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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 Seventy-One

Seth awoke with a start, cold beads of perspiration coating his body like little ants invading a summer picnic. His heart rate seemed slightly elevated, but his breathing appeared distant, as if it had belonged to another soul. The humid room was dark, yet faint slivers of ghost white filtered in through the gaps in the umber curtains to suggest that dawn had not yet broken through the early morning haze. The American steadied his nerves, distracting his mind from the horrible nightmare by coming to terms with his surroundings.

Advantaged by his sleep, Seth's eyes could make out the room despite the low level of light. There was the broken ceiling fan, the three windows not quite distant from one another, a small desk with a metallic lamp, and the doorway. *The doorway.* Standing between the frame of the door rested a figure of deep ebony. A silhouette carved out of the grayest of grays.

"Seth!" spoke apparition in an elevated hush.

Confused, not quite comprehending the situation, the American tried to shake loose the cobwebs from his mind.

"Seth!" the sable being again spoke. "Are you awake?"

"Sarosh?" Seth rolled lazily onto his right side, struggling to command his muscles to lift himself into an upright position. "What's up?"

"There's been an airplane crash." replied the Iranian, illuminating the small room into a blaze with the tug of a string hanging from the nearby lamp. "In your Washington!"

"Where?" News of a plane crash – *any* plane crash – in his nation's capital launched Seth's heart into overdrive and his muscles sprang him off the bed into a half-dazed pirouette. "Whose plane? Where? How'd it go down?"

"It was a VANYA AIR jet." Sarosh dutifully maneuvered around the room tossing his American friend several articles of

clothing extracted from various freestyle hangers. “Many people are dead.”

“The Russians?” Seth paused briefly, hung up in donning an old Grateful Dead tee shirt as he forced himself to imagine the distant.

“Yes, Mr. Seth. It crashed during takeoff, I believe.”

“Is it on television?”

“Yes, I saw it through my neighbor’s window. I’ve read it within the newspaper too but sadly I do not have a copy to give to you.”

“Never mind. Give me the details.”

“As I have said. A Russian VANYA AIR charter airplane has crashed not far from the airport in your capital. Many people are dead. I saw houses on fire and medical people carrying bodies. It was a terrible sight...the destruction.”

Seth sat back down upon the bed as he pulled a gray pair of socks over his feet, starting with the customary left specimen first. “Probably an accident. What was the weather like there?”

Sarosh looked dumbfounded. “Our papers are not interested in the weather of the Americans.”

“Probably not. What of the Russians?”

“I have sent word to my contacts, but they have not replied yet. I must be careful.”

Seth nodded, shoving his left leg into a worn pair of dungarees. “Right. We must consider our mission first. What about our guests?”

“The Arabs are still sleeping in the corner of the large room. They do not know about the crash in Washington. I do not believe that you would want me to inform them.”

“Good, that little bastard Haytham would probably say that it was Allah’s will or some crap like...” Seth paused abruptly, glancing quickly at his companion. “You know what I mean.”

Sarosh smiled. “I will make you a Muslim yet.”

“Bullshit.” snorted Seth. “I’ll get *you* laid yet.”

The Iranian’s olive skin blushed noticeably. “And you wonder why Americans are hated in the land of Islam.”

“Pffft. Islam has been screwing everyone else for centuries. And don’t come across as some pious jerk – you’re intelligent enough to have read the Quran, my friend.”

“Yes, I have.” Sarosh’s voice sank into a deep whisper. “But I choose to believe in my version of God’s will.”

Seth stood up confidently and patted his host firmly on both shoulders. “And that’s why I’m here – to give you the freedom to decide for yourself!”

“Freedom?” the Iranian sighed audibly. “I do not know if such a word truly exists. In Iran, freedom means a choice of doing as we are told or being killed in front of our families.”

“Friend,” Seth glanced didactically at the Iranian. “I can give you the date and hour when your mullahs will cease to enslave your people.”

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