

# FATHER OF ONE by Jani Anttola

## EXCERPT

This is it.

He would shoot some of them, then kill himself with the last one.

Maka counted his rounds. One in the chamber, four in the magazine. That was enough. And he had the grenade. He clipped off a cartridge and put it in his pocket. How many could he get? One? Two? More? He decided on three. A good number. He'd kill two on the road, then at least one more with the grenade when they stormed the house.

Three lives for his. It sounded like some sort of a deal.

He placed the muzzle of the automatic rifle into the rugged hole and took aim at the nearest soldier. He was about thirty metres away. Maka would drop him with a single slug. But when he looked at the man through the sights, over the blued metal of the gun, he felt bitter about dying this way. He knew the man outside was there to kill him and his kin, but what if he, too, was somebody's father? He was probably in his forties and distantly resembled a clerk who had worked in the post office in Srebrenica. This Chetnik also wore a šajkača, with its V-shaped top making his head look like a pig's hoof. He had a messy stubble and a moustache that seemed to hang from his long, thin nose, as he stood under the sun with weary eyes.

So, you're here to kill me?

It's you who's going to die now. But I don't do this because I like it.

If there were a way to leave this situation without killing anybody, let alone himself, Maka would do so. Just it was too late. It was far too much, and nothing could get it undone. He positioned the sights in the middle of the man's chest and calmed his breathing down. He took the slack out of the trigger, until he felt the tiny resistance of the firing mechanism in his fingertip.