

# Grey Areas

**By David Durbin**

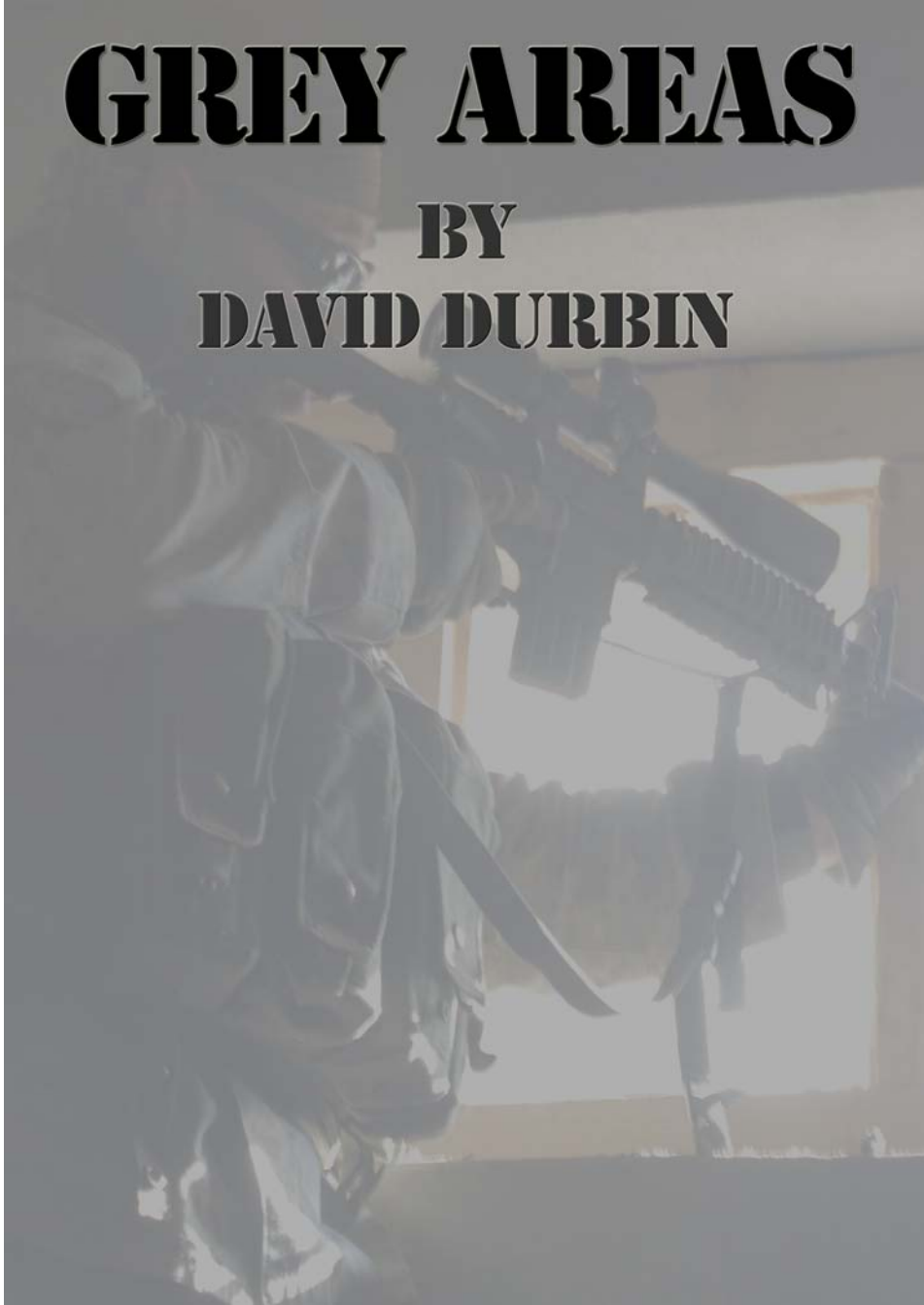
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# **GREY AREAS**

**BY  
DAVID DURBIN**



## **Chapter 1**

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014 – London, England

GMT 15:38

The man moved hastily down the busy corridor, glancing backwards every so often to check he wasn't being followed. His oafish girth impeded any great speed and it was with some awkwardness that he squeezed past junior aides and ministers heading in the opposite direction, trying not to be too forceful when pushing through but eager to complete his task as soon as he could. Finally he managed to fight his way into a private chamber, bolting the door behind him as he fumbled his mobile phone free with a sweaty hand. Dialling a number from memory, he sat heavily in a plush armchair, wheezing from his efforts. His call was answered almost instantly.

‘Yes?’

‘It's been decided, you're not getting what you want. He's going in completely the opposite direction; the old bastard actually thinks the public will

forget all about the last ten years and allow him some glory if he gives them an election. I guess he's just too old and tired to keep oppressing them.'

'When is he going to announce the decision?'

'Next Monday. He is going to inform the ministers and then go straight to a press conference outside Number 10.'

'You've done well. Your money will be in the usual place.'

'Thank you. But what about the announcement? I thought that-'

'You're not paid to think, so don't. And don't worry either. There will be no announcement.'

## **Chapter 2**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2014 – Manchester, England

GMT 05:28

The dark room was quiet and devoid of character, gleaming with the surgical cleanliness and emptiness that can only be achieved through a concerted, obsessive effort. A car drove slowly past the window and illuminated the sterile scene, its headlights easily penetrating the thin net curtains and highlighting the entire contents of the sparse room for the briefest moment. The glow of the headlights faded as the car passed by, the change in the light conditions causing the powerful figure sleeping beneath a simple sheet to stir uneasily. A second later his eyes snapped open, the transition from slumber to full consciousness almost instantaneous as he glanced around the room, checking everything was as he left it, his amazing and unique eyes easily piercing the gloom.

A man of routine, he checked his watch before rising and padding across to a small coffee table, picking up a pack of cards and shuffling them, slowly to begin with but gradually picking up speed until the cards were flying between his fingers,

little more than a blur. He tracked them intently with his eyes as they moved, able to pick out the individual cards as they appeared, disappeared and resurfaced, carrying on in this manner for nearly half an hour as he did every day, using the exercise to increase the dexterity in his hands and train his eyes to be better at detecting movement. He found it hypnotic and very calming, and was extremely attached to the routine because of the relaxation it afforded his troubled mind. Setting the cards down on the table he picked the top one from the pile and turned it over, revealing the eight of diamonds. Dropping to the floor he performed eighty push-ups rapidly, enjoying the feeling of the blood flowing to his triceps and shoulders. Once finished he pulled another card from the top of the pack and turned over the three of spades before performing thirty squats, his thick legs moving like iron pistons.

Next card, another exercise; by assigning a particular exercise to each suit and multiplying the face value by ten to dictate the number of repetitions he would perform, he was able to generate a randomised work-out every morning, for although his mind and spirit craved routine, his body adapted rapidly to any physical challenges he threw at it. Some mornings he would work through the entire deck six or seven times; exercise was the purest form of pleasure he had and

he thrived on pushing his astonishing body to its limits. Day after day he would drift away when working out, distancing himself from the physical discomfort he was inflicting, focusing instead on the emotional pain he carried wherever he went, reflecting on the troubles of his past. Pushing himself harder and harder, he would collapse in a river of sweat and vomit, often passing out. As a result of his masochistic efforts he had obtained almost superhuman levels of fitness and amazing physical strength. As a consequence of his self-inflicted torture, he had lost a significant proportion of his humanity, a fact of which he was largely unaware, so gradual had been the change. A hollow shell of a man he was almost machine-like in his qualities; strong, single minded and calculating, but lacking in real emotion. Pity, remorse, excitement, happiness, love, all were distant memories for him, memories he avoided at all cost, memories he had shut off and killed over the past few years. On some days he would remember a face, a place, a particularly gruesome death, but he always pushed the away and it was only when he slept that they consumed him so overwhelmingly that he would wake in a pool of sweat and tears. Last night had been one of his better nights, perhaps because today spelled a change in his daily routine, giving him something else to worry about; this morning he planned to only work through the pack of cards four times and use the rowing

machine for an hour and a half, as he had other preparatory work to do. Today was to be a busy day for Thomas Evans.

Later that evening Evans pulled his stolen, non-descript car up in a residential area of the city and parked across the street from the two-storey home currently occupied by his latest objective. He knew the target's face, name, and what he did for a living; he did not know why his client was paying him to kidnap the man, who was a politician's aide, and he did not know who he was delivering him to or the fate that awaited him. Evans did not care. Exiting the vehicle he ran across the road and past the house, cutting into the back garden, little more than a shadow in his jet black operational gear. Using a detached rifle scope equipped with night vision, he located the back door and inspected it, defeating it with his lock pick in seconds and opening the door gingerly, silently easing it back as he snaked his way into the house

Moving quickly, he entered through the dark kitchen into a cluttered and colourful lounge absolutely littered with children's toys and playthings. Soothing music played softly from another room, but he could hear no sounds of movement from the house. Proceeding with caution, he picked his way past a myriad of action



figures and a jumbo-sized yellow dump truck filled to the brim with plastic soldiers, slipping silently into a well-lit hallway decorated with a multitude of family pictures in solid wooden frames; he could see his target in most of them, progressing in age from an awkward looking teenager to the rather portly husband and father of two that he had now become. Evans could not be sure that there would be any pictures of this man as a grandfather, as a retiree, but that was not his concern.

Nothing but his objective occupied his conscious mind as he checked through the downstairs rooms one-by-one before heading upstairs, sneaking up a narrow flight of stairs, his immense concentration focused on the world a few feet in front of him. At moments like this he felt strangely at ease, enjoying the transformation of his complex and tormented existence into a simple goal-orientated situation where the only paths open to him were success or failure. Moving as smoothly as a viper he entered the first bedroom, careful not to wake the two young boys asleep in their beds. Without hesitation he approached them, removing one of the chloroform soaked pads from his backpack, preparing to strike. He attacked, holding the rag over the nose and mouth of the first boy, his muted struggles eliciting no sympathy from his tormentor. Satisfied he was

unconscious Evans repeated his attack on the second child, incapacitating him with the same cold efficiency. Keeping the pad close to his head he drew his pistol and attached a silencer before creeping back toward the hallway where he could hear soft laughter from the bedroom at the end of the hall.

Homing in on the sound he advanced until just outside, where he paused and listened for a few seconds, comprising a mental image of the situation he would likely find on the other side of the door. To Evans the conversation seemed casual, tender even, a standard exchange of small talk between a husband and wife as they prepared to sleep; they would not be expecting him. Without warning he kicked the door open with brutal force, charging over and pistol whipping the politician's aide where he sat, blood spurting from his nose as he slumped forward in his bed. Preparing herself to scream, the aide's wife opened her mouth wide but Evans was on her in a flash, smothering her with the chloroform pad. She kicked and fought, but he easily overpowered her, holding her firmly until her thrashing was subdued by the chemicals. Gently letting her fall back onto the bed, Evans turned and checked the man; he was unconscious and his nose was broken, but he would

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