unquestionably a gold medalist

Clearing customs was another matter. The Turks must have been on the payroll of the Samsonite Luggage Company, the way they poked, prodded, jabbed and tossed his suitcase around, seemingly bent on destroying the luggage. They finally dumped everything out on the table and stirred through his personal things with a stick, finally bunching up his clothing and dumping it back into the suitcase

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in a tangled heap. With shirtsleeves and errant socks hanging out of the sides, he closed the suitcase and re-fastened the leather straps.

Dan figured that the Turkish custom agents got their jollies digging through the American's personal possessions. They exchanged rude comments in Turkish.

"Cheap clothing, not rich this American."

"*Evet*, yes, look at this big bastard" one agent said, as he directed his eyes toward Bull.

Dan said nothing until he had cleared customs; and then in his most polite Turkish, he addressed the two Turks, thanked them for their courtesy and wished them well.

Jaws dropped and embarrassed smiles changed their demeanor. "*Afedersiniz efendim*, excuse me sir, I am so sorry."

"Come on Bull. *Hos geldiniz*, welcome to Turkey."

"Right behind you bro."

When they reached the main exit from the terminal, Dan looked back toward the Immigration Office. The dapper official was staring at him through the window in his office, a telephone at his ear. Dan gave him a salute and the man frowned, and turned away. "Damn, Bull, we've been in-country fifteen minutes and we're already on someone's list.

The ride in the back of the 1956 Plymouth Belvedere taxi was like riding in the bed of a pickup on a country road; the seat cushions had collapsed twenty years ago and sharp spiral springs attempted to impale Dan. Every bump in the road jolted the passengers against the threadbare headliner.

Their driver was a self-appointed tour guide, pointing out the most insignificant features along the way.

"Sheep," he said, pointing to a flock of grungy animals grazing along the roadside.

"Pine trees," finger aimed at a row of trees lining the highway.

"What's that?" Bull asked in Turkish, pointing to the immense stone fortress that spread for half a mile across a barren ridge.

The driver bent over to look out the passenger window and nodded his head. "*Eski bir sey*, something old."



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Dan expanded, "Actually, Bull, it's called the Kadifekale, the Velvet Fortress, built by Alexander the Great. Probably one of the most significant archeological structures in western Turkey."

The driver turned around and agreed, "Evet, something old."

Twenty minutes into their ride, the taxi crested the top of a hill and the ancient city of Smyrna, renamed Izmir, sprawled out before them. The city landscape sloped westward down to the exquisite turquoise Gulf of Izmir. The buildings they passed were a fascinating hodgepodge of architectural history. Within a single city block, structures from the 12<sup>th</sup> century stood side-by-side with buildings of contemporary architecture. The semi-tropical climate, similar to San Diego, was arid, with sparse vegetation, stunted pine trees, and what Dan's parents in Eastern Oregon, called rabbit brush. Groves of date palms poked up through the cityscape, and camels, used as plow animals in adjacent patches of farmland, plodded through the streets. It was a tourist's vision of Turkey, an intriguing and beautiful city.

Izmir, "The Pearl of the Aegean", was more than just one city; it was a continuous string of villages and towns dotting the shoreline of the Gulf for over one hundred miles. Across the bay from Izmir's city center, he saw the city of Karsiyaka. Ferryboats formed a continuous bridge from town to town. Unlike many American cities, Izmir itself was primarily a bedroom community. High-rise apartment buildings fanned out in all directions. A few office buildings and a string of tourist shops stretched along the shoreline, while the commercial and manufacturing businesses were located outside the city. A broad sidewalk with a red and white swirled pattern snaked along the seawall.

At the north end of the bay, he saw the Salhane industrial area, a place his Turkish language instructors had advised him to avoid. This was the backwater area of the bay that collected the garbage and sewage produced by the million-plus residents of Izmir.

Dan told the driver to stop. He opened the door, stepped out to release the kinks in his back and absorb the beautiful post-card scene before him, looking down on the panorama and wondering where in this thriving, complex cultural city, a purloined Jupiter missile

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warhead was stashed away; saved for God only knows what reprehensible purpose.

## Chapter Three

### *The Viper*

#### *Urla Beach, Izmir, Turkey*

Adnan Kurtoglu, known as "Yilan," (the viper) to his friends and enemies alike, stared out at the wind-swept beach. Sloppy clumps of foam washed along the pale sand, up to the tidewater level, leaving behind a dirty line of yellow froth. Heavy rain pelted the beach, erasing the foam. Each wave of seawater brought replacements, leaving a new line of sputum higher on the beach than the previous wave.

He was mesmerized by the ocean's action, a fruitless attempt to gain a foothold on the beach. Just when he thought the frothy tidewater was winning, the pounding rain erased the victory. The futility of it mirrored his attempts to act against his enemy. He took one step forward, then two backward. His plans to disrupt the US forces influence in Turkey had come to a halt. Having lost the support of the Kurdish Freedom Party, he was forced to act on his own. The Kurdish blood brothers he had recruited in Izmir last month were helpful; however, their level of intelligence limited their usefulness. Rather than include them in his plans, he relegated them to menial tasks, courier work and operations security. They were completely committed to his cause to gain equality for the Kurds and were fiercely loyal.

He got up from his window seat, poured himself another glass of black tea and placed a sugar cube between his lips. Sucking the tea through the sugar produced a satisfying tingle in his mouth and his headache slowly receded. Turning back to the window, he watched the wind blow the dirty sea-foam up onto the dock.

"Progress!" he said aloud. With the strength of the wind behind it, the foam had won the battle. That was what he needed, a second wind. He watched his motorboat slam against its moorings, the strips of rubber tire nailed to the edge of the dock leaving ugly marks along the gleaming white hull.

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He thought about taking the boat out in the afternoon to catch another 30-pound grouper like the one he gave yesterday to his new friend at the Urla market across the road from his villa.

The rumble of a car and sound of tires crunching in the gravel driveway in front of the house broke his reverie. An old rusty, black Fiat came to a stop and a teenaged Turk got out and stretched. Looking through the drawn curtains Adnan recognized the youth as one of his newly recruited contacts. He called him *Fare'*, the "Little Mouse." The short stocky eighteen-year-old was a street punk recommended to him by his stepbrother, Ahmet. Fare's narrow face and long sharp nose reminded him of a wharf rat with beady black eyes. He was a typical kid, eager to please The Viper and ready to accept any assignment. Adnan sat back in the chair by the window and assumed a pose of authority. As soon as he heard the knock on the door, he yelled, "*Gel bey!*" curtly ordering him to enter.

The French door opened slowly, and living up to his rodent-like nature, the boy closed the door quietly and scurried into the room. Eyes flashing, he quickly removed his faded baseball cap, holding it in front of him as he nervously scratched his shaved skull.

Adnan sat motionless staring at the boy without speaking. He enjoyed his subservient attitude, amused as he nervously shifted his cap from hand to hand, shuffling his scuffed athletic shoes.

Adnan lit a cigarette, without offering one to the boy, and blew out a long stream of smoke.

"Did you find the American?"

"*Evet efendim*, yes sir. I waited three hours across from the Cucuk Hotel. He came out alone and crossed over to Sair Esref Boulevard, and walked toward the fairgrounds"

"Skip the useless details. Get on with it."

"Yes sir." Fare' started to sit down opposite Adnan, but changed his mind and continued to stand. "He went into the park and sat at an outside table at the Fuar Cafe. He drank gazos and sat there for one hour. He kept looking at his watch and sometimes stood to look around."

"No one met him there?"

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"No sir, no one. I think he was expecting someone to meet him and they didn't show up."

"Okay, then what?"

"After an hour, he left the cafe and walked toward the Russian Pavilion. He waited there for five minutes, and then walked behind the Pavilion toward the Bulgarian exhibit hall. I followed him but when I got to the rear of the building, he was gone. I started to go around back, when the bastard came from behind a trash bin and hit me with a board. Look!" He pulled up his tee shirt to show Adnan a large bruise on his left side.

"Yes, go on."

"I butted him and knocked him backward. He hit his head on the steel trash bin and fell."

"*Aman bey!* You didn't kill him, did you? God damn it, I told you to follow him and report his contacts, not kill him. You fucking *aptal*, stupid idiot."

Adnan jumped up and grabbed Fare' by his tee shirt, bunching it into a tight fist and lifted the boy off the floor. "You stupid sonofabitch." He slammed the boy's head against the wall, dropped him, witnessing his legs buckle under him. His headache returned and he massaged his temples slowly, pondering this glitch, wondering what he should do. The idea of having Fare' follow the man was to find out if he had made contact with anyone. According to his informant in Izmir, the American appeared to be, at least in his limited experience, a policeman or maybe an intelligence officer. The discovery of his cache' in Goreme would have obviously stirred up the American authorities.

What next? He turned back to Fare', who was still lying on the floor rubbing the back of his head, his eyes darting, weak lips trembling, about to cry. How could he have trusted this simpleton to carry out a surveillance job? The boy was loyal, but Adnan had to be careful in his instructions. Fare' took everything so literally.

"Continue. What did you do next?"

"I ran back to my car at the hotel, then drove to the park and pulled into the loading area behind the building. The American was still on the ground, bleeding from his head; he was awake, but not

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moving. I dragged him to the car and dumped him in the trunk." Fare' stopped and waited for The Viper to say something.

Adnan nodded his head for him to continue.

"I drove him out to my uncle's farm near Cumaovasi and tied him up in the stable."

"Is there anyone there to watch him?"

"No. My uncle died years ago and no one lives there. I drove back to Izmir to look for you. Then I remembered that you were here at your beach-house. I came here last night, but you were gone."

"Did the American make contact with anyone?"

"No. No one."

"Do you know if he had an opportunity to hide anything while he was in the park?"

"What do you mean?"

"*Hide* anything. Damn it, that's a simple question. Could he have hidden an envelope, a note, or anything for someone else to pick up? Is that clear enough, aptal?"

"No, I mean yes, I did not see anything like that. He *did* have a briefcase with him when he left the hotel, but it was not with him when I picked him up at the Hall."

"Briefcase! Shit, man, what do you have for brains? Where is this briefcase?"

"I don't know. I guess maybe he hid it somewhere near the Hall."

"You climb into that pile of junk," he said, pointing out of the window to Fare's car, "get your stupid ass back to the park and find that briefcase. Check around the trash bin. He probably hid it when he realized he was being followed."

Adnan leaned forward, face to face. "Fare', you listen to me carefully. I do not like fuck-ups working for me. And, when your services are no longer needed, I will make your severed head bait for a very large grouper," he said, shaking with anger. "You understand that?"

"Evet, yes sir, I understand. Find the briefcase and bring it to you right away. What should I do with the American?"

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"If you have not killed the poor bastard, take him far out of town, perhaps into the hills near Ephesus. Someone will eventually find him. If he's dead, bury him on the farm."

"Yes sir, but I don't believe he's dead. He was trying to talk when I left him."

"Where's his ID? You *did* think to get that, didn't you?"

"He only had forty US dollars in his wallet so I threw it away, along the highway."

"You are the dumbest sonofabitch on the planet! You didn't look to see who he was, or learn anything else about him?"

Adnan started to grab Fare' again but the boy stepped back and yelled, "Yes sir, Yilan efendim, here is his ID. It was not in his wallet, but in his coat pocket." He handed Adnan a black case with a gold badge pinned to its outside cover. Inside were two thick plastic cards, identifying the bearer as a Special Agent, US Army Intelligence Corps.

"Yes! I knew that he must be an intelligence officer." He felt relieved to know he'd been right; the local US authorities would bring in an investigator. This man, this "Bastrophe K. Scott," was looking for him. He shoved the case into his pants pocket and observed the cowering Fare' with distaste

"*Haydi git!* Go, and bring back that briefcase."

Fare' slipped out of the door and gently closed it behind him. The Viper watched him walking to his car. Fare' was rubbing his head.

"Go on; rub your head, while it's still attached to your neck."

Army Intelligence Agents track down a Kurdish terrorist in Turkey.

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