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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!

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Chapter Sixty-Seven

Emerging from his self-imposed hibernation of a bit more than a half a year in duration, Jonas closed the door tightly until he could hear the bolt snap into position. Bending over to replace the worn key back into the flowerpot, he paused abruptly, recognizing a faintly familiar voice.

“Nice ass, honey...”

Jonas feigned pulling weeds out of the rhododendron bush while carefully inserting the key back into the dirt before standing more erect and nonchalantly brushing the debris off his khaki trousers.

“Not interested.” he replied briskly to the buxom prostitute leaning against the stair railing.

“Aw, honey. I ain’t expensive.” she laughed.

“But *I am.*” Jonas swiped his legs one last time and retrieved the olive drab bag sitting at his feet, threw it across his shoulder and climbed the final five steps out of his personal dungeon.

The red-haired, dark skinned woman managed another sarcastic laugh out from her overly purple lips and swung her lengthy left leg slowly out of Jonas’ way in a manner that left the man wondering whether she was trying to restrict his egress from the Washington hellhole.

Jonas’ mind was far from sex now, for pure survival placed everything into context. He had to find himself in Europe and this necessitated getting out of Washington alive. Both meant that he had to alter his identity for the authorities – his employers – were still on his trail.

He knew from previous encounters with the prostitute and her minions that quite often, mysterious strangers would congregate and accost them for information. They could have been seeking information about the numerous drug pushers that

infested the area, but Jonas could never be certain. In the decayed urban jungle that was Washington, nothing could be certain except that Jonas Prinkler's life was in constant danger.

His plan called for him to fly out of Florida, far from where his departure would be expected and therefore his alternate identity would do the most good. The problem was, Washington was quite a distance from the orange groves and alligators of Florida. This meant either riding or flying down to the state and only the former offered some opportunities to avoid passenger screening and disruptive baggage checks.

Slicing the crosswalk in a diagonal manner reflective of the other unconcerned pedestrians, Jonas crossed the street quickly and confidently. His target was the large parking garage three blocks down, the gray block building resembling something of a large shoebox that a gratuitous giant dropped by the wayside as they passed on towards pursuits that were more enjoyable for the gargantuan.

On the third parking level, near the furthest elevator from street side, sat the canvas-covered vehicle of his destination. Underneath the sought-after tarp, was a 2007 Dodge Charger bearing pilfered U.S. Government plates. The marine blue, Hemi-powered vehicle also sported the police interceptor package and the car was on loan from the bureaucracy that failed to acknowledge its absence.

Its looks, combined with the federal tags, permitted Jonas to voyage out into the world without drawing undue attention from the feds – *his* people. Despite its looks, however, it was simply an appliance of the safe house that friend and colleague Seth Carmassi informed him about long before the heavier American even flew into his native country's airspace. A safe house that bore no allegiance to any organization or individual except Carmassi.

Jonas reasoned that the vehicle would permit him to spirit down to the Sunshine State where he could ditch it and hop aboard a plane into Europe using any one of the falsified passports that sat in his duffel alongside the money, the prepaid gift cards, and the suppressed Ingram M10 and its half dozen 30-round clips, each filled to capacity with Hornady .45 caliber TAP-CQ ammunition.

Although he had shed much weight and gained considerable experience, Jonas was loaded with everything but expectation. He had long since given up his life as a lost cause, choosing to accept whatever God or Man had permitted him to endure. He possessed a mission, yes, but not quite an objective. His presence was tactical – without strategic restraints. That, he would defer to his younger partner whenever they should again meet.

Arriving at the parking structure, Jonas leaned towards the left and darted past the guard's post where the skinny black kid with the headphones glued to his ears appeared not the least distracted by his professional responsibilities. What was there to guard in a graffiti-covered structure that remained half-empty during even the best of economies? Perhaps if he saved a bit, the guard reasoned as he bee bopped to the tunes, then he could afford to move on up to Third World living conditions.

None of this fazed Jonas, however, for just the previous day he had bequeathed the guard a nice, heavily packaged manila envelope stuffed with representations of various U.S. presidents that the younger man had never learned about within public school.

Jonas knew full well how to play the Washingtonian game – to use other people's money to purchase the loyalty of those being paid to protect the very lives of those he was borrowing money from. It was cyclic, if not chaotic. Whatever experience Jonas lacked, how the government screwed its citizens was not counted amongst the drought. Now, he planned to turn the vise against Washington bureaucrats.

Mentally going over every conceivable consequence, Jonas found himself quickly to the third level using the stairs, paused briefly to scan for threats, then hastened over towards the canvas bulk in the corner. A click depression of the remote door unlock on the key attachment was followed immediately by the sound of a pair of beeps, signaling that, at a minimum, the vehicle's electronics were functional.

Another careful scan of his environment showed no trespassers. Jonas held in a deep breath to shield against airborne debris and quickly set about removing the canvas tarp

from the mechanical beast underneath. Unlike its artificial skin, the Dodge was clean and intimidating. It looked more like a racer to the uninitiated who overlooked the large spotlights spooning with the mirrors.

Jonas quickly walked around the front and climbed into the driver's seat, placing the olive drab bag on the passenger seat. He carefully unzipped the duffel to allow him to grab either the money or the gun easily and without presenting what was hidden within the bag.

Satisfied that everything was located beneficially, he locked the doors and placed the key into the ignition. With a twist, the 5.7-liter engine rumbled to life. So, too, did a federal frequency scanner that sat underneath the glove box.

Adjusting the rearview mirror, Jonas verified his full tank of gasoline one last time and threw the transmission into drive. A quick punch of the accelerator alerted the careless to his departure and Jonas turned the wheel hard to catch the downward ramp. *Ready or not Florida, here comes my ass!*

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