

# SNATCHED



# GUY

# LILBURNE

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Snatched

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## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

This book is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogue are entirely drawn from the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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## CHAPTER 1: THE PLAN

Nothing stays the same! People, places, governments, ideas and opportunities all change with the passing of time. In the short term or in a long time, it doesn't really matter. Nothing stays the same.

Syria was being torn apart by a brutal civil war. The dictatorial, self-appointed President had no intention of standing down no matter what the cost in money or lives, but he was beleaguered and embedded in a war that he couldn't win. Death or a war crimes trial in The Hague seemed to be his destiny, but he still had an army, he still had loyal supporters and, while no western powers would intervene, he still had hope - hope that was diminishing each day with the news of lost battles and lost ground. He was winning the battle in the skies above Aleppo, Qusayr, Hamah and Homs. Many lives were being lost, but he didn't care. As far as he was concerned they were peasants and not even peasants who were loyal to his regime. He was also winning the propaganda battle and in the war of words he could blame the deaths of so many innocent people on the freedom fighters of the opposition. The 'terrorists' he called them. Al-Qaeda. He knew the world would believe him when he stated that they were responsible. Russia was providing him with arms. Lebanon had sent Hezbollah fighters and Iran had sent soldiers into Syria to fight alongside the Republican Guard and militia still loyal to the President. It wasn't enough to swing the tide, it just prolonged the fighting and each day brought more bad news. The President had no idea that it was going to be the chain of events in the rapidly changing country of Myanmar (Burma) in south-east Asia that would change his destiny and the future of the country that he was born to believe belonged to him.

The President had just had another daily meeting on the crisis. Being fed truths, half-truths and lies, he had a tainted grasp on the reality of his country's situation and the world's

reaction to it. What the President just couldn't understand was that the West didn't seem to understand that Syria belonged to him. It was his by birth right. He had sat listening to the words being uttered by the men in white robes and army uniforms. The President himself stood out, being the only man wearing a suit. It was an Armani suit. It was two sizes too big on his skinny body to look either cool or smart. But who would dare say so! He had heard enough and his patience was running out. He stopped the meeting and ordered his generals to come up with a plan to end this war and warned them that they would all die if they didn't. Whether they would die on the orders of the President or die at the hands of the freedom fighter mattered little, they would still be dead. They didn't doubt the truth in what the President had said. Serious faces. Sad, scared, serious faces left the bomb-proof bunker. Generals and intelligence staff, advisors and government heads all filed out in silence. Only one intelligence officer stayed behind and his lack of movement caught the President's eye.

Ashour was and always had been a strong supporter of the President and his father before him. He was a distant relative and his loyalty was unquestioned. He was renowned for his anti-Israeli and anti-West views. His ideals were in perfect harmony with those of his President. The two men smiled at each other as their eyes met. Ashour wore a keffiyeh, the traditional Arab headdress and the long white traditional thawb (robe). His white beard did little to hide a face tanned the colour of oak by the sun and deeply creased by his 70 years of life. Now only Ashour, the President and his personal guards remained in the bunker.

"Unless you have a plan Ashour I do not want to speak with you" the President said in a quiet but not unpleasant tone.

"Yes sir, I have a plan." Ashour waited for a response from the President. It took a long time in coming. The President sighed;

"Will it win the war for me?"

"No sir. This is a war that cannot be won. But it would end

the war and you would be seen as the victor. You would have to be prepared to give up part of Syria to the rebels.” Ashour waited once more to gauge the President’s reaction.

“That has been suggested before Ashour, but the rebels would not accept this.”

“Would it be acceptable to you to give up one quarter of the country to the rebels? I would suggest the south-east provinces. They are of little use anyway; mostly desert. No oil or strategic use. The rest of the country would remain yours. Maybe under a new name. The Free Peoples Republic of Syria has a ring to it!”

“And just how do I achieve this master plan Ashour?”

“With a demarcation military zone, to be policed by the ‘independent’ West for maybe 10 or 20 years before handing responsibility over to the Arab League, who will eventually hand the responsibility back to you.”

“And why would the western dogs support this plan?”

“Because you would have something they wanted back.”

“What would I have that they wanted back so badly that they would make such a U-turn after all the lies they have spread so publicly about my country and myself?”

“Not what. Who.”

“Who!” The President sighed. “I am getting tired of our game of words Ashour. Who?”

“HRH Prince William.”

“The Queen of England’s grandson” whispered the President, almost to himself.

The President was quiet as he imagined the possibilities and the possibilities interested him enough to continue the game of words with Ashour.

“And how exactly would I get Prince William?”

“You wouldn’t. Well, not officially. He would be kidnapped by a terrorist group. Al- Qaeda! The same terrorists that you are fighting in your own country. It is because of this very fact that you would be able to help in the safe return of the future King of England. After capturing a terrorist here in Syria, he would

reveal to you information about the kidnapping. With your own intelligence service and special forces you would be able to mount an operation to rescue the Prince.....”

“As long as they agreed to support the peace plan for the new Free Peoples Republic of Syria” interrupted the President.

“Yes sir.”

“And do you think that they would, Ashour?”

“Yes sir, I do. Prince William is very popular amongst the people, not just in England but also in the United States and around the world. His wife is just about to have a baby and everyone loves these people. He is going to be a future King of England. I think that the British would get the support of the Western Powers in negotiating his safe return, in recognizing the new Free Peoples Republic of Syria and helping to implement the peace plan using United Nations soldiers to do it.”

The President smiled. It was the first time he had smiled in over a year.

“Yes. I could handle the negotiations. This would be perfect and the world would recognize me as a hero and recognize Free Syria as a friend. Do you have a plan to take the Prince?”

“Of course, sir. It’s a good plan and we really have nothing to lose; nothing that we are not going to lose anyway.”

“Okay. I want to hear your plan. Come back with me to the palace. We can talk over dinner. I’m hungry.”

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In Myanmar, or Burma as most people around the world still knew it, things had been changing quickly on the political front since the release of democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi from her long house arrest. For 15 of the last 21 years she had been locked away, but the winds of change were blowing through Myanmar and the world had started to take notice.

Barack Obama had already visited the country and the Myanmar President, former general Thein Sein, became the first head of state from Burma to visit the United States since

1966. The British had left a big footprint in Burma, just as they had in many countries around the world from the days of the British Empire. In **1885-86** Britain captured Mandalay after a brief battle and made Burma a province of British India, thereby ending the reign of the last Burmese King. (King Thibaw) In **1937** Britain separated Burma from India and made it a crown colony.

In **1942** Japan invaded and occupied Burma with some help from the Japanese-trained Burma Independence Army, which later transformed itself into the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL) and resisted Japanese rule.

In **1945** Britain liberated Burma from Japanese occupation with help from the AFPFL, led by Aung San, and in **1948** Burma became independent.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague became the first British politician to visit Burma in 56 years. In all these new waves of diplomatic visits, concerns were raised by the West about human rights and especially in respect of the Muslim minority. But they were little more than a gentle nudge. Myanmar was making progress and was being welcomed back into the world family. The visit by the British Foreign Secretary was considered a great success. Britain had in the past held great influence over the small south-east Asian country and hoped to have great influence again on a business and political level. The last British Royal to visit Burma was The Prince of Wales (later to become King George V) in 1905.

The Myanmar President, Thein Sein, thought that 2013 was a good year to receive another Royal visit and made the request to the British Foreign Secretary, but it seemed the request had fallen on deaf ears. He repeated the request to the American President who telephoned the British Prime Minister. Both leaders agreed that the time was now right for such a visit and the Prime Minister promised to raise the issue with the Queen at his next weekly meeting with her.