

The First Commandment (Scot Harvath, Bk 6)

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In the wake of his girlfriend's brutal murder by an assassin who is in possession of a strange radioactive isotope, covert counter-terrorism agent Scot Harvath discovers clues to a conspiracy with presidential ties that puts him at odds with his own agency. By the author of Takedown. 150,000 first printing.

Brad Thor is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of The Athena Project, Foreign Influence, The Apostle, The Last Patriot, The First Commandment, Takedown, Blowback (recognized by NPR as one of the "100 Best Thrillers of All Time"), State of the Union, Path of the Assassin, and The Lions of Lucerne. Visit his website at www.BradThor.com. The First Commandment CHAPTER 1

CAMP DELTA

U.S. NAVAL STATION

GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA

When it was hot and humid, life in Cuba hovered somewhere between absolute misery and "the bath is ready does anyone have a razor blade?" But when it was cold and raining, Cuba was downright unbearable. Tonight was one of those nights.

When the guards arrived at the isolation cells of Delta's "Camp 5," where the most dangerous and highest-intelligence-value detainees resided, they were in a worse mood than usual. And it wasn't because of the weather. Something was wrong. It was written all over their faces as they pulled five prisoners from their cells and ordered them at gunpoint to strip.

Philippe Roussard hadn't been at Guantanamo the longest, but he had definitely been interrogated the hardest. A European of Arab descent, he was a sniper of extraordinary ability whose exploits were legendary. Videos of his kills played on continuous loops on jihadist websites across the internet. To his Muslim brothers he was nothing short of a superhero in the radical Islamist pantheon. To the United States, he was a horrific killing machine responsible for the deaths of over one hundred U.S. soldiers.

As Roussard looked into the eyes of his jailers, though, he saw more than the usual pure hatred. Tonight it was coupled with absolute disgust. Whatever middle-of-the-night interrogation tactic the Joint Task Force Guantanamo soldiers had in store for Roussard and his four colleagues, something told him it wasn't going to be like anything they had experienced before. The guards appeared on the verge of losing control.

Had an attack been successfully executed against the United States? What else could have put the soldiers in such a state?

If so, Roussard felt certain that the Americans would make the prisoners pay. Undoubtedly,

they had devised yet another humiliating exercise designed to insult their prisoners' Muslim sensibilities. Privately, Roussard hoped the torture involved the attractive blond soldier and that she would disrobe down to her lacy, black lingerie and rub herself against him. Though he knew it was wrong, his fantasies of what he wanted to do to that woman were what kept him nicely occupied during the long, lonely hours of isolation he endured.

He was still speculating about his fate when he heard the door at the far end of the cell block shut. Roussard looked up, hoping it was the blond, but it wasn't. Another soldier had entered carrying five paper shopping bags. As he passed, he threw each of the prisoners a bag.

"Get dressed!" he ordered in awkward Arabic.

Confused, all of the prisoners, including Roussard, removed the civilian clothing from their bags and began to get dressed. The men cast furtive glances at one another as they tried to figure out what was happening. Roussard was reminded of stories he'd heard about Jewish concentration camp prisoners who were told they were being taken for showers when they were actually on their way to the gas chambers.

He doubted the Americans were dressing them in new clothes only to execute them, but nevertheless the uncertainty of what they were about to face filled him with more than a little trepidation.

"Why don't they try to make a run for it?" one of the guards whispered to his comrade as he stroked the trigger guard of his M-16. "I just want one of these fuckers to rabbit on us."

"This is bullshit," replied the other. "What the hell are we doing?"

"You two, shut up!" barked their commander, who then called in a series of commands over his radio.

Something definitely wasn't right.

Once they were completely clothed, shackles were placed around their wrists and ankles and they were lined up against the far wall.

This is it, thought Roussard as he held the stare of the soldier who had been hoping for one of the prisoners to make a run for it.

The soldier's finger went from his weapon's trigger guard to its actual trigger and he seemed about to say something when a series of vehicles ground to a halt just outside.

"That's us," shouted the Task Force commander. "Let's mount up."

The prisoners were shoved toward the door. Roussard hoped that once they got outside and he could see where they were going, things would make more sense.

That plan was dashed as one by one, black hoods were placed over each man's head before he was taken outside to a waiting column of green Humvees.

Ten minutes later, the convoy came to a stop. Before Roussard's heavy hood was removed, he could make out the distinct, high-pitched whine of idling jet engines.

On the rain-soaked tarmac, the prisoners stared up at an enormous Boeing 727 as their shackles were removed. A metal staircase had been rolled up against the side of the aircraft and its door stood wide open.

No one said a word, but based on the demeanor of the soldiers—who seemed to have been ordered to keep their distance from the plane—Roussard came to a stunning conclusion. Without being directed to do so, he took a step forward. When none of the soldiers tried to stop him, he took another and another until his feet touched the first metal step and he began climbing upward two at a time. His salvation was at hand! Just as he had known it eventually would be.

With the sound of the other prisoners pounding up the gangway behind him, Roussard stepped cautiously into the cabin. He was met by the plane's first officer, who compared his likeness to a photo on his clipboard, removed a heavy black envelope, and said, "We were told to give you this."

Roussard had received envelopes like this before. Without even opening it, he knew who it was from.

"If you wouldn't mind taking a seat," continued the first officer. "The captain is eager to be under-way."

Roussard found an empty place near the window and buckled himself in. As the main cabin door was closed, several members of the flight crew disappeared into the rear of the aircraft and returned lugging odd-looking pieces of medical equipment, along with an equal number of large, plastic coolers.

None of it made any sense to Roussard until he opened the envelope and read its contents. A slow smile then began to spread across his face. It was done. Not only was he free, but the Americans would not be able to come after him. He was going to have his revenge—and much sooner than he would have thought.

Opening his window shade, Roussard could see the soldiers climbing back into their Humvees and driving away from their airstrip, several with their hands hanging out the windows and their middle fingers raised in mock salute.

As the aircraft's engines roared to life and the heavy beast began to roll forward, cheers of "Allahu Akbar," God is great, erupted from the front of the plane.

Allah was indeed great, but Roussard knew it wasn't He who had arranged for their release. As he stared at the black envelope, he knew their gratitude was owed to someone much less benevolent.

Turning his attention back to the window as the soldiers quickly disappeared from view, Roussard cocked thumb and forefinger, took aim, and pulled an imaginary trigger.

Now that he was free, he knew that it was only a matter of time before his handler turned him loose inside America to exact his revenge.

Other Books

The Lionboy: Petualangan Dimulai.

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