

At his core, Jonathan Kincade was still a soldier. He had enlisted at a relatively young age and had never looked back. He recalled how, as a new recruit, notions of right and wrong had seemed so clear to him. And how, like many others, he had been so quick to throw around slogans about democracy and freedom, all the while lacking the wisdom to appreciate their true meaning.

However, years of traveling around the world, experiencing different cultures, and fighting in various conflicts had chipped away at his naiveté. He had in no way become a cynic. But he had learned to see the world for what it truly was: *a work in progress*. A portrait painted in various shades of gray, in which it was sometimes hard to discern where *right* ended and where *wrong* began.

He still believed in the values instilled in him as a young man. But too often he had seen people in power use those beliefs and ideals to further their personal agendas. They would cloak themselves in the mantle of patriotism in order to manipulate the masses, all the while pursuing their own selfish goals.