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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-Three

Colonel Oleg Shuliakovskii's entrance into the concrete block room, heralded by the faint sound of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* serenade as the rust-coated steel door swung open, typified the Russian's ancestry. Born of a White Russian father and an East German mother, the blonde, blue-eyed soldier seemed composed of pure muscle and devotion to duty.

His limbs moved in cadence while his eyes never left the vicinity of the tall Arab sitting lotus style in the corner. That the guards' vertebrae audibly snapped when they jerked to attention suggested to Muhammad that this was no mere colonel commanding their allegiance. The suspicion was confirmed when the intruder whispered a command to the far guard and the young soldier leapt over a small stool to depart for some unseen task, briefly permitting Mr. Mozart's music to swirl yet again into the confines of the otherwise uncivilized room.

"My name is Colonel Shuliakovskii," the gravelly-voiced Russian spoke as if introductions were a mere distraction, "and you are Muhammad ibn al-Ilah Talib."

The Arab remained silent, but stared directly at the muscular colonel's piercing eyes.

"You are, as the Americans like to say, a hot commodity." Shuliakovskii continued unconcerned. "I could receive fifty million American dollars for you right now – dead or alive – but we Russians are not interested in Yankee money. We print that much ourselves every day. Nor are we interested in the Americans' concept of 'enhanced interrogation techniques'. If we want to possess certain information, we simply retrieve it. You see, even here in post-Soviet Russia we still do not care much about what the rest of the world thinks.

“I am not a diplomat. My job is to win wars and since the world is nearly always in conflict against one another, my trade is not affected by political opportunists or international courtesies of the type that plague the West.”

The colonel slowly orbited the room, first circling counterclockwise in a large, sweeping pace before hastening his retreat in the opposite direction while compressing the volume of his walk. Not once, however, did his gaze leave the Arab’s face.

“Of course, being an officer in the Russian army merely facilitates my real power.” Shuliakovskii continued. “A mere formality that has very little to do with commanding soldiers in battle. My superiors use me to extract the heretofore mentioned information and what I seek from you is of utmost importance.”

Muhammad’s own stare focused squarely upon the Russian’s pupils, but he remained silent.

Shuliakovskii’s pacing ceased abruptly. “Your people have a plan for unleashing a terrible destruction upon New York City using a large thermonuclear device. You, yourself, also have designs for attacking Jerusalem with a smaller but comparatively destructive weapon. What we need to ascertain is just how far along your operations are to maturation.”

Feigning disinterest for a few seconds, Muhammad slowly rose to his feet, straightening the wrinkles within his hospital tunic as if cleanliness mattered within the filthy space.

“We know about these plans because you had talked during your *unfortunate medical condition*.” The Russian emphasized the last words to hint that his prisoner had been drugged extensively. “Unfortunately, you were not too cooperative. This suggests that your followers are working independently of your presence. To know for certain, we must dissect your thoughts carefully.”

The thought of mental dissection snagged the attention of the Arab and his posture stiffened measurably. His lips began to curl in upon one another and his nostrils twitched noticeably.

“That is correct.” Colonel Shuliakovskii barked. “I possess no patience for Muslims and less concern for Arabs. Your kind murdered my son while in Afghanistan and therefore you all must die. You might be willing to die for your Allah but before I

am done with you, you will be worshipping my shitty underwear!”

Muhammad’s face turned a burnt umber in color as he glanced first towards the guard bearing the Bizon submachine gun and then quickly back towards the unapologetic colonel.

“We defeated you Russians,” Muhammad’s voice flowed out deeply and precisely as he leaned towards the offending Russian. “And we’re defeating the Americans...”

In a literal blinding flash, Colonel Shuliakovskii launched his right hand straight towards the Arab’s face with his index and middle fingers protruding. The impact of his digits caught Muhammad’s left eyeball as each tore into the Arab’s optical socket between the orb and the bone of the skull.

Pinched securely between his fingers, Shuliakovskii violently extracted the organ from Muhammad’s face and yanked aggressively to snap the optical chords foaming with blood and body fluids before slamming the Arab’s eyeball onto the concrete floor with a nauseating splat.

As Muhammad staggered backwards with a suffocating cry, covering what remained of his face with his hands, Colonel Shuliakovskii crushed the wayward eyeball with his heavy right boot.

“This is what I think about Muslims,” the hoarse voiced colonel wiped the blood off his hand on the uniform of the remaining guard, before turning back towards the growling Arab. “You will now be able to see that I mean business...”