

Praise for *A Warrior's Cry*

Highly recommended: Once again, Donald E. McInnis produced a thoughtful, engaging novel, reminding readers that the greatest battles occur in the pursuit of truth and justice, not on the battlefield itself.

A Warrior's Cry delivers an absorbing legal drama while exploring timely questions about military ethics, leadership, accountability, and the enduring struggle to balance national security with the rule of law.

Andrew "A.J." Hawke's determination transforms what could have been a conventional courtroom drama into a compelling search for truth.

McInnis continues to demonstrate why his A.J. Hawke series has earned a loyal following among readers who appreciate intelligent, character-driven legal fiction.

—Midwest Book Review

Lively potboiler about a rakish lawyer taking on military justice.

A Warrior's Cry blends legal procedural and military thriller with strong pacing and legal fireworks that both dazzle and feel connected to the real world.

The greatest pleasures here are Hawke's surprising legal maneuvering and his dedication to the hunt for justice, which continues outside the proceedings as he works to uncover the actual murderer.

Readers who like to roll with thriller fun will get what they're looking for.

—Publisher's Weekly Booklife Reviews

A.J. Hawke Legal Thrillers

by Donald E. McInnis

The Sphinx Murder Case

McInnis infuses the intrigue of ongoing investigations with the suspense of courtroom proceedings. Lawyer A.J. Hawke is clever and crafty in the courtroom as he exposes police interrogation tactics.

—Publisher's Weekly Booklife Report

Return of the Sphinx

Editor's Pick: Nail-biting legal thriller. In this second book of the series, scrappy lawyer A.J. Hawke must use sophisticated science, and his fists, to aid a client accused of murder. Great for fans of Scott Turow, Phillip Margolin.

—Publisher's Weekly Booklife Reviews

Blood of the Father

"Highly recommended"—Blood of the Father is a legal thriller filled with rare, vibrant descriptions that will especially resonate with readers already familiar with the legal system. Few authors are in a position to as realistically portray the challenges of being a lawyer as lawyer/author Donald E. McInnis.

—Midwest Book Review

Cops Gone Bad

Centering on a young, ambitious lawyer who unmasks a conspiracy within law enforcement, delivers with brisk action and high stakes.

—Publisher's Weekly Booklife Reviews

Filled with action and insight, and perfect for patrons interested in more than courtroom proceedings, but bigger-picture thinking about social issues, justice, and criminal definitions.

—Midwest Book Review

Blood in the Water

Editor's Pick: Sharply plotted thriller exploring the gray zone between justice and vengeance.

—Publisher's Weekly Booklife Reviews

Showcases Donald E. McInnis at the top of his game . . . a must-read for fans of the genre.

—Midwest Book Review

Nonfiction by Donald E. McInnis

She's So Cold: The Stephanie Crowe Murder Case— A Defense Attorney's Inside Story

In this true-crime account, Donald E. McInnis unveils the truth behind the coerced confessions that nearly sent three innocent 14-year-old boys to prison for a crime they did not commit.

A powerful read. . . . Donald E. McInnis does an outstanding job of pinpointing the problems of juvenile prosecution methods. . . . No reader of true crime or juvenile rights should be without this outstanding book. . . . Law professors will find She's So Cold [second edition] holds much fodder for classroom discussion and debate.

—Midwest Book Review

Reader reviews:

It was never going to be rated anything BUT five stars! . . . An absolutely fantastic read. Up there with In Cold Blood by Truman Capote. I enjoyed it THAT much.

—Yassemin T, NetGalley

If you enjoy mysteries you will love this. If you want to see why we need more people like Donald McInnis working for us, you will enjoy this. . . . Mr. McInnis does a wonderful job of laying out the facts without prejudice. He simply states what happened. Fascinating read!

—Maria's Space

She's So Cold is one of the most harrowing stories I have read. . . . This is a gripping tale of law enforcement gone lawless.

—English Plus Blog

For more reviews and internet interviews regarding Donald E. McInnis's representation of one of the 14-year-old boys, go to: donaldmcinnis.com.

A WARRIOR'S CRY

The Court-Martial of Zachary Pines



An A.J. Hawke Legal Thriller

Donald E. McInnis

J & E Publications
San Diego, California

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This novel's story and characters are fictitious. Certain long-standing institutions, agencies, and public offices are mentioned, but the characters involved are wholly imaginary.

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A WARRIOR'S CRY

In war death is certain
Human flesh and bones deformed
In victory crosses adorn
In defeat graves unknown
Always the same cry: in war
death is certain

A Note to the Reader

A Warrior's Cry is a work of fiction. However, it is not just a story about a military court-martial. At the heart of the story is the question of governance of the people, by the people, in this atomic age where democracies must take desperate steps to survive.

In essence, I ask, what is the role of the people's Congress, the president as commander-in-chief, and the courts when it comes to how the military shall carry out its sworn duty? Will the rule of law, as decided by the people, control the military, or, by necessity, does the military abide by a different law?

Ever since the thirteen colonies first thought of independence from the tyranny of King George III and his English Parliament, there has been a debate about what role the military should have in a democracy. Never far from the colonists' minds was the British army's occupation of Boston and history's lesson of Caesar and his army crossing the Rubicon and the ultimate rule of the army over the Roman Senate.

In 1775, the colonists gathered in Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress, which passed the Articles of War, thereby establishing the rules for military conduct in the colonists' new Continental Army. These rules would eventually become today's United States Military Code of Justice. In the past 250 years, Congress, the president, and our judiciary have been unable to resolve one fundamental issue: how to preserve "Order and Discipline" in the military so it may accomplish its dangerous and important goals while observing the rule of law—laws passed by Congress and upheld by the judiciary.

Of equal importance is the oath taken by every military enlisted personnel and its officers: "I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States from all threats, foreign and domestic; . . ." Of note, that oath does not say to defend the *nation* from all foreign or domestic threats. Nor is the oath a sworn allegiance to the president of the United States as commander in chief of all military forces. In swearing to defend the Constitution,

our armed forces pledge themselves to defend and preserve the people's right to self-governance through their elected representatives, elected president, and an independent judiciary.

President George Washington, a military man for most of his life, warned the new nation about how the military can threaten individual liberty. Although he recognized the need for a strong military force, he demanded that there be civilian oversight of the military. He believed the military should use its power in self-defense as opposed to political ambition for foreign entanglements or despotic rule by one man, such as a president-king. To George Washington and the Founding Fathers, that oversight of the president and the military was to be done by the people's elected representatives in the United States Congress.

Another general, President Dwight David Eisenhower, also recognized the need for civilian control of the nation's armed forces. But he realized the new age of atomic warfare required a large standing army and an industrial complex to support such a military. President Eisenhower urged the people to guard against the unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military and its industrial complex. An influence that could lead to the disastrous rise of a military injurious to the will of the people. With the continued advance of military technology, the prospect of a nuclear attack within minutes has forced Congress to give the president more and more authority as to how the nation's defense is conducted.

As you read the story about the court-martial of Special Warfare Operations United States Navy SEAL Zachery Pines, I hope you keep in mind the warnings of our past military generals who became president.

—Donald E. McInnis

A WARRIOR'S CRY



The Court-Martial of Zachary Pines

An A.J. Hawke Legal Thriller

CHAPTER ONE

A late-August summer rain fell upon a windless, calm Black Sea. The storm's heavily laden drops created tiny craters that erupted into splashes of water. As the rain intensified, these volcanoes of water rose ever higher into the moonlit night. A mist of night fog mixed with the faint light and rain clouds to create a shimmering black-and-white canopy to this symphony of splashes playing across the glassy ocean surface. The soft sounds of their impacts added to the harmony of the slow surf washing against the sandy, tree-lined shore of the Taman Peninsula. The storm and all its beauty were a refreshing change from the hot, humid Russian night.

A narrow green iridescence shone upward toward the surface of the sea. The closer to shore it moved, the brighter it became. Slowly, a dark, semi-oval object peeked above the water. It remained motionless at first. Then the object appeared to turn to one side, then the other and back again as its green glow grew dim and then stronger as if scanning the coastline ahead. After a few brief moments, the object moved toward the shore, emerging from the surf as a tall, black silhouette barely noticeable amongst the thickening fog that hugged the coast. Soon a second green glow appeared, then a third, followed by five more. Their ghostly human forms slowly advanced onto the sand and toward a river opening that parted coastal shrub and rows of trees. All lay quiet except for the rain and the gentle lapping of the surf on the sand.

Once at the tree line, the lead figure stopped, knelt, and held a closed fist to his side. Those that followed stopped and went to one knee. Then the lead silhouette gave an arm command, and the group spread out and moved forward into the trees, disappearing into the early morning darkness. Phase one of Operation Zapadnya appeared successful.

After burying their ghostly gear, the men proceeded one and a half clicks north. There they spread out facing a walled compound on the rising knoll in front of them. The leader scanned the area with binoculars. Two objects could be seen near the entrance. The long driveway leading to the compound was clear.

"Sabre, this is Sabre One. We are in position. Provide visual." Nearly a minute passed. "Sabre, do we have Eagle view?" After several more minutes, mission command replied, "Sabre One, we confirm your location. There are two subjects smoking southwest side; north side one subject; two at the east entrance; one rooftop prone subject with scoped rifle." Several minutes later, mission command added, "Sabre One, Eagle sees no added Xray."

Upon hearing "no added Xray," the team knew there were no other enemies in the area.

"Sabre One, proceed on your command," came the order. With satellite confirmation that there were only the normal perimeter guards, the team split into three two-man units and moved toward each pre-assigned target. The remaining two repositioned for a sniper shot at the rooftop rifleman. Once all were in position, the order to execute was given. Through their comms, the team members could hear the rifle silencer's muzzled "thuds" as the four teams neutralized the outside guards. The three two-man units then entered the compound. The two-man sniper team quickly moved toward a pre-assigned vantage point that provided a view of anyone approaching the compound. As they did, a barrage of muzzled shots followed, indicating a fierce firefight inside. Then complete silence. Once at their assigned position, the two waited. The prolonged silence caused the two snipers to look at one another.

Finally, came the report, "Sabre, Paris is ours."

Silence again. "Sabre, we have him."

"Sabre One, do you have the Treasure?" asked Sabre command.

"No. Paris refuses to say."

"Sabre One, we need the Treasure."

No reply followed and command asked again, "Sabre One, do you have the Treasure?"

"Sabre, no. Advise next."

Again silence. Over a minute passed. Then heard over all comms, "Sabre One, Treasure is imperative. Proceed as needed. You have your orders."

CHAPTER TWO

81 Hours Earlier

A large briefing room at Naval Base San Diego was filled with officers and senior enlisted personnel from the United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land teams known as SEAL units, United States Marines, and United States Army Special Forces, the Green Berets. All were part of the joint United States Special Warfare Operations Command, USSOCOM. This joint umbrella command oversees all special operations forces throughout the world. Also present were support staff from all branches of the military, most of whom were officers. All present were wearing military combat utility uniforms.

“Atten-hut,” came the command from a Navy lieutenant preceding Captain Mace Wikman, the commanding officer of the United States Naval Special Warfare Group One, the Navy SEAL units stationed at Coronado. Those attending immediately snapped to attention and silence permeated the large room. The captain walked across the elevated stage while he glanced down at the first three rows of the large auditorium.

“At ease . . . be seated,” drawled the captain. A low rumble followed as the 130-plus personnel took their seats. “Good morning, gentlemen.”

“Good morning, sir,” came the echoing reply.

The captain paused, looked to his right at the seated female naval officers, and added, “Good morning, ladies.” Turning back to those seated in front of him, he said, “Those gathered here today have been preparing for almost two years for a secret operation vital to this nation’s security. As is our practice, each of you has trained in segmented sections unaware of the total action ahead. Now is the time! I repeat. Now is the time,” he said in a rising voice, “to execute your awesome talents.”

At that moment, the captain nodded to an assistant seated in the center of the third row, and the large screen behind him lit up with the words “**OPERATION ZAPADNYA.**”

“Now, I know all of you, and especially the SEAL team members, have been questioning why you have been sequestered here on the base for the past nine days. We have been waiting for confirmation about the events that are unfolding in Europe. We are now operational,” Captain Wikman said in a strong voice as he scanned the room. Smiles spread across the faces of the seated warriors.

“Operation Zapadnya is the kidnapping of Russian General Alexandrov Kazakoff.” A yelp came from the back of the room. Unaffected, the SEAL commander continued, “Kazakoff is the architect of a plan to stop the encirclement of European Russia by NATO. He has demonstrated the effectiveness of his form of strategic warfare through the slow, grinding war in Ukraine that has stalled that country’s ability to join the European Union and eventually NATO. Kazakoff has convinced the Kremlin that he can weaken the West’s efforts to surround the northern part of European Russia as he has in the south with Ukraine.

“The Russian general intends to boldly sever the northern NATO members from their brethren nations to the south. If he succeeds, Russia will dramatically weaken NATO. Your specific objective . . .” He looked out at those gathered before him. “. . . is to bring Kazakoff here for interrogation or kill him.”

Captain Mace Wikman stiffened his posture. “I prefer the former. We need the information he possesses. You,” he said, pointing to the SEALs in the first two rows, “you are to do so at any cost to you personally, and,” he emphasized, “you are to employ any tactic you find necessary to get that man to us alive. I do not care how you do it. No life is to be spared, including your own. That is how important this mission is. Do I make myself clear, SEALs?”

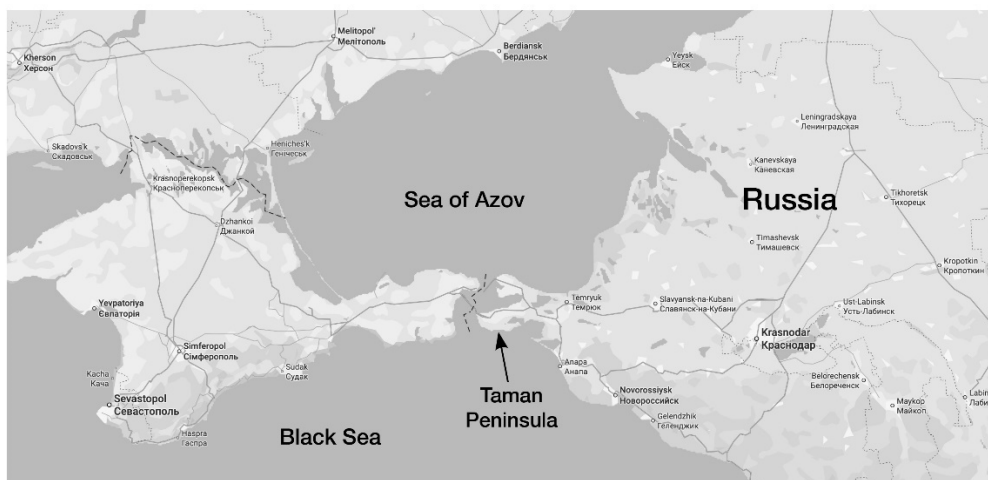
“Aye, aye,” came the response from the men whose lives the commander was responsible for.

“Intelligence tells us that General Kazakoff will hold a summit of his command staff near the Sea of Azov. We believe that meeting is to finalize his war plan against NATO. Once the meeting is over, the general intends to vacation with his family at their villa on the Taman Peninsula. Thereafter, he will fly to Moscow for political approval to execute his war plan. We believe those plans are with him at the villa.



1. Black Sea area relative to the Mediterranean Sea and southeastern Europe and Russia.

“Next image,” he directed to his assistant. “Here is Ukraine, Crimea, the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov, and there is the Taman Peninsula,” he stated as he ran a pointer that emitted a red light over the map. “It is while he is at his Taman villa that we will strike.”



2. Closer view of Crimea, the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov, and the Taman Peninsula, which separates the Sea of Azov from the Black Sea, opposite the Crimean Peninsula, and is in Russia.

The room was silent as the knowledge sank in that Special Forces would be operating so far into Russian territory. To the seated SEALs, the operation was beginning to sound like their suicide mission into North Korea.

“There will be two SEAL teams involved. Our specially equipped nuclear submarine, under communication blackout, will silently slip into the Black Sea and proceed to a disembarkation point off the southern coast of the Taman Peninsula. Two open wet mini-sub subs will motor a SEAL team, Sabre One, into shallow, clear waters to within two hundred yards of the beach. There, the eight-man team will swim ashore, bury their equipment, and proceed to their objective.” The commander paused as he again glanced at the SEALs in the first two rows.

“During this entire operation, you will be mostly silent. There will be limited communication between command, you, the mini-sub subs, and the mother sub. A further complication is that drone surveillance by us will be greatly limited due to the deep penetration into Russian territory. With the operation being so close to Russian military installations in eastern Ukraine, southern Russia, and those in the Taman Peninsula, we must limit any communication, as it would reveal the operation and your location. You will thus be operating both on land and in the sea without instantaneous audio and high-definition video of your target and surrounding hostile units. Your Tactical Operations Command will not know your immediate situation, and as a result, TOC will be greatly limited in what it can do to support you.” Wikman paused. His cold tone and stern expression drove home to his men: You will be on your own.

“You will use your own judgment. You know your objective. Achieve that mission any way you deem necessary. We need him alive or his treasure: the war plans. Do I make myself clear? At any cost to anyone.”

“Aye, aye,” came the response.

The SEAL commander paused for the longest time as he looked at the first two rows and then to the rest gathered in the room. He continued in a soft voice.

“A second full-strength SEAL team, Sabre Two, will remain on the sub as backup. If you get in trouble and Sabre Two has a chance to assist evacuation, TOC will so order. In addition to the two mini-sub subs, there will be two alternate extraction areas east of your original infiltration on the Taman Peninsula. These two extraction points will require you to proceed east through hostile territory and will require time for you to reach your evacuation and escape points. An Army Special Forces HALO unit will be standing by. But it too is limited as to how they can support you due to your deep penetration into Russia. Thus, gentlemen, it will be up to you . . .” He looked directly at the SEALs in the front row, “. . . to create a situation that allows for your escape. All this will be explained this morning in small-group briefings.”

The captain viewed the room and the young, eager faces riveted on him. Slowly, his eyes moved again to the two SEAL teams seated together in the first row. “Sabre One, you will act on your own initiative. If you become compromised, it will be your decision whether to abort the mission. There will be no shame in terminating the op. Yes, your mission is absolutely vital to national security. Your success will help prevent war. However, you are to come home with as many of you as possible. You will be greatly needed as the drums of war threaten our future.”

The room was deadly silent. No one looked at a fellow warrior. All were well trained, well aware of the expendable nature of their work. It was quite clear this special op was one where Kazakoff would be captured for interrogation or die with the rest of the SEALs.

“Now, back to Kazakoff’s military plans,” Captain Wikman said as he stepped closer to his beloved SEALs. “Kazakoff intends to sever the left flank of NATO that surrounds northwestern Russia. He calls the plan *Spetsial’naia Voennaia Operatsila Kinzhal*. My Russian is a little rusty, but, folks, I think we all may have to know more Russian before this is over.” The room erupted in a nervous laugh.

Captain Wikman’s countenance became serious. “In English, *Spetsial’naia Voennaia Operatsila Kinzhal* means Special Military Operation Dagger or ‘SVO Dagger.’ Dagger is the general’s idea to isolate the three Baltic NATO nations next to northwestern Russia. If successful, these three allies will have no land connection to the rest of NATO to the south.” Wikman nodded to his assistant again, and a large map of the Baltic states and Russia appeared.

“These are the three Baltic nations,” he said, pointing to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia with the red laser. “These are the three NATO countries nearest to Moscow. Easy range for our military during a crisis.”



3. Baltic region showing the relative locations of the Scandinavian countries to Kaliningrad, the Baltic states, Poland, Belarus, and Russia.

He held the laser beam on a specific location. “This is where his dagger will strike. Here, at the narrow part of Poland called the Suwalki Gap, the only land corridor connecting NATO Poland to Lithuania and the other two Baltic nation allies.



4. Closer view of Kaliningrad and the 60-mile-wide Swalki Gap and their relative positions to Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus.

“Kazakoff’s strategy is to strike west, through the Suwalki Gap. The plan is to invade with a large force driving through Russia’s puppet state, Belarus. Its objective is to connect Russia via Belarus to the Russian fortress Kaliningrad and its all-weather port on the Baltic Sea.”

The captain paused and circled Kaliningrad with the pointer. “Kaliningrad is the key. It is literally a Russian fortress with army and navy mechanized armored units, Russia’s latest cruise missile warships, land-based missiles, and air squadrons, all of which threaten both the land route and sea route to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The general believes a Russian threat to use its nuclear weapons, in particular its new generation of hypersonic missiles, will prevent NATO from intervening, even though the gap is the boundary line between Poland and Lithuania. We need Kazakoff’s Dagger Plans so we can be ready to act.”

Again, he looked to his SEALs. “Intelligence tells us the Russians have moved an entire armored division into Belarus while positioning two divisions on the Lithuanian border. All Russian warships have gone on a nationwide alert. The Russian North Fleet has already put to sea as part of an unannounced war game in the Baltic Sea. Intelligence believes this deployment is a prelude to executing Dagger.”

The gathered group whispered out loud at the news. The commander raised his voice.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please.” The room grew silent. “We are on the edge of World War III, a war that could lead to a nuclear exchange that would, most likely, annihilate the human race.”

“Our task is to stop the implementation of SOV Dagger. If we position our forces appropriately, the Kremlin will hesitate, if act at all.

“Yes, you men and women, in particular you select Navy SEALs—” He nodded to his men in the front row. “You are tasked with this ominous duty. Do not underestimate the importance of what you are called upon to do. Whether you succeed or fail will affect the fate of not just your lives, but the lives of your loved ones and possibly the planet. NATO will not allow Russian control of the only land supply route between southern NATO and its northern countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. To do so would isolate these allies and expose the Nordic NATO nations of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to a more dangerous Russian threat. The Western allies intend to stop this, even if it means war.”

The room was abuzz as everyone discussed the implications of the Russian intentions. The SEAL commanding officer let his words soak into the gathered throng. After a few minutes, Captain Wikman nodded to his lieutenant.

“Atten-hut,” shouted the lieutenant. The room jumped to attention, all facing their commander.

“Commanding officers,” spoke Mace Wikman in a firm, even voice, “you will now take your units to their designated areas for specific intelligence briefings on each unit’s duties in Operation Zapadnya.”

As the captain turned to leave, the lieutenant shouted, “Dismissed,” and left the room with the captain.

CHAPTER THREE

Two months later, a young man dressed in an expensive black suit, with a rich red tie and a white satin French-cuffed shirt, sat behind a desk, his feet propped up on its top. Andrew Jackson Hawke had just returned from court. As was his morning practice, the attorney was reading the newspaper, the *San Diego Herald*. There came a soft knock at his office door.

"Come," he responded as he looked up.

In walked Deborah McCaleb, Andrew's longtime family friend and the law-office manager. The fifty-year-old Black woman had on a dark-blue suit with a red, white, and blue scarf smartly draped around her shoulders. Her usual pleasant smile, however, was not evident. "Drew, there's a man on the phone. His name is Zach Pines."

"Who?"

"Mr. Zachery Pines. Sez you'll know 'im as Mako. He is calling collect from the brig at Camp Pendleton."

"Mako!" Drew shouted as he swung his feet off the desk. "Put him through, Debbie. He's the SEAL that saved my life."

The office manager pulled the door shut behind her, and a few seconds later the phone buzzed on Hawke's desk. Drew grabbed the receiver, wondering, *The brig? What the hell . . .*

"Mako, you're in the brig?"

"Yeah, and it's serious. Drew, I need your help."

"What happened?"

"They say I killed Luke Garner. You know him as Beta. But I didn't, Hawke. I didn't! Can you come see me?"

"Sure, but tell me more."

"We shouldn't talk. I'm on a pay phone and I'm not alone."

"I'll be up within the hour. You stay calm, Mako."

Forty minutes later, a black BMW convertible pulled up to the main gate at the United States Marine Corps Base, Camp Joseph H. Pendleton. An extremely fit, twenty-something Marine MP raised his hand and walked to the driver's side of the Beamer. The young man placed his right hand on a holstered sidearm as he examined the convertible's interior. He asked, "Sir, how may I help you?"

"I'm attorney Drew Hawke to see a detainee in the brig."

"Sir, do you have a pass?"

"No, I don't."

"Sir," the young Marine stood erect, his countenance now more authoritative. "We are in lockdown. Without prior approval, you may not enter."

"Even if I am here to see a client?"

"Who do you wish to see?"

"Mako, I mean Zach Pines, a United States Navy SEAL."

"Him! Sir, I am afraid you will have to go through JAG for any approval to see Seaman Pines."

"I'm the attorney he requested to see," Hawke protested.

“Sir, those are my orders. We are in lockdown. The base is closed to all unauthorized personnel,” the young man again asserted, this time with a raised, demanding voice.

Drew hesitated, then looked at the Marine. “Would you tell General Edmond Rousseau, the base commandant, that I am here to see him? I believe you may want to talk to his aide-de-camp first. His name is Lieutenant Dean Dunn.”

“Sir, you want to talk to General Rousseau?”

“Absolutely. Tell him attorney Andrew Jackson Hawke is here to see him.”

“Do you have an appointment, Mr. Hawke?”

“No. But he will see me,” the confident attorney asserted, pointing to the entrance gate guardhouse. “I suggest you call him now.” The guard looked confused. “I might suggest, Marine, you check with your immediate superior and advise him I am here to see the general. Oh, yes,” Drew added, “tell him the general and I are well acquainted, and I have a standing invitation to see him at any time.”

The Marine did a sharp about-face and swiftly moved to the sentry guardhouse and picked up the phone. After what seemed an inordinate amount of time, he returned.

“Sir, please drive through the gate and wait in the parking area to your right. It’s marked Visitors. There,” he said and pointed, “directly behind the entrance guardhouse. An officer is coming to talk with you.”

“Thank you,” Drew replied and drove to the designated area and waited.

Lieutenant Dunn soon arrived and told the attorney to follow his vehicle to the commandant’s office. Along the way, Drew noticed an enormous amount of activity. There were Marines and military vehicles moving everywhere as if the base was preparing for something. Hawke had never seen such activity on previous visits to Camp Pendleton.

Once parked, the lieutenant approached, saying, “This way, Mr. Hawke.” Drew followed him into a building and to General Rousseau’s office.

Once inside, the lieutenant advised, “Please take a seat.”

A few minutes later, General Rousseau came out. “Andrew Hawke, it has been a while. Great to see you.”

Drew immediately stood and stiffened. “Sir, sorry to bother you, but I need your help.”

“Never a bother,” the general replied, grasping the young man’s hand and shaking it vigorously. “Come in,” the smiling man directed.

Once seated, General Rousseau queried, “Now what is this about you wanting to see Petty Officer Fifth Class Zachary Pines?”

“Yes, sir. Zach Pines requested I come and see him. But I need a pass to get on base. I’m sorry to impose on you but . . .”

The general interrupted, “Hawke, you are not imposing on me. But I must ask, are you Pines’ attorney?”

“Not yet. However, he wouldn’t call me if he didn’t need my help.”

“Andrew,” the general replied, his expression now grave, the smiles all gone, “I suggest you not get involved in this Pines matter.”

“If I may ask, sir, why?”

“The situation is complicated and will be handled within the Navy. He currently has a JAG officer and will be adequately represented at his court-martial.”

“I know, General Rousseau, that I am not familiar with the Uniform Code of Military Justice, nor have I tried a case before a military panel, but, sir, I must ask your assistance to see Zach Pines.”

The general shook his head and started to speak when Drew interrupted him. “General, the man saved my life,” he said, his voice strong but tinged with emotion. “He stopped the bleeding and kept me alive until I could get up top to the surface ships for treatment. I must respond to Zach’s request. Honor demands that I do.”

“You’re talking about the SEAL mission off Mission Beach?”

“Yes, General. We were scouting the HMCS Yukon, the sunken Canadian destroyer. A cartel submarine arrived to drop off drugs. A fight broke out. We were outnumbered, but the SEALs bravely engaged. A vicious underwater fight broke out. I went to the rescue of one of the SEALs who was in a losing knife fight, and I got stabbed in the thigh. Zach Pines saved me.”

“Yes, I remember. Instead of killing the man, you tried to capture him.”

“We needed prisoners, sir.”

“And you were strongly criticized for doing so. Nearly got you killed.”

“I understand, a rookie mistake. But I owe Zachery Pines.”

The general looked at the pleading young lawyer and nodded. “Honor, yes, honor. One owes much to a fellow combatant—the warrior’s code. It is a bond written in blood that lasts a lifetime. However, Petty Officer Pines’ latest SEAL mission and his subsequent actions are very serious matters. His case is classified, not for public knowledge.”

“Sir, I have worked with a national security agency in the past and was cleared to scuba dive the Yukon with the United States Navy. General Rousseau, I know how to keep my mouth shut. I am no novice when it comes to handling confidential security issues.”

The general smiled. “Yes, I know. Tell me, I hear they put you through some special training before you could dive with the SEALs.”

Drew smiled. “Yes, they did.”

“Obviously, you survived.” Drew nodded. “So, Drew, which test was the worst?”

“Oh, that’s easy, the spherical chamber—at least that’s how I would describe it. They entombed me in a claustrophobic, six-foot sphere and lowered me into the pool. I’m six-foot-two. Tight fit.”

“You passed?”

“Yes, sir. Here’s the thing the dive master later told me—none of the pool exercises they put me through were required in order for me to dive with the SEALs. I think they were just trying to discourage me from going with them.”

The general laughed. “Young man, how you get yourself into such things is beyond me. When you were hospitalized here, I wasn’t sure your body would fully recover. Frankly, it was touch and go as to whether you would survive. Yet, here you are. Andrew Hawke, you are an amazing individual.”

The general bowed his head. Drew held his breath. He knew he couldn’t push the man any further.

“All right,” General Rousseau said as he looked up at Hawke. “I will allow you to see Petty Officer Pines. However, you will only do so in the presence of his JAG attorney. JAG will determine what Pines may tell you and what he can’t. Understand?”

“Yes, sir. I appreciate your cooperation.” *What’s the deal? Zach asked for me. I’m an attorney. I should be able to see him in private. Why all the restrictions?*

When Drew didn’t say anything, the general reiterated his caution. “I must warn you again. Stay out of the Pines matter. This is not the type of thing a civilian should be involved in. We in the military carry out orders. We carry those orders out any way we can. It does not matter how or who is killed in doing so.”

The general went silent for a moment as his stare held firm on the attorney before continuing. “Hawke, it is best the Pines matter be handled by us within our system of military justice. Further, the entire military operation is highly secret. That’s why the military court-martial will be closed to the public. Its results will never be known. The nation’s security is involved.”

Drew stood. “Thank you, General Rousseau. I value your advice. I sincerely appreciate you allowing me to talk to Zach. I owe so much to that brave Navy SEAL. Thank you again.”