

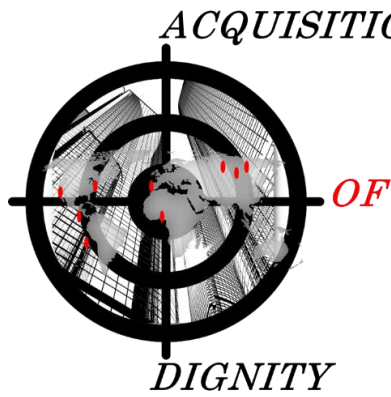
ACQUISITION



OF

DIGNITY

By Claude Garretson



Acquisition of Dignity is a suspense novel about strategy, wealth, power, military confrontation, eternal friendship, love and deliverance. Six men who became friends during their youth at a military academy reunite after years of separation when they attend the funeral of a former loved one. They never imagined how that reunion would change their lives and set a trajectory that would shake the country and rattle the world. When they realize that one friend needs assistance with his business, they bring their diverse knowledge and military experience to his aid. With strategic discipline, they approach each business situation in a military manner, carefully planning each maneuver as if it was a War Game ultimately transforming a small technology firm into a multi-billion-dollar global military defense conglomerate that is one of the most powerful corporations in the world. Their success would be challenged when a simple gesture to use their capabilities and influence to investigate suspicious activities of a government agency in an old neighborhood would put them at war with their former employer and largest client – the U.S. government. In a fight for survival they are forced to reclaim their military experience in

combat, espionage, counter-intelligence, and test their bond.

When Giordan Hunt, the CEO follows through on a simple request from Acie his elderly childhood mentor, what he and his partners find out is shocking. They reveal a connection between the U.S. government including the President, a South American Drug cartel and a scientific research firm. While continuing to conquer the business world on the front lines, they utilize their resources and experience to execute covert operations. They set out to destroy drug transport vessels sailing along the Mexican and South American borders that are being escorted by the U.S. Navy which is not aware of the contraband onboard; and to expose the money laundering of drug money from Russia through an American research firm. When their actions become known they become targets for the government and the cartel. Their efforts are thwarted when Giordan's daughter is kidnapped by the cartel. When they realize the odds are not in their favor, they develop an unorthodox strategy of military operations and urban warfare, and assemble a team of renegades comprised of highly skilled former Navy and Marine Corps soldiers who left the service under unjust situations and former Drug Cartel lieutenants and hitmen with contracts on their life. This rare team of renegades, *codename R135* is utilized to take on the U.S. government and a dominant Cartel in a quest to destroy an international drug ring and uncover a high-level government conspiracy.



Chapter 4 – Rising Sons



“Giordan it’s good to see you. I would have preferred to reconnect with you under more pleasant circumstances.”

“Richard, it is good to see you as well.” Giordan responds in a bland tone.

“Have you connected with anyone since being here?”

“No. How about you?”

Richard responds. “I’ve seen a few people that I have not seen since our days at the Academy. I did see Don and Karl. Douglas and James could not make it to the services. I understand Douglas is tied up with some business issues and James with some personal matters. I don’t know the details regarding either situation other than Douglas is a partner at a major Philadelphia law firm and James is still in the Corps. It would have been good to see everyone again.”

“It would have been good to see everyone.” Giordan concurs and continues talking in a soft tone as he looks directly into Richard’s face. “It’s been a long time. Seeing you takes me back. I cannot even begin to explain. Anyway, how are you?”

“Things are good. All things considered I am okay.” Richard responds.

“Last I heard you were no longer in the Navy and were working for a major defense contractor.”

“You heard correctly. I work for a military electronics system division of Lockheed Martin. Transitioning from military to civilian life was a challenge but I managed. My wife and children seem to be content with the stability and not having to deal with me being out to sea 6 to 8 months each year. Actually, I am happier too.” Richard’s voice seems to drift with a little insincerity when he refers to his happiness.

Shifting the focus Richard asks “So Giordan what has been going on with you?”

“I started a software development company several years ago. We develop healthcare management



software and recently expanded into developing software for medical devices to track and monitor vitals. Business is good but I have to take the business to the next level if I am to remain competitive.”

“I am interested in hearing about that ‘next level’.” Richard keenly responds.

Giordan begins to respond when two men approach them.

“Giordan and Richard; my brothers it is good to see both of you. I wish it would have been under different circumstances.” Karl says as he and Don merge into Giordan and Richard’s space.

They all hug one another and perform their fraternal handshake.

“Giordan when was the last time you spoke to Cymonne?” Don asks.

“We reconnected about 3 weeks ago. That was the first we spoke since our Annapolis days. She was on her way to New Jersey to see me when she had the accident.”

“Get the fuck out of here! I didn’t know that! How did the two of you hook up again after all these years?” Don asks.

“She reached out to me after a reading an article I wrote for a medical technology publication.”

Giordan responds.

“Bruh, the two of you were ridiculous. You would spend every free weekend hanging out on her campus. I don’t know how you managed our 1st class year at the Academy.” Don says with a slight chuckle as if to open the gateway to travel down memory lane. Giordan reminisces about his last year at the Academy while Richard and Karl laugh in unison as they look at Giordan.

“Don, you can’t say a thing about Giordan. You were just as bad. You were on their campus more than their Dean. You were on that campus so much that the female students thought their college had gone co-ed. I don’t know how your girl could breathe with you hanging all over her.” Karl



says.

“Don’s girl had his nose was so wide open that he could breath for the two of them.” Richard interjects.

“If I remember correctly, you and Giordan would sneak out after curfew and drive over to their campus and then sneak back in the middle of the night. Being around the four of you was sickening.” Karl sarcastically says.

“Hey, being on their campus wasn’t a bad deal. It was an all-women’s college and spring time was the best! It beat hanging in the yard with mostly dudes in uniforms. I remember one time Don and Giordan were sneaking back on the yard late one night and had to climb over the perimeter wall. Remember you could not drive your car onto the yard after a certain hour. Richard says and is about to continue when Don interjects.

“Oh, I remember that night! I fell off the wall and busted my ass. The worst part is I had to my obstacle course test the next day. My ass limped through it.” Don says laughing. They all laugh. Then there is a moment of uncomfortable silence. They all want to continue reminiscing about their days at the Academy but were concerned that traveling that path would lead to a conversation no one wanted to talk about even after all these years.

Don breaks the silence. “So, what have you brothers been up to? It’s been over 10 years since we have been together.”

“It has been about 12.” Giordan responds.

“I am married with two children. After getting out of the Navy, I moved back to L.A.” Karl answers.

I am married with two children and returned to my hometown where I was born and bred...Atlanta,



GA. How about you, Don?" Richard responds.

Don chuckles and answers. "My story isn't much different. You know I am married too and we have three children. We've been living in Chi-town since I got out of the Navy. What's your situation Giordan?"

"After leaving the Nav, I came back to New Jersey. Been living here ever since. Never got married and don't have any children." Giordan responds.

"Are you sure about that?" Don quickly interjects as he glances at everyone.

"Sure, about what? Where I live, being married, or having children?" Giordan sarcastically responds.

"You know what the hell I'm talking about! Sure, about you not having any damn children" Don snaps back.

"Hmmm...can't say for sure but no one has knocked on my door and told me otherwise." Giordan responds.

"I understand Douglas is married and lives in Philadelphia." Karl interjects.

"I am not sure where James is currently living but I believe he is still on active duty in the Corps. Last, I heard he was having some challenges in his personal life. I think he is married and may be getting a divorce." Richard adds.

One of our classmates told me that James was dealing with some post-traumatic stress from serving a tour of duty in Iraq." Karl says.

They all became quiet as if giving their friend a moment of silence to honor him. As they think about the well-being of James, one of them interjects. "He was always crazy so how can we tell if he changed?!" "Ain't that the truth" another one responds. "They all laugh.



They continue reminiscing and bringing each other up to date but avoid talking about their military careers. Giordan senses the discomfort and decides to change the tone by asking, “Does anyone want to grab a beer, a drink or both?”

“Absolutely! “Man, I was hoping someone was going to ask! Where’s the bar?” Richard energetically responds while looking around for the bar.

“You can stop looking. You aren’t going to find a bar in the church. The pastor relocated it.” Karl jokingly responds.

“Our challenge is being able to leave this repass unnoticeably. Shit, you know if these folks see us all walk out they are going to know the deal. We might as well start drinking right here in the church.” Don says.

“Leaving unnoticeably was virtually impossible since all eyes had been on the four of them. All who knew them were still enamored by their unbreakable bond of friendship.

Where are we heading?” Karl asks.

“This is what we do. Each of us will pay our respects to Cymonne’s family and friends and simply walk out the door. We will reassemble in the parking lot in 15 minutes. It’s been awhile since I’ve been in Atlanta but I remember a place called Midway Pub which is close to here. This pub once had an extensive beer selection. Hopefully they still do. We will head there.” Giordan says in his usually controlling tone just like he did when they were at the Academy. Everyone responded accordingly. Giordan was always annoyed by procrastination and indecisiveness.

Each one of them pays their respects to Cymonne’s family. Richard, Don and Karl become temporarily paralyzed when speaking to Moyette on their way out. They are stunned by how much she looks like Giordan. Giordan does not see himself when looking at Moyette but sees Cymonne.



Giordan reaches out for Moyette's hand as he speaks to her. When their fingers touch, their eyes light up expressing the power of their anonymous connection. For a moment, they stare at one another before Giordan says his goodbyes and heads toward the door. Moyette stares at him as he walks away.

Thirty minutes from Giordan's last sentence of his directions, all of them were all sitting at the Midway Pub having their first round of beer.

"Get the hell out of here! We haven't been here 10 minutes and look who just walked in the door!"

Karl excitedly says.

They all look toward the door and watch as Douglass enters and in his normal slow walking manner heads over to the table.

"Nothing would have kept me from this reunion. I wish it would have been under better circumstances. Nonetheless it is good to see all of you! Where's James?" Douglas says as he immediately notices that he is missing as he pulls up a chair to join the meeting. Several of them respond "Don't know." Douglas continues, "So what's going bruhs?" They all bring Douglas up-to-date and ask him how things are going.

"I don't know how much longer I can deal with this nonsense?" Douglas says.

"Deal with what nonsense?" Richard asks.

"Working for this firm." Douglas responds.

"What are you talking about? You are a partner for a major prestigious law firm...making all that loot! Karl interjects.

"The money and prestige are good but it's not about either. I achieved everything I set out to achieve. Been there done that! It's everything I thought I wanted and yet something seems to be



missing. What bothers me is that I believe I should be fine. I got everything but it takes every bit of energy to drag my ass into the office each day. Somewhere along the way it was no longer fun or meaningful. Gentleman don't pay me any mind, I'm just a little stressed."

"I can tell you what is missing." Giordan says in a soft stern tone.

"What?" The four of them respond in unison as if they had practiced that response.

"It's not yours." Giordan continues in the same tone. "Your name may be on the partner list but it's not yours. It is an awesome achievement but it's not yours. You have little control over what the firm does or the direction it chooses to pursue. You can climb to the top of the corporate ladder but you can't move the ladder because it is not your ladder to move. Lastly you're still a brother at a White old-school law firm." They all laugh at Giordan last statement.

"The revolution is about to begin again. Damn, Giordan you haven't changed." Don says.

They all continue laughing including Giordan.

Giordan gives a startled, bewildered look and responds, "Wha?"

Douglas stops laughing and says "He's right. It's not mine. For years I have worked my ass off and for what? It's not enough anymore to work just to acquire more things. I need something else. Not necessarily more but something else."

Richard cuts in. "I can relate."

Karl chimes in "I have to say it would be nice to be out there doing my own thing but I don't know if I am willing and able to make the necessary sacrifices, like giving up my salary."

"You motherfuckers are out of your minds." Don abruptly interjects. "Remember we all talked and dreamed about achieving success, making money, living the life. Now I am hearing you say you want something else...that there is something missing! Yeah, you are missing



something...your motherfuckin' minds!" Don summons the waiter. "Give me a double shot of cognac and shots of milk in little bowls for these pussies." They all laugh.

"We should all go work with Giordan?" Richard humorously says but as if he is baiting for a response.

"Now that would be some shit!" Don responds.

They all continued laughing as they share stories of their past. They all quietly imagined the possibility of being together again and the thoughts added a bit of seriousness to their laughter. Five lifelong friends sat at for hours talking about their past, present and future.

Though physically present in the moment Giordan sporadically fades in and out mentally and emotionally while gazing at his best friends. His mind bounces from thoughts of Cymonne, wondering where James is at this moment, and wondering about his future. His mind rests on Cymonne and lingers on one of their recent telephone conversations:

"We will always be friends and one day we will reconnect in a way unseen before."

"What do you mean?" Cymonne asks.

"Everyone knew that we shared a unique bond. A bond I never experienced before. It didn't matter what we did together we just meshed. We were a team, an unstoppable team. Someway, somehow, I will make us a team again. There are things I want to do and they are the only ones I know who can handle the challenge."

"Are you still planning on taking over the world?" Cymonne says while laughing.

"Yes." Giordan responds in a serious tone.

"Giordan if anyone else had said that I would ignore it. But you, I have to take that statement as truth."



"There are a few things that need changing around here...so somebody has to do it!"

"You haven't changed that part of you at all. I hope you never do because it is one of the things I love about you." Cymonne humorously responds.

Giordan glances at 4 of his 5 closest friends. In this solemn moment, he has found contentment and inspiration being in their presence. Cymonne, in her death, as she did while living, had changed Giordan's life. In the aftermath of death, a birth is occurring right before their eyes. The resurgence of a true friendship is taking place that is the beginning of a journey that will change their lives in ways none of them could have ever imagined.

Giordan summons the waiter. "Please bring me a double cognac and the rest of them milk."

The remaining three in unison responded. "Double cognac for me too!"