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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 Ten

Seth Carmassi elevated his voice to its best impression of artificiality as he tapped the telephone handset against his left temple. “Please stay online. Your telephone call is very important to us. It ties up all the other idiots who are calling to bitch about our service...”

Jonas chuckled as he awkwardly maneuvered his bulk into the office, his hands tightly grasping several thick file folders. “I take it that you don’t have a telephone in your office yet?”

Carmassi shook his head. “No; sorry to have to use yours but there isn’t one around within walking distance down here.”

“No problem.” The older analyst looked around mildly amused. “I just can’t believe that the phone even works in this office. I think we’re we left to our own devices.”

“Yeah, I remember you mentioning that. I’m ready to defy the bureaucrats and permanently relocate my carcass out to the Mall or somewhere.”

“That wouldn’t be a bad idea.” Jonas, for all his lack of physique, liked being outdoors. It was just a matter of childhood dreams gone awry. “In the meantime, I’ve been digging a little into this Saudi-amusement park-ship restoration connection thing and got these files from a lady friend of mine and, before you ask; no, she isn’t a redhead. However, what I’ve found out is that the Saudis – through their various charities – actually want to dock the McCaide at this very same amusement park.”

“Oh?” Carmassi lost interest in the elevator music wailing out from the telephone receiver and dropped the device, allowing it to hang nearly to the floor. “Why would anyone want to dock an old submarine tender at an amusement park?”

“Offhand, I haven’t a clue. However, the premise of their wanting to restore the ship is so that they could have a maritime school for Muslims from poor backgrounds.”

“Why don’t the Saudis just give them money to attend schools that already exist?”

“Now, *that* I can’t ascertain as of yet. Presumably they want something with which to take the kids out to sea.”

“To bathe?”

“That’s cruel...”

“So is being shot at merely because I’m an American.”

Carmassi retraced his steps and returned to the telephone to hang up the maligned receiver. “All cruelties aside, why do people who live in the desert want to promote maritime education?”

“I don’t know – to diversify; to explore?”

Carmassi frowned broadly. “Oh, I think they could acquire a nice three-masted bark or something like most Navies use to train sailors and if that didn’t suit them then I think that ol’ Prince Phillip in a Dress could part with one of his cruise ships – I mean *yachts* – for their delight.”

Jonas shrugged briefly going through the files within his hands. “The ship does represent Americana and that seems to represent their interests of late. One of the principle charities involves their quest for interfaith studies.”

Carmassi frowned more deeply, then spat harshly into the nearby trashcan. “The Saudis are about as concerned about interfaith studies as Hitler was in developing socialism.”

“Oh, I don’t think they’re *all* bad...”

“You, friend, apparently haven’t been fighting them lately. I have. You know all of these so-called insurgents fighting our guys in Iraq? They’re trained by Iran and funded by Saudi Arabia. We’re pigeon-holed here. Our government can’t admit Saudi involvement and the media can’t accept that Iran is actually fighting a war against us. Who benefits? The Saudis manipulate the global economy and Iran gets the first Islamic Bomb.”

Jonas sat down heavily within his chair, its cushion releasing a hiss as it reluctantly accepted his weight. “If that’s

the case; why then are the Saudis involved with the McCaide restoration?"

"At a minimum, I'd say that they want to emphasize their new 'friendship' with the United States. You know, sort of say 'Hey, guys. We're not so bad – we actually *love* America' and you know where they take that sentiment once they come over here."

Removing his eyeglasses to massage his nose, Jonas thought about the implications. "Again, there must be better ways of impressing us than with an old, broken down tender. I mean, just the amusement park itself is employing thousands of workers in New York. Wouldn't *that* be something of note? And still they don't promote that piece of economic infusion as much as anything else..."

Carmassi threw his hands up into the air. "Maybe Camel Land..."

"I think that they're using Candelabrum within the name."

"Whatever! I just think that they're using a low-key approach to the amusement park for fear of alienating their Muslim base. The McCaide will use the pier but I think that they're going to use the ship for something totally different than whether a bunch of Arabs can learn to navigate a ship."

"You're a cynical cuss, aren't you?"

"Nineteen Arabs flying into crowded office buildings will do that..."

"I was here..."

"Well, *I* wasn't; I was still laid up with shrapnel in my thigh from that explosion in Africa. The point is that whenever something bad in the world happens, it's 'American foreign policy to blame'; whenever a priest gets busted for improprieties, it's the Catholic Church at fault; but whenever a large group of Saudi Arabs murder three thousand innocent citizens it's 'Hey! We have no control over students...' No control, my ass; they probably paid for their flight lessons."

Jonas rubbed his eyes hard before replacing his eyeglasses. "Sure glad you're on our side. I just think that maybe we're getting a little carried away on their being the bad guys."

Carmassi stretched backwards; allowing his lengthened posture to snap a few vertebrae back into a more comfortable position. “I don’t care. If they were good guys and our friends then how come they aren’t all over the news saying ‘Muslims like America. Muslims don’t harm anyone. Islam stands with America – not the terrorists’, huh?”

“Maybe they are?”

“Bullshit!” Carmassi spit harder into the trashcan before dislodging it slightly with a kick. “It’s the nineteen sixties all over again. People want recognition and appreciation but they don’t want to earn it. They want others to pay for their shortcomings and lack of initiative. It’s all that damn bullshit about ‘I’m not successful because others won’t *let* me be successful.’ Just name one damn basic tenet of their religion that wasn’t stolen from Judaism or Christianity? You can’t! What makes them so appealing to the world is that they shove the blame for their own failures onto someone else – *us!*”

Jonas stood back up. “The world does seem quick to point fingers.” He straightened out his shirt with a swipe of his left hand. “My wife left me for someone younger than my underwear but I accept the blame. If I had spent more time at home with Tupperware parties than here in this fanatical building, she might have stayed at home more.”

“But *she* made the final choice. It wasn’t your fault that she couldn’t handle the kind of work that you do.”

“Eh.” grumbled Jonas. He hated being patronized. “We’re just getting into spats of who’s at fault. I don’t like it; I just try to deal with what life throws at me.”

Carmassi thumped his finger at the folders clutched by Jonas. “Want to convince me that the Saudis are legit? Convince me that they don’t have ill-intent on their minds. Otherwise, I consider them enemy agents within our midst.”