Beyond Deceit
Legacy of a Madman
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Bill Westbrook
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DEDICATION

To the millions of men, women, and children who have died, and to those who will be persecuted by fanatics, because of religious beliefs, political beliefs, and racial differences.

Also, to my wife, Cherie. Without her support, inspiration, and input, I never would have finished this book. And to my children: Lavaughn, Hope-Ann, Derek, Faith, Billy, Jessica, and Alex, all of whom I love and wish to protect. May God bless us all.

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”
—John F. Kennedy, inaugural address, 1961
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“I was getting closer to the cellblocks now and could hear low, guttural, gurgling moans coming from the cell area. I came up to the hallway that led to the cells and made my way down the hall. My eyes were finally adjusting to the poorly lit hallway. I came up to the first cell, carefully peered through the bars, and was horrified at what I saw.”

Karl began to shake, and the coffee cup on the table started to clatter in its saucer. He lit another cigarette, took a deep drag, exhaled the smoke from his lungs, and nervously continued.

“There were human beings in the cells, or at least some of them looked human. Most of them were dead,” Karl said, trembling.
My name is Jason Stein. I work for a large international marketing firm in Los Angeles and am one of its top sales account representatives. Two of my biggest accounts are Volkswagen and Daimler-Benz. Both have their main offices in West Berlin, Germany, and both are trying to pull their accounts out of the United States. Automobile companies all over the world are trying to get our firm to handle their advertising accounts, and now, all of a sudden, Germany is pulling out and no one knows why. If this happens, my company will lose billions, and most assuredly I will lose my job.

I’ve been ordered to fly to Berlin, find out what the problem is, get the accounts back in line no matter what, and then get myself back home. I truly do not wish to fly, I hate to fly: having to be at the airport two hours before boarding, taking my shoes off, going through the metal detectors, no liquids, no fingernail files, and that feeling that everyone with a backpack is a terrorist. I’m a nervous wreck before I even board the plane, and I especially don’t wish to fly to Germany. There has been unrest in Germany since the reunification of East and West Berlin in 1990. With the recent bombing of the new
Chancellery building this year by neo-Nazis, the uneasiness has escalated.

The horrible terrorist attacks on the US with commercial airliners on September 11th, 2001, our country bombing terrorist bases in Afghanistan, our invasion of Iraq, Saddam Hussein’s capture, arrest, trial, and execution, along with the continued threat of more attacks worldwide, make traveling anywhere more of a nightmare than a pleasure. Between the trouble in Germany, the discovery and death of Osama bin Laden by American forces, al-Qaeda’s ceaseless threats of more attacks on British and American citizens, the crippling of our economy because of Arab oil prices, and Iran’s nuclear threat, I am a little worried; actually, I’m scared shitless. Here I am flying the friendly skies, white knuckled, halfway between Los Angeles and New York on my way to Berlin. I can’t even get a free bag of peanuts anymore, and as a smoker, I’ll be in a straightjacket before I get to Germany. God help me!

It has been almost twenty years since the incident that I’m about to describe to you took place, and still in my heart I don’t think it’s over. For the last twenty years—not all the time, but most of the time—it has been haunting me in my sleep, creating problems at work, and slowly destroying my relationship with my wife, Cherie, just like it did to the man who told the story to me. So far, I have kept it from totally ruining my life.

For me, it started back in 1988 when I was working in a rest home outside Palm Springs, California, as an assistant activities director. It paid enough for me to keep an apartment and pay my tuition to college, where I was taking courses in marketing and
salesmanship. It did not afford me much else. The Silver Sage Rest Home was a great place to work; it was a lot different from most rest homes. It treated the residents with respect and dignity, and the residents were content and cheerful.

The home sat high on the top of a pine-covered peak two miles west of Palm Springs and two miles south of Interstate 10, on a road curving up through Palm Canyon. As you rounded the last turn in the winding road at the top of the canyon, you could see the white stucco walls of the home about a quarter of a mile past the black ornamental iron gate.

Weaving through the rails of the beautiful black iron fence that surrounded the home was an incredible display of yellow, red, pink, and peach flowering bougainvillea climbers. On each side of the huge black iron gate stood pink stone columns topped with exquisite hand-carved stone pots imported from Mexico. The full, lush, green asparagus ferns in the pots fell down the front of the columns like waterfalls, making a green and white pool at the bottom.

On each side of the road beyond the gates, pine trees marked the boundary leading up to the driveway, which circled in front of the home: a large, unique X-shaped one-story building that covered many acres. Down each hallway that made up the X were the residents’ rooms. The center of the X consisted of the entrance, reception area, gift shop, offices, dining room, activities room, physical therapy room, nurses’ station, and clinic. The entire building was painted in a soft Navajo white and had rose-colored carpeting throughout, except for in the clinic area, which was covered with Spanish tile of multiple shades of pink.
The nurses and doctors were nice, the employees were friendly, and the residents were happy. It was my job to see to it that the residents had something to do all the time. Sometimes we’d play bingo or cards. Sometimes I’d write letters for them, play chess, read to them, or lend a compassionate ear, and every afternoon I’d show a movie in the activities room.

One day the ambulance brought in a new patient. I was sitting at the nurses’ station with my head on the desk, half-asleep after studying all night for an exam. It was about four o’clock on a nasty, cold, windy fall afternoon. Sylvia, the head nurse, cleared her throat, disturbing my little catnap.

“Jason, you are not going to believe this one!” she exclaimed.

“What is it?” I asked.

“A new patient who’s just been admitted. Right now he’s unconscious, but if he ever regains consciousness, he is going to need someone like you. Showing warmth and compassion is about all anyone can do for him considering his condition. That’s where you come in, when or if he ever wakes up,” Sylvia said sadly.

Sylvia was an attractive, blonde middle-aged lady from England with a heart of gold. Her great sense of humor and her proper English accent always made going to work a pleasure. She was extremely compassionate and dedicated to the residents, and everyone loved being around her. I guess that’s why she became a nurse. She had been in the US for about forty years and had settled in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, before moving to Palm Springs. Lake Havasu City is now, and has been since 1971, the home of the famous London Bridge. This stone bridge
was originally built in London, England, during the 1800s. It was purchased, disassembled, shipped to the United States, brought to Arizona by truck, and reassembled in its original form by a land developer. Sylvia told me that when she was a little girl living in London during World War II, her parents would instruct her on which side of that very bridge to cross depending on which direction the German planes were going. Being on the correct side would narrow the risk of being killed when the planes shot at the bridge. She told me that some of those very bullet holes are still there.

My eyes fell upon the patient’s chart she had placed on the desk in front of me. I glanced at it and, with a sleepy film over my eyes, I picked it up and read:

Patient’s name: Karl
Address: Unknown
Place of Birth: Unknown
Date of Birth: Unknown
Relatives: Unknown

I handed the file back to Sylvia. She sighed and shook her head in disgust.

“Do we know anything about him?” I asked.

“All we know is he’s about sixty or seventy years old, a white male, weighs about ninety-seven pounds, and the paramedics call him Karl because it was carved into the inside of his belt,” Sylvia said as she slid the silver chart back into the nurses’ file.

“He is dying of cirrhosis of the liver, probably from alcoholism, nutritional deficiency, or both. I’ll let you know if anything changes in his condition.”

When I got to work the next day, Sylvia informed me that the new arrival, Karl, had regained
consciousness but wasn’t responding to anything. Out of curiosity I peeked into the room where they had placed Karl and found him lying on his back and staring at the ceiling, not moving a muscle.

I called his name several times, but he never budged. I went back to the nurses’ station and asked the duty nurse where they had found him. The nurse said he had been found in an alley in Los Angeles—cold, wet, and in some sort of trance. Silver Sage was the closest facility with available beds, and that’s why they had brought him here.

Every day for a week I went into Karl’s room and tried to get him to respond to something, anything, but he would just lie in his bed, stare at the ceiling, and drool. Sometimes I would sit across from Karl and watch him for hours, wondering what could have possibly happened to this man. Some days I would read to him, hoping for some kind of response, but it never came. Karl was, of course, horribly undernourished; his skin was a dark brown and looked like leather from sleeping outside for so many years. It stretched tight against his bones like the skin of a sick cow about to die. His eyes were a putrid yellowish color from the failure of his liver, a scruffy gray beard covered most of his face, and his white hair hung down past his shoulders.

A couple weeks later I decided (with the doctor’s permission) to put Karl into a wheelchair (with the help of a couple nurses’ aides) and take him into the activities room. I sat him in front of the television. Maybe being with some of the other residents might bring a response from him or at least make him feel like someone cared. I was showing a movie that day—one of the great *World at War* episodes
narrated by Sir Lawrence Olivier. The residents liked them. They could relate to World War II and would talk about their experiences during that horrible time in our past. The movie that day was the first of the series: “A New Germany—1933 to 1939.”

The movie started, and right off the bat a quarter of a million Germans were standing in front of the Chancellery building screaming “SIEG HEIL! SIEG HEIL!” Arms were raised in the air in a frenzy of excitement as Adolf Hitler, the Chancellor of Germany, stepped onto the balcony. Karl threw his head back with a snap, fell out of his wheelchair, and began making horrible gurgling sounds as he pointed toward the television. I called for a couple nurses’ aides to help me put Karl back into his wheelchair and then tried to calm him down. Karl’s head slumped over, a gust of air rushed out of his mouth, and he was quiet again. Just then an RN heard the commotion and entered the room.

“What did you do to him, Jason?” the nurse asked, horrified, as she wiped the drool from Karl’s face.

“I didn’t do anything. I don’t know what came over him,” I said, shrugging my shoulders.

“Well, I think he’s had enough excitement for one day,” the nurse said as she motioned for the aides to come and take Karl back to his room. The activities room calmed down, and the residents finished the movie without any further disturbance, but Karl scared the hell out of me that afternoon and aroused my curiosity even more.

I was a little shaken and thought to myself, *What the hell could have brought that on?* The guy really freaked out. I had never seen anyone go to pieces
like that, especially considering that I had tried for
days to get him to respond to something, anything,
but nothing worked until that day.

I still had a couple hours before my shift ended,
so I went to Karl’s room. Everything was quiet again,
and Karl looked the same as he had the previous days.
I sat in the chair next to his bed and ran the incident
over and over again in my head, but I couldn’t find
the connection.

The time between bringing Karl into the activities
room and him falling out of his wheelchair was a blur;
it happened so fast. He didn’t move or make a sound
until the movie started. He pointed to the TV, and all
hell broke loose. That was about it—not much to go
on. Obviously it had something to do with the movie
or the television, but what? It was probably nothing
more than the volume on the TV. I had seen a lot of
weird things in my job, from residents throwing food
at each other at dinner to residents standing naked in
the hallway, thinking they were dressed in their finest
clothes. My shift was over for the day, so I decided to
go on home. Besides, there wasn’t anything I could
do about it then.

That night I tossed and turned, trying to get the
terrible picture of Karl out of my head. I probably had
a total of five hours of sleep. I dragged my ass out of
bed the next morning, showered, and went back to
work. After my fifth cup of coffee, I decided to go to
Karl’s room and check on him. To my amazement,
Karl was sitting up in his bed and trying to feed
himself breakfast. The night nurse and Sylvia were
in his room, reviewing his chart for the shift change.

“It’s absolutely incredible!” the night nurse
exclaimed. “Two days ago he would fall face first
into his breakfast, and now he is holding a spoon. Isn’t that weird?” the nurse said to me with a puzzled look. “It’s the strangest thing I’ve ever seen.”

“Well, Jason, I’m off work now, so I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” the nurse said as she left the room, still shaking her head in disbelief. I sat there for a while and watched Karl eat, or, I should say, attempt to eat. Sylvia just shrugged her shoulders with that “I have no idea” look.

Karl was shaking terribly and was dropping food everywhere, but at least he was trying. It was unbelievable. He stopped eating, put his spoon down, and slowly lay his head back onto his pillow with a sigh of relief.

“How are you, Karl? Can you hear me?” I asked in a soft tone. He just stared, but I noticed that his eyes were filling with tears.

“Karl, would you like to visit the activities room today and see another movie?” I asked. Karl started to wave his hands around, nodding his head and making deep guttural sounds.

“Okay Karl, take it easy, we’ll watch one this afternoon,” I said. Karl nodded.

“I have to go to the activities room and set up the bingo game, but I’ll be back for you a little later,” I said loudly.

I went to the activities room, set up the bingo equipment, and gave the hospital volunteers the go-ahead to start the game. I told them I would be in my office if they needed me. I was dying to take Karl back to the activities room, but I had some reports that were overdue and could not be put off any longer. After putting a couple hours of work into the reports, I couldn’t take it anymore. My curiosity was
getting the better of me. If the first movie had made such a difference in Karl’s behavior, then maybe the next one would make more of a difference. I started reviewing the videos and picked volume one, “Distant War—1939 to 1940.” In this film, Germany invades Poland and bombs Warsaw into submission. Prime Minister Chamberlain is forced to bring an unprepared Britain into the war. Following the failure of the British expeditionary force to Norway, the Chamberlain government falls and is replaced by Churchill.

The Nazi war machine rolls into the Low Countries and France. *This looks as good as any,* I thought. I brought the VCR into the activities room and prepared an area next to the other residents for Karl’s wheelchair. I went back to Karl’s room and, with the help of a nurses’ aide, put Karl into his wheelchair.

“See, Karl, I told you I would be back for you. Are you ready to watch another movie?” I asked happily. Karl raised his arm and pointed toward the door.

“Let’s go, then. I think you’ll like this one.” As I wheeled the chair out of his room and pushed it down the hall toward the activities room, my pulse raced and I could feel the tension building. Not knowing why, I had this feeling of terror, like a man walking the last few steps before entering a gas chamber. I knew it was silly. *It’s just a movie,* I told myself.

“Well, Karl, are you ready?” I went to the TV, put the cartridge in the VCR, pressed the play button, and sat back. The film started, and in the very first scene the movie showed thousands of German soldiers marching down Wilhelmstrasse, the main
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street in Berlin, flexing their muscles on their way to invade Poland. Karl rose slowly in his wheelchair with one hand on the arm of the chair and his other arm pointed toward the television. He screamed. He pointed toward himself, then back at the television.

“Were you there, Karl?” I asked. Karl mumbled and moved his head back and forth. He leaned even farther forward in his chair. His eyes were glued to the television. I watched Karl’s face as the German army band played one of those strong German marches they are famous for. Karl started moaning and whining and lashing his arms out again, and the other residents were starting to join in. I could feel the panic building up in my chest and thought it best to return Karl to his room before it got any worse.

“It’s all right, Karl, don’t worry, nothing is going to happen to you,” I said, trying to calm him down. I brought Karl back to his room and called for a nurses’ aide, and together we were able to put Karl back into his bed. He mumbled and twitched for a few minutes then settled back down. I asked the nurses’ aide if she would check on the others who were watching the movie and call me when the movie was over. She said she would take care of it.

“Will he be all right?” the aide asked.

“I’m sure he will be fine, but I am going to sit here for a while and keep an eye on him,” I said reassuringly. I watched him and wondered to myself, *Is he sane or insane?*