

**MORTICE
IN AMERICA**
MORE JUSTICE – MORT STYLE!

BOOK THREE

A J WILTON

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Pig, Suzie and I are walking back toward 'Entertainment Central', the hub of the Invictus Games in Victoria BC from the small boat harbour.

We had been out whale watching, following a pod of orcas, which had been awesome, watching these ruthless killers gliding along. Apparently in sleep mode where they simply cruise. Fascinating to watch.

The trouble is, it was a bitterly cold and breezy day and we were in an open zodiac boat, so no protection from the elements. Even though the tour had provided us with dry suits – both rather tight on Pig and my large bodies! We were all freezing. Suzie's teeth had been chattering, she was so cold. Her fingers had gone blue and the tour guide suggested her toes most probably were too. (Helpful!)

Being Queenslanders with our tropical warm climate, we simply don't have the right cold weather gear (or thick blood!) for these bitter temperatures. Besides, it is meant to be summer!

We were walking as quickly as possible, all with our own plans on how best to warm up quickly. Long hot shower or bath, with maybe a shot of hot Irish whisky. An Irishman, a member of the elite British SAS squadron, had told me once on a long bleak and bitterly cold Afghan night he was dreaming of just that!

Suddenly, Pig says, 'Hunter, three o'clock.' I don't look. If Pig says Hunter is at three o'clock, then Hunter is at three o'clock.

Instead, I reply, 'I thought I saw him on Thursday, but only fleetingly.'

Pig replies, 'Interesting, I also thought I saw him at the track just before my ten-thousand-metre race as well.'

Suzie has been looking from me to Pig and back again and to her credit, has not tried to look to the three o'clock position. But she does ask, 'Who is Hunter?'

I reply, 'He was a lieutenant in the US Marines. We worked with him a few times in Afghanistan. A good guy. Was then anyway.'

I continue, 'Okay, let's find out what he's up to and why he hasn't come out and said hi. You two keep heading into the crowd. I'll go around and find out what's going on.'

Suzie looks at me and says, 'Don't take too long or you will have to de-ice me.'

I smile and say, 'A nice long hot kiss will do that pretty quickly, but not out here in the crowd. They might get jealous!' I give her a reassuring squeeze on her arm and deviate away from them. At the same time, I take the newly bought Seattle Sea Hawks beanie, common headwear around here, and pull it down on my head and droop my shoulders, thus changing my body profile. I've learnt to do this and had to do it a few times in the past.

I'm a big unit after all, so a little difficult to not stand out in a crowd.

Hunter, who I can now see still standing at the top of a small rise overlooking the crowded harbour area, doesn't appear to have noticed my peeling away.

I move slowly through the crowd off to his left until I'm out of his sight.

Then I move quickly through the thinner crowds here in the background, approaching him from directly behind.

I slow my pace as I get closer, keeping an eye out for any obvious

partner working with him. Whilst Pig and I worked with Hunter and his Marines unit a few times in Afghanistan and certainly shared many a beer with them in the mess, we had not stayed in touch with him. So have no idea who or what he is doing now. Certainly not why he would be spying on us. Or are we simply being paranoid?

It would be unusual to have only one person running a reconnaissance mission. Then again, I have no idea who or what he does these days.

Time to find out.

I wait until a group of three move further away from Hunter and slip up behind him. My right hand tightens around his neck and my left plucks his earpiece and throat mic off him.

I say, 'Not a sound and don't move.'

He deflates, saying, 'Shit. Where did you come from?'

I don't loosen my grip, as yet I don't know if he is friend or foe.

I say, 'You have three seconds to tell me why I don't crush your larynx and you collapse.'

'F...K. It's okay. I had a bet with Campbell you wouldn't see me for three days. Now I have to shout him a fancy dinner.'

'Why are you spying on us? You friend of foe?'

He jerks a little as if startled by my question. 'Shit, man, friend. I work with Campbell in the FBI. We were going to show our hand tomorrow but wanted to see how good your skills still were.' A pause then he says, 'Man, I could never be foe. You're good people.'

'Our skills are better than yours obviously. This is the third time we have seen you,' I reply.

'Shit,' is his response before continuing, 'Campbell is in the office over there.' He points with a nod of his head to an office building on the other side of the square. 'Let's go and see him.'

'First things first. Which pocket is your FBI badge in?'

'Inside coat pocket, left-hand side.'

He pulls the zip of his puffer jacket down to give me easier access. I'm still holding him around the neck, so he knows one wrong move and he will go down. I use my left hand to slip inside his jacket and before retrieving his badge, I feel around for any holster but don't feel one. I grab his badge wallet, pull it out and flick it open.

It's a real FBI badge or a bloody good imitation. It shows Hunter Buchanan with an FBI ID number.

'Okay, let's go and have a chat with "Sunshine", shall we?'

'Sure, but don't call him that for all our sakes. Please. Where's Pig and Suzie?'

'So you know Suzie's name. What's going on?'

I am on edge again. I don't like that they have not only been watching us for three days but have dug up enough to know Suzie's name.

'Let's go see Campbell. He will lay it all out for you.'

I reply, 'Let's go. I will be one pace behind you. Any false move, you know what I will do from there. Pig will find us.'

As always in these situations, Pig's and my phone act as two-way radios. They might look like Apple iPhones – but they aren't!

Pig and, I suspect, Suzie will have heard the conversation and will follow, at a distance, to act as back up and certainly monitor to see if Hunter in fact does have back up as well.

Hunter leads me around the outskirts of the 'Entertainment Central', the centrepiece of the Invictus Games with temporary bars, clubs, a stage and seating for five thousand, all built over the inner harbour, right in the heart of town.

It's an awesome location and it has been buzzing 24/7 through the entire Games.

We head off around the edge of the gathering crowd, all getting ready for the night's festivities, this being the second to last night of these Invictus Games.

As we reach the far side of the crowd and head into Humboldt Street, Hunter slows outside the imposing Belmont building, points to the front door and turns to me, saying, 'We have an office up on the third floor. Do you want me to go in?'

I nod in the affirmative.

He turns again and, using a key card, opens the front door, moves through and holds it open for me. I stop once I have entered the doorframe, indicating he is to continue in front of me. A wry smile spreads across his face as he heads to the lifts.

Once the lift arrives, he again precedes me in, but I am tight behind him. Whilst precautionary, I am fairly confident he is legit and not a threat. I'm still alive because I don't assume!

The lift pings as it arrives on level three. Hunter exits, turns left and moves along the hall until he comes to suite 305. Without a word, I film the suite number with my phone, knowing Pig will have now seen it and know where we are. Hunter again uses a key card to open the door, holding it wide for me to enter.

As promised here is my old 'mate', Campbell McPherson, a former captain in the US Marines. He used to be Hunter's boss in the Marines. We had a few run-ins and more than a few beers. In the past. Now? Well, I'm about to find out.