

Chapter One

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life.

The mantra, pounded into his head during basic training, ran through his brain automatically as he sighted through the Kahles 10X scope, the reticule resting on the front door of the building over four hundred yards away.

My rifle without me is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will.

He made a slight adjustment to the scope to compensate for the wind, blowing from his left at what he gauged to be fourteen miles per hour. It was always windy in San Francisco.

My rifle and myself know that what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our bursts, nor the smoke we make. We know it is the hits that count. We will hit.

He shivered slightly as he lay in his “hide” on top of the building. It was a late Sunday afternoon in October, and the sun had already set behind the coastal hills. What little warmth it provided was gone as the shadows crept over him. He was secure that he could not be seen, even from above. He had constructed his “hide” to resemble the heating and air conditioning apparatus on the roof. Made of reinforced cardboard, it was painted exactly the same and was the

same size and shape as the others. It would burn nicely, once he was done with it.

My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strengths, its parts, its accessories, its sights, and its barrel. I will ever guard it against the ravages of weather and damage. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will.

He chuckled to himself at that part. Clean and ready? Of course he kept his rifle clean and ready, but there were times he could hardly stand his own stench from the days spent stalking his prey, days during which he hardly slept or ate. Bodily functions were ignored. He would not eat, and drink only small quantities of water to minimize the waste his body would eliminate. When he had to dispose of his waste, he did so where he lay, not moving from his position. Moving meant dying, and he had no intention of dying. Urine dried soon enough.

But his rifle, that was another story. The SIG SG 550-1 sniper rifle was one of the finest weapons for its purpose in the world. Manufactured in Switzerland by Schweizersche Industrie Gesellschaft , it was a semi-automatic rifle chambered in .223 Remington caliber, using the 556 mm x 45mm cartridge.

First manufactured in 1989, its' design is based on the SIG 550 military assault rifle, the main issue battle rifle of the Swiss army, with sniper specific features developed in close co-operation with police special units. Its design concept

forgoes many of the requirements a military sniper might need, such as the simplicity of a bolt action chambering system to prevent malfunctions and jams, and a smaller caliber rather than the long range capability of the typical .308 caliber. Police snipers typically operate under 100 meters, though the accuracy requirements for the SIG SG 550-1 are the same as for military sniper weapons. It can be deadly accurate up to 500 meters, and in the proper hands, targets up to one thousand meters are not safe.

Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and myself are defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life. So be it, until there is no enemy, but PEACE.

He lay on his stomach, feet spread for stability, rifle butt snug against his shoulder. The plastic stock felt so smooth against his face, the cheek piece seemed almost form-fitted to his cheek. He gently rubbed his face against it, loving the feeling of power that emanated from the rifle. He lay perfectly still, knowing his quarry would be emerging from the building very soon, knowing it would be the last thing he ever did.