

AUTHOR OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER *SEPARATION OF POWER*

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EXECUTIVE POWER

Also by Vince Flynn

Separation of Power
The Third Option
Transfer of Power
Term Limits

To Sloan Harris

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EXECUTIVE POWER

PRELUDE

The sleek gray craft sliced through the warm water and humid night air of the Philippine Sea at twenty-five knots, its twin engines rumbling toward its destination with a guttural moan. The boat was in violation of international law and at least one treaty, but the men on board didn't care. Technicalities, legalities and diplomacy were for other people to sort out, people who sat in comfortable leather chairs with Ivy League degrees matted and framed on their office walls. The men standing on the deck of the Mark V special operations craft were here to get a job done, and in their minds, it was a job that should have been taken care of months ago.

The low profile Mark V special operations craft was designed to sneak in under radar. It had been designed specifically for the United States Navy SEALs, and it was their choice of platform when running maritime insertions. It was eighty-two feet in length but the boat only drafted five feet when it was fully loaded and dead in the water. Instead of the standard screw it was propelled by two waterjets. All of this allowed the boat to maneuver very close to the beach with great precision.

Five men wearing black flight helmets and night vision goggles manned four .50-caliber machine guns and a 40mm grenade launcher. Eight other men dressed in jungle BDUs and floppy hats sat on the gunwales of the rubber combat raiding craft they would soon launch off the Mark V and went over their equipment for at least the tenth time. Their faces were smeared with warlike green and black camouflage paint, but their expressions were calm.

Lieutenant Jim Devolis looked down at his SEAL squad and watched them go through their last check. He'd observed them doing it countless times before and for some reason it always reminded him of baboons picking bugs from each other at the zoo. They meticulously examined their H harnesses to make sure every snap was secure and all grenades taped. The communications gear was checked and rechecked. Fresh batteries had been placed in everyone's night vision goggles, and along with backup batteries the expensive optical devices were stowed in waterproof pouches attached to their H harnesses. Weapons were sandproofed with condoms secured over the muzzles and a bead of silicone sealant around the magazines and bolt covers. The only person wearing a rucksack tonight would be the squad's medical corpsman, and Devolis sincerely hoped they wouldn't be needing his expertise. The group was traveling light tonight. No MREs, only a couple of Power Bars for each man. The plan was to be in and out before the sun came up. Just the way the SEALs liked it.

The tension grew as they neared the demarcation point. Devolis was glad to see that the jaw-jacking had subsided. It was time to get serious. Turning his head to the right and down, his lips found the tube for his neoprene camel water pack and he sucked in a mouthful of fresh water. The men had been drinking all the water they could hold for two days. Hydration before an op in this part of the world was crucial. Even at night the temperature was still in the mid-eighties and the humidity wasn't far behind. The only thing that was keeping them from sweating through their BDUs was the breeze created by the boat as it cruised at twenty-plus knots. Once they hit the beach, though, that would change. They had a two-mile hike ahead of them through the thick tropical jungle. Even with all the water they'd drunk in the last two days, each man on the team would probably lose five to ten pounds just hiking in and out.

A firm hand fell on Devolis's shoulder. He turned to look at the captain of the boat.

"Two minutes out, Jim. Get your boys loaded up."

Devolis nodded once and blinked, his white eyes glowing bright against the dark camouflage paint spread across his face. "Thanks, Pat." The two men had practiced this drill hundreds of times back in Coronado, California, at the headquarters for Naval Special Warfare Group One.

“Don’t go wandering off on me now,” Devolis said with a wide grin.

The captain smiled in the manner of someone who’s confident in his professional ability. “If you call, I’ll be there guns a’blazin’.”

“That’s what I like to hear.” Devolis nodded and then turned to his men. With his forefinger pointed straight up he made a circular motion and the SEALs instantly got to their feet. A moment later the boat slowed to just under five knots.

The Mark V, in addition to being extremely fast, also came with a slanted aft deck that allowed it to launch and receive small craft without stopping. Without a word the men grabbed the sides of their black CRRC with the forty-horsepower outboard leading and walked down the aft ramp. The men stopped at the end of the ramp just shy of the Mark V’s frothy white wake and set the rubber boat on the nonskid deck, the lower unit of the outboard hanging in the water. A crew member from the Mark V held on to the rubber boat’s bow line and looked for each man to give him a thumbs-up. All eight men were low in the boat clutching their handholds. One by one they returned the sign.

The call came over the headset that the launch was a go and the crewman tossed the bow line into the boat. A second crewman joined the first and together they shoved the black rubber boat down the ramp and into the relatively warm water. The small rubber boat slowed instantly, the SEALs hanging as far to the aft as possible to prevent the bow from submarining. The boat rocked gently in the wake of the Mark V and no one moved a muscle. The men lay perfectly still, listening to the ominous moan of the Mark V as it sped away. Not one of them had any desire for the boat to return until they needed it. They eagerly looked forward to carrying out their mission. Unfortunately, they were unaware that thousands of miles away they’d already been fatally compromised by someone from their own country.

ONE

Anna Rielly drifted in and out of sleep, the warm sun enveloping her in a hazy dream. Her bronzed skin glistened with a mixture of sweat and sunscreen. A slight afternoon breeze floated in off the ocean. It had been the perfect week. Nothing but food, sun, sex and sleep. The ideal honeymoon. A small resort on a remote Caribbean island with their own secluded cabana, gravity pool and beach. Total privacy, no TV, no phones, no pagers, just the two of them.

She opened her eyes a touch and looked down at her wedding ring. She couldn't help but smile. She was like a schoolgirl again. It was a perfect diamond set in an elegant platinum Tiffany setting. Not too big, not too small, just right. Most important, though, it was from the right man. The man of her dreams.

She was now officially Mrs. Anna Rapp. He had been a little surprised that she'd taken his name without so much as a word of debate. She was a feminist, after all, with definite liberal leanings, but she could also be an old-fashioned romantic. She could think of no other man she respected more. It was an honor to share his name and she wanted the world to know that they were now a family. In addition, she could also be pragmatic. She had no desire to one day see her grandchildren running around with four last names. Professionally though, she would keep her maiden name. As the White House correspondent for NBC she already had name recognition and a solid career. It was a good compromise and Mitch didn't object.

Amazingly, the entire wedding had gone off without a hitch.

Rielly couldn't think of a friend who didn't have at least one big blowout with her fiancé, or mother, or mother-in-law while planning her wedding. For her part, Anna had always clung to the romantic notion that one day she'd fall in love and have a big wedding back at St. Ann's in Chicago. It was where her parents had been married, where she'd been baptized and confirmed and where she and her brothers had gone to grade school. But in the months after they got engaged she could see that this was an idea Mitch was less than enthusiastic about. It wasn't that he was uncooperative. He told her that if she wanted a big wedding back in Chicago, that is what they'd do, but she could feel his apprehension. He didn't have to state it.

Mitch Rapp did not like being the center of attention. He was a man who was used to working behind the scenes. The strange truth was that her husband had been a covert operative for the CIA since the age of twenty-two. And the harsh reality was that in some circles he was known as an assassin.

In the months before their wedding, during the confirmation hearing for Mitch's boss at the CIA, a member of the House Intelligence Committee had leaked Mitch's story to the press in an attempt to derail Irene Kennedy's nomination as the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The president had come to both Rapp and Kennedy's defense and a version of the truth was released to the media. The president told the story of how Rapp had led a team of commandos deep into Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein from joining the nuclear club. The president called Rapp the single most important person in America's fight against terrorism and overnight the politicians lined up to shake his hand.

Rapp had been thrust into the spotlight, and he didn't do well. Having survived for years because of his ability to move from city to city, and country to country, without being noticed, he was now recognized virtually everywhere he went. There were photographers and reporters who hounded him. Rapp tried to reason with them at first. A few listened, but most didn't. Not one to let a problem fester, Rapp arranged to have a few noses smashed. The others took the hint and backed off.

There was something else, though, that worried Rapp a great deal. He was now a marked man. Virtually every terrorist from Jakarta to London knew who he was. Bounties had been placed on his head and

fatwas, Islamic religious decrees, had been thrown down by dozens of fanatical Muslim clerics across Arabia, Asia and the Pacific Rim. Thousands if not millions of crazed Islamic zealots would gladly give their lives to take him down.

Rapp worried incessantly about Anna's safety and had even asked her if she was sure she still wanted to spend the rest of her life looking over her shoulder. Without hesitation she had said yes and told him not to insult her by bringing it up again. He had stoically honored her request, but it didn't stop his worrying. He'd also taken some serious precautions, having ordered her a customized BMW with bulletproof glass, Kevlar-lined body, and shredproof tires. They were also in the process of building a house on twenty acres outside D.C. in rural Virginia. Anna had asked more than once where the money came from to pay for all this, but Rapp had always deflected her questions with a joke or change of subject. She knew he was a man of many means, and in the end she reasoned that there were some things she was better off not knowing.

When they sat down to plan the wedding, Rapp brought up a laundry list of security concerns that would have to be addressed. As the weeks passed, Anna began to realize that he simply would not be able to enjoy the day if they held such a large wedding. She made the decision then to have a small private ceremony with their families and a few close friends. The news had been received well by Mitch.

The event was held where they'd met. At the White House. Anna's entire family, her mom and dad, brothers and sisters-in-law and seven nieces and nephews were there. Mitch's only surviving relative, his brother Steven, was best man while Anna's longtime friend Liz O'Rourke was the matron of honor. Dr. Irene Kennedy and a few of Rapp's friends from the CIA were present as well as a select group of Anna's media friends. Father Malone from St. Ann's was flown in to officiate and the president and the first lady were the perfect hosts. President Hayes also used his significant clout to make sure there wasn't a mention of the wedding in any of the papers or on TV. It was agreed by all that it would be wise to keep the identity of Mrs. Mitch Rapp off the front pages.

The guests all stayed at the Hay Adams Hotel, just a short walk across Lafayette Park from the White House. They celebrated well into the night and then the bride and groom were taken by the Secret Ser-

vice to Reagan National Airport where they caught a private jet to their island. Courtesy of the CIA, they were traveling under the assumed identities of Troy and Betsy Harris.

Anna sat up and looked over the edge of the patio down at the beach. Her husband was coming out of the water after a swim. Naturally dark-skinned, after a week in the sun he looked like he'd gone native. The man was a prime physical specimen, and she wasn't just thinking that because she was married to him. In his twenties he'd been a world-class triathlete who competed in events around the world. He'd won the famous Iron Man competition in Hawaii twice. Now he was in his mid-thirties, and was still in great shape.

Rapp sported some other physical features that had taken Rielly a little getting used to. He had three visible bullet scars: one on his leg and two on his stomach. There was a fourth that was covered by a thick scar on his shoulder where the doctors had torn him open to get at the bullet and reconstruct his shoulder socket. There was an elongated knife scar on his right side, and one last scar that he was particularly proud of. It was a constant reminder of the man he had sworn he would kill when he started on his crazy journey into the world of counterterrorism. It ran along the left side of his face, from his ear down to his jawline. The plastic surgeons had minimized the scar to a thin line, but more important to Rapp, the man who had marked him was now dead.

Rapp stepped onto the patio, water dripping from his shorts, and smiled at his bride. "How ya' doin', honey?"

"Fine." She reached out her hand for him. "I was just dozing off a bit."

Rapp bent down and kissed her and then without saying another word he jumped into the small pool. He came up and rested his arms and chin on the edge. "Are you ready to go back tomorrow?"

She shook her head and pouted prettily for him.

Rapp smiled. She really made him happy. She was smart, funny and drop-dead gorgeous. She could be a bit of a ballbuster at times, but he supposed any woman who was going to put up with him had to be able to assert herself or it'd be only a matter of years before he screwed everything up.

"Well, we'll just have to stay a little longer, then," he said.

She shook her head again and put the pouty lips back on.

Reaching across the patio for the bucket of iced Red Stripe, he laughed to himself. He'd called her bluff. She needed to get back to work or the network would have a complete shit fit. If Rapp had it his way she'd quit. The exposure was an ever increasing risk to her safety. But Anna had to come to that conclusion on her own. He didn't want to wake up ten years from now and have her go nuts on him for making her throw her career away. His only consolation was that her current assignment at the White House meant close proximity to more than a dozen well-armed and supremely trained Secret Service agents and officers.

"Would you like a beer, honey?"

"Sure."

Rapp opened one, handed the ice-cold bottle to Anna and then opened one for himself. Reaching out with his bottle he waited for his wife to do the same. The two bottles clinked together and Rapp said, "To us."

"To us," she replied with a blissful smile.

They both took a drink and Rapp added, "And lots of cute healthy babies."

Anna laughed and held up two fingers.

Rapp shook his head. "At least five."

She laughed even louder. "You're nuts."

"I never said I wasn't."

They sat there basking in the sun, talking about their future for the better part of an hour, teasing each other playfully about how many kids they were going to have, how they were going to be raised, what names they liked and what they would do if one of the kids was as stubborn as either of them. Rapp refrained from sharing his opinion as she talked about what she would do with her job after they had a baby. It was one of those new things he'd learned about relationships. He understood that she was talking it out, and not looking for him to throw in his own two cents.

For her part, Anna kept her promise that she would steer clear of digging for details on the goings-on at Langley. Rapp knew that if they were going to survive in the long run he would have to share certain aspects of his job with her, regardless of what Agency policy dictated. Anna was too curious to spend the rest of their lives never discussing what he spent the majority of the week doing. The general subjects of