

# KILL ORDER

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AN EX-MILITARY ACTION THRILLER

Alex Ander

# CHAPTER 1

## Stone

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1 JUNE—10:46 P.M.

SASKATCHEWAN PROVINCE (CANADA)

NEAR PRINCE ALBERT NATIONAL PARK

**D**RESSED IN BLACK FROM head to toe, his face painted black and green, a black stocking cap on his head, Jason Stone crept forward in the dark of night, heel-toe/heel-toe. He paused a beat and held his breath, crouching a bit in the shadow of a tall pine.

Three feet ahead, his back to the tall pine, a sentry yawned.

Stone waited. During his stint with U.S. Army Special Forces, he had been the ‘tip of the spear’ on many direct-action operations like this one. Now working in the private sector, however, he was on his own. If things went wrong—heck, even if they went right—and he ended up getting caught, there would be no secret, night-time, incoming Blackhawk rescue mission in his future. But, sometimes, doing the right thing meant you had to take a few chances, break a few rules.

The sentry finished his yawn, blowing a visible cloud into the cool night air while lowering his arm.

Stone pounced. From behind, the six-six, two-sixty former military man clamped his left hand around the sentry’s mouth, the thick soles of his tactical boots increasing his height advantage over his prey by at least another inch.

A large individual in his own right, the guard was forced to his tiptoes. He reached for the pistol on his right hip.

Stone yanked the adversary’s head backward and sliced his KA-BAR Ek Model 4 fighting knife backward across the man’s throat, the KA-BAR’s 6.6-inch, double-edged spear point blade sinking three inches into flesh.

Blood shot out.

He thrust the Ek into the man’s chest several times, opening more holes to speed up the dying process and ensure his victim made no sound.

The man's body went limp.

Acting as if he had choreographed his next move, Stone squatted then went to his left knee to lay his 'dance partner' on the ground.

The watchman came down on his left side, the back of his right hand dropping onto the grass, his right elbow flopping forward. A split-second later, a gurgling sound came from his throat, and he let out his last breath.

Stone used the corpse's shirt to wipe the red slick from the Model 4's black blade before sliding the knife into a self-locking sheath strapped to his left upper arm. He fastened a retaining strap around the black handle while pivoting his head left and right, his eyes scanning for more threats.

A half-moon overhead cast a glow on the sparsely wooded backyard between him and the three-story stone mansion located atop a shallow rise a hundred yards ahead. Around the extravagant home's perimeter, security lights lit up the ground like a moat surrounding a castle. The sounds of insects and animals disturbed the quiet of an otherwise peaceful 55-degree evening. The critters' white noise was also a boon to intruders seeking to go unnoticed.

Stone drew a black Ruger Mark IV 22/45 Lite pistol from a thigh holster on his right leg. An attached Ruger Silent-SR sound suppressor nearly doubled the twenty-two-caliber pistol's overall length, while the owner's large hands engulfed the rest of the gun.

On his ten o'clock, all the way across the backyard, another sentry meandered in the shadows among the trees, the glow of a cigarette giving away his position.

Closer, on Stone's one o'clock, a man leaned against a wide oak, one foot flat against the bark, his back to the tree and to the intruder who had just killed his comrade.

More shadows appeared and disappeared at the far end of the mansion on Stone's twelve o'clock, indicating one more member of the security detail.

He surveyed the lavish home, noting multiple windows aglow from interior lighting. His mind envisioning a target-rich environment, he rose to a crouch and snaked his way across the manicured lawn. He stopped at several trees along his route—to verify his advance had gone undetected—before he turned his attention toward the hazy figure leaning against the oak.

The unaware guard brought his left hand to his mouth, and a reddish-orange dot grew brighter.

Now with a positive fix on where his target's head was, Stone raised his Ruger, lined up the red dot scope a little to the right of where the cigarette's tip was glowing brightly and eased off a shot.

The weapon's sliding bolt was louder than the subsonic 22LR ammunition the gun spewed.

The target dropped where he stood, his torso sliding down the tree until his butt hit the grass.

Stone glanced toward the two men with rifles slung in front of their bodies. From this distance, with the insects still croaking, he was certain neither one had heard the report. But a second look was never a bad thing, especially before leaving the relative concealment of the trees.

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#### ONE MINUTE LATER...

Stone had hugged the tree line, made a wide half circle to his right, staying just outside the reach of the security lights, and approached the huge house on the near side. After giving the surrounding area, and the front of the home, a second look, and spotting no one, he peaked around the corner then hurried along a sidewalk, ducking under windows as he passed by them.

At the next corner, he pressed his right shoulder against the structure's rough stone exterior, leaned out, and gazed across the backyard he had been observing a minute ago.

Pacing, the man who had been stationed inside the tree line took a long drag on his cigarette, hunched his shoulders, then rubbed a palm up and down his right arm.

Stone glanced right and barely made out an elongated silhouette on the ground near the opposite corner before he came back to the smoking man and raised his Ruger.

The human target did an about-face and retraced his steps.

Stone settled the Ruger's red dot just ahead of his target's nose and squeezed the gun's trigger.

In short succession, a bullet escaped the barrel, *Pfff*, and the 22/45's bolt reciprocated, *Click-click*.

Smoking Man collapsed.

Stone peeled around the house and fast walked toward the other corner, his eyes darting left and right, up and down. When they faced forward again, he saw that the silhouette he had seen on the ground earlier was gone. Now a real person was staring back at him, a real person with an AK-47 strapped across his chest.

The man scrambled to get his rifle into play.

Stone cursed under his breath. Twenty-two pistols were great for stealth work, for when you had the time to get off a precision headshot. But they were terrible one-shot manstoppers when your opponent would not stand still while you tried to kill him.

Bending at the knees to keep from bouncing, and throwing off his aim, Stone charged forward while working the Ruger's trigger.

The weapon sounded off, *Pff—Click-click*, three times.

All three projectiles hit home; none struck anything vital.

The man brought the weapon to bear.

*Come on.* Stone fired his last half dozen rounds in less than a second. *Hit something juicy.*

The handgun's bolt locked open.

Through the red dot, he saw a dark-colored mist appear then vanish.

The AK-wielding man fell to his knees then keeled over, his face slamming onto the patio walkway.

Stone reloaded the Ruger then drilled the fallen man in the head with a 'make sure' bullet before hopping onto the back porch. He drew up to the rear door and tried the handle. It moved.

## CHAPTER 2

### Opulent

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ONCE INSIDE THE MANOR, Stone noted the interior was as vast, opulent, and expansive as the extravagant exterior had suggested it would be. The first floor had numerous rooms, alcoves, nooks, and crannies; great places for guys with guns to hide. Add in the low lighting, and the space was laden with perfect ambush points.

Movement came from an adjacent room on his nine o'clock.

He put his back to the entranceway wall on his left, holstered his Ruger, and slipped the KA-BAR from its resting place on his left upper arm.

Ten seconds later, approaching from Stone's eight o'clock, a blonde-haired woman in her twenties made a 'right-ninety.' Startled by the stranger sporting a black-and-green face and a long knife, she jumped backward.

Stone coiled his left arm around her head and slapped his palm over her mouth, cutting off her cry for help.

She pushed on his stomach and pulled away.

He drew her tiny body into his bulky frame, the top of her curly hair only coming up to his chest.

Her right cheek against his vest, she punched him in the sides.

He raised the KA-BAR, so she could see its black blade. "Shhh."

She halted her struggle.

"I mean you no harm." Stone pointed the tip of the Model 4 toward the back door. "Don't scream. And don't stop running. You understand?"

She nodded against the pressure of his hand.

He released her.

She bolted away from him, threw open the door, and ran outside, into the backyard.

Stone exchanged the KA-BAR for the Ruger, crossed the living room, and climbed the spiral staircase. There was no way one person could effectively clear every room on every floor. Having pored over the layout of this place, he was ninety percent certain his objective would be in one of the rooms on the third floor.

“What the,” said a gruff voice from below. “Who the,” a man uttered a vulgar word, “are you?”

Stone spun left, leaned over the railing to his right, and let loose with a volley of shots.

The newcomer took three in the chest, one in the neck, and one in the nose.

A pass-through bullet shattered a wall mirror.

Pieces of glass tinkled to the floor, as the man fell forward onto a brown sofa.

Stone paused, turned his head, and cocked an ear.

Footsteps came from different directions.

*Son-of-a—* he shoved the Ruger into his thigh holster and yanked an FNX-45 Tactical 45 ACP pistol from a belt holster while climbing the stairs. *No sense worrying about noise now.* His long legs took the steps three at a time.

On the second floor, he grabbed the vertical handrail on his left.

A man in a black leather jacket ran toward him.

Stone’s eyes went lower, and he saw black steel in the man’s hand. *Congratulations. You just won a bullet.* He thrust out the FNX and sent three one-handed rounds downrange.

‘Leather Jacket’ absorbed the 230-grain 45 ACPs, skidded two feet on his knees, and crumpled to the floor.

Stone was off again. Four strides later, he reached the third-floor hallway, hung a left, and slammed his right boot into the first door on his three o’clock.

The barrier flew inward.

He poked his gun and head inside, saw the space was empty, then moved to the second room on the right.

That door opened on its own.

A bare-chested man sporting white boxers, one sock, and holding his pants, stood facing the intruder, his head cocked back at a forty-five-degree angle to meet the gaze of the one who towered over him and filled the doorway.

His black stocking cap grazing the molding overhead, Stone saw no weapons. He squinted at ‘Boxers.’ “Donovan.”

Boxers frowned.

Stone gritted his teeth, leaned forward a hair, and growled at the man, repeating his question, louder this time. “Donovan.”

The man took a half step back. His eyes flicked to his right before his neck followed. “D-down the hall...last room on the right.”

Stone put the FNX’s muzzle to the man’s sternum, pushed him another step backward, and grabbed the doorknob. “Stay.” He closed the door and moved down the hall, his pistol up and aimed at the last room on the right.

The door on his immediate right opened.

All in one motion, he pivoted right, saw a gun, and shot its owner, a greasy-haired, thirty-something man, at point blank range.

A wet spray speckled Stone’s cheeks, chin, and neck.

Undaunted, the operator spun back toward the final door.

Gunfire came from the first floor.

Bullets punched holes in the third-floor ceiling, pinged off the metal handrail.

Stone flinched, ducking his head like a turtle trying to crawl back into his shell. He stood tall, did a one-eighty, leaned over the railing, found the shooter, and fired.

Three 45s penetrated the torso of a man wearing camouflage fatigues on the first floor.

‘Fatigues’ did a jig then keeled over backwards.

Stone saw a head peek out from the spiral staircase below on his ten o’clock. He fired.

Two 45s breached a man’s skull. He did a backward somersault down the steps, his remains ending up in a mangled heap against the far railing.

Stone grabbed a fresh magazine, dropped the used one into his palm, then rammed the fresh one home before stowing the partial in a pants pocket. He took a giant left-footed step, lifted his right foot, and thrust out the leg.

Wood splintered and cracked, the top part of a door coming off its hinges, as the whole thing crashed inward and banged off a wall.

He waited two beats for gunfire. When none came, he ‘sliced the pie’ and gradually exposed himself to the room’s occupants one half step at a time.

Surrounded by three floor-to-ceiling bookcases filled with books, a man stood behind a massive mahogany desk. Behind him; a window. The curtains were closed. In front of the desk; two straight-back chairs, a bear rug, a sofa, and a coffee table.

Stone pointed his pistol at the man but lowered it to get an unobstructed view, his mind matching a photo from a file folder to the person he now saw.



Short, overweight, balding, the man behind the desk wore a gray track suit. He leaned forward and rested the tips of his splayed fingers on a desk calendar. “So,” he swallowed hard, licked his lips, and cleared his throat, “is this it? Have you finally come to kill me?”

Stone’s eyes glanced around the room. “Anyone else here?”

Donning a puzzled look, the man slowly shook his head.

“Come.” Stone shot a look over his shoulder.

The man at the desk stiffened his back. “I *won’t*. If you’re going to kill me, then,” he pointed an index finger toward the floor, “kill me here and now.”

Stone whirled around to confront the protestor. “If I had wanted you dead, Mr. Donovan, you’d be dead. Now, if you want to see your family again,” he used his pistol to beckon the man, “*come*.”

Following a five-second staring contest, fifty-seven-year-old Alfred Donovan—CEO of a multinational corporation, husband, and a father of two college-aged girls, a man who had been kidnapped three days ago, and was now being held for a ransom—sauntered out from behind the desk. He approached the man who had promised him a safe return to his loved ones. “So, you’re not here to kill me?”

Stone rolled his eyes, got a handful of the man’s shirt, and led him out of the room. “Follow m—”

Two doors down, now fully dressed, ‘Boxers’ stepped into the hall, holding a pistol. He glanced left, toward the staircase, then looked toward Stone and Donovan.

Stone saw the weapon and put two rounds in the man’s chest and one in his head.

Boxers backed into the door jamb, slid to his butt, and fell sideways into his room.

Stone reached back and tugged on Donovan’s arm. “Come.” He passed by the corpse and shook his head at what remained of the dead man’s face. *I told him to stay.*

## CHAPTER 3

### Repercussions

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ONCE ON THE MAIN floor, Stone led Donovan to the front door, his firearm up and swinging toward areas that posed potential threats. Reaching the entryway, he spun around and covered their retreat. “Stop.”

The kidnap victim stopped.

Stone backed up to the front door, squinted at the front yard through a glass pane, then opened the door and exited the house. A tingling sensation raced up and down his spine at the same time he caught a glimpse of a figure on his left. He shouted, “Back,” while ducking.

A gun went off.

A bullet ricocheted off the home’s stone exterior on the opposite side of the doorway.

Stone coiled his left arm over and around the gunman’s outstretched right arm, and wrenched the man off his feet, dislocating the aggressor’s shoulder in the process.

The attacker bellowed.

Now face to face with his ambusher, Stone touched the muzzle of his FNX to the soft, fleshy part under the man’s chin and pulled the trigger.

The top of the man’s head blew out, as his feet came back down onto the concrete porch. A beat later, he fell across the open doorway.

Stone washed a hand down his face and wiped a red palm on his pants before reaching over the body, grabbing a stunned Donovan by the man’s shirt, and pulling. “Come.”

Donovan stepped over the gruesome sight and followed his ‘monosyllabic savior’ down the porch steps, half glancing back at the spectacle and half looking down to find his next footfall.

The twosome hurried toward three parked SUVs lined up in the driveway—all of them black four-doors with blacked-out windows. While the older man ran fingers through his hair and grimaced at the prostrate body seventy feet behind him, Stone tried the door handles on the vehicles. The passenger door on the third one, the lead one, popped open. He bent over. Seeing keys in the ignition, he stood tall and called out to the one in his care. “Let’s go.”

Donovan scurried to the SUV.

Stone pushed, more than he ushered, the man into the passenger seat before throwing the door shut with a loud thud.

His left thigh vibrated.

He rounded the front grille while shoving his free hand into his pants pocket. He knew who the caller was even before he fished out his cell phone and saw her name on the device's screen. He moved his thumb toward a red icon while opening the driver's door.

The passenger leaned over the console to stare at the upright man.

Standing still, Stone made a face, his thumb hovering above the 'Decline' icon. This was the third time she had called in the last twenty minutes. He had felt the second one come in when he had been in the backyard, wiping his knife on his first victim's clothing.

Donovan held up open hands. "What's going on? Aren't we leaving?"

Stone winced at the repercussions of not taking this call. Eyeing Donovan, he then puckered his lips and touched the top of the FNX's slide to them before turning away, taking a deep breath, and exhaling. He tapped his phone and put it to his left ear. "Hey, Taylor, honey. How's it going?"

Donovan heard the gentle, loving tone in the voice of the man who had, up to this point, only grunted one- and two-word commands at him. He leaned left again and saw the man with a phone to his cheek, a gun in his right hand, and a smile on his face.

"Stone," said Taylor, an edge to her voice.

Stone arched his back and glanced up at the sky. His wife only ever called him by his last name when she was irked by him. But the fact that she was talking to him told him she had not yet reached the point of being upset with him. Irked versus upset; there was a definite difference between the two. And he suspected most married men never got the luxury of a 'two-minute warning' with their spouses. So, he was okay with the tip-off. He straightened his back. *I can still salvage this.*