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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 Sixty-Six

June, 20xx  
Outskirts, Washington, D.C.

Jonas Prinkler downed the last of the Lucky Duck, swirling the Chilean cabernet sauvignon around within his mouth for a few moments before swallowing the wine and returning the empty glass back to edge of the table. A glass of red wine a night for dinner remained his soul vice, an anchor towards the past when the heretofore overweight and largely apathetic analyst served as nothing more than an astute nine-to-fiver engaged in all manners of bureaucratic redundancy.

Many months on the lamb from his own federal government, however, forced him to reflect upon his own life and that necessitated a change in character. A change that reduced his mass not by the tens of pounds, but by a hundred at the least. The safe house in which he held out possessed no bathroom scale and so such an achievement was a guesstimate at the best. What was not open for interpretation, however, was that his life remained in mortal danger and those whose concerns a year ago bordered upon whether the fat analyst in the basement office would partake of early retirement or not had by now solidly manifested into an extensive, if covert global manhunt for both he and his younger accomplice lost somewhere in the Middle East.

Alone now and relying upon newfound capabilities of survival, Jonas knew that his personal transformation meant that his own world had capsized. Whereas before he was a proud member of the Establishment seeking to defeat Islamic terrorists at every opportunity, he was now confronted with the knowledge that this very establishment was presently more interested in denying their own employees the capability for

waging war than they were in stopping the real enemy at all costs.

Jonas stood up, retrieved the glass from the table, stared into its cavity for a few moments as he strained to catch the oblique reflection of his bearded, unkempt, and now decidedly thinner face, and strolled into the cramped kitchen to finish the dishes.

Half a lifetime ago, he could have discussed but never believed that some people could undertake just such a radical transformation as to make them completely unrecognizable to even the closest of relatives, but the image of his own face seemed infinitely more foreign than any distant blood relative that he could have imagined.

The weight of the world, at least a hundred and fifty pounds of it, seemed lifted from his chest and replaced ironically with the care for its survival. Being so reduced granted him energy like he never possessed even as a child, but it was not as much the transformation that bothered him, as it was the necessity of it.

Unlike the younger Seth Carmassi, Jonas was never an operative. Even when they were touring Europe, he had always deferred to the capabilities of his then-friend-now-equal-fugitive-from-justice. *Justice?* he chuckled to himself. *Is it 'justice' that protects the terrorists and hounds the fighters aligned against them? Is it justice where the U.S. government turns into an accomplished enemy of its own people?*

Throwing the yellowing washrag into the sink, Jonas turned off the kitchen light and walked into a side room that had served as his command center for the previous six months. Here, in this pathetically small apartment located within the most pathetically impoverished section of Washington, he could retain some semblance of freedom.

It was the only address in America that Seth assured him would be off the government's radar despite the fact that it rested largely within the very shadow of the Capitol itself. And for good reason. The feds would have assumed that Jonas would escape the city at the earliest convenience, possibly vacating via the same airport from which he had arrived previously. The investigators on his trail could not have cared much about the

tiny, cockroach-infested basement apartment with the much-maligned rhododendron blooming outside the front door.

The seriousness of the charges pending against the then-overweight and under-practiced analyst quickly dismissed any concerns for cleanliness and Jonas found the key to the door some three inches into the plant's topsoil – just about where Seth said it would be found. Nowhere near a luxury domicile, the tiny apartment with its requisite prostituting neighbors and occasional drive by was the perfect place in which to disappear while one contemplated what the future held.

Understanding that what his adversaries were seeking was a fat Caucasian man of far middle age, Jonas quickly decided that his best chance for avoidance was to trim his mass more than his face and so his beard grew proportionately to the reduction in his belly, courtesy of one of the few luxuries the cramped apartment possessed – an exercise and weight machine tucked neatly into the smallest bedroom. Jonas reasoned that Seth always found the need to keep in excellent shape and so spared no expense in this regard.

At first, the home gym unit served simply to ward off stress. Who paid for this apartment? Would he be discovered? Where were the authorities? Such thoughts kept Jonas awake at nights and so he spent the sleepless time hitting the weights and conditioning his body. By the time that these fears ebbed, he was gaining confidence in his ability to confront his former employers – even physically.

By no means in triathlon shape, Jonas at least could sneak into town to purchase groceries and other supplies without drawing undue attention towards himself or panting heavily in the process. For the first time in his adult life, Jonas Prinkler could pass as 'average size', a monumental testament to the power of repetitive exercise.

Living beneath the radar also served to ease his mind, but as the months drifted away, he realized that remaining a recluse was both detrimental to his sanity and disadvantageous towards his former companion, the present whereabouts of whom he knew little about.

The two Americans had some inkling of a rendezvous for the future. Seth always had contingency plans. Contacts outside of the federal government – Mossad, Spetsnaz, etc. – who were indebted to his past exploits. Before they parted company, Seth made his associate memorize enough of the ‘procedures’ to place him within the presence of those who could steer Jonas towards potential reconnection.

The fear, anxiety, and personal bulk that kept him tethered to the rancid apartment dissipated nearly as fast as had the shoebox full of non-sequential, multidenominational bills and prepaid Visa cards, leaving him to finally determine that the time was about right to make his final exodus from the putrid smelling apartment smack in the middle of the equally corrupt city.

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