

## Chapter 1

### Bergen

It was 1968 and President Lyndon Johnson had just announced that he would not run for a second term. Less well publicized was the arrival of Bergen Sawyer at the army base hospital maternity ward in Wiesbaden, Germany. Bergen's father was Major Roscoe Sawyer who commanded the base Military Police detachment. His mother was Rebecca Sawyer. To say that the child was welcomed is a gross understatement. Previously, his mother had miscarried once, and another child was stillborn. Bergen was the first surviving offspring. As such, he was somewhat sheltered and spoiled until his sister was born three years later. Despite the rumors that circulated for years and that refuse to die, Bergen was not named after a world-famous ventriloquist. Rather, he was named after the town in Norway where he was conceived. His sister, Nancy, is rather glad that the family was transferred from Wiesbaden before her time arrived.

In the Sawyer family, Roscoe was the authority figure and Rebecca was the disciplinarian. The two of them were comfortable with the division of roles. They communicated with each other easily and often. They were in complete agreement about ninety-five percent of the time. No child would ever be successful in playing off one of them against the other. They understood that discipline was an essential component of a child's upbringing. They also knew where the line ran that separated discipline from child-abuse and they never came close to crossing it.

Rebecca had read aloud to Bergen when he was in utero. The readings continued throughout his childhood. He learned to read at an early age and his fascination with books grew stronger the longer he lived. One could almost believe that he was predestined for a bookish profession. The family relocated so often that Rebecca had no choice but to begin educating the child herself. Thus, at an early age, Bergen became bilingual, in English and in German. Later, other languages were added easily and naturally. Rebecca began to wonder whether

he had some special gift for languages or whether this was a by-product of beginning as bilingual. She taught him to write and got him started on simple Mathematics. There were many other army brats at Wiesbaden, so his socializing began at an early age. Rebecca monitored his behavior as unobtrusively as possible. She knew that eventually he would have to begin school and attend classes. She also believed strongly that no child should be allowed to start school until the child had acquired a basic grounding in manners and had learned a proper respect for those in authority. After all, grammar school teachers had their hands full trying to teach their curricula without first having to civilize their charges.

He accompanied the family to the Sunday and Holyday services at the Catholic Chapel on base. Bergen had no choice; it was part of the family routine. His mother was the more devout, his father the more critical. She favored the services with ceremony and pomp; her husband preferred them short.

So Bergen was the product of a loving, two-parent family, albeit a very peripatetic one. The reassignments by the Pentagon were so frequent that they rarely spent even two years at any one base. Even before he started his formal schooling, Bergen learned that it was pointless to form friendships because, in a short time, inevitably, you would be separated and would probably never see each other again. However, the family unit was constant. That and the great faceless bureaucracy that was the army!

Rebecca did not consider her work done when Bergen enrolled in the grammar school of the base where they were assigned. Quietly, she monitored the quality of his classes and the instructors. She tracked his academic progress. Beyond that, she insisted that the whole family immerse themselves in the culture of the country where they happened to be assigned. This went beyond learning the language to studying the history, politics, religions, literature, and arts. Bergen's education may have been fragmented but it was exquisitely eclectic.

Roscoe Sawyer also had a strong influence on his son's education but largely in non-academic areas. He taught Bergen how to fight and, more importantly, when not to fight. He introduced Bergen to the basics of boxing, wrestling, and the martial arts. In time, he added the nuances of stud poker. Along with this knowledge, he imprinted the philosophy that these skills were never to be used to bully people. Rather they were to be used in self-defense and especially in the defense of the weak, the helpless, and those being bullied. Roscoe had never cracked a skull with a nightstick unless the owner of the skull truly deserved it and no milder form of intervention was practical. The father passed this code of conduct on to the son as part of his inheritance.

The father's tutorials naturally progressed to a study of weapons. By the time Bergen was in the fifth grade, he could fieldstrip, clean, oil, and reassemble his father's 0.45 caliber sidearm and an M-1A1 rifle, all by candlelight. Before he graduated from grammar school, he could accomplish all of these feats blindfolded. It was only after Bergen understood the inner workings of the ordinance that he was allowed to fire them on the range. He showed a steady hand and a sharp eye and soon became an expert marksman.

One afternoon, when he was in the sixth grade, Bergen was leisurely strolling the six blocks home from school. His mind was preoccupied with an attempt to find the right words to ask his classmate, Janice Burke, to be his date for the class party. A military staff car pulled to the curb next to him and the rider's side window was lowered. The driver, alone in the vehicle, greeted him by name. "Bergen, your father sent me to pick you up. Get in!"

Like most youngsters, Bergen had been warned about accepting rides from strangers. He stared at the driver through the open window. The man was dressed in an army uniform but he was long overdue for a haircut, his face had not seen a razor in over 24 hours, and his tie was undone. Bergen knew that this fellow would be unlikely to pass inspection by his father. He concluded that it was even less likely that his father would send someone like this to fetch him.

"Thank you, but no!"

The man reached under his jacket and removed a handgun from his waistband. He leveled it menacingly at Bergen. "I said GET IN!"

Bergen noticed that the man had not released the safety on the gun and concluded that it was a bluff. He had no intention of shooting anyone. "Not today!" Then, fueled by the audacity of youth, he added, "If I was your age and weight, I would whip your ass and then feed you that gun."

"You're a cheeky little bastard, aren't you?"

"I'm not a bastard. What is it you really want? I have homework to do."

The man rubbed the crescent scar over his right eye, lowered the gun, and said, "Give your father a message. Tell him Martin Malone says hello. And tell him that, if he doesn't drop his investigation, his only son will not live long enough to finish the school year."

Bergen was experiencing a strange mixture of emotions; fear, loathing, and outrage. "What investigation is that?"

"Just give him the message. He'll know. And, kid, you better hope that our paths never cross again."

"Why not tell him yourself. There he is crossing the street behind you."

Predictably, the driver turned to look and Bergen ducked behind a concrete planter on the sidewalk. Not seeing the senior Sawyer, the driver turned back to find that Bergen was nowhere in sight. Malone muttered several obscenities, slid the window closed, and pulled the car away from the curb. However, before it disappeared into traffic, Bergen had memorized the license plate alphanumeric. Bergen wasted no time completing his journey home. Over cold milk and freshly baked toll house cookies, he reported the encounter to his mother. Rebecca experienced an involuntary spasm of fear and then telephoned Roscoe to ask

him to come home immediately. Such a disturbance of routine happened so infrequently that Roscoe knew that it had to be a serious matter. He was home in ten minutes.

Roscoe convened an extraordinary family meeting, one to which even Nancy was invited, for there was a lesson here for her as well. Bergen was made to recount the incident in full detail, neither embroidering nor leaving anything out. When he was finished, Roscoe took the floor and filled in as much of the context as they needed to know to understand what had happened. For about six months now, Roscoe's staff had been investigating Supply Sergeant Martin Malone and his cronies on suspicion of grand theft and racketeering. They were building their case and soon they would have enough for indictments. Aside from Bergen, no one on base had seen Malone since the previous evening. He was officially listed as AWOL. The staff car he had used was stolen. Later, it would be found parked in the Pastor's parking place at the Catholic chapel.

Bergen was commended for keeping a cool head, being observant, and following the rules that had been drummed into him over the years. However, he was also chastised for taking unnecessary chances and putting his life at risk. On the academic grading scale they gave him a C rather than an A. Roscoe made explicit for each of the family members the take home lessons that they were to learn from this unfortunate incident. After he told them to get cleaned up for dinner and had dismissed them, he withdrew to his home study and made a series of telephone calls.

When Bergen came down the next morning, he was surprised to find that they had a guest for breakfast. He was introduced to Gunnery Sergeant Maxwell Greenfield, USMC. In short order he became known more familiarly to all as Max, or just Gunny. Max became Bergen's constant companion on the trips to and from school. Max was on high alert and took in everything: the pedestrians around them on the sidewalk, the passing traffic, the arrangement of parked cars, and even the flight paths of low aircraft. He listened for the out of place sound;

he watched for the unexpected glint of the sun on metal. Whenever he identified a possible staging area for an attack, he positioned his own body between that site and his charge. They varied the route and the departure times each trip, trying to make them as random as possible so that setting an ambush would be difficult. As they traveled, they talked. Bergen was surprised to find that Max was especially well read and quite articulate. No sooner did he have these thoughts than he berated himself for believing the stereotype that Gunnery Sergeants are illiterate and inarticulate. In time, Max became a third tutor and a second

father to him. Max taught lessons that Rebecca would never touch and that Roscoe had not yet reached. Bergen's education had taken on an added dimension.

The Sawyers had decided that it was best for Nancy to withdraw from school for the rest of the semester and continue with home schooling. By the end of the semester, the crisis had dissipated. Most of Malone's gang had been rounded up, confined to the stockade, and charged with a laundry list of crimes. Courts marshal awaited. Malone himself had eluded them. The last report they had on him was that he had become a warlord in Afghanistan and was leading a band of mercenaries. Max was reassigned and the Sawyer family resumed their normal lives.

Roscoe made Lieutenant Colonel on schedule but the rotation of assignments continued. He knew the system and understood that he was still some years away from full colonel and the posting stateside to a desk job that would put an end to their gypsy wanderings. He also knew that he would never make Brigadier. He was too much soldier and not enough politician.

When Bergen was in the seventh grade, his parents had a long, serious discussion about their son's future. They agreed that he needed to get to know his native country and have more stability for the rest of his education. The transition to a stateside high school would be a great shock. They needed to do what they could to cushion that shock. They searched widely for just the right type of school. Finally, they found what they were looking for in the Custer Military Academy in New Rumley, Ohio. It was a boarding school, a military academy with a junior R.O.T.C. Program, and run by the Catholic Order of The Mendicant Monks of Malta. From the Sawyers' point of view, it was the best of all worlds.