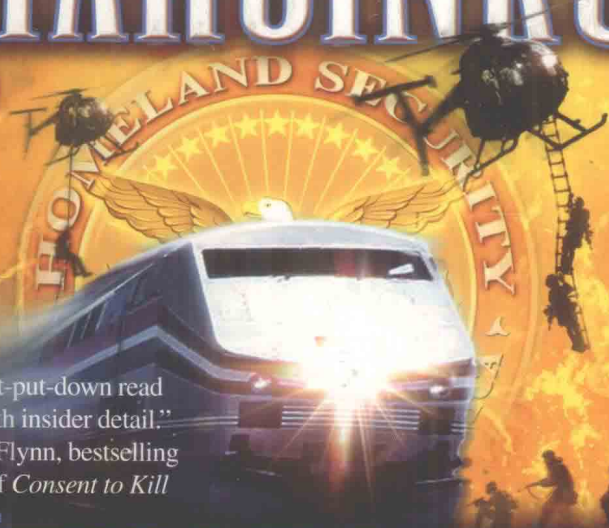


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*Dedicated to the 180,000 Homeland Defense employees who are faced with new challenges every day, and all the first-responders who must be prepared to function if and when they fail. They all fully understand the 24/7 demands.*

# Part One

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MOI?



"Decline the attack unless you can make it with advantage."

—FIELD MARSHAL MAURICE COMTE DE SAXE,  
*MY REVERIES*, 1757





It was your basic freight train: big, slow, and ugly, springs squealing like a pig in a Missouri hog pen. The sound didn't make any difference to the fine, upstanding middle-class citizens of Lenaza, a few miles outside of Kansas City. Hell, nothing made much difference to most of them, because they were snoring in their beds. The train had crept into their dreams forever: it rolled through every night at two A.M., give or take.

Tonight, it was a bit on the take side. But me and my guys were about to even the ledger out.

Guys and *gals*. Never let me forget Trace Dahlgren. At that exact moment she was leaning off the side of an AH-6 Little Bird helicopter as it swooped down toward the freight train in question. I was leaning off the other side, doing my best to pretend I was the patient type. This was necessary because the helo pilot had a hell of a time matching the speed of the train, a useful prerequisite to our immediate goal: disembarking from the aircraft onto the roof of one of the diesels. The train had picked up speed as it started downhill, and to complicate

things just a little, the weatherman had screwed up again, and the calm, clear night I'd ordered had turned windier than hell and misty to boot. I swore to myself that next time I'd play hobo and hop on the damn thing if I wanted a ride.

"Can we at least get over the damn train?" grouched Trace. "All I see here is dirt." Normally dependable and crystal clear, even the discrete-burst communications system we used was having a hard time of it; it croaked and crackled, distorting her voice.

The helo rocked hard right and we zipped over the train—but instead of hovering over the engines, we were above one of the chemical tankers. Jumping off onto the car wasn't particularly convenient—if you can't figure out why, find one of those mega culvert pipes and spread your legs over it. Our pilot had flown with the 160th SOAR once, the Army's dedicated special operations airborne taxi squad, but either once was a long time ago or this just wasn't his night.

The tankers were the reason we were here. They happened to be all filled with the same basic ingredient: cyanide gas, or more technically speaking, Chlorcyan, another name for cyanogen chloride. Left alone, Chlorcyan is "simply" riot gas: beats shit out of your eyes and chokes you, maybe to death, maybe not. Heat it so it starts to break down and let some of it come into contact with water and you get hydrogen cyanide, which is best known as the gas used by the Nazis in their quest to exterminate a good hunk of the human race.

The exact effect of blowing up a dozen cars of

the stuff would depend slightly on luck; if the charges were placed willy-nilly, all you'd get was really wretched smog and an ecological disaster unmatched since Chernobyl. If you knew what you were doing when you blew them up, you could kill half the population in the state.

My goal wasn't to blow them up, not really. The train was starring in a little Red Cell II exercise I'd worked up to test the procedures of the regional Homeland Security alert system and its various dependent and not-so-dependent agencies. The train was supposed to be under their guard and jurisdiction, well protected from terrorists and maniacs, to say nothing of airborne hobos with improvised explosive devices and attitudes to match.

"We need to be over that front locomotive," I told the pilot. "Before the tunnel."

"I'm trying, Skipper."

"Try harder."

Finally the helo flitted forward and a relatively flat stretch of diesel engine appeared below my boot. I clicked the fancy French snap on my safety harness and stepped off as naturally and easily as if I were hopping off the last step of a mall escalator.

And if you believe it was *that* easy, I have some swampland for you to take a look at.

I felt like a cat pouncing onto the seat of a wet motorcycle moving about sixty miles an hour as I stepped off. My feet started to slide out from under me, but I managed to grab the edge of the roof I'd landed on. Trace came off just like the lady she is. Catlike and nimble, she stepped, twirled, and gave me a look that seemed to say, *So what's the big deal?*

There were three diesels, all facing forward. Trace and I were on the first, both of us just ahead of the dynamic brake fan, which is the large cooling area in the center of the locomotive. As a general rule, the people who design locomotives don't give a hell of a lot of thought to people riding on the top of them, which means moving across them and getting down while the train is doing sixty or so is not particularly easy. The fact that the top of the engine had been slicked with the rain made it even more interesting. Trace slipped and fell spread-eagled out across the top. Instead of gloating as I probably should have, I grabbed her leg to save her sorry butt and slipped myself. All I could find for a handhold was the side of the engine. I managed to grab it just as we roared into the tunnel.

If I hadn't been hanging on to Trace by a couple of fingernails, the rest would have been easy: a quick slide around and I'd have plopped down on two feet onto the catwalk outside the engine cab. But between Trace and the wind of the tunnel and the slippery slime of the moistened grit I was perched on, I found it possible to slide in every direction but the one I wanted. If you've ever tried to catch a greased pig in the middle of a mud flat while a hurricane rolled through, you'll know what I mean. Trace suddenly slid over the side. Thinking she was falling, I threw my other arm out to grab her and flew off the side of the top of the locomotive.

I expect most of you reading this book know who the hell I am better than I do, but let's do a

quick review for the nuggets among us who have wandered into *The World According to the Rogue Warrior* without a map or the proverbial pot to shit in, and more important without having read the books that should be on everyone's MUST READ NOW list, starting with *Rogue Warrior* and ending with *Violence of Action*.

Yesterday—well, it *seems* like yesterday—I kicked commie slimebag butts and slit throats in the jungles of Vietnam. Pretty little hellhole there, as detailed in *Rogue Warrior*. Fast-forward through mountains of shit and red tape and you get to the part where I started SEAL Team Six, the Navy's preeminent counterterrorism force—Delta Force with fins and finesse. After three years as CO on Six, I finally pissed enough people off that the powers-that-were found a way to shaft me off to the sidelines. Not that I stayed shafted too long—I managed to *really* irritate people with a little operation called Red Cell. This was conceived as an exercise in kicking the Navy in the pants—alerting the brass, swabs, ship drivers, and everybody else top to bottom to the very real danger terrorists posed. Today it's damn obvious what terrorism can do, but in 1984, very few people understood the danger posed by maniacal slimebags who believe religion greenlights murder and mayhem. Not that knowing any better has helped all that much in terms of improving security, but that's a topic for another day.

Red Cell got attention for a couple of reasons—"blowing up" nuclear submarines and Air Force One were just the start. All of this attention led inevitably to the ultimate revenge of the nerds: I got

railroaded on a set of trumped up charges into a federal home for the absurdly unappreciated.

And then things got *really* interesting. It turned out that, once I was officially out of favor, my services were indispensable. I guess the secret to getting ahead is to get screwed by the right people in life.

Bullshit on that. I took no prisoners and gave no quarter; the secret to my success was the good ol' American secret to success: work twice as hard as everyone else. But I go into all this stuff in my other books, so we'll just skip up to the very recent past, say the three weeks that brought me to Lenaza.

Over the years, I have gained a certain reputation and maybe even a certain fame as a guy who knows the color of his shit when it comes to dealing with terrorists and security issues. And while I admit to rubbing a percentage of people the wrong way—I like to say I'm one hell of a brain surgeon, but I do flunk bedside manner—another percentage of people realizes that if you want to improve your security problems, the person to call is Demo Dick, whose talents and private firm are available for the proper considerations. Which led Rich Armstead from the Homeland Security Office to pick up the phone and jingle yours truly at Rogue Manor one fine early-spring morn. He explained that his department was working with local agencies to improve antiterrorist security. I immediately got the picture—Rich wanted Dickie to do a rerun of Red Cell.

"No," I told him. "I'm out of the pissing-people-off business. Now I just kill them if they get in the way."

Rich laughed, but I wasn't kidding. Certainly not about testing defenses BS. Showing people how dumb their security precautions are makes them mad, and, unfortunately, usually doesn't help improve them much.

Look at it this way: if the organization were smart enough to take constructive criticism, they wouldn't be so fucked up in the first place.

Rich didn't give up, though. He laid on the your-country-really-needs-you crap and dropped the President's name and insisted I ought to talk with him in person. And just in case I forgot the way, he'd detailed a limo to pick me up.

So that's what the honking was in the driveway.

The day Rich called had been a particularly bad one for the office PR wise, with some dinky newspaper named the *New York Times* burying a story on page one about security lapses in the nation's rail industry. What really pissed Rich off about the story was that for once the news hounds had actually gotten their facts right; if any terrorist hadn't had a blueprint for ruining a lot of mornings in America, they sure as hell had one now.

Rich covered his feelings pretty well, smiling and shaking hands and even trying to flatter me by talking about what good shape I looked to be in. That's the dead giveaway, I guess, when they start asking if you're still benching five fat ones every day. (I am.) He smiled and nodded and slick as a carnival hawker moved onto a sob story about how fucked things were security-wise across the country. This of course naturally led to asking if I'd do my bit to straighten it out. There were violins in the

background, and just as he finished, the strains of the Star-Spangled Banner seeped in from the outer office.

I may not be wiser but I'm definitely older since the days of Red Cell. I offered to provide Rogue Warrior services overseas for the proper fee, no holds barred and no questions asked. Hit the scumbags where they live and head off the trouble was always what I was best at, and I told Rich it made a lot more sense in the long run, in the short run, and in every run in between. Uncle Sam has seen fit to contract out for a variety of services which for one reason or another can't be handled in-house, and I'm always happy to work with Uncle on what needs doing.

Rich stood up, grinned, and shook my hand as if we'd agreed.

"Call when you're ready to start," he said.

"Don't sit by the phone."

He grinned as I left. The phone calls from old pals started five minutes after I was out of the office and continued nonstop. It was good stuff: duty and honor, responsibility, need in a time of crisis. Tears in my eyes—you get the picture. The clincher was a five-minute conversation with the President of the United States that went roughly like this:

"We want you, Dick."

"Yes, sir."

So I agreed. It was my only option anyway. So many damn people were calling I couldn't use the fucking phone even to order a pizza.

Rogues never do learn, I guess. I rounded up some of the usual suspects, made plans to hire a few



new ones, picked up a Rand McNally of the U.S., and off we went.

Which was how I came to be surfing a diesel locomotive roaring through the Missouri countryside, pretending to be a scumbag terrorist bent on kicking mud in the face of the world's only superpower.

Or rather, I came to be flying off said diesel locomotive, looking at becoming just another piece of tunnel trash.

I jammed my right hand out against the side as I went over, hoping I'd grab part of the pipe that ran back along the side of the engine. In my mind, I saw myself swinging down Tarzan-like and hopping onto the next platform.

That was in my mind. In real life, I missed completely. My chest and chin smacked against the side of the locomotive. My hand bashed against something else and I grabbed it desperately, sure that gravity had finally managed to find a way to kick my butt.

It hadn't, fortunately, though it kicked just about every other part of me. I'd snagged the side support of the metal ladder running up to the cab, jamming my arm between the corner of the rung and the side. I smacked against the side of the locomotive a couple of hundred times, flailing to stay upright as we emerged from the tunnel. After what seemed like a hell of a long time, I managed to get myself on the ladder—upright, bruised, but unperforated.

And where was Trace while all this was going on?  
Mangled to shit back in the tunnel?