

"Be ready to be catapulted into the real world of international intrigue!"

—WILLIAM GRIMSLEY, MAJOR GENERAL, US ARMY (RET)

RED CHAOS



A THRILLER FROM THE RED HOTEL SERIES

ED
FULLER

GARY
GROSSMAN

“Russia is a country masquerading as a gas station.”

“Whoever controls oil controls much more than oil.”

JOHN MCCAIN

UNITED STATES SENATOR

FORMER CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES NAVY

I dedicate this book to my lovely wife Michela, who has exemplified being the best wife in good times as well as difficult times. I also dedicate RED CHAOS to our family Scott, Elizabeth, Alex and our grandchildren Cameron and Nolan. Also, to “Candy” our special and unique puppy.

ED

For Helene, my wonderful wife, whose writing career is flourishing, and whose creative voice is reaching far and wide, and making a difference. I'm so proud of you.

GARY

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DAN REILLY
President, International
Kensington Royal Hotel
Corporation

ALEXANDER CROWE
former U.S. President

RYAN BATTAGLIO
U.S. President

MOAKLEY DAVIDSON
United States Senator

ROGER WHITFIELD
National Security Advisor

ELIZABETH
MATTHEWS
Secretary of State

PIERCE KIMBALL
National Security Advisor

BOB HEATH
CIA Case Officer

REESE McCAFFERTY
FBI Director

GERALD WATTS
CIA Director

TASHA SAMUELS
Congressional Aide

SHERWOOD BAKER
Reporter, The Hill

MIKAYLA
COLONNELLO
U.S. Senator

U.S. ARMY GENERAL
ZARIF ABDO
Member of the Joint Chiefs

SEAN ALLPHIN
Speaker of the House

ADMIRAL RHETT
GRIMM
Chairman, Joint Chiefs
of Staff

BRADLEY SNAVELY
Secretary of the Interior

DOMINIQUE DHAFARI
A hotel guest

SHEILA JOHNSON
DOUG COX
BUDDY MULDOON
FBI Agents

BEIJING, CHINA

HUANG ZHANG
Colonel, Chinese People's
Armed Police Force

SKIP LENCZYCKI
Former CIA operative

EY WING LI (AKA
SAMMY)
A fixer

YIBING CHENG
Private security consultant

MATTHIEU LEFEVRE
Tourist

YICHÉN YÁO
President of China

SUEZ CITY

DAE-JUNG WOO
GYEONG SONG
Operatives

RUSSIA

NICOLAI GORSHKOV
President, Russian
Federation

GENERAL VALERY
ROTENBERG
FSB Chief

DR. ARKADY SECHIN
Russian Oil Advisor to the
Russian President

LONDON, ENGLAND

WALTER GRÜN
Hotel Assistant Manager

IGOR KRITZLER
Russian oil executive

ALAN CANNON
VP, Global Safety and
Security

CHICAGO, IL

EDWARD JEFFERSON
SHAW
President/CEO
Kensington Royal Hotel
Corporation

BRENDA SHELTON
Dan Reilly's Executive
Assistant

CARL ERWIN
Former CIA Director
Kensington Royal Crisis
Committee

BD COONS
U.S. Army General, ret.
Kensington Royal Crisis
Committee

DONALD KLUGO
Private security consultant
Kensington Royal Crisis
Committee

LOU TIANO
Kensington Royal COO

CHRIS COLLINS
Senior Vice President, Legal
Kensington Royal Hotel
Corporation

PAT BRODOWSKI
Kensington Royal CFO

CHIP SNYDER
Kensington Royal Domestic
President

NAIROBI, KENYA

JAYO MENG
Chinese oil company
executive

BAETE DE SMET
Belgian Tourist

GATIMU KAMAU
Police Detective

NORTH ATLANTIC

ANDREW POLICANO
Commander, USS *Hartford*

MARCEL JAMES
Sonar Operator

BORIS SIDOROV
Commander, *Admiral
Kashira*

ALI SHIRVANI
Cmdr. *Karim Khan*

ADMIRAL BRANSON
STUCKMEYER
Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet

PART ONE

LINE OF ATTACK

STAFFORD, VIRGINIA

“Reilly, get down!”

The volley of automatic gunfire in the hotel lobby made the order almost impossible to hear. But Dan Reilly didn't need any warning from the hotel security assessing his options—if he had any at all.

He breathed heavily. His pulse raced as he rewound the previous minute in his mind, piecing together the events as they had unfolded. He'd seen an older couple checking out. Vacationers with too much luggage. A young woman glancing at her watch expectantly, then opening her purse. Probably for a lipstick touch-up before heading out on a date. A man at the bar working on a Bloody Mary. A seven- or eight-year-old girl wearing a bright yellow dress sitting on a couch, well into her *Goosebumps* book. Two hulking characters flanking her tightly. A boy carrying a skateboard, undoubtedly ready to get away from his parents. A concierge at her desk arranging theater tickets or giving directions. Some twenty other people also in sight, spread throughout the lobby.

Then five men entered. Five huge men with shaved heads, all wearing long, loose-fitting leather jackets. One marched purposely toward the front desk. The remaining four split up and headed directly to the far corners of the lobby.

Reilly watched and concluded, *They're taking up strategic posts.* He tapped the officer beside him on the shoulder and whispered,

“Look—there!” He nodded to the near corner. “And there.” The opposite corner. “Something’s going down.”

The officer didn’t immediately pick up on his concern. The concern was that Reilly saw people who were armed, and he wasn’t.

Reilly took in the entrance in one sweep. A dangerous choke point; poorly designed with two narrow manual doors that would become instantly clogged in a mad rush. Reilly feared that kind of chaos if things truly turned bad. He’d seen it before. Young and old, people died. Just then, a sixth man entered wearing a long leather coat that was definitely not in season. He stopped five steps into the lobby and scanned the space just as Reilly had. He exchanged a nod with the man who had taken up position at the front desk. A signal. A signal that told Reilly the figure who just arrived was the head of the snake.

Reilly glanced back to the front as the man removed what appeared to be an AK-47 from under his coat. Then, without warning, he raised the weapon and fired five rounds into the ceiling.

That was ten seconds ago. Everyone ducked, some faster than others. One of the two men sitting with the little girl on the couch threw his body over her. Reilly dropped behind a couch as the security officer crawled to the nearest man standing. But not just a man—an assailant with his version of the same weapon as the leader.

For now, there was nothing Reilly could do. That was not his way.

Dan Reilly, forty-three, President of the international division of the Kensington Royal Hotel Corporation, was touring the Capitol Hoganville Hotel outside of Washington, D.C.—a friendly visit, though experience told him never to be complacent.

At that moment panic struck. A woman close to the entrance rose and ran toward the door. The leader grabbed her with his left hand and pulled her in. A shield. With his right, he swept his weapon across the room. “You behave, you live,” he shouted. “So in the interest of your own health, sit down. Better yet, lie down.”

Reilly heard a German or Slovakian accent. It was cruel and dangerous. All too familiar in tone.

No one responded.

He fired again.

“Have I not made myself clear?”

Those nearest offered a meek yes.

“Everyone!” He repeated, “Do ... you ... understand?” punching every word.

He heard compliance except from the young woman at the front desk. From her standing position she slowly inched toward a door behind her as others lay down. The move caught the eye of the corner man near Reilly.

“No!” the gunman shouted. The woman panicked. She turned and bolted. The terrorist closest to her turned and shot her in the back.

Men and women screamed. The security officer with Reilly removed his gun as he knelt. Reilly was surprised he even carried. But aiming quickly, he took out his near-corner man. Then he stood, spun right, and shot the terrorist near the front desk. It would be his last kill. Crossfire over the huddled captives took him down from the other three corners.

His Glock fell three feet from Reilly. He dove for it fast, pulled the pistol in, and rolled to the right against a man lying face down. Reilly caught his breath. He saw the woman who had checked her watch and her purse lying low a few feet away. She gritted her teeth. Reilly put his finger to his lips indicating she should stay still. She blinked confirmation. Reilly controlled his breathing. He knew the room. Where his targets were standing. Where civilians were most vulnerable.

No more than thirty seconds had elapsed since the first gunshots. It felt like an eternity to Reilly. Combat was like that—elongated, exaggerated.

“You see what happens when you don’t listen,” the leader said, stepping further into the lobby and purposely walking toward people to his right.

The terrorist continued to bark instructions, but Reilly shut him out. He had to concentrate and draw on his experience in battle. His mind raced back in time to more than a decade ago, to his service with

the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. To an ambush that should have never happened. He lived to talk about it, except that he couldn't. Command quickly clamped down. The mission was stamped classified because of two participants. Very few people knew the truth. He had also been in dangerous situations since. In the past eighteen months, Reilly's work had taken him into danger zones in Asia, South America, the Middle East, and Europe. To hotel bombings, street shootouts, interrogations by rogue military officers. He faced an assassin in Brussels and chased down a killer in Stockholm. He'd squared off with a Mexican cartel leader and stood up to a Russian spy. Not the typical work of a business executive. But Dan Reilly was nowhere near typical.

He remained low, watching the leader's legs as he crossed the room. Reilly figured his best opportunity, perhaps his only one, would come after a few more steps when the gunman passed his position; facing away. He could get him, but he likely wouldn't survive the next round when the three corner men found him in their sights. He might get one. Beyond that? Still, he felt he had to try.

As he began to rise to take his first, and perhaps only shot at the head of the snake, he heard the wail of sirens. Police were on the way. Possibly hostage negotiators or the SWAT team. Now he felt it would be better to wait. *Stay down*, he told himself.

That would have been fine if the next thing didn't happen. The civilian closest to Reilly saw that he had the security guard's weapon. Suddenly taking him as one of the bad guys, he screamed, "No, don't shoot me!" Acting on impulse, he jumped up and headed for the entrance. Others saw the opportunity to follow. The old man with all the suitcases shouted for his wife to follow. Bloody Mary man rose and rushed forward with the growing crowd. Head of the snake fired and dropped him and the old man's wife. The choke point choked.

Outside, the sirens stopped. Reilly heard doors open, the orders shouted. But getting in would be impossible, and the assailants had multiple ways to leave once their mission, which had become clear to him, was accomplished.

Now with the cover of others standing, Reilly got to his knees, then to full height. He stepped over the woman he had motioned to be quiet, maneuvered around the crowd and found a target. His aim was good. The leader took two hits to the chest. Reilly then found the two corner men at 45-degree angles. He got one. He missed the second.

More screams. More panic.

The last remaining terrorist grabbed the boy with the skateboard and used him as protection. He began shooting indiscriminately. Reilly tracked him. He willed himself to wait for the best shot; a safe kill. *Safe kill*. The phrase had always struck him as such a contradiction in terms. He shook it off. He suddenly had opportunity; a side angle. But as quickly as the opportunity arose, it ended when people pushed against one another and blocked his shot. *Wait ... wait*. The remaining attacker hustled to the office door the front clerk had hoped to make. He pushed the boy down and raced ahead. Reilly steadied his right wrist with his left and breathed in.

A shot echoed in the lobby. It wasn't from Reilly's gun. The young woman he had motioned to remain quiet, the woman with the large purse, large enough to contain a Smith & Wesson M&P T4E, expertly put two shots dead center into Dan Reilly's chest.

LONDON, ENGLAND

The first bullet had been enough. Professional. The second was purely personal. Igor Kritzler fell back onto his bed in his Kensington Royal Mayfair suite in London.

Barely four minutes earlier, Kritzler's two wrestler-sized Russian security officers had cleared a man into his suite who had identified himself as a hotel assistant manager. He had a winning smile, appropriate for a hotel executive delivering an unexpected treat. He was gloved and smartly dressed in a dark suit, wearing a name tag they couldn't pronounce. He looked to be in his late fifties with mid-length wavy gray hair and a close-cropped beard. He rolled a cart with items that seemed absolutely appropriate for someone of Kritzler's stature as

a Russian oil magnate—a bottle of Dom Perignon with, as he revealed, an extravagant food plater.

“Compliments of the house,” Walter Grün warmly explained with a slight German accent. “May I?”

It was certainly in keeping with what they had seen before. Expressions of hotel staff largesse, including complimentary food and drink, limousines at the ready, and depending upon the country, women waiting for him in the backseat or in his bed upon his arrival.

One guard, the bigger of the two by forty pounds, knocked. A few words were exchanged in Russian without opening the double doors.

“*Da*,” came curtly from inside.

The smaller guard swiped the electronic room key allowing Assistant Manager Grün to enter.

“Thank you.”

Nods, but no smiles.

Grün pushed his cart forward. He turned, smiled to the guards, and said, “I’ll just be a moment.”

The big guard shrugged and gave him a *whatever* look.

Grün closed the door and saw Kritzler spread across the couch in the huge living room portion of the suite. He was fat and irritable. He wore a silk bathrobe and mink slippers. Grün assumed he had nothing on underneath.

“Mr. Kritzler, On behalf of the Kensington Mayfair, welcome back. We’ve prepared something we hope you’ll like.”

“Fine, fine,” Kritzler said like a man who expected people to lavish gifts on him. “But not here. In the bedroom. I’m expecting someone. Put it on the corner table and leave.”

“Of course.” The assistant manager replied. He crossed the suite to the bedroom. “A nice nightcap.”

“Open the bottle, then go.”

“Certainly, sir. But there are great delights. You should come see them.”

Grün parked the cart just inside the bedroom, removed the metal

cover and described the assortment of cheeses, the truffle pâté, the crispy artisan crackers, strawberries, and fine chocolates from Roast + Conch, one of London's newest shops. "The cocoa beans are from St. Lucia. They're positively delicious."

This brought Kritzler to the bedroom. He reached into the open box, rudely grabbed a handful, and filled his mouth.

"They're really to die for."

"Yay, yay, now finish and go."

Kritzler sat on the bed ignoring the man who was clearly below his station; little more than a mid-level functionary doing his job and talking far too much. No tip for him.

Kritzler found the TV remote, turned the set on, and flipped through the channels until he settled on RT, the English-language Russian propaganda channel. In the background, a report on oil futures.

Grün cleared his throat. Kritzler shushed him and turned the sound up.

"I'll pour your champagne!" Walter Grün said, his back now to the Russian lout.

Kritzler ignored him. Grün slowly came around. The television audio drowned out the muffled pop. Not a pop from the champagne. The man posing as an assistant hotel manager held a Makarov 9mm pistol with a suppressor he'd hidden in the cart drawer. The first shot was between Kritzler's eyes. The second was between his legs just because he had been so rude.

Chocolates oozed out of his mouth as blood leaked from between his legs.

He'd been right; Kritzler had nothing on underneath.

Grün backed out of the suite door, pulling his cart. He gave a pleasant thank you to the guards, wishing them a good night. He was certain it would be anything but a good night when they checked on their boss later. They'd be recalled to Russia and once there likely *questioned to death*.

In the hotel kitchen the killer removed a backpack he had also

stored in the cart and casually walked to the service door leading to the loading dock. There, he transformed into a completely different identity by removing his fake beard and gray wig, swapping out his jacket for a London Monarch's football sweatshirt, putting on a pair of tortoise-shell glasses, and popping in an ear pod. All in the shadows; all within thirty seconds. He instantly looked some thirty years younger, now more like a student on his way to a pub crawl in Piccadilly than an assassin leaving a successful job.