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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!**

[www.rjgodlewski.com](http://www.rjgodlewski.com)

## Chapter Fifty-Four

March, 20xx  
*Ense et aratro*  
Near Tuscany, Italy

“Line ‘em up and shoot all down like dogs!”

“Who?” quizzed Jonas.

“Politicians.” snorted Seth, hoisting his coyote tan tactical pack onto his hunched back. “The only good one is a *dead* one.”

“You can’t be serious.” Jonas never could tell when his highly opinionated friend was speaking his mind truthfully or not.

“Try me.” Seth pulled on his brilliant red Detroit Red Wings baseball cap, giving him more of a casual appearance considering all that they went through during the past several weeks. His smirk was intended to highlight his disgust on the subject. “I’m tired of bureaucracies. I’m tired of ass-kissing politicians. And I’m tired of a population that forgets the morning news by the time the evening reality shows are turned on.”

Jonas stood up uneasily, never quite figuring out the seriousness of his friend’s refusal to capitulate to Washington’s orders. “I still don’t know about your refuting of Washington. Perhaps it’s still best that you go back and fight for your beliefs from within.”

“I’m tired of fighting.” Seth’s intentional bump of Jonas with his pack as he left towards the office door was intended to show his resolve. “It’s high time that I go back to winning.”

“That I could understand, but don’t forget that you’re leaving me alone to face Meredith’s wrath. I’ll be the one that she’ll take her frustrations out on.”

“Play dumb. Shouldn’t be too hard.”

“Thanks.”

“That’s *not* what I meant. Meredith understands that you’re basically an office jockey. She’ll know that I’m the one who’d go off half cocked. In fact, I’ll bet that when she blows her top, she’ll cease even listening to your alibi.”

“And then? What’s *our* plan?”

“First, ol’ Mahmoud is dead meat. We freaked his mind out so much that he’s practically useless for our purposes save for his inherent desire to seek out his own kind. I’ll turn him loose and see if I can track him or, more probably, keep tabs on who he tries to contact. Mahmoud is not the Big Fish; he doesn’t have the balls to be more than your typical Islamist bully.”

“Neither does the kid.”

Seth nodded sympathetically. “Yeah. Usually the kids are the most vicious of them all. Not our Haytham. He got sucked up into this thing for reasons that aren’t fully clear to me. Might just be the same “Allah Good, America Bad” bullshit that all Muslims try to nail upon us.

“At any rate, I don’t care. Haytham will head back towards his own people too but I’m willing to bet that I’ll be able to get him to open up with some damn good Intel that we haven’t been able to retrieve thus far. I just think that after what he’s been through, the kid has had enough and just wants to get back into med school.”

“Perhaps.” Jonas took the lead, moving ahead of his companion into the great stone hallway that opened up just beyond the small office. The size of the corridor reminded him that he was but a stooge within a much grander play. “If I had my way, I think that I would go back and raise chickens for a living.”

“Beats working with ‘em.” Seth smiled. “At least the birds try to run away even after you whack their head off. Not so with our illustrious leaders. If they’re not smiling with some baby they’re off humping some damn foreign dignitary somewhere. The entire planet knows everyone is lying, yet they still will

stand in front of the cameras and argue over who's better liked by everyone else.

"That's the *only* thing that I like about the Islamists. They don't make any effort to hide their hatred of us. They'll get the world so resentful over ordinary Muslims that everyone just knows it's only a matter of time before the whole culture disintegrates and *yet* they manage to get the entire Muslim world to thank them for the noose. Now *that's* gall."

Jonas' thoughts retreated into his mind to the point that he never noticed the occasional collision of his bulk with the stone wall. As always, he found himself torn between the desire to safeguard his country and the unrelenting feeling that no matter how hard his effort was, people much higher up in the political food chain would sabotage the progress in the name of personal gain.

Noticing his friend's navigating the hallway by way of barrier interruption, Seth paused in his walk to aid his friend's reflection. "Listen, Jonas. Long gone is the time where our leaders were idealistic types who envisioned a strong and competitive nation. I don't even think that we've had that in the last hundred odd years.

"Today, everything is done for personal gain and profit. They have their offshore accounts, their trust funds, and what have you. America could cease to exist tomorrow and they'll still be able to screw their interns and bribe their wives with positions of power.

"I'm different. Always have been. I feel that America grew into the economic and military powerhouse that it is today because A. we have our Constitution which reigns supreme and B. *this* Constitution empowers the individual above the State.

"Somewhere following the mid-nineteenth century we lost our way. We allowed government to grow like a fungus upon our liberties and our responsibilities. Maybe I'm just old-fashioned; you can blame my parents for that. Regardless, I look upon a nation where anything goes and kids are raised from scratch to possess no direction whatsoever. It's a freak; a chance distraction of human nature. It won't last. *Cannot* last.

“I just want to keep my nation around just a bit longer until the ‘Nintendo Generation’ and whatever screw-up’s came after them realize that technology is a tool and not a crutch.

“Only when they realize that feeling good today is simply not sufficient for a truly horrible future will they wise up and take back our government from the assholes who’ve sacrificed everything our forebears fought and died for.”

Jonas calmly and reverently wiped his brow. “You know, Seth? That’s the most you’ve ever said in one breath that I could almost agree wholeheartedly with. I just don’t understand how you expect to survive by challenging these same creeps in office.”

Seth took a step towards the main door of the *Ense et aratro* complex before turning around and retreating to his friend whom he offered a firm hand upon the shoulder. “Psychological warfare, my friend. I’m one nasty sonofabitch and there isn’t a politician on the planet that cares to go toe-to-toe with someone prepared to call them out in public.”

He smiled broadly towards Jonas before heading back towards the massive wooden doors in the distance. “I’ve been prepared for this for decades. I’ll be a boil on their ass for centuries after I’m gone. Just wait, you’ll see.”

*I don’t expect to be around that long, my friend.* Jonas waved haphazardly as he watched the younger American disappear into the brilliant Italian sunshine. “May our paths cross again soon, my friend...”