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This novel is written exclusively for Right Truth Blog ([www.righttruth.typepad.com](http://www.righttruth.typepad.com)) and its readers.

In loving memory of my precious  
Sara (7/25/1951 to 12/13/2003) who always  
encouraged me to write from the heart and was  
at once both my greatest critic and my most  
loyal fan.

**In love with you always!**

*And...*

To the greatest dad anyone like me could ever  
have hoped for: Joseph Stanley Godlewski  
(11/29/1918 to 04/14/2008).

**You gave me life. Thank you!**

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## Chapter Fifty

February, 20xx

*Ense et aratro*

Near Tuscany, Italy

Seth Carmassi downed another tough swig of the whiskey from the glass that he swirled around in his right hand. It had been ten minutes since he received the priority cable from Supervisor LeDuc and its implications still sat heavily upon his conscience. He was growing tired of U.S. political whims and the liquor tingling at his senses merely aggravated the situation.

“I can’t believe that Meredith is ordering us home...” His words faded quickly within the tiny office and he was unsure as to whether anyone else had heard them.

Jonas Prinkler had been busily packing files within the corner, as was his custom to follow orders blindly, especially those emanating from the signatory to his paycheck. “Is that all that she said? That we are to close shop and return to Washington?”

“No.” belched Seth, devouring the remainder of the whiskey before slamming the glass down hard upon the steel desk with angst. “She wants us to turn Haytham and Mahmoud over to the FBI guys for trial. You know what *that* means, right? Circus trial. Acquittal on technicalities and you and...well, *I* get caricaturized as some brutal thug harming poor innocent little Muslims.”

Jonas nodded silently, preferring to distract himself with the matter at hand.

“I’ve spent most of my life working for the CIA, Defense, and a host of other agencies that do not even possess names...” Seth continued, forcing himself backwards into the creaky gray chair whose green plastic cushions had long since seen their better days. “...and it always turns out that as soon as we get close to success, the clowns in Washington decide that we are on the wrong side or something.

“You know why they’re doing this, don’t ya? The Islamists already have nukes on American soil and they’ve been blackmailing the government for over a decade.”

Jonas paused briefly but refrained from being drawn into what he perceived as merely an alcohol induced conspiracy theory.

Seth shook his right index finger didactically at his friend as he leaned forward and retrieved the whiskey bottle out from its hiding place in the lower left drawer of the desk. “Ah, yes. I forgot. You’re a pencil pusher.

“Don’t count me as an idiot, my friend. I don’t believe in Bigfoot, UFOs, or Global Warming. The Russians lost three suitcase nukes back in 1993 when the staff over in Arzamas revolted over their not having been paid for two months. In 1993 I could have walked an elephant across the border and our guys would not have even complained about the droppings.”

Jonas found that he just had to make a counterstatement. “I’m sure that if that were true, our people would have found the devices.”

“Bull roar!” snapped Seth. He reached underneath his desk and yanked out his trusty Samsonite briefcase. “Could *you* find this if I hid it somewhere in the United States? Could our radiation detection devices locate it if it was buried within some shielding device waiting to be extracted just moments before it was to be used?”

Shoving a cardboard box out of his way, Jonas grew infuriated that Seth was implying that the entire national security of the United States rested upon himself. “Listen, Seth. I’m an analyst; I analyze. I’m sure there’s far more qualified people protecting the United States than myself.”

Seth rolled first his eyes, then his head and he focused what was left of his vision upon the ceiling. “Poor, poor pitiful Jonas. Anyone who has a job in national security is responsible for safeguarding our country regardless of who they are or whomever they work for. I don’t care if the President himself ordered you to do something – if it was contrary to our national defense then you would have a moral obligation to defeat his intentions. He works for the taxpayers just like you and I do.”

Jonas proceeded to squeeze his bulk into a second chair, rolling it slowly across the chipped tile floor closer to his friend. “So what about your theory of nuclear devices being secreted to America?”

“Theory?” lambasted Seth. “Three nuclear weapons were smuggled ashore near New Orleans from a mother ship by a shrimp trawler operating in the Gulf of Mexico while everyone else was celebrating Mardi Gras. I’m the one who interrogated the bastard – I mean the skipper of the boat, that is.”

Intrigued by the revelation, Jonas inched closer to his companion. “So what happened? Where are the nukes now?”

“The same damn thing that’s happening to us now. The higher-ups decided that the threat would disrupt domestic tranquility and so they quietly decided to appease the terrorists. Ever wonder why Washington spends so damn much money? Ever wonder why that money is never, *ever* accounted for?”

“Still,” Jonas slid back a ways. “I cannot believe that our own Government would not make every effort to locate these devices.”

“Oh, yeah? Suppose that it was me that placed those damn things in the United States. All that I would have to do would be to pick up the phone to those liberal bastards over at CNN and say ‘Hey, guys. I’m blankety-blank and within five minutes three of your largest cities are going to disappear. Do you have *any* idea on how much panic that would create? The people who actually brought those things into America aren’t conspiracy theorists; they’re hardcore Islamists who have their nasty fingerprints all over the planet. Pretty hard to dismiss their claims if made public...”

Jonas scratched his jaw briefly, then leaned forward and quickly snatched the whiskey bottle away from Carmassi and took a deep swallow. “So why are we over *here* instead of fighting the terrorists at home?”

Seth waited patiently before being able to retrieve his liquor and likewise forewent the use of a glass. “Because, my friend, Megadeath wants to keep me from being able to spill the beans to the rest of the country. That’s the way that our government works – do just enough to look as though they’re doing something without actually doing *anything*. Ever wonder why some politicians remain in office for thirty or forty years? People who actually work for a living are usually begging for retirement after about twenty or twenty-five years. *Not* the crowd in Washington. Their pensions are built upon bribes and cheating the rest of us out of our national inheritance.”

“I’m still a bit confused,” sighed Jonas, slowly propelling his chair back into the corner near his original chore. “Why are we chasing the Sorcerer if two or three of our cities are under such danger?”

“Two reasons, actually.” Seth straightened his posture. “First, if you cannot defeat the blackmail then you try to dismantle the blackmailers. Secondly, the Sorcerer isn’t really part of the ‘nukes in America’ scenario though he desperately wants to partake of the potentialities. So, to keep Americans

thinking that we are protecting their butts we go after whomever is conveniently available to go after. Unfortunately, you and I are making headway here. We've broken Mahmoud and we're on the verge of breaking Haytham. We're getting results."

Jonas continued to feel confused and massaged the bridge of his nose for comfort. "So our orders are to return to Washington. What else can we do?"

The younger American remained silent for a few disturbingly long moments before he calmly stood up and arched his back to release some built-up tension. "You fly back to Washington. I'm quitting. We are *not* sending our two terrorists here back to the United States to be tried in some damn liberal court. I want to stop these Islamist bastards who are trying to kill our friends and neighbors.

"I'll cable my resignation to Meredith. That should give me some time to sneak off. I won't mention that they won't be accompanying you to Washington and, if she asks – and she *will*—you had no frickin' idea on what I was planning on doing. I'll know how to contact you so that we can still work together on this matter."