

# BETRAYAL

DAVID GILMAN



*An Aries Book*

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**BETRAYAL**

For Mike Thyrring  
*Semper Fi*

Each betrayal begins with trust.

Martin Luther

# Prologue

## Central America

The world was ablaze. Booming echoes of explosions ricocheted around the compound. Ignited fuel spewed lethal tongues of flame. The ammunition stored in the caves erupted, hurling debris and men into the air and casting fireballs into the treetops. Palm trees flared, beacons lighting the darkness. Howler monkeys bellowed as the troop attempted to escape the burning treetops, flames jumping from one to another, a chain of fire. What had been the silent depths of night now roared from one man's actions that devastated vehicles and buildings. Bodies lay strewn.

Gunfire crackled from one side of the jungle compound to the other. His assailant's blow to his head had disoriented him for vital moments and now he was dragged semi-conscious through the turmoil. The stench of fuel and death mingled with the sickly odour of seared flesh. He had barely escaped the city alive, but now, here in the jungle, death seemed certain.

Another explosion boomed, torn metal raining down. Crouching behind a wall, his captor forced a knee into

his chest. This was his only chance. He bucked against the man's weight, but it wasn't enough; the man struck him hard.

As he slipped into unconsciousness, a final thought whispered. The attack had trapped the woman in the compound. She would have to face this killer alone.

# 1

## Marseilles, France

Raglan walked along the narrow street that separated the single-storey terraced houses from the city's main railway station. Rich people didn't live on this side of the tracks. Streets were barely wide enough to manoeuvre a car through their labyrinthine one-way system, so Raglan stayed on foot. The Rue du Petit Sol lengthened behind him. Plenty of scope to watch for anyone tailing him. The call for his help had come through his former French Foreign Legion friend, Serge 'Bird' Sokol. Contacting the Russian ex-legionnaire was the only way for anyone to find Raglan. Especially when they needed help. And Jacques Allard had made the call. One veteran to another. Could Raglan meet him today?

As he walked past the only small tourist hotel in the street, he smelt the wafting temptation of a small patisserie at the end of the road. The sole shop and bakery in the area would do a steady trade. And they would know what there was to know about the locals. Better to hear if there was anyone other than Jacques in the house before he stepped through the door.

The house he sought was less than fifty paces away from

where the narrow street bellied out into a small square. Hardly a square. More like a lay-by which gave access to a nondescript backstreet garage workshop. The house was next to it. He feigned disinterest in the glossy, green-painted sheet of iron that served as a gate to the rundown building. His knowledge of the area told him it was likely to be only three rooms and a bathroom. He kept walking towards the bakery, keeping his peripheral vision on the house. Overgrown shrubbery clambered for daylight above the wall. A dog barked. He checked behind him. No one. It seemed that in every street of France a chained dog barked. But it wasn't in the target house. There, nothing moved. Not even a breeze to lift the torn lace curtain that he could just make out behind a cracked windowpane.

He bought a fresh croissant. The woman smiled, thanked him, wished him a pleasant day. French civility ruled.

'*Madame,*' he said, taking his change from a ten, 'I'm looking for an old friend who lives in these parts.'

'Oh, then you've come to the right place. My husband and I have run our business for over thirty years. We know all our customers.' She hesitated and took a second look at the tall, stubble-faced man dressed in jeans and a weatherproof oiled cotton jacket. 'Your accent. It's not from around here.'

'No,' Raglan answered. There was no need to tell her anything more. Fifteen years in the Foreign Legion's specialist commando unit and since then his work as a freelance asset for intelligence services could twist an accent this way and that. 'His name is Jacques Allard.'

French civility disappeared.

Her lip curled. 'You're not welcome here. You and your

kind. Get out before I call the police. We're sick of drug dealers. You shame us. Go on.'

'*Madame*, I apologize but I have nothing to do with drugs. My friend and I served in the army together,' he said to placate her. If the elderly woman was correct and Jacques was dealing or using, then he was already implicated in the woman's mind. She was a perfect police witness if trouble erupted.

She shouted after Raglan as he left the bakery: 'Soldiers! You're good for nothing! Better you should get yourselves killed than come back home and disturb decent people.'

Raglan was already out of sight. The half-eaten croissant tossed for the foraging birds. There was no other crumb of kindness to be had in these backstreets.