



CHESAPEAKE VALOR  
— BOOK FOUR —

# DEAD DRIFT

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To Dave Long

For signing an unknown author and believing in me.  
For all the input, feedback, and fun brainstorming chats over  
octopus and, even occasionally, in sub-zero temperatures.

You've had such an impact on me as an author,  
and I'm deeply grateful.

Thank you!



This one is for you.

# PROLOGUE

CHESAPEAKE HARBOR, MARYLAND

EIGHT YEARS AGO

**E**xcitement bubbled through Jenna McCray, gooseflesh rippling along her skin in the cool night air as she hurried to meet Parker. Her Parker. It was almost too amazing to be real.

He was bright, tender, manly, and hers. How it had happened, she didn't know. She'd spent years daydreaming about marrying him, but now her dream was coming true. They were talking marriage.

She looked both ways before crossing the neighborhood street, though at midnight in her tiny town there was really no need. Yet, to her surprise, two headlights appeared in the distance.

Crossing the street with a skip in her step, she hopped up on the opposite sidewalk and shoved her hands into her pockets, praying whichever neighbor was out driving at this hour didn't rat her out. She'd be an adult in a few weeks, and then it wouldn't matter, but tonight it still did. If Griff found out . . .

She winced, hating to think what her big brother would do.

Parker would have no problem holding his own, but she wanted to avoid that battle until she turned eighteen—and then Griffin couldn't say anything at all. Well, he could and probably would, but it wouldn't matter. She and Parker would be engaged soon.

The headlights lit her from behind, casting her shadow on the sidewalk in front of her. *Great.* She was going to get busted.

She turned and lifted her hand to shield her face, the glare of the headlights blinding her momentarily. Trepidation shot through her as the van stopped. A shiver raced up her spine. She was being silly. She was in Chesapeake Harbor, for goodness' sake. Nothing bad ever happened in Chesapeake Harbor.

A man stepped out of the van, and instinct bade her to run, her internal warning flaring red hot.

The man moved toward her, and despite the shelter of her hometown, she heeded her instincts, turning to run. Whoever he was, she could face them with Parker at her side. She was only a half mile from the park.

Heavy footfalls echoed after her. He was chasing her.

Panic flashed. Something was wrong. *Very* wrong.

As the man closed in on her, she hollered, "Parker!" praying maybe, just maybe, Parker hadn't made it to the park yet and would hear her.

The man called her a name that made her ears burn. Who was he? Certainly no one she knew.

Tears beaded in her eyes as she ran as fast as her slender legs would carry her. Racing for Parker and safety.

A thick hand clamped down on her shoulder, another wrapping around her throat. She kicked and screamed, but the man only tightened his grip. A nasty odor enveloped her face, a cloth smothering her nose and mouth. She blinked, and everything went black.

# 1

**L**uke extricated himself from the vehicle to find shattered convoy debris littering the ground.

Ebeid had blown up the convoy. It didn't make any sense.

He covered his face with his shirt as smoke billowed into the air, sirens wailing dimly over the ringing in his ears.

The ringing grew louder. His phone. Coughing, he pulled it from his jeans pocket and answered. "Yes?"

"I'm assuming you survived what I just learned was a convoy explosion."

"Yes, but I don't understand. Why would Ebeid blow up his own scientist?"

He realized the reason before Malcolm answered.

"It appears they found a replacement with Bedan."

"Any idea where he is?" Luke asked.

"No, but that's not the worst of it."

"What happened?" What had they missed?

"Fort Detrick was transporting a supply of anthrax to the CDC, and it was just hijacked. The guards are dead, and the

truck carrying somewhere in the neighborhood of six ounces of anthrax is gone.”

“Why didn’t we know about that transfer?”

“We did, but we didn’t consider it a target.”

He was so sick of being given only bits of intel when there was a far bigger game at play. His frustration with Malcolm soared. “And you can’t find the truck?” Surely helicopters were searching, but why hadn’t he been notified about the anthrax transport? If only he’d known. . . . Of course Ebeid would go for the anthrax. Dr. Kemel’s transport was just another diversion. Ebeid had been feeding them false intel. Righteous anger flared hotter than the flames dancing a hundred yards from him as fire trucks converged on what remained of the convoy.

He covered his free ear, trying to hear as Malcolm continued. “We believe they must have switched vehicles somewhere undercover, but we’re still looking.”

His chest compressed. Both the bridge and Kemel’s transfer were diversions. Ebeid and his team had just outmaneuvered them. But how did he know to play them? Did he have a man on the inside, or had Ebeid discovered *their* man on the inside and fed him false intel?

Either way, Ebeid and his crew now had six ounces of anthrax along with Dr. Bedan. Luke fought the urge to stagger backward. Instead, he leaned against his car, which was still warm from the blaze that had engulfed it only moments ago. It was mind-numbing to think the convoy explosion and the bombing attempt on the Bay Bridge were nothing compared to what anthrax could do. A few grams were deadly, and Ebeid now had six *ounces* in his control.

Luke swallowed. He couldn’t even begin to fathom the level of destruction Ebeid could cause or what deployment method

he was planning. This case had just shifted gears—and the ramifications were terrifying. “We need to bring in the FBI. I’m sure they’ve already been alerted to the hijacked anthrax.”

“Yes. I’ll make sure the case is directed to Declan Grey, as he’s already somewhat looped in. Looks like you’ll be reunited with your old friends after all. Guess we’re going to see how well trained you actually are in not letting attachments come into play.”

Elation and unease churned inside Luke. The idea of working side by side with Katie and the guys thrilled him, yet it also terrified him. He wasn’t the same man they’d once known, and he was nervous that they wouldn’t like who he’d become. He didn’t like who he’d become half the time, and yet he knew he was doing what the job required.

“I need you to come in. We need to talk.”

Luke gazed back at the remnants of a war zone—shattered debris littering the scorched ground, gray smoke plumes funneling into the hazy air, flames dancing in the carcass of the transport van.

He swallowed at the sight of the charred remains, regretting the action as pain shot down his parched throat, the smoke sucking the oxygen from the air. “I’ll be there in an hour.”



Dr. Isaiah Bedan entered the lab Ebeid built for him—designed, it appeared, to his exact specifications. A combination of trepidation and searing joy surged through his limbs. *This is it.* This one act would be regarded as the zenith of his life’s work. He was creating something others had only dreamt about. Yes, it would cause destruction, but that’s what they deserved—destruction and decimation.

Bedan appraised the finest in lab equipment and, much to



his pleasure, adequate space and light. Everything he needed to make his mark on history. To *be* history.

“Your living quarters are this way,” Cyrus said, gesturing to the back of the lab.

The living space consisted of a small galley kitchen, a desk, sofa, and armchair, and a bedroom with a twin bed and full bath.

“It will suffice?” Cyrus asked.

Bedan nodded. Not the luxury accommodations he’d expect from a man like Ebeid, but it was sufficient.

“If you require anything we have not provided”—he handed Bedan his business card—“call me and I will see you get it. The kitchen is fully stocked,” he said, opening the refrigerator door to reveal shelves stuffed with food. “The pantry is equally full.”

Bedan nodded his thanks.

“How soon can we expect results?”

“If everything goes smoothly, the finished product will be ready in a matter of days.”

“Meaning?”

“In time for the anniversary.” He’d had a working prototype before Ebeid moved him to the States. Now he had a privately funded lab and the opportunity to fully concentrate on putting the finishing touches on his design. He narrowed his eyes at Cyrus’s displeased look. “Has something changed in the timeline?”

“No. The date stands, but we don’t want to wait until the last minute to make certain it works. We need time for testing.”

“Of course.” Bedan set down his bag and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. “I’ll get started right away.” A day or two of concentrated time, and he’d be finished. “You may tell Ebeid he *will* have his retribution.”



Luke strode across the leaf-covered grounds of his alma mater. Seven and a half years since he'd been a student here. His mentor, Malcolm Warner, had recruited him into the Agency just prior to graduation. He'd still gotten his degree—Malcolm saw to that—but he'd never walked across the stage or seen Katie do so.

He blinked, his mind flashing back to a simpler time, when the dreams he and Kate Maxwell had were the same. Join the Bureau, get married, fight injustice, and make a life together. But all that had changed during a conversation with Malcolm. Instead of embarking on a life with Katie, he'd gone through advanced training at the Farm and had been sent into the field in a black ops unit under the leadership of Lauren Graham. Talk about someone who was not quite right. . . .

Passing a couple clearly in love jolted his mind and heart back to Katie. But she was his past. Ebeid was his present. And the future . . . ? That was up to him to define—not Malcolm.

Seeing Katie a couple nights ago—seeing the life he'd once been a part of, a life that could maybe still be his—had convinced him he was done with the Agency as soon as Ebeid was behind bars or dead. Whether that meant he returned to his old life remained to be seen, but he doubted he could just waltz back in. Not after the hurt he'd caused or the man he'd become.

Reaching Malcolm's door, he knocked, and the man he both loved and loathed answered. Over seven years had passed since he'd set foot in Malcolm's office, and now he was here for the second time in less than a week.

Malcolm gestured him in, shutting the door behind him.

Luke took two steps in and froze as a blonde on the couch stood and turned to face him. *Lauren Graham.*

He swallowed, unsure if he wanted to politely greet her or strangle her.

He glared at Malcolm. “What is *she* doing here?” This was *his* op. His man. Ebeid was no longer hers. Not since she’d nearly gotten their entire unit killed in Afghanistan.

“Nice to see you too.” She linked her arms across her chest.

Wearing a red turtleneck sweater, gray pencil skirt, and black heeled boots, she had the same allure. Long blond hair hanging straight to the middle of her back, deep blue eyes—cold as ice—five feet seven, one thirty, max. She was a killing machine in a pretty package. A package he wanted absolutely nothing to do with.

“Please sit down,” Malcolm said.

Lauren took instruction. He did not. He remained standing, leaning against the far wall, still perfectly able to hear whatever possible explanation Malcolm had for bringing one of the Agency’s top wet work assets, or assassins, back into his life.

Malcolm sighed but ignored Luke’s positioning and continued all the same. “I brought in Lauren in case we need help with Ebeid.”

“It’s not necessary,” Luke said, knowing that was not the true reason for her presence. He could easily read Malcolm’s lies.

Malcolm looked at him as if he’d anticipated the response. “It may not be, but she’s our contingency asset.”

“Meaning?” If he failed? He hadn’t failed at a single mission yet. Lauren, on the other hand . . .

“Meaning you’re walking back into your past. I want to make sure you don’t get distracted.”

Luke pushed off the wall, anger and frustration flaring through him. “So she’s here to babysit me?” He knew that was the real reason she was here. To run interference. To make sure he didn’t get any ideas about returning to his old life.

“No.” Malcolm shook his head in that flustered way of his,

dabbing his brow with his handkerchief. “She’s here to keep another set of eyes on Ebeid. He’s too close to home, and he needs to be stopped.”

“Which is why *I’m* here.” But there was still a question burning in his mind. Why had Ebeid chosen Baltimore? Because it was a port city and easy to get what he needed transported in? Because the cultural office he worked out of needed a new leader? Or was there a deeper significance to it all? One they didn’t yet understand?

“It’s why I’m here too,” Lauren said, her slender legs crossed and angled slightly off to the side. Such poise for a ruthless killer.

Ebeid wasn’t the reason for her presence. She was here to ensure he didn’t leave the Agency, that his old life didn’t pull him back in. He understood the former, but the latter was none of her business. If she went anywhere near Kate, she’d regret it.