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**Robert Ludlum's**  
**The Janus**  
**Reprisal**

A Covert One Novel

Series created by Robert Ludlum

Written by James Freveletti

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Robert Ludlum's™

# THE JANUS REPRISAL

A Covert-One Novel



Series created by  
Robert Ludlum

Written by Jamie Freveletti



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# 1

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JON SMITH opened his eyes to see a shadowy figure standing at the foot of his hotel room bed pointing a gun at him. The red pinpoint dot of the weapon's laser sight skittered up the comforter cover toward his chest, making a wild pattern of loops on the way, as if the shooter were drunk and unable to aim his weapon. Smith rolled to the right, propelling himself off the mattress and onto the floor, hitting the carpet with a thudding sound and landing face down, using his hands to break the fall. A silenced bullet tore into the pillow.

Smith reached up to the nightstand to get his gun but snatched his hand back when the laser pinpoint sight began its chaotic dance over the area near his knuckles. The killer fired again, the bullet narrowly missing Smith's fingers and piercing the alarm clock. It exploded into pieces, and bits of the drywall behind it sprayed into the air.

Smith scrambled farther to the right, and the assassin stayed with him, firing over and over, but continuing to aim in a haphazard, erratic fashion. The bullets cracked into the wall, and he took cover by sliding into the small space between an armoire and a collapsible metal stand that held his suitcase. This position had the advantage of getting him out of the shooter's direct line of sight, but put him farther from his gun and still farther from the hotel room door. The attacker dropped behind the bed, using it for cover, as if he thought Smith had access to another weapon.

Smith crouched in the dark with his back pressed against the wall

while he tried to pull together his jangled nerves and think about what to do next. He was in a suburb of The Hague attending a World Health Organization meeting on infectious diseases in Third World countries, an area of expertise of the United States Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases where Smith, an MD, worked. He was due to deliver a speech the next day on the hazards of cholera in disaster areas. The routine meeting had just turned deadly, and he didn't know why.

Smith's suitcase lay open, containing his still neatly folded clothes; below it were his shoes. He inhaled, grabbed a shoe, and threw it across the room, aiming in the general direction of a lamp that he remembered sat on the desk. He heard the shoe land and then the crash of the lamp falling over and glass breaking. The pinpoint laser sight danced on the desktop. The assassin had taken the bait.

Smith didn't hesitate. He catapulted himself toward the door, moving as fast as he could, fear and adrenaline making the blood pound in his ears. The killer fired again, but Smith was now a moving target and difficult to hit. More bits of drywall exploded to Smith's right. He reached the door, twisted it open, and stumbled into the hallway, blinking in the sudden glare from the overhead lights. He turned, preparing to run to the elevator bank.

Two men carrying assault rifles, their faces covered with hoods, stood about thirty feet away at the end of the hall, facing one of the doors. One turned his head to glance at Smith, but kept his weapon aimed at the room. He returned his focus to the door, muttered something, and both men shot into the panel. The corridor rang with the staccato reports of the automatic fire. The first man kicked open the door, and both disappeared from Smith's sight as they plunged through the shattered entrance.

Smith's mind raced while he tried to understand just what was happening. The shooter in his room obviously valued silence, with his dampened weapon and what must have been a careful entrance into Smith's chamber, but the two in the hall kicked in doors and seemed unconcerned about revealing their positions.

Smith spun left but stopped when he saw the emergency exit door at the far end begin to open. It swung outward, and Smith found himself staring into the eye holes of yet another masked attacker. His own bedroom door remained ajar and he slammed back through it, dropping at once into a crouch. He crabbed to the left, hitting his temple on the corner of the desk and stepping on some broken glass from the fallen lamp. He clenched his teeth as he felt the shard bite deep, followed by a flow of warm blood.

No sound came from the shooter in the room.

The hallway erupted once again in gunfire punctuated by the screams of the other hotel guests. Smith heard an explosion and the floor shook. When the noise died down, he strained to focus his senses in the shooter's direction. No sound. He hovered in the darkness and did his best to slow his breathing, a difficult task because he was panting with a mixture of adrenaline and stress.

His cell phone lit up and began to ring. Smith froze. The phone sat on the nightstand and its display illuminated the area with a yellow color. In the weak glow he saw the shooter slumped at the foot of the bed. The phone's ring increased, getting louder each time. Smith made his way around the desk, past the motionless person and over to the nightstand. He grabbed his gun, pointed it in the direction of the bed, and flicked on the bedside lamp.

The killer remained still. Smith glanced at the phone's screen. The display read "Anacostia Yacht Club" followed by a number that Smith knew was a decoy. His other employer, Fred Klein, head of Covert-One, an organization of clandestine experts in various fields dedicated to fighting terrorism, was calling. Klein didn't call often and never without a grave reason. Another explosion rocked the hotel, punctuated with screams and the sound of sirens from emergency vehicles, still in the distance, but getting louder.

Smith picked up the phone and hit the answer key, keeping his weapon pointed at the motionless shooter.

"It's Smith. What's happening?"

“Get out of the hotel. The CIA just reported that it’s targeted for an attack,” Klein said. More automatic fire came from the hallway, the noise louder and closer than before and coming from both sides. The attackers were systematically entering each room. “Is that gunfire I hear?”

Smith edged around the bed past the fallen man and moved to the door. He threw the deadbolt and turned the locking bar inward before returning to the body. This attacker wore no mask, and Smith stared into the face of a man perhaps twenty-five years old, with dark hair and the broad, flat, slightly Asian features of someone of Mongolian descent. Smith crouched down and pressed his fingers on the carotid artery, checking for a pulse. There was none. He put pressure on either side of the man’s jaw, forcing it open, checking for cyanide suicide pills. Nothing. Smith could discern no reason why the man was dead.

“The CIA is a little late. They’re already here. Why are they after me?” Smith transferred his phone to his left hand while he started to search the body.

“They’re not after you personally, they’re after American and diplomatic targets. This one is just bad luck. Coincidence. The CIA’s been warning of an attack in Europe for months, but I just got the report that pinpointed the WHO conference and I knew you were there. Get the hell out of that hotel. Now.”

Klein was right. The media had been reporting that certain fringe groups were planning an attack, but Smith hadn’t thought much about it. He knew that US intelligence sources received hundreds of bits of information each day and that many led to nothing. Such reports were usually so vague as to be useless, and his business required that he travel to Europe.

“Tell me how many,” Smith said.

“They think at least thirty. Two to four on each floor.”

Smith heard more screams from the hall. A woman started wailing, the noise cut short by the report of a gun.

“They taking hostages?”

“No hostages. Body count. Get the hell out of there.”

The hotel shook from another explosion and the fire alarms went off, making a high-pitched squeal so loud that Smith winced. A sprinkler set high on the wall over his bed began spraying water. Two others came to life, one over the desk and the other near the door.

He rifled the shooter's pockets, finding a spare clip for the silenced weapon and a wad of euro bills. He reached into the next pocket and withdrew a handful of photos. There were three. The first was a picture of a woman, obviously taken while she walked on the street and without her knowledge. She was dressed in a navy suit, carried a briefcase, and her long, dark hair was pinned at her neck. She looked attractive and formidable at the same time. There was no mistaking her serious demeanor.

The second picture was a candid shot of a man Smith knew and admired: Peter Howell, an agent for Britain's MI6 who had retired some years ago.

The third picture was of Smith.



## 2

SMITH HEADED TO THE WINDOW, still talking to Klein and holding the phone, euro bills and photos in one hand, the gun in the other.

“It looks like they may be after me. Or at least someone is. There’s a dead guy in my room carrying photos of me, Peter Howell, and a woman that I can’t identify.”

“A dead man? Did you kill him?”

“I didn’t touch him. He just . . . died.” Smith stood against the wall and used the tip of the gun to slowly pull back the curtains. Emergency vehicles filled the street, their flickering lights sending eerie red flashes that bounced off the nearby buildings. The authorities remained a safe distance from the hotel, but ringed it. “Listen, I’m going to do my best to get out of here, but if I don’t, I’m going to put the photos in my pocket. Make sure one of your operatives collects my personal effects, notifies Howell, and then finds this woman and warns her.” The door to his room shivered as it was kicked from the outside.

“Get out of there! I’ll—”

Smith didn’t hear the rest. He aimed and fired into the hotel room door. The 9 mm bullet pierced the wood, and Smith heard the satisfying sound of a man’s yell. Bull’s-eye, he thought. There was a moment of silence, followed by the report of an automatic weapon firing round after round in response. Ordnance flew into the room along with bits of wood from the door, but Smith was to the right at a 45-degree angle and none

of the hits came near. The bullets peppered the headboard and the wall above it with shot.

Smith shoved the phone, bills, and photos into his pocket. He'd worn loose-fitting cotton drawstring pants and a T-shirt to bed and his feet were bare. At that moment he was glad that he'd stuck to his usual, careful habit of booking rooms only on the third floor or below. Fire-truck ladders could reach the third floor, and most hotels had overhangs at first-floor level that could break a fall if need be. Smith always thought that precautions were best when followed each and every time because you never knew when they'd become crucial. This precaution just had.

The hotel was a large, stately stone building built over one hundred years ago on a rectangular lot. The front of the hotel faced the city and the back faced the North Sea and sat directly on the beach. Smith's room was located near the end of the hall, with five rooms on one side, and ten rooms on the other. His room had a view of the city in one direction and one that was cut off by the wall that jutted out in the other. The narrow casement window swung open easily. Smith put his foot on the sill, grabbed the curtains and stepped up.

The attackers began kicking at Smith's door. He fired again, and the battering stopped. He thought the killers must be surprised that one of the hotel guests not only had a gun, but knew how to use it. Smith's military background meant he was trained in weapons and hand-to-hand combat and had learned a smattering of different martial arts moves. In his early forties, he no longer took combat duty, but that didn't mean he couldn't defend himself.

Smith was tall and slender and he had to angle his body to stand on the window's edge. He stuck his head out the window.

A six-inch decorative ledge banded the hotel at least three feet down, with a corresponding band three feet up. A quick glance to the emergency vehicles gathered in the circular front drive told Smith that he couldn't expect any help from that quarter in the time that he needed it. None had ventured closer than fifty feet from the hotel, and most

stayed back even farther. The battering began again, and this time the door cracked at the leading edge. It opened, but the safety bar caught. Smith saw a hand reach around the panel. It was time to go.

He put the gun in his waistband at the small of his back and slid one leg, then the other out the window. He lowered himself, face against the brick, until his toes hit the ledge. He held on to the remains of the window and began moving to the right, toward the wall that jutted out at a right angle in the corner. He had almost thirty feet of flat hotel. Once he reached the end of the window, he'd have only the rounded decorative piece above him to grasp.

He reached the window's edge too soon and hesitated. He was sweating despite the cool spring air, and he took a deep, shaky breath. For a moment he thought he wouldn't be able to transfer his grip from the window to the small, rounded piece of stone. Every instinct in him told him not to let go of the solid window edge, and his fingers seemed locked in position. Once he managed to release his fingers, he would be committed to making it around the corner or falling to his death.

Sweat ran down his sides and he swallowed. He heard the bedroom door splinter as the terrorists finally pulled the locking bar out of the panel. With an effort he released his hand, and moved it to the rounded stone piece. His fingertips dug into the brick and mortar.

"Move." He whispered the word out loud, and the action jarred him out of his paralysis. He began inching along to the corner where the walls met. He reached it just as a masked gunman leaned out the window, an assault weapon in his hand.

### 3

**R**ANDI RUSSELL STOOD IN THE CIA's situation room in McLean, Virginia, surrounded by eight flat-screen televisions mounted on the walls and sixteen computer terminals stationed at desks. At least ten people filled the eighteen-by-twelve-foot room. It was 9 PM Eastern Standard Time, and her entire crew had arrived when the first reports of gunfire near The Hague began. Her best officers sat at computer terminals monitoring the Internet status updates from various networking sites, while others watched the traditional media report live from the perimeter of emergency vehicles surrounding the hotel. Russell herself had been working round the clock to decipher the exact location of the attack and had only just gone home to sleep when her phone rang to tell her that what they had warned about had begun. She'd thrown on a pair of jeans, boots, and a cotton long-sleeved shirt while she raced to her car. For the entire drive to McLean she'd prayed that the terrorists would be thwarted before they took too many casualties.

Now she paced before the screens watching the Dutch police handle an action that was straining their capabilities and plotted how her group could help. The live feed from CNN showed the stately Grand Royal Hotel with fire pouring from a sixth-floor window. Russell could hear gunfire and explosions through the microphones. The CNN correspondent kept pointing out how often shots were heard in a voice pitched high with adrenaline.

“The hotel guests are updating. There appears to be a shooter on every floor.” Jana Wendel, a new hire fresh out of Yale, was monitoring a networking site that provided short updates in real time. The site had crashed twice since the beginning of the attack, but each time had been brought back online only to show a continuous stream of heartbreaking sentences. “My husband’s been shot, he’s bleeding to death, please send help to room 602” was the latest. Wendel set her jaw, and Russell thought she would soon be crying. The man sitting next to her, Nicholas Jordan, another new hire, was in charge of monitoring a second, European version of the site, and he, too, looked ready to weep. Despite the obvious emotion they were feeling, they stayed in position, grimly doing their jobs.

“Where’s Andreas Beckmann?” Russell said to the room in general.

“On his way,” another officer replied.

“Get him in position. As close as possible to the hotel.” Beckmann was a CIA sharpshooter, and one of the few stationed in the Netherlands at the moment.

Russell was temporarily stationed in McLean under a new program instituted by the director of national intelligence. The DNI was an entirely new entity signed into law after the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. The DNI reported directly to the president and since 2005 had been giving him his daily briefing. The DNI was mainly concerned with correcting perceived intelligence failures of the 9/11 attacks, and the latest program was designed to increase communication between officers in the field and McLean. Russell had proven her competence in the field time and time again, and her last mission had helped destroy a growing problem in Africa, after which the CIA had decided that she was best stationed away from that continent until memories faded. She’d been hauled home to act in a consulting capacity within headquarters and to manage a small cadre of agents spread across Europe. Despite the fact that the job was managerial in nature, she was surprised to find that she enjoyed the broad overview that the role gave her, as well as the power to implement real changes in pro-

toocol throughout Europe. Occasionally she chafed at the inactivity of a desk job, even a temporary one, but as an operative she knew just how vital it was to have a command center that could support rather than hinder.

The CNN cameras focused a lens on the third floor, where a man was standing in an open window. After a moment he emerged from the pane, holding on to the building's side. The CNN correspondent noted the man's actions.

"There appears to be a hotel guest desperate to leave the nightmare that is the Grand Royal," the CNN correspondent said. Russell felt her irritation rise. The situation was dire enough without dramatic narration from the media.

The supervisor for her assigned area, the director of European Operations, stepped up next to her. Dr. George Cromwell was in his early sixties and had spent his entire career in the CIA. He'd risen from the ranks during the final days of the cold war and was set to retire in two more years. He wore a rumpled shirt and khaki pants, having clearly just left the comfort of his own home.

"That guy falls and he's a dead man," Cromwell said. Russell nodded. The man clinging to the wall wore drawstring pants in a black watch pattern with a black T-shirt. His feet were bare and he moved along the slender ledge with precision, never looking down. The CNN camera telescoped, and the man's profile came into focus. Russell gasped.

"What is it?" Cromwell said.

"That's Jon Smith." Russell stepped closer to the flat screen. Smith's image filled the forty-two-inch monitor.

"You know him?" Cromwell said.

"He's army, and was engaged to my late sister, Sophia." Both Wendel and Jordan looked up from their computer screens. Wendel gave Jordan a glance, her eyebrows raised, before returning her attention to the monitor.

Russell scanned the room. "Someone get me a list of hotel guests. Didn't we have one?" An officer handed her some papers. She ran her

eyes down the first page, then the second, then the third. She pointed to a name that she showed Cromwell. "There he is."

"US Army. He's a doctor?" Cromwell said.

Russell nodded. "And a molecular biologist. Highly skilled." She waved a hand at Jordan.

"Do we have a channel to the fire department? Put me through, could you? But remember to use the cover ID." Russell's cover included a fake name and false picture on the CIA website, and her title was acting CIA director of public liaison. She'd been using it for the past month when sending out communiqués to various European agencies about current threat levels.

Russell resumed pacing while she waited for the fire department call to be connected to the wireless headset she wore. She watched Smith make his way across the wall and felt her stomach twist with tension. While her feelings about Smith were complicated, she didn't want to watch him fall to his death. She stopped pacing when she heard the chief of the fire department address her.

"This is Brandweercommandant van Joer." He spoke English with a British accent.

"Commandant, can you get a ladder to that man? Quickly?"

"I'm sorry, but I cannot. My orders are to keep my men away from the building. They have no body armor, and we're afraid that the terrorists will kill them before they even maneuver a ladder into position. We're waiting for our tactical team to contain the situation first."

"But he might fall at any moment."

"I'm sorry. But I'd like to point out that he also has a gun in his waistband. It's entirely possible that he is one of the terrorists."

"No, no, he's one of ours."

"But he has a gun..."

"Of course he has a gun! He's United States Army."

"What's he doing at a WHO conference with a gun?"

Russell hesitated. She knew that Smith's activity as a Covert-One operative often placed him wherever a crisis was happening, but in this

instance his presence at the hotel could have been purely coincidence. His real job also placed him at the scene of disasters and near disasters, and it was entirely possible that he was there in that capacity as well.

“He’s an infectious disease specialist. I imagine he was invited by WHO to attend.”

“I’m very, very sorry, but I can’t risk my men. Again, I’m sorry.”

“Ms. Russell, Beckmann’s in position. I’m patching him through,” Wendel said, and she tapped on her keyboard.

Russell watched the screen. Smith was almost to the corner when she saw a masked man’s face appear at the window to his left. The terrorist maneuvered an assault weapon out and trained it on Smith.

“Beckmann, fire,” Russell said.