

THE RIPPER: REDUX

BY

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## CHAPTER 1

### DINER IN THE DESERT

The four wheel-drive vehicle rumbled along the lone highway in the barren expanse of the desert. The sun was scorching hot, and the rock formations towered out of the ground in the distance.

The thin face of the man was grayish, slightly withered from years of stress, the hair on his head, a light brown, but the gray roots visible underneath, covered by the vanity of hair coloring, the sign of man valiantly trying to retain the striking features of his younger years. His eyes were sharp, as if burning their way forwards, and his body was thin, but muscular. The legendary Film Director, Kevin Stone, about 45, perfectionist, blunt, driven, and ruthless, sat in the driver seat. His eyes were locked onto the dirty and sandblasted makeshift sign that listed a short distance ahead. The sign swayed on the dirt road that led off the main highway. Kevin Stone looked across at the young man with a round, baby face, thick black hair, and thoughtful eyes, driving the four-wheel. He was Film Producer, Mike Parson, about 40, a professional, quietly ambitious, and intellectual man. Mike Parson had a laptop on his lap that was currently running a program with, "Department of Defense," labeled across the top of the screen. The detailed maps were constantly decrypting and revealing the pre-determined route that their four-wheel drive was to follow. The small blinking red dot that represented their four wheel-drive

vehicle on the map moved along the marked out route. It led them towards that small dirt road that led off the highway. The thick black line on the map marking the 'route' stopped at the corner, turned and then ran along the dirt road, and right off the side of the map. It was obviously going to be a long drive along this dirt road before they hit their secret destination. Mike Parsons looked at the director.

"Is this the road?" Mike asked as if puzzled by all of this secrecy.

Kevin Stone nodded softly.

"This is the road," Kevin replied sharply.

The four wheel-drive vehicle swung tightly around the listing road sign. It barreled along the dirt road and kicked up a storm of dust that flew around the vehicle if a mini dust hurricane. The dirt road ran in a straight line towards the horizon. There was nothing but flat, empty, dusty earth for as far as the eye could see.

Mike Parson ran his hands over the laptop. The decoding program began running again. A new detailed map appeared on the screen. It had a large blinking dot that seemed to represent the final destination. The sun seemed to scorch every inch of the vehicle as Kevin Stone looked across at the laptop. Kevin Stone's thin lips pursed. He gave a half frown as if to say, "Finally, we have almost arrived." The dust that was thrown up by the tires of their vehicle clouded their vision but they could faintly make out the outline of the building and it appeared to be derelict.

The four wheel-drive vehicle slowed as it drove into the empty parking lot. The paint was peeling upon the diner, its windows were smashed, and there was no one to be seen. The diner had been visibly abandoned for years. Kevin Stone and Mike Parson stepped out of the four-wheel drive. They looked around slowly as if looking for something. Then they walked towards the wrecked, unhinged door of the diner.

Kevin Stone and Mike Parson walked into the diner. There was a large cover of dust upon the tables, chairs, and the large menu board hung on the far wall. They looked over the diner as if looking for a waitress. They looked at each other and sat down at one of tables as if waiting for service.

The four wheel-drive vehicle sat silently in the parking lot. The sun scorched down upon the ground. There was not a sound except for the sound of lightly swirling wind.

Kevin Stone looked at Mike. He nodded as if it was time to go somewhere. They both got up and walked along the counter. They walked past the decades old vending machine filled with packets of molded chips that hung on rusty hooks. Kevin Stone pushed the men's toilet door open, and they walked inside.

Kevin Stone and Mike Parson walked to the urinals. They opened their flies,

and took a long piss. Then they turned and walked to the basins. They washed their hands as if undertaking a precise ritual. Kevin Stone glared into the mirror.

“Do we have to wipe our asses now?!” he questioned sharply.

There was a slight pause. The door of the toilet cubicle directly behind them began to open. Mike Parson looked around to see the wall behind the toilet bowl slowly slide open. The heavily armored soldier appeared in the opening. “Your identities and security clearances have been verified,” he informed them in a strict military tone.

Kevin Stone’s face was non-stoic as if he expected this to happen. Mike Parson in contrast looked stunned.

“It’s about bloody time, and you better have some water in there. My throat is fucking parched,” snapped Kevin Stone.

Mike Parson looked at the heavily armored guard’s automatic rifle.

“There is plenty of water supplied Sir. General Johnson is awaiting your arrival,” the armored guard informed him.

Mike Parson still looked stunned. Kevin Stone had obviously told him nothing.

Kevin Stone gestured forward confidently.

“Lead the way,” he announced.

The heavily armored guard stepped backward into the elevator that was concealed behind the wall. Kevin Stone led Mike Parson around the disgusting looking toilet bowl and into the elevator. The wall slid back into place again behind the toilet bowl concealing any indication of its presence.

The elevator was dropping quickly and seemed to take some time. Mike Parson looked at the wall. There were ten levels upon the board, and they were speeding down the levels quite rapidly. The heavily armored guard stood quietly facing the elevator door. This unnerved Mike Parsons who looked at Kevin Stone.

“Where are we?” Mike asked puzzled.

The heavily armored guard then spoke suddenly.

“Sub level five Sir. General Johnson is awaiting your presence’s shortly on sub level ten.”

Kevin Stone gestured as if to say, “There you go.” The director was clearly enjoyed pulling his subordinate strings as if Mike was his puppet. Kevin Stone was the clearly the Alpha Male.

Mike Parson whispered to Kevin Stone still bemused by where they were and why.

“Kevin Stone, I thought we were scouting the major location for your next mystery project?”

Kevin Stone smiled sharply.

“More a way to get there,” the director replied.

Mike Parson gave a confused expression.

The elevator finally stopped, and the elevator door slid open.

General Karl William Johnson, about 60, forthright, and fit in stature, stood in the tunnel waiting to greet them. The heavily armored guard stepped out the

elevator and then respectively moved to the Generals side. General Johnson looked at Kevin Stone as if the two had met before.

“It is a pleasure to have such an esteemed Director in our presence again Mr. Stone,” he welcomed.

Kevin Stone stepped forward and shook the General’s thickset hand.

“Your previous presentation quite impressed me General, particularly the future opportunities it affords me,” Kevin Stone told him.

Then Kevin gestured to Mike.

“Let me introduce my producer for the shoot Mike Parson,” he introduced.

Mike Parson watched the heavily armored soldiers walk along the subterranean corridors. General Johnson saw the producer’s bemused expression. He grabbed Mike’s smaller hand and shook it strongly. It was a tight, soldiers grip.

“Your first time in a missile silo...albeit a modified silo son,” General Johnson said rhetorically.

“Ah, yes General,” said Mike still seeming bemused.

General Johnson looked at Kevin Stone.

“You didn’t tell him,” stated the General.

“It’s like giving away the killer twist to a film...cannot stand the fuckers who do that,” Kevin Stone said in a tone as if a knife slicing the air.

“A test is ready per your request,” the General informed.

“I’m ready to make cinematic history. Let’s get this beast underway,” Kevin Stone exclaimed with barely contained excitement.

General Johnson led Kevin Stone and Mike Parson along the subterranean corridors. The two Kevlar wearing armored guards that carried high-powered rifles flanked them with every step, quite unerringly for Mike Parson's. The corridors were dull and claustrophobic in nature. Kevin Stone saw that Mike was uneasy at the surroundings. Kevin looked amused by the producer's reaction. Kevin glanced at the armored guards that were escorting them. He whispered quietly to Mike Parson as they headed toward a large reinforced steel door that lay at the far end of the corridor.

"They can't allow us to stray off..."

Mike Parson looked at him as they approached the heavily built door.

"I took five years for me to negotiate to hire it..." Kevin told him.

General Johnson stopped at the reinforced doors. The two armored guards that stood either side of the door looked at the General and then moved aside. General Johnson stepped forwards to the 'finger print pad.' It scanned his rough hands. Then it flashed with a bright green light. Kevin Stone continued to whisper to Mike Parson.

"I would not have even known it existed, who would, unless a certain, 'high profile Congressman' drunk and with the promise of a role in one of my future projects let slip, 'the juiciest state secret he knew.'

General Johnson looked up into the 'retinal eye scanner.' It scanned his deep blue eyes and the green light blinked again brightly.

Kevin Stone added quietly as the General provided voice identification.

"We Directors are always stretching for that new technique...that next ground



breaking format to shoot our films...we all have ego and covet to set the new standards by which further films follow and imitate.”

General Johnson said into the ‘voice scanner.’

*“General Karl William Johnson.”*

The light blinked green. The armored guards subtly flicked the safeties on their rifles as if they would had responded with force had the identification procedure for the General proved ‘negative.’ The door made a large locking sound. They began to slowly open. Kevin Stone whispered.

“To create an entirely new genre of films...a history making groundbreaking method of making films carves your name forever into history...”

He smiled at Mike Parson cryptically. The large reinforced steel door continued to open slowly. Mike Parson eyes were fixed tensely as he awaited to see what lay beyond.

“Both our names...even if it did take a promise not to reveal its existence until the President was ready and I was provided the exclusive first civilian use prior to its worldwide exposure...along with a eighty million dollar fee to secure an eight week hire,” continued Kevin Stone.

The heavy, thick door fully opened and revealed an extremely large, hanger shape, dimly lit chamber. The silhouetted heavily armored guards and civilian dressed scientists moved throughout it. There were numerous equipment stations littered throughout the dimly lit chamber. Mike Parson’s eyes pierced

through the light, and he saw the faint outline of the large halo like structure. It was positioned in the middle of the chamber. Kevin Stone looked over the dimly lit chamber with heavily armored guards and scientists. He looked as if he had visited this place before. He slapped Mike Parson hard on the back. “Even the military has a sense of theater,” Kevin said with a sharp smile. Mike Parson glanced at him stunned by the vision. The General said as he began to move forwards.

“My men are already en-route to the destination. They will return shortly with the proof you requested. “

Kevin Stone and Mike Parson followed him into the chamber. The armored guards and the scientist’s gave curious looks towards the visitors. Mike Parson was trying to absorb the surroundings.

“If you would follow me to the viewing area for optimal viewing of the platform,” General Johnson informed.

The two armored guards that had been escorting them from the elevator had remained at the foot of the heavily fortified doors as if not permitted to proceed any further. The steel doors began to close and the light emitting from the corridor was slowly cut out. The interior of the chamber was very dim. The armored soldier stood to attention as General Johnson approached the cherry picker like viewing platform. Kevin Stone and Mike Parson stopped at the base of the stairs that led into the cheery picker like platform. General Johnson walked up onto the platform. But Mike Parson eyes were transfixed onto the large silver circular platform with a large halo like frame that hung

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