

HOW LEARNING TO **SELL**
CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

**WHEN
ALL ELSE
FAILS
SELL** 

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The Reluctant Hero

In a cloud of yellow dust, Marine captain Mark Whitby was bouncing through southern Afghanistan on the back runner seat of an open Light Armored Vehicle (LAV). Ahead of him were three identically camouflaged Humvees. Three blind mice. In one of them was a VIP. Not even Mark knew which Humvee held the prize. Or who the prize was. Security was that tight.

“Must be one big dog, right, sir?” Scar called to Mark over the noise and dust. “Arf! Arf!” he added for effect, then stuck out his tongue, panting, then cackled, the veins in his neck pushing up through his tattoos. “Aho!!!” He threw in a hound howl for good measure.

Mark looked away from Scar, shaking his head and smiling. Scar, Gunnery Sergeant Luciano Scarfia, had been at Whitby’s side for nearly three years now. The unit’s official wise guy. Mark tolerated Scar’s clowning for one main reason: Once upon a time, not too long

ago, Scar pulled Mark's sorry ass out of a huge ambush. Scar took six for Mark that day, sustaining the kind of injury soldiers tend to die from. He could have gone home with a few medals, but once he was patched up and done leaking, all he wanted was to be back with his unit at Mark's side—with half a dozen new reasons for his nickname.

Mark's broad jaw and flat lips tightened as his ice-blue eyes scanned the bleak landscape through his goggles. A sea of sand stuck forever in dull swells. Now and then they'd pass a caravan of camels, goaded on by tribesmen in round wool caps and baggy white pants, their untucked shirts hanging down below their knees. Clothes for a crazy world. Crazier still with Mark being here. From Alexander the Great to Soviet Russia, nobody has successfully nailed these sandmen down. Now it was Mark's turn. It was just 100 degrees—as long as the wind kept blowing—and that brought the smell of oil fires, which sure beat camel crap.

The convoy snaked its way between pyramids of rubble and deep craters in the road to enter a village. They slowed to a crawl through a mobbed market square decorated with fruit stands and rugs and shiny fabrics hanging next to sides of meat swarming with flies. Smells of spices, wood fires, and sewage engulfed them. Hawkers waving baubles and carvings cursed and glared at the vehicles in outrage for not stopping.

None of the Marines noticed the chain of signals that passed from one set of dark eyes to the next down the busy road as the convoy passed. Except Mark.

Scar was coaching the two new arrivals, Marines who had just stepped foot in Afghanistan. "Every one of these buildings has a gun in it. And every kid knows how to use it."

The two new Marines—one bulky and chubby-cheeked like Barry Bonds, the other sunburned with freckles and carrot red stubble—were listening.

“Guess this ain’t a shopping trip for Mr. VIP,” Scar called to Mark. “What do you suppose a big dog is doing out here anyway, sir?”

As the convoy left the village and passed bright green irrigated fields of rice and wheat, Mark checked the two new Marines. They looked ready for anything. He hoped they were. There was nothing good about escorting high-profile convoys out in these badlands, especially top-secret convoys.

When Mark didn’t answer, Scar got back to his lesson. “So,” he said, using his two heavily muscled and tattooed arms, “you got your good guys and you got your bad guys.”

The bulky Marine turned to him. “How we supposed to know the difference?” he asked.

“Simple,” Scar said. “You don’t!”

The new grunts looked at one another, then looked at Scar, who waited a beat and then burst out laughing, his gold-capped teeth glinting in the desert sun.

“You’ll get it, fellahs. We’ll clue you in. Don’t worry,” Mark said. “Sergeant Scarfia?”

“Yessir, Captain?”

“Go to the gun.”

In a flash, Scar turned serious. He rose and hopped next to the machine gun mounted in the cab. The dust cover was already off and ready for action. Once he had a grip on the handles, he got back to his indoctrination lesson.

“Now, them same kids who can shoot you can also give you good intel, so always make sure you carry candy in your pockets. But all the candy in the world won’t get them to tell if a bomb’s been planted down the road.” He paused and cocked his head. “That’s the one thing. They’re funny that way.”

Along the side of the road, next to a dried riverbed, women young and old, their faces completely draped with brightly colored shrouds, were walking back to the village with canisters of water balanced on their heads.

“Now there’s some locals who’ll be happy to get home,” Scar said.

Home, Mark thought. At least they’ve got one. He watched the green farm fields vanish as the convoy suddenly reentered stark wasteland.

“Hand language can also be very important,” Scar told the new guys. He held up one index finger. “Now this, you may think, means ‘We’re number one.’ Not here. Oh, no. To these guys it’s the same thing as sticking up your—”

Scar never got to finish his sentence. The whole world suddenly turned into a blinding orange flash. A deafening thud kicked the air out of their chests as it lifted the vehicle into the air and then slammed it against the rock-hard ground, scattering everyone aboard. Even before they settled, the unmistakable crack-crack-crack of AK-47 fire was piercing the oily black cloud that choked them.

Adrenaline pounded in his ears. Mark had been thrown facedown on the ground. He got to his hands and knees, wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and groped for his weapon. Luckily it was only ten feet away. He crawled over and grabbed it, locked and loaded, then squinted through the smoke to try to see how bad it was.

It was bad.

The red-haired Marine had taken shrapnel in the back of the neck. The other new Marine was rolling on the ground gripping his shoulder but trying to wave Mark off, saying he was all right. Mark could tell he was not.

Scar! Mark thought. He scanned the wreckage.

As the smoke began to thin, Mark could see that the three-Humvee convoy ahead was intact but taking heavy fire. Scar was charging between the attackers and the Humvees, firing his M4 and wailing like the hell dog he was: "You already got your chance with me! You missed! What? You want some more? You want some of this?" And he fired.

"Scar!" Mark yelled, charging after him without thinking and firing his weapon at the source of the tracers.

Then Scar went down.

"Nooooo!" Mark screamed, barreling into the hell storm, firing the whole way. He fell to the ground to shield Scar, then picked up Scar's weapon with his free hand and fired double-fisted at the insurgents.

Out of the corner of his eye, over his shoulder, Mark saw the convoy of Humvees changing position, getting away, just as a shroud of darkness and silence fell over his world.



The Chess Master

The distinguished white-haired old gentleman, dressed in a long Japanese silk smoking jacket, looked as if he could have been inspecting the deck of his yacht or his stable of polo ponies, but he was standing before a view of the rugged, snowcapped Rocky Mountains that never failed to fill him with humility, reverence, and awe. Lawrence Whitby would never tire of this sight. In fact, he had designed a cantilevered veranda for his mansion to bring him closer to it—*into* it, really. The crystal-blue sky; the sharp, silver-glaciered peaks; the soft pine fringes; and the green fields speckled with wildflowers that brought the chilled scent of pine without fail.

He went to the railing, which, like everything on his estate, was built from rough-hewn, natural materials from the Rockies, raw harvested, quarried, mined, but really only on loan from the bounty. He looked down into the backyard, where a rushing spring cascaded down three

levels of boulder waterfalls before settling into a meandering brook, crossed by an arched Japanese footbridge to a path that led to the gate of a sprawling labyrinth of ten-foot-high boxwood. On the other side of the brook was an oversized chess board in the shade of towering red pines. A game was under way. The pieces, which were sculpted from balsa wood in the ancient Persian style, some in place on the white and black gravel squares of the grid; others, captured, waiting on the sidelines for the next game.

The old gentleman studied the position of the pieces and smiled. The emir truly was a wily customer. Their game had been dragging on for a year and a half now, and he needed to e-mail his next move by midnight.

“If I keep you from pinning my queen in two moves,” he said aloud quietly, “I step into another trap that will fork pin my rooks in three. I’ll have to start calling you the Desert Fox, my old friend.”

With a whirring mechanical sound, a man in a motorized wheelchair came rolling out onto the veranda. He was missing both legs from the knees down but still had the spit-and-polish bearing of a military man. “Excuse me, sir,” he said.

“Yes, what is it?” the old gentleman said without taking his eyes off the chessboard.

“We have confirmation,” he said.

“And...?”

“It was just as you suspected, sir. Landstuhl.”

“Very well,” he said, turning. “I think we can send the emir our next move before our deadline.”

“Really?”

“Pawn to rook four.”

The man in the wheelchair widened his eyes. "What?" he said, craning his neck for a better view of the board over the railing. "But that's... It's not..."

But the old man had already headed into the house and was striding through the lodge room, where stained-glass windows and French doors soared twenty feet up to a ceiling beamed with Japanese joinery and wrought-iron chandeliers. Tapestries of Shoshone and Arapaho patterns hung on walls alongside snowshoes, elk heads, and grizzly bear hides.

The man in the wheelchair followed now as they turned into a dimly lit hallway lined with glass museum cabinets on each side. Inside the cabinets were ancient antiquities, each treasure carefully lit to bring out its breathtaking detail: a solid-gold bull's head, a golden harp, a golden helmet etched with ringlets of hair, a silver crown with emerald leaves and angels holding torches with ruby flames. There were Grecian urns and marble busts and coins with the faces of Alexander the Great and Cleopatra and Caesar.

From there they entered another high-ceilinged room, but this one was fitted out with a dazzling array of technology: Wall-size monitors and screens garnished an entire wall, a console control center made of polished black marble clustered with panels of buttons and flashing lights filled the center of the room, and flat-screen monitors hung from the ceiling.

"Where is the report?" the old man asked.

The man in the wheelchair went over to a workstation and hit a keyboard.

The old man leaned forward to read from the screen, then nodded and straightened back up. He was thinking.

After a moment, the man in the wheelchair asked, "It's time, isn't it, sir?"

The old man took a deep breath and released it slowly. "Yes," he said, nodding, "it's time, my old friend."

"Yessir," the other said, enthused.

"But first tell the emir..."

"Yessir, pawn to rook four. Got it."

"It's time for a swim," the old man said. "Would you ask Mrs. Whitby if she'd like to join me?"

"Yessir," the other said, hitting send on an e-mail. "Take that, Mr. Emir."

Lawrence Whitby went back out to the veranda and followed it around the side of the house to an infinity pool. Rich white steam was billowing softly off the surface of the water. Lawrence took off his robe, exposing a body that, while old, was still lean and toned and tan, though marked here and there with scars that were almost painful to look at. He slipped into the water and allowed himself a deep, groaning "Ahhhhh."

Through the mist a beautiful, smiling woman, her smooth, shiny hair slicked back to reveal a long, svelte neck, floated up to his side. "I beat you to it," she said.