

# **SILENT INTRUSION**

Silent Intrusion Book 1 – Breaker

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# CHAPTER 1



Time had lost all meaning without sunlight. His meals came at odd times. He knew the lack of any routine or normalcy was meant to add to the pain of his isolation, the delay of the inevitable and an added torture. His room was dark, dank and rough. With time on his hands to explore his surroundings Mike had studied his prison. At first, he thought the jagged cuts in the steel wall were from a struggle. Possibly someone had struggled in this cell before him. Then as he continued to rub his fingers against the markings, he realized these were not cut by hand but with a precise tool. There was language here, invisible in the darkness. Someone had taken the time to etch every symbol in the cold wet steel. The lines were straight and the symbols seemed old.

Mike had fought hard for his freedom but in the end he had been betrayed. His captors would tell the story differently. In their eyes no one was more deserving of death. A sentence they would carry out soon enough.

The floor had no discernible texture, except a damp sludge in the corners. He knew that outside the walls were others, locked as he was – the forgotten thousands. To those who had once known them, they were already dead – they just hadn't died, yet. He knew he had given a few of them hope, because word of his escape had made it through the labs. The tale had spread that he had nearly beaten them at their own game. Others, locked behind their own steel doors knew he was still here somewhere. And knew that he had been caught by *her*. That he had almost pulled off the impossible, escape. He wasn't sure what the other missing had heard but he knew they didn't know the whole story. Sadly, the truth would never live up to the legend. He had fought for himself and he would have saved only himself given the chance. That chance had fled and abandoned him. Now he sat locked in a pitch-

black world, struggling to control his fear. Silencer had been killed months, maybe years ago. He had been his only friend.

The distant muffled moans of others trapped in their cells gave him some sense of the outside world. A sea of suffering reaching through the thick metal walls and the noise gave him a twisted comfort, a way for his mind to gauge distance. Suddenly, for the first time since he had arrived, the moans went silent.

Mike sucked in deeply and crouched on the floor. They were coming, the day had arrived – an eternity of anguish and regret was coming to an end. The metal doors clicked, clanged, and then creaked slightly. A bright light burst through the room. It was the first light he had seen in months. Mike’s eyes burned, he was prepared for this and shielded his eyes with the crook of his elbow.

He held still, ice prickling from the base of his neck down his spine. He knew they would be armed and there would be at least five of them. His eyes were useless, but he could sense them, could feel their fear. Until Mike, no one had dared fight back, nor had been quite so capable. They were standing around him now. Mike waited a split second more, then lunged from his crouched position, shooting towards the light and open doorway. He grabbed the first one and slammed him against the ground, killing him instantly. He had reached the second when he heard the crack of electricity. He felt a sharp stab in his right ribs, tasted iron, and went rigid before falling to the ground.

His body was frozen, his eyes stuck open and the light tore painfully at his retinas. He lay flat on his back while thin, clammy hands gripped cautiously around his ankles.

The ground scraped against his back as they dragged him out of the cell and down the dank corridor. His tattered shirt was pulled up and he felt the slimy metal against his exposed skin. Fear kept the other prisoners quiet until someone, peeking through a crack in their cell door, recognized who was being dragged down the hall.

“It’s Waltman!” he yelled loudly before banging against the wall. The prison lit up with noise and grew in volume as news spread about who was being dragged. It was news that he existed, that the legends held truth. They knew his fate as well as he did but the fact that he had been there that whole time, gave some comfort to those also facing his sentence.

Mike was dragged to a small room. Judging by the vicinity to his cell he recognized the purpose of the room. He had heard the muted screams of other condemned coming from this room for what must have been months. He was in the execution chamber. Mike felt a cold sweaty hand against his forehead, "I am very excited for this," whispered a quivering voice in Mike's ear, the warm breath tickling from the closeness of the whispering lips.

The voice was Meganon, someone Mike knew all too well. He wasn't surprised that Meganon had made the trip, even if this place was far beneath him.

"Mike Waltman, for attempted escape and the murder of your Grale superiors, you are sentenced to die," said Meganon. Mike realized Meganon was there to do more than watch, he was the executioner. Mike could now blink and look around and see the details of the room. A massive forest of wires filled the entire back portion of the room. His eyes followed the tangled monstrosity from the ceiling down to a single helmet which hung suspended above the ground. The only other thing in the room was a flat table with straps which stood upright about 10 feet from the looming helmet. Meganon stepped behind the complex head gear.

"Guards, bring him forward." This command was not aloud but transmitted telepathically from Meganon to the two guards holding Mike.

The guards leaned Mike's stiff body against the standing table and started to strap Mike into place. Gradually, the feeling was returning to his limbs. He glanced at Meganon who had never stopped staring at him. It was the intense stare of a wild predator who was preparing to feast on a fresh kill. His twisted smile matched the intensity of his stare and Mike recognized it as the malevolent smile of the truly corrupt. He looked giddy with perverse excitement. Meganon kept his stare even while he moved beneath the hanging helmet and placed it on his own head.

Mike's death would be by mental assault. Amplified mental messages would be sent into Mike's mind until all of his memories were overwritten by a simple message of degradation and death, until his mind complied and shut down his body. It was a painful way to go. Only the worst for a traitor.

The last of the worn straps was secured and the guards stepped away. Mike could barely see Meganon's face through all the wires hanging from the ceiling attached to his complex helmet and harness. This device, like many others, was of ancient origins and the Grale had long since lost the knowledge and ability to fix or replicate it. Mike wasn't sure what the original purpose was for this machine, but it was now Meganon's preferred tool of torture and death.

A loud buzzing started to build inside Mike's head concentrating in his frontal lobe before pulsing down his spine. Then the first assault began. Mike had felt pain before but nothing like this. His mind was suddenly on fire and his skull seemed to be splitting in half. It was like the screaming of millions of voices stronger than his conscious. They began to tear down everything precious in his mind. Every good memory, every sense of self, of integrity, of hard work, of pride, everything started to warp into its negative opposite. The mental anguish blurred the lines between what was real and what was being created in his head. Mike instantly craved death. He desperately needed to end the pain. He hoped that somehow, it would come quickly. Surely after all he had suffered he deserved this mercy.

The thought rose to his mind that the weaker minded died faster but that thought didn't give him hope. "Where are you?" he cried into the pain filled darkness but only silence greeted him. She had gone dark and even in his greatest moment of anguish she remained silent.

The pain lessened slightly. Somehow he was still alive. How could he still be alive? His head had to be in two pieces now, torn in half. He started to open his eyes when the second wave hit.

Mike's fists tightened into balls, his knuckles white. It was unbearable. He screamed out in agony, at least he *thought* he was screaming. He could take no more. Then he heard a metallic explosion.

So this is what death feels like.

## CHAPTER 2



Breaker was nervous as he stepped off the Cargo plane. He was a short thin man with a cherubic round face and thinning hair. Although he was in the military he usually was nervous around other soldiers.

He was shocked to find himself as an aid to the great General McIntire. He hoped it was because of his brilliant mind and not his lacking social skills that had lead to the General's decision to hire him. He had worked with General McIntire for only a few weeks but already it hadn't gone well but in those weeks as the General's assistant he had backed into the General's classic Jaguar XKE when his hot chocolate fell into his lap. He had SOME HOW started a small fire in the office while taking apart his computer. And now he was trying hard to forget about the incident with the Russians in St. Petersburg. As the General's personal assistant he felt like an abysmal failure. Clearly, the General was showing his dissatisfaction by making Beaker fly in the Cargo plane rather than a commercial airline to the distant Svalbard island of Spitsbergen. It was only 800 miles from the North Pole.

Breaker hadn't been briefed about the mission but he read up on everything he could find about the small island during his flight. Apparently it was best known for being the doomsday seed bank of the world. Being as close as it was to the ice caps it was a natural refrigerator all year round. Eager to impress, Breaker studied everything he could find about the Seed Vault in an attempt to avoid another blunder.

The cargo door opened and Breaker was greeted by the usual disdainful look of Alex, McIntire's head scientist. Alex was obviously annoyed at having to pick up Breaker. In fact, as far back as Breaker could remember he had never seen Alex look anything but unhappy. "Let's go, we don't have a lot of time," said Alex. Breaker promptly threw his rucksack in the back of the waiting Humvee, hoping to

prolong the time it would take for the inevitable mishap that would set off Alex. It didn't take long. Alex walked briskly to the back of the vehicle and lifted the rucksack out using metal rod like the sack was a sour smelling gym sock. He dropped it on the ground, "When the General says travel light, he doesn't mean bring one bag, he means don't bring anything."

Alex tossed the rucksack back into the cargo plane. "Wallet," demanded Alex as he stretched out his hand, palm up, impatiently motioning with his hand for Breaker to give it to him. Not wanting to mess up anything else. Breaker clumsily took his wallet out of his pocket. Before Breaker could hand it over to Alex, Alex snatched it out of his hands. He pocketed the forty dollars Breaker had in cash then flung the wallet after the rucksack through the doors of the cargo plane. Before Breaker could say anything, Alex was back in the driver's seat and Breaker heard the Humvee shift into gear. He scrambled back into the passenger seat.

"Breaker, I know the General has a soft spot for you, for some reason. Otherwise you'd be long gone. Just try and stay out of the way. If the General asks you to coordinate a dinner between him and the Norwegian Government, let me double check whatever you do before you send it out. We don't want what happened with the Russians repeated," said Alex.

And there it was again. The mistake Alex would never let him forget. Breaker had known it wouldn't be long before that incident was brought up. It was a dinner which involved half of the Russian delegation arriving in St. Petersburg Russia, and the other half arriving rather confused in St. Petersburg Florida. To be fair, Breaker did not think the Russians in Florida were all that upset but the dinner had obviously been a disaster.

The Humvee drove away from civilization, which didn't take long. They were barreling at a rather unsafe speed directly towards the mountains and as Breaker learned a very particular glacier. The glacier was beautiful. Alex's incessant complaining faded into the sounds of the rattling vehicle as Breaker sat mesmerized by the sheer cliff of the approaching blue ice.

This was Breaker's first time traveling in his short military career and sites like this were one of the main reasons he had enlisted. Soon the Humvee was close and Breaker was able to make out a square

tunnel cut into the glacial wall of ice. He was enthralled with the preciseness of the ice cutting and his mind started racing. What type of tools could cut such a perfect tunnel and roadway? He had heard of hotels and buildings made out of ice but to see it in person was incredible! Alex didn't slow down as they entered the tunnel and the Humvee continued its hurried pace deeper into the glacier.

"I need to remind you that what you are about to see is to be kept strictly confidential. It was discovered during a search for two missing geologists," said Alex. The ice tunnel was getting darker as they delved deeper into the glacier and soon the top lights and head lights were on. After a few minutes of driving a light ahead sparkled. They were approaching their destination.

"What is the light?" questioned Breaker.

"It's our work camp. This tunnel we're driving in didn't exist forty eight hours ago," said Alex not showing any surprise that Breaker had missed the first major clue that something wasn't right.

"You cut it?" questioned Breaker.

"No Breaker, nothing we know of can cut miles into the ice in hours," said Alex.

Breaker looked out at the perfectly cut ice walls. Whatever had cut them had done it very precisely. He felt stupid for looking like an idiot in front of Alex once again. Alex drove the Humvee into the well-lit opening and this time Breaker spotted what was even more amazing. They had just driven into an ancient city. It was carved into the side of a rock mountain buried miles under a glacier. The city seemed perfectly preserved. There was a collection of buildings surrounding a square of open ground. In a mobile command center Breaker saw the General. He looked young for a general. General McIntire was organizing scientists and soldiers as they brought samples and reports to him. Beside the table looking as amazed as Breaker, sat two local Forest Rangers.

McIntire smiled as the Humvee pulled up and Alex and Breaker got out. "Breaker, good to see you finally made it. McIntire left someone with a rock sample and walked over to Breaker his hand outstretched. Breaker extended his own hand but the General, instead of shaking Breaker's hand he reached up to his uniform name patch and tore it off. With a smile he pocketed the name badge and said in a

light tone. “Get a couple of plain uniforms without name badges when we get back.”

At this, Breaker looked around and sure enough no one else had their name printed above their pocket. “What do you think of this place?” questioned McIntire to Breaker.

Breaker looked at the ice ceiling hundreds of feet above them, illuminated by massive flood lights powered by droning diesel generator trucks.

“It’s amazing. What is it?” questioned Breaker.

“Good question.” McIntire, turned to his head scientist. “We have found what they took,” he said as he turned his attention to Alex.

Breaker was too caught up in his own thoughts about this new environment to notice Alex and McIntire walking away and to the center of the square. They gathered around a shattered pillar which unlike the rest of the intact ancient city, appeared destroyed. McIntire examined the remaining base of the pillar. They were debating over its origins when Breaker tripped over some debris and joined them. Their eyes darted to Breaker who blurted out to cover his embarrassment, “There are over three million different varieties of seeds in the Domsday Vault.”

Alex rolled his eyes but McIntire just nodded his head and they all turned back to the base of the pillar. There were hieroglyphic drawings cut very precisely into the rock. “It’s got to be a formula of some sort,” said Alex examining the pictures on the broken base.

“It’s not a formula,” interjected Breaker. Alex looked like an older sibling getting math homework advice from a little brother. “Take a look, this picture is a war. Laser etched into the rock,” said Breaker motioning toward a depiction of what now appeared to be soldiers. “It could be a history of whoever lived here,” said Breaker. McIntire had given his full attention to Breaker and since this was the first intelligent thing Breaker had said he barreled on. “Over here they are celebrating the creation of something. It’s some sort of light maybe even fire. But fire seems a silly thing for them to get excited about when they are etching rock with lasers. And fire doesn’t explain why the substance is hovering above the table,” said Breaker.

“Lasers?” questioned McIntire.

“Yeah, look at the angles and the dark portions of the grooves. Only lasers cut like this,” said Breaker. “So how old is this place?” he questioned.

“There is no record of this city in modern history,” said McIntire. Surprised, Breaker felt the gravity of the situation begin to sink in. He was about to speak when he noticed an angry group of men in winter camouflage approaching them from their vehicles at the entrance of the tunnel.

McIntire faced Breaker. “Breaker, I want you to go talk to those men and stall them as long as you can. Remember do not tell them your name or who you work with. I’ll have you out in six months tops,” smiled McIntire. The General grabbed his radio and calmly said, “That’s a wrap.”

Six months, was that a Joke? It was all Breaker could think as the angry men approached him. “Who are you?” they questioned in thick accents.

Breaker knew he wasn’t allowed to answer that question. He was still trying to figure out what was going on as military personnel all around him loaded what they could into their Humvees and headed down the tunnel with incredible speed. He was out of ideas on how to stall so he responded, “Who are you?”

“We are the Norwegian Army, who are you and what right do you have to be in our country?” questioned the angry man. His men were fruitlessly chasing after the last of McIntire’s retreating soldiers. Confused as he was, Breaker couldn’t help but be impressed at the hustle of McIntire’s soldiers. They had all made it out of the cave in record time. Unfortunately Breaker was now being handcuffed by a very angry Norwegian.



## CHAPTER 3



McIntire was obviously watching over his aid. Breaker didn't have to spend six months in a Norwegian prison. After only six weeks, McIntire had him added to a terror watch list and the Norwegian Government reluctantly extradited him to the CIA. If Breaker had one complaint, beyond the six weeks in prison it was how long it took McIntire to remove his name from the Terror watch list.

Back in Washington, Breaker could not get the images of the hieroglyphs out of his mind. He was back at his desk outside the General's office and back at his usual duties, which sadly didn't include much. Breaker looked at the General's calendar to see that the majority of the calendar was blacked out, indicating that the General was busy but it was top secret. He looked up from the calendar to see a uniformed soldier.

The soldier saluted and left a package on the desk. It was labeled top secret and by the weight and feel Breaker was certain it contained photos. He was about to buzz through to General McIntire's office when he noticed who the package was from. Stamped in the top left corner was Alex's name. It had been weeks since Breaker had heard anything about the trip to the glacier and had been unable to even bring the subject up with the General. He debated for a moment and then opened the envelope. Sure enough, there was a complete picture of the base of the column. It must have been taken before the Norwegians arrived.

Breaker had done some research on the subject and these pictures confirmed what he now believed. He was so excited, he forgot to page the General before he walked into his office.

"Sir, I know what the fire is," said Breaker.

McIntire stopped mid-sentence and looked at Breaker before saying into the phone. "I'll call you back."

“In 2004 the Russians discovered Element 115 . . . well they discovered it in 1999 but it took us until 2004 to confirm it. We were only able to create it for a fraction of a second but my point is, its properties match the properties in the picture,” Breaker paused to point at the hovering wedge-like shape positioned a few feet above a table in the hieroglyph.

“You see it has its own gravitational field, it lives by a completely different set of laws.”

McIntire interrupted. “So do you think the Russians have figured out how to stabilize the element?” questioned the General.

For the first time it was Breaker’s turn to give him a look of an older brother looking at a younger sibling trying to help. “Sir, I think we can stop pretending this is Russian. What we have here is massive, potentially ancient, and I want in,” said Breaker.

McIntire paused for an awkward minute as he thought through a few things. “Breaker, you’re a young man with a great career ahead of you. If you can learn not to read people’s mail and never talk about this subject again, well . . . you will go far and I’ll see to it that it happens,” started McIntire.

“Who are they General?” questioned Breaker further.

“Breaker you need to think about what you’re doing here. I can’t undo telling you what we know. You’ve already guessed more than I would have liked. Look, I’m sorry about the whole Norwegian prison and terror watch list thing but I think at this point it would be better if you put in for a transfer. I’ll give you a good recommendation,” said McIntire trying to conclude the conversation.

Breaker held his ground but said nothing. “Breaker this is your last warning. This is a career ender. This will ruin any chance of a real promotion . . . or a normal life for that matter,” said McIntire. Still Breaker stood in front of him.

“I understand the risks sir but I was never one to chase rank,” replied Breaker.

McIntire sighed in a disappointed manner and then smirked slightly before lifting a device from underneath his desk and a stack of folders. “This,” he said motioning to the device, “detects E-115, the element you are referring to. Think of it like a Geiger counter for that substance. That Norwegian site which you saw was covered with trace elements of the substance. That site, although the biggest find, is

actually the forty ninth site we have discovered . . .” McIntire chuckled.

Breaker looked at a photograph of a teenage girl clipped to the first folder. “They’re taking people Breaker . . . and I can’t figure out why but the people they’re taking are not coming back.”

“What do you mean?” questioned Breaker.

“Whoever or whatever they are, they are interested in people and they’ve taken hundreds of our citizens and the citizens of other countries. We haven’t found a pattern - they aren’t related, they don’t live near each other, they leave very little traces behind - E-115 being one trace. Other than that it looks like a standard kidnapping or runaway,” said McIntire.

Breaker did not expect what he was hearing. He knew deep down this was big but had not really thought long enough about what “big” could mean. “Why do we need a pattern?” he questioned looking at the files.

“We’ve got to be able to predict it, to stop it and if we can’t find a pattern, no dice” said McIntire in resigned frustration. “Why are we the ones that have to stop abductions?” asked Breaker.

“Well, when it started, it was all about national security, but the longer it’s gone on...” McIntire was struggling with finishing his statement. “Let’s just say, it’s personal. We’ve been over the files a hundred times and no leads yet they are happening with more frequency.”

“How high up do people know about this?” questioned Breaker.

“Years ago, a sitting President commissioned this organization, but the problem with secret black ops projects is they don’t always get passed on to the next president. Our country has had some political shifts as of late and we’re off the books and frankly I prefer it that way,” said the General.

“Look Breaker, I’m at my wits end. I can’t figure this one out at all. If you want to pour over the files you’re welcome to it but they don’t leave this office and my calls need to be answered and my mail needs to be delivered, sealed. I’ll show you the important stuff but I have hunting magazines that I take great pride in turning the pages for the first time myself,” the General stood up. “I’ve got a meeting in ten minutes so lock up when you’re done,” said the General before exiting the office, leaving Breaker alone with the files.

Breaker worked through the night. He read every file. They varied in some ways and in other ways were all the same. The first abduction or “victim zero” had occurred two years earlier and had involved a homemaker in Norway of all places. She had had the house to herself for the weekend, but when her family arrived home late that Sunday the house was turned upside down and she was gone.

Like investigating a serial killer, the first crime is the most important- it’s where the most mistakes are made and potentially the biggest clues are left behind. The house had been left in shambles but that was not a pattern that continued. Gradually as the kidnappings proceeded, less evidence was left behind. The only obvious commonality was detectable traces of E-115.

Breaker started by building a map of the world, plotting all forty-nine abductions on the map. He then ran criminal background checks on all of them- nothing out of the ordinary came up. All night Breaker read and re-read the case files scrutinizing over the map and spreading the files further and further around the room as the hours passed.

He was frustrated. It had to be here. There had to be a pattern in front of him. In frustration he tossed a file across the room, almost hitting General McIntire who had walked back into his office to start a new day. The General looked around at the papers spread all over the office and the map completely covering the top of his desk. “We’re going to get you your own office,” he said. Breaker embarrassingly scrambled to pick up the papers, apologizing repeatedly.

“I’ve got a soldier that’s going to help you on this project Breaker. He’s a good fighter. He’s had some trouble so be a little careful but his mind is sharp. He just has some impulse control issues,” said McIntire.

“Impulse control? What, is he a criminal?” questioned Breaker restacking a particularly thick file. McIntire didn’t answer and so Breaker turned around slowly to see the man McIntire had been describing. He had short cut hair, broad shoulders and a dour expression.

“My name is Garren and yes I am a criminal,” said Garren offering his hand to Breaker. Breaker shook his hand and realized the man was a full head taller than him.

McIntire said, “Breaker you’ve got thirty days. This is a small research operation right now. I’ve got my people looking into the artifacts we’ve recovered at the sites. If Alex feels any of the artifacts

are pertinent to your research he will forward the appropriate information on to you.”

Breaker knew the likelihood of him ever seeing anything from Alex hovered near zero chance. “You’re running point on helping us find out the why, where, and when of the next attack. We’ll work on the how’s. Oh, and Garren, you’re in charge of cleanliness,” said McIntire while handing a stack of paper to Breaker.

McIntire led the two of them down the hallway and into an empty disheveled office. Breaker was a little surprised to see the empty office so close to the General’s. “No one has wanted to be in here since you’re predecessor committed suicide in here,” said McIntire answering the questions Breaker hadn’t yet asked.

“Well, I’ve got a trip to prepare for and I’ll be gone a week,” said McIntire, walking out of the office rapidly. He left Breaker in the quiet room, holding a stack of paperwork and awkwardly facing Garren. “So, how was prison?” he questioned after a long pause.

“I’m missing it right now,” muttered Garren, kicking a rusted chair out of his way. He dragged a desk to the only small window in the cramped space. “This is my desk,” he announced positioning it under the window. Breaker just stood there, a little disappointed to not be going with McIntire on this latest mission. The good news was that tomorrow he could begin digging deeper into the kidnappings.

The next morning Breaker walked into the office to see Garren already at his desk. Instead of working, his feet were kicked up and he was watching the news on a huge, wall sized flat panel television.

*“In Russia a leading proponent of nuclear disarmament has been found dead in his office. The General was working late....”* Garren muted the news broadcast when he saw the confused look on Breaker’s face.

“McIntire had our petty cash delivered so I went out and bought our first intelligence gathering piece of equipment.” He unmuted the screen.

*“In Svalbard, home of the Doomsday seed bank, authorities are claiming sabotage at a research site that had recently been discovered as it emerged from its ice covering. The site was crushed by an unexpected avalanche...”*

Breaker watched the report and for a moment forgot about how much of the petty was used to pay for such a huge television. The

strange dig site he had visited was gone. Breaker wondered if McIntire was into avalanches and where his commanding officer was.

The news report shifted and so did Breaker's focus. "Where is the petty cash?" he questioned. Garren didn't look away but motioned to a metal ammo box sitting open on Breaker's desk. Breaker looked into the ammo box and saw a few twenty dollars bills floating at the bottom of the container.

"You spent all of our petty cash on a television?" questioned Breaker in horror.

"Don't say it like that, we've already learned where our friend McIntire has been on his trip. AND possibly this story about a two headed turtle has something to do with the fall out of that stuff they leave behind," said Garren motioning to the television.

"Garren, you need to take this seriously," said Breaker.

Garren looked away from the television. "I am taking this seriously. We have seriously no resources to do much of anything until McIntire gets back. Four thousand dollars wasn't going to get us very far," said Garren turning back to his television.

"Four thousand dollars?" questioned Breaker looking at the television, his fists balling up. He took a deep breath and grabbed a file and his jacket. "Come on, we're going to visit Megan Longfellow," announced Breaker.

Garren looked up a little puzzled and then looked over to the petty cash container. "She's local, we can drive to her house," said Breaker.

Garren and Breaker walked out into the parking lot where Breaker's car was parked. Breaker wasn't driving a new car. Being a young military man he drove a used Ford Mustang that produced a bit too much black smoke when he hit the accelerator. Garren walked up to the car and threw a large duffle bag on the back seat. He got into the passenger seat and made himself comfortable.

"What's in the bag?" questioned Breaker.

"It's get out of trouble stuff," said Garren without further explanation.

Breaker shook his head and climbed in. He punched the address into his GPS, a very ancient model that talked in a British accent. "You ever get the feeling that these little boxes are just leading you to

some abandoned field where gangs of other GPS's are waiting for you?" questioned Breaker, trying to break the ice a bit with Garren.

"No," volunteered Garren. They pulled out and started driving towards their first visit. Once Breaker was close he noticed another flaw with his GPS. It just took him to the middle of the street without any clue as to which house it was or on which side of the road. Breaker began to frantically look back and forth trying to guess which house it might be when Garren calmly pointed at a house and said, "It's that one."

Breaker was getting very annoyed about Garren's attitude and prepared to let him have a tirade of abuse when he noticed the house Garren was pointing at. It looked like it was decorated for Christmas, only an alien landing Christmas. Green Christmas like lights lined the roof and a life size alien stood in the lawn mechanically waving to all who drove by.

"I guess it's not a deed restricted community," remarked Garren as a green alien head made out of Christmas lights illuminated on the roof. Even in the light of day the green glow was noticeable.

Breaker parked the car and got out to see Garren grabbing the duffle bag out of the back of the car. "No, let's leave that," Breaker said.

Garren looked a bit confused and then patted a bulge in his jacket, "You're probably right, I can handle things with this."

"I thought felons weren't allowed to have guns?" questioned Breaker walking towards the front door.

"Well, they aren't *legally* allowed to have guns," corrected Garren pushing an E.T. shaped doorbell.

As they waited, Breaker said, "Do you mind me asking why you were in prison?"

"Yes," said Garren. Before Breaker could respond they heard shuffling behind the door. Megan opened the door cautiously with about five door chains keeping her from being able to open it all the way. "The men in black. Sam, they've finally come!" she exclaimed slamming the door.

Breaker stood for a few minutes before confirming he wasn't wearing any black and then said, "We're not the men in black." There was the sound of scraping metal and then the door flew open. Megan stood in the door frame. "Sure you're not. Come in, come in," she said.

As they stepped into the house she disappeared behind a giant pile of magazines. Calling from the other side of the pile she said; “Take a seat in the living room; I’ll be there in a minute.”

Breaker and Garren looked around. The room was stacked high to the ceiling with magazines from all over the world. There was a velvet picture of an alien taking up the bulk of the wall directly opposite the door. There was carpet beneath their feet but only a very thin path led to their left, towards where they both felt the living room had to be.

Breaker led the way as they navigated through the stacks of magazines and newspapers. The path led to a couch with a pile of some sort of fur hats next to it and what looked like an adult high chair facing the couch.

Breaker, who had been stuck going first, made a B-line for the portion of the couch as far away from the ugly hats as possible, sticking Garren with the seat next to it. Garren exclaimed with disgust as he sat down, “It’s a dead cat!”

“Keep your voice down. Let’s not offend anyone until we ask a few questions,” said Breaker who could feel lumps underneath his couch cushion.

Megan seemed to be taking a long time. They sat there waiting when Breaker noticed more than once Garren reach into his jacket to check something. “Would you stop?” said Breaker. Ignoring Breaker, Garren’s hand made another trip to his concealed weapon. Garren started to say something when the dead cat suddenly jumped up on all four and hissed violently at him.

Garren’s hand immediately went back to his weapon and Breaker had to physically reach over and push Garren’s pistol back into its holster as the cat hissed again. “It’s a cat, relax,” ordered Breaker. Garren lowered his hand a few inches while staring at the cat. Just as fast as the cat began hissing, it jumped off its perch and hit the ground with a thud. Its hair was patchy and falling out in places. Even though it could still limp around it looked like it belonged in the grave.

“What is taking her so long?” questioned Garren, looking around nervously. It was obvious to Breaker he was ready to leave.

“Here you go,” called Megan, whirling around a particularly high stack of magazines with a tray shaped like a UFO in her hand. With a clean motion she pushed all the newspapers that were stacked on the table onto the floor and laid the tray on the coffee table. “I made you

some tea and got some of my favorite cookies out,” she explained. She poured a thick green liquid into three cups on the tray.

Garren immediately raised his hands in protest. “Oh I wish I could but I’m Mormon, I can’t drink tea,” he said apologetically.

Megan looked a bit surprised and turned to Breaker. “Oh well, that just means more for us,” she said. Breaker drew a complete blank on why he couldn’t drink the tea. Instead he feebly took the overflowing tea cup from Megan.

Garren was looking way too smug for Breaker’s liking as Megan picked up a Gray disc from the tray and handed it towards him. “I know there is nothing in the Mormon faith against cookies,” she said. Garren also tried to protest but like Breaker, he couldn’t think fast enough to dodge the gray cookie and instead took it from her hand and put it to his mouth. Garren bit hard and dislodged a tiny portion of the cookie with tremendous force.

“So where do you want to start?” questioned Megan, looking excited.

“Well, actually I’d like to start with your genealogy if you don’t mind. Where is your family from originally?” questioned Breaker pulling out a notepad to take notes. Garren not to be outdone pulled out a tablet to take notes as well.

Breaker lifted the cup to his lips and felt the lukewarm, slimy liquid slide down his throat. He had to concentrate on not throwing up as Megan began. “My family is actually from the lowlands of Scotland- primarily Scottish but they married into the English a lot and we had a bit of Gypsy in the family over the years,” answered Megan.

It was at this point that the walking dead cat returned to the room, causing Garren to tense. Instead of hissing it walked calmly over to Garren and began to rub roughly against his leg—emanating a gargling purr and smearing drool all over his pants. The purr sounded as if it were choking.

“Sam usually doesn’t like anyone” commented Megan in shock. “I haven’t heard him purr since I had him fixed,” she said in further shock.

Garren, who Breaker could tell wasn’t an animal lover, tried to gently shoo the cat away from his leg but with no luck. Breaker noticed that as the cat rubbed against his leg, great chunks of its fur dislodged and were sticking to the drool patches on Garren’s pant leg.

“Poor Sam has had a tough life, he developed leprosy when I was recently taken. I think it was from the worry,” said Megan.

“So you were abducted? When did this happen? For how long? Did you learn anything from them?” barked out Garren who was obviously in a hurry to get the interview over with.

“Well, which time? They visit me on a regular basis,” started Megan.

“Start wherever you want,” said Garren. Megan looked up deep in thought. Which gave Garren an opportunity and he kicked toward the cat. This motion did not help the situation. The cat purred louder and continued to rub more vigorously against Garren.

“Well, they first came to me as a child in a dream. They told me to make the statues and they would change the world,” said Megan.

“Do you have one of these statues?” questioned Breaker.

“Well yes, let me go get one,” said Megan. She stood up from her large high chair and scurried away with amazing speed.

Breaker tried to give a warning look to Garren but it was too late. As soon as Megan disappeared from view Garren kicked the cat a little harder and it bounced off his leg hitting a stack of magazines. It wasn't a particularly hard kick but the cat keeled over and went stiff. “You just killed it!” hissed Breaker.

“A cat with leprosy!” exclaimed Garren in a pleading voice.

Breaker looked around in a panic. “Well, hide it somewhere and let's get this thing done,” said Breaker in frustration. Garren shuddered slightly and then grabbed a couple of magazines. He scooped the stiff cat up by the magazines. He raised it up precariously only to have it slip out and thud against the floor.

“I found it,” called Megan from the other room.

“She's almost back,” whispered Breaker. Desperate, Garren grabbed the cat with his bare hands and quickly threw it behind the couch. Great patches of hair were now sticking to his fingers. He sat on the couch right before Megan returned with her statue. Garren tucked his furry hands into his pockets. Megan held out a statue that resembled the standard looking gray aliens that were popular in pop culture, except it had butterfly wings and a magic wand.

“This one is Light Bringer, he's in charge of making sure the flowers bloom,” she said proudly.

Breaker hoped his look of surprise hadn't been too obvious. The statue looked beyond ridiculous. Not sure what to do next Breaker looked down at his list of questions. "How long have you lived at 1024 Garland St.?" he asked.

"1024 Garland St.? This is 1025 Garland St. I've lived here for twenty years," said Megan.

Breaker looked angrily at Garren. They were at the wrong house. "Where is Sam?" questioned Megan, before starting to search around for her cat. Her question was answered when a large hissing began from behind the couch. "He's narcoleptic and he's always in a bad mood when he wakes up," she said starting to move towards the back of the couch.

"Do you know the woman that lives at 1025 very well?" questioned Breaker as a gray patchy object with claws extended, shot from behind the couch and violently latched on the back of Garren's head. Garren yelped in pain and fell forward. He gripped the cat, sending a puff of fur flying. He then began to gingerly attempt to detach the claws that were now embedded in his scalp.

"Oh that's Megan Longfellow's house, she's crazy. She doesn't know anything about the Gray's. I'd stay away from her if I were you," said Megan noticing that Breaker's tea cup was no longer full. She picked up the tea pot and began pouring into his cup, fully ignoring the struggling Garren as the cat violently slashed at his face from behind his head. A large solid green something slid from the tea pot into Breaker's cup.

Garren reached into his jacket again as Breaker stood up suddenly, grabbed the cat, pulling it from Garren's head, its claws scraping against his skin as it was removed. Breaker threw the slashing cat towards Megan and turned towards the door. "Megan you've been a great help and done a great service for our country with your..." Breaker struggled for the word, "statues, but we must be on our way," he announced. He made a break for the door pushing a scratched, bloodied and angry Garren in front of him.

"Wait, don't you want to hear about the abductions?" questioned Megan. Sam had immediately settled down once reaching Megan and she petted him lovingly in her arms, not noticing the hair sticking to her fingers.

"Not this time, I'm afraid," said Breaker reaching the front door.

“I’ve got more statues,” called out Megan. Breaker turned the door handle and made a break for the car. .

Garren had reached into the back seat and unzipped his duffle bag by the time Breaker reached the car. “What are you doing?” called Breaker starting the car. Megan was walking towards them as Breaker put it into reverse.

“I’m getting a silencer,” called back an angry Garren.

“You can’t shoot anything,” said Breaker, accidentally peeling the car out trying to leave quickly and completely blowing any subtlety he may have retained up to that point. Breaker tried to look back at Megan but the black smoke blocked any visibility.

Once they were a safe distance from the neighborhood, Garren insisted on going immediately to a hospital where he was assured repeatedly that he did not have leprosy. The scratches were small and not infected and the doctor assured Garren that cats could not get leprosy. Then, after a thorough scrubbing in a hospital bathroom he agreed to get back in the car and they called it a day.

## CHAPTER 4



The next day under protest from Garren, they headed back to the neighborhood to find the right Megan. Breaker had only gotten Garren to agree to come by agreeing to let him drive his own car. It was an older jeep with massive tires. Because of the tire size Garren was driving under the minimum speed limit. A long line of angry drivers built up behind them. When each driver got a chance to pass, they honked and gestured angrily. Garren seemed immune to this kind of treatment and they eventually made it to Megan Longfellow's house without incident.

They walked across the street with the alien landing site house glowing behind them. Breaker didn't show it, but like Garren, he was nervous that the other Megan would come outside and try to give them more tea.

After knocking the door slowly opened and the right Megan stood in the doorway looking exhausted at the presence of two people on her doorstep. "Can I help you?" she questioned.

Garren took the lead and pulled out a badge, "Ma'am we are from the NSA we'd like to ask you some questions."

"I told the investigators everything I know and I'm trying to move on," said Megan.

"May we come in?" questioned Garren, glancing over his shoulder. The porch light of the other house had turned on, either because of the approaching sunset or potentially to light the way for Sam to find his friend.

Megan started to shut the door. "Ma'am we are trying to find answers, just like you," said Breaker. With a defeated look, Megan allowed Breaker and Garren into the house. Garren was sure to secure the door and looked relieved once it was closed.

“Could you start by telling us what happened?” started Breaker joining Garren on the couch. Once again, Garren pulled out his tablet to take notes.

“Where are you from again?” questioned Megan.

“We’re from the NSA,” said Garren.

“What does NSA stand for?” she questioned skeptically.

Garren started to make an “n” sound before turning to Breaker, his eyes questioning.

“National Security Agency ma’am,” said Breaker quickly. “He’s new,” he added motioning to Garren.

Megan sighed deeply, resigning herself to the conversation she was about to have. “Well, I don’t remember much. Things were winding down here. My brother went to bed early. For the first time in my life, I fell asleep in front of the television. When I awoke Tom was gone,” said Megan.

“What makes you think this was anything but a runaway or kidnapping?” questioned Garren.

Megan stiffened slightly. “What kidnapper steals every family photograph of the person they took?” she questioned.

“I’m sorry, what?” asked Breaker.

Megan pointed at the wall behind Breaker. Breaker stood up and looked. The wall still held the nails where pictures must have hung. Breaker turned back to Megan who looked more upset. “They took every picture I had of him, well almost every picture,” she said pulling a Polaroid photo out of her purse and handing it to Breaker.

Breaker took the photograph and looked it over. Tom looked like his sister. He was standing casually next to his car, laughing. Breaker took his phone out and snapped a picture of the Polaroid before handing it back to Megan.

“Ma’am I don’t mean to offend but could the pictures just have been stolen, possibly by Tom. Would he have a reason to disappear?” questioned Garren.

“Tom isn’t good on computers. The night he disappeared physically, he disappeared in every other way. When the police took my statement they looked Tom up. There is no record online that he exists. If there hadn’t been hard records of a birth certificate that I was

able to get hold of, they wouldn't have believed that I even had a brother," said Megan.

Breaker allowed himself to wonder if the other woman across the street was right about this Megan. He wondered if she really was crazy because he didn't know of anyone that had the ability to make people disappear this completely. And he certainly didn't know what her strange story has to do with a lost city in a glacier. A city that had since disappeared.

Breaker reached into his bag and pulled the E-115 detector out. It flared to life, beeping as it detected the material. It was the first time Breaker had heard the machine working and it caused both he and Megan to jump.

"What is that?" she questioned.

"Sorry, just my cell phone," lied Breaker, tucking the machine away.

"Tell me again, you said you fell asleep on the couch," asked Breaker, changing the subject.

"Yes, last thing I remember I was watching television. I remembered being startled awake and noticing immediately the pictures were gone," said Megan.

What did you do?" questioned Garren.

"I stood up and ran to the front door. I ran right into it," said Megan. Garren looked confused. "The door was locked despite the fact that we never lock our door because we lost the keys months ago," said Megan.

"What was the conclusion of the investigation by the police?" questioned Garren.

"They said Tom ran away. That he left without any of his things but he took the photo albums and pictures to make searching for him more difficult. As you may expect I don't believe it. As a kid, he wouldn't go camping with the Scouts for more than a night. He certainly didn't fit any profile I've ever known for a runaway," said Megan.

"When you fell asleep, what was the last thing you remember?" questioned Garren.

Megan thought back to that night and then after a long pause said, "I don't know, I just dozed off. I remember thinking how tired I was,"

she paused for a second remembering something she had forgotten. “I remember the television losing signal before the power went out,” she said.

Breaker wrote this down, looking back up at Megan who was staring at him now. “Who took my brother?” she questioned.

“Aliens,” answered Garren calmly.

“We don’t know that, we’re trying to find out. You are not alone in this and we’re interviewing everyone who, well fits an abduction profile,” said Breaker. “A few final questions if you don’t mind – where does the name Longfellow come from?” he questioned.

“It’s English,” said Megan in response.

Garren and Breaker prepared to leave when Megan turned to them. “Is he dead?” she questioned.

“We don’t know but if he’s not we’re going to get him back,” said Breaker. Megan smiled slightly and nodded her head before walking them to the door.

The drive back to the base was a relatively quiet until Garren interrupted the silence. “Why would you say we’d get him back?” Garren demanded.

“That’s what we’re after, isn’t it. To get people back if they’re not dead?” said Breaker.

“Look, I know you think this is important and matters but did you ever consider that this was a way to get you out of the loop of what McIntire is really up to. A wild goose chase to keep you entertained so that you won’t see what’s really happening. All I know is, I’m stuck in this for the next month and then I’m going to get as far away from this mess as possible before it really blows open,” said Garren.

Breaker was annoyed. He was annoyed at Garren’s never ending casual attitude. “Look, I don’t need you for this and it seems a bit elaborate for keeping someone busy for a few weeks don’t you think?” questioned Breaker losing his cool.

“What have you ever seen McIntire do that wasn’t elaborate. It’s not expensive, line up some crazies that think their runaway brother was abducted and give us five thousand dollars to drive around interviewing them,” said Garren.

“If that’s how you feel, don’t come in tomorrow. I can run this wild goose chase without you,” said Breaker.

“I can’t. Not come in, that is. This is a work release program, which involves showing up to work. I have to show up or I’m back in prison,” said Garren, grudgingly.

Breaker wanted to ask Garren what exactly he had done. How long he’d been behind bars but he was too upset to ask anything. Instead they drove in silence and again called it a day.



## CHAPTER 5



A few nights later Breaker was in a deep sleep when his phone rang. “Hello?” he questioned groggily.

“There’s been another abduction. A driver will pick you and Garren up and I’ll meet you at the site,” said the familiar voice of McIntire before the phone went dead.

Breaker shook his head, trying to clear it. It wasn’t long before he heard tires squeal outside his house. The car was already there. Breaker had a ready bag packed just for this type of scenario and he grabbed it. He quickly threw on a suit and with his shoes in one hand, his bag in the other, he ran out of the house and got into a beautiful black Cadillac. “Do you know where we’re going?” Breaker questioned the driver.

“Airbase,” the man answered. Breaker looked at his watch to see that it was three in the morning. The driver peeled out the car and shot down the streets at an impressive velocity. The car came to a stop at a halfway house and a disheveled Garren, still in his pajamas, climbed into the back seat. He was surprised to see Breaker already sitting there.

“Where are we going?” questioned Garren, with a big yawn.

“Airbase,” said Breaker, not really sure where they would go from there but knowing that the driver wouldn’t know much more than that.

“Do you mind looking out the window? I’ve got to change,” said Garren, the resentment from the day before still at the surface.

Breaker turned to the window and looked out at the quiet streets that were flying by as they headed toward the air base. Once again the car was filled with silence. They didn’t pause at any check points. Instead, the vehicle barely slowed down as it was flagged through repeated check points right to the runway where a B-1B Bomber sat ready and waiting. The stairs were still in place despite the fact that the

engines were running. The driver turned to Garren and Breaker. “Alex told me to tell you to leave your bag in the car, there isn’t any room for it,”

Breaker got out of the car first but Garren pushed past him on the way up the stairs. They were handed helmets and ordered to strap themselves into the jet. Breaker looked at the four man cabin. There were two pilots. Once he had his helmet on, he could hear the pilot over the roar of the engines. “You will be sitting in the chairs of the offensive and defensive officers. Luckily for me we are flying over the United States and we will not need any defensive or offensive help, so don’t touch anything.”

The bomber flew just under the sound barrier to not wake up any sleeping Americans. “We’re heading to Ellsworth Air base in South Dakota where this bird is based. I’m told a car will pick you up when you get there,” said the Pilot.

Breaker had a lot of time on the flight to think. Although he was excited to get to a site early, he hadn’t learned anything of value in the week McIntire had been gone. He was running out of time and wondered if Garren was right. If all of this was a way of keeping him away from what was really going on. He still couldn’t find any connection between an ancient city and recent kidnappings. But then why would McIntire commandeer a bomber and have them flown halfway across the country?

When they arrived they were given priority and quickly landed. Breaker was surprised to see three police cars waiting for them when they touched down. McIntire approached them dressed as a police officer before their feet even hit tarmac. He handed new wallets and badges to Breaker and Garren. “You two are detectives investigating the crime scene. Her name is Michelle McKenzie,” he said walking back to his squad car.

Garren took the badge and said under his breath, “I’m keeping this,” then tucked it into his back pocket as Breaker stared at it for a second. It looked real. When Breaker looked back up McIntire was pulling out and an unmarked police car sat waiting for them. Garren had beaten Breaker to the driver’s seat and the car was already rolling when Breaker jumped in the passenger seat. .

They followed McIntire and pulled up to the house to see a few other police cars besides their two. The front door was lying on the

lawn- the door frame badly damaged. There were other uniformed officers moving in and out of the house. Garren looked at the men and recognized most of them as men working for McIntire. Breaker walked in to see a shell shocked woman in the front room. "Ma'am, the doctor would like to ask you a few questions," McIntire said, motioning to Alex who was wearing the uniform of a paramedic. Alex took her into another room.

McIntire turned to Breaker. "What have you learned so far?" he questioned.

Breaker was caught by surprise. "They take all the pictures of their victims," he said. He pulled out his E-115 detector and it immediately registered a signal.

"Yes, we don't think it's just to make the search for them harder, we think there is another reason," said McIntire.

"There is no link that I can find to these victims," said Breaker, a little frustrated.

McIntire started to say something but then didn't. Breaker felt like he had failed an exam he didn't know he was going to be taking. McIntire changed the subject. "There was a visit here tonight from our enemy," said McIntire.

"How do you know they..." Breaker was cut off as McIntire spoke again.

"I know they are the enemy because this isn't my first site visit," said McIntire. At that moment a woman who must have been Michelle screamed loudly. The door opened and she ran out of the room she had gone in with Alex.

"Who are you people?" she questioned.

"We're here to help. Please, I know it's difficult but you must finish with the doctor," said McIntire, grabbing her arm. Michelle looked at him with terror in her eyes. "I'm not going into that room alone with him," she said, looking accusingly at Alex. Breaker was secretly pleased.

We'll go with you then," said McIntire. He motioned for Breaker and Garren to follow. They went into the master bedroom and shut the door. Alex was holding a rusty looking piece of metal that seemed very old except that all across its surfaces were intricate laser cut patterns. McIntire pushed the bed against the wall to give them more room. "I am sorry Michelle, but we really need you to do this. The rest

of you, hld onto your hats,” said Alex. Breaker furrowed his brow, he was tempted to point out that no one was wearing a hat but before he got the chance the room changed.

With a swirl the walls melted away and Breaker found himself standing in the living room he had been in a few minutes earlier. Only it wasn't quite the same room. The furniture wasn't overturned and there were pictures on the wall. Sitting on the couch sound asleep in front of the television was Michelle. “She can't see you,” said McIntire. She was obviously asleep and had fallen asleep without taking the time to pull her head phones out of her ears.

Breaker looked at Garren who didn't seem fazed by the surreal experience that was unfolding in front of them. Breaker looked at the clock and it read eight hours earlier. He was completely mystified about what was happening. The room felt cold and everyone began to feel very uncomfortable. It was like a nightmare was lurking in the shadows outside. “They're here,” said McIntire pointing at a window. Breaker didn't want to look. He had figured out that they were in Michelle's memory and he was worried about what he would see next. “They can't hurt you,” reassured McIntire. Breaker was embarrassed so he looked. A hissing noise filled the room and everyone strained to find words in the noise.

A black shadow jumped across the window, startling Breaker. Everyone else was just observing quietly. The shadow was moving toward the front door. Michelle suddenly shot awake on the couch—her headphones still firmly fixed in her ears. “Get out of here,” warned Garren who was beginning to become involved in the world around them. She didn't move. Instead, she shook off the feeling. Breaker could feel the stillness outside her front door. Whatever it was, it had paused, holding its ground and waiting for her.

“Don't fall back asleep,” said Garren. She settled deeper into the couch, her music blaring. Suddenly, the power went out and the music in her ears turned to static. The television went black and only the moon lit the room. To her left, the front door lock clicked, disengaging very slowly. Her eyes were still closed as the door creaked open. The dim moon light coming from the crack in the door darkened as the shadow slipped silently into the room. Breaker suddenly heard a word in the hissing noise. “Sleep,” it commanded. Breaker had enough. He turned to McIntire to make the request that he let him off the crazy

train. What he saw was McIntire staring intently at the woman sitting on the couch, comfortably slumbering in front of them.

Breaker stepped as far away from the woman and the creature as he could. If he had to endure this, he was going to be as far away from it as possible. He would have left the room but whatever it was had come from outside. “Sleeeep,” it hissed again. Breaker turned and looked at Garren. He was subconsciously reaching for a gun he didn’t have.

“I can’t make out what it is,” said Garren, finally embracing the world that couldn’t see him back.

“No, we are within Michele’s mind, things outside her view are blurry,” said McIntire. Breaker turned cautiously toward the creature, only to see its shadow quietly moving toward her. A floor board creaked under its foot. Michelle shot straight up, she looked in horror toward the shadowy figure. She screamed and jumped up and ran into the bathroom. It was happening fast now. The shadow charged after her. She slammed the bathroom door behind her. Breaker felt icy fear but he was able to look at it. He still couldn’t make out any features, only its general shape. The shadow was next to the bathroom door. Everything about it seemed calculated and methodical. A hand like thing reached out and felt against the locked door knob before exploring the door frame of the bathroom.

“Open the door,” came the whispered command.

Slowly the door handle turned from inside. Once it had turned enough to unlock the door, the shadow pushed the door open. The moon light weakly illuminated her body in a frozen state. Her body looked relaxed but her face was contorted in fear. The shadow beckoned her forward and her body complied. “I still can’t see it, it’s still just shadow” said Garren.

“Yes, I see. This is troubling,” was all McIntire said in response. She was now walking slowly toward her front door, a panic on her face but all control seemingly lost from her limbs.

“She’s done for,” said Garren.

“Obviously not,” retorted Alex who was getting annoyed at the interruptions.

“Maybe she has a twin,” suggested Garren.

“A twin. Are you insane, we’re viewing her memories,” said Alex.

The shadow left Michelle standing outside the bathroom door as two other shadows slipped into the house. The other two shadows began rifling through drawers and pulling pictures off the wall. Her computer booted up and began flashing images across its screen as a shadow appeared to be copying her hard drive without ever touching the computer itself. “Hurry up,” commanded one of the shadows.

The first shadow stepped backwards tripping over a pair of shoes. His smooth motion stopped as he stumbled and knocked a glass off the counter. The glass shattered on the ground loudly. Michelle’s expression changed to outright terror. Her body went momentarily limp and then tensed up. She bolted for the open front door at full speed. “She could see everything that was happening,” said Breaker realizing that she had been trying to run the whole time but was unable.

A third shadow in the living room pushed the couch with tremendous force, aiming it at her legs but she was already at the front door. The couch crashed into the door frame sending it and the door crashing into the yard behind her. She screamed loudly as she hit the grass. She sprinted across the yard to the street. Breaker heard a high-pitched whine as a rifle of some sort was raised to the shoulder of one of the shadows, a faint purple glow emanating off of it. “No, alive,” commanded the other shadow. The three shadows began to give chase across the yard. The observers stood and watched it unfold and kept trying to get a clearer view of the intruders.

She was screaming now, banging on the door of her neighbor across the street. A light came on but was quickly extinguished by the shadows. She tore away from the door and ran to the next neighbor. The three shadows following her as she again kicked the door and rang the doorbell. Again the light came on but this time her pursuers lurked backwards into the darkness.

“That’s it,” said McIntire. The memory faded and the bedroom reformed around them.

“Who or WHAT was that?” questioned Garren with true alarm on his face. He had somehow gotten hold of a side arm and was checking to make sure it was loaded.

“They are Grale,” said Alex.

“What did they do to her?” questioned Breaker.

“Nothing permanent and she got away. It’s the first time I’ve seen anyone get away,” said McIntire. Breaker felt horrible for Michelle who had just lived that experience hours ago and had to relive it again.

Michelle sat quivering on the couch. “I’m so sorry that happened to you ma’am,” said Breaker trying to focus his attention on her.

“Ma’am, we are going to need to ask you more questions,” said Alex.

“If you don’t mind, it will help us in catching whoever did this to you,” added McIntire.

“Don’t let them get me,” she said while looking imploringly at Garren.

The sound of sirens echoed in the distance and in his usual fashion McIntire made the announcement, “That’s a wrap. Let’s move out.” Like it always did, the team moved from their evidence gathering mode to quick exit mode. “The local authorities will take it from here,” said Alex to Michelle.

Alex turned to Breaker and Garren. “Your transport plane leaves in twenty minutes, leave her here,” he ordered. Police uniforms were torn off and stuffed in duffle bags as the police lights were removed from the vehicles. Breaker was amazed by how fast the squad cars resembled civilian vehicles and how quickly the ten cars rolled quickly off in different directions. They should have been moving too but Garren stood looking at Michelle.

With McIntire’s team gone, Garren, Breaker, and Michelle heard the police cars pulling up. Michelle was on the verge of tears, panic in her eyes. Garren turned to Breaker. “We can’t leave her, they will not believe her. They neighbors didn’t see anything and she will look like she is crazy and they won’t protect her,” he said.

Breaker was surprised to see Garren asking him for anything. “It might be better for her if they lock her up,” said Breaker.

“We can’t leave her,” repeated Garren.

Breaker sighed in frustration. He knew Garren was right but McIntire must not find out. “Ok, bring her and let’s go.”



## CHAPTER 6



The flight back to Washington was much longer than the trip there. Taking Michelle with them ruled out the military plane option and getting to a civilian airport had been quite a challenge. Both Garren and Breaker wished they had more answers for Michele. Garren sat beside her as she obviously was comforted by his presence and felt safer with him by her side. Breaker spent his time trying to come up with answers for himself. They were dealing with alien visitors and they had some piece of alien equipment that allowed others access to a person's memories. McIntire and his team were not working with local police and they seemed to know where they should be before the police investigated. Breaker resolved that the next time the team started moving quickly that he would do the same thing. He was tired of being left behind to pick up the pieces.

They arrived in D.C. without sleep. Breaker was stressed as he got in the elevator and headed towards his bed. They had a week before McIntire was due back.

Breaker had to help Michelle find a place that was safe before McIntire came back. That wasn't going to be easy. For now, Michelle was at Breaker's mothers even though Garren had extended the invitation for her to stay at his place. Breaker had to remind him that he was still on probation.

Michelle and Garren were already in the office when Breaker came in the next morning. Breaker got the distinct impression he was interrupting something. Garren was sitting way too close to Michelle and they both turned quickly to Breaker when he came into the room. The pause was awkward. Breaker racked his mind for what he had planned to say to Michelle when he saw her that day. "Michelle, I was hoping you could help us with your relatives," said Breaker, pushing forward with his own agenda and trying to ignore Garren's.

Breaker laid a family tree printout in front of Michelle for her to fill out. While she set to work, Breaker pulled Garren out of the office with him. “What are we going to do with her?” Breaker questioned.

“This isn’t something we have to figure out right now,” said Garren, trying to calm Breaker down. “We’ve got a week before McIntire is back and she’ll be doing better by then. She’s already showing a lot of improvement. She’s talking up a storm this morning,” said Garren, not reassuring Breaker at all.

“We aren’t qualified to help her. What experience do you have treating traumatized patients?” questioned Breaker.

“Look, she can help us while we help her. We know she is a target. Now we’ve just got to dig through her past and figure out what she did to get on the alien naughty list,” said Garren.

“What do you think McIntire is going to say when he finds out we’ve got her staying at my mom’s?” questioned Breaker.

“Yes, that show how we handle things differently. I’m not going to tell him that we brought her with us,” said Garren. “I think we can both agree he’d be very ticked if we did.”

Breaker was exasperated. “I know she’s cute and you think you might have a chance but she’s a victim and you’re exploiting her,” said Breaker.

“It’s not like that,” said Garren, truly offended by the comment.

“I don’t buy it,” said Breaker.

“Look, yes she’s attractive, and yes I do plan on maybe in the future seeing if she’s available but not until she’s safe,” said Garren.

“I’m all done,” said a voice from a few feet away. Michelle had come out of the office and neither of them knew how long she had been standing there. Nothing was going right for Breaker. Michelle was standing a few feet away holding the family tree out for him to see.

“Thank you Michelle,” said Garren striding over and taking the chart.

Breaker wasn’t sure why the politeness Garren was showing Michelle was the straw that broke the camel’s back but it was. He was done. He was done with Garren and the whole operation if that’s what it took to end the madness. “We’re done,” said Breaker rather quietly at first. Garren didn’t look up from the chart- ignoring Breaker.

“It’s over Garren, this whole sick experiment. I get it, you were right. This is a stupid test and I’ve failed it because I’m going to kill you if we’re together any longer,” said Breaker his voice elevating.

Garren continued to ignore him, taking the family tree chart back into the office and spreading it out on the table. Instead of facing Breaker, he turned to the computer on Breakers desk, easily bypassing Breaker’s password screen and looked something up. This further infuriated Breaker, who was now looking for an object he could use to club Garren in the impending fight he was going to start. “Get out of this office!” yelled Breaker. Michelle who had been trying to busy herself with a handful of spilled paperclips jumped noticeably as the tempo was raised.

Garren raised his finger to silence Breaker. Then with his eyes still on the computer, Garren began to laugh. Breaker had located the object he was going to use. A broken table had a leg barely dangling by a single screw. He grabbed the table leg and ripped it free. He began to charge across the room when Garren finally began to speak. “She’s done it. She’s solved the puzzle,” he said, excitedly flipping the computer monitor around so Breaker could see it. On the screen the name of Ferman was displayed next to every victim’s name.

Breaker paused and Garren grabbed the family chart. “There is a family connection. It was just maternal. It’s the genes of the mother. Every victim shares the same maternal ancestor,” said Garren.

Breaker could see it now. It was a pattern and they had caught a break. “What are you doing with that piece of wood?” questioned Garren, looking at the table leg still held in Breaker’s hands.

“Cross-reference it against the population,” ordered Breaker as he put the leg down and pulled a chair up to the desk.

“I’m going to go get some lunch,” said a nervous looking Michelle.

“No, we’ll have none of that. You need to order in or go with one of us,” said Garren protectively.

“I’ll get something in the building,” said Michelle. She left Breaker and Garren to engross themselves in their newly found break. They ran it against the population and found close to twenty five hundred hits.

“Now run that list against the missing persons list,” said Breaker.

It took a while but the report came back. Not only were all their victims on the list but there were over a thousand other disappearances

that they hadn't investigated. "They've taken over a thousand," exclaimed Breaker looking at the list.

We need a timeline of who was taken when and let's see if we can figure out if there is any order," said Breaker.

Garren looked out the doorway. "I promised Michelle that I'd take her to a movie today".

"What? We've had a breakthrough here," said Breaker but Garren had already grabbed his jacket and was waving as he walked out the door. Breaker was too excited about some actual progress to chase after him. He began to scan through the names and dates of disappearances in an attempt to put together a timeline.

Hours later Breaker had figured it out. Outside the light was gone from the sky and the offices around his were empty but he had narrowed the next possible victims down to five candidates. Five was a number he could sell to McIntire to get the soldiers he needed to interrupt the next abduction. What startled Breaker was the uniformity in the abductions. With the exception of the occasional accidental murder, all had been taken in order and with great success. None of the names were skipped and they were each taken when their time came. Breaker was interrupted as his cell phone rang.

He looked down to see Garren's number. "I don't have time for this," he said putting the phone to his ear. There was no response. "Garren are you there?" he questioned. He heard what he thought was a movie in the background. Garren had to have accidentally called him but for some reason Breaker's heart felt cold. He put the phone back to his ear in time to hear the movie stop and to hear a screaming crowd followed immediately by sudden silence. The silence was so sudden that Breaker jumped from his chair and grabbed his jacket.

Breaker kept listening with his phone for another five seconds before the call dropped. He called back but it went straight to voicemail. It could have been nothing. Just a scary part in a movie and an accidental dropped call but Breaker got in his car and drove. There were two movie theaters in the area and he called the local dispatch as he drove. "Power outages, do you have any reported near a movie theater," asked Breaker, his mustang flying down the road.

"Actually we do, but it's not a power outage- probably a blown transformer," responded the officer.

“Give me the address,” said Breaker. He desperately wanted to request police on the scene but that was not how McIntire operated. He then speed dialed McIntire’s cell but it also went to voicemail. “General, this is Breaker and I’m on my way to Central Station Movie Theater. We may have a problem,” he said. Breaker screeched into the parking lot. The lights were off, the building was silent and his car engine immediately died. He noticed none of the cars in the parking lot were functioning either. Breaker’s heart raced yet he felt the urge to close his eyes and sleep.

He fought against the urge to sleep, pushing his car door open and hitting the cement as he fell out of the car. He was disoriented, his mind telling his body to lie down on the cement. The feeling was powerful but fading which gave Breaker the edge he needed to force himself to his feet and begin to stumble toward the movie theater. The kid behind the ticket counter was asleep but was starting to show signs of stirring. Breaker pushed past him while pulling his gun free of its holster. The deeper he pushed into the theater the stronger the urge to sleep was growing.

The theater was pitch-black as Breaker stumbled into it, his gun arm limply dangling at his side. He charged forward into the first theater but in there all was black and perfectly still. He could have been alone in a cave a mile under the earth. Breaker pushed out of the door and pushed into the second theater but the same complete silence greeted him.

Breaker fought back the burning desire to sleep and stumbled into the third theater. This too felt quiet but his desire to sleep grew exponentially once he entered.

Breaker fell to one knee, struggling to stay awake. The absolute silence that filled his ears was interrupted by the soft sound of cloth rubbing against a wall. He turned toward the sound when a burst of moonlight broke the darkness. The door to the emergency exit flew open and a shadowy figure carrying someone stood in the open door. Breaker thought he saw it look back at him for a brief moment.

Breaker fumbled with his gun arm, raising it upwards but it was too late. Whoever it was disappeared out the door. Determined, Breaker pushed on toward the door but his legs finally gave out in his frantic pursuit and he fell flat on his chest, completely asleep.

He was awakened by the sound of the movie and the screams and chaos of the awakening movie goers. The lights quickly came on in the theater. Breaker was momentarily blinded and disoriented and he found himself fighting against a panicked crowd pushing passed him toward the theater exit. Through the pandemonium Breaker heard Garren's scream, "Michelle. Are you still here. Michelle!" Garren was searching everywhere.

Breaker was relieved to see Garren despite the fact that Michelle was missing. Garren was pushing toward the exit but it was too late and Breaker knew it. Precious seconds ticked by as the crowd chaotically bolted for the exit. Breaker held his position and waited for Garren to reach him.

"Let's go," said Garren.

"Put the gun away, it's too late," said Breaker. The crowd had taken notice of the guns and a new round of screams erupted. "Relax, we're police. Everyone please take a seat. We're going to have to get a statement from everyone," said Breaker. He lifted a badge from his wallet not even sure what the badge said. Garren, however, couldn't remain calm. He pushed Breaker aside and charged out the exit.

Within an hour after the incident Alex was on the scene with a crew of very official looking personnel. He walked straight to Breaker with a very angry look on his face. "They say a woman was taken from here. A woman that seems to fit the description of Michelle," said Alex his face red with rage. Breaker had spent the last hour corralling an angry and scared group of movie goers awaiting Alex's arrival.

"Your point," said Breaker.

"My point is that if you knew anything about what we're dealing with you'd know they always get their victims alive or dead. You've endangered everyone by bringing her back to our base," said Alex.

"Our base isn't a movie theater," said Breaker.

"You know what I mean," said Alex anger in his eyes.

"You knew they would come back for her?" questioned Breaker, disgust in his voice.

"Listen my little sheep. We're trying to save a world here. The loss of a few humans, although sad, is a necessary sacrifice if we're going to win this in the long run," said Alex. "Now, where is your short fused partner?"

Breaker hadn't been able to leave the crowd to search for him yet. He expected that he would eventually return. Nonetheless he, Alex, and a few others went searching for him. It was over an hour before they found Garren sitting on the roof of the movie theater. Breaker walked over to him and sat next to him. Garren spoke first. "They took her up to the roof and left from here. Scaled a thirty foot wall," said Garren. Before Breaker could question how he knew that, Garren handed him a broken necklace. "I found this snagged on the air conditioner unit. She was wearing it at the movie theater," he said, handing it to Breaker.

"I'm sorry Garren," said Breaker after a long pause. He didn't know what else to say.

"I felt them coming. We both knew somehow that they had arrived. I tried to call you. I even dialed the number but then I couldn't move, couldn't speak into the phone. They froze everyone. We all were locked into position. Some of them fell asleep but I never felt sleepy just frozen. I had to watch as they slowly walked up our row. They paused in front of her for a long time before picking her up. One approached me and he looked at me for a long time. I think they were talking to each other about me. I couldn't understand them but I heard the hissing we heard in Michelle's dream." Garren paused and didn't say anything for a while. "We've got to get her back and we've got to stop them," he finally said with determination in his voice. Breaker just nodded his head in the darkness and waited until his partner was ready to go down.



## CHAPTER 7



When Breaker and Garren came to work the next day the base was a hub of activity. Offices were being emptied and personnel were scattering carrying half-filled boxes. They were called into McIntire's office. Alex was standing at the general's side looking decidedly chipper. Breaker noticed pictures of the movie theater and the chaos that followed the abduction scattered across McIntire's desk. It was a mess and it was almost too big for even McIntire to contain. "Sit down," said McIntire to Breaker and Garren.

"Seventy witnesses saw you waiving your side arm," started McIntire. Breaker started to interrupt but McIntire cut him off with a wave of his hand. "You brought a victim to our headquarters. You showed her around. Had her participate in the mission." Breaker noticed that things sounded a lot worse when McIntire was summarizing them. "Now she's in the Grale's hands. How long do you think it will take before we're all dead?" questioned McIntire.

"I've worked longer than you've been alive on this problem and in one night you set us back thirty years," said McIntire his voice rising. "We will be abandoning this facility in four hours. You are not coming with us," said McIntire with finality.

Breaker was desperate and blurted out, "Sir, we know who they are going to hit next. We know their targets now."

McIntire thought about this for a second. "It doesn't matter. She knows what you know and so it's in their hands as well," said McIntire.

"No, she left the room before we cracked the code. She just knows she helped. They may know we know about the maternal line but they don't know we have the whole thing cracked wide open," said Breaker.

"It's too late, we are now in a defensive position," said McIntire dismissively.

“Sir, give me one team for one mission. I know their next target and they will strike in three days,” said Breaker in desperation.

Alex’s face twisted into disbelief when he saw McIntire considering Breaker’s plan. “One team. Garren selects the men. Once your mission has completed I expect all files returned and we will assign you a new identity and your job with this organization will be completed,” concluded McIntire.

## CHAPTER 8



This was it. The last shot before a new life. Breaker didn't know where his new life would be but was sure he'd never forget all those who would be lost if this idea didn't save them. Breaker was sitting in an old surveillance van they had borrowed from the local police. Well, borrowed was an inadequate word but they would return it before the night was over. Breaker had tried multiple times through the planning stage of the operation to include Garren or at least strike up a conversation about what had happened at the movie theater but Garren wouldn't talk or participate. They were now based out of a hotel because McIntire had disappeared out west. Breaker wasn't even sure Garren was coming on the mission until the day of the mission. He found Garren sitting in the cargo plane in full tactical gear, quietly waiting. Even in the plane Garren didn't speak at all.

Now, in the surveillance van outside the targets' home, Garren finally spoke. "How do you know they will hit this house. I thought you could only narrow it down to five potential targets."

"I could only get it to five. I just figured a twenty percent chance was better than no chance at all. So I guessed," said Breaker.

Before Garren could respond Breaker got the signal from his driver. "It's time to move," he said and slid the van door open. The sun had completely set and the seven man team moved out. All of them had on night vision equipment but had not yet turned it on. The plan was simple. They would set up a position in the barn and create a triangle of observation with a two man sniper team in the corn field, the three in the van and Breaker and Garren at the barn.

Breaker had used the seventy-hour prep time he had for this mission to the best of his abilities. But as he approached the barn, like all good planners, he realized that he had forgotten a minor detail. The animals. A rather large pig was staring at them outside of the barn door as they approached. Unlike some of the other animals, it was not

scurrying around but holding its ground and making a lot of noise. “Garren, he’s all yours,” said Breaker as he jumped the fence into the pen.

Garren pulled a silenced pistol from his jacket. Breaker quickly reached over and grabbed the gun. “Never mind, just get in the barn. I’ll handle him,” whispered Breaker remembering the cat incident. Garren looked at him with disbelief and instead of going in to the barn he took up position behind a feed trough. The pig was facing them and lowering its head slightly as Breaker approached the pig and tried shooing motions. The pig was not backing down, in fact, Breaker was pretty certain it was getting angrier.

Breaker started to back up but it was too late. The pig rushed forward and slammed into Breaker with full force. Breaker saw the ground above him as his legs went straight up in the air from the impact. He rotated completely around in the air before slamming into mud which cushioned his fall, slightly. The pig backed up and prepared for a second charge.

Breaker heard Garren let out a little laugh. He got to his feet, determination in his face and crouched down like a football player as the pig charged again. Again the blow knocked him down. The pig let out a squeal and Breaker let out a groan. “Keep it down,” whispered Garren.

Garren started to get up and intervene as Breaker jumped back on to his feet. The pig was already in full charge but just as it reached Breaker, he jumped on its back. The pig panicked and swung around towards the barn. They slammed into the outside wall with such force Breaker was worried he had broken something.

“Can I please shoot it?” asked Garren. Breaker stumbled to his feet, grabbing one of the rear legs of the boar and jump back on top of it.

“No,” he ordered as he bounced around on top of the confused pig. Garren’s amusement quickly changed when Breaker and the boar came his direction. He tried to run but slipped on a fresh pile of dung and slammed to the ground. He scrambled on his hands and knees to a fence where he threw himself over to the other side. Breaker tried steering the pig by grabbing it by the ears, which of course only made it more upset. Instead of turning in the direction Breaker wanted him to go, the pig stopped dead and rolled over onto his rider. Breaker felt

his chest being squeezed and was having trouble catching his breath. The boar then stood up, moved about a foot and collapsed exhausted to the ground. Breaker, equally spent, lay where he had fallen and the two stared at each other for several seconds before Breaker looked to Garren.

“I think he should stay out here with us,” said Garren. Breaker just nodded and lay next to the pig for another minute before he took up his position. The pig just lay there.

Breaker wondered what he would be able to put on his resume. Knowing McIntire it wouldn't be much. He was starting to get lost in his thoughts when the boar stood up. It looked around frantically and then with renewed energy it bolted straight for the barn, disappearing without uttering a sound. “That was strange,” whispered Breaker to Garren.

Breaker scanned the horizon. Even the crickets had stopped chirping and all had grown still. Too still.

“Sleep,” the word like a thought entered Breaker's mind. His eyes grew heavy and he reflexively closed them. Part of Breaker's mind was already asleep. He tried hard to focus on keeping the remaining component awake.

He remembered back to his first meeting with McIntire. He had been freshly transferred. McIntire wasn't impressed when Breaker handed him his resume. Breaker was convinced it was the font he had chosen. McIntire was known for being old fashioned. Breaker struggled to remember why he was keeping his mind awake. Why he wasn't falling into the deep sleep his mind desired.

Breaker thought of the look on McIntire's face in his office that morning and saw the corners of the memory turning black as cold began to slip around the edges of his mind and body.

“Change memories!” called a voice in Breaker's mind.

Breaker immediately complied, remembering his trip to Norway. The air had been so cold before they entered the ice cave. His mind filled with the images of the tunnel and his frustration with Alex. Breaker was dreaming, not remembering. At least some sort of dream. His mind wasn't working the way it was supposed to.

“Wake up,” called the same voice again.

Breaker's eyes shot open painfully. He felt like he had been pushing against a wall and it had suddenly collapsed. He grabbed his radio and clicked it a few times but the light wouldn't come on. He looked over at the van to see a purple flash and hear the tearing of metal as the van shredded to pieces. His team was under attack.

Breaker looked at Garren. He was sound asleep next to him. He shook him violently and Garren shot awake, grabbing his rifle. "They're here," whispered Breaker pointing toward the house.

Garren looked at the wrecked van, "How many?" he questioned.

"At least one," said Breaker. Breaker flipped his night vision down but only saw black. They were as broken as the radio. He flipped them up and looked over at the house, all the lights inside were off now.

"The Sniper team?" questioned Garren. He stood up and tried to see through the darkness to their position. The boom of a heavy fifty caliber bullet exploding close to Garren's head answered his question. "Well, they're alive," said Garren, "But I don't think they are thinking clearly," he said as he ducked back down. A second shot echoed and a bullet blew right through the feed trough they were hiding behind. "They knew we would be by the barn right?" questioned Garren.

"Yeah, I've been checking in with them, remember," said Breaker. A third shot splintered the wood a half foot above his head.

"We'll be dead if we don't move," said Garren.

"They're snipers, we'll be dead if we do move," said Breaker as he tried to get lower.

"I'll take care of this," said Garren. He tossed three flash bangs over the side of the trough which were answered by two more shots. The night lit up with three bright flashes in rapid succession. Breaker was blinded and when his eyes adjusted Garren was gone.

Another flash bang exploded, then Breaker looked through the hole a fifty caliber bullet had left in the trough and he spotted Garren. He had reached the house and was firing on the sniper position with his assault rifle. Breaker heard the fifty go off one more time but Garren was charging straight for it, his gun sending bullets into the sniper position.

Garren stopped shooting and all went silent. Breaker scanned frantically, unsure why Garren had stopped firing. The house was still completely dark. Breaker was relieved a minute later when Garren

stepped out of the corn field, the fifty caliber gun in his hands, his rifle slung over his back.

Breaker ran from his position, his own rifle held-ready as he ran toward Garren. Garren was already advancing on the house as he scanned it through the scope of the large rifle. Breaker was running fast towards Garren and was about thirty feet from him when Garren stopped his forward movement.

Garren stood straight up, stiffening. Breaker watched as he turned toward him, swinging the large rifle around with him. Without thinking Breaker charged faster and threw his weight at Garren, knocking him to the ground violently. The impact sent the large rifle falling heavily to the ground.

“What are you doing?” asked Garren as he looked at Breaker, their faces an inch apart. “Why am I lying on the ground?” he further questioned.

“I thought you were mind controlled like our snipers obviously were,” said Breaker. Garren looked at him confused but then a purple shot blew past the two of them exploding ten feet away like a hand grenade. Breaker rolled off Garren who then swung his rifle off his back and unloaded his clip toward the house.

A second shot flew past Garren’s shoulder, slicing easily through the body armor before exploding behind them. Garren fired a short burst from his rifle. Breaker heard a horrible scream coming from the shadows. There was a shift in the darkness and what looked like a shadow collapsed to the ground, fifty feet from them.

Garren charged forward, kicking a rifle of some sort away from the black figure lying on the ground. Breaker ran over just in time to be thrown back with Garren as the black shadowy body exploded outward. Breaker hit the ground hard. He heard a rib break in his chest as his lungs drained of all air. Breaker’s arms and face ached. He reached up to his face to feel small pieces of metal shrapnel embedded in his skin from the explosion.

Breaker looked over at Garren. Garren was closer to the explosion and Breaker expected him to be in worse condition. However, Breaker wasn’t completely surprised to watch Garren stand up, pull something out of his arm and pick up the rifle the shadow had dropped. He was beginning to understand why McIntire would have him on this case.

“I’m calling dib’s on the rifle,” Garren said in a hoarse voice. Garren was looking up from the rifle when the next purple blast was fired. This time it came from inside the house and this time it hit Garren in the side. Breaker watched it go right through Garren’s body armor and explode behind them with such violence it knocked them both down.

Dirt and debris in his mouth, Breaker looked up to see two shadowy figures carrying a teenage boy between them on a strange device. That boy must be Mike, the one from the list. He was on some sort of hovering bed. One of the shadows had a smoking rifle in his hands and was raising it to his shoulder to take another shot.

Breaker quickly fumbled for his own rifle, raising it and firing a quick burst towards the figure. Breaker’s shots all missed. They were at least two hundred yards away so Breaker dropped to his knees and grabbed the fifty caliber sniper rifle. He had just gotten them in his scope when they disappeared with the boy around the back of the house.

“Garren, you okay?” questioned Breaker. No noise had come from Garren since the explosion and even now there was silence from where his body lay on the ground.

Breaker wanted to tend to his friend; to get medical help quickly to make sure he was okay but he knew if he didn’t make it around the corner of that house soon, all hope for the boy would be lost. Breaker dropped the heavy rifle and charged toward the retreating Gale. He slipped a fresh clip in his assault rifle as he rounded the corner to face them.

In rounding that corner at that speed, Breaker was ignoring his military training. If he had been thinking straight he would have never rounded a blind corner at full speed without making sure the ambush that was waiting for him, wasn’t waiting for him. Instead, as his body came around the corner his eyes were greeted with the sight of a silent ship hovering five feet above the ground right above the two retreating Gale.

His body went immediately stiff- trapped by a powerful beam of light that not only froze him in place but it pressed hard against every inch of his skin. Frozen where he stood, one of the aliens broke away from the teenager and his partner and approached Breaker. Breaker

tried to see its face as it moved closer and closer to him but he couldn't see past a shadowy blur that obscured its features.

Although frozen, he could see a small figure standing in the door frame of the house. Breaker tried desperately to signal her with his eyes to go back inside but she was staring at the shadows. The Gale was close now, its head inches away from Breaker. Breaker's whole body felt cold as it reached toward him. Clutched in its thin hands was something metal. It touched it to Breaker's skin sending excruciating pain ripping through him. Breaker tried to fall to his knees but his legs wouldn't bend as the figure pushed the metal rod against him again and again. Pain resonated throughout his entire body.

"Get away from him!" yelled a voice. Through his own scream Breaker recognized the voice of the teenage girl. His last fears were for her as the light disappeared and darkness gradually silenced him.