

Unbridled Fury
(Prologue)

Charley did two tours in Afghanistan. He saw the tragedy and hopelessness of war. Some would say he had PTSD.

Post-war stress is now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a mental health condition that can follow, experiencing or witnessing traumatic events. Especially combat, though it affects anyone after trauma, with older terms including "shell shock" and "war neurosis". PTSD involves intrusive memories, nightmares, avoidance, negative moods, and hyper-arousal, persisting long after the event.

Charley did not have that. He was just pissed off that his government would send him on a hopeless mission with no upside for all the sacrifices he and his comrades made.

His goal from now on was to stay away from the military, live his life in peace, and enjoy what time he had left.

This would all change after he meets Jill. He was destined to return to combat and employ all the skill, experience, and anguish he thought he had left behind.

Jill was a war correspondent. When not in the field, she conducted interviews with former soldiers diagnosed with PTSD. That was how she landed on Charley's doorstep. She had done many interviews and helped some regain some semblance of normal life. Halfway into the interview, she knew she had met someone different. Not the typical PTSD case. At first it sounded like one, but as she quizzed deeper, she realized he didn't have any mental disorder, it was more of an unbridled hatred for authority and politicians. He had seen first hand the uselessness of trying to fight a losing battle on the enemies home turf. Russia had tried to tame the Afghan people and that ended up in about the same situation as the US was now in.

Why are you here interviewing me? I never requested this. Your exit

counselor diagnosed you as having PTSD. I can tell he was wrong. Your anger resulting from your combat experience is not from PTSD. It is from a disdain of those who sent you and your fellow soldiers on a futile mission. I would like to return and get some more perspective from your point of view. Most of those I have interviewed really do have PTSD. Maybe your insight can help me help them better. This is something she usually doesn't do. Perhaps her interest was not entirely professional.

Charley was not immune to the attraction he also felt. At first he tried to dismiss her attempts to analyze him. He was going to cut the discussion short, but instead opened up like never before. When she said she needed some followup discussion, he was all in.

The follow on discussions turned out more like a date interview. What have you been doing since you got back? What are your future plans, etc. He repeated his formerly stated goal. My goal from now on is to stay away from the military, live my life in peace, and enjoy what time he have left. What interests do you have? For one, I would be interested in taking you to dinner. So started a new chapter in both of their lives.

Charley had opened up a clinic teaching arm to arm combat and firearm safety along with marksmanship. Jill had asked him, why that? It is the only thing I am good at. Well I can vouch for sure that you are good at other things too. She said this with a wink of her eye. Their relationship had advanced to beyond friendship. Charley felt he had found the peace and happiness he had been searching for. They had one contentious argument. He had wanted her to quit her job as war correspondent. Why do you need to do that kind of job? She responded with his own reasoning. It is the only thing I am good at. Have you tried other endeavors? Yes, I have. This is the only one that gives me a sense of purpose. I need to show the world the futility of war. I am agreement with you on that, it just bothers me that you have to put yourself in harms way. That is the nature of the job.

As fate would have it, her next assignment was to be in Afghanistan. Charley pleaded with her to not go. I know what that place is like. If you insist on going, take me with you. I can protect you. I know that place like the back

of my hand. I have many friends in place there that can assist you. Having you there would affect my concentration. I need to work alone. So it was that she had entered an area fraught with danger. The SUV she was traveling in was hit with and IED.

IED (Improvised Explosive Device), often confused with the term IUD. (Parish Hilton used that term when stopped for a DUI). Acronyms can be confusing. IED is the common acronym for bombs used on roads, especially improvised ones, and specifically to surprise those riding in vehicles.

The driver was killed, and even though Jill had been slightly injured, she had been taken prisoner.

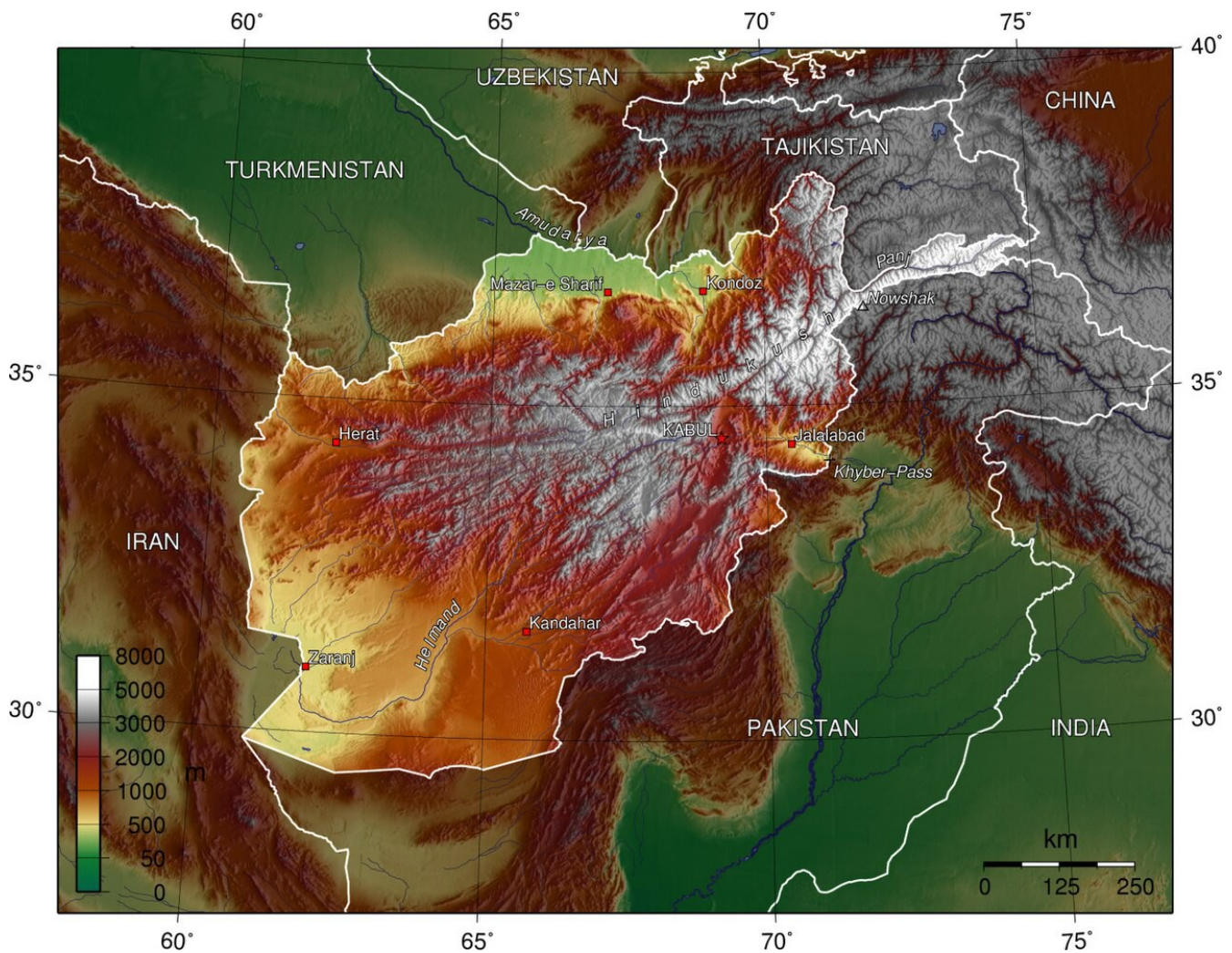
A ransom amount broadcast via Al Jazeera was sent out. Charley saw the news on TV. The standard response to these types of abductions was that the US does not pay ransoms.

Charley still had some sources in the military elites. They said no rescue operation was planned. The upper echelon didn't want to break the fragile cease fire agreement currently in place. Charley didn't expect anything different unless it was the daughter of a congressman who had been kidnapped.

He didn't need any permission from them to do what he knew he must do.

Unbridled Fury
(Chapter 1)

Why does anyone give a rat's ass about Afghanistan?



You can see this is a mostly barren land ruled by tribal chiefs and Islamic extremists always Waring with each other.

The Soviets invaded Afghanistan because it was formerly a Communist ruled state and they were worried that the regime would be overthrown by the Muslim extremists or that the US would broaden their influence. They were right about that. They spent 9 futile years trying to maintain control. They left in 1989.

The US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as a direct response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, with the U.S. and allies invading after the ruling Taliban government refused to hand over al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, and other militants who planned the attacks from Afghanistan. The U.S. goal was to dismantle al-Qaeda, remove the Taliban's safe haven, and prevent future attacks, leading to the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The U.S. officially left Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, when the last American military aircraft departed Kabul, concluding the 20-year war. Getting our troops out of Afghanistan was a good thing, but the withdrawal was chaotic leaving many of our allies behind while the Taliban took control. This was one of the worse ways to end, leaving millions of dollars of US armament for use by the Taliban.

Charley knew how difficult it was to maintain a foreign force. The Afghan forces were fighting on their home turf. They knew the terrain, all the hiding spots, and even though many locals hated ISIS and the Taliban, they were fearful of being marked as traitors. They did not give up information easily.

Charley landed in the US controlled airfield near Kabul. He needed information and he knew who was most likely to have it. Sargent Kiley was the most knowledgeable soldier in the area. He owed Charley a favor. Charley had saved his life more than once.

Most US soldiers ate at the DFAC dining facilities. Alcohol was limited and often not available at all. Kiley knew places outside where they could meet in private and enjoy some beers. There were even Burger King, Popeye's, Subway, and Pizza Hut franchises around.

You know why I am here? Not exactly. I thought you had enough of this place and would never return. What is so urgent? My girlfriend is the one abducted three days ago. You mean that hot war correspondent? That is the one. Damn! What do you want me to do? I need intel. Are you going to try to rescue her? That is my plan. What are your rules of engagement? I am a civilian, there are no rules. That makes certain things easier. I heard she is being kept in Kandahar somewhere. Do you know anyone there who can be trusted? I know some. I will give you their contact information. Do you know about the security around her location? It is about as tight as a duck's ass. I don't have direct knowledge of that, but it does sound tight. My guys there will have more details than I can give you.

The primary U.S. base in Kandahar, Afghanistan, was the sprawling

Kandahar Airfield (KAF), a massive NATO hub that served as the main logistical and air support center for operations in southern Afghanistan.

Kiley had told Charley to find Russ. They also met at an offsite location for their own security and privacy. Charley told Russ why he was there. So you are the boyfriend of the war correspondent who was captured. Do you know where she is being held. I don't know, but I might know someone who does. I brought some money to aid in getting help. Your money will not help. These locals aren't driven by money. If they suddenly have too much wealth, the Taliban will know that they are traitors. What can I use to get intel? Anybody that will help us is driven by revenge. That may be the case here. I will set up a meeting and you can decide if the guy is legit.

So that is how Charley met Omar Khan. Do you know where my girlfriend is being held? I have a pretty good idea although the security is very tight. Ya!, I know, tight as a goose's ass. What? Never mind. Why would you help me? My wife disappeared several months ago. She was too outspoken against the Taliban. I don't even know if she is still alive. I have a 10 year old daughter that I want to protect. What makes you think you know where she is? I am a merchant. I know where food and goods transport to and from. There is one area that has been getting more than they normally would. That seems like pretty weak evidence. This was kind of like how they found out where Osama Bin Laden was. I am not the only one who suspects this. OK, what would it take for you to help me? I need to get my daughter out of Afghanistan. If you could aid me in that, I would do all I can to find your girlfriend.

After meeting with Omar, Charley told Russ that he believed and trusted Omar. He relayed the condition for his help. That will be a difficult task. You can't just drive on the main road to the Pakistani border. You would have to take a mountain pass. This time of year it is extremely cold. Your chances of survival are low. Survival is my specialty.

I need to meet up with Omar again and come up with a plan. On the next meeting, Omar brought his 10 year old daughter. Her name was Farah. She spoke perfect English and was a very precocious young girl.

She looked and reminded Charley of the famous Afghan girl named Sharbat Gula. Her picture had been taken by a photo journalist and appeared on the cover of National Geographic magazine seen by all the world. Jill was also a photo journalist, she just did it in war zones.



Pashtun by ethnicity and from a rural background, Gula's family fled their village in eastern Nangarhar during the Soviet Union's bombing of Afghanistan. She was around six years old at the time. Along with her father, brother, and three sisters, she walked across the mountains to Pakistan to the Nasir Bagh refugee camp in 1984 where she was photographed. The photographer searched for her for years and eventually found her when she was 30 years old. She eventually was given safe haven in Italy.

What are your rules for engagement? Neutralize anyone of anything that gets in my way. I wish I could help. Those are my kind of rules, but we have been ordered to not get involved. Sorry. That is OK. I work best alone.

To be continued:
The Rescue

Unbridled Fury
(Chapter 2)

I know you can't assist, but can you get me some stuff? What do you need?

Night vision goggles, a Rambo knife, brown skin color, a several grenades, an M1 rifle, as much ammo as can fit in a back pack, a drone with infrared sensor, and a thin camera that fits under a doorway. That is quite a shopping list. Why not ask for a M1 Abrams tank? That would make your entry so much easier.

The best US tank is the M1 Abrams, specifically the highly upgraded M1A2 SEPv3 (System Enhancement Package version 3) renowned for its lethality and survivability.



I can get you everything except for the tank. No one tracks the small equipment in great detail. That stuff is readily available, no problem.

Charley meets up with Omar Khan. He has his delivery truck. Charley explains his plan. I will go in there early morning. If I succeed, you and your daughter be ready to head to the mountain pass. Bring survival clothes, food, and equipment. If I am not back by dawn, abandon all plans. That means I am not coming back. Understood? Yes, I understand. Charley has let his beard grow and along with the dark makeup and a turban, he looks the part. I will attempt the rescue tomorrow morning. Right now, I need you to drive by the compound where you think my girlfriend is contained. I just want to recon the area and see if I can spot the surveillance.

As they approached the compound, Charley did spot some sentries. He needed a better understanding of the compound itself. Head over to that high

rise hill. I can put up my drone and get a Birdseye view.

Viewing the compound using the infrared sensor in the drone, Charley determined that the most likely room Jill was in was in the far left corner. Other bodies showed up moving around. That room just showed one person in the middle with another near the doorway typical of a prisoner with a guard. That was about as good a guess as he was likely to get. If he was wrong, no one would be the wiser if his stealth plan worked out.

He went over the plan with Omar. When I infiltrate the compound, I will scale the fence at this point. I do not know the condition Jill is in. I need you to position your van as close as you can get without being detected. Bring a small step ladder. If you see me coming with Jill in tow, throw the ladder over the fence.

0-dark-30

That was the name of the film they made showing the killing of Ben Laden in Pakistan. It means 30 minutes after midnight. The most likely time guards will be sleepy and not alert.

Charley successfully made his ascent over the fence. Worked his way over to where a guard was stationed by the door. A few minutes later, the guard was dragged behind a bush with his throat silently cut. So far so good. The door wasn't even locked. No one thought anyone would be so bold as to try a rescue in such a fortified building.

Charley moved quietly down the corridor. He found the door to the room he had previously determined was most likely holding Jill. Using his micro camera, he slid it under the door. Rats, no one was in there. You always have to have a contingency plan. There is always something that changes. He had no choice. He kept moving door to door and performed the same operation. After the third attempt, bingo. He found her. They had moved her to a different room. Same setup though. She was in the middle with one guard dozing in the corner. The room door was unlocked. Lucky so far. The guard never saw him coming. Jill started to let out a cry. Charley shushed her. He quickly cut her bindings. Now came the tricky part. Someone would surely

find the missing guard. He needed a diversion to make the get-a-way. He opened a window, cut through the screen, then kicked it out. Jill was weak, but could still move on her own. They climbed out the window making their way toward the fence with Omar waiting on the other side. He threw the ladder over. Charley took one of the grenades and tossed in back into the room they had just left. Good thing they had the ladder, Jill could barely make it over the fence. They sped away as the grenade exploded.

Get us as close to the mountain pass as you can, then ditch the van. I am sure they have security cameras and will be able to identify it. Omar's daughter had been in the van. They took all the survival equipment out and Omar drove the van over a cliff into a ravine. It will take some time for the Taliban to figure out what had just happened.

Abu Hudhayfah Al-Ansari was the leader of the group that captured Jill. He was furious that someone had taken her out. If she was allowed to completely escape, his status among the elite Taliban would be severely reduced. He immediately sent out a search party to see if they could find which direction the armed insurgent group had fled. He couldn't imagine that this was just the effort of one man. He correctly reasoned that there was no way they could flee the main road. The mountain pass was the only alternative. That is where he directed his troops. He also told them that you better bring her back or don't come back yourself. They all knew what that meant. Do or die. This leader was one crazy SOB.

Omar led them up the path. From a vantage point, they noticed some ground troops following them in the far distance. It seems it took less time to figure out what happened than Charley would have believed.

Give me one of your grenades. What are you going to do? I am going to slow them down some. You will be captured and tortured. There is a goat path back to Kandahar that only the locals know about. I never intended to leave anyway. There is no way I could leave without finding out where my wife is or if she is still alive. They will catch you quickly. They will trace the van to you. I stole the van from one of my co-workers who has been sympathetic toward the Taliban. I think he will have some explaining to do.

Just make sure you get my daughter to safety and your girlfriend too. Papa, don't leave. Will I ever see you again? If Allah be praised, you will.

Charley finally got the chance to ask Jill how she was. Did they hurt you or harm you in any other ways? They did smack me around, didn't feed me, and I heard they were going to televise my execution if the ransom demands were not met. Your rescue was just in time. The water and beef jerky you guys brought has helped me recover sufficiently to hike.

As they continued their climb, they heard the grenade go off. I hope Omar makes it back without being seen.

Unbridled Fury *(Chapter 3)*

The trek up the mountain took most of the day. Charley had some surprises for those trying to catch them. He had the high ground. He noticed lots of loose boulder around the entrance to the cave they had taken shelter in. He could see the Taliban troops ascending the mountain terrain below. Still fairly far away, but they would reach them in the night if they kept going. Farah asked, what are you going to do? Will you kill them all? I could, but they are just soldiers like me following orders. I image they have been given a death sentence. Catch us or face your own demise. I need you to help me avoid total slaughter. What can I do? I want you to write a message on this paper I found in our backpack. What do you want me to say? Say, I am the white ghost sent by the evil US to eliminate all Taliban. I could have slit all your throats, but I am giving you a chance to live. Go back home.

First, I am going to discourage them from continuing their climb. You see all these boulders here at the base? I need you and Jill to help me line them up. I think an avalanche will change their minds about traveling in the dark. The sun is almost down. In the twilight, they could see the soldiers advancing. Still far down the hill. They started to push the boulders. As they gained speed and momentum, more and more dirt and rocks joined them. The

soldiers scrambled to get out of the way. Charley followed with some well placed rounds from his M1 rifle. That was enough for the followers to hunker down for the night. Charley still had his night vision googles. He believed the Taliban didn't possess this technology.

I need each of us to keep a watch while the others sleep. I will go first. Jill, you second. Use this night vision google to keep watch. Wake me if you see or hear anything.

Farah shook Charley awake. It is midnight, the time you asked to be awakened. Good job Sarah. What are you going to do? I am going to take the note you wrote in Pasto and tie it around one of the men's neck. When they awake, they should get the message.

When are you leaving. I am leaving at 0-dark-30. It worked well last time. What is that? I'll tell you the whole story when we get to safety.

At dawn, the Taliban soldier woke with the note tied around his neck. As all the others read the note, instead of taking the hint, they responded by insulting the one who had received the note. The Yankee devil was right in front of you and you did nothing? So be it. Their ignorance and arrogance would be their undoing.

Still wary of climbing the hill, after the rock slide and bullet display, their advance was greatly slowed down. By the time they reached the cave, Charley and company had been long gone.

At noon, they reached the mountain pass summit. Looking back, they could still see a pursuit in progress. Charley told Farah that he had giving those soldiers a chance. Now all bets were off. We still have 30 miles to reach the Pakistani boarder as we descend down the mountain. After that we will be traveling mostly over flat terrain. The advantage will be with them in numbers and position. Let me remind you. Those are from the same group who captured Jill and were going to execute her. They also caused your mother to disappear and who knows what is happening with your father. A dark look came over her face. She was much more mature than her age

belied. Her next comment even stunned Charley. Waste them all.

You can see what they are facing as the came down off of the mountain.



There won't be many places to hide or take cover. We will need to be creative. Jill asked, what are our chances? Our chances are better than those following us. You asked me before, why do I do this? It is because it is what I am good at. You will see. Have faith. I do, Charley. I never thought I would live another day or to ever see your face again.

We came to an area with three out croppings of rock. Everywhere else was just open barren land.

This will have to do. What is the plan? There are 10 Taliban left and they are gaining on us. I am not sure I can shoot all without us taking fire ourselves. I have two grenades left. This is what we need to do.

They don't know that it just one man, a woman, and a girl they are chasing. They think many more had to be involved with the escape. This will be to our advantage.

Each one of you take a grenade and hide down low below those two rock cropping on the left and right. I will position myself behind this one. As they approach, I have this flair to send you a message to throw your grenades. Jill, do you know how to fire a pistol? Yes, survival and safety precautions

are part of our training. OK, take this 45. Farah, I only have this knife. I am hoping you will not need it. If this goes as planned, it will split them up as they reach our position. That is when I will fire the flair. In the confusion, I should be able to take out the majority. I will deal with any that remain left alive. At that point, the odds will be in my favor.

The chase group came down off of the plains. They were in a hurry thinking their quarry was getting away.

Just as they arrived at the strategic attack point, Charley fired the flair. Grenades flew at them from right and left. I explosions took out a couple more. The rest split just as Charley had anticipated. They took some cover in shallow rock formations. Charley started picking them off from his rear positions. He got all but two. Feeling the heat from his fire, two of them managed to reach the rock cropping where the two females were hiding. Charley feared for the worst. Where to run to first? He heard a shot from Jill's position. That just left Farah alone to face the last Taliban soldier. As he ran to where she was, he jumped over and into the depression. There on the ground was the last Taliban soldier bleeding out with a knife stuck in his belly. Farah ran to Charley and hugged him knowing that now they were all safe.

The final hike to the border took two days. Once safe inside Pakistan, Jill took over. With her contacts, a trip to a field hospital for health check, and then a chartered flight to Andrews Air force Base in New Jersey.

Author's note: That was the same place I landed after my Vietnam era military duty was completed.

Both Charley and Jill used their connections to list Farah as a war refugee. For the mean time, she was allowed to stay with them.

Of course Farah was anything but satisfied. She was safe, but what about her mother and father. Charley felt the same way. He had private discussions with Jill. He said he had to return to Afghanistan to try to extract Omar and perhaps his wife if he had any luck in finding her. An argument persisted

between Charley and Jill. She insisted on going back with him. He said no way, but women always seem to get their way in these situations. Her logic was not bad. I have the contacts and resources for getting in and out. The Taliban still don't know it was me who rescued you. I need to contact Omar and check on his status. Don't you think the Taliban will be even more anxious to capture you again after the embarrassment of your escape. This time I will alter my appearance and they won't know who I am.

To be continued:
Return to Kandahar

Unbridled Fury
(Epilogue)

Charley and Jill were visiting Omar and his wife Zahra in their new home in the US. Of course Farah was there too. They had all gathered around the TV to watch the documentary Jill had produced about the war in Afghanistan. The video opened up with this introduction. Here is a documentary produced by photo-journalist and war correspondent Jill St. John about war torn Afghanistan. Caution, some images may not be appropriate for young viewers.

A series of photos taken by Jill appeared in sequence showing the dangers that young children faced everyday. Some were hard to look at. Kids missing arms and legs, almost starving.

The final scene showed Al-ansari's compound destroyed by a predator missile.

Charley filled them in on the untold details leading up to the bombing.

On his return to Kandahar, Charley had found Omar unharmed. He was now delivering food supplies to Al-Ansari's compound. It seems the former delivery guy couldn't adequately explain how his truck showed up on security video when Jill was rescued.

I am going to find out where your wife is. How are you going to do that? I am going to ask Al-Ansari. I believe he might know. They modified Omar's van and put in a false floor. Charley entered the compound secretly hiding under the panels. Once inside, he slipped out. Already knowing the layout of the interior, he made his way to the central meeting room. Al-Ansari was conducting a senior level assessment on current affairs. Charley used a silenced pistol to dispense of all except Al-Ansari. It seems that he was not as strong as some of those interrogated by him. He gave up the information Charley needed fairly quickly. He tied Al-Ansari to a chair, gagged him, and safely made his exit where he got back in Omar's van and they drove safely out of the compound. Why not just kill Al-Ansari? That would have been too easy. He wanted a dramatic exhibition of America's lethal weapons. He gave the coordinates to Russ back at the air base. He relayed the data to central command. The rest is what you saw at the end of the video. If I had not done it that way, someone could have accused me of homicide. There are liberals who would do that if they knew all the details.

Jill had filmed that final explosion in living color. Or maybe I should say in “dying color”.

Author's note:

I used Abu Hudhayfah as the villain in my story. He is actually the current spokesman for ISIS.

Drawing a comparison with the past, Abu Hudhayfah recognizes new fronts for jihad and new tools to accomplish it. Not only in battle, but also through the dissemination of ideology via new digital means. The primary targets of the new campaign are young people and individuals who operate independently, although the message is aimed at everyone, particularly in the Western regions. Muslims are specifically invited to immigrate to the lands of jihad.

The West remains the primary target of the threat. The message calls for action against Christians, Jews, and kuffar (those non-believers of Islam) in their territories, presenting possible actions as responses to wars in territories not yet converted. The United States, considered the leader of the coalition

against the Caliphate (the top follower of Muhammad and spreader of hatred toward infidels), faces the greatest threat.

The End