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This novel is written exclusively for Right Truth Blog (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

Chapter Nine

June, 20xx
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Jonas Prinkler had been eying the newcomer pacing the corridor outside his office with a mixture of curiosity and suspicion. After several minutes, he decided to break the ice. “Lost?”

The tall stranger sighed. “I’ve been lost ever since I got involved with this sorry-assed organization.”

Jonas smiled over the bluntness of the newcomer. “Yeah, I can relate. I’ve just been assigned to this office and I haven’t a clue as to why.”

“That makes two of us.” Drawing closer towards the office door, the newcomer’s face appeared a little less confused. “Somewhere in my past one of my forefathers must’ve spit in the face of the village witch.”

Jonas smiled. “Nah, my wife would’ve mentioned it.”

Both men laughed.

“My name is Jonas Prinkler.”

The other man accepted the handshake and returned it with a bit more force. “Seth Carmassi. Glad to meet you.”

“So how did you end up down here in this dungeon?” asked Jonas as he guided Carmassi into what existed of his office.

“Damn, if I know. I just think that this place is getting a bit too politically-correct for someone like me.”

Jonas nodded, more so for he suspected that the other man was less of an analyst than someone whose function wasn’t discussed within polite company.

“I’d been in operations.” continued Carmassi. “Doing a bang-up job getting rid of the thugs hell-bent on destroying our way of life and all of a sudden – *poof!*—I’m down here trying to make sense of it all. I just can’t figure it out.”

Jonas shrugged with a low grumble. “I’m still trying to figure out the impotency commercial where the guys are all together singing in Nashville at one-thirty in the morning. I mean if the drug was so damn good; why aren’t they at home in bed with their wives at one-thirty in the morning instead of at some stupid recording studio?”

Carmassi laughed; he was beginning to like his new friend. “You’ve got me there! No doubt the television commercial was produced by someone upstairs in Public Affairs!”

Now Jonas laughed. “And probably funded by the Saudis or someone...”

Carmassi held up his hand abruptly as if to cut off Jonas’ train of thought. “Funny you should mention the Saudis. I was just reading a file on one of their charities petitioning the government for the donation of the ex-sub tender Samuel Maxwell McCaide.”

Jonas scratched the bridge of his wide nose. “Oh? I only mentioned them because *I* was just reading a file on their massive investments in this country of recent.”

“I wonder...” Carmassi took a brief glance down the hallway towards his own office and discovered that, though quite far from one another, neither had any intervening compartments. That was, Carmassi and Jonas were neighbors of a sort and represented the entire ‘function’ of the floor. “I wonder if there’s some method to their madness.”

Jonas nodded even though he had no clue as to the line of Carmassi’s reasoning. “You suspect that there might be some connection between the funding of the ship and their other investments? Probably just a coincidence.”

“Eh, who knows?” grumbled Carmassi. “I’m just used to doing things on my own and now I’m supposed to ‘organize a new effort to evaluate ‘future’ threats against the United States

and its allies through data and information cataloged previously' according to this here paper."

Jonas accepted the highly wrinkled document, read its words, then handed it back to Carmassi without saying a word.

"Double-speak is what I call it," lambasted Carmassi. "They send me down to that ridiculous office of mine without anything to work with and I'm supposed to fight terrorism, how?"

"Perhaps this could work to your advantage?" offered Jonas politely. "In all of the years that I've been working in this building, the one thing that I *do know* is that if you don't take the initiative then they'll leave you rotting around until your retirement."

"Yeah." Carmassi swiped the remnants of a dead cockroach with his toes. "I'm just used to being in the field where you have to think on your feet. Here, there's too many Suits for my comfort."

"Down here I expect to find coveralls."

"No doubt. If I know *anything* about our government and that's that they won't do anything unless it takes too long and costs too much. So, we'll probably be exiled down here for a few years until they decide what we're *really* supposed to be doing. I feel like the damn Phantom of the Opera or something."

Jonas calmly removed his eyeglasses, retrieved a handkerchief from his pocket and began to haphazardly clean the lenses. "So, lacking any further instructions as to our purpose, are we not then permitted to do as we please?"

Carmassi scrutinized the expression offered by his friend; thoughts of flirting with redheads quickly dissipating from his mind. "You intrigue me, friend. What's on your mind?"

"For starters, I don't believe that the Saudis do a dang thing without some ulterior motive." He replaced his eyeglasses so as to look more serious in his reasoning. "I know that the Saudis are building a new amusement park in New York as a 'gift' of friendship. I also know that their site plan includes a massive deepwater pier. Now, my friend, you bring up the notion that they're working on plans to restore an old Navy tender. Why?"

“Yeah, *why?*” Carmassi returned to his old habit of lip chewing whenever a problem presented itself. “Would it offend you if I said that I don’t trust those bastards one square inch?”

Jonas chuckled. “Personally? No. I don’t like *anyone* who doesn’t support my nation one hundred percent. I don’t necessarily care about their race, their religion, or their homeland. I just view mine as the best – bar none – and I take exception to anyone who tries to manipulate our policies here or abroad.”

Carmassi smiled broadly. *The fat guy has courage of a sort.* “Good; because I think that the bastards should be nuked off the earth, myself. They don’t need all of that oil – they just use it to fund our enemies – so that makes them *our* enemies and America always takes what it needs from our enemies.”

Jonas nodded softly as if he was being watched from above. *Yep. No wonder why they sent us down here to the basement.* “So you think that there’s a connection between their involvement in New York and their interest in renovating the McCaide?”

Carmassi threw up his shoulders. “Damn if I know. On the one hand, if we find a connection; a sinister one at that, then someone has to do something about it. On the other hand; if we don’t find anything, what were we supposed to be doing down here anyway?”