

Reviews for Who Dares Wins

This book is terrific! I couldn't put it down and read it until midnight! I can't wait for the sequel. *Robyn*

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your book—brilliant! It clips along nicely, and I loved the humour and style. It was very original and unique in that it switches genres. I look forward to reading the sequel. *Crimpy*

It's not often I read a book that has these elements in this order: Humour, Drama, action and authentic characters. It would make an amazing movie! *Tim*

Who Dares Wins was a great read with bits of humour thrown in. There was plenty of action and it was great hearing of all the locations from my hometown. *Lyn*

It's a racy read and would make a great movie! *Julian*

WHO DARES WINS

**WHISKEY
TANGO
FOXTROT
SQUAD
WHO DARES WINS**

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This book is dedicated to both my parents who instilled in me the love of books and learning—especially my father, who was my hero and a World War II veteran of the Italian Campaign. He taught me to never give up and the meaning of the word pedantic. To my grandfather who fought in the trenches of France during World War I and who could neither read nor write. And to all the returned servicemen and women who have served their countries. Thank you all for your service and sacrifice. Lest we forget.

CHAPTER 1

Jesse lowered his lanky 6'4" frame from the open window attempting not to step on the flower beds below that were exposed by the summer evening moonlight.

He gazed at the beautiful woman smiling at him from inside, her long blonde hair cascading over her shoulders as she leaned forward and covering her breasts. He smiled back. He was about to speak when he heard a rustling noise from behind.

"Mr. Hunter!"

Turning his head, he could make out the figure of a woman in the twilight with her arms folded. His frown quickly turned to a smile.

"Well, if it isn't the lovely Maxine. How are you this evening?"

He placed his feet carefully between succulents and flowers and turned to face the manager of the Peninsular Estate Retirement Village, where he lived.

"This is the second time this week, Mr. Hunter. Why can't you exit a building by the door, like a normal person does?"

"Now there lays the problem—I'm afraid I don't do normal very well, Maxi."

"It's Maxine; and so it would appear Mr. Hunter."

She always called him Mr. Hunter. Jesse wasn't sure if it was due to her respect of his 74 years of age and full head of grey hair, or because she liked him. She was 10 years younger, and a very attractive widow. He chose like.

He smiled and said, "Excuse me for one moment please." Jesse turned to the other woman of interest who was somewhat embarrassed standing in her dressing gown and spoke to her in French: *"Je me Suis desole tellement amuse ce soir Jacqueline. J'apprecie vraiment votre compagnie."*

"Merci pour une merveilleuse soitee. Tu m'as tellement appris!"

“C’était mon plaisir absolu J’attends avec impatience notre mprochaine rencontre, Jacqueline.”

“Bonne nuit, Monsieur Hunter.”

“Bonne nuit, belle demoiselle.”

Translated: “I had so much fun tonight, Jacqueline. I really enjoy your company.”

“Thank you for a wonderful evening Mr. Hunter, you have taught me so much!”

“It was my absolute pleasure. I look forward to our next encounter, Jacqueline!”

“Good night, Mr Hunter.”

“Good night, beautiful lady.” Jesse winked at Jacqui. She giggled, closed her window and dared one last peek through her curtains at her late-night visitor.

Jesse started towards Maxine, making his way carefully around the flowers and shrubs.

“Mr. Hunter!”

Jesse stopped midstride above a succulent and looked at Maxine. “Yup?”

“Meet me in my office tomorrow, 10am sharp.”

“Oh,” he said, somewhat surprised. “We have a date then?”

“Not quite. I’ll show you how to use a door properly, in one easy lesson.”

“Oh Maxine, you’re such a tease sometimes!”

She did her best to suppress a smile, turned quickly and walked back along the small road towards her onsite studio.

Jesse thought he could hear her giggle. He let out a sigh; then accidentally trod on the succulent his foot was hovering above.

“Bonne nuit, Monsieur Hunter!”

Monsieur Hunter turned and raised an eyebrow.

After watching Maxine disappear into the night, Jesse strode his way along the pathway where small solar lights on the roadside curb lit the

way leading between the village units until he got to the one he'd recently rented. He'd previously been living on his 30-foot sloop for five years and now had it moored at the city's marina.

As he walked along the winding cobblestone path leading to his front door a gravelly voice called from the dark. "So, caught again young fella?"

It was his neighbour, Leo Bakkum, an immigrant Dutchman who had moved to New Zealand with his parents' when younger. He was sitting on his wooden bench seat which was set between carefully manicured rose bushes. Leo liked roses, but not the little pricks on them so much and was sporting several plasters on his arms after a morning of pruning.

He was just visible, but Jesse could still make out Leo was naked again.

He looked down. "Didn't realise it was that cold a night, Grumpy."

"You want a bash young fella?" Grumpy raised his fists into the air.

"In your dreams old man!"

"Did the lovely Max catch you again? I could hear voices coming from the workers' night-stay unit—Jacqui again?"

"Mmm. Yup and yup," replied Jesse. He put his hand into his shirt pocket and pulled out a packet of small flavoured French cigars and offered one to his friend.

"Don't mind if I do, merci. Cherise?"

"Oui."

"You know these things will probably kill ya, don't you?" stated Grumpy, as he took the small, filtered cigar from his friend's outstretched hand and put it under his nose, smelling its sweet fragrance. In return, he handed Jesse a bottle of home-made Whiskey he distilled in his garage as a hobby. He also supplied his tasty brew to his neighbours for a small donation, adding extra pocket money to supplement his pension.

"Thank you, don't mind if I do, sir. But I think lead poisoning will get me first. You know this stuff will probably mess your liver up and slowly kill you, don't you Grump?"

"It's for medicinal purposes."

They both inhaled from their small brown cigars and blew smoke towards the stars and swapped stories, along with the Whiskey bottle.

“So, how was Jacqui?” inquired Grumpy.

“Wonderful, she’s such a lovely young lady,” said Jesse, matter-of-factly.

“Cradle snatcher!”

Jesse just smiled.

Grumpy extinguished what was left of his cigar in an old seashell he used as an ashtray. He turned and opened a small leather pouch sitting on the seat beside him and searched around in the dark, eventually pulling out a long hand-rolled cigarette. “Birthday present from my grandson, Levi. Care to indulge?”

“It would be rude not to—for medicinal purposes of course,” smiled Jesse.

Grumpy took the roll-your-own from his mouth after wetting it and lit it with his Zippo. He inhaled deeply and passed his grandson’s gift to Jesse.

Jesse said, “You know this stuff will probably mess with your head, don’t you, my naked friend?” He slowly blew thick smoke circles into the warm summer night.

“That’s the plan!” Grumpy looked at his friend and said, “You know, Maxine called me pretty today?” attempting to make his friend jealous.

“Really! She said you were pretty? Like Leo, you’re pretty?”

“Yeah, nah, well,” started Grumpy, “her entire sentence actually went; ‘Mr. Bakkum, you’ve been pretty annoying today’. But I only like to focus on the positive.”

Jesse grinned at his friend’s attempt at a joke. They laughed. They were still laughing 10 minutes later.

“So, what adventures are planned for us here tomorrow?” asked Grumpy.

“Tommy and Lucy are here in the afternoon; they’re always good value.”

“Great, that’ll be fun for sure. I love Lucy—she’s such a hottie!” Grumpy smiled.

“That she is my friend—I love the blonde ones.”

“So I’ve noticed! So, how about a midnight snack; I have some special brownie?” Grumpy twisted his long white goatee beard with his fingers and raised an eyebrow several times.

“No, I’m good thanks. I’m not hungry, yet. And I have an appointment with the lovely Maxine in the morning, after I see Doc.” He looked down at his older, naked friend. “And I recant my previous remark. That’s quite impressive!”

“Thanks bud—I was just happy to see you.” He winked.

As Jesse walked away, Grumpy called out in his gravelly voice. “Thanks for being my friend, Cappy!”

“My pleasure, sir. Thanks for being mine!”

CHAPTER 2

Jesse unlocked his front door and made his way carefully into his small, tidy kitchen. He decided he was a little hungry after all and grabbed a pizza slice from his fridge. He finished eating, had a glass of water and walked to the bathroom to do what needed to be done. Once finished, he undressed and carefully placed his folded clothes over a wooden bedside chair. He slipped into his neatly made single bed commando style and pulled the cool cotton sheets against his warm skin and closed his eyes.

Sleep never came easy for Jesse, with his overactive mind skitting from one thing to another in graphic detail.

He thought of his earlier encounter with Jacqui and how excited she was and his chat with Grumpy, laughing as he recalled how he looked, sitting on the wooden seat, naked.

A scene which played out regularly was of the men in his platoon being blown up by enemy artillery shells several decades earlier while on a rescue mission in Vietnam. The screams of those left living, louder than the ringing in his ears from the explosions. Why was he still alive? They were good men! His memory of a cave in Afghanistan and the screams of men as their throats were cut ear to ear. A helicopter picking him up from a small beach while under fire. The feeling of helplessness. A desert with enormous sand dunes and the sound of bullets whizzing past his head.

Maxine calling his name earlier as she caught him hopping out from Jacqui's window, again. Her giggle. A laugh with Grumpy, the taste of his Whiskey and the lingering smell of the cherry flavoured cigar in his neatly clipped moustache.

The face of a beautiful tall woman smiling as she held his hand dancing to their favourite tango song. Riding his motorcycle along a stony trail in the Andes Mountains with the woman holding on tightly behind him, laughing and waving at the colourfully dressed locals as they passed.

Sailing his sloop on clear blue water with waves lashing against the bow as dolphins jumped playfully in the surge.

The woman, now older, crying and holding his hand. A young girl lying still on a hospital bed. A church chapel. Faces he knew and some he didn't. Sadness mixed with relief.

A man in his late 30s holding a woman's hand as they walked through breaking waves on a golden beach. A young girl running ahead of them and jumping in and out of the shallow water laughing as the big splashes wet her. She stops and looks up. A huge smile appears on her face as she sees Jesse standing on dry sand a short distance away. She runs to him and before she reaches him, launches herself and lands safely in his strong outstretched arms.

"Who are you?" she asks, looking straight into his pale blue eyes.

"I am granddad," he answers. "Who are you?"

"I am granddaughter. What is your name?"

"My name is Jesse. What is your name?"

"My name is Novarda."

"That is a very pretty name. Well, it's a pleasure to meet you Granddaughter Novarda."

"And it's a pleasure to meet you." She leans forward and whispers in his ear. "I love you Granddad Jesse, very much!" She leans in closer and kisses him sweetly on his cheek.

A tear rolled down Jesse's smiling face as he drifted into sleep. This was his most favourite memory.

CHAPTER 3

Around the same time Jesse was falling asleep, Omar Ozturk sat at a table covered with loose papers with drawings and mathematical equations on them. He didn't understand any of it. He pulled at his long brown beard with his callused hand feeling exasperated. He felt like breaking something, or someone. Things were taking too long, and they were behind schedule.

"Zain!" he called loudly, staring at his computer screen. "Where are you?"

From another room he heard a woman scream and a man's raised voice. A slap. A thud. Quiet. A door creaked opened on rusty hinges and slammed shut. Heavy metal bolts were locked.

Zain appeared from a darkened hallway. He was solid and well-built after years of working out at the gym. He rubbed his stubbly face.

"I want to kill her! I'll make it quick. No, I'll take my time with her," he sneered. "She's a total ..."

"Not yet! She still has her use." Omar barked, while looking at the computer screen. "Bring me the old man!"

Zain grumbled and wandered off to another room. He thought that maybe one day he would kill Omar—very slowly!

He walked through a room full of Persian carpets and rugs of various sizes; some hanging from racks, some rolled neatly and placed on wooden shelving and others scattered on the floor. He smiled at the thought of killing Omar while glancing at the carpets and sighed. He wished he was somewhere else and with someone else other than Omar—his days were certainly numbered. Zain could see himself with a pretty girl on a nice beach somewhere who didn't scream or hit him.

He stopped at a heavily bolted wooden door, slid the locks back and opened it. Inside the humid room an older man lay on a small metal