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This book is dedicated to my mother, Doris. Thanks for believing.

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Prologue

Saturday, 21 April 2012

Ben Palmer placed the bloodied knife on the table and removed the tape covering Kan Tek Kwok's mouth.

'I know that you've been passing sensitive material to Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) Alphaco,' he said, his voice calm. 'Just tell me what you shared with them.'

It was, in fact, a lie. He neither knew that Kwok was selling trade secrets to his client's rival technology firm, nor did he care. His remit for the current assignment was simply to extract information, and in this particular field he had no equal.

'I swear...'

It wasn't the answer Palmer was looking for. He placed the tape back over Kwok's mouth and picked up the knife, which he'd found in his subject's kitchen drawer. It was probably fine for Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) slicing vegetables, but it had taken a lot of effort to cut through the man's fingers. *Still*, he thought, *it all adds to the effect*.

Palmer ran the knife down Kwok's bare stomach and over the two marks created by the Taser. The file he'd been given showed the man lived alone, and fortunately he hadn't been entertaining that evening. After getting him to answer the door, Palmer had stunned him with the electroshock device. While he was still reeling from the shock, Palmer had flipped him Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) over and administered an injection between his shoulder blades. Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) He had then closed the curtains while the neuromuscular-blocking drug—derived from curare, a relaxant which left the recipient unable to move any of his voluntary muscles—took effect. Unlike other varieties—such as suxamethonium chloride, which also affected the involuntary muscles such as the diaphragm—this derivative allowed the patient to breathe unaided. The result was that Kwok was unable to put up any resistance whatsoever, but could still feel every ounce of the pain being inflicted.

'I can make this last all night, Kan,' he said, moving the Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) knife down to Kwok's bare genitals. 'It would be better to tell me now, while you can still father children.'

Palmer placed the blade on the man's penis and applied a little pressure while making a sawing motion—not enough to break the skin, but sufficient to bring a look of horror to Kwok's face.

'I'll count to five,' Palmer said. He got to four when his phone rang and he knew it was work related—less than a dozen organisations and governments had this number, and his circle of friends could be counted on one hand.

'Think about it,' he said to Kwok and hit the 'Accept' button. 'Palmer.'

James Farrar had been through Tom Gray's file Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) twice, but as he'd already suspected, there were just two associates known to be in Asia. In order to prioritise them, he had been in touch with the Government Communications Headquarters to get a breakdown of recent calls made to their known numbers, specifically anything from the island of Jolo. Within twenty minutes GCHQ had come up with the information he wanted.

Farrar closed down Gray's electronic file and opened the one for Timothy Hughes. Once it had passed through security protocols and loaded, he looked for the current address. Minimising the file, he opened another screen and searched for resources in the Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) area. The results showed that Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) the nearest was in Japan and currently working a case, and Farrar didn't have the authority to pull him off it for his own needs.

What he could do, though, was bring in some outside help. Given the sensitivity of the mission, it would have to be someone he could trust, and that narrowed it down to just one man. Despite this, he was reluctant to mention Tom Gray's name. Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) After careful consideration, he decided to limit the mission to locating Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) and, if Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) possible, Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) eliminating the quarry: Len Smart, Simon Baines and one other, as yet unidentified.

Farrar looked up the number in the database and dialled.

Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3)

'Palmer,' he heard when the call was connected.

'Ben, it's James Farrar. I have an urgent job for you.'

'Sorry, gonna be a bit busy for the next few days.'

Farrar cursed silently. Palmer was the only man he could turn to, the only one he could trust. He had performed other jobs for the organisation, and Farrar Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) knew that operational secrecy was a given.

'How much are they paying you?' he asked the freelancer.

'Three hundred...' Palmer replied, Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) and Farrar knew from previous negotiations that he had to add 'thousand' to the end. He also suspected that Palmer had doubled the fee he was currently earning, but that wasn't his concern. All that mattered was getting him on board.

'I'll give you five Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) hundred if you can start now.'

The offer brought a pause in the conversation. 'Sterling,' Palmer said eventually.

'Dollars,' Farrar insisted.

Another pause, then: 'Write this down.' He gave Farrar an Internet URL consisting of letters and numbers, one that couldn't be guessed or stumbled upon accidentally. Palmer also gave him a twelve-digit code to enter when he got to Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) the website.

'Once you're in, enter the job details and hit "Send". You can also upload files and images.'

Don't worry, it's secure.'

'How secure?'

Palmer explained that Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) it used 2,048-bit encryption and a one-time 28-digit key, which meant even a supercomputer would spend a lifetime trying to unscramble the garbled message.

'I'll have access to the message in an hour. Please make sure the money is transferred to the usual account before then.'

The phone went dead in Farrar's hand. Now that he had secured Palmer's services, all that remained was to get his hands on half a million dollars. As an idea came to him, it brought a smile along for company. He still had control of Tom Gray's Manila bank account, which had a balance a shade over the sum he needed. The smile grew as he considered the irony of using Gray's money to pay the man sent to kill him, and he thumbed through the list of contacts in his phone in search of the account manager for the Philippine National Bank.

Palmer put his phone away and looked down at Kwok. The man had tears streaming down his face and a pool of urine had formed between his legs.

'You got lucky,' he said, extracting another hypodermic needle. Kwok had overheard his conversation, but that was the least of Palmer's worries: he had seen his face, and that sealed the man's fate. Palmer stuck the needle into his subject's carotid artery and delivered double the normal dose. As he waited for the drug to take effect, Palmer straightened his wig and considered an explanation for his current employers. He settled on reporting that Kwok had been innocent and collecting the fee, which he had tripled for Farrar's benefit.

Kwok's breathing was becoming laboured, and Palmer prepared to leave, replacing the hypodermics in their case and stowing it in the inside pocket of his jacket. He sat there for another minute until Kwok took his last breath, then he left the house, quietly closing the door behind him. As he walked to his car, he removed the bloodied surgical gloves and screwed them into Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) a ball before wrapping an elastic band around it to stop them from unravelling. The ball was discarded down a storm drain, along with the hairpiece.

He drove the car to a secluded wooded area and removed the false licence plates which he had stuck over the originals. He wiped them down before digging a shallow hole in the undergrowth

and burying them.

No loose ends.

Palmer drove back to his rented apartment, curious to see what the urgent mission entailed.

Chapter One

Sunday, 22 April 2012

The Gray Redemption (A Tom Gray Novel Book 3) radar indicated a small vessel a mile ahead, apparently stationary in the water. According to his GPS it was within fifty metres of the rendezvous point, and the captain made a small course correction to intercept it.

‘Just where you said they’d be, sir,’ he said to Timmy Hughes, who had just entered the cabin.

‘Anyone else around?’ Hughes asked.

‘Nothing larger than a canoe for twenty miles.’

Hughes stepped onto the deck and switched on the Carlisle & Finch searchlight, playing its beam out over the bow of the twenty-metre yacht. It was a couple of minutes before he located the small craft and its four occupants. Using hand signals, he indicated for the captain to slow their approach, and a few minutes later they pulled alongside the craft. Hughes threw out a rope, and it was caught by one of the males, who tied it to a ring on the wall of the inflatable. Hughes walked the rope to the stern and tied it off, allowing his visitors the chance to climb onto

the swim-deck attached to the transom.

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