

WHO IS SINLOCK?

by

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CHAPTER 1

The feral figure of a man dropped over the puddle of water, lowered his mouth to the surface, and began to drink noisily. He was naked and filthy, a sinewy body covered in caked mud and muck. Worse, his forearms appeared to be covered in drying blood and grime. Wild hair spilled over one side of his face and dipped in the water. He scanned the trees around him while he drank. His eyes darted and rolled in wild circles as he drank from the shallow puddle, seemingly independent of rational thought or direction, winding around and around as an animal's might.

The sound of a twig snapping brought his face up from the puddle sharply, beads of water running through his beard. Another noise, this time the slight rustle of movement behind him caused his head to whip around. The naked man brought one hand up from the puddle in a gesture of defense as he hissed savagely through yellowed teeth that seemed jammed with dirt and gristle from an unspeakable meal of meat served raw. In his hand, he held the remains of a deer's antler. It had been crudely broken off from its previous owner and held as a makeshift, multi-pronged dagger or spear point. The tips of the dagger were stained with gore and a thin ribbon of gristle hung from the man's fist, which tightened around the antler in

anticipation. The man listened as he drew in ragged breaths of air.

A third noise now, a low voice saying something, unintelligible in structure but unmistakable in tone- He was being watched. The savage man ran off from his drink letting loose a raw throated screech, tearing through the brush before him.

"There... THERE! He's moving!" One of the secret watchers yelled. The sound of a rifle bolt sliding and locking a round into a chamber sounded.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot unless you have to!" A voice of authority shouted. "Just track him!"

"Forget that! He's a killer!" someone shouted in contradiction.

"Elwood! Shut the hell up! I'm in charge! Just track him, goddamn it!" the voice with authority shouted. The feral man ran from the arguing voices, splashing through muddy ground and leaping between trees until he had put perhaps fifty yards from his last position. The savage hunkered down and listened. Then noise came from the opposite direction. It was the sound of shuffling feet and clumsiness.

"Where are you guys?" a particularly lost sounding voice wailed out in front of where the savage was. The bearded face

grimaced in crazed hatred, then twisted up in glee as he crept forward, advancing on the nearly mewling voice.

"Guys?" the voice asked aloud, searching for any help.

A thin man with a cherubic face and an expression of bewilderment underneath a dark green hunting cap pushed through the bushes and was leapt at by the screeching mud covered savage who knocked him to the ground, sending a brand new hunting rifle skittering into parts unknown. The cherub was too scared to scream as the sinewy savage stood upright over him and clenched the antler dagger with two filthy fists overhead.

The savage screamed in a voice that declared both delight and rage at the same time.

The man beneath him was frozen in fear, fully expecting to be killed, and knowing on some level that he deserved it for losing track of the others in the group, for being in the woods by himself when a mad killer was on the loose.

The butt of a rifle stock planted itself loudly against the back of the savage's head, parting grimy hair and splitting scalp. The naked man went sprawling face down next to the cherub who almost sobbed with gratitude.

"Deke!- I got lost!" the cherub blurted out in explanation.

"Get up and find your gun, Hughie. He's down, but he ain't exactly out." Deke Martin aimed his rifle at the dazed savage on the ground next to Hughie Longstrum,

keeping the naked man covered. Other than the four years he'd spent in the Marines, Deke had spent his whole life in this town. No one in the group knew their way around these woods or a rifle like he did, which was why Deputy Kenner had asked him to come along. James Elwood and Deputy Kenner came tramping through the brush to find a red faced Hughie on all fours retrieving his rifle from under a dead and fallen log.

"Aww, it's all scratched up..." Hughie complained sullenly. He looked up at Kenner and Elwood, a goofy smile appearing on Hughie's face.

"We got him!" Hughie said triumphantly.

"Get up and get clear of him Hughie. I'm not foolin' around. "Deke warned. "You got those zip ties ready, Deputy?"

"What the hell we wasting time with those for?" Elwood asked as he pointed his rifle in the direction of the dazed savage.

"For the last time, knock that shit off Elwood. We're bringing him in," Kenner breathed. He pulled the plastic flex cuffs from his belt, but Elwood shouldered him out of the way.

"Why!?! So some lawyer can score him a cozy hospital room? Some place all our tax dollars have to pay for? Did you see what this animal did to Jenny Caufield!?! How in the hell is that justice!?"

"Calm down, Elwood. We're still taking him in," Deke said calmly. "It's not our job to hand out justice."

"Bullshit!" Elwood spat and began to take aim at the downed naked man. Deputy Kenner grabbed the barrel and pushed it away roughly.

"I'm not fooling around anymore, Elwood. Calm down and get a grip. He's coming in," Tim Kenner spoke through clenched jaw.

"Don't you don't even care that he slaughtered that girl!? That he killed them three others!?" Elwood was screaming now. Hughie had climbed to his feet and looked confused and weak, like a child watching his parents fight in the living room. Kenner turned and squared off against Elwood for half a second before stooping to pull the savage's arms behind him and apply the plastic loops.

"I care enough to do my job right," he breathed out in a last attempt at being civil toward Elwood. "You're here to *help* me do my job. Remember that."

"Well, maybe me and Hughie and Deke aren't satisfied with that- I'm a deputy too, Kenner. In case you forgot," Elwood said, puffing out his chest.

"You're part-time summer help, Elwood. Kenner's the one with rank here. He calls the shots. I don't have a problem with bringing him in," Deke said, eyeing and not liking the way Elwood was gripping his rifle.

"What are we doing? What are we not satisfied with?" Hughie asked, oblivious to what Elwood was pushing for.

"You're not shooting the prisoner, Elwood," Deputy Kenner said flatly. "Get used to it."

"Well, he ain't getting off this mountain alive," Elwood challenged the Deputy.

"What do you mean, Elwood?" Hughie asked.

"I say, that he got shot trying to escape..." Elwood stated ominously and took aim at the man lying on the ground again.

"Hey!" Deke shouted.

Kenner stood up and spun around, facing the barrel of Elwood's rifle. Both men's eyes flashed with anger.

"Get out of the way, Kenner," Elwood growled.

"Aim that rifle somewhere else," Deke warned. He had pointed his own rifle at Elwood. "Right...now."

"Goddammit, Deke! You didn't see what this animal did!" Elwood shouted, glancing sideways at the business end of Deke's rifle.

"Nope. I heard what he did and I agreed to track him and take him in. Not murder him. Now put down that rifle, Elwood. I don't want to have to drop you."

"You'd do that?" Elwood asked, hesitating, looking for some kind of forward momentum as he shifted his stance nervously.

Kenner was motionless, his hands held up in front of his chest

waiting for the opportunity to move. Elwood gave him the necessary moment when he turned briefly to plead with Deke. Whatever his argument was going to be, it went unheard as Kenner shoved the barrel out of the way and patted Elwood with a right that met with Elwood's nose. Elwood fell backwards, and Kenner deftly picked up the rifle as it spilled from his hands.

"Thanks Deke," Kenner said.

"No problem, Deputy," Deke said and brought his rifle skyward.

"Cheap-shot artist!" Elwood spat. Blood poured between fingers as he cupped a broken nose. "Goddamn coward cheap shot! Hit me when I wasn't looking!"

Kenner looked down at Elwood and checked the rifle.

"Yeah. Wish I was brave like some guys...willing to shoot an unconscious man whose already been cuffed. In the back no less," Kenner mumbled. He took aim at the sky with Elwood's rifle and fired three shots, placed evenly apart.

"And that's all your rifle's getting used for today. The other search party can give us a hand hauling him down," Kenner said.

"Worst mistake you ever made...I won't forget this," Elwood growled as he began to get to his feet.

"And I'll try not to forget you had a rifle pointed at me a minute ago," Deputy Kenner said. The naked man began to stir and

make noises from the back of his throat. Deke stepped forward and put his boot on the man's back.

"Stay down," he ordered. In response, the savage turned his head to the side and began to make barking noises.

"Hughie, take some of these flex cuffs and secure his legs. We don't want him getting up and running around," Kenner said and tossed a couple of plastic loops to the dumbfounded Hughie. Hughie managed to get the cuffs on just as the prisoner began to really thrash around under Deke's foot.

"What's wrong with him?" Hughie asked and looked to the others.

"He's a mad dog killer is what's wrong with him...it's a mistake to let him live," Elwood said and spat some more blood on the ground as he glared at Kenner and Deke with a sullen sense of having been betrayed.

"Maybe," Kenner said looking down at the thrashing wild man.

"Who do you think he is?" Hughie asked.

"He's fucking nobody," Elwood asserted and spat some more blood on the ground.

CHAPTER 2

Twelve hours later the wild man sat in a detention block at the Sheriff's Department in the town called Sherman. He had been hosed down and given orange prisoner scrubs to wear. His wrists cuffed to a heavy leather belt around his waist and leg shackles restricted his steps. A safety harness linked him to a chair bolted to the floor. An empty aluminum table was set before him, but the harness prevented him from smashing his forehead onto it, no matter how hard he tried. His eyes darted back and forth, and his head whipped from side to side as if he was constantly responding to things around him no one else could see.

The people behind the two-way mirror observed him for a few minutes.

"And he hasn't said a word?" one officer asked. He turned to Kenner.

"Nothing that made sense. I got a few words out of him, but it was kind of like Spanish, maybe Italian. When I asked him what language he spoke, he started screaming a whole lot of other stuff. Different languages I think. He's quiet when no one else is in the room trying to talk to him, but he still keeps twisting around."

The wild man twisted rapidly around as if there was someone behind him.

"Like that," Kenner finished.

"I kind of figured he would pass out by now, but he doesn't even seem close to running out of energy."

The other deputy whistled.

"It took ten guys to get him into the truck. This isn't drugs... He's really crazy. I've been calling the State Police since we hauled him in. They said they were sending a shrink to talk to him," Kenner said.

"He's gonna plead insanity, then?"

"We're nowhere near that part... we don't even have a name, yet. There's no sense in questioning him if he's just going to talk gibberish. The Sheriff talked to some of the state's investigative unit and they said it would be best for the psychiatrist to observe the next interview attempt. The shrink should make a determination if he should go straight to the nut factory instead of..." Kenner began, and then stopped as the wild man looked straight at him through the glass. "Hey, is the speaker on?"

"No, that's the freaky thing about this guy... Well, *another* freaky thing. He sometimes looks like he's hearing what's going on here. Hey, is it true he was eating squirrels and woodchucks and stuff?" the deputy stated.

"From all the carcasses we found, yeah. Plus, we found part of a deer. He just killed them and ate them raw."

"Did he...did he eat Jenny Caufield?"

"Like I said, we're nowhere near that part. The state boys sent their forensic team up to the campgrounds. They were cut up too bad to tell," Kenner said.

The interoffice phone line rang at that moment, and the deputy answered.

"The shrink is here. Hey, why does he keep moving around like that?"

"Who knows what's inside that guy's head. He could be seeing all sorts of things," Kenner responded.

The wild man glared around at the empty room, stopping at several different points as if he were looking at people talking to him. While the room was empty as far as the deputies were concerned, the man looked around at the dozens of silent people who stood in the room around him, staring at him. The line of grey, quiet faces jammed the department hallways. They were all lined up to try and pour into the room, with angry scowls for expressions filling the empty doorways, splitting into several different lines that spilled out into the street. One thousand faces in all, that went unnoticed by the men in uniform who walked right through them to escort the state appointed psychiatrist to meet their prisoner. The silent faces began to speak suddenly and all at once. A thousand voices tripping over one another, scrambling the rare moment of peace

the man strapped to the chair had found. He began to scream again.

"And he has no identification on him whatsoever?" Doctor Julie Byrnes asked as she signed in. Sheriff Duffy stood beside the doctor, having met her at the heliport. The murders had happened while he was away on an annual vacation. He was playing catch up with the investigation and didn't want to be left out on anything.

"Hell Doc, he was balls ass naked- Uh, no. No ID, ma'am." a deputy said, catching himself before Sheriff Duffy had a chance to reprimand him.

"And he never gave you a name?" she asked, following the deputy toward the lock up.

"He hasn't really said much that wasn't just screaming," the deputy said.

"We have the state Detective standing by and Deputy Kenner will be in the room with you. He's been restrained, so you won't be in any danger," Sheriff Duffy said.

"Is that necessary?" she asked, wondering if the deputies weren't going overboard.

"Trust us, it's necessary," the deputy said.

Detective Carroll, who was on loan from the state, had significant experience in homicide investigations. Carroll had just come back from the campground where local teenager Jenny

Caufield and her boyfriend Terrance McCabe had been camping. Jenny had come home from college on a mid semester break and took the opportunity to spend the night with Terry in the woods they had grown up next to. Neither family balked at the idea, fully expecting the couple to get married before Jenny graduated from the university. They had been in love since the age of fourteen and no amount of distance was ever going to change that.

Both were found skinned and dismembered in their campsite by Jenny's father and brother who had gone looking for them when the blue-eyed blonde who had dreamed of becoming a veterinarian had not come home the night before wearing the engagement ring Terrance had bought for her a week before, planning on presenting it to her that first night under the stars. The ring had been found wrapped around Terry's penis, which had been severed and left on a log the couple had used to sit in front of their campfire.

Mr. Caufield had a heart seizure at the campground upon seeing the body of his daughter hanging upside down from a tree limb. Jenny's brother managed to fumble through the buttons of his cell phone to call the sheriff's department and an ambulance for his father.

Detective Carroll and Sheriff Duffy stepped into the interrogation room to jointly interview the John Doe suspected

of skinning Jenny Caufield and dismembering Terrence McCabe. The bearded man bared his teeth and rocked in his chair as he glared at the two. Sheriff Duffy stood in the room watching the scene, trying to seem like he belonged there. Even with all his years in law enforcement, John Duffy had handled only a few homicides. This was a small, quiet town and the Caufield/McCabe murders were beyond him, but he wasn't quite ready to admit that. He had known both victims and their families. He felt nothing but rage toward the man in chains.

Again, they tried with preliminaries. *'What is your name?'* *'Do you know where you are?'* *'Do you speak English?'* Detective Carroll asked taking the lead. He noticed that the suspect's eyes would shift rapidly about the room with every question but would keep settling back on the mirror behind him. The detective turned and looked at the mirror, behind which the auburn haired doctor observed all.

"I think he's a little distracted, Doctor," the detective suggested. "I'm not sure we're going to get anything-,"

"Eu vou falar com ela," the man said suddenly and clearly in a voice completely different from the one that had been screaming and screeching for hours. This voice was almost charming. The detective's head turned suddenly back at the man. "What did you say?" Carroll asked.

"Son of a bitch," Duffy erupted. "He's Spanish."

The man meanwhile appeared shocked at what had come out of his own mouth and stared off to the left. Then in a completely different voice spoke once more.

"Don't do that again!" he hissed, and his eyes began to scan the ceiling rapidly, moving back and forth.

"But he wants her..." he moaned, in yet a third distinct voice that sounded almost childlike. He began to slump. "We all do! We all do!" a harsh ragged voice shouted, seeming to pour out of his throat, forcing him to sit up straight again. "Act normal or they'll never let us have her!"

The man stopped shouting abruptly, and his eyes rocketed back and forth between the detective and the sheriff, studying their reactions as he held his tongue, as if trying to keep a secret inside of him.

"Ohhhkay," Carroll breathed. "I think we're gonna take a short break."

Duffy and Carroll conferred with Dr. Byrnes.

"Is he faking?" the sheriff asked. He felt angered at the possibility that the man in the jumpsuit might be able to evade justice for what he had done. "If he thinks he's going to get away with slaughtering some kids in the woods by making some funny voices-," John Duffy started.

"I don't know if he's faking or not, sheriff. I've only looked at him through some glass for a few minutes, and I only

saw what you both did. Besides, I wouldn't make that kind of determination anyway, not without an extensive interview...but at first glance," Julie Byrnes took a thoughtful breath as she looked over through the glass at the John Doe. He was now staring at his own reflection and breathing raggedly. "There's something going on in there," she finished.

"That thing with his eyes...like he's seeing stuff," Deputy Kenner remarked. Dr. Byrnes nodded.

"It's called internal stimuli. He's reacting to sounds and images he's experiencing that we can't," Byrnes explained.

"Hallucinations?" Kenner asked.

"Possibly. There's no way to know what he's experiencing," she answered.

"But those things he was saying... in those different voices?" Carroll asked.

"Maybe he's a ventriloquist. Who cares?" John Duffy grumbled.

"I won't know anything until I interview him myself," she said, mindful of what the sheriff was probably feeling. He wanted the murderer of the two teenagers to be evil, not sick. Here was someone who might not be responsible for his actions. Sheriff Duffy wanted this to make sense, the way he understood right and wrong to work in his world.

A few minutes later, she sat before the restrained man in the orange scrubs in the interrogation room.

"Hello. My name is Dr. Julie Byrnes. I was hoping to try and talk with you," she began.

The man stared blankly ahead, then snapped momentarily to the left like a dog reacting to a gnat.

"I know you can speak. We all heard you speak."

Again, he looked blankly ahead, "Can you hear me...? Do you understand me?" she tried, looking for any sort of reaction from the man. "This would be easier if I knew your name...can you tell me your name?"

For a moment, his face twitched and he began to make a noise as if he was going to speak.

"...sssssSSSSSSsssss...", but he faded off into nothingness as if he had forgotten whatever it was he was going to say. His eyes began their crazed shifting again, searching about the room, looking over and around the doctor. She followed the sporadic movements and thought she saw a pattern.

"What do you see here? Can you tell me what you see?" Julie asked, feeling it might be the key to getting him to open up. There was earnestness to his expressions. Expressions that now seemed tortured, as though he were suffering or in constant fear. She suddenly felt compelled to look around the room herself to make sure.

"There's no one else here," she insisted, hoping it would reassure him.

Actually, the man in orange saw the room to be filled with dozens of people who surrounded him and were rapidly speaking words only he could hear.

After trying and failing to communicate for twenty minutes, Julie had determined that he would be transported to a psychiatric facility for long-term evaluation in the morning. There was no way she could approve him for arraignment, not without figuring out if there was some kind of psychotropic medication that could clear whatever was going on behind his eyes.

Speaking of his eyes, there was a minor debate between a few of the deputies as to what color they should list their prisoner's as being on the identification forms. Kenner had insisted they were green but Detective Carroll had said they were a light hazel, nearly amber.

Eye color wasn't the only source of disagreement amongst the deputies. The idea that the man who murdered Jenny Caufield and Terrance McCabe was going to be shipped off to a hospital and be pumped full of 'happy pills' didn't sit well with a part time deputy who had a broken nose and had recently been denied the chance to mete out some justice as he saw it. Elwood had

gotten busy impressing his frustration on another deputy as soon as Kenner had clocked out for the evening.

After Kenner had spoken with Sheriff Duffy, Elwood had been assigned to monitor communications and been forbidden to interact with the prisoner in solitary. The overnight staff deputy was named Tom Gerard, and his regular duties included monitoring the prisoners. He also had gotten an earful from Elwood about what should happen to the "John Doe" in solitary.

"Just let me have five minutes alone with him," Elwood growled.

"No way, Elwood. Duffy's serious about us not fucking with him," Gerard said. He was an amiable and doughy man, who managed to do his job between coffee breaks. He wanted to avoid trouble, but could easily be led astray. Elwood knew how to do just that.

"What are you, some kind of bleeding heart? Do you know what he did to those kids?" Elwood demanded.

"Yeah, I also know what Duffy will do to me if he ever found out that I let you near this freak. Let it alone."

Elwood thought about it and had a moment of sly inspiration as he saw the small group on one of the monitors next to the image of the bearded man rocking back and forth in his cell.

"You could make it look like an accident..." he suggested, a smile growing beneath the bandaged and broken nose.

"Sure," Gerard snorted. "I can picture that now. *'It was the weirdest thing sheriff, he just fell on Elwood's fist a dozen times until his teeth fell out,'* No thanks."

"I mean something not our fault," Elwood said, through his shark-like smile.

"What do you mean?" Gerard looked up. Gerard didn't like the idea of the freak in solitary getting away with murder but wasn't willing to risk Duffy's wrath, either. The sheriff was one dude Gerard wasn't willing to cross. "What wouldn't be our fault?" he asked.

"Well if there was a plumbing problem, or his cell had to be cleaned out for health reasons...you'd have to place him in another cell while the solitary room was being fixed, right? Nobody ever said that he'd have to be put in an *empty* cell, right?" Elwood pointed at the monitor of the main cell with the four burly men milling about.

"Nooo...but...," Gerard began to answer.

"It would be an accident...you couldn't have known what Joe Benson and Mark Kestrel and those other guys that busted up the Bowling Alley would do to the animal that murdered Jenny and Terr... *right?*"

Deputy Tom Gerard regarded Joe Benson as a dangerous animal. Most people in Sherman did. Mark Kestrel was only slightly better, and only when he wasn't anywhere near Benson.

Both men worked as tow truck drivers and diesel mechanics in between alcohol fueled rampages. The summer before last, Benson had beaten a man into a coma for looking at him in a way he felt was "*fruity*." Benson only narrowly missed an indictment by the skin of his teeth. His freedom had been secured when Mark Kestrel had paid the sole witness to the assault a late-night visit. Afterwards, the witness had forgotten seeing Mr. Benson at all.

Benson and Kestrel had gotten into a brawl at the Premiere Bowling Alley that night, incurring a few thousand dollars worth of property damage as they ripped apart the bar for cutting them off. The two other two men were long haul truckers who had been arrested during the fracas and held on out of state warrants for assault. The bar had been filled with discussion of the brutal murder of a girl and her boyfriend and how the bastard who had murdered them should be blown away. Someone hadn't agreed quickly enough for Benson and Kestrel which led to the brawl.

Tom knew better than to do what Elwood was suggesting, but thought he could get away with pretending it was a simple mistake. He told himself that as he and Elwood held onto the struggling, chained maniac in front of the cell containing the four men.

"Who the hell is *this* freak?" Benson demanded as he stood behind the cell door. Elwood smiled brutally.

"A little somebody we picked up in the woods," Elwood grinned. The answer may as well been a dinner bell. The remaining men stood up from their places on the cell's bench.

"I'll have to take his cuffs off before I put him in a cell with them," Tom said quickly. "They know I wouldn't make that mistake."

"That's fine. I don't think Benson is too worried about this guy getting grabby...Are you Benson?" Elwood asked, with a giggle.

The man the deputies held was sinewy, while Benson had the kind of frame that looked capable of lifting an engine block. Benson stepped back from the cell door and looked up and down at the figure in orange that'd begun to twist in the two deputy's grip. Benson's eyes went from surly round saucers that glared at the deputies to focused suspicion at the man in orange.

"The woods...? Wait- Arnie Caufield's girl? *This* guy!?" Benson pointed at the man in orange as Elwood opened up the cell door. Gerard removed the handcuffs from the prisoner who made a confused grunting sound and looked from left to right as he was pushed through the opened cell door. The four cellmates formed a semi-circle to greet the newcomer. The grunting noises sounded enough like fear for Elwood to think the psycho was just starting to realize how much pain was coming. He and Gerard shoved the freak into the cell.

"We have to clean out this fella's cell. You boys won't mind an extra body in your cell for an hour or two, will you?" Elwood asked jovially. No one responded. The cell door closed behind the man in orange. The two deputies walked away, snickering as Benson grabbed onto the front of the orange jail tunic and began to pull the bearded man close.

"I've been wanting to meet you..." Benson said with a cruel grin.

Elwood and Gerard stepped into the security office thirty seconds later with excited chuckles that bordered on girlish giggles. They quickly sat down in front of the monitor to the main cell, looking like a couple of boys about to sneak their first peek at a pornographic movie.

Their faces froze, unable to comprehend what they were seeing. Two bodies lay senseless on the floor of the cell. A third man was holding his face as he knelt in the corner, apparently gasping for breath. The man in orange had just expertly finished putting down the fourth man, whom Gerard recognized as Kestrel. The wild man moved behind Kestrel and held him in a strangle lock using his forearms. Kestrel weakly struggled and clawed at the arms cutting off his air supply.

"Jesus Christ!" Elwood roared and jumped up from his seat, charging out of the office toward lock up.

"How the-!?" Gerard started and immediately hit the in house alarm, signaling every deputy on duty to respond to the lock up area. He didn't want to do it since he realized he was now in for a world of trouble, but really didn't have a choice. One glance at the monitor made that much clear, as the man who was choking Kestrel began to shout demands at the camera.

"Offnen sie das tor!" he screamed. *"Offnen sie das tor, oder rich tote ihn!"*

"Who hit the alarm!?" Elwood shouted at Gerard as the chubby man came running behind him to the cell door. Gerard had been standing at the door staring helplessly at the man in orange who had been making his demands over the shoulder of the nearly unconscious Kestrel.

"We need help! We have to get the other guys on the tour!" Gerard explained. Elwood looked at the two men on the floor of the cell and the normally terrifying Benson crouched in the corner holding his face. He saw that blood was seeping between the fingers of Benson's hands and realized Tom Gerard was probably right.

"Sond sie leute wie dumm!?" the man with the hostage demanded and gave Kestrel another squeeze.

"What the hell is he saying?" Elwood asked, trying to come up with some story to explain how this all went down before the reinforcements arrived.

"Ach! Brilliant! Open zer gate, *NOW!* Do it now or I vill break his neck! *Mach schnell!*"

"Hey, is that German?" Gerard asked, puzzled at the total change in demeanor from the prisoner.

"Open zer gate or I vill kill him," came from the man strangling Kestrel. Benson came up from his crouch and made a blind lunge for the voice as blood had run from a gouge above his eyebrows and into his eyes. The bearded man stepped partially from behind Kestrel and savagely kicked Benson in the gut, putting the big man down. Benson wheezed through what sounded like broken ribs. The bearded man, once a gibbering maniac, now appeared in complete control as he re-secured his chokehold on Kestrel.

"Do it now!" he commanded in a tone that almost prompted Gerard to obey. Three other deputies came running down the hall, joining the flustered Gerard and Elwood.

"How the hell did he get in the main cell!?" someone demanded.

"It was a mistake-," Gerard started and just gave up. He would deal with the fall out later. Kenner came running up the corridor as he tucked in his uniform shirt.

"What happened?" He stopped when he saw the scene in the cell.

"I vill kill him! Open it!" the prisoner shouted, and his smile toward Kenner suggested he would snap Kestrel's neck without hesitation. There was both control and determination in the prisoner's face.

"Get the shields. We're taking back the cell," Kenner said. He noted the strange amber colored eyes of the prisoner and wondered how he hadn't realized they were that color before, having insisted they were green. The deputies grabbed the riot shields and helmets from the rack at the end of the corridor and rushed back to the cell door, waiting for Kenner's instructions. Kenner turned to Gerard and ordered him to get some zip ties.

"Nothing fancy. We pin him. We zip tie him. We drag him out of the cell. Understand?" Kenner said as Gerard came back with a fistful of ties.

"Ja...Ja. Try to do zat, police man," the prisoner taunted as he braced himself behind Kestrel, smiling broadly. He seemed to want the fight to happen as if he had been waiting for one for a long time. "I vill kill him," he warned again.

Kenner ignored him as he directed Elwood to open the gate. The deputies rushed inside, swarming the cell with their riot shields raised. They charged around Kestrel and his captor. The man in orange seemed for a moment that he would actually snap

Kestrel's neck, but his eyes went to the open cell door. The men rushed at him quickly. The prisoner threw Kestrel's bulk at their feet, causing two deputies to trip. The prisoner jumped over them, through the hole in the line of uniforms and bolted for the open gate. The prisoner ran into Elwood, rabbit punching the surprised deputy squarely in the nose.

"*Schwienhund!*" the escaping prisoner laughed, beginning his run down the hallway toward freedom. Gerard had managed to grab onto the back of the orange prisoner's uniform and pulled at him. The prisoner spun and delivered two arcing fists perfectly aimed and delivered at the side of Gerard's head in rapid succession, knocking Gerard unconscious. He was tackled by Kenner who had abandoned his riot shield to pursue the man. They other deputies piled on as they recovered from their fall. Yet somehow, he fought his way from underneath all of them. The man in orange got up from the pile and began his dash to freedom once again when he was met by another deputy, a woman in uniform who'd arrived late to the alarm. The prisoner was struck in his chest by twin darts attached to a couple of lengths of wire. He stood for an instant, confused by what had just happened, until the deputy pulled the activation trigger to the Taser weapon. Fifty thousand volts dropped him to the floor, where he spasmed violently. Eyes bulged, then rolled back into his head, as he was rendered unconscious.

"Shock him again!" Elwood screeched through hands that were cupping his twice broken nose.

"No!" Kenner shouted, as he climbed to his feet and grabbed a few of the zip ties that Gerard had dropped on the ground. He began securing the prisoner's ankles together and then the man's wrists behind him.

"You're not supposed to bring a Taser back here," he commented. The lock up detail was not supposed to allow any weapons into the cell areas for fear a prisoner would grab one away from a deputy.

"I'm sorry," she responded.

"Don't be. He was kicking our asses. I'll figure a way to explain it on the report," Kenner grunted at the deputy who's name he remembered as being Melanie Hurley. "It's gonna be a lot easier than explaining why this psycho got put in the main cell."

Elwood threw his hands up in the air in a gesture that was both disgust and exasperation.

Gerard came around and someone helped the dazed deputy to his feet. Kenner looked back at the collection of uniforms and then down at the unconscious prisoner.

"Who the hell *is* this guy?" Kenner asked out loud to no one in particular.