



# THE INDIAN COWBOY

- THE HUNTER -



Brita - Rose - Billert



Seitenweise Voraus



PART  
2

## **The Author:**

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Every single one of us fights for his existence, for his survival and for his dreams every day. No matter where on this earth and in very different ways.

This book is dedicated to all these people.

Don't give up and don't forget to smile whatever happens.

Brita Rose Billert

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Time of the dawning**

Around ten in the morning, Sergeant Ryan Black Hawk was led from the detention cell into General Major Barkley's office. Ryan stopped in front of the desk behind which Barkley, Taylor and a young lieutenant had taken a seat. Barkley announced his decision in just two sentences.

“Sergeant Hawk, you are dishonestly released from the service of the U.S. Air Force with immediate effect. Due to the damage you caused to people, the company car, the refusal to obey orders, unreliability and desertion, I see another affiliation as indefensible. Now that you are a civilian on military grounds, the lieutenant will accompany you to your room so that you can pack your things. Afterwards he will accompany you directly to the exit.”

Barkley's words sounded like shots fired. Ryan's blood froze. He took a deep breath. With no emotion he showed what he felt. Although he had hardly expected Barkley's judgment differently, he felt the ground shaking dangerous under his feet. Every word was superfluous. Since he was no longer under command, the Lakota turned without a word of greeting and went out the door. The lieutenant jumped up to follow him in a hurry.

Barkley's grim look followed the men. Hardly audible, Taylor said: “He was my best man. I will never find one like him again.”

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Dark clouds piled up over the land around the Black Hills. Dawn dominated the day. Oppressive sultry announced the approaching thunderstorm. It was incredibly quiet. Not a bird sang and the thick air swallowed the engine noise of Highway 90. A young man came from there on foot. He didn't seem to be in a hurry, but he didn't stroll. A black bag hung over his shoulder and although it wasn't necessary, he wore sunglasses. No road, no path, led in this direction, in which he walked purposefully. It seemed as he knew where he was going. He had put the shirt in his belt. It dangled in time with his steps. Ryan Black Hawk knew exactly where he was going. He knew the way. Not the first time he put it back on foot. After about two hours he had reached the edge of the forest in the Black Hills. In the mountains he would find shelter from the thunderstorm that was coming up very quickly. The jeans stuck to the skin and the tongue to the palate. Even the dark forest offered no cooling relief. A fire seemed to be burning in his sneakers. Ryan ignored all of this. His face looked petrified and his thoughts tormented him. Finally, he put the glasses away. It was dark in the thick forest. Here, too, the Lakota did not follow any track. His feet touched the soft mixed forest floor, rotting needles, withered leaves, moss and branches. It smelled of it. A barely audible sound that didn't belong here made Ryan stop and listen. He clearly heard a human groan. Ryan grinned at the corners of his mouth and waited.

Silence.

Then someone groaned again. It came from above, from the slope. Ryan left the bag behind, crawled up and finally lay on the floor. His grin widened when he realized the cause. Another miserable moan came to his ears. Ryan got up. Although the Lakota always avoided interfering in other people's affairs, it seemed extremely necessary here. A white-haired man, wearing only his underpants, was hanging upside down on the lowest branch of a tree. His head hovered above the ground, while his arms hung in a

large anthill. The animals bravely defended their dwelling and did not agree with the intruder. Ryan took out his knife and cut the rope. The old man flopped in the crawling pile and croaked. He swore weakly and tried unsuccessfully to get up. The old man waved awkwardly. Ryan grinned mockingly at the strange, ridiculous creature and turned to go.

“Hey you!”, the old man suddenly snorted. “You can't...”

He groaned as he laboriously tried to get on his legs “... leave me here. goddam!”

Ryan paused and looked back.

“Maybe you didn't deserve it any other way”, he replied unaffectedly.

“I'll kill those cursed skunks! Ungrateful people!”

The old man had enough air in his lungs to swear heavily. On all fours he crawled out of the bunch of brave little animals and kept stroking his fiery red arms. Some dead bodies fell to the ground. When he thought he was safe, he leaned against a tree and took a first look at his rescuer. The little old grinned, coughed and said in a hoarse voice: “Thank you! I owe you something.”

Wind came up and drove into the leaves of the trees. It rustled. Ryan looked up.

“I can feel something prowling. I noticed it last night in my old, rotten bones. I'm Samuel Gabriel Anthony Williams by the way. For you, Sam. If you give me your name?”

Ryan looked down at him skeptically and eyed him. He was small, stocky and had short, crooked legs. His white hair stuck in all directions from his head. But the beard made an extremely meticulously groomed impression.

His big nose was reminiscent of a potato and his eyes blinked curiously at Ryan.

“Ryan”, he finally said.

Sam laughed in a smoky voice. “I like you, fellow. You're Indian. Looks like an Air Force cut on vacation. No one else would have had the stupid idea to roam through this

godforsaken piece of forest. My luck. Otherwise the ants would have gnawed off my bones.”

Old Sam changed his mood from an unfriendly snarling to an idiosyncratic humor. He laughed and beckoned to Ryan. “Come on boy! Help an old man get on his feet.

My skull is humming from the twisted world.”

Ryan took a step forward and held out his hand. The old man grabbed his wrist and pulled himself up. Then he took the first stiff steps.

The wind grew to a storm.

The thunder rumbled.

It was high time for Ryan to go to the cave. Again he turned to go.

“The lightning should hit me that I drop dead immediately if I'm a liar. I am a businessman and have always been honest with everyone!” Sam screamed through the loud roar of the storm.

Branches cracked menacingly. One fell to the ground.

Ryan remained indifferent and continued on his way.

“Why should our creator send you to me on your way?

To save my life! He didn't want me up there yet!” The old man shouted after him.

“Ever heard of hell?”, Ryan shouted back without stopping. He heard the old man croak behind him.

“The devil is afraid of me.”

Ryan disappeared down the slope. The storm played furiously with the tree tops. The howling whistle grew louder and the rustling leaves sang. Ryan reached for his bag. Now he would have to hurry to reach his shelter on the rocks. Maybe he would have to spend the night there. When he threw the bag over his shoulder, he saw the old man, who called himself Sam, limping hurriedly towards himself. He stopped right in front of him. Ryan didn't move. His petrified expression looked indifferent.

“Come on boy. My cabin is nearby. I invite you. If you support me a little bit, both we could still make it.”



The strange old man seemed to mean it honestly. He looked worriedly at Ryan and waited for an answer.

Ryan finally nodded. "Okay."

When the two men reached the log cabin in a clearing, lightning flashed through the darkness. Ryan recognized a shed by the house in front of which a relatively new off-road vehicle was parked. The two men had just reached the door when the rain pelted down. The drops of water jumped over the hard floor like pebbles. Sam tossed the door behind him and turned on the light. He breathed heavily. The path had robbed him of his last strength. He laboriously dragged himself to the table and sank onto one of the chairs.

"Sit down, Ryan."

Ryan stood at the window and looked out. The masses of water drummed against the windows and onto the roof of the log house. Then he sat down at the table with the stranger and pushed the bag underneath his chair. In silence, he eyed the room, which was appropriately furnished and decorated with all kinds of frills. His eyes roamed a desk on which a computer was standing. Next to it was a narrow metal cupboard. Ryan's eyes finally caught on an old Winchester. In addition to skins, pictures and some hunting trophies, she adorned the wooden wall. Sam watched him.

"I'll find something to wear and start the fire. And I'm incredibly hungry", he said. Sam rose and disappeared through the door into the room beyond.

Ryan examined the stove that would have honored any museum. In a basket lay chopped wood and next to it some large, stacked logs. When Sam entered the living room, the fire was already burning. He nodded gratefully to Ryan and slid a cast iron pan onto the stove.

"Coffee or tea?", he asked.

"Coffee. Black", Ryan replied.

"I hope you like turkey?", Sam asked while he was making coffee.

“Yes, I do”, Ryan replied shortly.

Sam shook his head. Then he cut turkey meat into strips and squeezed them into a pan. Ryan's thoughts deviated. He was trying to find out, why he was sitting here now. *What does that mean? Why did Wakan Tanka send me to this stranger? The old man would surely not have survived the day without my appearance. And now I'm in his house...*

Sam interrupted Ryan's thoughts, as he pushed a large coffee cup in front of the Lakota.

“Thanks”, Ryan replied shortly.

The smell of roast penetrated his senses and brought him completely back to the present. The old man now made a very civilized and well-groomed impression, which was in contrast to his appearance in the forest.

The old man put the food on the table without saying a word. Then he muttered a prayer.

Ryan felt peculiar emptiness deep inside him. Fear and anger were gone. Suddenly he didn't care. Only the feeling of hunger, with the smell of roasting, came into his consciousness. For a long time, he had enjoyed nothing like it. The old geezer was actually a good cook and host. Ryan smiled.

“Thank you. The food is really very good”, Ryan politely thanked his host.

The old man's eyes lit up when he smiled openly at Ryan.

“I'm glad, boy”, Sam croaked.

The storm raged outside. Stormy gusts lashed the rain against the house. A loose shutter rattled at the shed.

The thunder sounded like the rolling ball of a bowling alley and discharged in a loud crash.

When Sam had cleared the dishes, he got a bottle of whiskey and two glasses. He poured without asking.

Without a word, he took his glass and drank it in one go.

“Sometimes that's good. Then you know, you're still alive”, Sam said softly.

Ryan hesitated. Finally, he reached for the glass and drank it in one go. Sam was right. It felt good to feel the burning in the throat. It was probably the best whiskey he had ever drunk. No comparison to the cheap fluff without taste, which had only eaten holes in his stomach for years. Ryan took a deep breath, as if taking a deep puff on the cigarette. Sam poured coffee and looked directly at Ryan.

"You are the first stranger who was ever allowed to enter my claim. I don't like strangers sniffing around here. You saw where that could lead."

Ryan had to grin.

"Do you like the Winchester?"

"Yes."

"I'm giving it to you."

Ryan shook his head. "I don't need a gun that decorates a wall."

Sam laughed roughly. "So? What do you need?"

Ryan said nothing.

"Are you in the air force? You look like."

Ryan contemptuously twisted his mouth.

Sam watched this very carefully.

"Pilot?"

"No."

"There are dozens of different jobs at the Air Force. But you don't look like a cook and you don't look like one from the cleaning squadron either. I can't explain it to myself, but when I look at you, I don't want to have to face you with a weapon in hand."

A mocking smile now played around Ryan's corner of the mouth, which looked almost snooty. "Driver", he finally answered.

Sam raised her eyebrows. "Then I would bet my holy claim that you were the one, they hunted for two days.

They told it on the news. You must have made them angry." Sam indicated the bandage on Ryan's arm. "Shot

and escaped the FBI with their jeep”, Sam giggled. “And then the US Army fired you after you turned yourself in?”

Ryan was amazed at the old man's knowledge.

“So it is”, he nodded.

“What the hell did you screw up?”

“You ask too much, Sam.”

Sam raised his hands in defense.

“All right. It's none of my business.”

Ryan took the coffee cup in both hands and drank. Sam got up heavily, limped to the desk and rummaged around. Then he pushed a note to Ryan.

“Maybe that's something for you.”

Ryan stared at the piece of paper on which a number was written in blue ink in accurate writing.

“What's that?”

“If you're looking for a damn well paid job, call. I think you can handle weapons, drive a car and track down people like me that nobody else can find.”

“I can do that.”

“Okay. But now the hitching come in, buddy. Can you track down people who don't want to be found at all?”

Ryan raised his head and looked at Sam. A suspicious wrinkle formed on his nose. “Bounty hunter.”

Sam nodded slowly.

In silence, Ryan shoved the note into his pocket. Flashes of lightning twitched in front of the windows. Tree branches crashed and a tree seemed to break under the force of the storm. The storm still whipped the rain against the house. Thunderbolts crashed like cannon shots.

“You stay here tonight”, Sam decided. “Tomorrow morning I'll take you down to town.”

Ryan nodded in agreement.

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The sun was just over the ridges of the Black Hills when Ryan got in the car with Sam. He liked the black Dodge truck. In contrast, the old man looked like a dwarf. A few feather clouds stood in the blue sky. Nothing reminded of yesterday's thunderstorm. The air was pleasantly fresh and clear. The RAM rolled down the forest path to the paved road. The sunlight shimmered through the treetops. The road twisted through the mountains like a flattened snake. Country music sounded from the radio.

For a moment, Ryan thought the world was back in order. The appearance was deceptive. He knew that.

When the car left the forest in an easterly direction, the sun was dazzling. Grumbling Sam made his face and lowered the sun visor. The city of Rapid City was right in front of you. The road now led straight ahead like a ruler. A little later Sam steered the truck into a driveway.

He opened the roller door from the car with an electric remote control. It closed automatically behind him.

"Here we are. Come with me, boy", Sam said and got out.

Ryan smiled because the old man kept calling him *boy*. It was Sam's way, but Ryan didn't blame him. He inexplicably liked this strange and idiosyncratic old man.

Ryan was amazed when he followed Sam through the depot. He sensed what business Sam was doing. When he entered the store, his assumption was confirmed.

Sam had a gun shop. Ryan looked around. Weapons of all kinds and for every taste, many packed, some in the display under glass.

"Pick up a good one. I don't want to be in your debt forever. You saved my life, boy." The old grinned, for he hadn't missed the Lakota's amazement.

He looked at the weapons in silence. His eyes moved from one to the other.

"Take your time. I only open in half an hour."

Sam switched on the computer and sorted the mail.

From time to time he laughed croakily or cursed quietly.

“I thought of a small, handy and with a short barrel, semi-automatic. What do you think of that one?” asked Ryan finally.

Sam came up and shook his head. “Toys for people who want to impress. You can scare chickens at most”, Sam laughed. “I will show you the professional tool.”

Sam put a few boxes on the counter. “Colts are somewhat out of fashion, although they are of course technically acceptable. These are semi-automatic pistols, self-loading, caliber nine millimeters from different manufacturers. Very popular with police officers and agents. All are inconspicuous to wear and easy to operate with one hand. The more mature gentlemen often rely on Smith and Wesson or Browning. The young customers prefer Beretta or Glock”, smiled Sam. “For your purposes this one seems to me to be optimal. It’s practically invisible and has the same impact as its big sisters. High shooting speed. The best life insurance in the skilled hand. And absolutely no stoppages.”

Ryan picked up the pistol, looked at it from all sides, and checked the position in his hand.

“It’s yours and a thousand rounds of ammunition.”

Ryan put the gun back on the table.

“Waste”, he nodded.

“Waste”, Sam grinned and also nodded.

Then he carefully put away all the other pistols. He treated the weapons like raw eggs.

“Do you think I can show up in the bank with the pistol?”

“Boy! You don't want to ...”, Sam whispered in horror.

Ryan laughed amused.

It was the first time since he was released that he laughed. And it was the first time Sam heard him laugh so boisterously. Without scorn and without mockery.

Sam let himself be infected by it.

“No I do not want to. I just need something cash.”

“I can give you the money too. Credit card? How much?”

“Five hundred and please give me a shoulder holster and the little black backpack there.”

Sam nodded and gave Ryan what he wanted. “I would be happy to see you again sometime. You're always welcome to me, boy. And you know where my cabin is.”

Ryan packed everything in the new backpack.

“You know, the most worthy way for a man to die is to fall asleep by the fire in the evening or to be shot in battle. Never tell anyone that you cut old Sam off the tree in such an embarrassing situation.”

Ryan pressed his lips together and narrowed his eyes into small slits.

“Which tree?”, he grinned.

Sam accompanied Ryan to the door and opened his shop. Ryan walked down the street without looking back.

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A little later, Ryan showed up at his sister's house, Carry Crowman. The noise of the children playing could be heard from far away. His niece, who played ball with a whole horde of tots on the playground, first discovered him. Joan immediately ran to her uncle and jumped at him. “Ryan! Ryan!”, she shouted out and clinging to him.

Ryan laughed.

“Hello Jo, you little whirlwind. How are you?”

“Fine, and you?”

“Good as well. Is your mom at home?”

“Yes, she is in the house. She's just packing things up.”

Ryan eyed Joan skeptically.

“No fear. Not what you think.”

“So? What do I think?”

Joan giggled. “Just a move. That was decided by the great war council.”

Ryan grinned.

“Can you play soccer? I still lack a good player in the team. Mason is too clumsy.”

“He can't even walk alone”, Ryan laughed. “Well then... get off, spider monkey.”

Ryan tucked his travel bag into the tree's forks at the playground. Joan beamed when her uncle accompanied her to the field. The field was delimited by the laundry area, pile of sand, wall of a house and a lying log. The other players, all about Joan's size and age, had no objection. The noise roared, louder and jarring than before.

Carry shook his head and smiled as she wrapped the cups out of the closet in newspaper and put them in one of the boxes. She had no idea who was chasing the ball outside the door with the kids.

Ryan shot. Joan enthusiastically screamed *goal! goal!*

while Mason was sitting in the pile of sand and putting sand grains in his mouth. Now the children rushed in from all sides to get the ball. Ryan tried to snatch the ball away from them. The little feet got in his way in the fray. He stumbled over it, rolled off his shoulder and caught the ball with his hands. This provoked loud protests from all sides. Joan enlightened him. “That’s a foul! You cannot use your hands.”

“Okay.”

Ryan handed the ball over to the opposing team.

“Wait! That that will be a five meter!”, threatened Joan.

“Doesn't that mean penalty?”, Ryan asked.

“Sure, but that's too far from the goal!”

Ryan giggled.

The goal was only hinted at, between the wall of a house and a tricycle. With an important expression, a five-year-old attempted and shot the ball. Since no one volunteered to goalkeeper, Joan and Ryan tried to prevent a goal. The ball came flying in a high arc and crashed into the corner of the house. Ryan jumped to the ball and bounced the ball against



his chest. The ball jumped to the ground and hopped away. He finally remained in the middle of the field.

“Man! You could have caught him with your hands”, Joan shouted.

“You said I shouldn't take the ball with my hands”, said Ryan.

“As a goalie for sure”, Joan grinned.

“And who gets the ball now?”

“Well, whoever grabs it first.”

The unrestrained zeal of the players unloaded again in the battle for the only ball. No one took any notice of the audience that the noise was likely to have attracted.

Mason was taken in the arms by Carry and smiled when she spotted her brother in the crowd. Someone had shot the ball with such force that it flew far beyond the field.

The children chased him. Ryan stopped and laughed.

When he saw Carry, he pulled his bag out of the branch-fork and went to her.

“I was afraid for you”, she whispered.

“I was scared too”, Ryan replied.

“They didn't put you in a prison. I can hardly believe it.

I'm so happy you're here, Ryan. Let's go inside.”

“Jo said you are moving.”

“Joan!” Carry called as the children ran past her.

Joan stopped and came to her mom. Since she had called with her full name, Joan had no idea of anything good. Mom only called her Joan when she had done something wrong.

“Can you tell me how much sand your little brother has eaten?”

“It couldn't have been that much, Mom. The pile of sand is still as big as before.”

Carry gritted her teeth to stay serious. When Ryan laughed, she finally had to laugh too.

“You little cheeky toad”, said Ryan.

Joan giggled.

“You can keep playing, but with Mason.”

Joan didn't move a muscle of her face. "Yes, mom." She took the little brother with her.

Ryan and Carry went inside. Boxes and laundry were piled up in the apartment.

"Jo said you're moving", Ryan resumed the conversation.

"Yes, back to the reservation, to Kyle", Carry confirmed as she cleared the kitchen table.

"Sit down, dear brother. I can barely make coffee."

Ryan sat down.

"Alex's parents need help and I never really felt at home here. Jo is going to school soon."

"That soothes me. You'll be better off there. How are father and mother, grandmother and my brothers?",

Ryan asked.

"Good. For real. They are healthy, also mother."

Ryan breathed a sigh of relief and nodded in satisfaction.

"They miss you. They too were afraid for you. They always ask me about you."

Ryan pressed his palms together. His body tightened like a bowstring. He seemed to be looking for words.

"I'm out, Carry. Dishonorably released for things I've never done. But at least I didn't get a charge of murder even though I killed three men. Don't ask why. Now I'm sitting here and I don't know what to do. I can't go home. Without a job, without money and without a face.

No!", he said softly and took a deep breath. "Two men offered me a lot of money for a job that nobody wants to do. Both valued my skills, although they were the first time in my life. That confuses my senses. My path was always in one direction and I knew where I wanted to go.

But now my path seems to be dividing and I no longer know what is right."

"What kind of job, Ryan?"

"Bounty hunter."

Ryan noticed his sister's startled look. He did not avoid.

“I have no choice, Carry. I will have to do it. This is my dance. If one day I no longer come home, you cancel my account and bring the money home. I had your name registered at the bank. Don't tell anyone about it. The less you know, the better for everyone.”

Carry felt the big lump in her throat, which took her breath away and prevented her from speaking. Her eyes shone treacherously.

“I can't go back now. My life has become a struggle, a rodeo, my dance. Everything else is not in my hands.”

Carry nodded bravely.

“I can understand you well. Take care of yourself, Mishunkala, my little brother. I will pray for you.”

Ryan pulled the black backpack out of his travel bag and shoved the cash he had withdrawn over to Carry.

“Take what you need. Give the rest to mom.”

Carry nodded. “Thank you.”

“There is only dirty laundry in my pocket. Can I leave it here?”

“Of course. I also have some from you. You can take that with you.”

Ryan smiled weakly. “Everything that fits in my backpack. I will hardly need more.”

“Where will you live?”

Ryan shrugged. “Everywhere and nowhere. Can I use your phone? I don't have any more.”

“Of course.”

Ryan got up and went to the phone. The decision was made. His decision and it was not easy for him. Carry went next door to continue packing. Ryan stopped at the kitchen window and looked out. The children were still chasing the ball. He punched in the number on the slip of paper. A male voice answered immediately.

“Yes?”

“Ryan here”, he said without hesitation.

“Oh! This is Thompson speaking. You’ve changed your mind? I’m glad to hear that!” Thompson's voice was actually pleased.

Ryan was surprised and not when he heard the black wolf on the other end of the line.

“Yes”, he replied shortly.

“Good. Let's meet for a coffee.”

“At the gas station at the Farmer Store.”

Thompson laughed. “Okay. In two hours.”

“I'll be there.”

Ryan hung up and took a deep breath. His features were petrified. Lost in thought he watched the children play.

Carry silently stepped behind her brother and put her hand on his shoulder. Slowly he turned to her.

“We will meet in two hours.”

Carry tried to smile. “Your decision will be the right one, Ryan. Wherever your path goes one day he will take you home.”

Ryan took Carry in his arms and hugged her. She held him tight. It was good. Carry didn't dare tell him she was afraid for him. She said nothing. He knew it anyway.

## Chapter 2

### The Hunter

Ryan walked the way back on foot. Almost two hours without marching baggage was a no-brainer for him. He was wearing aviator glasses. The sun was shining. He was sweating. There was a constant coming and going at the gas station. A few men stood together, talking, drinking coffee, chewing fast food out of the cardboard.

Ryan got coffee, sat in the shade on a curb and sipped it.

The black backpack was stuck between his knees.

Nobody noticed him. It seemed like someone had dropped him here. Ryan tore open a pack of cigarettes, put a box next to him and the rest away. He smoked almost motionless, his elbows on his knees. About fifteen minutes later a Dodge came up. Slowly he rolled over the asphalt and headed purposefully towards the man who was sitting alone on the curb. It was only when Thompson got out that Ryan got up. Thompson greeted.

Ryan nodded to him.

“Jump in. We talk in the car.”

Silently, Ryan grabbed the backpack and got in.

“I was pretty sure you were going to call me, Ryan Black Hawk”, Thompson started.

“Not me”, replied Ryan.

Thompson grinned. “Concerns?”

“No sir.”

“You know what this is about?”

“You are looking for a bounty hunter. I don't work for the FBI.”

Thompson laughed. “Not for the FBI, Ryan. For me.”

Ryan looked skeptical at the black man in the gray suit.

“What's the matter?”, Thompson asked.

“Okay. Talk”, Ryan replied.

Thompson raised his eyebrows. The glasses of the rimless glasses shone.

“You are my man, my shadow wolf. Silent, fast and invisible. There are only two of us. Forget everything else. You only get your orders from me. You alone decide whether to accept or reject an order. From me you get a laptop and a cell phone with a special microchip. Tap-proof! This enables us to exchange all information, data, photos and so on quickly and easily, and above all without third-party access. As soon as you have accepted the order, you will delete the data. All information goes to me and only to me! In some cases, a meeting cannot be avoided, but it is always associated with a risk. You know. Questions?”

“I understand everything, Sir.”

“Okay. Get fon with it. Your account will be checked sooner or later. It is extremely suspicious if no regular payments are made and then suddenly large sums of money come up in one fell swoop. Banks are obliged to report this. That's why I pay regularly. Charged after each order. I take care of licenses and equipment. Do you have a car?”

“No, I have not.”

“It will be quite exhausting on foot and the FBI will not let you steal a second car.”

Ryan's mouth twisted into a mocking grin.

“Are you sure?”

“No. I'm not sure”, laughed Thompson.

Then he started his car. “Let's go shopping, Ryan. A warrior needs weapons and a war pony. Right?”, he said as he drove the Dodge to interstate 44.

“If you want to send me to war, Thompson, yes.”

“The war is always and everywhere and I'm up to both ears. A shitty job that nobody wants to do. The scoundrels not only wear jeans, but also suits and Rolex. But there are rules, Ryan”, said Thompson and the smile faded from his

face. "Let's see that we always get our ass out of the line of fire in time."

"Yes, Sir", replied Ryan Thompson nodded in satisfaction.

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Baxter, who was usually in a good mood, slammed his apartment door angrily. He rumbled down the stairs like remote controlled. Panting, he went to his jeep, which was parked on the street. In his anger he neither noticed nor greeted the old lady who came towards him on the sidewalk. Rice had been bullying Baxter non-stop for the past two days. And Rice painted a pretty ugly picture at the former Indian Air Force Sergeant.

"I kill him!", Baxter growled.

Baxter hadn't heard or seen anything about Ryan himself since they fired him. He had just left and the connection was simply broken. That made Baxter angrier. He looked neither to the right nor to the left when he jumped into his Commander, cursing. Just when Baxter was sitting behind the steering-wheel he noticed that the sports car in front of him had obstructed him.

"Such an idiot!", Baxter swore. "I should be pushing you", he roared as he pushed open the driver's door. He would almost have crashed into the narrow figure that was directly in his way. Baxter froze, silent and mouth open, as if seeing a ghost. No word came over his lips.

"Hi Baxter. Everything okay with you?", Ryan asked.

"Where the hell are you coming from," Baxter snapped at him.

"From there", Ryan replied, gesturing with his thumb behind him.

Baxter took a step back and looked his friend up and down. Then he laughed forgivingly and slapped his arm in greeting with his paw. Ryan grimaced in pain.

“I see your head is still on top and everything’s still on you. Nice to see you”, said Baxter.

Ryan grinned.

“Look at this! What does a stupid think if he puts his show-off car right in front of the bumper of my Commander?”, Baxter growled.

Ryan laughed amused.

“I don't know what to laugh about, my friend. Such a fool! Such a asshole, mental defective! Idiot, stupid! I would like to get in and go full throttle”, Baxter snorted.

“Do you have to leave urgently, Baxter Bear?”

“What does it mean, urgently. I need to go shopping. My fridge is empty.”

“Then it is urgent”, said Ryan and offered Baxter a cigarette. “Here, take one! You are loaded like a powder keg. That’s unhealthy.”

“Hm”, Baxter growled and took the cigarette.

“We smoke and then go shopping. I have time.”

Baxter took a deep breath and rocked his head.

“Are you coming with me, Ryan?”

“Of course. My fridge is empty.”

“Do you have one?”

Ryan laughed softly. “No. Maybe I can use yours.”

“Good idea.”

Then both were silent for a while.

“You suddenly disappeared without a trace. I really thought they still locked you up. Tell me.”

“It's a long story, Baxter. I'll tell you afterwards if you have space for a mentally deficient, an idiot and a goofy man in your apartment.”

Baxter slowly dropped his hand with the cigarette and stared at Ryan in disbelief. “I knew you were crazy...”, Baxter shook his head and gave a skeptical look at the dark blue sports car. “That thing is yours?”

Ryan nodded.