

CHAPTER ONE

The Abduction

*The play's the thing wherein
I'll catch the conscience of the king.*

—William Shakespeare

Early on a glorious September morning in St. Andrews, Scotland, former president of the United States George W. Bush approached the first tee of the world's most famous golf course, excited to play a round of golf he would not finish.

Assembled around the first tee were a few hundred local residents and a handful of members of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club. Known simply as the “R&A,” the club is the governing body and custodian of the rules for all golfing countries except the United States, which has its own governing body. The occasion was the annual driving-in ceremony of the newly elected captain of the R&A. Mr. Bush arrived at the first tee, scanned the Old Course, which had been the site of many historic championships, and began to mingle with the members.

Precisely at eight o'clock, the retiring captain preceded the new captain as they marched out of the R&A clubhouse, down the ancient stone steps, and onto the first tee. In typically understated R&A fashion, nothing was said. The new captain took a few

modest warm-up swings, addressed the ball, and hit a lovely tee shot down the middle of the fairway.

BOOM. At the precise moment of contact, an ancient cannon situated off the first tee was fired to mark the occasion. A few dozen local caddies scattered about the fairway scrambled for the ball as it careened down the fairway, until the winning caddie scooped it up, raised it over his head triumphantly to the jeering of his peers, and proudly strutted up to the first tee.

When the caddie arrived, the captain shook his hand in congratulations and, as was the custom, gave him a gold sovereign coin worth about two hundred pounds.

If it sounds unusual, it is. No other club has such a ceremony, and it has occurred in exactly the same way since 1863, when the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, “drove in” as captain.

The tee times following the driving-in ceremony are traditionally reserved for former prime ministers, presidents, or other visiting dignitaries. And so it was on this occasion that George W. Bush and two club members stepped onto the first tee and were greeted by R&A secretary Harold Maxwell. “Gentlemen. Mr. President. Good day to you all.”

“It’ll be a good day,” Bush said, shaking hands, “if I don’t make a fool of myself by chunking it into the Swilcan Burn on the first hole, or yanking it into the Road Bunker at seventeen, which I honestly don’t think I could get out of.”

“I’m sure you’ll do just fine.”

“You’re more sure than I am.”

Secretary Maxwell chuckled. “We were very pleased to welcome your father here as a new member after he finished his presidency.”

“Yeah, he loved golf and he loved St. Andrews, that’s for sure.”

“There’s a little-known story about your father that says a lot about him as a man. In December of the year he played his first round at the Old Course, he sent his caddie a handwritten letter

thanking him for making his experience in St. Andrews so special and wishing him a Merry Christmas. I do believe that was a first.”

“He must’ve been a good caddie.”

“Must have been.”

“Guessing you fellows don’t allow mulligans,” Bush said, looking out at the fairway.

“No mulligans, but we can offer a swallow of scotch if that will settle your nerves?”

“Not my nerves I got a problem with. It’s my damn golf swing. Forsakes me every time when I need it the most . . . like now!”

The secretary commented, “That’s just about the widest fairway in the world, so it shouldn’t present much of a problem. Enjoy.”

It would be fair to say every golfer in the world dreams of playing the Old Course at St. Andrews. Bush approached the ball, took his stance, *nervously* jerked the club away, and swung. Mercifully, the ball curved only slightly to the right and came to rest in the fairway.

Bush smiled mischievously. “Not bad for a broken-down ol’ president. What’s the course record around here anyway?”

“In the Open Championship . . . sixty-three.”

“Sixty-three, hell! I will’ve hit it that many times by the twelfth hole,” Bush said as he winked at the secretary and stepped aside to allow his playing partners their turn.

From a position three hundred yards away on a public footpath that bordered the fairway, a middle-aged man of generic features lowered his binoculars and turned to saunter away, whistling as he went. As he reached up to scratch his nose, he spoke quietly into a microphone buried inside the sleeve of his sweater. “Blue sweater, white shirt, gray pants, black shoes, no hat.”

In a secluded wooded area two kilometers from the golf course, a nondescript brown van and midsize blue car were parked side by side. Huddled inside the van were eight British paramilitary commandos. Sitting inside the car were four more commandos. Six of the twelve were carrying assorted weaponry. Hearing the description of Bush's wardrobe, the driver of the van keyed his radio and answered in a noticeably British accent, "Copy that. Cowboy Justice a go." The drivers of the van and the car exchanged informal salutes, started their vehicles, and sped away.

Poised with engines running on the edge of a runway at the Rotterdam Airport, pilots strapped inside the cockpits of a Hawker 800XP and Learjet 85 received the same message and answered back in turn: "Cowboy Justice a go. Hawker 1 copy."

"Learjet 1, copy that as well."

The Hawker took off in an angry roar, followed quickly by the Learjet.

The most famous hole on the Old Course at St. Andrews is the seventeenth, commonly referred to as the Road Hole. The green sits hard by a cobblestone road, on the other side of which is a stone wall that for centuries has presented unusual and difficult challenges for golfers.

George Bush, midway through a Cuban cigar, and his caddie, Oliver Croft, stepped onto the seventeenth tee along with his playing partners and their caddies. Bush tossed his cigar to the ground and considered his options as Oliver offered a word of encouragement. "Nice and easy does it, sir."

"Nice and easy? Not my strong suit," Bush said before slicing his tee shot into the right rough. "More or less like Jack Nicklaus did it."

"More 'less' than 'more,' I'm afraid, sir," Oliver responded.

Bush picked up his cigar and headed down the fairway, saying, "Let's go see if we can birdie this bad boy."

As Bush made his way along the seventeenth fairway, the brown van and blue car pulled into the parking lot of the Jigger Inn, a famous St. Andrews watering hole located short and to the right of the seventeenth green.

Just as Bush arrived at his ball, the twelve British commandos poured out of their vehicles and precisely according to a well-crafted and rehearsed plan, sprinted straight for the former president, his playing partners, and their caddies.

Immediately realizing what was happening, Bush turned and ran for his life. The much faster commandos quickly tackled him to the ground. With the former president lying facedown on the turf, one commando lifted his head back allowing a second commando to put a cloth soaked with diethyl ether over his mouth and nose to both mute and anesthetize him. Two other commandos strapped a leather belt around his ankles, slapped handcuffs on his wrists, and slipped a hood over his head. Once Bush was unconscious, gagged, shackled, cuffed, and hooded, the commandos carefully lifted him and carried him away.

Simultaneously and similarly, five commandos contained Bush's caddie, his playing partners, and their caddies.

Immediately upon seeing the attack, three distinctly American-looking men dressed in Scottish golf attire rushed to Bush's aid. Expecting Secret Service protection for the former president, the remaining commandos fired stun guns at the oncoming agents, who, one by one, stumbled and fell to the ground.

The commandos carrying Bush placed him in the back of the van and fled.

The entire series of events took less than six minutes and occurred with little commotion and hardly any noise. The stealth abduction

of a former president of the United States from the world's most famous golf course—against his will, in broad daylight—was a stark contrast to the peace and grandeur of this ancient town, the resting ground of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

Eventually, a few passing townspeople noticed the bound bodies strewn over the seventeenth fairway and rushed to help. Once Bush's playing partners and the caddies were untethered, the lot of them raced up the eighteenth fairway waving their arms and yelling hysterically, "Help! Help!" "They abducted the president!" "Help, please, for the love of God!"

Located six miles from St. Andrews was the hamlet of Leuchars, famous for its RAF airfield. The Hawker and Learjet landed and sped to their appointed destination. With clockwork precision, the van carrying Bush pulled up alongside the Learjet. The commandos transferred his now conscious but still restrained body onto the plane.

Other commandos entered the Hawker's passenger cabin. Not by happenstance, another man joined the team who looked remarkably like George Bush—about the same age, hair color, height, weight, facial features, and wearing the same clothes. The commandos sat the Bush look-alike in a window seat, thus creating a Bush decoy. The commandos deplaned and scattered. Immediately the Hawker screamed down the runway and lifted off, heading west to Glasgow.

The Learjet carrying Bush took off in a southeasterly direction. Destination unknown.

Inside the R&A Clubhouse, the secretary was on the phone with Scotland Yard explaining what had happened as best he could. Behind the eighteenth green of the Old Course, Scottish police were questioning Bush's playing partners and the caddies. What

they knew would fill a thimble. What they didn't know would fill a novel.

Two RAF jets flew up to and alongside each side of the Hawker. The pilots spotted the Bush decoy, radioed they had found the former president, and requested a convoy of military aircraft to help escort the Hawker to Glasgow.

Meanwhile, the Learjet carrying Bush flew close to the ground to avoid conventional radar. Aboard, the commandos removed the hood, gag, shackles, and handcuffs from Bush who immediately asked, "Who the hell are you guys?"

"You will know soon enough," the attending commando coldly responded. "You do not need to worry. You will not be harmed."

"You're British, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"What the fuck are you doing?" Bush erupted in anger. "You're supposed to be our ally."

The commando shot back, "No, Tony Blair is your ally. Most British people hated your war."

The Learjet landed at its appointed destination, the Rotterdam Airport, and taxied to a stop next to a waiting chopper, rotary blades spinning. United Nations police quickly and silently escorted Mr. Bush off the jet and into the chopper, which took off immediately.

Boxed in by four escort jets flying in close formation, the Hawker landed at Glasgow Airport and taxied to a stop. Police cars and vans quickly pulled up to create a 360-degree barricade. Two dozen Scottish police officers under the command of Chief Constable Angus Duff drew their weapons and aimed at the

plane. Government officials positioned themselves behind the police cars.

The Hawker door opened. The pilot descended the stairs, protesting, "What the hell is going on here?"

Over a megaphone from behind the barricade, Duff responded, "You know. Where is he?"

"Where is who?"

"Deliver him unharmed or you will be spending the rest of your life in a cold dark box from which you will never emerge."

The pilot dug in his heels. "Are you out of your mind? Your jets flew dangerously close to our aircraft in blatant violation of international flight regulations. And now you're falsely accusing us of having some mythical passenger onboard."

Without responding, Constable Duff signaled a dozen Scottish police wearing body armor and carrying machine guns to board and search the plane.

A peaceful silence at The Hague was broken by the sound of helicopter blades whirring as a chopper approached a makeshift landing pad between the International Criminal Court and the ICC Detention Center, situated two and a half kilometers apart. The chopper landed gently, its blades continuing to rotate as four security guards approached the door and politely but firmly escorted Bush off the chopper. No words were spoken. They swiftly led him through a back door into the detention center. The chopper sped away, mission accomplished.

The reception area of the detention center is small but functional, its walls bare except for a simple portrait of the UN secretary-general. The guards escorted Bush to a single chair in front of the desk where sat a Kenyan guard, Mobwana Mochellus. "Hello, Mr. Bush. Welcome to the Detention Center of the International Criminal Court."

Bush did not respond. Mochellus continued. “Consistent with ICC protocol, I will inform you of your living quarters for the foreseeable future. Each detainee is assigned a private cell that includes a single bed, desk, chair, bookshelves, toilet, hand basin, television, and computer. We provide three meals a day, but detainees also have access to a communal kitchen if they wish to cook for themselves.

“The ICC provides a variety of recreational opportunities at selected times, including walks in the courtyard, a basketball court, and an exercise gym. You can also elect to partake in manual activities such as gardening, painting—we hear you like to paint, so that might be of interest—woodcrafts, and other such activities. You will receive medical and dental care as and when needed. Detainees can have visitors at prearranged times, and certain phone calls are permitted. However, you should know that phone calls as well as computer usage will be monitored.”

With her speech successfully delivered, Mochellus reached into a closet and brought out a bundle of clothes. “Here are your ICC prison clothes and pajamas. We guessed your size. Let us know if you need anything else. It’s not required for detainees to wear prison clothes in court, so we procured a few dark suits we thought you might want to wear. Do you have any questions, Mr. Bush?”

“Yes,” he answered. “Is there a Bible in the room?”

“I’ll make sure there is.”

Orientation completed, the prison guards escorted an angry and tired former president George W. Bush, carrying his prison garb, out of the reception area.

The events of the day sent America’s top political, legal, and military authorities into a tailspin. Not since the September 11 attacks had so many high-powered meetings been so hastily assembled to

discuss such a daunting crisis of international importance. The day culminated in a late-night meeting at the Pentagon of the president's senior advisors, including Secretary of Defense John Cox and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Secretary Cox began, "Gentlemen, the president asked for recommendations within the hour on how the hell we can rescue George W. Bush from the ICC."

"If the bastards think they can just nab the president of the United States and get away with it," barked Army general Arthur Lexton, "they got another *think* coming."

"Former president," corrected Admiral Dick Dohring.

Marine commandant Stephen Wells interjected, "Same thing. If they can arbitrarily kidnap a former president, they can grab any of our top government officials. We need to let them know we're not going to stand for this horseshit."

General William Shackelford addressed Secretary Cox. "Sir, we have several scenarios in play that are ready to engage."

"Such as?"

"Option one is the insertion of SEALs from Task Force 64, Special Ops assigned to the Sixth Fleet, headquartered in Naples. They can fly over the Swiss Alps and be on the ground in The Hague by twenty-three hundred hours GMT. Minimal collateral damage expected.

"Option two is a standard amphibious assault. The ICC Detention Centre is situated on the banks of the North Sea, easily accessible by Marine forces. The Dutch would not contest a rescue attempt as their defenses in that area are light and they will not be expecting an amphibious invasion. We currently have assets returning from the Arctic that could carry out this mission ASAP. Again, minimal collateral damage expected.

"Option three is a stealth Delta Force chopper landing under cover of night. Special Ops forces would breach the detention center and extract the former president. This option utilizes forces and

air assets stationed in Germany. A larger degree of collateral damage is to be expected with this option.”

“Thank you, General,” Secretary Cox said, nodding. “Well conceived.”

“Sir, I understand this is an awful situation and sets a bad precedent,” General Robert Reynolds added, “but if we recommend to the president that we invade the Netherlands, we’re recommending military aggression that will violate its sovereignty and be in contradiction of the UN Charter.”

General Lexton scoffed. “Too damn bad. We didn’t care much about violating the UN Charter when we kicked Saddam’s ass out of Kuwait.”

“Let’s not forget, gentlemen,” Cox cautioned, “that the Dutch are our allies. They didn’t kidnap George Bush. It was a private security firm arranged by some of our British *friends*. The Dutch have fought alongside us since World War II. We’re both members of NATO and, according to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, if one of its members is attacked, the other members must regard it as an attack against all. Britain, France, Spain, Germany, even Canada, are all bound by the treaty to respond.”

Admiral Dohring countered, “So you’re saying if we send a stealth rescue squad to The Hague, it would be considered an attack on the Netherlands and trigger a violation of the NATO treaty?”

“Possibly, yes,” responded Shackelford. “Do we really want to risk a counterattack on our homeland by forces from Canada, for God’s sake? They would have every legal right to do so under the NATO treaty.”

Wells shook his head. “Shit, that’s crazy. Unthinkable.”

“The whole thing is crazy,” Cox added. “Thank you, gentlemen. There are a myriad of global issues in play here that the president needs to be aware of. I’m choppering over to the White House now to discuss our options. Keep your powder dry, gentlemen.”

In the ICC Detention Centre, George Bush, wearing prison pajamas, sat slumped on the edge of the bed in his cell, six meters long and three meters wide, reliving the events of the day, wondering what was going to happen tomorrow, and perhaps even mildly chastising himself for venturing over to Scotland to play golf and not bothering to pay more attention to the ICC.