Blowback

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY: AMERICA'S TERRORISTS

Quinn O'Flynn

“What is done in the dark will one day bleed into the light.”

Quinn says...

When I first learned of the events of October 7th and saw the corresponding actions taken by Israel and its' western benefactors it blew my mind.

I'm not sure why this time was different, but I knew we were being lied to… I knew the media was providing cover and I knew I needed to get closer to the action and see this with my own eyes and find the truth and then share this with my audience.

This started a journey for me, one that led me down rabbit hole after rabbit hole. The more I learned and studied, the more appalled I became and the more disgusted I became with not only how my country was handling this current situation, but how for decades our government has employed misinformation, shadowy manipulation, outright corruption, military force and of course, the many operations of the CIA around the world.

These have resulted in toppled democratic governments, the installation of dictators, the kidnapping, disappearance, torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of people who dared speak up as well as the training and financial support of hideously evil people around the world. All of this to gain power, control and money and all of this done while our government labels anyone who fights back "terrorists."

The truth of the matter is that WE are the terrorists and there is no organization on earth which terrorizes people so effectively as the CIA.

I wanted to started educating fellow Americans, as well as everyone else, but wanted to do it in a way that was not simply a listing of facts and atrocities but that told the stories of the people whose lives these operations have destroyed.

I've selected 22 of these operations ranging from the 1950's through the present. This in no way is a complete listing of all of the horrific operations from the CIA, it is instead a small sampling that shows the sheer evil that this agency has perpetrated as they terrorize the world.

Prologue

They called it intelligence. They called it defense. They wrapped it in the stars and stripes and handed it to us with a straight face, as if what they were about to do would keep us safe. But behind every covert operation, every euphemism for violence, and every secret war was a broken life. A scorched village. A mother clutching a lifeless child. A nation spun into chaos.

This book is not just history. It is testimony. The voices you are about to hear are fictionalized, but they are deeply true. They are the sum of eyewitness accounts, survivor testimonies, and history's forgotten footnotes. They represent the crushed bones beneath the boots of the empire—the ones no president mourns and no textbooks teach.

This is a reckoning. May their voices be heard.

"A Monster Is Born"

Eleanor Hughes, former analyst, Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 1947

I was there when the shadows took shape—when a wartime necessity morphed into a permanent machine of secrecy and sabotage. We thought the Nazis were the enemy. We thought the Soviets would be the end of us. But we never imagined that the worst thing we'd build after the war was a monster inside our own walls.

We were told it was temporary. After World War II, the OSS was dissolved—our wartime intelligence agency dismantled. But the Cold War changed everything. There was fear in

Washington, real fear. The Soviets were everywhere, it was said. Paranoia spread like wildfire. Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947, and from its inked pages rose a shadow: the Central Intelligence Agency.

I was a young analyst then, 32 years old, working in a pale office off of E Street. My job was to compile human intelligence, vet sources, and translate documents. I believed in America. I had served during the war and knew the cost of inaction. But what we unleashed that year wasn't about defense. It was about domination.

The CIA wasn't just about gathering intelligence—it was given the power to conduct covert operations anywhere in the world. With almost no oversight. No rules. No transparency. We didn't just want to know what the world was doing—we wanted to control it. Replace governments. Sabotage economies. Assassinate leaders. Test drugs on our own people. That power was intoxicating. And for some, irresistible.

I remember the first time I read about Operation Ajax—the coup in Iran. I was horrified. We had overthrown a democratically elected leader because he dared to nationalize oil. We crushed a nation's hope because it didn't serve British Petroleum. And it was just the beginning.

By the time I left the agency in 1959, I knew I had been part of building a monster—one that would wrap itself in the flag, whisper "security," and leave smoking ruins wherever it walked. I tried to warn people. Wrote letters. Spoke at hearings. No one listened. They never do until it's too late.

But maybe now—through these stories—someone will listen.

Chapter One

Operation Ajax – Iran Coup (1953)

Operation Ajax, also known as the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, was a covert operation orchestrated by the United States' CIA and the UK's MI6 to overthrow the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddegh, and consolidate the power of the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The operation, which took place in August 1953, aimed to reinstate the Shah as a powerful monarch and ensure Western influence in Iran, particularly regarding oil resources.

"The Sky Burned Green That Day"

Tehran, August 1953

Fatemeh Rezai, 19 years old, student nurse, University of Tehran

I remember the smell of burning tires before I saw the bodies. It was the second day of riots, and already the city stank of gunpowder, sweat, and betrayal. I was just a girl with a white uniform and trembling hands. And that week in August, I watched my country bleed out on the sidewalk while foreign ghosts pulled the strings.

I never wanted to be a revolutionary. I only wanted to heal people.

Before everything fell apart, I lived in a small apartment with my father above a bakery on Hafez Street. He was a schoolteacher—stern, kind, with tired eyes from years of grading essays under candlelight. My mother had died from cholera when I was nine, and since then, it had been just the

two of us. He used to brush the hair out of my face and call me his "little lioness." He was proud that I wanted to study medicine. Proud that his daughter would serve her country with a stethoscope, not a rifle.

Tehran in those days buzzed with hope. We had a real leader—Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. My father adored him. “He walks with the people,” he’d say, pointing at the radio when Mossadegh’s trembling voice came on. Mossadegh had nationalized our oil, stood up to the British, and refused to bow to the Shah. For the first time in decades, it felt like Iran belonged to Iranians.

And then, in one week, it all unraveled.

The rumors came first. That Mossadegh was soft. That the communists were taking over. That the army had turned. We didn’t believe it at first. But then came the mobs—men with sticks and banners screaming “Death to Mossadegh!” My father said they were paid thugs. I didn’t believe him until I saw one man switch sides in the same afternoon, wearing two different armbands.

I was at the hospital when it happened. The city shook with shouting. At first, we thought it was just another protest. But then a soldier burst into the ER, dragging a man whose face had been shattered by a rifle butt. “They're storming the radio station!” he shouted. “The army’s turned!”

Gunshots echoed like thunder.

We worked without thinking—my hands covered in blood, sweat pooling down my back. One boy, no older than my younger brother, had been shot through the stomach. He screamed for his mother as I pressed gauze against the

hole. I remember looking into his eyes—black, wide, terrified—and realizing he wouldn't survive. The blood wouldn't stop.

By evening, the word had spread: Mossadegh was gone. Arrested. The Shah, who had fled like a coward, was returning in triumph. I remember staring at the hospital wall, shaking, as one of the nurses vomited in the sink.

That night, I walked home under a sky choked with smoke. On the street outside our apartment, boys danced around a burning portrait of Mossadegh. They laughed and drank and shouted, but their eyes were empty. Something hollow had taken root.

When I opened our door, I found my father sitting still in his chair, a paper clenched in his fist.

"They did it," he said softly. "The Americans. The British. They bought our revolution and burned it to the ground."

I didn't believe it at first. Why would America do this? Why would they destroy a democracy? I had thought America was the land of freedom. My textbooks said they fought for liberty.

"They want the oil," he spat. "They want a puppet. And now they have one."

Three days later, they came for him.

A black car pulled up as I washed dishes. Men in suits stepped out—SAVAK, they called themselves. One flashed a badge. The other shoved my father against the wall. They

said he was spreading subversive ideas in his classroom. That he was inciting unrest.

He looked at me as they dragged him away, eyes calm. “Remember what I told you, lioness,” he said. “Truth is worth bleeding for.”

I never saw him again.

I searched. For months, I searched. I bribed guards. I visited prisons. I begged bureaucrats. They all shook their heads. Some laughed. Some looked away. One finally whispered that he had been “disappeared.”

I quit nursing school not long after. The university was crawling with informants. They arrested professors in the middle of lectures. My classmates disappeared, one by one. We learned to whisper, to avoid eye contact, to keep our heads down.

Years later, I read a report from America, declassified decades after the coup. “Operation Ajax,” they called it. A joint effort between the CIA and MI6 to overthrow Mossadegh and restore the Shah.

They admitted to paying thugs, bribing generals, infiltrating newspapers, and staging fake protests. They admitted to planting lies and using American dollars to drown Iranian democracy.

I stared at the document, my hands shaking. I remembered the boy in the hospital, crying for his mother. The portrait burning. The taste of ash in my mouth.
I am an old woman now. I live in a quiet part of northern Tehran. I have no children. No family. Just a photograph of

my father, and the memory of a time when we believed we could stand tall.

People still argue about Mossadegh. Some say he was weak. Some say he was a dreamer. But I remember how the air felt different when he spoke. I remember the pride in my father's face. I remember how, for one brief moment, we believed that Iran could belong to Iranians.

And I remember how foreign hands snatched it all away.

"The first casualty of empire is always the truth. The second is the soul of a people."

Chapter Two

Operation PBSUCCESS – Guatemala Coup (1954)

Operation PBSuccess was the code name for a 1954 covert U.S. operation that resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) orchestrated the coup, aiming to remove Árbenz due to his land reforms, which threatened the interests of the United Fruit Company, and his perceived communist associations. The operation involved psychological warfare and a U.S.-backed invasion force, ultimately leading to Árbenz's resignation and the installation of a military dictatorship under Carlos Castillo Armas.

"The Rooster Crows Before the Burning"

Guatemala, June 1954

Miguel Ángel Calderón, 12 years old, son of a farmer from Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa

I was twelve years old when the sky fell.

My name is Miguel Ángel Calderón, and before the soldiers came, we lived in a small adobe house near the edge of Chiquimulilla, where the hills ran soft into the jungle. My father, Domingo, was a campesino—a farmer of plantains and beans. We had nothing but the land, and we loved it more than anything. It fed us, it taught us. Papa always said the soil remembers every hand that treats it well.

Our house had no electricity, but Mama always kept the hearth burning. The smoke would curl up into the thatched roof and warm the mornings with the smell of wood and maize. My sister Elena died of fever two years before Árbenz came to power, and it broke something in Papa. He stopped singing, and sometimes, in the evenings, I would find him sitting alone in the field, staring into the dark.

When President Árbenz was elected, something changed in him. When the radio told us about the Agrarian Reform Law, I saw Papa cry for the first time. Not the quiet kind of crying I did when Elena died—but something powerful, like a river breaking its dam. He said we finally had a man who understood the poor. Árbenz passed a law that gave us land—real land, from the big plantations that had taken everything for generations.

We cleared it together. I still remember the smell of sweat and clay on Papa's shirt as we built a fence with wood we cut ourselves. We planted maize that spring, and Papa swore the rain fell sweeter that year. He even taught me how to plant by the moon's cycle, a secret passed down from his own father. We were building something—not just a field, but a future.

But someone far away decided we didn't deserve it.
The name I heard first was "La Fruta." The United Fruit Company. Gringos in suits who owned more land than God and kept it empty so men like my father would starve and beg for work. They said Árbenz was a communist. They said we were dangerous.

We were just farmers. We wanted to eat.

One morning, we woke to the sound of engines—loud, growling, alien. I ran outside. In the distance, three planes circled low, dropping something black from their bellies. A moment later, smoke curled into the sky. Papa ran toward the truck and screamed at me to stay inside.

They bombed our village's radio tower first. Then the market. Then a school, where my cousin Maria had gone the day before. I found her hair ribbon days later, burned at the edges, tangled in a tree. I kept it, pressed inside a small book of prayers Mama gave me.

Papa said it wasn't just bombs. It was lies. He said the Americans were paying traitors—Guatemalan soldiers—to rise up. To make it look like a rebellion. To make Árbenz fall. He called it a golpe—a coup. I didn't know what that meant then. All I knew was that my father started sleeping with his machete under the bed.

The army came to our town two days later.

They wore green and boots and blank expressions. They said they were with "the Liberation Movement." They tore down Árbenz's posters and told us the land we had been given now belonged to the government again. When Papa objected, they hit him in the face with a rifle. My mother screamed. I wet myself. That was the first time I saw blood pour from my father's mouth.

That night, he said we had to flee. We packed only what we could carry: beans, a knife, a blanket. I left behind my slingshot and the dog I'd raised from a pup. Her name was Luna. I hope she found someone kinder than the soldiers. We walked for hours through the dark, heading toward the hills. Other families joined us. Whispers moved like ghosts

between us: executions in the capital, men thrown into rivers, teachers vanished from schools. They were hunting us—campesinos, reformers, anyone who had once dared to hope.

We found shelter in an abandoned church in the mountains. A priest there gave us water and news: Árbenz had resigned. They said a man named Castillo Armas was now in charge. He was America's man. The gringos smiled on him.

Papa stopped speaking for three days. During that time, he didn't eat. He just sat in the church, staring at the crucifix, as if demanding answers from a God that had stopped listening. Mama tried to coax him into sleep, but even when he laid down, I'd see his eyes open in the candlelight.

Later, I would learn the truth.

The CIA had called it Operation PBSUCCESS. They trained mercenaries in Honduras. They filled the airwaves with lies. They bribed newspapers. They painted a democratically elected president as a Soviet pawn. All to protect United Fruit's profits. All to keep men like my father from owning the land their feet bled on.

We never got our land back.

Papa died two years later from an infection that could have been treated in any decent hospital. We were too far, too poor, too forgotten. Mama and I ended up in the slums outside Guatemala City. I sold chewing gum on buses. Sometimes men in uniforms would still knock on doors in the middle of the night. We didn't ask why. We knew.

I remember the first time I saw a dead body in the street. I was fifteen. The man's eyes were open. There was blood on his shirt, and a hole in the back of his head. People walked around him like he was furniture. Like grief had worn us numb.

By the time I turned eighteen, the war had already begun. A war that would last more than thirty years. A war built on the ruins of our dreams. Over 200,000 people would die—mostly Mayan villagers, mostly innocent. All because a government dared to take land from a fruit company and give it to us.

Sometimes, I dream of our old plot. I see it green again, the corn swaying, Papa whistling as he digs, my dog barking at birds. I smell Mama's tamales cooking in banana leaves. I hear Elena's laughter. Then the sky darkens. The planes return. And everything burns again.

They called it freedom. But all we ever saw was fire.

Chapter Three

Mind Control Experiments (1953–1973)

On April 10th, 1953, Allen Dulles, the newly appointed director of the CIA, delivered a speech to a gathering of Princeton alumni. Though the event was mundane, global tensions were running high. The Korean War was coming to an end, and earlier that week, The New York Times had published a startling story asserting that American POWs returning from the country may have been “converted” by “Communist brain-washers.”

Some GI’s were confessing to war crimes, like carrying out germ warfare against the Communists–a charge the U.S. categorically denied. Others were reportedly so brainwashed that they had refused to return to the United States at all. As if that weren’t enough, the U.S. was weeks away from secretly sponsoring the overthrow of a democratically elected leader in Iran.

Dulles had just become the first civilian director of an agency growing more powerful by the day, and the speech provided an early glimpse into his priorities for the CIA. “In the past few years we have become accustomed to hearing much about the battle for men’s minds–the war of ideologies,” he told the attendees. “I wonder, however, whether we clearly perceive the magnitude of the problem, whether we realize how sinister the battle for men’s minds has become in Soviet hands,” he continued. “We might call it, in its new form, ‘brain warfare.’”
Dulles proceeded to describe the “Soviet brain perversion techniques” as effective, but “abhorrent” and “nefarious.” He gestured to the American POWs returning from Korea,

shells of the men they once were, parroting the Communist propaganda they had heard cycled for weeks on end. He expressed fears and uncertainty–were they using chemical agents? Hypnosis? Something else entirely? “We in the West,” the CIA Director conceded, “are somewhat handicapped in brain warfare.” This sort of non-consensual experiment, even on one’s enemies, was antithetical to American values, Dulles insisted, as well as antithetical to what should be human values

Fear of brainwashing and a new breed of “brain warfare” terrified and fascinated the American public throughout the 1950s, spurred both by the words of the CIA and the stories of “brainwashed” G.I.’s returning from China, Korea, and the Soviet Union. Newspaper headlines like “New Evils Seen in Brainwashing” and “Brainwashing vs. Western Psychiatry” offered sensational accounts of new mind-control techniques and technologies that no man could fully resist. The paranoia began to drift into American culture, with books like The Manchurian Candidate and The Naked Lunch playing on themes of unhinged scientists and vast political conspiracies.

The idea of brainwashing also provided many Americans with a compelling, almost comforting, explanation for communism’s swift rise–that Soviets used the tools of brainwashing not just on enemy combatants, but on their own people. Why else would so many countries be embracing such an obviously backward ideology? American freedom of the mind versus Soviet “mind control” became a dividing line as stark as the Iron Curtain.

How did a secret government mind control program inadvertently fuel the use of psychedelic drugs in the 1960s?

MK-ULTRA

Three days after his speech decrying Soviet tactics, Dulles approved the beginning of MK-Ultra, a top-secret CIA program for "covert use of biological and chemical materials." "American values" made for good rhetoric, but Dulles had far grander plans for the agency's Cold War agenda.

MK-Ultra's "mind control" experiments generally centered around behavior modification via electro-shock therapy, hypnosis, polygraphs, radiation, and a variety of drugs, toxins, and chemicals. These experiments relied on a range of test subjects: some who freely volunteered, some who volunteered under coercion, and some who had absolutely no idea they were involved in a sweeping defense research program. From mentally-impaired boys at a state school, to American soldiers, to "sexual psychopaths" at a state hospital, MK-Ultra's programs often preyed on the most vulnerable members of society. The CIA considered prisoners especially good subjects, as they were willing to give consent in exchange for extra recreation time or commuted sentences.

Whitey Bulger, a former organized crime boss, wrote of his experience as an inmate test subject in MK-Ultra. "Eight convicts in a panic and paranoid state," Bulger said of the 1957 tests at the Atlanta penitentiary where he was serving time. "Total loss of appetite. Hallucinating. The room would change shape. Hours of paranoia and feeling violent. We experienced horrible periods of living nightmares and even blood coming out of the walls. Guys turning to skeletons in front of me. I saw a camera change into the head of a dog. I felt like I was going insane."

In 1977, Senator Edward Kennedy oversaw congressional hearings investigating the effects of MK-Ultra. Congress brought in a roster of ex-CIA employees for questioning, interrogating them about who oversaw these programs, how participants were identified, and if any of these programs had been continued. The Hearings turned over a number of disturbing details, particularly about the 1953 suicide of Dr. Frank Olson, an Army scientist who jumped out of a hotel window several days after unwittingly consuming a drink spiked with LSD. Amid growing criminalization of drug users, and just a few years after President Nixon declared drug abuse as “public enemy number one,” the ironies of the U.S.’s troubling experimentation with drugs appeared in sharp relief.

But throughout the hearings, Congress kept hitting roadblocks: CIA staffers claimed they “couldn’t remember” details about many of the human experimentation projects, or even the number of people involved. The obvious next step would be to consult the records, but that presented a small problem: in 1973, amid mounting inquiries, the director of MK-Ultra told workers “it would be a good idea if [the MK-Ultra] files were destroyed.” Citing vague concerns about the privacy and “embarrassment” of participants, the men who crafted MK-Ultra effectively eradicated the paper record for one of the United States’ most obviously illegal undertakings. A program born in secrecy would hold onto many of its secrets forever.

Location: VA Hospital, Pittsburgh – 1958
Purpose: To investigate mind control using drugs, hypnosis, and torture—primarily LSD—on unwitting subjects.
Outcome: Countless civilians and patients were experimented on without consent. Many suffered permanent

psychological damage; some died. Records were destroyed in 1973. No one was held accountable.

“The Lights Never Stop Buzzing”

Pittsburgh, 1958

Walter Hughes, 44, U.S. Army veteran and patient at a VA hospital

I served my country. I bled for it in Normandy. I came back with ghosts in my head and a limp in my leg. But nothing prepared me for what they did to me in that hospital. The worst wounds I carry—they weren’t from the war. They were from my own government.
I checked into the VA hospital for nightmares and left without knowing who I was.

They said I had shell shock. They said they’d help. I didn’t ask questions when they gave me pills that made my thoughts twist like wet laundry. I didn’t protest when they strapped me to a chair and made me listen to the same sentence for ten hours. But when they put the needle in my arm and I started seeing my dead friend speak through the walls—that’s when I knew I was somewhere dark.

I begged to stop. They said it was part of a new therapy. Something the doctors from Washington were pioneering. They wore suits and smiles but never gave their names.

By the time they were done, I couldn’t recognize my own handwriting. I screamed at light bulbs. I forgot my mother’s face. When I asked for my medical records years later, they said they’d been lost in a fire.

They never told me what MK-Ultra was. But I know what it did.

It erased me.

Chapter Four

Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961)

The Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961 was a failed attack launched by the CIA during the Kennedy administration to push Cuban leader Fidel Castro from power. Since 1959, officials at the U.S. State Department and the CIA had attempted to remove Castro. Finally, on April 17, 1961, the CIA launched what its leaders believed would be the definitive strike: a full-scale invasion of Cuba by 1,400 American-trained Cubans who had fled their homes when Castro took over. However, the invasion was doomed from the start. The invaders were badly outnumbered by Castro's troops, and they surrendered after less than 24 hours of fighting

The outcome was a total disaster with over 100 invaders killed and more than 1,100 captured. It strengthened Castro's regime and humiliated the U.S. globally.

"The Beach Was Red"

Cuba, April 17, 1961

Alejandro Pérez, 27, schoolteacher in Playa Girón

They say the ocean brings peace, that its rhythm calms the mind. For me, it used to be true. Every morning I walked along the edge of the water before school, letting the breeze cool my skin, the salt cleanse my breath. The children would gather outside my small classroom, shoes caked with sand, faces sunburned but smiling, shouting my name—"Maestro Alejandro!"—as they waited for their lessons. I taught them mathematics, but really, I tried to teach them hope. That was before the Americans came.

The morning the sea lit up with gunfire, I was preparing a lesson on prime numbers. A simple joy—equations, puzzles, patterns that made the world seem ordered and understandable. I remember writing "13" on the board when the first explosion cracked across the sky like thunder sent by an angry god.

It came from the sea. At first, I thought it might be a military drill. The government had warned us that something might happen, but no one believed it would reach this far. Not our little Playa Girón. We were a fishing village, a place for families and old songs, not blood and war.

But then the planes came. American B-26 bombers with their shark teeth painted on the noses. They screamed overhead like metal vultures, spitting fire at the beach, at the trees, at the homes. Some of the children ran. Others froze. I told them to get under their desks, but desks can't stop bullets. One of them, little Raúl, looked up at me and asked, "Maestro, are we going to die today?" I didn't have an answer.

From the window, I saw them—men charging out of the surf in wet uniforms, holding rifles like clubs, shouting in Spanish with foreign accents. Some were Cuban, I think, but not like us. These men were fed and polished, wearing boots that had never touched our soil before that day. They called themselves "liberators." But they looked like ghosts. Puppets of another country, their strings held by hands in Washington.

My cousin Marta was running down the dirt road toward the school when a bullet caught her in the throat. She fell before she reached the gate. I screamed her name, but her mouth was already filled with blood. No medics came. Only more

bullets. We buried her behind the church with three others that night. The priest didn't even finish his prayer before more explosions forced us to scatter.

The Americans said it was about "freedom." That they were here to save us from tyranny. But freedom doesn't come wrapped in napalm and bullet casings. Freedom doesn't come in the belly of a bomber. It doesn't crawl ashore in the dead of night with a rifle and a foreign flag.

I saw a boy no older than 18 trying to shield his mother with his own body. They shot them both. I remember the way her hand curled around his head, as if she could still protect him even in death. I remember thinking: what kind of liberation is this?

They bombed the sugar mill. They strafed our fishing boats. They destroyed the only pharmacy we had for miles. Old Man Reinaldo tried to crawl back into his burning home to save a portrait of his wife. He didn't make it out. They say fire cleanses. That's a lie. Fire erases. It took his memories, his photographs, his letters, and left nothing but blackened wood and silence.

I found myself asking, again and again, why. Why would a country so far away send killers to our shores? What did we do to deserve such wrath? We had chosen our own path, not theirs. That was our crime. We dared to believe that Cuba could belong to Cubans.

I later learned that the men who came ashore were trained by the CIA in Guatemala. That their mission was to overthrow our government. To erase our revolution. They called it the *Bay of Pigs Invasion*. The pigs—they meant us. The beach ran red that day, but not with the blood of

tyrants. It was the blood of mothers, of children, of farmers, of teachers like me.

I remember one of them—one of the invaders. He had been shot in the leg and was crawling across the sand, crying out in pain. I should have hated him. I should have wanted him to die. But when I looked into his eyes, I saw fear. He was no hero. Just another pawn. Maybe he believed the lies they told him. That we needed to be rescued. That we were desperate for the return of Batista's cronies, of gangsters and landlords and foreign companies who owned our land and our labor.

I knelt beside him, pressing a cloth to his wound. He looked surprised. "Why are you helping me?" he asked. I didn't know what to say. Maybe because I wanted to believe that we were still human. That this madness hadn't stolen our souls.

But the truth is, I hated the people who sent him. I still do. The CIA. Those three letters meant nothing to me before that day. Now, they are etched into every scream, every grave, every memory of that morning. The Central Intelligence Agency—an organization that claims to defend liberty, but spreads terror like wildfire. They trained these men, gave them maps and money and missions. They fed them dreams of victory while preparing our people for slaughter. They didn't see us as human beings. Just obstacles. Just targets.

After the failed invasion, their government pretended it was the fault of the exiles. As if they hadn't orchestrated every second of it. As if the American president hadn't approved it while smiling for cameras. They wanted the world to forget. But we never will.

The children who survived still jump at the sound of thunder. Some of them stopped speaking altogether. Others draw pictures of tanks and burning homes in their notebooks. I try to teach them again—about numbers, about patterns. But what number do you give to loss? What pattern explains cruelty?

They say we were victorious. That we defended our homeland. And yes, we did. But there is no victory in burying your cousin. There is no glory in holding a dying child in your arms. The only thing that came ashore that day was grief, and it's never left.

The beach was red for days after. The tide took the bodies, one by one, dragging them out to sea like secrets the world was not meant to see. But we saw. We remember. Every April, we place flowers in the sand. Not for heroes, but for the innocent. For those who wanted only to live and were given death by a nation that preaches peace and profits from war.

To the CIA, we were just another operation. A code name. A file in a drawer. To me, it was the day I lost my innocence. The day I stopped believing the world was fair.

And yet I still teach. Because someone must. Someone must show the children how to think, how to remember. Someone must tell them that the people who died that day were not forgotten. That even in the face of foreign aggression, we stood our ground—not with missiles or armies, but with the fierce dignity of those who refuse to be erased.

And every morning, when I walk to the shore, I still hear the echoes. The ocean does not bring peace anymore. But I

walk anyway. Because this is my home. Because we survived. Because they did not win. And because I owe it to Marta, and Raúl, and all the others, to speak the truth—loud enough that even the CIA, from their dark rooms and hidden wires, will hear us.

We are not numbers in a report.

We are not pawns on a board.

We are the people of Playa Girón.

And we remember.

Chapter Five

Operation CHAOS – United States (1967–1974)

Operation CHAOS was a covert domestic surveillance program designed to spy on American citizens, particularly civil rights leaders, anti-war activists, and Black liberation movements under the pretense of national security.
It was initiated by the CIA from 1967 to 1974.

Conceived in response to fears of foreign influence on domestic political dissent, the program aimed to uncover links between anti-war and civil rights movements and international communist entities. Utilizing methods such as physical surveillance, electronic monitoring, and infiltration, the CIA amassed extensive files on American citizens and organizations, including prominent figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Bella Abzug. The operation's exposure led to significant public outrage and governmental scrutiny, highlighting the tension between national security and civil liberties.

The program created a massive infiltration of domestic groups, suppression of lawful dissent and utilized psychological warfare against U.S. citizens. This violated the CIA's charter prohibiting domestic operations and resulted in o accountability.

"Watched, Hunted, Silenced"

Denise Jackson, 27, African American civil rights activist and member of the Black Panther Party

I used to think the worst thing about growing up in Oakland was the sound of gunshots at night. But I was wrong. The worst thing was learning that sometimes the trigger was pulled by your own country—and sometimes, they didn't even need a bullet to destroy you.

My name is Denise Jackson. I was 27 when the lies began to bleed through the cracks. It was 1971, and I was already tired. Tired in the way Black women are born tired—carrying the weight of a system that was never meant for us. But still, I stood. Still, I marched. Still, I fought.

I joined the Black Panther Party when I was 22. Not because I wanted violence, not because I hated America. I joined because I wanted to protect my little brother, Marcus. I wanted him to walk to school without white men spitting on him. I wanted him to survive until 18. That dream didn't feel radical. It felt necessary.

The Panthers fed children. We taught political education. We set up free clinics. We gave out shoes. But the headlines never showed that. To the papers, we were "extremists." To the cops, we were targets. To the CIA, we were enemies of the state.

That's when Operation CHAOS came for us.

We didn't know the name at the time. We just knew things started to break.

Phone clicks. Mail torn open. Cars parked across the street, engine idling for hours. New members who asked too many questions. Flyers we never printed showing up in mailboxes. Threats. Raids. Whisper campaigns.

My friend Yolanda disappeared for three weeks. When she came back, her hair had been shaved off. She didn't talk much after that.

Marcus found his name on a list at school—a list of "potential subversives." He was 16.

We thought we were paranoid. That's what they wanted us to think.

But we weren't.

Later we learned the truth. The CIA had created Operation CHAOS to spy on Americans like us. Technically, they weren't even allowed to operate on U.S. soil. But that didn't stop them. They coordinated with the FBI, local police, military intelligence. They infiltrated everything—from peace marches to college campuses. They compiled thousands of dossiers on regular citizens. I saw mine. 96 pages. Photographs of me holding my niece. Notes about what I wore at protests. Memos on who I was dating. A file thicker than a Bible, all to say: "She wants justice."

The pressure was constant. It wasn't just surveillance—it was psychological warfare.

They sent fake letters to my neighbors claiming I was a federal informant. One day, my mother got a phone call saying I'd been killed. When I came home that night, she

collapsed sobbing in my arms. That was the point—not to jail us. To shatter us.
I started sleeping with a knife under my pillow. I stopped trusting people. Sometimes I still look over my shoulder when I enter a room.

The night they raided our office, they brought dogs. They smashed everything—the mimeograph machine, the food pantry, the books. They dragged us into the street like animals. I was six months pregnant. They didn't care.

They never filed charges. Just intimidation. Just a show of power.

They put microphones in our homes, bugs in our cars. They sent informants to our rallies. They turned lovers into liars. They wrote anonymous letters accusing leaders of infidelity, embezzlement, betrayal—hoping we'd implode from the inside. Sometimes, it worked.

Fred Hampton was murdered in his bed by Chicago police when he was only 21. We later found out the FBI had supplied the floor plan. Operation CHAOS and COINTELPRO worked hand in hand—two arms of the same beast. A beast that feared Black unity more than war itself. What frightened them wasn't that we were violent. It was that we loved each other. That we organized. That we dared to believe our lives mattered. That we could win.

And so they hunted us.

I lost friends. Some to bullets. Some to exile. Some to silence. Yolanda took her own life two years later. My brother Marcus disappeared in '73. To this day, I don't know if he ran or if they made him vanish.

In 1974, the program ended. Or so they said. The New York Times broke the story. Congressional hearings followed. The Church Committee revealed the depth of the betrayal. They read the files aloud. Senators gasped. But no one was punished.

They called it a “mistake.” A “misjudgment.” A “necessary evil.”

I called it war.

I still have my dossier. I keep it in a fireproof box next to my son’s birth certificate. One reminds me what they tried to take. The other reminds me why they failed.

We were not broken. We were tested. And we are still here.

We didn’t ask for war. But when they brought it to our doorstep, we refused to bow.

They called it Operation CHAOS.

But we called it our lives.

Chapter Six

Phoenix Program (1965–1972)

The Phoenix Program in Vietnam was heavily criticized for its methods and consequences. It was accused of being a "civilian assassination program" with numerous neutral civilians killed, and for employing torture and other coercive tactics. Additionally, concerns were raised about its use for personal political gain and the program's overall impact on civilian populations.

A major criticism was the significant number of civilian deaths attributed to the program, which was intended to target Viet Cong infrastructure but often resulted in the deaths of innocent people. The program was notorious for its use of torture and other brutal interrogation methods to extract information and raised serious ethical questions about the conduct of war and the treatment of civilians in conflict zones.

Public disclosure of the program's practices led to US Congressional hearings and ultimately pressured the CIA to scale back and eventually shut down the program.

"The River Ran Red"

Phạm Thị Lan, widow and mother in Quảng Ngãi Province

I used to rise with the sound of the river.

The Trà Khúc flowed gentle through our village, brushing the banks with a sound like hushed breath. I lived there with my husband, Minh, and our two children, Dung and Bao, in a stilt house that overlooked the water. We raised ducks and

grew rice in the paddies my father had tended before me. Life was never easy, but we had moments of peace—moments I would trade my soul to return to.

It began in whispers. In 1967, we started hearing rumors of strange men asking strange questions. Americans in civilian clothes with clipboards. South Vietnamese officials with bulging eyes and guns that never pointed away. They said they were rooting out the Viet Cong. But in our village, everyone knew everyone. There were no lines. My cousin had once cooked rice for guerrillas. My brother refused to fight for either side. We all lived in the cracks between ideologies, just trying to survive.

One morning, my husband didn't return from the paddies.

He was late, but I wasn't worried until Bao, our youngest, found his hat near the edge of the field—trampled and bloody. We searched until nightfall. The next day, a soldier told me Minh had been "taken for questioning." They said he was listed as a suspected sympathizer.

I asked where.

He didn't answer.

Three weeks passed before I found Minh's body. It had washed up downstream, snagged in tree roots. His hands were gone. His chest was carved open. I recognized him only by the scar near his ear, from when he fell off our roof fixing a leak. He had been tortured. They had made an example of him.

That was when I first heard the words: Phoenix Program.

The villagers spoke it like a curse. Run by the CIA, they said. A network of death. A campaign to kill anyone suspected of helping the enemy. Names were added to blacklists with no trial, no evidence. Some were dragged from their beds and shot in front of their children. Others disappeared into trucks, never to return. Every village had ghosts.

In Quảng Ngãi, the river turned red more than once.

I remember the morning they came to our village.

It was still dark. The ducks stirred before the dogs did. Then came the voices, loud and angry, followed by screams. I ran outside to see Bao on the ground, blood in his hair, a boot print on his back. A man held Dung by the hair, yelling questions she didn't understand. They demanded names. Weapons. Information.

They found nothing.

But they burned our house anyway.

The worst part wasn't the fire or the beatings. It was the moment they made me kneel next to my children and told me to count backward from ten. If I made a mistake, they said, they'd shoot Bao. I couldn't speak. My mouth wouldn't work. I was shaking so hard I thought my bones would shatter.

Dung started counting for me.

She made it to five before they hit her with the butt of a rifle. They didn't shoot, but they laughed. One of them spat on me.

They left us alive, but only just.

Others weren't so lucky. Old man Thu, who once taught calligraphy to children, was found hanging from a tree two days later. His wife swore he had no politics. His crime? His nephew had once joined the National Liberation Front. That was enough.

I tried to find someone to report what happened. I tried to talk to an American adviser who sometimes came with aid workers. He said he didn't know anything about Phoenix. That it must have been a rogue unit.
But the killings continued.

We found a list once, buried near the village school. Names of villagers marked with red stamps. American documents. Coordinates. They weren't targeting soldiers. They were targeting anyone who might resist, who might speak out, who might imagine something better.

By 1970, over twenty people from our village had been killed. Some were shot. Others stabbed. A few poisoned. One woman's baby was drowned in the well. They said she had harbored a Viet Cong courier.

We learned to speak less. To look at the ground when trucks passed. To bury the truth with the bodies.

Years later, after the Americans left, I heard someone say the Phoenix Program had killed more than 20,000 people. They called it intelligence. A necessary evil. They said it helped shorten the war. I wonder what they would have said to my daughter, who never again looked a soldier in the eye.

Or to Bao, who still wakes in the night, whispering numbers backward.

They say memory is a river, always flowing. But mine is a flood.

The water still carries pieces of him—my husband, my neighbors, my stolen peace.

And I will never forget how the river ran red.

Chapter Seven

Operation Condor – South America (1975–1989)

Operation Condor, aimed to persecute and eliminate political, social, trade-union and student activists from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil. It was coordinated with dictatorships from 8 countries and led by the CIA.

This program empowered dictators and suppressed any dissent or rebellion with disappearances, torture, death squads and pyschological warfare. This operation ran for close to 15 years.

"The Vanishing Point"

Jorge Alvarez, journalist from Buenos Aires

They took her on a Thursday.

The sun was warm that morning in Buenos Aires, one of those perfect autumn days that makes you forget anything bad could ever happen. My wife, Camila, kissed me on the cheek before walking to the corner market to buy bread. I stayed behind, editing an article I'd written the night before —an exposé about political prisoners who were disappearing in Uruguay. She never came home.

At first, I thought she'd been delayed. Maybe the bakery had a long line. Maybe she'd stopped by her mother's place. But by dusk, the sky turned purple, and she still hadn't returned. I called the hospital, then the police. They

told me nothing. A clerk at the precinct looked up from his typewriter and said flatly, “Maybe she went somewhere.”

But I knew what had happened.

I had known it was coming. We all had. Argentina was suffocating. In 1976, the military seized power, and the junta began erasing people with terrifying efficiency. First came the arrests. Then the silences. Then the rumors—flights over the Atlantic, bodies dumped from helicopters, secret torture chambers in government buildings.

They called it Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. But to us, it was the death of air.

And behind it all, like a hand guiding the knife, was Operation Condor—a transnational conspiracy of death, forged in the shadows by military regimes from Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia. With CIA backing, these governments created an international assassination and intelligence network to eliminate dissidents, activists, students, and journalists. People like me. People like Camila.

Our phones had been tapped for months. I knew because I could hear the faint click every time I picked up the receiver. I had written too much. Asked too many questions. In 1975, I interviewed a Chilean refugee who had fled after Pinochet’s coup. The piece never saw print. My editor said it was too dangerous. But Camila insisted we keep the notes.

“Someone will want the truth someday,” she said.

It turns out she was right.

But it came at a price.

I searched for her for weeks. Went to the prisons, hospitals, military barracks. I bribed officials. I gave my last pesos to a man who said he'd seen her at ESMA—the Naval Mechanics School, which had become a torture center disguised as a military academy. He described a woman who looked like her. She had bruises on her wrists and was kept in a blindfold. He said she asked about her son—our son, Matías.

The pain was a living thing inside me.

I stopped sleeping. I stopped writing. Every night I sat in the dark, waiting for the knock at the door. But it never came. I was nothing to them. A man they had already broken by taking what he loved most.

And I wasn't alone.

Every week, I met mothers in the plaza—Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo—women with white scarves, clutching faded photographs of children who had vanished. We didn't chant. We just walked in silence around the square, as soldiers stood nearby with guns and smirks. They called us mad. Said our children had gone abroad, or joined terrorists. But we knew the truth.

We were marching through the heart of a nightmare.

What made it worse was knowing the Americans helped build it.

Operation Condor was their blueprint.

The CIA trained our torturers. They shared intelligence with our secret police. They provided equipment, money, silence. I later read documents that showed just how deep it went—Henry Kissinger advising Latin American dictators to “make the economy scream,” turning a blind eye as thousands disappeared. The U.S. embassy sent regular updates back to Langley: who had been taken, who had been killed, how the “stabilization” was progressing.
We were nothing but pawns in their Cold War.

And they killed us with precision.

Camila was declared dead in 1981, though no body was ever found. A government official said she had been “lost during interrogation.” I laughed when I heard that. How do you lose a person in a locked room?

They buried her name in paperwork. Her memory in redacted files. But I remember her voice. Her laugh. The way she held Matías like the world might fall apart if she let go.

After the dictatorship fell, I testified in court. I gave them the names of officers I had tracked down. One of them had trained at the School of the Americas in Georgia. Another had been on the CIA’s payroll during the Dirty War. I watched them in the courtroom—old men, now. Frail, quiet. I thought I would feel peace seeing them in chains.

But I didn’t.

Because nothing could bring her back.

Matías is grown now. He teaches history in Córdoba. He once asked me if his mother would have liked the man he became.

“She would’ve died for you,” I told him. “And she did.”

Operation Condor may be forgotten by most, but not by us. Not by those who walk the Plaza . Not by those who saw their lives erased by invisible ink.
The Americans said it was about security. Stability. Anti-communism. But we were never dangerous. We were poets, teachers, musicians, students. We were believers in a better world. And for that, we were hunted like animals.
There’s a point in grief where pain becomes ritual. I still walk that plaza sometimes. My steps are slower now, but my purpose is the same. To remember. To resist.

Camila’s face is etched in my memory like stone.

And I will carry her story until I vanish, too.

Chapter Eight

Support for Pinochet in Chile (1973)

In 1973,the CIA set forth an operation to overthrow democratically elected President Salvador Allende and install military dictator Augusto Pinochet to protect U.S. economic interests and prevent leftist policies.

Allende was killed and thousands of people were tortured, killed, or “disappeared.” This led to decades of authoritarian rule, torture centers, and mass graves.

“We Played Guitars While the Guns Took Aim”

Santiago, September 11, 1973

Camila Jorquera, 29, folk singer and mother of one

We sang for bread. For justice. For the right to dream without fear. I was not a soldier, nor a politician. I was a woman with calloused fingertips and a voice trained in the kitchens and courtyards of Santiago. My name is Camila Jorquera, and once, I believed that a song could change the world.

On the morning of September 11th, 1973, I woke early to prepare for the rally outside La Moneda Palace. My guitar leaned against the wall, its strings still humming from the night before when I’d sung to my daughter beneath a threadbare blanket. The song was a lullaby—soft, sweet, and filled with promises I had no idea I wouldn’t be able to keep.

The sky was orange that morning, a calm lie before the storm. In the streets, people gathered—miners, mothers, students, old men with worn hats—united in fragile hope. We came for Salvador Allende, the man who had dared to dream with us. A doctor turned president, he spoke to us like we mattered. Bread for all, dignity for workers, schools for children. It felt like something new was blooming in Chile.

But in the distance, I heard the first unnatural thunder—rotor blades slicing the air like knives. The songs died on our lips. The jets screamed overhead, and then we saw it: *La Moneda*, our Palace, burning. Bombs fell like they were dropped by God Himself, though we knew whose hands guided them. America. The CIA. We had heard rumors of their hands in our politics, whispers of bribes, of plans. But none of us believed it would come to this. Not war in our streets. Not bombs on our president.

But they did it. The Americans helped plan it. They funneled money, influence, and lies into our country until everything we'd built cracked beneath their boots. They didn't even try to hide it. To them, our democracy was inconvenient. Allende was inconvenient. A man who gave copper mines back to our people? Who wanted medicine and housing instead of foreign investors? No. That was enough to paint a target on his back.

As the bombs fell, I was standing in the plaza, guitar in hand. I started to sing—not out of courage, but because I didn't know what else to do. The others joined in, trembling voices raised against the roar of death. We sang *"Venceremos"*—we shall overcome—even as soldiers poured into the streets like shadows with guns.
And then they opened fire.

A boy beside me fell. He had a red flag in his hand and a hole in his chest. His blood soaked the lyrics I had scribbled the night before. I screamed but kept playing, my fingers shaking on the strings. Another bullet cracked the air, and someone behind me dropped. Chaos swallowed us. People ran. Some fought back with rocks. Others just cried.

I saw tanks roll past like iron monsters. I saw a man beaten to death in front of me for wearing a union badge. His name was Javier—I had sung at his daughter's wedding.

My husband, Luis, was taken that afternoon. We had been looking for each other in the chaos when soldiers stopped him. "Communist," they hissed, like it was a curse. Luis was a baker. He made bread and jokes, not revolutions. They beat him with rifle butts and dragged him away. I screamed his name until my throat tore.

I never saw him again.

I searched for him in every hospital and every morgue. I offered bribes I couldn't afford. I walked until my shoes fell apart. Days passed. Weeks. A neighbor whispered they'd seen him at Estadio Nacional—the stadium turned prison. A place where songs once echoed now filled with screams.

Then they came for me.

They kicked down my door before dawn. My daughter, barely a year old, was asleep in my arms. They tore her from me. "You sang at protests," the soldier spat. "That makes you a traitor."

They dragged me to the stadium. The same stadium where I had once performed for thousands, where applause had

rung like thunder. Now, it was a hellhole. Blood stained the concrete where people once danced. The locker rooms were filled with the stench of sweat, fear, and death.
They forced us into cells—dozens of women crammed into tiny spaces. You could barely breathe. At night, they came for us one by one. Some never returned.

They asked me for names. “Who were you working with? What foreigners helped you? Where are the weapons?” I had none. I had only songs. They didn’t believe me.
They tortured me with electric wires. They strapped me to a table and jolted my body until my vision blurred and my voice turned to ash. They said music was a weapon. That my lullabies were communist sedition.

I was pregnant.

I didn’t know it until the pain twisted in a way that wasn’t from the wires. My body had become a battlefield. Sometimes, I would press my palm to my belly and sing under my breath, hoping my unborn child could hear something other than screams. I sang of rivers, of trees, of hope. I sang lullabies for the life I didn’t know I’d be able to give her.

I watched friends disappear. Ana, who had danced barefoot in the university square. Marta, who painted murals of Allende. Gone. Just names now. Ghosts.

When they finally released me, it was not out of mercy. They thought I would die anyway. I was left on the side of the road like trash, bruised and bloodied, barely able to stand. I crawled home.

My house was gone. Neighbors had vanished. Santiago had become a graveyard pretending to be a city.

A priest took me in. He didn't ask questions. He just gave me soup and silence. Weeks later, I gave birth to a daughter.

I named her **Esperanza**—Hope.

She never met her father.

Sometimes, she asks why he's not in photos. Why he never sings with us. I tell her stories of warm bread and sunrises, of laughter that filled our kitchen. I do not tell her how he died. I do not tell her that the CIA helped kill him.
But I remember.

I remember that they trained Pinochet's men. That they taught torture techniques in secret camps. That they armed the butchers. That Henry Kissinger said, *"I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."*

Irresponsibility? We voted. We dreamed. We wanted dignity. That was our crime.

Now I sing in secret. In dark rooms with cracked windows. With others who survived. We whisper songs to keep the memory alive. Not because we believe they'll change the world anymore, but because they're all we have left.
Every note is a grave marker. Every lyric a name.
The CIA buried thousands of us beneath their war for control. They called it "freedom." They said it was to protect democracy. But they burned our ballots. They silenced our voices. They murdered our dreams.

They turned our songs into screams.

But still—I sing. For Luis. For the boy with the red flag. For the women who never returned from the stadium.

For Esperanza.

Because one day, I hope the world will listen.

Not just to the melody,

But to the silence it replaced.

Chapter Nine

Afghanistan Mujahideen Funding (1979–1989)

As the Soviet Union was fighting Afghan militias, the CIA started to arm and train Afghan Islamist fighters to bleed the Russians during their occupation of Afghanistan. Billions of dollars were funneled into militias which led to a rise of warlords, widespread civilian deaths, and the eventual empowerment of extremist groups like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

"They Taught Him How to Kill"

Kunar Province, 1983

Zahra Wahidi, 33, schoolteacher turned refugee

I used to teach children how to write their names. Now, I write the names of the dead in my prayers each night, hoping God still listens.

My name is Zahra Wahidi, and once, I believed in learning. In the beauty of books, of soft-spoken wisdom passed from mother to child, from teacher to student. I believed we could raise a new Afghanistan—not perfect, but peaceful. And then the world came crashing through our mountains with bombs and guns, and my son learned how to kill before he learned how to shave.

They say the Soviets were the first devils. And yes, they were monsters—steel beasts that breathed fire. Their helicopters circled above our village like vultures, dropping death on our rooftops without warning. I saw children's

limbs scattered like firewood. I saw my neighbor's home split open like a pomegranate, his wife screaming into dust. Their soldiers treated us like insects. One day, they laughed as they shot at goats and boys just for sport, just to watch things die.

So when men came from Pakistan, bearing rifles and promises, we welcomed them.

They said they were *mujahideen*—freedom fighters. They said they came with the blessings of the Muslim world. What they didn't say was that behind them, across an ocean, sat men in suits who had never tasted our bread or buried our children—men from America, the CIA. They called it **Operation Cyclone**, like some divine wind meant to scatter our enemies. But it scattered everything: our families, our futures, our very souls.

At first, it seemed right. We were desperate. Our people needed help. The Soviets had tanks; we had shovels and prayer. The Americans gave us weapons. Rockets. Machine guns. Training. The money flowed through Pakistan like poison in a river, and it reached even our remote village in Kunar. We were told the Americans were helping us fight for freedom.

But what kind of freedom turns your son into a stranger?

Farid was twelve the first time he held a gun. I remember the day like a wound. One of the *commanders* came to our home. He wore a black turban and carried an American M16 like it was part of his body. He smiled too easily. He patted Farid on the head and said, *"A boy like this should serve Allah, not waste time in school."*

I told them my son was still a child. That he loved math, that he stayed up late reading under the blankets with a candle. I showed them his drawings—houses with gardens, trees with birds. They laughed. *“Books won’t drive out the Russians,”* they said. *“Bullets will.”*

They took him anyway. At first, it was for a few hours a day. Then it became days. Then weeks. When he came home, he was different.

He no longer smiled. His eyes were dark, vacant, like someone else was looking out through them. He used to tell me about his dreams—of being a teacher like me, of planting trees that grew so tall the birds would never leave. Now he only quoted sermons. He spoke of blood and heaven, of martyrdom and fire. He said things like, *“A man who dies killing infidels goes straight to paradise.”*

He was twelve.

I begged him to come back to school. He spat on my books. Said they were Western lies. That the Americans gave them guns for a reason, that knowledge was weakness and jihad was strength. They had poisoned his young mind. Not the Soviets. Not the Pakistanis. The Americans. The CIA paid to print these books of hatred. They flooded our world with Kalashnikovs and cassette tapes filled with sermons that glorified death. They trained boys to shoot, not think. And when the Soviets left? When the red flags came down and the tanks rolled out?

The guns stayed.

The men stayed.

But they no longer protected us.

The fighters, once heroes in our eyes, became something else. They burned the school where I had taught for eleven years. They stood outside with rifles and told us women should never teach. That Allah did not permit it. When I cried, they laughed and called me an agent of the West. They began taking our food. Our daughters. They set up checkpoints and demanded money, then beat those who didn't have it. They said it was *zakat*, but it was theft. They were not protectors. They were wolves who had tasted blood and found they liked it.

And my son was one of them.

Farid stopped coming home altogether. I heard he was in the mountains, guarding weapons caches. They said he had killed a man who refused to kneel and kiss the Quran. I didn't want to believe it. Not my boy. Not the child I had sung to in the moonlight, who once cried when a bird fell from the sky.

But he was gone. Not physically—his body still walked, still held a rifle—but everything else had been taken.
The Americans called it *"freedom fighting."*

I called it the beginning of hell.

Years passed. I lived like a ghost in the ruins of my village. Most of the other women had fled or been killed. The valley once filled with the sounds of laughter and children learning their letters now echoed only with gunfire and sermons shouted from loudspeakers. My classroom was rubble. My library, ash.

And yet, the Americans never returned. Not to rebuild. Not to take responsibility. They had done what they came to do—use our country as a chessboard to hurt their enemy. The CIA funneled over a billion dollars into the hands of warlords and radicals. They trained thousands of fighters. And when they were done, they left the pieces on the board to rot.

We were never people to them.

We were tools. Pawns. Disposable.

I heard one American official say once, years later, *"It was worth it."* He meant defeating the Soviets. But I wonder if he knew what that meant for us. Was it worth the schools burned? The sons lost? The minds twisted into believing that death is holy and education is sin?

Was it worth my son?

I eventually fled to Peshawar. I crossed the mountains with blisters on my feet and a sack of books on my back—the few that had survived. I settled in a refugee camp where the water ran brown and the nights never stopped howling. There, I tried to teach again. Just a few children, sitting in the dust, tracing letters in the dirt with sticks.

They asked me once, *"Why did the Americans help the bad men?"* I had no answer. Only a bitterness I couldn't explain. I never saw Farid again. Some say he died in a skirmish near Jalalabad. Others say he joined a new group, one that called itself *Taliban*. I don't know which is worse—him dead, or him still out there, believing that he is righteous, that his mother's voice was the voice of an enemy.

Sometimes I wake in the middle of the night, thinking I hear his voice calling me. *“Madar… Madar…”* But it is only the wind.

I hold on to one photograph—a grainy image of him at age nine, holding a book nearly as tall as his chest, smiling proudly beside a map of Afghanistan. That was before the Americans sent guns. Before the CIA helped pour gasoline onto our wounds and called it strategy.

They taught him how to kill.

But they never came back to mourn what they made.
And so I write. In notebooks. On scraps of paper. In my prayers. I write to remember. Because the world will forget, or pretend to. They will call it “policy.” They will hide behind words like “containment,” “strategy,” “freedom.” But I remember the truth.

We were a country of poets, farmers, teachers.

And they turned us into graves.

Chapter Ten

Iran-Contra Affair (1980s)

The Iran-Contra affair involved a complex web of covert operations, arms deals, and political maneuvering, ultimately highlighting a significant breach of US law and policy.

The CIA secretly funded Nicaraguan Contras (right-wing paramilitaries) by selling arms to Iran, despite U.S. bans and laws. As a result, thousands were killed and human rights abuses were rampant by the Contras. The Reagan administration was ultimately implicated in these illegal arms trades but there was little to no accountability.

"They Gave Them Guns. We Gave Them Our Lives."

Northern Nicaragua, 1986

Isabel Rivera, 16, Nicaraguan villager

I was holding my baby sister when they came—ghosts in black, armed with American guns and dead eyes. They didn't speak at first. They just pointed. And then the world split open with screaming, with fire, with blood. That was the night I stopped being a girl.

My name is Isabel Rivera. I was sixteen years old when the Contras came to our village. Sixteen. I still braided my hair every morning. I still believed in love songs. I still helped my mother grind corn by hand and watched the stars at night, wondering if God heard my whispered dreams.

That day, I was sitting outside, bouncing little Sofía on my lap while my cousin Maria hung laundry behind the house. Our village, San Miguelito, wasn't even on most maps. Just a cluster of wooden homes, two oxen, and a chapel that doubled as a school. We were not soldiers. We were not revolutionaries. We were farmers. Poor, tired, hungry—yes. But kind. We shared what we had. We prayed for rain. We stayed out of the war.

But the war did not stay out of us.

The Contras said we were "Sandinista sympathizers." I don't even know what that meant. My mother never voted. My uncle didn't know how to read. We weren't fighting for the government. We were fighting for survival.

But the Contras didn't care. They had come with orders. And with guns. American guns. American training. American money.

That night, as the sun slipped behind the hills, they emerged from the jungle—ten, maybe twelve of them, covered in black scarves and ammunition belts. One of them kicked over the cooking pot outside our home. Another raised a gun and fired it into the air. Panic scattered us like ants. My mother rushed toward us, yelling for us to run. I tried to move, but Sofía was screaming in my arms, her tiny body trembling. And then they were on us.

I remember my mother trying to shield us, stretching her arms wide like wings, like she could stop the bullets with her body. One of the men shoved her to the ground and stomped on her back. When she screamed, he shot her in the head.

I did not cry. Not then. I think my soul left my body for a while.

My cousin Maria was dragged by her hair into the center of the village. Her mother begged, clutching at their boots, crying, *“Por favor, no mi hija—please, not my daughter.”* They laughed. They tore Maria’s dress and forced her to the ground.

I turned away. But I could still hear her. And I can still hear her, to this day.

They set fire to our food stores—beans, rice, the dried corn we had saved through a season of drought. They torched the school. The flames swallowed everything, even the alphabet painted by the village children on the classroom walls.

They dragged my uncle into the street. He had a limp, an old wound from a farming accident. He was quiet, always humming to himself while he carved wooden toys. They accused him of being a Sandinista spy. He said nothing. So they cut out his tongue.

When they left, they left behind ashes, corpses, and silence. I sat in the dirt, still holding Sofía, who had fallen silent. Her cheeks were wet, not with tears—just soot and smoke. I pressed my hand to her chest to feel if she was breathing. She was. Barely.

We buried my mother in a shallow grave behind the chapel. My cousin Maria would not speak for weeks. My uncle bled to death the next morning. We wrapped him in his hammock and placed him beside the others.

It wasn't until later—months later—that I learned where the Contras got their weapons. From America. From the country whose name was like thunder in the sky, so big, so far away we thought maybe it didn't really exist.

But it did exist. And it reached into our lives like a hand through a curtain and strangled us.

They called it a secret operation. *The Iran-Contra Affair,* they said. The CIA had helped sell missiles to Iran—yes, Iran—and used the money to fund these monsters. They funneled cash and arms through Israel and Honduras, training these men, unleashing them on villages like mine. And when the truth came out, the Americans didn't fall to their knees in shame. No. They used words like *freedom* and *containment* and *anti-communism.*

They never once said *Isabel.*

They never once said *Maria.*

They never asked what we wanted.

Do you want to know what we wanted?

We wanted to live.

We wanted to farm our land and raise our children and go to bed with full stomachs. We wanted pencils instead of bullets. We wanted to dance at weddings instead of weep at funerals. We wanted to teach Sofía how to count stars and harvest mangoes.

We did not ask for guns. We did not ask for freedom from people we had never met, in a language we didn't speak, with bullets that bore no mercy.

After the massacre, the survivors gathered what was left. A cracked pot. A photo burned at the edges. A shoe. We fled north, across rivers and into the mountains, sleeping in trees, feeding on weeds and roots. We walked for days, barefoot, until we reached a camp near the border. There were others—dozens of them. Children with hollow eyes. Mothers with missing limbs. Entire villages turned to smoke.

We weren't alone.

That was the worst part.

The Contras had been doing this across the country—killing, raping, burning. Entire communities erased. And all the while, the Americans smiled on television and said they were spreading liberty. That they were standing against tyranny.

But what do you call the rape of a girl held at knifepoint? What do you call a mother shot through the head while clutching her baby?

I called it terrorism.

I called it genocide.

But they called it foreign policy.

I still live, somehow. I am older now, and I walk with a limp. The leg never healed properly. But I carry Sofía on my back

when she gets tired. I sing her the lullabies our mother sang, though my voice breaks sometimes in the middle.
I do not have much left. My village is gone. Maria lives in silence. My memories are stained with blood.

But I remember.

I remember everything.

And I write. I write because I must. Because no one will remember San Miguelito unless I do. Because the Contras destroyed more than homes—they tried to erase our stories. And the Americans—the CIA—they tried to bury us beneath the weight of their empire.
They gave them guns.
We gave them our lives.
And they never said sorry.
Not once.

Chapter Eleven

Central American Death Squads (1980s)

In the 19080s the CIA was active all throughout Central and South America and their favorite method of control was to arm and train right wing paramilitary death squads to terrorize and suppress leftist insurgencies.

Over 75,000 people were killed in El Salvador alone and U.S.-trained military units were responsible for atrocities Including massacres, torture and rape.

"The Night the Sky Closed In"

El Mozote, El Salvador – December 1981

Rosa Márquez, 10, sole survivor of the El Mozote massacre

I was ten years old when I stopped being a child.
Ten when I watched the world fall silent under gunfire.
Ten when I learned that the sky could bleed.

My name is Rosa Márquez. I used to live in El Mozote, a quiet village nestled in the hills of northern El Salvador. We were poor. We were peaceful. We had chickens and dogs, old radios and hammocks strung between trees. We had no army, no weapons, no politics. We had prayers and songs. We had mothers and grandfathers and small children who played with sticks in the dirt.

Then the soldiers came. And none of that mattered anymore.

It was December 1981. The nights were cold in the hills. I remember the wind making the trees sway like they were

whispering to each other. My little brother Miguel had a cough, and Mama wrapped him in a blanket made from old shirts. We ate a little rice, lit a candle, and listened to the radio crackle in the corner. The voice said something about guerrillas and war. But that was far away, or so we thought. We didn't know we were already surrounded.

The Atlacatl Battalion entered the village just after dawn. We thought they were government troops there to protect us from rebels. Some people even welcomed them. But they weren't there to protect anyone. They had come to kill.

They said they were "clearing out guerrillas." But there were no fighters in El Mozote. Only farmers and teachers and babies who had never seen a rifle. My father had died years before, so it was just Mama, Miguel, Abuela, and me. We didn't run. We had nothing to run from. We thought.

They went door to door, pulling people out. The men were separated from the women. My uncles were lined up in front of the school and forced to lie on the ground. I heard one of them cry out for his wife. A soldier laughed and kicked him in the ribs. Then the shooting began.

I held Miguel as tight as I could. Mama told me to stay close, to not speak, to pray.

They gathered all the girls in the village—me, my cousins, the daughters of our neighbors—and lined us up in front of the church. My cousin Clarita was twelve. She had just started to wear her hair up like the older girls. When they grabbed her by the arm and dragged her behind the church, she screamed so loud the birds scattered from the trees. We never saw her again.

Then they took my mother.

She held Miguel in her arms and begged. “Please,” she said. “He is just a baby. I am only a mother.” The soldier pointed his rifle and shot her in the mouth.

I didn’t even scream. I couldn’t.

Abuela grabbed me and shoved me under the bed in the corner of her house. She covered me with her body and whispered, “Don’t move. Don’t breathe.”

A few minutes later, they came. They didn’t even ask questions. They shot her where she lay, right above me. Her blood dripped onto my cheek. I stayed perfectly still.

And then I heard it.

They found Miguel.

He had been crying. He was only a baby. They didn’t care. A shot. A whimper. Silence.

I closed my eyes and felt my body go cold.

I stayed under that bed for two days.

I didn’t move when they dragged bodies from the houses and burned them in piles. I didn’t move when I smelled the smoke and heard dogs yelping in confusion. I didn’t move when I heard one of the soldiers laughing, saying, “Tell the gringos we did a good job.”

Because that’s what it was to them—a job. A mission. A strategy.

The Atlacatl Battalion was elite, they said. Special forces. Trained by the United States. Trained at the School of the Americas—what some called the “School of the Assassins.” Fort Benning, Georgia. They learned how to interrogate, how to torture, how to kill and make it clean. They were proud graduates. Some even wore American patches on their uniforms.

The CIA knew. The Pentagon knew. Washington knew.

They armed them, funded them, trained them, unleashed them.

And we? We were statistics. Collateral. A small price in the name of fighting communism.

When I finally crawled out, the village was silent. Utterly, sickeningly silent. The dogs didn’t bark. The birds didn’t return. The sun itself seemed too ashamed to shine.

I walked through the ashes of my life. The house where Mama used to boil corn was a charred husk. The school where I practiced writing was just a blackened frame. The chapel where Clarita had once lit candles now smelled of death.

I was the only one left.

I walked for hours until I reached another village. My legs bled. My throat burned. My eyes didn’t see straight. When I collapsed on the dirt, a woman picked me up and wrapped me in a shawl.

I didn’t speak for weeks.
I couldn’t.

But I remembered.

I remembered everything.

Eventually, word got out. A few brave journalists made their way to El Mozote. They took photos. Counted bones. They found hundreds of bodies—entire families, children with bullet holes in their skulls, women with their dresses torn. Over 800 people murdered in one December morning.

And the United States?

They denied it.

Ronald Reagan's government said it was propaganda. Said it didn't happen. Said the communists were lying. The CIA issued reports saying no evidence could confirm a massacre.

No evidence?

My body was evidence.
My brother's blood was evidence.
The silence that haunts the hills of El Mozote is evidence.

It took years for the truth to be acknowledged. But by then, most of the world had moved on. Another war. Another country. Another lie.

I never went back.

How could I?

I live now in a city where no one knows me. I clean houses for people who speak English, who don't ask about scars. I have no family. I have no birthday. Time stopped for me that day.

But I do have one thing: memory.

I remember Mama's last words.
I remember the sound of Clarita's scream.
I remember how the sky closed in—not with clouds, but with smoke and the roar of helicopters paid for by men who never learned our names.

They called it counterinsurgency. They called it necessary.

I call it a massacre.

I call it murder.

And I will carry it until I die.

Chapter Twelve

CIA Torture Program (Post-9/11)

Since 9/11 thousands of people have been kidnapped, jailed, tortured and killed. This has happened in US bases like Guantanamo Bay and at a host of CIA Black sites around the world.

The CIA also established relationships with countries like Syria and Egypt and had people tortured or killed there.

"The Room Without a Name"

Undisclosed Black Site, 2003

Omar al-Din, 41, Pakistani electronics repairman abducted on mistaken identity

They took me in the night. No warrant. No charge. No voice to tell me why. Just the snap of plastic ties, the hiss of a hood, and a blow to the ribs that knocked the air from my lungs.

My name is—or was—**Omar al-Din.** I was 41 years old, a father of two, a repairman who spent his days fixing radios, rewiring fans, and unlocking forgotten cell phones in a dusty corner of Rawalpindi. I drank tea with my neighbors. I brought mangoes home when I could afford them. I kissed my daughter on the forehead each morning before school. That was my life.

Until the Americans came.

I was walking home from work when a van pulled up and three men in black masks grabbed me off the street. I

shouted. People saw. No one moved. They beat me, shoved something foul-smelling under my nose, and then—nothing.

I awoke in darkness. In cold.

Stripped. Shackled. Alone.

The first thing they asked me: *“Where is Osama?”*

I laughed. I thought it was a mistake. Some sick joke. I said, *“I fix stereos. I don't know anything about that.”*

They hit me.

Then they asked again.

“Where is the bomb?”

I didn’t know.

I didn’t know anything.

That didn’t matter.

They never said where I was. Never told me what time it was. The room had no windows. The lights stayed on constantly—except when they didn't, and then it was pitch black for days. I only knew time by how often they came to break me.

They tied me to a wooden board, flat on my back. A man held my jaw while another poured water over my face, slowly at first, then more, then more, until my body began to scream for air. My lungs panicked before my mind did. I choked. I flailed. I bucked against the straps.

They called it “enhanced interrogation.”
I called it drowning.
Over and over. Again and again.

Then they left me naked in a cold room. The floor felt like ice. I shook uncontrollably. I bit my lip to stop my teeth from clattering and split it open. I bled down my chest and couldn’t even wipe it away.

I hallucinated. I saw my daughter standing over me, reaching for me. Then she caught fire and melted. I screamed for her until my voice failed.

They asked questions with dead eyes.

“Where are the weapons?”
“Who are your contacts in Al Qaeda?”
“What is your mission?”

Every day. The same questions.

I gave them the same answer: “I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know.”

Until I couldn’t take it anymore.

And then I lied.

I told them I had met a man at the market who once spoke Arabic. I said I thought he mentioned a “plan.” I gave them a name I made up—**Yasir Khan**—a boy I had known from childhood who had once stolen candy from a vendor. I made up a mosque, a date, a whisper. I gave them what they wanted to hear, not because it was true, but because I wanted the water to stop. Because I wanted to be warm. Because I wanted to be allowed to sleep without screaming.

They wrote it down like gospel.

And that became “proof.”

It didn’t matter that it wasn’t real. It didn’t matter that they had no evidence. The lie became its own truth because they needed it to be.

I don’t know how long I was kept there. Weeks? Months? Years?

They moved me from place to place—different cells, different walls, the same hell. Sometimes there were other prisoners. Sometimes I heard them scream through the walls. One man spoke to himself all night, repeating the names of his children until his voice was hoarse.

Another sobbed for his mother.

I stopped asking for anything. They brought me food that tasted like plastic and water that smelled of rust. I stopped eating for days. At one point I began pulling at my fingernails, one by one. I think I hoped that if I bled enough, someone might finally see me.

But no one came.

Eventually, the torture stopped—not because they realized they were wrong, but because I had given them what they wanted. They told themselves I was “neutralized.” That they had extracted value.

I sat in a box for over a year afterward. A steel coffin where the air never moved. No books. No voice. No sunlight. Just the faint sound of a humming pipe, and my mind slowly rotting.

When they released me, it was as silent as when they took me. They dropped me on a road outside Islamabad with a blindfold and a sealed envelope. No apology. No explanation. Just *“You’re free.”*

Free?

My wife had remarried. My son did not recognize me. He was twelve when I vanished. He was sixteen when I returned. He had grown into a man without me. My daughter stared at me like I was a ghost. I suppose I was.

I had no home, no job, no name that meant anything anymore. The shop had long been sold. The neighbors avoided me. They thought I had done something terrible. No one disappears unless they’re guilty. That’s what they said.

I didn’t even recognize myself in the mirror.

My beard was tangled. My teeth were chipped. My skin looked like wax. My eyes—my God, my eyes—I could not hold my own gaze for longer than a second.

For years I could not sleep without panic clawing at my throat. A knock on the door would send me hiding beneath the table like a child. I flinched at water. I jumped at white noise. I sat in closets just to feel the walls around me.

They took away my language. Not Arabic. Not Urdu. I mean the language of normal life. How to talk about the weather. How to laugh at jokes. How to say *“I’m fine”* and almost mean it.

And no one was held accountable.

They called it a mistake.

A mistake?

When the CIA finally released the Senate torture report, they blacked out my name. *“Detainee #24.”* That’s what I became in their history. A footnote. A blurred shadow in a thousand pages of sanitized evil.

Not a father.
Not a husband.
Not a man with a trade and a love for radio circuits.
Just *Detainee #24.*

They never said they were sorry.

They never gave me a cent.

The Americans said they were fighting for “freedom.” That they were protecting the world from terror. But in their war for freedom, they made me forget what it was to be human.

They tortured innocence until it confessed to fiction.
They destroyed a life to defend a lie.

And I am still here.
Somewhere between who I was and who I am now.
Between silence and rage.
Between forgetting and remembering.

The room I lived in had no name.
No number. No sign.
But it exists.
It exists inside me, always.

And I am still trying to find the door out.

Chapter Thirteen

Extraordinary Rendition (Post-9/11)

As pressure mounted on the CIA from home they implemented “extraordinary rendition” programs and detained and transported suspects to foreign countries for interrogation, often where torture is legal or tolerated.

Hundreds kidnapped without trial, held incommunicado, and tortured. Many were innocent or held on mistaken identity. Legal accountability remains nonexistent.

“I Remember the Smell of My Own Burning Flesh”

Cairo, 2005

Abdelrahman Said, 36, software engineer abducted in Sweden and sent to Egypt

They never read me my rights.
There were no rights.
Only silence.
Then screaming.

My name is—or was—**Abdelrahman Said.** I was born in Alexandria, raised by teachers, and educated in Europe. I became a software engineer, one of the lucky ones, the ones who made it out and got good jobs, clean apartments, dreams bigger than borders. I lived in Malmö, Sweden, with my wife and our newborn daughter, **Yasmine**. I drank coffee on my balcony, wrote code for Scandinavian banks, paid taxes, and tried to live a quiet life.

And then one day, in December 2005, I stepped out of a technology conference—and never came home.

I had just turned off my phone to board a tram when three men approached me. Well-dressed, clean-shaven. One flashed a badge. Another placed his hand gently but firmly on my shoulder. I barely had time to ask, *"Is there a problem?"* before they shoved me into a black van parked behind the conference center.

I shouted. I struggled. I kicked at the door. No one came.

I was blindfolded, handcuffed, and hooded. I remember the engine running. I remember someone speaking Swedish with a stiff American accent. I remember thinking, *This must be a mistake.*

It wasn't.

The Americans called it **extraordinary rendition.**

I called it kidnapping.

I was flown out of Sweden on a private jet, my body duct-taped to the floor, unable to move, my limbs growing numb as the hum of engines filled my ears. I lost track of time. It could have been hours, or days.

I woke up in Cairo.

I knew the smell immediately—dust, diesel, sweat, rusted pipes. I was taken to a facility that didn't officially exist. No signs. No clocks. No names.

Just corridors painted the color of infection.

They sat me in a room tiled like a morgue. The walls wept with condensation. I was still in the same clothes from Sweden, soaked in my own sweat and piss. A man with thick sunglasses stood in front of me. His voice was casual, almost friendly.

"You're going to tell us about the plot."

“What plot?” I asked. “What do you mean?”

He smiled. “The one we know you're a part of.”

I said I was a programmer. I said I was Egyptian by birth but had lived in Sweden for years. I begged them to call the embassy, to call my wife. I gave them the name of my company, the name of my boss, the name of my daughter, the hospital where she was born. But none of it mattered.

He nodded to someone behind me.

The first blow came quick. A cable across the back of my neck. Then one to the spine. Then two across the soles of my feet. I screamed. I hadn’t even finished my sentence.

They worked in shifts. Some beat me with sticks, others with cables. They wrapped wires around my fingers and ran electric current through them until my hands seized. I bit my tongue hard enough to bleed.

They kept the lights on all the time. Or turned them off for days. I couldn’t tell the difference between dream and waking. At some point, they began to play the sound of a baby crying on a loop—over and over and over.

The first time I heard it, I thought it was real.
My daughter, Yasmine.

My heart raced. I cried for her. I screamed into the floor, *“Yasmine! Baba is here!”*

But it wasn’t her.

It was a recording.

They had asked me about her, early on. What was her name? Her age? Did I miss her? They took the answers and weaponized them. Turned them into soundwaves designed to unmake me.

And they did.

They hung me by my arms from the ceiling until my shoulders dislocated. My body swung like meat. I screamed for water. They spat at me.

Then came the car battery.

They clamped it to my genitals and turned it on. The smell—my own burning flesh—still curls inside my nose on cold nights. I remember smoke. I remember the nausea. I remember the laughter.

I confessed to anything.

I told them I was part of a terror cell that didn’t exist. That I had met Osama bin Laden in a park in Copenhagen. That I was building bombs in JavaScript. That I had friends in Paris, in Cairo, in Dubai. That we planned to destroy shopping malls, bridges, football stadiums. All lies. All fantasies conjured under threat of another jolt of electricity.

They wrote everything down.

And they said, “Good. Now we’re getting somewhere.”

For **fourteen months**, I was kept in that purgatory.

No lawyer.
No charges.
No judge.
No daylight.

Just questions.
And pain.
And silence.

I began to forget who I was. They called me "Subject 1357." They never said my name again. I repeated it to myself like a prayer. *“Abdelrahman. Abdelrahman. Abdelrahman.”* I worried that if I forgot it, I would die.

I stopped keeping track of the days. My body shrank. My hair fell out. My gums bled. I talked to the insects that crawled across the floor. I hallucinated a conversation with my wife. She told me she had waited. That she still loved me. That Yasmine was walking now.

That was a lie my brain gave me to survive.

One morning, or maybe night, they came without warning. No beatings. No questions. No ropes. Just two guards who pulled me to my feet and dragged me out.

They threw me into the back of a van and drove for hours.

I was dropped outside the Istanbul airport. No passport. No money. Just the clothes I had been tortured in and a small envelope containing a one-way ticket to Sweden and five hundred euros.

There was no explanation.

When I returned to Sweden, the embassy staff refused to meet with me. My wife was… different. She had waited for months, filed reports, called every office imaginable, begged every official, but no one gave her answers. She told me that Yasmine stopped asking about me. That she had begun calling another man *“Baba.”*

My body had returned, but I hadn’t.

She tried to touch my hand. I flinched.
Yasmine tried to hug me. I wept.
She cried when I spoke her name. She cried when I tried to hold her.

They had taken me from her once.
Now she pulled away as if I were a stranger.

And I was.

I couldn’t sleep in beds. I slept on the floor. I kept the lights on, always. I couldn’t walk through airports without vomiting. I screamed when I heard crying, especially babies. My hands shook every time I held a fork. I couldn’t work. I couldn’t laugh. I couldn’t pray.

I was a ghost.

Eventually, she left. I don’t blame her.

I tried to file a legal complaint. I went to court in Stockholm. They told me it was *classified.* That the Americans wouldn’t confirm or deny anything. That Sweden had “cooperated under international obligations.” They said it was *a gray area.*

They called it a mistake.

No apology. No admission. Just silence.
The kind that rots the soul.

I live alone now. I fix laptops for cash. I speak little. I eat little. I laugh at nothing.

I carry a photo of Yasmine from before—when she was still mine. When she hadn't yet learned to fear me.

The Americans called it "extraordinary."
Extraordinary rendition.
Extraordinary cruelty.
Extraordinary loss.

But to me, it was nothing extraordinary.

It was hell.

And it still echoes.

In the humming of a vent.
In the smell of melted skin.
In the silence of my daughter's rejection.

In the unbearable truth that in their war for freedom,
they destroyed the very thing that made me human.

Chapter Fourteen

Drone Assassinations (2004–present)

As technology increased, so did the killing by America. Drone warfare became an easy way to kill suspected terrorists using unmanned drones based on intelligence, without trials or confirmation.

Thousands of people were killed including many civilians. Entire families were wiped out based on metadata or mistaken identity.

This program often has very little accountability and there is. No clear number even of how many people have been killed and how many of them were innocent. For this reason, estimates of civilian casualties from U.S. drone strikes vary widely, and range from a few thousand to over 10,000 people.

"The Fire Fell From the Sky"

Al-Jawf Province, Yemen – 2012

Samira Al-Hadid, 14, survivor of drone strike that killed her family

The buzzing never stops.

It hums like a mosquito too high to swat, a sound that sinks into your bones until you can't tell if it's real or just something your mind replayed too many times. We used to fall asleep beneath the stars. My mother would point out the constellations and tell stories—about great horses, wise kings, and guardians in the sky. We believed those lights would keep us safe.

But now, we fear the sky more than anything else.

My name is **Samira Al-Hadid**. I was fourteen years old the night the fire fell from the heavens. Fourteen, full of questions about the world, dreams about cities I'd only seen in pictures, and innocent enough to believe that the war couldn't find me in our little clay-brick house in Al-Jawf.

We were nobody.
Just farmers.
Just a family.

My father, Ahmed, raised goats and figs. My mother, Layla, made flatbread and lentil stew that smelled like safety. My older brother, **Tariq**, was seventeen—he joked all the time, even when things were hard. My baby sister, Amina, had just learned to speak. Her favorite word was *"again."*

That night—*the last night*—we were gathered for dinner. The air smelled of cumin and woodsmoke. We sat cross-legged on the rug, eating from one bowl, laughing as Tariq made fun of how loud Baba chewed.

Amina giggled so hard she spilled her cup of water. Mama clucked her tongue, but she was smiling.

And then the world ended.

There was no warning. Just a sharp whine above us, louder than usual, like the buzzing had teeth. And then—the ceiling vanished. Light, searing and violent, crashed into our home.

I don't remember flying.
Only fire.

I woke up outside, skin blistering, my ears ringing with a silence too deep to be real. It was like God had forgotten to put me back together properly.

I was screaming without knowing it. My body was on fire. My clothes clung to my skin, and my throat felt like it had been scrubbed raw with ash. There were pieces of my home scattered across the sand.

And then I saw him.

My father—what was left of him—his legs still twitching, ten meters from the rest of him.

My mother was near the corner, her arms wrapped around Amina's tiny head. Her body was gone from the waist down. But her arms were still holding.

Tariq was not whole.

There was no ambulance. No medics. No officials. Just neighbors running through the dark, pulling rubble away with their bare hands. Someone wrapped me in a blanket. Someone else threw water on my burns.

I kept asking where my family was.

No one answered.

The next day, I learned what killed them.

A drone strike.

They said it was a "precision strike."
They said there was a terrorist in our home.
They said someone on a list—typed up in a faraway office—had visited our house once, maybe, months ago.

There was no trial. No court. No judge. Just a **name**.
A **signal**.
And a **click**.

Some man I will never know, watching a screen in a military base in Nevada or Virginia or Germany, pressed a button.
A drone dropped its payload.

And my family was erased.

We weren't told why. We weren't even told who. Only whispers among officials, then silence. The U.S. government never acknowledged our names. Never said sorry. Never admitted a mistake. We were civilians. We were innocent.

But innocence means nothing to machines in the sky.

They call it "targeted killing."
I call it **murder**.

They said the strike was "surgical." That it "eliminated a threat." But they didn't see the pieces of Amina's crib embedded in the sand. They didn't smell the burning hair, the boiling blood. They didn't hear my mother's last heartbeat as she died holding what was left of her daughter.

The Americans never came. Not to ask. Not to explain. Not to look me in the eyes and tell me why my mother was turned into vapor.

Some journalists arrived weeks later. They took photos. Asked questions. One of them wept when I told my story. Another said, *"Collateral damage."*

I asked what that meant.

He looked away.

Since then, I've lived with an uncle who took me in. I try not to be a burden. I wake up early and sweep the sand out of the tents. I fetch water. I keep quiet.

But at night, the buzzing returns.

It's always there—just above the horizon, like a phantom that forgot to disappear. Even when there is no drone, I hear it. A memory lodged between my bones. I've seen others lose their minds from it. A girl in the next village threw herself into a well because she said the sky was watching her sleep.

I stopped looking up.
I stopped believing the stars could save us.

Every time the sky is clear, I hide. Blue skies are no longer beautiful—they are dangerous. Cloudy days feel like a gift. Rain is a blessing. Thunder is protection.

I haven't seen stars since that night. I don't want to.

Sometimes I imagine what I would say if I could speak to the man who pushed the button. Maybe he had a family too. Maybe he packed a lunch that morning, kissed his child on the forehead, and clocked in to kill strangers.

Would he look at me?

Would he say my name?

Samira. My name is Samira.
I was a child.
I loved stories.

I laughed at my brother's jokes.
I ate lentil stew.

Would he tell me I mattered?

Or would he simply say, *"Target neutralized"*?

There is no justice. The drone strikes continue. Yemen bleeds from a thousand wounds—each one blamed on someone else. The Americans point at "bad guys." The Saudis blame Iran. The rebels blame the West. And the dead?

We just rot quietly in the sand.

I speak now because I must.

I speak for Amina, whose head was smaller than my hand.
I speak for Mama, who wrapped her arms around death and refused to let it touch her baby alone.
I speak for Baba, who never got to finish chewing his bread.
I speak for Tariq, whose last joke never made it to the punchline.

I speak because the buzzing has not stopped.

And maybe, if I shout loud enough into this endless silence, someone—somewhere—will hear.

Will remember.

And maybe one day, when the sky is quiet again, I will be able to look up and not flinch.

But until then, I carry the fire with me.

Chapter Fifteen

Operation Mockingbird

In the 1970s, the CIA launched an operation designed to control the media by compromising journalists and ultimately turning them into assets.

Dozens of journalists were eventually exposed as CIA informants or propagandists which undermined public trust in journalism. This is almost certainly still ongoing in altered form.

"My Typewriter Became a Weapon"

Washington, D.C., 1974

Thomas Kearney, 42, journalist at a major Washington newspaper

I once believed in the invincibility of the written word. At forty-two, I had worked my way from printing obituaries at a small New England daily to writing political analysis for one of Washington's most respected newspapers. I wore ink on my fingers like a badge of honor. My pen was his sword, my typewriter the pulpit. I believed that democracy depended on truth—and that truth depended on men like me. But by 1974, I was no longer writing for the people. I was writing for the shadows. The lie started with a quiet envelope. And ended with the death of everything I once held sacred.

It was a Wednesday, gray and wet like the day had forgotten to wake up. My editor dropped an envelope on my desk. No name. No return address. Inside, a single page, typed. A lead on a story about a "foreign plot" to infiltrate labor

unions. No byline. No sourcing. But it had all the trappings of urgency.

“You’re the guy for this,” my editor said with a shrug. “It came from upstairs.”

That’s when I first felt the crack—not in the story, but in myself. Because even as I read that anonymous memo, I knew something was off. I’d chased truth long enough to smell fiction in a fed line. But I didn’t question it. Not out loud. Not then. I wrote the piece. It ran on the front page two days later.

The next envelope came the following week.

Then came the phone call.

He said he was with “a federal office.” Never named which. We met in a basement bar near Dupont Circle. He didn’t give his name, just flashed credentials I didn’t recognize and spoke like he already knew my whole life—my college essays, my divorce, my habit of staying too late at the newsroom.

“I know you want to protect the country,” he said, sliding a folder across the table. “So do we.”

The folder was filled with documents—some real, some clearly fabricated, but carefully curated to look just credible enough. “Foreign agitators,” “anti-American intellectuals,” “Soviet-backed civil rights leaders.” I was told my articles could help “shape the public narrative” before things got out of control. That my byline would lend “legitimacy.” That I’d be “doing my part.”

And then the money came. Quietly, indirectly. A bump in my freelance rate. A book deal that fell into my lap. A column syndicated overseas. No one said the words, but I understood the bargain.

Write what they give you. Don't ask questions.

And I didn't. For too long, I didn't.

The stories I planted weren't even outright lies—not at first. They were distortions. Omissions. A phrase inserted here, a quote removed there. Frame the protestors as "radicals." Describe the coup as "democratic realignment." Mention the U.S. ambassador's "concerns" without noting he was orchestrating the whole damn thing.

I told myself it was temporary. That I could steer the narrative more honestly from within. That it was better me than someone with no scruples.

But every day I wrote their words, my own voice got quieter. My hands shook more. My dreams turned black and metallic. I'd wake in the middle of the night with headlines screaming at me. My typewriter started to feel like a loaded gun.

The turning point came with a story about a whistleblower inside the Pentagon—an analyst who had leaked documents about covert operations in Latin America. He'd provided proof of CIA-backed death squads. Real, undeniable proof. I'd seen it.

They told me to discredit him. Paint him as mentally unstable. "Paranoid, emotionally erratic, possibly connected to hostile foreign elements," the notes said.

I wrote it. And he disappeared.

Just gone. No press release. No arrest. No charges. His name was erased like chalk in rain.

That's when I tried to stop.

I told my editor I needed time off. That I was burned out. He gave me a look like I'd confessed to treason.

A day later, I came home to find a file sitting on my kitchen table—photos of me at an anti-war rally in '68, records of a private clinic I visited during my divorce, notes about a woman I once loved who fled to Canada. Things no one should have had.

There was no signature. Just a handwritten line: "Careful, Tom. The pen cuts both ways."

After that, the world blurred.

I kept writing. Not because I believed it, but because I was afraid not to. I told lies in a voice that used to speak truth. I watched colleagues vanish from the newsroom—some to other agencies, some to breakdowns, one to a river.

I started drinking. Staring into the mirror like it owed me an apology. I couldn't look my son in the eye when he asked what I did for a living. I told him I "covered foreign policy." What I didn't say is that I was helping to manufacture it. Once, I tried to slip a real story through. About CIA involvement in Chile. My editor killed it in an hour.

"This isn't your beat, Tom," he said.

And I heard the subtext loud and clear: This isn't your truth anymore.

I think the worst part wasn't the lies. It was watching the truth die by inches. Watching good men nod along as the walls closed in. Watching the Fourth Estate become a marble tomb for principles we used to die for.

They didn't just infiltrate the press. They bled it dry. Turned editors into couriers. Turned journalists into courtesans. And turned the public into a herd led by shadows and slogans.

Mockingbird, they called it. A bird trained to mimic the songs of others. Not to think. Not to feel. Just to echo. That's what I became.

I finally walked away in late '75. Packed up my office, left the awards on the shelf, burned my notebooks. I took a job teaching journalism at a small college in Maine. I told my students to question everything—especially me.

Some days I still write. Not for print. Just for myself. I keep a locked drawer full of stories I never published. One day I'll pass them on to someone brave enough to print them.

Because I wasn't.

I'm not a hero. I'm a footnote in someone else's betrayal. But maybe if I tell the truth now—if I write it plain and raw—it'll mean something. Maybe someone will read this and recognize the shape of the lie before it folds over them too. I don't expect redemption.

But I still believe in the truth.

Even if I no longer believe in myself.

“When the CIA infiltrated the press, they didn’t just manipulate facts—they manipulated reality. And reality, once fractured, cannot be repaired by silence.”

Chapter Sixteen

CIA Surveillance of U.S. Citizens

Although the CIA is legally prohibited from conducting domestic surveillance, historical and contemporary evidence reveals that the agency has repeatedly spied on U.S. citizens, often under the pretense of national security. Programs such as Operation CHAOS in the 1960s and 1970s targeted anti-war activists, civil rights leaders, and political dissidents, collecting intelligence on over 300,000 individuals. These efforts, conducted without warrants or oversight, blatantly violated the CIA's charter and the constitutional rights of Americans. The agency monitored mail, infiltrated protest groups, and maintained secret files on ordinary citizens who posed no legitimate threat.

Even in the post-9/11 era, under the guise of counterterrorism, the CIA has been implicated in domestic information gathering, often in collaboration with the NSA and FBI. Leaked documents and whistleblower reports suggest the agency has participated in the bulk collection of emails, phone records, and social media data, blurring the line between foreign and domestic operations. Despite congressional reforms and public outcry, meaningful accountability remains elusive. The surveillance state built in secrecy continues to erode civil liberties, raising urgent questions about privacy, democracy, and unchecked power in the hands of intelligence agencies.

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"They Listened Even When I Was Alone"

New York City, 2005

Renee Jackson, 38, Muslim-American civil rights lawyer

I used to think the law was a lighthouse. That if you just stayed within its beam, you'd be safe. That was before I realized the watchers don't care about lighthouses. They operate in the dark. They are the dark.
It began with a van.

A white panel van with blacked-out windows. Parked across the street from my apartment in Harlem. For three days it didn't move. On the fourth day, a man stepped out—white, middle-aged, in a windbreaker too clean for the city. He pretended to smoke. But I could feel his eyes tracking me through the glass.

I'm a civil rights lawyer. I don't sell drugs. I don't buy guns. I don't plan violence. I defend people who've been accused of those things—people who are often Muslim, often Black, and always expendable to the justice system.

So when I noticed my emails arriving out of order—threads broken, attachments corrupted—I didn't assume coincidence. When friends told me they'd been approached by men in suits asking about my schedule, my affiliations, my "beliefs," I didn't think it was a mistake.

I knew what it was.

Surveillance. Government surveillance. On me.

The first time I filed a Freedom of Information Act request about myself, it came back 37 pages long. Thirty-two of them were fully redacted. Thick black lines where my life used to be.

The only words that remained:

“Domestic threat assessment. Flagged subject. Legal observation approved.”

Legal. That word sliced through me like glass. I am a lawyer. And I had been reduced to a target.

I was born in Queens. My mother taught second grade. My father fixed elevators. We said the Pledge of Allegiance before school. We volunteered on weekends. We were the American Dream painted in brown skin and modest dress.

And still, the watchers came.

After 9/11, everything changed. Not just the skyline—but the rules. They passed laws with names like Patriot Act and Protect America, but all they did was authorize suspicion. You didn’t need a warrant anymore. You just needed a hunch.

And if your name was Muhammad or Aisha or—you know—Renee Jackson? That hunch was already in the system.

They bugged my office. I’m sure of it.

I’d walk in and the phone would click before I picked it up. The cleaning lady said she found a wire taped under my desk. A “client” came in wearing a wristwatch with a blinking diode. He asked questions that weren’t legal, just… probing. Personal.
I stopped trusting my own space. My own voice. I wrote case notes by hand and burned them after. I met clients in parks instead of conference rooms. I taped over my webcam. I removed the battery from my flip phone at night.

And yet—I still felt them. Like ghosts, like breath on the back of my neck.
Watching.
Always watching.

I tried to take them to court. I gathered affidavits. I partnered with the ACLU. I stood before a judge and read from the Constitution like it was holy scripture.

The government responded with one phrase: “State secrets privilege.”

That meant they didn’t have to confirm or deny anything. Didn’t have to explain why I was flagged. Didn’t have to reveal what they collected or how.

They just had to say the words—and the courtroom went silent.

I remember the judge’s face. Old, white, fatigued. Like justice was a burden he was tired of lifting.
Case dismissed.

I wasn’t just surveilled.

I was erased.

They didn’t need to charge me. They just needed to surround me with suspicion. Suddenly donors pulled out of my nonprofit. Colleagues avoided me in elevators. A university rescinded a speaking invitation without explanation.

I was radioactive.

Even my own mother called one night in tears and asked if I was “in trouble with the FBI.”

That broke me. More than anything.

Because I realized I wasn’t just being watched—I was being turned into a threat in the eyes of everyone I loved.

You know what’s ironic?

I still believe in the law.

That’s the cruelest part. After everything they did to me, after the silence and the shadows and the humiliation—I still believe in the principles that this country pretends to stand for.

But believing in something doesn’t mean it believes in you.

I’m a citizen. Born here. Educated here. I passed the bar. I fight for the voiceless. And yet I became a suspect—not because I broke the law, but because I dared to use it.

Because I defended the wrong people.

Because I prayed the wrong prayers.

Because I looked the wrong way on the subway, maybe. Or spoke Arabic on the phone.

Or maybe just because I believed they couldn’t do it.

I know I’m not alone. I’ve spoken to students who found GPS trackers under their cars. Activists who had FBI agents

show up at their poetry readings. Imams whose mosques were wired like crime scenes.
And the worst part?
Most people don't care.
You try to tell them, and they shrug. "If you're not doing anything wrong," they say, "you have nothing to worry about."
But I wasn't doing anything wrong.
And I worried every day.

Do you know what it's like to sit in your living room and whisper—just in case?

Do you know what it's like to see your face in your daughter's drawing, and wonder if she'll grow up thinking silence is safer than truth?

Do you know what it's like to lose the sound of your own voice, because every syllable might be used against you?

I do. And I'm still learning how to unlearn that fear.

I don't know how many files they've kept on me. I don't know where my name is stored or how many "watchlists" it's on. I don't know what algorithm decides whether I can fly, or bank, or rent a car.

But I do know this:

They listened when I cried.
They listened when I prayed.
They listened when I kissed my daughter goodnight and told her everything would be okay—even though it wasn't.

They turned the law into a mirror that only reflects whiteness.

And justice into a secret that no longer speaks my name.

“You don’t have to be guilty to be watched. You just have to be visible.”

Chapter Seventeen

Destabilization of the Congo (1960s)

In 1961, the CIA set it's sights on the Congo and launched an operation to remove Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who threatened Western mining interests and leaned toward Soviet assistance.

As a result, Lumumba was captured, tortured and executed with CIA complicity. Congo plunged into decades of dictatorship, civil war, and exploitation.

Joseph Kabamba was just twenty-one when he first heard Patrice Lumumba speak, and in that moment, his future changed. He had been studying engineering at the University of Léopoldville, a quiet student with calloused hands from helping his father farm cassava. But when Lumumba rose to power, Joseph saw a future not of subservience, but of sovereignty. Lumumba made him believe that Africa could belong to Africans—that the soil under his feet didn't have to be stolen anymore. That belief, so beautiful and brief, became a wound he would carry for the rest of his life.

"The Rain Fell Like It Was Weeping"

Léopoldville, January 1961

Joseph Kabamba, 21, university student and Lumumba supporter

I still see his mouth moving, even though the voice is long gone. I still remember the way the crowd roared, their fists in the air, the drums echoing across the city like thunder summoned on purpose. That was the first time I saw him in

person—Patrice Lumumba. My heart beat so hard I thought it might break my ribs.

He wasn't just a man.

He was a mirror.

He reflected the best parts of us—the pride, the pain, the possibility. He stood on that stage with sweat on his brow and thunder in his voice and told us we would never be slaves again. He said Belgium could take their flags and go, and we would plant trees in their place. That we could own our diamonds. Our copper. Our rivers. Our stories.

I cried that night, walking home through the streets of Léopoldville, feeling taller than I ever had in my life.

I was a free man in a free country.

That was what I believed.

That was what they killed.

It happened slowly, and then all at once.

First came the newspapers, whispering doubts about Lumumba's "ties to Moscow." Then the mutiny in the army, which no one saw coming—but I later learned was helped along by men who spoke Lingala with accents and always wore sunglasses.
Then the "president" we didn't vote for—Joseph Kasa-Vubu—announced Lumumba's dismissal. No hearing. No trial. Just a proclamation broadcast from a room full of men in suits that still smelled like Brussels.

Still, Lumumba fought. Peacefully. Politically. He tried to hold onto the government, onto the dream.
And that's when the Americans and Belgians got serious.

The night he was taken, I was in the crowd.

We had gathered outside the Prime Minister's residence to protect him. Hundreds of us. Students, workers, mothers with babies tied to their backs. We sang freedom songs through the night, our throats raw, our hearts full.

Then the army came.

The Congolese National Army. But they weren't acting for Congo anymore.

They came in trucks, rifles raised. I saw Colonel Mobutu in the distance—young, cocky, wearing the American boots he hadn't earned.

We didn't fight. We didn't run. We just shouted, "Lumumba azali na biso!" Lumumba is with us!

Then a soldier struck me across the face with his rifle butt. I hit the ground hard enough to forget my own name.

When I opened my eyes, Lumumba was gone.

They said they took him to Thysville Prison.
They said he was safe.
But we knew that was a lie.

Because three weeks later, he was in Katanga—a breakaway state run by Moïse Tshombe, a puppet of

Western corporations. And with him were two of his loyal ministers, Mpolo and Okito.

We would later learn the truth.

They beat him in front of soldiers. They humiliated him. They spit in his face. Belgian officers filmed it like a sport. American intelligence passed cables and nodded in silence.

And on January 17th, 1961, they took him into a forest.
They shot him.
Three bullets.
One for each man.
Then they cut up his body, piece by piece. Dissolved him in acid. Burned what was left.

They did not want a grave.
They feared a grave.
Because they knew it would become a shrine.

I remember that day like a scream caught in the throat.
The sky was gray. The rain came down like it had lost all purpose. My mother sat in the corner of our hut with a scarf pulled over her eyes, rocking back and forth. My father stood outside for hours, his face blank, his machete laid at his feet.
I wanted to tear something apart. I wanted to fight. But there was no one to fight—because the killers wore our uniforms. Spoke our language.
But they weren't ours.
They belonged to the CIA.

It would take years before we got the proof. The documents. The admissions. The confessions hidden in diplomatic cables and redacted reports.

But we always knew.

We knew it when American diplomats smiled too easily.
We knew it when Belgian companies returned to mining our earth like nothing had happened.

We knew it when Mobutu became “President for Life” and began crushing dissent with American weapons and American dollars.

They said Lumumba was a communist.
He wasn’t.
He was just a man who thought Africa belonged to Africans.
And that was enough to sign his death warrant.

The day after we found out he was dead, our university went silent.
No lectures. No exams. No announcements.
Only weeping.

I walked past the courtyard where Lumumba had once spoken to us, barefoot and laughing, telling us the future was ours to write. There were candles on the steps. Scraps of paper with his name scrawled in charcoal. Students stood in silence, hands clasped.

I picked up a piece of paper and wrote:

“They took his body, but not his words.”
And I meant it. Even as tears blurred my sight, even as soldiers circled the campus like vultures.

But I did not feel free anymore.
I felt hunted.

A week later, the arrests began.

They came for professors. For students. For anyone who had been too vocal.

They came for my roommate, Jean-Baptiste. He was studying political theory. His thesis was on Lumumba's independence speeches. They took him in the night. I never saw him again.

I ran.

I hid in villages. Changed my name. Grew my beard. Lived off bread and beans. I left my degree behind. I left everything behind.

I was twenty-one, and I had already lost my future.

All because the United States feared a Black man with a vision.

They said it was "anti-communism."
But what they feared was justice.
What they feared was the birth of a free Africa that did not beg, did not obey, did not sell its soul for foreign loans and military bases.

They feared the example.
Because if Congo stood tall, who else might rise?
So they killed the example.
They turned the land of the Congo River into a graveyard.
And we are still digging out the bones.

I'm an old man now.

I never became an engineer. I never built the bridges I dreamed of. Instead, I've buried more friends than I can count.

Mobutu ruled for three decades. With CIA backing. With Belgian funding. With silence from the world.

He stole billions.
He tortured children.
He built a palace on the ruins of our dreams.
And the Americans smiled.

I visit Lumumba's memorial once a year.
There's no grave, only a statue. Bronze and quiet. They tried to melt him down with acid, but they couldn't erase him.

He still stands.
And when I close my eyes, I still hear him.
"We are no longer your monkeys. We are men. And this is our home."
They killed his body.
But his words are still alive.
They live in every protest.
Every poem.
Every child who dares to ask, "Why is my land poor when it is rich?"

"Every time the CIA destroyed a leader, it created a thousand orphans."

Chapter Eighteen

CIA & Contras Drug Ties (1980s)

During the 1980s, the CIA's covert support of the Contra rebels in Nicaragua became deeply entangled with illicit drug trafficking, contributing to one of the most devastating drug epidemics in U.S. history. To fund the Contras' brutal insurgency against the Sandinista government—bypassing congressional restrictions on aid—the agency turned a blind eye to, and in some cases facilitated, the smuggling of large quantities of cocaine into American cities. This cocaine was subsequently processed into crack and flooded impoverished urban communities, primarily targeting Black neighborhoods. Investigations and whistleblower accounts revealed that Contra operatives, backed and protected by the CIA, were directly involved in running drug networks that helped finance their war efforts.

The influx of cheap crack cocaine devastated families, fueling a public health crisis that led to soaring rates of addiction, violence, and incarceration, disproportionately impacting communities of color. Despite mounting evidence and congressional inquiries, the CIA avoided full accountability, maintaining secrecy around its covert operations. The agency's complicity in enabling drug traffickers shattered public trust and inflicted deep wounds that still reverberate today. The crack epidemic was not simply a social tragedy but a consequence of calculated geopolitical maneuvers and cold war-era policies that prioritized covert warfare over the lives of American citizens.

“They Called It the Crack Era. We Called It a Funeral.”

South Central LA, 1988

Darnell Hayes, 17, high school student and brother of a victim

Darnell Hayes had just turned seventeen when the body count began to feel normal. He was a high school student in South Central Los Angeles, a place where hope was already in short supply—but his older brother Malik had been his anchor. Malik was everything Darnell wanted to be: athletic, smart, kind. But when the crack epidemic rolled in like a chemical hurricane, his neighborhood crumbled. And when the truth came out—that his government had known, allowed, even fueled it—it wasn’t just a betrayal. It was genocide in slow motion. Darnell tells us,

The day my brother died, a government jet flew over the city. No one noticed. We were too busy watching bodies fall from corners like rotted fruit. No sirens. No headlines. Just silence—except for the gunshots and the howling of mothers. I remember that silence more than anything. Like the world had decided we weren’t worth the noise anymore.

Malik was seventeen. He wore his varsity jacket like armor, carried a basketball in one hand and a college scholarship in the other. He was going to make it out. That’s what we said back then—make it out. Like we were in a prison.

And then the corners changed.
And the powder changed.
And everything did.

Crack didn’t arrive like some random curse.

It came fast, calculated, and wholesale. One day the dealers had weed and 40s. The next, they had little vials of white lightning, bagged and ready. They sold it like candy—five dollars a hit, get you high enough to forget you were poor.

But it wasn't just a new drug.
It was a new war.

Our streets turned into battlegrounds. Gangs multiplied like tumors. Houses with children in them became trap spots. You'd walk home and see someone twitching on the curb, face slack, pants wet, eyes rolled back like a broken doll.

Malik tried to stay clean. He really did. But even staying clean doesn't mean staying safe when the system is designed to break you. His best friend got shot over a bad deal. His coach got busted with a kilo in his trunk. His girl's uncle started cooking rocks in the kitchen while her baby sister cried in the next room.

It was everywhere. It was everything.
We called it the crack era.
But it was a funeral.
Every day, another coffin.

Malik started using it—just a little, he said. For the pressure. To sleep. "Don't worry, D," he'd tell me, rubbing my head. "I'm too smart to get caught up like that."

I believed him. I needed to.

But crack doesn't care how smart you are. It doesn't care about scholarships or dreams or mothers who pray for you every night.

It eats you. Quickly. Quietly.
I came home one night and found him in the bathtub, eyes glassy, water running cold. Still breathing. But not really there.

He overdosed two weeks later. I held his hand in the ER while his body convulsed like it was trying to fight its own soul. And then he was gone.

Seventeen. Gone.

I didn't even cry that night.
I couldn't.
My chest just folded in on itself, like the grief was too thick to pass through.

The next day I walked down the block, past the liquor store where Malik used to buy Gatorade after practice. I saw a twelve-year-old selling crack under the streetlight. Twelve. And people just walked by. No one said a word.

Because by then, it was normal.
Because by then, we knew.
We knew this wasn't just some epidemic. It was a strategy.

A journalist named Gary Webb confirmed what we already felt in our bones. The CIA had looked the other way—no, helped—as cocaine was funneled into Black neighborhoods across America.

Why?

To fund a war. A goddamn war in Nicaragua.

They armed the Contras—right-wing death squads fighting a leftist government the U.S. didn't like. But they didn't want to fund it with tax dollars, because people might ask questions.

So they sold poison instead.
They flooded the hood with it.
And watched us kill each other.

When I read Webb's series, I vomited.
He had names. Flight logs. Testimonies. Proof that the CIA not only knew about the drug trafficking but facilitated it. Let it happen. Encouraged it.

And where did all that cocaine go?

Right into the lungs of my brother. My neighbors. My classmates.

Webb won awards. Then they came for him. Discredited him. Ruined him.

He died from two gunshots to the head. They called it suicide.

Just like they called what happened to us "urban decay."

Let me tell you what urban decay really means.
It means our schools didn't have pencils, but the dealers had Mac-10s.

It means we buried a whole generation while the White House declared a "War on Drugs" that somehow never touched the people selling the drugs—just the people dying from them.

It means our mothers aged twenty years in five.
It means prison became a rite of passage.

They made movies about our suffering.
They sold albums about our streets.
They built careers off the image of the broken Black boy.
But they never asked who broke him.
The government did.
The CIA did.
They looked at us and saw expendable pawns in a foreign policy chess game.

They turned our neighborhoods into war zones to fund a war that had nothing to do with us.

We were not collateral damage.
We were the target.

Sometimes I walk past the gym where Malik used to practice. The backboard still has his initials carved into it: "M.H." He made those letters when he was fifteen, laughing, full of joy, full of future.

Now it's a ghost town.

No nets on the rims. No kids in the lot.

Just silence and syringes and stories no one wants to hear.

I didn't become a criminal. But I didn't become whole either.

I carry Malik's name like a shard in my chest. I tell his story because he can't. I scream it because they want us to whisper.

I write it on walls. On school papers. On the inside of my eyelids when I try to sleep.

He was a boy.
He deserved to live.
He didn't deserve to be a casualty of a war he never knew existed.

One day I'll have a son. And when he asks me what happened to Uncle Malik, I'll tell him the truth.

That America killed him.

Not with a bullet.

But with a program.

"They gave us poison, then punished us for swallowing it."

Chapter Nineteen

Cuban Biological Attacks (1970s–1980s)

In order to sabotage Cuba's agriculture and economy, the CIA used biological agents (e.g., swine flu) and created a massive loss of livestock. This led to food shortages and ruined lives. The U.S. denied involvement, but evidence suggests CIA sabotage.

Rosa María Infante lived simply and proudly, like her mother and grandmother before her. She raised pigs in Ciego de Ávila, a region where the red Cuban earth was fertile, and the work was hard but honest. Her animals were not just income—they were family, memory, tradition. When African swine fever struck the island, Rosa thought it was a natural disaster. But when it spread faster than wildfire, when the whispers from the coast spoke of sabotage, she began to see the outlines of a crueler truth—one that pointed north, toward a government she'd never seen but whose cruelty she would never forget.

"The Wind Carried Death on Its Breath"

Ciego de Ávila, Cuba – 1971

Rosa María Infante, 49, pig farmer and grandmother

The pigs began dying on a Tuesday.

That's the first thing I remember. The way their bodies twisted like snakes, foam collecting at their mouths, their hooves scraping at the ground like they were trying to dig into the earth and escape.

By Thursday, the smell was everywhere—thick, rotten, the kind of stink that seeps into your clothes, your skin, your dreams. I covered my mouth with a rag soaked in vinegar, but nothing worked. Not against that smell. Not against what was coming.

We tried everything—boiled herbs, prayers, antibiotics we bartered for in the city—but nothing slowed it. The virus moved faster than gossip in a village church. One pen, then the next. Twenty pigs dead. Then sixty. Then the babies.

My youngest granddaughter watched one of them die. A little black piglet named Flor. She screamed so loud the neighbor came running. That scream still echoes in my head when I wake at night.

We buried them in pits.
Deep ones.
But it didn't matter.
The earth still wept.

Before this happened, we were proud people. Not rich. Not powerful. But proud. My family had raised pigs for four generations. We sold their meat at the market in Morón. We cured our own ham. We made blood sausage for New Year's. My daughter and her husband helped run the farm. My grandson named every pig we raised.

And just like that—gone.

Five hundred thousand pigs, across the island, slaughtered or dead from disease.

It wasn't just a tragedy. It was annihilation.

They told us it was African swine fever.

But we had never seen it in Cuba before. Never.

The scientists said it had come from Africa, but how? We had no pigs from Africa. No trade routes. No explanation.

Then we heard the whispers.

From fishermen on the coast. From truckers passing through.

That the Americans did it.

That the CIA smuggled infected animals or vials into Cuba. That it was an act of sabotage. A biological attack to cripple our food supply, to starve us, to punish us for surviving the embargo and standing tall under Fidel.

At first I didn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it.

But then I remembered something: a story my cousin in Havana told me. A year before the outbreak, men were seen landing at night along the northern coast—men who weren't Cuban, who spoke English, who disappeared by dawn.

And then, months later, the pigs began to die.
Too fast. Too coordinated. Too cruel.
It wasn't natural.
It was a message.

You see, the United States doesn't need to drop bombs to kill.

They kill in silence.

They kill through insects, through viruses, through embargoes that rot your crops and medicines that never arrive. They kill through whispers and deniability.

And this time, they killed through disease.

They didn't just want to ruin our economy—they wanted to break our spirit.

Because a hungry man starts to doubt his cause. A hungry mother begins to question the price of resistance. A hungry child stops singing the songs of the revolution.

That's what they were trying to do to us.

The government ordered a massive cull. Every pig in every province had to be slaughtered. Even the healthy ones. Even the babies.

I remember walking into the pen with my machete, tears soaking my blouse. My grandson was screaming, "No, Abuela, not Benito!" But I had no choice.
Benito was just six months old. Fat and pink and curious. He trusted me. I killed him with one swing.

That moment changed me. Something in me cracked, quietly, like a bone snapping beneath the skin.

It was the moment I realized we were in a war we couldn't see.

A war without uniforms. Without declarations. Just death, creeping in like fog.

Do you know what it means to lose a way of life?

It means no meat at the market. No lard for cooking. No money to fix the roof. No bartering with neighbors. No festivals. No laughter.

Just silence.

Just hunger.

The next year was the hardest of my life. We survived on rice and beans and hope. My son-in-law left for Havana to find work. My daughter cried herself to sleep for weeks. My grandson started wetting the bed again. We were all unraveling.

Not because of a hurricane. Not because of drought. But because a foreign government had decided we needed to be punished. Because we dared to be free.

The U.S. denied it, of course.
They always deny it.
Even when their fingerprints are all over the corpse.
But years later, a journalist named Drew Fetherston revealed that a U.S. Senate committee investigated this very outbreak. And according to his sources, the virus was introduced deliberately—by the CIA.

He called it “the most bizarre and successful use of biological warfare in history.”

I call it terrorism.
Not with bombs.
But with infection.

We rebuilt the farm, eventually.
New pigs. New pens. New names.
But it wasn't the same. There was a shadow over everything. A fear that it could happen again. That they could strike whenever they wanted, however they wanted.
And that no one would believe us.
Because the weapons they use don't explode. They rot.

I'm an old woman now.
I sit on my porch and watch my grandchildren play, their laughter almost enough to drown out the ghosts. But when the wind shifts and carries the scent of the pigpens, something inside me tightens.
I remember those pits.
The squeals.
The silence.

I keep a small notebook beside my bed.
In it, I write the names of every pig we lost. Every dream buried in that red earth. It is my own little monument. A way of saying: We remember. We see you.
I may not know the names of the men who did this.
But I know their nation.
And I know what they are capable of.
They couldn't beat us with bullets, so they sent disease.
But we are still here.
Still farming.
Still fighting.
Still Cuban.

"They wanted to poison our pigs. What they did was poison our memories."

Chapter Twenty

Operation Just Cause (1989)

The US always uses people and then discards them when they are finished and former CIA asset Manuel Noriega was no exception after he became politically inconvenient.

In 1989 the U.S. invaded Panama and bombed neighborhoods, killing hundreds of civilians and causing massive destruction in working-class areas.

Luis Delgado had known poverty his whole life, but he had never known war. A dockworker in El Chorrillo, he lived in a tight, proud neighborhood full of kids who played stickball in the alleyways and abuelas who watched from balconies. His wife, Elena, was his compass—she hung their laundry out every morning, always humming. When the U.S. bombed Panama to capture their former asset Noriega, Luis learned what it meant to lose not just a person, but the center of your world.

"She Was Hanging Laundry When the Planes Came"

El Chorrillo, Panama City – December 1989

Luis Delgado, 32, dockworker and father of two

It was just after sunrise when she kissed me.

She always did that—right after the coffee was poured and the boys were still asleep. She'd hum softly as she went out to the balcony to hang the laundry. We had no washing machine, but we didn't mind. There was something beautiful

about the rhythm of clothespins snapping, sheets dancing in the wind.

She was humming when the first bomb hit.

One moment, our building was solid—home. The next, it groaned like a wounded animal. The floor shook. I smelled burning.

I ran out to the balcony.
And it wasn't there anymore.
The building across from us had vanished into flame. The sky was a bright orange bruise.
And Elena—my Elena—was gone.

They told us later that it was a precision strike.
That the United States had to remove Manuel Noriega, a "drug-dealing dictator."

But Noriega used to work for them. For years. A CIA asset.
A favorite thug.
He didn't change.
They just got tired of him.
And we paid the price.

I ran down three flights of stairs barefoot, dodging broken glass and screams. The air was thick with smoke and metal and something I can only describe as panic made real. When I reached the street, I could barely breathe. The sky was raining ash.

I found her arm first.
Charred.
Still wearing her bracelet.
The one I gave her on our tenth anniversary.

The rest of her was buried beneath rubble. I dug for hours.
My fingers bleeding. My knees torn open. I didn't care.

I just needed to see her.
To hold her one last time.
But I only found pieces.

They bombed El Chorrillo like it was Baghdad.
Like our lives meant nothing.
Whole apartment blocks flattened.
Kids buried in playgrounds.
Dogs howling beside the burned corpses of their owners.
And for what?
To arrest one man.
They could've sent a team. Knocked on his door. Paid off his guards.
But that's not what they wanted.
They wanted a message.
They wanted fire.

The Americans said the death toll was in the hundreds.
Locals say thousands.
And no one's counting.
Not really.
Because bodies were incinerated.
Because names disappeared in the blaze.
Because we were poor, and brown, and in the way.

My sons don't talk much anymore.
The younger one stopped speaking altogether after the funeral—if you can call a bag of ashes a funeral.
He used to sing to his mother at night.
Now he cries in silence.

I lost my job.

The docks were closed.
Looters came after the bombs. Then soldiers. Then hunger.
Everything broke.
Our country didn't get peace.
It got scar tissue.
And Noriega?
They took him.
Paraded him in front of cameras.
Then put him in a cell in Miami.
That was justice, they said.
I call it a performance.

My wife died for that performance.
So did my neighbors.
So did the dreams of an entire generation.
We weren't liberated.
We were erased.

"They said it was about Noriega. But I watched my wife burn."

Chapter Twenty-One

Libya & Gaddafi Destabilization (2011)

The CIA played a central role in the covert efforts to destabilize and ultimately overthrow Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya, especially during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. Gaddafi had ruled Libya for over four decades with an authoritarian grip, but his vision extended beyond mere control of his country. He championed the idea of African unity and proposed creating a pan-African gold-backed currency that would challenge the dominance of the U.S. dollar and the euro in African trade.

This move threatened Western economic interests by potentially undermining the petrodollar system, which tied global oil trade to the dollar and ensured American financial influence across the continent. Seen as a regional threat for his support of militant groups and his ambitions to unite Africa politically and economically, Gaddafi became a target for covert operations aimed at removing him.

The CIA, along with NATO allies, engaged in secret operations to weaken Gaddafi's hold on power by supporting rebel groups, providing arms and intelligence, and facilitating funding through regional proxies. These efforts aligned with broader Western strategies to maintain control over Africa's resources and geopolitical landscape. NATO's military intervention, justified as a mission to protect civilians during the 2011 uprising, further accelerated the regime's collapse. However, instead of fostering stability, the removal of Gaddafi plunged Libya into chaos. The power vacuum unleashed violent clashes among militias, extremist groups, and rival factions, turning the country into a hub for

terrorism, arms smuggling, and human trafficking. The dream of African unity and economic independence died along with Gaddafi, replaced by fractured states and foreign interference.

The aftermath of the CIA-backed campaign left Libya devastated. The country remains divided with competing governments and ongoing conflict, while extremist organizations exploit the instability to expand their influence. Rather than a triumph of democracy, the intervention exposed the dangers of covert regime change driven by economic and geopolitical motives. Gaddafi's vision of a sovereign African currency and united continent posed a direct challenge to Western hegemony, and his violent removal ensured those ambitions would be crushed—at immense cost to Libya's people and the region's future. This episode stands as a stark example of how foreign intervention to preserve global economic dominance can devastate nations and stall genuine progress.

The murder of Gaddafi didn't bring democracy—it brought death, warlords, and chaos.

"Revolution Burned My University"

Tripoli, 2011

Khadija al-Senussi, 22, nursing student and war zone survivor

I held a bleeding child in one arm and a rifle in the other. That's when I knew the revolution was lost.

When the Arab Spring came, we stood together in the streets. Men and women. Christian and Muslim. Young and old. We chanted, "Hurriya!" Freedom! We believed it. I believed it.

I believed NATO bombs would protect us.
That the West cared about democracy.
That the CIA would help us build something better.
But then the weapons came.
And the men with them.

They called themselves rebels, but most weren't from Tripoli. Some were tribal fighters with no loyalty to anyone but their own clan. Others had foreign accents and foreign money. The Americans gave them rifles, RPGs, encrypted phones.

But they didn't give them a conscience.

Hospitals ran out of bandages.
Children disappeared at checkpoints.
My best friend was raped by a militia commander who claimed to be "liberating" us.
No trial. No justice.
Only war.

We overthrew Gaddafi.
And the moment he died, so did the country.
The news showed his bloodied body, dragged through the streets. Some cheered.
I cried.
Not for him.
But for what came after.

Tripoli became a maze of warlords.
You needed a password to get across town.
My nursing school was turned into a weapons depot.
Our library burned.
I tried to keep treating patients. But one day, a boy bled out in my arms because the rebels shot up the ambulance.

They laughed as they drove away.

Now, Libya is a shattered mirror.
Each piece ruled by a different gang.
There are slave markets in the south.
Mass graves in the desert.
And the oil still flows—to foreign companies, of course.
The CIA got what it wanted: Gaddafi gone.
But we got fire.

I haven't been to the sea in years.
It used to calm me.
Now it carries away the bodies of those who try to flee.

They said they were helping us.
But they handed us war.
They handed us chaos.
They handed us a country in pieces and told us to clap.

"They gave us freedom. Then they gave us chains."

Chapter Twenty-Two

Syria Covert Ops (2010s)

Beginning in 2011, the CIA launched extensive covert operations to influence the outcome of the Syrian civil war, aiming to weaken the Assad regime and curb Iranian and Russian influence in the Middle East.

Through secret programs like **Operation Timber Sycamore**, the agency funneled weapons, training, and funding to a patchwork of rebel groups, many of whom were loosely affiliated or outright linked with extremist factions. These efforts sought to create a proxy force capable of toppling Assad, but the lack of centralized control and clear objectives led to unintended chaos. Instead of a unified opposition, Syria became a battleground of competing militias, foreign fighters, and jihadist groups, many empowered and emboldened by the influx of weapons and resources the CIA supplied.

The horrific consequences of these covert operations are still felt today. Syria descended into a brutal, protracted conflict marked by staggering civilian casualties, widespread torture, and the displacement of millions. The power vacuum fueled the rise of ISIS and other extremist groups, who exploited the chaos to seize territory and commit atrocities. Cities were reduced to rubble, cultural heritage was destroyed, and a generation of Syrians grew up amid unimaginable violence and trauma.

The CIA's secret war, conducted with little oversight or accountability, helped ignite a humanitarian catastrophe that shattered the country and destabilized the entire region—

exposing the deadly costs of covert foreign interference driven by geopolitical interests rather than peace or justice.

"Aleppo Was My Playground"

Aleppo, 2015

Hana Rahal, 9, child from Aleppo turned refugee

I used to play hopscotch in the courtyard.
Now I play with memories.
Because everything else is gone.

My brother lost his leg to a mortar. We don't know who fired it.
Was it the rebels?
Was it the army?
Was it the Americans?
I just know he screamed.
And Mama fainted.

The men with black flags came first.
They had shiny rifles and shouted prayers that didn't sound right.
Then the other men came.
With different flags.
Different guns.
Same fear.

Our school was bombed.
Then used to store weapons.
Then bombed again.
Now there's nothing but dust.

We ran.
From bullets.

From hunger.
From men with beards and cameras.
We slept in fields.
In mosques.
In basements full of rats.

At the border, they told us to go back.
But there was nothing to go back to.
No house.
No city.
No country.

Now we live in a refugee camp.
Mud and plastic and flies.
I haven't seen a toy in two years.
I dream of silence.
But even dreams are loud now.

They said America was helping.
Helping who?
Not me.
Not my brother.
Not the babies buried in rubble.
They handed weapons to men who handed them to monsters.
They turned my city into a graveyard.

I don't know who the good guys are.
I only know who is gone.
My father.
My cousins.
My school.
My childhood.

“They said they wanted to help us. They handed us war instead.”

The Unseen War: A Final Reflection

They called it strategy. They called it containment. Security. Liberation. Freedom. But for those who lived beneath the boots, beneath the drones, beneath the endless shadow of secrecy—it was none of these things. It was pain.

This book is not a history written by the victors. It is a chorus of the silenced.

From Tehran to Tripoli, from Los Angeles to Aleppo, the Central Intelligence Agency has acted not as a guardian of peace, but as an architect of suffering. It has toppled democracies, built dictatorships, trained torturers, and financed death—all in the name of an empire that denies it is one.

These victims are fictionalized, but their pain is real. Their stories are drawn from the pages of declassified files, investigative journalism, human rights reports, and historical memory.

To read this book is to bear witness. And in bearing witness, we refuse to forget.

ABOUT QUINN

Quinn's passion for humanity, his hunger for learning and growth and his simple way of breaking down complex scenarios all with a disarming smile have brought his videos to millions of beautiful humans all over the world.

He's a full-time digital nomad and has lived in countries all over the world. He'a an author, a musician, and a social media influencer. Quinn's first book, "8 Ways to Be Happy" has changed thousands of lives with it's simple method of regulating your emotions and creating a happy life.

Connect with Quinn on his website at quinntheeskimorocks.com