

Excerpt from *Three Kisses*

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Chapter 17

Friday, April 14, 2006
Fairborn, Ohio, USA

“What the hell’re you doing here and who are the other guys?” Fred asked Ali as they drove to Patrick’s house. “I just wanted to get out of Syria, be a doctor,” Ali replied. “Help people who’re injured and disfigured.”

“What about the other guys?” Fred continued.

“The two with me’re poor Yemeni kids who felt screwed by the system. Involved with an imam who gives them work driving between Canada and North Carolina. They’re naïve; harmless. Turn right at the next corner.”

Must be smuggling, Fred mumbled to himself. “What about the guy where we’re going?” he asked.

“He’s mean,” Ali answered. “Skinny, but tough. Saudi Arabian who worked in Afghanistan with al Qaeda to treat wounded fighters. Gotta watch out for him.”

“Is he armed?” Fred asked?

“Don’t know,” Ali replied. “Didn’t see any, but I’d guess he has a gun. There, that’s the house.”

“Is there a garage door opener?” Fred asked.

“On the flap that pulls down,” Ali answered.

Fred quickly called on his cell phone saying: “Drive up just past the driveway so you can push the garage opener. It’s on the visor. Park and go in the garage.”

Fred turned on the blinkers and pointed so Luie could know to drive into the garage then drove the cruiser into the driveway parking behind the four-by-four.

He asked Ali: “Is that car the other guy’s?”

Ali nodded his head and said: “Yes”.

Once inside the garage with the door closed, Fred said: “You’re going in ahead of me gagged and cuffed like a hostage. He tries to kill me, you get killed.”

“Won’t make any difference,” Ali said. “He’d kill me just as soon as he’d kill you. I’m sure they were going to try to kill me in Canada, making it look like suicide.”

Once all were in the garage, Fred said: “The guy inside’s tough, mean, and maybe armed, the doc says. We have only one pistol and that’ll be in the doc’s back. Someone stand in the door keeping an eye on the four-by-four, but ready to jump inside the house and help. Other two come with me.”

“I’m going in with you,” Frank said. “Got to see if Patrick’s all right.”

“I’m going in too,” Paco said.

“Someone give me a handkerchief,” Fred said. Luie stuck one in Fred’s hand, which he promptly crammed into Ali’s mouth, saying: “Gotta make it look good, Doc.”

Fred pushed Ali ahead and walked quickly into the living room; Frank and Paco followed. Adnan jumped up from the couch, startled, half asleep watching a muted television program. He reached in his jeans for a gun that apparently was not there.

“Hands in the air or your buddy gets his brains blown out,” Fred said.

Adnan leaped forward trying to grab Ali and the gun.

Fred shouted: “I said hands in the air, damn it,” and pointed the gun into Adnan’s face.

Paco moved behind, forced Adnan’s hands behind his back, and attached cuffs while Adnan kicked and screamed.

“Put something in his mouth. Can’t wake Patrick,” Fred commanded.

Paco shoved in a small pack of tissues that he always carried out of habit from the nursing home.

“Don’t worry; he’s out like a light. I saw to that this morning,” Ali tried to say with a handkerchief in his mouth.

Fred said: “Take him to the garage and search him good for concealed weapons; these guys keep things in their crotches and up their asses. Take his wallet and keys too.”

“I’ll help carry him but I’ve got to come back to check on Patrick,” Frank said as they took Adnan, kicking and trying to scream to the garage.

“Ok, Doc, you’re still my hostage,” Fred said. “We’ll see what’s in the bathroom and bedrooms. Meanwhile in the garage, Luie said: “Look, long and thin like a limp piece of spaghetti.” Adnan was naked with Paco sitting on his legs saying: “Let’s see what he has hidden up his ass. I’ve given rectal exams, but with gloves.”

“Think we have some in the four-by-four,” Luie said.

“Nahh, I’m not going to stick a finger in that dirty Arab ass, even in a glove,” Paco continued. “Dirty blot on all Arabs; bet his asshole’s the same. Use the billyclub; shove anything way up inside.”

Adnan kicked and moved violently, trying to scream.

“OK, you disgraceful piece of shit” Paco said; to Luie. “Get the leg restraints.”

Luie applied leg restraints while Adnan continued to resist as violently as he could.

“Ok, you filthy piece of shit, up inside with your two scum-bag buddies,” Paco said. Luie got Adnan’s wallet and keys reading from the driver’s license: “Edgardo Rodriguez, Mesquite, Texas. Guess he goes with the Texas plates on the old Toyota over there. Is he Mexican or Arab?”

“Don’t you know Arabs and Mexicans look alike, at least to Anglos?” Paco said then suddenly realized he had used the word ‘anglo’ that could betray him.

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Frank came into Patrick’s bedroom as Fred said: “Pulse and breathing seem strong enough.”

Ali tried to speak; Frank asked: “Take his gag out?”

“Yeah, go ahead,” Fred replied.

“I was very careful with the dose and timing,” Ali said.

“What’s this?” Fred asked. “Hypodermic syringe and two small bottles of something.”

“That’s how I administered medication,” Ali said.

“Name I can’t pronounce,” Fred said as he looked at fine print on the bottles. “Pharmaceutical lab in Canada.”

“That’s what I told them to get,” Ali said. “Safe and effective if used in the right dose over the right time period. Can’t be detected in blood or urine after a short time.”

Smuggling meds from Canada too, Fred thought and asked: “How long ’til he wakes up?”

“If Adnan didn’t give another injection,” Ali replied, “the one this morning should last a couple more hours.”

“How can we know?” Fred asked.

“Hand me the bottle, please,” Ali said. “Don’t think it’s gone down since I injected him, but I can’t be completely sure,” Ali said when Frank removed the handcuffs.

“OK,” Fred said. “Hey, maybe we shouldn’t let him wake up today and panic because he didn’t go to work. He might get really suspicious then. Maybe he should sleep until tomorrow. What do you think Frank?”

“Maybe if we make him think he came to work this morning and left because he was so out of it,” Frank replied.

“It’d make it safer for all of us if we can convince him he didn’t sleep all through the day. He was definitely seen at the office, but if he believes he wasn’t there, it could lead to questions we wouldn’t want to answer.”

“Do you think you could actually make him believe this?” Fred asked.

“Maybe, especially if Felicia’s in on it,” Frank continued. “Patrick’d believe almost anything she said. She’s in on this somehow; has to be.”

“Who’s Felicia?” Fred asked.

“Philippine woman who works in our office,” Frank replied. “Real thick with Patrick. Must’ve been the one who stole his wallet the doc here had.”

“She’s in on it,” Ali said. “Forced her to cooperate. Didn’t tell me much.”

“What do we have to lose?” Frank said. “How many more injections can we safely give him, Doc?”

Ali pondered and said: “At least one more, maybe one more after that, max.”

“Doc’ll give him one more under our supervision before we go,” Fred said. “Hey, maybe your friend can give it.”

“Just a moment,” Frank said. “One more thing I need to do. Sorry, buddy, for your sake as well as mine, I need to do this. Hope he doesn’t wake up.”

He pulled off the blanket and pulled down Patrick’s boxers. “That’s Patrick. Let’s go.”