

THE ARCHANGEL RESPONSE

Kevin Harmon

MARKETING & PROMOTION

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Author: Kevin Harmon

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Online: [Amazon.com](#)

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[Smashwords.com](#)

[iTunes Bookstore](#)

Available for checkout at local libraries.

WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

Website developed with SEO: [www.kevinharmon.com](#)

Links to Facebook page and Twitter

- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Archangel-Response/150073248387222>
- Twitter account: [www.twitter.com/KevinHarmon13](#)

Links to online purchasing sites including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Smashwords and iTunes Bookstore

Info on purchasing hard copy at local retailer, *I Know You Like a Book*.

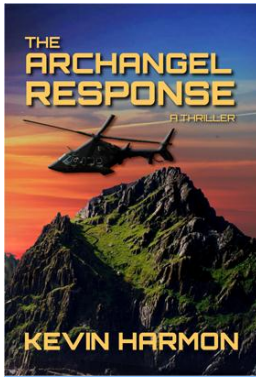
PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Open House/Book Launch

March 18, 2012, Agatucci's Restaurant, Peoria, IL

- Utilized local, well-known restaurant
- Facebook and email invitations
- Online press releases
- Turnout of more than 150 individuals
- 70 books sold

[www.kevinharmon.com](#)



THE ARCHANGEL RESPONSE

Kevin Harmon

- Television coverage of event on nightly local news
- Tabletents and placemats as leavebehinds
- Books can be purchased anytime at this location

Radio Interview

1470 WMBD Talk Radio – Greg and Dan Show

March 19, 2012



Kevin_Harmon_0320
12.mp3

Newspaper Coverage:

Peoria Journal Star

Sunday, February 4, 2012

[From 18 to 80 in seconds](#)

Peoria Journal Star

Sunday, February 19, 2012

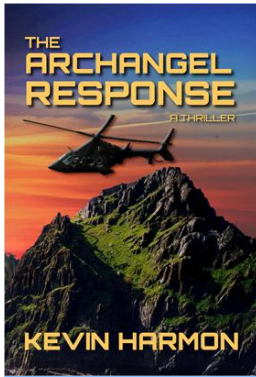
[So much more than thanks](#)

Press Release

Sent to local and regional media as well as online book websites such as [Shelf Awareness](#) and [Goodreads.com](#)

[Dragon Dictation Software](#)

Currently in talks to promote Kevin's book through Dragon social media communities. Kevin utilized Dragon Dictation Software to research, plan, outline and dictate the entire novel.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In an age when individuals are capable of acquiring multi-billion-dollar fortunes, and with them the power to influence governments, what prevents some men from going the next step -- and actually becoming governments unto themselves?

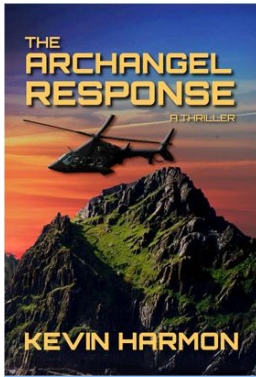
Influenced by authors Brad Thor (*Full Black*), Tom Clancy (*Locked On*) and Vince Flynn (*Kill Shot*), first-time author Kevin Harmon says, "I had this scenario in my head for a long time, and it just kept filling out. The main characters, Michael Cavanaugh and Caitlin Doyle, slowly developed into these fascinating individuals with this extraordinary dilemma, and the rest just fell into place over time."

And so the [The Archangel Response](#) was born.

Kevin's inaugural novel has been more than 10 years in the making. Now 43, an accident 26 years ago left him quadriplegic. Yet the seemingly inconceivable goal of writing a full-length novel was made achievable through sheer determination and the advent of voice recognition software. Through the miracle of modern technology, [Dragon Dictation Software](#) (a division of [Nuance Communications](#)), gave him the means to "write" his novel using only his own voice. "Voice recognition software has come a long way since it was first invented," Kevin explains. "I can talk at a normal pace, make changes and corrections – and it gets to know my voice patterns so it becomes even more accurate the more I use it." The software also enabled him to plan, outline and conduct the research necessary for the novel's authenticity.

Kevin calls Peoria, Illinois his hometown and is a lifelong Illinois resident. Other than writing, his passions include politics and world affairs, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, NFL football and World Cup Soccer. He enjoys reading (both fiction and nonfiction) playing chess (with friends and against the computer), and spending time with family and friends.

With the determination, ambition and integrity of his main character, Kevin has created a pulse-pounding thriller full of twists and turns that will keep you on the edge of your seat until its surprising end. Or is it the end? A sequel is already in the works, so stay tuned.



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BOOK SYNOPSIS

As the founder of one of the world's largest tech companies, mysterious billionaire Michael Cavanaugh seems to have it all – fabulous wealth, power, and access to the most influential politicians in Washington. A collector of classic art and fine wine, Michael's business has provided him with a very good life.

But Michael also has a secret. One that could cost him everything if discovered.

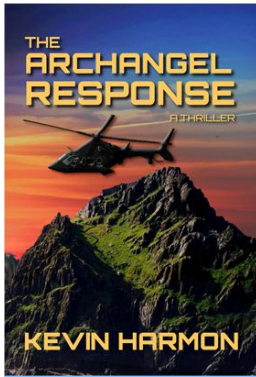
With the aid of Marlin, a former CIA case officer and his longtime mentor, Michael operates a clandestine organization that protects his company from a global network of intellectual-property pirates who want what he has, even if they have to kill to get it. Together, the two men use whatever means necessary to defend what Michael has spent his life building.

Because of his very dangerous life, Michael has forbidden himself from ever getting too close to anyone. That is, until he meets Caitlin Doyle, a beautiful, intelligent, and politically connected campaign strategist working on the upcoming presidential election.

While on a weekend vacation to the mountains, Michael and Caitlin come under attack by a group of hired assassins. Barely escaping the sudden, brutal, and well-orchestrated assault, Michael must respond against a powerful and unknown enemy in ways that test his courage and beliefs like never before. With merely a blurred photo of a man's hand to go on, Michael wages a battle that circles the globe – all to hunt down the men who invaded his perfect life.

Set against the contrasting worlds of high technology, politics, and espionage, *The Archangel Response* moves quickly from a defiled Russian monastery to an exploding supertanker in Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor, through the corrupt halls of government in Washington DC to Spain's Running of the Bulls.

Ending in a violent confrontation that could cost Michael everything he's worked for, and even the woman he loves, *The Archangel Response* is a pulse-pounding thriller from first-time author Kevin Harmon that will leave readers shocked and emotionally moved.



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BOOK REVIEWS

4.25 stars (out of 5) on Amazon.com

4.0 stars (out of 4) on Smashwords.com

"Loved your book!" (September 10, 2012)

I bought your book months ago and have just gotten around to reading it. It made a great time passer as I nervously awaited phone calls from the OR while my husband was having surgery, I took it everywhere with me...OR, recovery and finally his room at OSF. As he slept I read page after page. He came home Saturday and I still had your book in my hand.

I return to work tomorrow - time was running out - so this evening I finally turned the last page and handed the book over to him to read while he recovers from surgery. You did a wonderful job despite none of the big publishers wanting to publish you. They were wrong. I hope and pray you write another, I truly enjoyed reading it, and will patiently await your next book. Thanks for the wonderful read.

P.S. as a physical therapy assistant I can safely say your writing will make you self sufficient in the future - keep up the great work! Your body may not work the way it was intended to but your mind is working miracles.

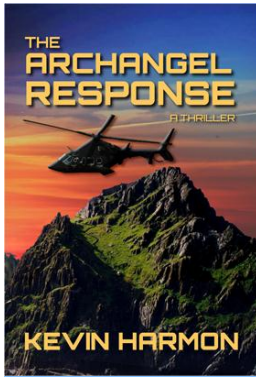
"Dan Brown meet your competition!" (July 7, 2012)

Just finished reading The Archangel Response by Kevin Harmon and I can't say enough great things about this rookie writer's first published product! The Archangel Response takes you on an emotional thrill ride. My adrenaline was flowing as if I were being hunted down by assassins myself.

Kevin obviously did quite a bit of research on the various cities that are in the book and the various weaponry used. The detail that he sets the scene reminds me of Dan Brown.

The secret world that Kevin has envisioned for hero Michael Cavanaugh is truly unique and compelling. It makes one wonder what secrets are our government keeping from us....? The characters are very well developed, so you feel as if you really know them and swept away into their adventures.

If you want to read a real 'Page-turner', buy The Archangel Response by Kevin Harmon, you won't be disappointed! Hopefully a sequel will be coming out soon with more adventures with Michael, Caitlin, Marlin, Niko, and the rest of the team!



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"The good God is in the details" (March 22, 2012)

This solid effort from the first time author is what previous reviewers have described - exciting, relevant, and absorbing. The characters are well developed, and the reader becomes fully acquainted with most of them through the first third of the book. Particularly impressive is the dialogue and interaction between the main characters Michael Cavanaugh and Caitlin Doyle. Considering the book is billed (rightly so) as an action thriller, it's somewhat surprising to see the attention to detail with which the characters are presented. They are completely believable especially how Caitlin reacts to Michael's secret life of espionage.

As the book goes on it becomes clear how important all the details become to the action and story. The choreography of the covert operations, the technical sophistication and precision of the Archangel Response, the captivating strikes and ambushes against Cavanaugh, and the early subtle plot devices that shape the later suspense all provide a pretty captivating and meticulous adventure.

There are several action sequences, but two main ones involving Cavanaugh and Doyle are the main pillars of the story. The first comes as a surprise at a time when they are probably most vulnerable and somewhat ambushes the reader. The dichotomical suddenness is masterfully done. The second climatic assault builds into more of a crescendo and provides a resolution not only for the central conflict of the Archangel Response, but also for Michael and Caitlin's relationship. All in all, well thought out and well researched and well done. Can't wait for the movie.

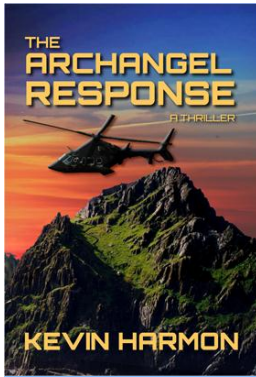
"Clear the book shelf for Kevin Harmon" (March 14, 2012)

I am an avid reader and my favorite genre is "thrillers". A few of my favorite authors in this category are Vince Flynn, Daniel Silva and Clive Cussler. I am now going to add the name Kevin Harmon to that list.

His first book, "The Archangel Response" was a great read. It pulled me in and did not let me go until the last page. It has all the components of a super thriller; politics, exciting covert operations, and a fascinating high tech organization set up by a self-made Billionaire, Michael Cavanaugh, to defend his business against global intellectual-property pirates.

The main character, Michael Cavanaugh, is serious, intelligent and private. He has always avoided personal attachments due to the nature of his business. That was until he met Caitlin Doyle, a beautiful political campaign strategist who he welcomes into his life.

Michael's happiness is interrupted however. What he could not know yet was that his organization's most recent covert actions had put him in the cross hairs of an unknown and powerful enemy. Michael was soon to discover the strength of that enemy's resolve. What his enemy was soon to discover was the magnitude of the Archangel Response.



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Kevin Harmon has written a book that takes the reader on a thrilling ride. His narrative was so vivid that I felt like I was an observer, not a reader. There were twists and turns and the ending was superlative. Does Kevin Harmon plan to give us a sequel? I certainly hope so and I am leaving space on my book shelf next to my other favorite authors.

"Fast paced and relevant" (March 12, 2012)

The author has done a great job writing a story that is relevant and timely for today incorporating Intellectual Property Rights issues and how they are abused globally along with a strong political tie-in that is completely believable given the political climate in the US. The book appears to be well researched with details that allow for very vivid images about locations, processes and scenery as well as strong character development. A very fast paced writing style that reminded me at times of John Grisham's *The Firm* - not in the story line but rather in the multiple threads of the story taking place at the same time. The writing style also incorporated short chapters that kept me moving through the book and not wanting to put it down. Overall, very enjoyable and the best fiction book I have read since *The Firm*.

"Fast paced" (Feb. 20, 2012)

I originally downloaded this for my husband to read but ended up reading it myself. I usually don't read spy novels but once I started I couldn't put it down. I loved the characters and the difficult situations they found themselves in. Definitely a page turner!

"Many sleepless nights" (Feb. 15, 2012)

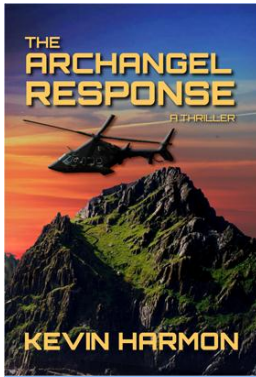
I purchased this book after seeing an article on the author in a local newspaper and I am so glad I did! I thoroughly enjoyed the premise of the story line (who cannot resist rooting for a rich business man who gives up on the government and tackles "game pirating" on his own!) The character inner play was believable and enjoyable. The battles were intense. I have passed this on to my teen age soon to read and personally look forward to other books from Mr. Harmon.

"A good read!" (Feb. 14, 2012)

I love a good book like a kid loves cake. And this was a good book. I enjoyed the characters, the spy aspect, the political angle...well done Mr. Harmon. Well done! I would definitely recommend to friends!

"The Archangel Response: a thriller" (Feb. 8, 2012)

I really liked this book! The story was believable and certainly applicable to today's world of software piracy. I enjoyed Caitlin's spirit and Michael's sense of civic responsibility to fight for others rights as well as his own. Lots of fast-paced action!! Mr. Harmon's descriptions of factual information showed that he had done extensive research. The ending left speculation for another book?



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“Like the old Clancy? READ THIS STORY” (Jan. 20, 2012)

Treat yourself to a GREAT READ if you like dynamic thrillers that are American based but spread around the globe. I can remember reading a younger Clancy and marveling at how he just happened to be writing about current events. Check out what is going on in Congress, Jan 2011, copyright, SOPA, PIPA, and other anti-piracy laws. This author has put a story in our hands that could not be more current. The characters are believable (maybe the main character is a little too perfect) and real. The organization that the writer created is realistic for someone like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet. The story flows smoothly with plenty of challenges to keep the reader searching to see how the challenges can be overcome. This was not an easy story to hold together but the author did a great job and the reader will be rewarded with some entertaining reading. DON'T MISS THIS TIMELY STORY---well done Kevin

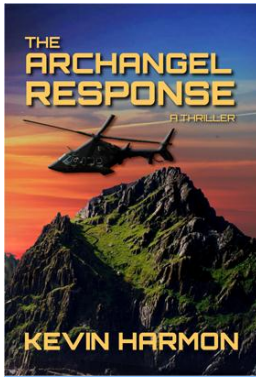
“Move over Michael Crichton – Kevin Harmon is here!” (Jan. 4, 2012)

I have to say I was absolutely gripped from the first page of Mr. Harmon's The Archangel Response: A Thriller. The book stands firmly on its own merits. In fact, if anything it heightened the pleasure -- like I was sitting next to him on a roller coaster and I could enjoy the ride all the more. On this roller coaster, we are taken up a steep slope of intrigue, swiftly around corners of action, and through the slow and building relationship of the protagonist, Michael Cavanaugh, and his love interest, Caitlin. Mr. Harmon interlaces humor throughout, which makes the prose even more captivating. He has a flair for suspense, gripping the reader with chapter flow and nuance. Mr. Harmon creates a dynamic, honorable, and more multi-layered James Bond type character in Michael Cavanaugh -- one ripe for the picking for a movie. I loved it, loved it, loved it and am left with only one question -- when is the sequel coming out?! Do yourself a favor -- READ THIS BOOK!

“WOW !!! What a great read.” (December 28, 2011)

The story line is fast paced and keeps you digging for more. If you like Vince Flynn, Brad Thor, Daniel Silva you will appreciate this entertaining story.

I had never read a story about stealing copywrited material but it makes total sense after reading this story. The author's research is appreciated. Well done, looking forward to the next story!!!!



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BOOK EXCERPT

1

It was a cool spring afternoon in southwestern Montana as the black Bell 430 helicopter cut across the cloudless sky. The pilot, sitting alone in front, carefully navigated his way through the long narrow valleys along the eastern Rocky Mountains, snaking his way up the aspen- and Douglas fir-lined rivers and creeks near the Gallatin National Forest. Nearby, a single bald eagle flew cautiously overhead, observing the strange black intruder warily.

To avoid being picked up on radar, the pilot flew just above the trees—not that the lone passenger sitting in the back of the sleek executive helicopter sipping a glass of expensive bourbon could have cared. He had more important things on his mind.

Michael Cavanaugh was resting his head against the plush leather seat next to the window as he looked down at several bears hunting along the bank of one of the many trout streams crisscrossing this area of the country. As the helicopter buzzed over a large open field of prairie grass, Michael noticed a herd of elk scatter. Though Michael owned all of the land for miles in every direction, he'd never thought of the wildlife as trespassers. They were here first, he'd always figured. Besides, he really only needed one small area of the property. They could have the rest.

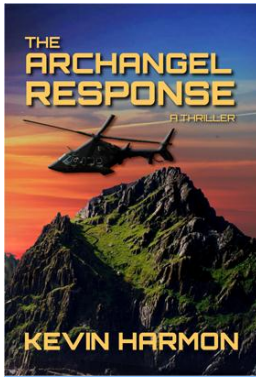
Many people become nauseated when experiencing the ups and downs of helicopter travel. But not Cavanaugh. For him, it had always had a relaxing effect. It was the reason he'd gotten his helicopter pilot's license several years before—so he could take off by himself whenever he needed to get away. After all, the life of the country's eighteenth richest man could be very stressful at times.

But this wasn't a pleasure trip. Important business awaited him.

"We'll be landing shortly, Mr. Cavanaugh," the pilot informed Michael over the helicopter's onboard intercom.

Reclining comfortably in his leather chair, Michael was startled at the sound of the pilot's voice. It took him several moments to focus on where he was, he had been so successful in his attempt to distract himself, however momentarily, with the placid view below.

Flying over a pine-tree covered ridge, the pilot then dove down through a small clearing alongside a steep mountain in the Montana backcountry. Sitting up in his chair, the 39-year-old Cavanaugh put down his drink and gathered himself for their impending landing. He'd been so engrossed in his thoughts of what was to happen when he landed that he hadn't noticed the approaching cabin. Not that he would have seen it anyway. The small, cedar cabin—and dirt road leading up to it through the woods—were virtually invisible, nearly engulfed by the surrounding giant aspens.



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Across the Pacific Northwest, luxury cabins had sprouted up all over the place—mostly trophy pieces built by wealthy urbanites who'd seen their net worth explode during the stock market boom of the '80s and '90s. But this cabin was different. First, it was small, quaint, and rustic. Second, it was merely a façade. A façade designed to camouflage the existence of something far more important. And its helicopter landing pad—designed almost like an optical illusion—could only be seen if you were directly above it and knew exactly what you were looking for. *The fewer people who know about this place, the better*, Michael thought, as he had on each of his many previous visits. He didn't want a bunch of Sunday pilots flying over the cabin and then going back and asking a lot of questions about it, after all.

It was the first time he'd been here in several months, he recalled as the aircraft came to a motionless hover directly above the camouflage-colored concrete landing pad. But Michael knew his personal attention was necessary for what was about to happen.

Lowering the retractable wheel gear, the pilot slowly descended through the narrow opening in the otherwise dense tree cover. Gently, he set the Bell 430 down on the small, round landing pad about 15 yards from the cabin.

Looking out the window, Michael saw a six-foot-five, 250-pound man, wearing jeans and a beige-colored safari shirt, coming towards him from the front porch of the cabin. Climbing out of the helicopter, Michael ducked his head down and hustled over to the large man.

"Is everything set?" Michael yelled over the thumping rotors of the helicopter as it lifted back up towards the sky.

"Yeah. We're right on schedule," the man yelled back, greeting Michael at the side of the landing pad and shaking his hand. "Wanted to watch the show in person, huh?"

"Just keeping you on your toes, Marlin."

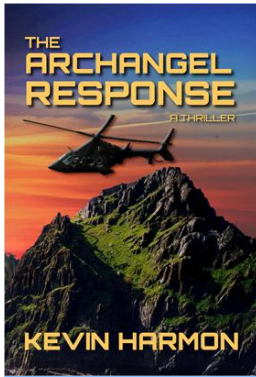
Michael and Marlin laughed comfortably as they hurried back up a stone path to the front of the cedar cabin.

Inside, the cabin looked like any other mountain hideaway. It was nicely rustic, with a large stone fireplace and several pieces of furniture made from logs. A few Western-themed paintings of horses and mountains decorated the walls to make the place look like any other cabin, just in case any unauthorized people happened to appear unannounced. Which wasn't likely, considering the state-of-the-art security system that monitored, around the clock, the entire 25,000-acre property the cabin was located on—especially the 500 acres directly surrounding the cabin.

Michael and his escort hurried through the cabin's main foyer and down the steps to the basement. The only evidence suggesting the beautiful mountain cabin was anything but what it appeared to be was the presence of several heavily armed men casually walking around inside.

If an intruder had somehow found the cabin hidden in the wilderness, and gotten past the security system, past the armed guards, and into the basement, he or she would have recognized the true significance of the building. For this cabin had one major addition that no other run-of-the-mill, privacy-hungry rich person's cabin had: a secret door in the basement leading down a tunnel to a massive underground complex, built deep into the mountain.

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When Michael and Marlin reached the basement, Marlin walked over to a numeric keypad along the far wall. Unlike upstairs, the basement of the cabin was completely empty. Just four gray concrete walls. No need to pretend down here, they both knew.

Even though Marlin had just left the basement complex, he was still required to follow the security procedures upon reentering it—procedures he himself had created. Security was the key to safety, he had learned long ago. And discipline was the key to security. Marlin entered a series of numbers into the keypad, and a section of the concrete wall began to open.

Proceeding through the door, followed by Michael, he punched in another series of numbers on a similar keypad, closing the thick concrete door behind them and sealing them off from the outside.

As they walked down a brightly lit concrete tunnel for nearly twenty yards, their steps echoed through the passageway. Soon they came to another door—the next layer in Marlin’s multi-layered security system. But this door was steel, and the method for opening it was a fingerprint scanner—which unlocked its special hydraulic lock. Biometrics was the latest in high-tech security, and Marlin had access to all of the highest-quality technology.

Above the door lurked a small surveillance camera, and Marlin knew that someone inside the complex was watching carefully as he and Michael put their hands on the scanner, one after the other. Everyone who wanted to get through this door had to successfully complete the scan.

After Michael and Marlin passed through the steel door, they came to the final security hurdle—a medium-size, concrete-and-steel anteroom. In the middle of the room stood a chest-high metal cylinder. A retinal scanner and three numbered plates rested on top of it. Each plate corresponded to one of three numbered doors located on each of the three walls in the room that they hadn’t entered through— and had a single, sophisticated, key-card-operated lock right beneath them.

Marlin took a key card from his pocket and inserted it into the lock. He then put his face up to the retinal scanner and a light flashed across his eye, matching the scan to a computer database inside the complex. Because Marlin had complete access to the entire facility, he was now able to press any one of the three numbered plates and have its corresponding door open. Only certain people could go through certain doors.

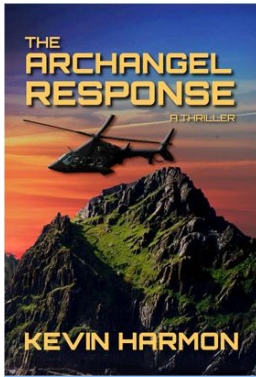
Once Michael completed the retinal scan also, Marlin pressed the button numbered “2,” the steel door along the far wall of the anteroom began sliding open. As it did, a flood of noise poured into the chamber, momentarily startling Michael.

“It sounds like it’s about game time,” Marlin said, his blood pumping faster.

“It sure sounds that way,” Michael replied. New missions always put him on edge, and this time the stakes were immense, he knew. And the risks were even greater.

Once through the heavy titanium door, there were two steel-mesh staircases – one leading up to an observation deck, the other down to an enormous control room. Modeled after NASA’s Mission Control Center, the subterranean complex contained the latest high-tech tracking, communications, computer, and data-display equipment in existence.

The men quickly made their way up to the observation deck—a steel and concrete loft overlooking the complex’s enormous Operations Center, the nerve center for all active operations.



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Down below, the Ops Center was a cavernous room with 40-foot ceilings. Covering one entire wall, three 80-inch, high-definition plasma screens were displayed side by side, surrounded by ten smaller screens. Along the floor of the room, there were several dozen workstations, manned around-the-clock by technicians who analyzed all of the incoming data from around the world.

With a new mission just about to begin, the floor was buzzing with activity. More than a dozen technicians were sitting at their consoles, checking their screens for any anomaly to be passed along to Samuel, Marlin's chief of technology, who was in charge of managing data flow to and from the mission's operatives.

"Status report, Samuel," Marlin said into the microphone of his observation deck's command console.

"Team Two is already in place," the young man—who looked even younger than his twenty years would indicate—quickly informed his boss. "Team One is just approaching."

In front of them, the enormous center wall-monitor displayed a three-dimensional rendering of a building, shown from the top, with dozens of little red lights inside—each one representing the thermal signature of a person—while the screen on the right showed the same building from ground level.

Approaching the building were two green lights.

*

Half a world away, along the banks of the Volga River in southwestern Russia, Dmitri Manos and Elena Kubiak walked up an old stone staircase towards St. Borislav's monastery—or, rather, what used to be St. Borislav's monastery. In the decades after the Bolsheviks took over Russia in 1917, many of the ancient, beautiful monasteries that had existed for centuries were either torn down or converted to state-run industrial facilities. St. Borislav's had actually been one of the lucky ones. In the early '60s, it had been taken over by a high-ranking member of the Politburo for his summer residence—his *dacha*. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." That's what the apparatchiks had told the masses. Apparently, though, huge *dachas* were needed by quite a few Politburo members.

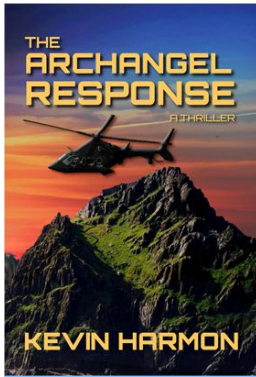
"We're approaching our first mark, over," Dmitri said into his hidden microphone, pretending to talk to Elena.

"Proceed, over," Samuel replied from his console down on the Ops Center floor.

As Dmitri and Elena approached the former monastery, they could hear the techno music blaring from inside. Aleksandre Lukin was infatuated with all things Western, they knew from their research. Music, women, liquor, drugs, cars, clothes, jewelry—it didn't make any difference to Lukin what it was, as long as it was expensive. Lukin had money to burn—and he was going to spend it on whatever gave him pleasure.

Arriving at two large, oak double doors at the front of the converted monastery, Dmitri and Elena were greeted by two immense guards.

"Pass," one of the men said coldly, sticking out his hand.



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As instructed, Dmitri handed the burly security guard his “invitation”, an exact forgery of one that Elena had “borrowed” from one of Lukin's regular guests earlier in the week while partying in the south of France.

The guard looked at it for a few moments before waving Dmitri and Elena through, keeping the invitation as he did. Invitations to Lukin's parties were one-time-only passports to pleasure, and every party required a new invitation to get in.

Passing through the front door into the foyer, Dmitri and Elena noticed several partygoers sipping on drinks and dancing with their bodies pressed tightly together, as they moved slowly to the rhythm of the beat. Dmitri and Elena were both dressed in expensive black leather pants and hip-length black leather designer coats—the typical dress code for the Euro-trash types who hung out with Lukin. Many of the guests at his parties were fashion models and wealthy European heirs and heiresses with way too much time and money on their hands. They were professional partiers, jetting back and forth across the world in search of the perfect high the way professional surfers seek the perfect wave. Lukin provided the party, and they provided the party. It was a perfect bacchanalian synergy.

“We're inside the building, over,” Dmitri said softly into his microphone.

“Affirmative. Proceed to second mark, over,” Samuel replied.

Dmitri put his arm around Elena's waist and they gyrated slowly towards the central ballroom—a massive two-story room where, in centuries past, monks would spend their days praying. Now, though, the room had been converted into a dance hall, with strobe lights and several large disco-style balls hanging from the ceiling, turning around and around—the same way the abbot had done nearly fifty years earlier when the Soviets had hung him by his neck in this very room.

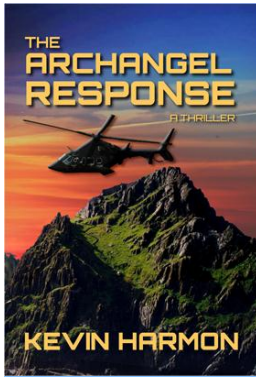
On a raised platform overlooking the room, where the abbot's dinner table once sat, a disc jockey was busy operating his huge array of electronic synthesizers. In each corner of the room, huge speakers blared out music. High up along the side walls of the room were a row of beautiful stained-glass windows picturing scenes from the Last Supper. They stood in surreal contrast to the scene down below, where people were openly snorting cocaine and having sex...among other things.

“Approaching second mark, over,” Dmitri said into Elena's microphone, as the two operatives danced towards the entrance to a small hallway along the far wall.

“Team One, proceed. Team Two, begin cycling, over.”

At that moment, two of the other partygoers—a man and woman who'd arrived earlier and were also dressed in expensive leather—began moving towards the same hallway as Dmitri and Elena.

Squirming through the throng of people, Nikolayevich “Niko” Antoniya and Brenda Montgomery worked their way towards the hallway, passing by the entrance to a small alcove off to the side of the main dance hall as they did. Standing on each side of the open, rounded entranceway were several heavily armed guards, Niko could see as he glanced over while passing by. Inside, he could see a man he recognized to be Aleksandre Lukin, along with a half-dozen other men and women, sprawled out on a massive divan. They were reclined against dozens of large, plush pillows, laughing and guzzling expensive champagne. *Disgusting*, Niko mumbled to



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himself in his native Russian. Niko certainly wasn't a religious man, but he felt a moment of revulsion as he remembered from his pre-mission research report that the room Lukin and his guests were currently defiling used to be the most sacred chapel in the monastery. It had contained a burial relic from St. Borislav himself—the founder of the monastery—on the central alter, he recalled.

Your time will come, Niko thought, rubbing the side of his knee-length leather coat. Underneath the coat, Niko could feel the hard metal of his Glock 9mm. *Not tonight*, he knew. *But sometime. That's a promise.*

Tonight, though, their mission called for complete stealth. In and out. No trace.

Moments later, Niko and Brenda passed through the entrance to the hallway at the far end of the main ballroom. Dmitri and Elena, who'd been waiting for them to arrive, slid in right behind them. There were a number of partygoers who were also in the hallway, some standing together drinking, some coming and going to and from the bathrooms which were a short distance down the hall.

"Mark," Niko said into his microphone, as he and Brenda positioned themselves discreetly along the wall of the hallway. "We're in position, over."

"Affirmative," Samuel replied. "Team One, move to next mark, over."

"Moving to next mark, over," Dmitri confirmed.

Across the small hallway from where Niko and Brenda were positioned was a staircase leading upstairs. At its base were two more armed guards. No one was allowed upstairs, the men had been instructed by Aleksandre Lukin. No one.

Niko put his hands around Brenda's waist. They embraced. Pretending to be two lovers was just a camouflage, but still Niko felt a momentary rush from Brenda's perfume as he leaned towards her, pressing his cheek against hers as he kept his eye on the two guards behind her.

Neither Niko nor Brenda revealed any awareness of Dmitri and Elena as they passed and continued farther down the hallway into the monastery.

The hallway, like most of the monastery, was constructed of stone and wood. Along the walls were several chairs, tables, and couches. Overhead, track lighting that had been added within the last several years illuminated the otherwise dark, tunnel-like corridor. Dmitri and Elena slowly advanced towards their next mark, about fifteen yards down the hallway. The music wasn't nearly as loud this far away from the main dance area, and the only people were a few couples looking for a place to have a little private party of their own.

No guards in sight, Dmitri silently noted.

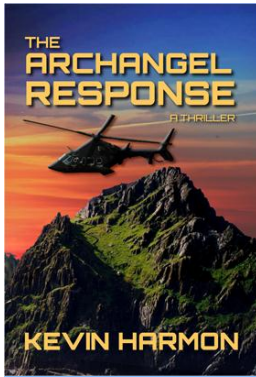
"We've arrived at our next mark," Elena said into her microphone, as she and Dmitri stood alone at the far end of the hallway. "We're clean. No guards, over."

"You should be at the staircase leading down to the basement, over," Samuel relayed to Dmitri.

"Confirmed," Dmitri said. "We're splitting up now, over."

Sitting down on a high-backed upholstered chair along the wall, Elena sipped a glass of champagne and looked bored as she stood guard while Dmitri made his way down the winding staircase towards the monastery's underground cellar.

When he arrived at the bottom of the staircase, he saw another long hallway. It was damp and poorly lit. Dmitri quickly pulled out a small, high-intensity flashlight, made to look like a



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ballpoint pen, and continued down the hallway, passing more than a dozen small, cell-like rooms along the way. Dmitri knew from Samuel's research report that the rooms had once been the sleeping quarters for the monks who lived here. But when the Communists took over the monastery in the thirties, they'd converted these sleeping quarters into jail cells, where the head of the local branch of the secret police would confine "enemies of the state." What was once a beautiful monastery had been converted into a police headquarters—and this was its dungeon. *How many people were tortured down here*, Dmitri wondered, as he hurried past the cells towards the end of the hallway.

Arriving at a heavy wooden door, Dmitri pulled down on a large, brass, lever-type handle located in the center. The door creaked open as Dmitri pushed against it with his shoulder; it had probably not been used in years.

Inside, the room was completely dark. Dmitri used his flashlight to take a quick glance around. It had been the abbot's living quarters, he knew from his research, and at one time had probably been filled with books and other religious artifacts. But now it was empty except for some built-in wood bookshelves and a large stone fireplace along the opposite wall. He walked over to the fireplace.

The fireplace was made from beautifully carved stone. There were many intricate details to it, and Dmitri hoped he could find what he was looking for. Sliding his fingers between the side of the imposing structure, nearly fifteen feet wide at its base, and the bookshelves, which were almost—almost—flush with the fireplace, Dmitri finally felt what he was looking for.

When he pushed up on the small wood lever located in the narrow space between the top of the fireplace and the bookshelf he thought it would break, because he could feel it was nearly rotten from centuries of dampness and mold. But it didn't. Dmitri heard a quiet *click*...then the bookcase slowly began to open, almost pinching his fingers as it did. He jerked his hand away and watched as the giant bookcase began rotating out towards the room...and then stopped when it was pointed straight out.

Like many ancient monasteries, this one had been designed with a number of secret passageways. Escape tunnels. And, as Dmitri squeezed past the open bookcase, he imagined they'd come in handy on numerous occasions over the centuries when enemies of the church had felt like cracking down.

"The package is open," Dmitri said into his microphone. "I'm moving to next mark, over."

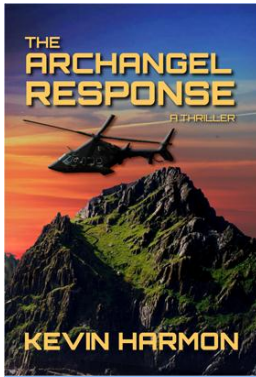
"Roger that, over," Samuel replied.

Passing through the opening in the wall, Dmitri was now in a tight, narrow passageway barely the width of his shoulders. It was cold and dark, and the stone walls were covered with a slick, damp moss. He scanned the hidden passageway with his flashlight, before finding another large wooden lever. He hesitated before pulling it, worried that it might break off in his hand and lock him in the dank tunnel. But upon examining it closer, he determined that the lever was sturdy enough to use.

He gently pulled down on it, and the bookcase slowly closed behind him.

It was absolutely quiet in the hidden passageway as Dmitri quickly worked his way through the confining, spider-web-covered tunnel.

Finally arriving at a stairwell, he started upwards, climbing past the main floor up to the restricted upstairs living quarters of Aleksandre Lukin. "Mark, over," Dmitri said.



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“Okay, at the top of the staircase should be another lever, over,” Samuel said.

Dmitri looked around with his flashlight and soon found the similarly rotted wood handle. “Affirmative, over.”

“We’re not showing any thermal signatures inside the room next to you,” Samuel continued. “But there are two guards right outside the door. Proceed with caution to target, over.”

Dmitri gently pulled down on the lever. The wall he was standing behind began opening, and he immediately heard the muffled sound of music radiating up from the party downstairs.

Unlike the basement, this room was warm and dry. It was Lukin’s office, but it looked like it could belong to any American CEO. There was expensive mahogany paneling, and a huge tapestry almost completely covered one of the walls. At one end of the room was a large glass desk, with a computer and several folders sitting on it.

Dmitri silently made his way across the carpeted floor to Lukin’s desk. Behind it was a picture window overlooking the Volga River. Dmitri spent just a moment admiring the beautiful view of Europe’s longest river, and the lights of freighters making their way down it. The moment ended, and he quickly reached down under a built-in bookcase underneath the window. Sliding his hand across the bottom of one of the shelves, he felt a button. When he pressed it, the large, heavy tapestry on the wall started rolling up towards the ceiling.

As Dmitri walked over to the wall, he pulled out a digital micro-camera from inside his coat. Where the tapestry had just been, there was a large map of Russia, with red markings all over it. He began taking pictures, making sure to get close-ups of the entire map.

When he finished, he went back over to the shelf and pressed the button again, lowering the tapestry.

“Status, over?” Dmitri whispered into his microphone.

“On schedule,” Samuel said. “Everyone’s static. Proceed, over.”

Everyone’s static. Dmitri knew Samuel was telling him that Lukin and the guards were still in their same positions, presumably unaware of Dmitri’s presence. Fortunately, the sound of the music drifting up from downstairs was enough to muffle the minimal noise he was making.

Having finished photographing the wall map, Dmitri sat down at Lukin’s desk and plugged a flash drive into the computer there. He typed a few buttons on the keyboard and the contents of Lukin’s computer began copying onto it.

“We have movement,” Samuel said calmly into his mic, seeing several red heat signatures on his computer monitor leaving the alcove where Lukin had been partying. “Team Two, report, over.”

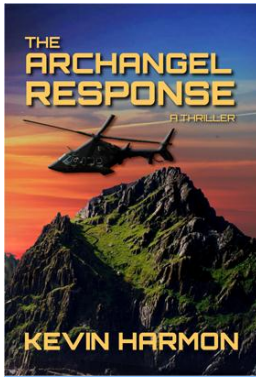
Niko and Brenda, who were standing in the hallway pretending to make out as they kept watch over the guards at the bottom of the staircase leading up to the second floor, walked back towards the main dance hall. “Lukin, a woman, and two guards are headed this way,” reported Niko. “Abort mission, over.”

“I’m almost finished,” Dmitri said. “Can you stall them, over?”

“Only for a few seconds,” Niko replied. “Start egress procedure as soon as possible, over.”

As Lukin continued down the hallway towards where Niko and Brenda were standing, he stopped to talk to a few guests, but quickly disengaged from them. He had business to take care of upstairs with the young lady, and he wasn’t about to be put off for long.

Almost at the staircase now, Lukin was again momentarily distracted when Niko stumbled



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up to him, pretending to be high. In flawless Russian, Niko exclaimed, “Man, this is a great party! I mean...the music is wild, dude. The disco lights are like stars circling around my head. You know what I mean, man?”

“Yeah,” Lukin replied sarcastically, “I know what you mean...*man*.” Lukin looked over in disgust at one of his men. The burly guard quickly stepped between Lukin and Niko and pushed Niko out of his boss’s way—allowing Lukin and his young date to continue upstairs.

As Lukin and his entourage started up the staircase, Niko said into his microphone, “They’re on their way up, over.”

Upstairs, Dmitri was waiting as long as he could to pull the plug on the download. “How much longer until they arrive?”

“Fifteen seconds...fourteen seconds,” Samuel began counting down, as he watched the red thermal dots coming towards the office.

Dmitri watched the blue progress bar filling in as the contents of Lukin’s computer downloaded onto his flash drive. But, hearing voices outside the door now, Dmitri finally yanked it out of the computer and hurried across the room towards the hidden passageway.

Outside the door, he could hear someone putting a key into the lock.

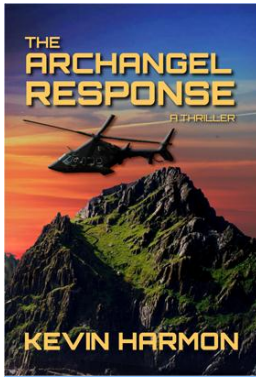
Back inside the passageway, Dmitri pushed up on the lever along the wall.

The wall-door began closing. Just before it clicked shut, though, Dmitri heard the door to the office open. Then silence. *Did they see the wall close?* he wondered.

Back at the Ops Center, everyone was wondering exactly the same thing. Closely monitoring the thermal-imaging display, Samuel watched as one of the red heat signatures in the office moved across the room to where the desk was located. After several moments, it went back out into the hallway. Then, it and one other red heat signature moved farther down the hallway into another room—which Samuel knew was Lukin’s master bedroom—while the other two stayed outside, appearing to stand guard. “Condition green,” Samuel told the operatives. “Proceed as planned with egress, over.”

By this time, Dmitri had already descended the escape tunnel stairs and closed the basement entranceway. He raced down the basement corridor and up the stairs to the main floor. When he arrived at the top of the stairs, Elena was still in her chair, guarding the stairwell. She immediately joined him, and together, they put their arms around each other’s waists and began making their way back down the hallway.

After they passed Niko and Brenda, Dmitri and Elena were once again in the large dance hall area, heading through the throng of people towards the front door. Niko and Brenda fell in several yards behind, following the two lead operatives towards the exit. Once outside, both teams drove separately to the airport—where a private jet was waiting for them.



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