

***2020***

***A Simply Divine Mystery***  
**(about God, Country and Terrorism)**

**by**

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## Prologue

After decades of cultural and religious conflict over issues ranging from abortion to homosexuality, the death penalty and the public display of religious symbols, Christians decide to put aside many of their theological and political differences in order to accomplish a common goal—to make the United States a more Christian nation. Joining together under the banner of the Christian Democratic Republican (CDR) Party, America's Christians from far left to far right along the political spectrum hope to end the secularism that they believe has taken over—and corrupted—American government and society.

Their success is astounding. Within a few years, the CDR becomes the majority political party in the country and begins to lay the foundation for the party's ultimate objectives—making the New Testament the basis of all civil law and changing the name of the country to the Christian Republic of the United States of America.

In the year 2020, as a vote on the Christian Republic amendment draws near—with strong opposition from the opposition National Liberty Party—terrorist bombings hit the nation's capital, taking the lives of several prominent government officials. It is now up to the Christian Democratic administration to demonstrate that it can fight terrorism while also pursuing its goal of creating a Christian Republic. Nothing less than the future of the nation is at stake.

## CHAPTER 1

*“O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.” Psalm 7:9*

The massive pipe organ of the National Cathedral had never sounded quite as majestic to Winston Tobias “Toby” Sullivan as on this sunny Sunday morning of March 1, 2020. It seemed as if the organist was putting a little something extra into the entrance hymn that was most familiar to Toby as “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,” but today was Hymn 595, “God of grace and God of glory.” The volume was cranked up so high that Sullivan could actually feel the vibrations from the giant instrument’s 10,000 pipes as the choir and congregation prepared to join in.

*God of grace and God of glory,  
On Thy people pour Thy power.  
Crown Thine ancient church’s story,  
Bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
For the facing of this hour,  
For the facing of this hour.*

As Toby added his tenor voice to the baritones, mezzos, sopranos and those that he felt were most charitably described as “none of the above,” he could not help but question why he was in this magnificent house of worship. If the truth were to be told, he was an agnostic, and it was primarily his love of classical music that led him to attend this particular church. That—and he would have been ashamed to admit—the fact that his boss’s assistant, Margaret Peabody, also attended the same service, and he knew the chances were good that she would mention to Associate Director Carl Drake that she had seen Sullivan at church. Of course, Toby knew that it might be even better for his career if he attended the same church as Drake, but there was no way in hell (or heaven) he was going to an evangelical church that specialized in the latest “praise” music. Being hypocritical was bad enough, but even in this era when a person’s religion—or lack thereof—could influence his professional advancement, enduring musical torture would be much too high of a price to pay.

*Save us from weak resignation,  
To the evils we deplore.  
Let the search for Thy salvation,  
Be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
Serving Thee Whom we adore,  
Serving Thee Whom we adore.*

After the last note from the entrance hymn faded, Toby prepared to make himself as comfortable as possible in his usual spot in one of the rear rows slightly behind an enormous column that helped support the impressive Gothic structure. Before sitting, he glanced around to see if he could locate Margaret, and he was quite surprised that neither she nor some of the other regulars, such as United States Senator Langdon Stevens and his wife, seemed to be in attendance. Given all that had happened that week, he was certain they would want to be in their usual pews.

After completing his visual inspection of the congregation, Toby sat down and began, as was his habit, to tune out much of the service and focus his thoughts on the week behind and the week ahead. He knew that what had happened in the previous week was certain to change the course of his career and perhaps his entire life.

A violent explosion on each of three different days in different parts of the nation's capital had resulted in the deaths of a dozen people, including two United States senators and the assistant secretary of Homeland Security. As expected, Associate Director Drake, a terrorism expert, had been personally selected by the FBI director to put together a special unit from the Joint Terrorism Task Force consisting of law enforcement personnel from several different agencies including FBI, Homeland Security, CIA, Metropolitan Police, Federal Park Police and Capitol Police. Sullivan and his partner, Davis P. Rawlings, III—nicknamed “Trey”—were selected, although Sullivan was well aware that Rawlings, a member of Drake's church, was the one the boss really wanted and Sullivan was included only because he had been Trey's partner for the past two years.

Toby watched and listened as Rector Samuel York read Psalm 19:14:

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”

The bombings constituted the most serious terrorist attacks on United States soil in more than a decade and had caught the entire nation flatfooted. Not the Department of Homeland Security, nor the CIA, nor the FBI had any hint that such attacks were imminent. Nothing that had been done since 9/11/01, including a complete reorganization of the nation's security infrastructure, the appropriation of billions of dollars in additional funding and hiring hundreds of thousands of new security employees, had been able to prevent one or more people from setting off two powerful car bombs and a bomb on a train in the Metro subway system. While no one had claimed responsibility, al-Qaida was the name being mentioned on all of the television news channels and by most of the Internet bloggers. Even the usual “high ranking government officials” were telling reporters off the record that a rejuvenated al-Qaida or some other Muslim extremist organization was likely behind the attacks. Sullivan had no reason to doubt this theory.

The rector continued as the congregation kneeled.

“Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear this holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.”

On the other hand, Sullivan told himself, he had no reason to believe the speculation, either. True, multiple explosions were a hallmark of al-Qaida and other radical Islamic organizations, and successfully killing several top government officials gave the attacks the publicity the Islamic extremists craved, but that really wasn't proof, was it? No physical evidence had been identified to conclusively link any organization to the horrendous crimes.

Then the congregation joined the rector in reciting:

“Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.”

With the nation on the highest level of alert—it would have been Terror Code “Red” if the old color codes still existed—the taskforce was under intense pressure to identify those responsible and capture or kill them quickly. Members of Congress were both scared and angry, clearly a dangerous combination. Some of the more hawkish members were calling for the president to launch a unilateral military attack on Pakistan, Syria and Iran simultaneously, because they were certain that al-Qaida leaders were hiding in all three countries. In a special televised address to the nation, the president said “all options are on the table,” making it clear that he would not hesitate to launch an attack on any country that provided support to the people who murdered the assistant secretary of Homeland Security, two prominent members of Congress and nine other Americans.

The service progressed solemnly in the background as Toby continued to reflect on the tragedy that had the nation asking how—and why—America had once again been attacked.

He heard the priest say:

“The Almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. Amen.”

And then Sullivan joined the rest of the congregation in reciting a Collect for Peace:

“O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

After the Collect, Sullivan glanced at the Space Window on the south aisle of the Cathedral. There were more than 200 stained glass windows in the historic building, but it was this one, containing a piece of lunar rock presented by the astronauts of Apollo XI, that was clearly his favorite. His second favorite was the magnificent Rose window high above the west front entrance. Briefly glancing at this spectacular work of art, Toby noticed that the thousands of pieces of stained glass were not as vibrant as in the afternoon when the sun shone more directly from the west. Even so, the 26-foot diameter window was breathtaking.

While admiring the colorful glass, Toby’s thoughts suddenly returned to the tragic events of the week and their effect on his personal faith—or lack of it. *“How could a merciful God let something so awful occur? And, if the perpetrators were in fact radical Muslims, how could any sane Muslim believe that Allah—or God by any name—would advocate or condone the killing of innocent people?”*

As Toby turned to face the front of the church, his thoughts about Muslims quickly drifted into thoughts about his own country and its majority religion—Christianity. He was becoming more and more concerned about the ever-increasing role of religion in the government. Over the course of the last two decades, Christian activists had made steady “progress” (as they saw it) in making the United States a more “Christian” nation. And in the last few years, this trend had—at least as Toby saw it—spun out of control. Christians of all denominations and political beliefs had joined together to form the Christian Democratic Republican (CDR) Party. Their goal, pure and simple, was to make the United States a theocracy.

This train of thought led him to recall a folk song from a couple of decades earlier.

*I ain't afraid of your Yahweh.*

*I ain't afraid of your Allah.*

*I ain't afraid of your Jesus.*

*I'm afraid of what you do in the name of your god.*

*I ain't afraid of your churches.  
I ain't afraid of your temples.  
I ain't afraid of your praying.  
I'm afraid of what you do in the name of your god.*

Suddenly, Toby's mind cleared of thoughts of religion and bombs. He began thinking about Tiffany Ashley Davenport, better known to family and friends as "Tad." Tad, who had a PhD in mid-eastern studies from George Washington University and spoke fluent Arabic, had been working undercover with the CIA for nearly five years, but Toby had just learned that she was being rushed home to work for the Associate Director for Homeland Security, Terrorist Threat Integration Center, and to serve on the bombing task-force.

Sullivan thought about how much he had missed Tad during the last five years. They had been so close before she took the undercover assignment, but since then, he had been with her for only a few brief visits—once in the U.S. and twice in the Scottish Highlands at a place isolated enough to protect her cover and their privacy. He had not seen his lover for more than a year, and the thought of being with her again had him feeling both excited and anxious.

And then, before he knew it, it was time for the recessional hymn. But how could it be? He could barely recall the homily—something about not allowing one's heart to be filled with hate against an entire group of people for a vile act committed by a few evil or misguided individuals. "*Easier said than done*," Toby thought as he stood and looked at the sea of faces in the packed church. Even without some of the regulars, such as Margaret and Senator Stevens, there were obviously more people here than on an average Sunday. That was understandable. It was as if people needed to be someplace in which they could feel secure again.

Being in God's house, away from the hysterical hype of the news media and, yes, if the truth were told, isolated from those people, i.e. "Muslims," helped people feel a little safer than being in a shopping mall or even in the privacy of their own homes. God and their Christian faith would make everything better. Or, at least that is what they believed.

The mighty organ pipes, the choir, the celebrants and the congregation joined together to fill the giant Cathedral with a much beloved and comforting hymn.

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved...*

As Toby and the congregation held the note—a middle "G"—at the end of "relieved," a terrible, almost deafening explosion ripped through the sacred house of worship, shattering in an instant people's lives, limbs and whatever sense of security they had felt just seconds before. Gone were the joy of music and serenity of worship. These were destroyed by a frightening conglomeration of noises, including shattering glass, screaming children and wailing men and women.

Almost immediately, after the initial shock wave and terrifying noise had subsided, Toby recognized what had happened. He had been shielded from the blast and flying debris by the column that stood partially between the explosion and him. Others were not as fortunate. People of all ages were screaming and pushing toward the exits as fast as they could run or crawl. Some lay on the floor and in the pews, dead, injured or too stunned to move.

By voice command, Sullivan activated the miniature cell phone that was imbedded in his ear, connecting him instantly to taskforce headquarters. "This is Agent Toby Sullivan, Code Alpha John 465. There has been an explosion at the National Cathedral on Wisconsin Avenue. Send the bomb experts and notify hospitals in the area to send every ambulance and EMT they can find. Many people have been either killed or injured." And then, as he looked westward above the chaos at the undamaged Rose Window, he added emotionally, "The bastards have attacked again."

## CHAPTER 2

*“We must respect the other fellow’s religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children smart.” -H.L. Mencken*

Tiffany Ashley Davenport—better known to family and friends as “Tad” since shortly after her maternal grandfather, Grandpa Johnson, had recognized how much his granddaughter disliked her “prissy” given names and began calling her by her initials when she was about eight years old—woke slowly out of a light, restless sleep. She surveyed her surroundings and attempted to figure out why a rather large head was lying on her right shoulder while a small boy with something wet and sticky on his hand was patting her left cheek with one of his gooey fingers.

Then she remembered. The gigantic man, whose real name she did not know, but whom she had nicknamed “Doublewide” for her internal conversations, was already well settled on the plane when she boarded in Frankfurt. He had apparently staked out his claim to the two adjacent seats at the flight’s origination in Istanbul. When a Frankfurt passenger showed him the ticket she had purchased for one of the two seats (an aisle seat), he refused to let her have it, claiming that his enormous size entitled him to two seats under a recent court settlement won by the National Association of Weight Challenged Americans (NAWCA). The flight attendant had been forced to move the unhappy woman to a seat in the middle of a center row in the back of the plane, promising her as compensation a free roundtrip ticket to any destination in the United States. Tad also remembered that the little boy’s real name was Steve and that, all things considered, he seemed like a nice little kid. Unfortunately, someone had given him a rather large supply of stick candy which he licked and handled constantly, creating sticky hands and a colorful sticky face surrounding his mouth.

*“Oh gee, it’s ‘Doublewide’ and ‘Sticky Stevie,’”* she thought to herself, as she looked again at her two neighbors in the middle aisle of the Boeing 787. *“Could I have possibly gotten a worse seat?”* she wondered as she surveyed her surroundings from the vantage point of Seat 35-E, the one in the middle of the five-seat middle row in the center of the rear economy class section. *“No doubt about it,”* she concluded. *“I win the prize. This is hands-down the worst possible seat on a plane with an abundance of bad seats. They call this plane a Dreamliner. It’s more like a nightmare than a dream. I have to escape from here for at least a few minutes.”*

Tad, slowly and with some effort, gently pushed Doublewide’s head back over to one of the two seats that he occupied, unbuckled her seatbelt and, as gracefully as possible, slipped by Sticky Steve and his sleeping mother, finally reaching the aisle and space in which to exercise her cramped limbs. After stretching her legs and torso, she walked slowly to the rear of the plane and took her position behind two other disheveled Economy passengers waiting for their turn to use the miniature restroom. While waiting, her mind began to clear from the cloudy state that attempting to sleep on airlines always produced. She tried to sort out what had happened to her with breathtaking speed.

It was just yesterday. She had barely finished teaching an English class when a woman whom she had not previously met approached and handed her a book. Before Tad could say anything, the woman said in Arabic, “Page 125 is very interesting,” and walked away. Upon opening the book to the designated page, Tad found an envelope. Inside the envelope were a passport, an airline ticket and a piece of paper on which a brief note was written: “Your cover has been blown. Your apartment has probably been bugged. Carry only essential items with you and go to the airport very early in the morning. Your ticket, passport and other identification are enclosed. Buy a throwaway cell phone and contact Charlene McGill of Homeland Security. Good luck. Ringo 911.”

Ringo was the code name of her CIA contact, and 911 was a confirmation code that the message was legitimate. She knew she had to leave, and she wasted no time doing so, following her instructions to the letter. Now she was standing in line to use the restroom of a Boeing 787 that was taking her back to a new job and a lot of uncertainty in her native country—a country that had been experiencing a wave of terrorist attacks unlike any in nearly a decade.

“Pardon me, Miss, but are you waiting in line for the restroom?” Tad realized that she had been deep in thought and that the woman behind her was trying to get her attention.

“Oh yes, I’m sorry,” Tad responded before opening the accordion-style door and entering the small space that passed as a restroom.

After taking care of business, including a thorough washing of her hands and candy-coated face, Tad took a little stroll up and down the aisles of the plane before returning to her prized seat between Doublewide and Sticky. Fortunately, Doublewide was now awake, sitting upright and reading a book, and Sticky was asleep with his cute little gooey face and hands snuggled against his mother’s lap.

As she settled back in her seat and fastened her seat belt, Davenport began thinking about Toby Sullivan and how much she looked forward to seeing him. She and Toby had become extremely close after meeting at a national security gathering several years previous. Things were getting really hot and heavy between them when she was approached by her team leader at the CIA and offered a chance to work undercover in the Middle East. As much as she had hated to leave Toby, she had dreamed of working as an “espionage agent” since she was a young girl. The offer was too good to turn down. In the five years since leaving Washington, she had seen Toby on just a few occasions, but she was still in love with him and hoped that he felt the same way. She was excited that she would see him again—hopefully, in just a few hours..

Tad touched the small video screen on the seat in front of her, producing a map that showed her flight still about three hours from Washington, D.C. She then changed the video program to “movies” and watched an old Harrison Ford flick about the hijacking of Air Force One. After watching it until the president and his family were safely rescued and all the bad guys killed, she fell back into an uneasy sleep for about an hour before being awakened by a flight attendant saying something about starting the initial approach into Ronald Reagan Airport. *Why, Tad wondered to herself, do they always say “initial” approach? Just how many times are they going to attempt to land, anyway?*

Before Davenport could figure out a logical explanation for this illogical airline jingo, she had something far more serious to worry about. She noticed the plane was suddenly banking sharply to the right and increasing its altitude. Simultaneously, she saw a look of shock and terror on the faces of many of her fellow passengers, including Doublewide and little Stevie. Before she had an opportunity to ask anyone what was happening, she heard the intercom click on and the captain, in a rapid-fire voice, attempt to explain the plane’s unusual motion.

“This is the captain speaking. As you may have noticed, we just made a sharp right turn and have begun to gain altitude. The reason for these maneuvers is to get out of District of Columbia airspace as quickly as possible. We don’t know all of the details, but apparently a bomb exploded a few minutes ago in the National Cathedral and all air traffic is being directed away from the city. We are awaiting final instructions, but our tentative plan is to land at BWI – the Baltimore –Washington International Airport. As soon as we receive our destination, I will let you know our plans.”

*“The National Cathedral—for Christ sake, that’s where Toby goes to church,”* Tad said to herself as she tried to pull her thoughts together as quickly as possible. Relying on the CIA training that had helped her make it through five difficult years in the Middle East as an undercover operative, she composed herself as best she could and searched the channels on the in-flight television screen on the back of the seat in front of her. She quickly found a news report about the bombing of the church.

“Details are still sketchy, but we do know that several people have been killed and many more injured this morning when a bomb exploded during a religious service at the National Cathedral,” said the man with the perfectly blow-dried head of hair and non-descript accent. “We hope to have a reporter and camera crew on site shortly, but as you might imagine, firefighters, medical personnel, law enforcement officials and other emergency personnel are rushing to the scene and roads are being closed to ordinary traffic for miles around this landmark religious site which has served as an unofficial national church for more than 100 years.”



The news report left Tad clearly shaken. It was a strange feeling for someone who normally kept her emotions in check. Maybe her senses were heightened because things in her life were changing so rapidly. Everything had happened so fast that she had only been able to speak briefly to her sister and to an old friend with whom she would soon be working at the Office of Homeland Security. She hadn't even had time to contact Toby, the one person she was most anxious to see, but also the one she was most nervous about seeing. And now, there was this news about the bombing. She knew that Sullivan had recently started attending the Cathedral because he loved organ music and because his boss expected his agents to attend church.

She wanted to find out if Toby was safe, but she felt completely helpless to do anything. For security purposes, she had nothing on her person or in her carry-on luggage that identified her as a CIA agent, and she had no way to contact anyone at the CIA, Homeland Security, or at the taskforce where she would soon be working. She could only wait until the plane landed so that she could make contact with someone who knew more about what had happened. She did know this, however: If Sullivan was injured because he was trying to "be a good Christian," she was going to be more than a little mad. In fact, she was going to be damn pissed off—and not just at the ones who set off the bomb, but also at the ones who made going to church so important to a person's career advancement. *Just one more example of religious warfare and stupidity*, she told herself while changing channels on the in-flight television, trying to find more information about the bombing at the Cathedral.

### CHAPTER 3

*“...begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors.” Qur’an 002.190*

The scene in God’s house—normally a place of beauty and of worship—was one of chaos with people not knowing exactly what had happened or what to do. Toby knew that there could be another bomb planted in the church, timed to go off as people fled or when first responders arrived to help. He immediately identified himself as an FBI agent and quickly recruited five uninjured worshipers to help search the large sanctuary—nearly two football fields in length—for more explosives. He also asked for any doctors and other health care workers to come to the north side of the nave where the bomb had exploded in order to treat and triage the most seriously injured people until the ambulances arrived. After rushing outside to make certain that there were no terrorists waiting to shoot down worshipers fleeing the church, Toby instructed everyone else, except for the clergy who were administering to the dying and the hysterical, to run outside, away from cars, dumpsters and buildings—away from any place that a bomb might have been hidden.

Sullivan stayed at the church for several hours doing as much as he could to assist health care personnel and help preserve the crime scene until Henry Nelson, one of the FBI’s forensic experts, arrived. Then, after taking some high-resolution digital videos with his *p-Com*, the latest in personal communications devices, he headed back to headquarters where he knew Rawlings and the rest of the taskforce were waiting.

The drive from the church to the headquarters, normally no more than 10-20 minutes, took nearly an hour because so many streets were blocked and he was in his personal car—a classic Jaguar—that had no GPS navigation system. Toby used the time trapped in his Jag to reflect on the many similarities between life and the game of craps. *“When your number comes up in life,”* he thought, *“it’s really not much different than snake eyes coming up on a pair of dice—pure chance.”* Fortunately for him, he had chosen to sit toward the rear of the church behind a column, and for that reason alone as far as he could determine, today was not the day for his number to come up. He had been one of the lucky ones.

After parking his car near the Joint Terrorism Taskforce headquarters, Toby walked quickly to the modern government building and took the elevator up to the third floor where the special unit was housed. As he entered the office, the scene in front of him was not nearly as chaotic as he imagined it would be. Although the noise level was quite high, people seemed to be going about their business in a purposeful and professional manner. *“Maybe we are becoming too accustomed to bombs and death,”* he thought.

The first person he encountered was Rawlings who was characteristically calm, even-tempered and filled with religious fervor. *“Praise the Lord that you were not killed or injured. I was worried about you,”* Trey exclaimed in his UVA- and Yale-educated English that still bore a trace of his distinctive Virginia Piedmont dialect in which the “u” in “about” seemed to disappear.

Although Toby knew that his friend had only the best of intentions, at this particular moment he found Trey’s religious fervor both annoying and inappropriate. *“Maybe you should give praise to the stonemasons who built the Cathedral,”* Toby suggested. *“If I hadn’t been sitting almost directly behind one of the giant columns, I don’t know what condition I would be in, but I bet it wouldn’t be very good. You should have seen the devastation—which reminds me, have you heard from Margaret? I never saw her today.”*

*“The Lord has blessed and watched over her, too,”* Trey responded. *“As faith would have it, she chose this weekend to visit her mother in Atlanta and is scheduled to fly back this evening. It is obvious that the Lord has something he wants you and Margaret to do on this earth, because he was watching over both of you.”*

*“Or maybe we were just lucky,”* Sullivan suggested, somewhat skeptical of the idea that God gets involved in day-to-day happenings on earth, such as where people are sitting in church when a bomb explodes.

“There you go again,” Trey said with a touch of exasperation obvious in his voice. “Why can’t you just accept that the Lord loves you and has a plan for you? Is it really so hard to give your life over to Jesus?”

Sullivan paused before he spoke, watching as his partner unconsciously straightened his blue and gold striped bow tie. He knew that Trey, a graduate of Yale Law School, was both intelligent and completely sincere in his faith, and it was just impossible not to like the guy, because he almost always had a smile on his face and an unshakable belief that good would eventually triumph. On the other hand, Toby had just come from a house of worship—supposedly the Lord’s house—where scores of innocent and devout men, women and even children had been killed or seriously injured. “*Just how did such an event demonstrate God’s love?*” he wondered.

“Yes, it is hard, Trey, especially after witnessing what I saw this morning,” Toby said slowly and quietly. “It is very difficult to find love in a lot of what happens in this world.”

“That’s because the devil is also real,” Rawlings explained. “Until all people accept Jesus as their Savior, death, destruction and evil will continue to plague the world.”

“Does that go for our Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim friends, too?” Sullivan responded. “Do they have to accept Jesus as their Savior, too?”

“I know you find it simplistic,” said Trey, “but I happen to believe in what the Bible says. ‘There is no salvation except through Jesus.’ Why do I believe it? Because I believe the resurrection is a historical fact, and that pretty much makes the rest of Christianity a slam-dunk in my book.”

“I guess it would,” Sullivan said, “but I’m afraid I just can’t be as certain as you about the resurrection or a lot of what the Bible says—particularly after what I witnessed today. If, as you say, God purposely spared Margaret and me, then that must mean that He purposely allowed the others to die. Why would He do that? It makes no sense.”

“That’s because we don’t know yet what God’s plan for us is,” Trey said. “We won’t be able to completely understand His plan until we are with Him in Heaven.”

“Look, Trey, now is probably not a good time for us to have this conversation,” Toby said. “In spite of the fact that I should be thanking God that I am alive, I am more than a little pissed off at any God that would allow such a terrible thing to happen. I think we’ll just have to continue to agree to disagree about religion for the time being and focus our energies on finding the miserable people responsible for the bombings.”

“You mean the radical Muslims?” Trey said more as a statement than a question.

“We don’t know that for certain,” said Toby, “It was possibly Muslims who were responsible, but just possibly, it was someone else.”

“Possibly Muslims?” Rawlings asked incredulously. “I’d say the chances are about 99 percent, wouldn’t you?”

“I’m not willing to go above 80 or 90 percent quite yet,” said Sullivan. “We have to keep our minds open at least a little. We want to make sure we catch the people who actually committed the crimes, not the ones that everyone assumes committed them.”

“Who else could be responsible?” asked Trey. “These are the only people I know who are so filled with hate that they would commit such horrific crimes.”

“What about the Ku Klux Klan, Timothy McVeigh, Eric Robert Rudolph, the White Christian Alliance, Raymond Collins and that guy John Chapman who shot those seven doctors about five years ago?” Sullivan reminded his partner. “We have had some homegrown kooks, too.”

“Maybe so, but Rudolph and Chapman, at least, were trying to save lives by stopping abortion,” said Rawlings. “You know as well as I do that most of the terrorist acts of the last few decades throughout the entire world have been the work of Muslim fanatics. The more democracy has threatened to spread in the Middle East, the more desperate the fanatics have become. They lash out without regard to whom they harm or where, all in the misguided belief that they will go to heaven if they kill a sufficient number of infidels.”

Toby looked at his partner with a slight scowl. “You don’t actually believe that Rudolph’s and Chapman’s actions were justified, do you, Trey?”

“I don’t believe that anyone has the right to kill innocent people unless the deaths are collateral, such as during warfare,” Trey responded, “but I also understand their desire to bring an end to the barbaric practice of abortion.”

“Under that philosophy, the Muslim terrorists can justify their actions as the only way to bring an end to what they see as the corruption and sinfulness of Western culture and government,” Sullivan answered.

Before Rawlings could respond, the taskforce leader, Associate Director Carl Drake, came to their door. Always a man of few words, he did not even ask Toby how he was doing after the explosion, but said bluntly, “Please move as quickly as possible into the conference room.”

Trey and Toby followed the ramrod straight, six-foot tall Drake to the meeting room, which contained a very long table, nearly two dozen leather swivel chairs and a large state-of-the-art interactive communications wall at one end of the room. The room was crowded and Sullivan and Rawlings took the only two remaining seats—the ones on either side of their boss. Other members of the taskforce from CIA, Homeland Security, the Capitol Police, the Metropolitan Police and a few other agencies filled the rest of the chairs around the rectangular table. Toby instantly focused his eyes and attention on the woman who had just sat down at the far end of the table. It was Tad. She was dressed in a casual outfit of black pants, a black blouse and a soft black jacket with some kind of subdued print—very likely one of the many travel outfits she routinely purchased from Chico’s, her favorite clothing store.

Before Sullivan even had an opportunity to say hello to his former lover, Drake looked at the 14 men and two women and asked them to bow their heads.

More as a sign of respect (and conformity) than reverence, Toby bowed his head slightly, but kept his eyes open while his boss called for Divine guidance and intervention. Such a request by a government official would have been almost unthinkable a couple of decades earlier, but recent Supreme Court decisions and the newly-enacted Freedom to Practice Religion Act had made Christianity—the nation’s dominant religion—virtually a state religion.

“Dear Jesus, we know that we are unworthy and are being punished for not living the kind of lives that you want us to live. We know that promiscuous behavior and immorality permeate our society and that we have not followed your commandments and teachings...”

While Drake prayed, Toby noticed Lieutenant Johnson of the Metropolitan Police, who was rumored to be gay, and Steve Abronovitz of Homeland Security, the only Jewish member, open their eyes uncomfortably as the boss referred to society’s sins and evoked the name of “Jesus, our Savior” to help guide the taskforce in its duties. It obviously never dawned on Drake that some people might take offense at his prayer — or maybe it did dawn on him and he just didn’t care.

Mostly though, Sullivan focused his eyes on Tad. They had met nearly six years earlier at an antiterrorism training program that had brought together representatives from the FBI, CIA, Homeland Security and several other agencies to make sure that everyone was “on the same page” as the trainers had said over and over. He was in his mid-thirties at the time and Tad was just barely 30. He was attracted to her instantly. She was approximately 5’8” tall with medium brown hair, gorgeous blue eyes and what was in his perception, a perfect figure (not emaciated like some of the so-called super models). Looks, brains and brass—she had it all. And, as Toby saw her winking at him, he had no doubts that he had made the right decision to wait for her while she was on an undercover assignment of indeterminate length that had lasted five long years.

“...and this we ask in your name, Jesus, amen.” The taskforce leader paused for a moment and then, while looking around the room with his steel-grey eyes, spoke in a quiet, resolute voice, either forgetting or ignoring the women present. “Gentlemen, we are at war. In the last six days, terrorists have launched the most ferocious attacks on American soil in more than a decade. Let’s review what we know so far.”

Drake waited for a few seconds for a three-dimensional projection of a street in Georgetown to appear on the giant video screen.

“On Monday, a car bomb exploded at approximately 7:30 a.m., just as Senator Charles Madison of Oklahoma was approaching his car. The senator and two other people on the sidewalks were killed.”

Next, a projection of Union Station appeared on the communications wall.

“On Tuesday around noon, another car bomb exploded near Union Station just as Charles Rutherford, assistant secretary of Homeland Security was heading toward the station for a luncheon meeting. Rutherford and three other people were killed.”

And then, a projection of the Metro Center train station.

“On Wednesday, a bomb exploded in a Metro train near the Metro Center station. Five people, including Senator John Morgan of Virginia, were killed.”

The projection of the Metro station was replaced by a three-dimensional view of the interior of the National Cathedral.

“And earlier today, a bomb exploded in the National Cathedral on Wisconsin Avenue. We have no firm casualty figures yet.”

Drake paused briefly before continuing. “We can’t officially say this, because it would compromise intelligence sources, but we have very good reason to believe that al-Qaida is responsible for all of these bombings.”

“*That’s interesting,*” Sullivan thought, although he said nothing. “*How could anyone already know for certain who planted the bomb in the church just a few hours ago?*” He anxiously awaited an explanation.

“In case you are wondering why I am so certain that al-Qaida is responsible for all of the bombings, including the one this morning, it is because we have an agent, whose code name is Desert Dan, working under cover in a terrorist sleeper cell in New Mexico. He has reason to believe that another sleeper cell in the Virginia or Maryland suburbs of D.C. has been activated and instructed to unleash a series of attacks in this area. Unless we find these people quickly and stop them, there will almost certainly be more attacks.”

“Do we have any leads as to where these people may be living?” Abronovitz asked.

“Nothing definite yet,” Drake responded. “Based on little bits of information he has gathered, Desert Dan believes that most or all of the cell members live outside of Washington in rural Virginia or Maryland.”

“If we have an agent under cover, how come we didn’t have any warning about the attacks?” Rawlings asked.

“That’s a good question,” Drake responded. “These al-Qaida cells are completely independent. The New Mexico cell in which the agent is imbedded knows virtually nothing about the Virginia/Maryland cell, except that it exists. These are smart and devious people. In case one cell is discovered, they don’t want that discovery leading to other cells.”

“But what if this agent, Desert Dan, has bad information?” asked Davenport. “Shouldn’t we consider the possibility that these bombings may have been the work of some domestic terrorists—or some international terrorists unrelated to al-Qaida?”

“I think that would just be an unnecessary distraction,” Drake replied. “I have complete confidence in the information we have received.”

“And so what is the plan for finding these putative terrorists?” Tad followed with another question.

“That’s why I have called you all together Miss Davenport—to determine exactly how we should proceed,” Drake responded, obviously not appreciative of Tad’s questions. “I can tell you, however, that I have some special assignments here at headquarters for you and Miss Robinson. I feel confident that these assignments—as well as things that will come up to assist the men in the field—will keep you extremely busy and be of tremendous value to the investigation.”

“*...assist the men in the field*”? Had she really heard that correctly? Tad sat motionless trying to absorb what she thought she had just heard. As a recent undercover agent and an expert on Islamic and mid-eastern culture, she was unaccustomed to being treated as a “gofer.” Having been away for five years, she knew very little about Drake’s attitude about women, and she could never have imagined that he would be as blatantly sexist as he appeared, even in an age when fewer and fewer women were pursuing careers.

“Pardon me, Director Drake, but I would prefer “Doctor” or “Agent” instead of “Miss,” and I am not sure I understand what it is you just said,” Tad answered firmly as Toby winced and waited for Drake’s response.

“I’m sorry, *Doctor* Davenport,” Drake responded with a very heavy—and somewhat sarcastic—emphasis on the title, “but the people in the field will be in extreme danger, and I do not believe in putting women in that position. There will be plenty of important work to be done here in the office.”

Knowing Tad’s temperament as he did, Toby braced himself for a forceful reaction to Drake’s explanation, but, amazingly, she said nothing further, although he suspected she was very likely fuming inside.

The only other woman on the taskforce—other than Drake’s assistant Margaret Peabody who had not yet arrived from Georgia—was a Metropolitan Police lieutenant named Lucinda Robinson. It appeared to Toby that she was poised to respond to Drake’s remark as well, but he spoke before she could open her mouth.

“Sullivan, you were at the Cathedral when the bomb exploded. We are all very grateful that the Lord was with you and you were not injured. What can you tell us about the attack?”

“One thing I can tell you is that it could have been a lot worse,” Toby responded as he used a laser device that he borrowed from Drake to point to the three dimensional projection of the Cathedral. “All of us who escaped injury were probably saved by the fact that the bomb was attached to the underside of this seat on the north side of the nave and only a portion of the device exploded. If it had been located closer to the center aisle and exploded with its full force, there may have been many more people killed and injured.”

Sullivan hesitated and then continued. “We can also be grateful that Margaret was away for the weekend, because she usually sits close to the seat where the bomb was hidden. And another fortunate coincidence is that Senator Stevens and his wife were not there. When they are in town, they almost always attend that service and sit close to where Margaret sits.”

“Any ideas why the Cathedral was targeted?” Drake asked.

“If this was in fact the work of terrorists,” Toby hypothesized, “it could be that they were looking for a soft target that would produce the maximum amount of publicity and residual terror. After all, where can people feel safe if not in a house of worship?”

“Why that church?” Trey asked.

“My guess would be because it is such a prominent landmark in the city or because they were targeting Senator Stevens,” Sullivan speculated. “Terrorists usually attempt to get the most attention they can for each attack. It isn’t so much the number of people they kill, as it is the symbolism attached to their targets. For example, when Eric Rudolph set off the bomb during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, relatively few people were killed or injured, but the attack achieved enormous media coverage.”

“Which is yet another reason that al-Qaida is the group most likely responsible for the attacks this week,” Drake said. “A series of bombings; all in our capital city; aimed at government officials and one of our country’s most prominent religious symbols. It fits their M.O. perfectly.”

Drake stopped briefly and then continued. “And I agree with Sullivan that it is quite likely that Senator Stevens was a target. He has been a very outspoken supporter of our country’s antiterrorism efforts...just one more reason the terrorists may have chosen that particular church.”

Although Toby still had not seen any concrete evidence to link al-Qaida to the bombings, he had to admit that the radical Islamic terrorist organization was high on the list of suspects. And since no one had any better ideas, the members of the taskforce spent the next two hours discussing possible strategies for locating the members of the alleged metro D.C. cell. Obviously, they would rely heavily on the forensics team to find solid evidence to lead to the bombers, but until such evidence turned up, they had to pursue the leads they had, and at this point, the only lead was the New Mexico tip.

Drake divided the taskforce unit into teams of two men each and assigned each team a specific geographic area within which they would work with local law enforcement personnel to find evidence leading to the capture or death of the terrorists. Sullivan and Rawlings were assigned the Leesburg,

Virginia area, and as the meeting adjourned—with another prayer—they quickly made arrangements to meet at headquarters early the next morning. “I’ll be here at 7:30,” said Trey.

After acknowledging Trey’s remarks— “May Christ be with you”—Toby wished his obsessively neat, spiritual and punctual partner a good evening and then caught up with Tad who was waiting for him at the elevator.

“For Christ sake, Tad, you might have let me know you were going to be here today. Do you have time to talk now?”

Tad grabbed Toby’s arm and pulled him into the elevator. “Yes, I have time to talk, but I need a drink first. I can’t believe what just happened.”

## CHAPTER 4

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” U.S. Constitution, Amendment #1*

“I still can’t believe what that Bible-thumping SOB did,” Tad gave Toby an earful as they left the building and stepped out into the cool evening air. “If I didn’t really want to be on this taskforce, I would have told him just where he could put all of those things he expects me to fetch for him and his boys.”

“Well, I missed you, too,” Sullivan responded. “I’m glad to see you haven’t mellowed in your old age.”

Tad stopped walking, grabbed Toby, hugged him and planted a big kiss squarely on his lips. She then looked in his eyes and touched his face gently. “I’m sorry, Toby. How selfish of me. I haven’t seen you in more than a year, you almost got blown up in church a few hours ago, and I’m carrying on like a spoiled brat. You don’t know how much I’ve missed you and how worried I was when I heard about the church bombing. It’s just that I am really upset. I spent five years in a region where women are treated like crap and I was really looking forward to getting back to the good ole U.S. of A. And then after spending an eternity on a flight with Doublewide and Sticky—but, that’s another story—I finally get home and find that the country I came back to isn’t the same as the one I left five years ago. I can’t believe they put a Neanderthal like Drake in charge of such an important taskforce. Who made that decision?”

“Actually, I think the president decided that the FBI should take the lead, and then the director chose Drake,” Toby answered. “They’ve known each other since college days and belong to the same church, and besides, he does have a good reputation in the counter-terrorism business.”

“Same church, huh? Well that explains it,” Tad shot back. “This government is becoming more and more a government of the churches, by the churches and for the churches. What the crap was Drake doing starting and ending our meeting with a Christian prayer? Does he not realize that there are still people of other faiths—and even some nonbelievers—in this country?”

“I’m not sure it matters to him,” Toby said, “but he probably means well.”

“Means well? Jesus, Sullivan—I see you still give everyone the benefit of the doubt,” Tad said as she stopped walking. “By the way, if I can change the subject, you do still keep a large stash of wine in your condo, don’t you?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I bought a case of really nice Bordeaux yesterday. Are you inviting yourself over?” Toby asked.

“Of course I’m inviting myself over,” Davenport responded playfully. “You don’t mind, do you?”

“What do you think?” Toby answered. “I’ve only been waiting for this day for five years. My car is right up the street.”

After a short walk that led to Toby’s silver sports car, Tad looked at the vintage auto and exclaimed, “I can’t believe you’ve still got the old Jag!”

“Why of course,” he answered. “I’ll keep this car until it dies—or until the government takes it away from me for polluting too much. Hop in—that is, if you aren’t too embarrassed.”

After Tad and he were securely buckled in their seats, Toby turned the key and the powerful V-12 gasoline engine responded with a satisfying roar. Within a matter of minutes, they arrived at Sullivan’s 1940’s era condominium building just off Connecticut Avenue above Woodley Park. “Remember the days before the return of the blue laws when you could actually buy alcohol in restaurants on Sundays?” Sullivan asked as they took the elevator up to the 10th—and top— floor.

“It wasn’t all that long ago,” Davenport said, “but it seems like ages. What’s happening to this country, anyway?”

“The times, they are a changing,” Sullivan answered in a short burst of an old folk song as he opened the door to his spacious corner apartment with its 10-foot ceilings, crown molding and parquet floors



throughout—and a spectacular view of Rock Creek Parkway on the east side and the city and monuments in the distance on the south side.

“I love this apartment,” Tad said as she walked in the entry hall and noticed some photographs she had not seen before. “Who are these people?”

“My family,” he answered.

“But I thought you were adopted by a couple that had no close relatives and you never knew your real parents?” Tad responded.

“That’s right,” said Toby.

“So, how did you find photos of your relatives?” Tad asked, obviously still puzzled.

“Well, they are actually my ersatz family,” Toby explained. “I don’t know who any of my real blood relatives are, but I was at the Georgetown flea market one Sunday a few years ago and saw the late 19th century photo of that couple up on the top left and bought it. Why? I don’t know, except I just thought it was a neat photo. A few weeks later, I was in an antique/junk store and saw a lot of photos of people taken all during the 20th century, so I had this weird idea to invent a family. I tried to find photos of people who had some features similar to mine—like look at that skinny guy in the middle row in the three-piece suit that looks like a banker. Doesn’t his nose look a lot like mine?”

“Now that you mention it, he did look a lot like you,” Tad said.

“Meet my great-uncle Ned,” Toby continued. “And that couple at the bottom-right with the baby—that’s me with dear old Great Uncle Hiram and Great Aunt Louise.”

“Toby, you’re incorrigible,” Tad said while laughing. “Has anyone ever asked you about them before?”

“Oh yea, and the amazing thing is, a lot of people tell me that I am a dead-ringer for my uncle or my cousin or some other relative. Almost everyone sees a remarkable family resemblance—although it’s more on the Parker side of the family than the Sullivan side.”

“Toby Sullivan, I see you haven’t lost your bizarre sense of humor. What else have you changed since I was here last?”

“Only the kitchen,” Toby replied. “I just finished remodeling it—not that you care much about kitchens.”

“Let me see,” Tad said excitedly. “I do care—especially if it means that you are more likely to cook for me.”

Toby smiled at Tad and led her into the rectangular kitchen that was extremely spacious for circa 1940’s construction. Davenport surveyed the handcrafted cherry-stained wooden cabinets, black granite counter tops and the latest high-tech appliances. “Boy, it looks like you sunk some money into this setup.”

“A fair amount, but I saved a lot by doing most of the work, including building the cabinets,” Toby replied.

“You built them yourself?” Tad asked, obviously impressed. “Where’s your workshop?”

“We have a communal workshop in the basement,” Toby responded.

“Boy, you are a Toby of all trades, aren’t you? I know you will enjoy cooking here,” Tad said as she noticed the gray-spotted white cat eating out of a bowl on the floor. “Is that J. Edgar?”

“Of course, although he responds better to *Jeddy*,” Sullivan said as he picked up the small short-haired cat who squirmed briefly before relaxing and allowing his staff of one to rub his stomach while simultaneously opening the refrigerator, pouring some half and half in a special bowl and warming it briefly in the microwave.

“Oh gosh, don’t tell me you’re now giving that spoiled cat warmed cream,” Tad said in amusement. “And what is wrong with that?” Toby asked while trying to appear serious.

“Well, I guess it’s okay—but only if you promise to use these fancy new appliances to spoil me some, too,” Davenport answered. “However, I do have one question.”

“What’s that?” Sullivan asked.

“Where’s the cook-top? I see the oven and microwave, but there are no burners.”

Toby touched a spot on the wall near the microwave, activating a quiet motor that slowly propelled the built-in cook-top out from the wall of appliances. “Presto, one cook-top. And watch this,” he said as he stood in front of a black glass panel near the cook-top. “Menu: Chicken.”

Suddenly a list of chicken recipes appeared on the glass wall. Toby touched one of the items listed and instantaneously an entire recipe for baked chicken appeared. Then he pressed the word “demonstration” near the recipe and a hologram of a chef appeared demonstrating in specific detail how to prepare the chicken recipe.

“Now that is impressive,” Tad said. “I might even get into cooking with a set-up like this.”

After opening the wine and allowing it to breathe for a few minutes, Toby led Tad into the spacious living area.

“Do you still play the piano?” Tad asked as she looked at the baby grand in one corner of the room.

“Occasionally,” said Toby. “Mostly simple classics and a little jazz. I’m no Horowitz, but I still enjoy it.”

Toby handed Tad a glass that he had poured half-full of a deep red wine. “Here’s looking at you, kid—and may I say that you are quite nice to look at.”

“You’re looking pretty good, too, Toby—damn good for an old, middle-aged guy who just survived a bombing,” Tad said as she held her glass up to touch his and then took a swallow of the smooth Bordeaux.

“This is incredible,” she said. “Maybe it’s because I haven’t had any good wine in so long, but it is really outstanding. Is it the one you bought yesterday?”

“Actually, no. I decided that surviving a bomb blast and having you back home are both good reasons to uncork one of my really special wines. It’s a 2004 Mouton Rothschild that should be just at its prime,” Sullivan responded as he sniffed the wine’s bouquet and then took a small taste, twirling the wine in his mouth briefly before swallowing. “Very nice,” he said. “Full-bodied with hints of coffee, chocolate, a little smoke and some berries.”

“Speaking of the bombing, how are you feeling?” Tad asked as she stroked Toby’s face. “Are you as unaffected by it as you appear to be, or are you just doing a really good job hiding your feelings?”

Toby thought for a few seconds before answering. “It’s hard to explain,” he said. “Because I was behind that column, it was almost like watching the whole thing on television...except, of course, that there were dead and injured people all around me. Maybe it hasn’t all sunk in yet, or maybe it’s just that I have seen horrible crime scenes before. Whatever the reason, I feel more anger than fear. I just want to catch the people responsible.”

“But you will let me know if it starts to bother you and I can help you somehow, won’t you?” Tad asked.

“Of course I will,” Toby said as he poured more wine in both of their glasses.

After taking a sip from the newly filled glass, Tad suddenly noticed a large sketch of herself hanging on the wall near the piano. “Did you do that, Toby?” she asked, clearly flattered.

“Yes, I sketched it a couple of years ago from some photos I had of you. Do you like it?” he asked.

“Like it! I love it!” she responded. “I always knew you were talented, but to sketch that with such detail is just amazing to me.”

“I’m glad you like it. It helped remind me of the little features of your face that I love.”

Tad took another sip and then looked at her friend. “You are a really amazing man, Toby, and I hope we can spend a lot of time together so I can puff up your ego—at least enough to give you delusions of adequacy.

Toby laughed. “I’d like that.”

After taking another sip of the smooth, flavorful wine, Davenport suddenly seemed more somber.

“Is something wrong?” Sullivan asked.

“I guess you could say that,” Tad replied. “I’m really scared about something.”

“Something about me scares you?” Toby asked in a concerned voice.

“No, it’s not you, but it could affect both of us,” Tad answered in a serious voice. “It’s what’s happening in this country of ours. Can you help me understand how everything changed? As much as I

read about the changes while I was gone, I need to get a better understanding of what actually happened, especially how the government became so religious and how our entire political party structure changed. When I left, we still had some Republicans and Democrats. Now all we have are Christian Democratic-Republicans and National Libertarians. Help me understand how this all happened so fast and what it means for the future.”

“I’ll do the best I can,” Sullivan said as he put his glass on the coffee table. “I think the root causes developed when we were still kids in the 1980’s and 1990’s.”

“We?” Tad asked with a slight grin.

“Okay, when you were still a kid and I was an older kid,” Toby laughed. “That’s when the Christian coalition became so influential in the Republican Party. And then, there was that whole series of events in the early part of this century—the election of 2004, all of the hoopla around that woman that they wouldn’t let die—what was her name —Terry Shiavo, the controversy over stem-cell research, the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI. Suddenly, the right-to-life movement was re-energized with groups like Missionaries of the Gospel of Life springing up and all of the conservative and evangelical Christian churches becoming even more politically active.”

“How could they be any more politically active?” Tad asked after taking another sip of wine. “They pretty much had veto power over Republican candidates and policies.”

“It certainly seemed that way,” Toby responded, “but after having such high expectations after the ’04 elections, the religious faction of the GOP soon became frustrated, because they were unsuccessful in getting their agenda through Congress. They wanted a complete ban on abortion, an end to embryonic stem-cell research, the inclusion of the intelligent design theory of creation in the public school curriculum and a constitutional amendment to abolish gay marriage and civil unions. And they didn’t get any of that. In fact, they felt that Christianity was increasingly under attack from the ‘secular humanists.’”

Toby took another sip of wine and continued. “There was also a growing schism between the religious wing of the party and the business or “country club” Republicans on issues such as immigration and free trade. Face it, both factions of that party had used the other to gain power, and once they had power, it was only a matter of time before their different political philosophies and agendas caused increased friction.”

“But why did the Republican and Democratic parties both just vanish?” Tad asked while glancing out the window at the forest surrounding Rock Creek Parkway.

“Probably the greatest impetus was the politicalization of the Christian left to compete with the Christian right. Back in the early part of this century a group called the Sojourners, a progressive evangelical Christian ministry, organized Christians to help redefine Christian values away from the agenda of the political right and toward issues like poverty.”

“But wouldn’t that have caused the Christians to divide, rather than come together?” Tad asked.

“We’ll, it did for awhile, but a few years after the economic meltdown of 2008-2009 and the election of President Obama, there was a famous—or infamous—meeting of Christian religious leaders—both liberals and conservatives—who decided that they should join together to make America a more Christian nation,” Sullivan explained. “They abandoned the old political parties and started their own. You remember that, don’t you?”

“Of course I remember it, but it seemed like such an unlikely alliance at the time. I still don’t understand how a political party structure more than 150 years old changed so quickly,” Tad responded. “Maybe I was too wrapped up in my work to pay much attention, but I just don’t get how all of the old allegiances just vanished in less than a decade.”

“It was rather sudden, but really not that hard to explain.” Toby said. “Think of the American political structure as a circle. Up until that meeting of religious leaders, the circle was divided more or less evenly into two sides—left and right, or liberal and conservative. But that changed when this coalition of Christians came together with a common objective of using the political system to further their religious agenda. They completely changed how the circle was divided.”

Toby drew an imaginary circle in the air and then drew an imaginary line through it from left to right. “Think of the new division as being along an east-west axis with those advocating a faith-based government on the top half of the circle and those supporting secular government on the bottom half. The faith-based advocates include most of the old right-wing religious Republicans, some African-American Christians motivated both by religion and a thirst for political power, devout Latinos and many of the more religious-oriented, social justice and anti-war Democrats. There are also some others who favor a more isolationist America, including less immigration and more economic protectionism. Together, they formed the Christian Democratic-Republican Party or CDR, which is now, as you know, the majority party in the country.”

“But I still don’t understand how people with such divergent views can be in the same political party.” Tad said.

“It’s no different than in the 1930’s when Franklin Roosevelt put together the New Deal coalition of conservative white Southerners, blacks, liberal Northerners, labor unionists and a few others thrown in for good measure,” Toby explained. “Successful political parties almost always include people of significantly different views and philosophies. Ideologically pure parties rarely hold power because they are too small.”

“But how can adamantly pro-choice people coexist in the same party with equally as adamant pro-life folks?” Tad asked.

“Just like the pro-segregation southern whites and the pro-integration blacks and Northerners did in the Democratic Party from the 1930’s through much of the 1960’s. They had other issues, such as the economy, that were of greater concern to them. And what greater issue could there be to hold people of different political views together today than doing what they believe is pleasing to God?”

“And tell me what it is that people who used to be considered liberal Democrats get out of being in the CDR?” Tad asked skeptically after taking another sip of the smooth, full-bodied wine.

“Well, for one thing, they now have power to influence policy, which they didn’t have much at all in the last two decades of the 20th century and first few years of this century,” Toby explained. “Since taking power the CDR has decreased defense spending and increased spending on ‘programs of compassion’ for people in need. They have also established a system of universal, free health care. And the government finally abolished the death penalty, which liberals had long claimed was a blight on our country’s standing in the world,” Toby responded.

“Yes, but our so-called Christian government has also criminalized abortion and made it almost impossible to take nutrition and water away from people who are dying or in a vegetative state,” Davenport said curtly. “I don’t like abortion any more than the right-to-life folks, and I don’t think I could ever have one myself, but what about the women who find themselves in hopeless situations, such as victims of rape or incest? What are they supposed to do? And what about a person’s wishes to die with dignity and not have her life prolonged just so religious fanatics can feel that they are doing the ‘Christian’ thing? If we don’t watch out, American women will be wearing burqas and walking five feet behind our men just like women do in Islamic countries.”

“Come on, Tad, get serious,” Sullivan said between sips of the Bordeaux. “You know that could never happen in this country.”

“I hope you’re right,” Davenport responded. “But doesn’t it make you nervous that both the Congress and president are pushing so hard for that amendment to change the name of the country to the Christian Republic of the United States of America? As I understand it, the amendment would make the New Testament the basis of civil law and thereby make any law deemed anti-Christian unconstitutional. Even the judiciary couldn’t stand in the way of mixing the state and religion.”

“Of course it makes me nervous, but it isn’t going to happen,” Toby said reassuringly while pouring a little more wine into their glasses. “Sure, the amendment has passed in the House, but they’re several votes short in the Senate, and I’m almost certain that the National Liberty Party will gain more seats in the election eight months from now.”

“I hope you’re right, Toby. But like almost everyone in the country, I feel a bit vulnerable right now. And as you know, vulnerable is not a feeling I deal with very well.”

“Oh, really,” Toby said. “You don’t have to tell that to the guy you once broke up with because you were beginning to feel emotionally dependent and vulnerable. I felt just as dependent, but I thought that feeling close to someone was a good thing.”

Tad looked at Sullivan and mustered a slight grin. “That was five years ago when I was a mere child. I had just gotten that big promotion and was about to be shipped overseas. I couldn’t afford to get emotionally involved.”

As Tad spoke, Toby couldn’t take his eyes off of her. Although now in her mid-30’s, Davenport looked several years younger than most women her age. Her body was still as trim—and curvaceous—as he remembered, and her wavy brown hair showed no signs of graying.

After another glass of wine, further discussion about the state of the country and a lot of catching up on their long separation, Toby looked straight into Tad’s deep blue eyes. “I really have missed you,” he said.

Tad reached across the table and touched Sullivan’s hand. “I missed you, too, Toby. It wasn’t an easy decision, but the opportunity to go undercover was something I had dreamed of since I was a little girl watching spy movies on our old low-definition 25” television set.”

“And what about now?” Toby asked. “Why didn’t you let me know when you got back in town? I had to hear it through the grapevine.”

“Mainly because it happened so fast. I didn’t know until yesterday myself,” Tad responded. “I was going to call you from the plane, but I decided to surprise you. And, if the truth be known, I guess I was a little afraid that you might not still be available...or that you might be and I would face the same dilemma I faced before.”

“Well what say we talk about all of that later,” Sullivan said as he leaned over and kissed Tad sensuously. “You’re here, I’m here, and I don’t know about you, but these bombings have made me aware that life is very fragile and can be over in an instant. I would love your company tonight.”

“I’d like yours, too, Toby, because life is fragile, and besides,” Davenport said as she kissed Sullivan softly on his ear, “I’m pretty drunk and I’ve been sex-deprived for way too long.”

## CHAPTER 5

*“I’ve never understood how God could expect His creatures to pick the one true religion by faith—it strikes me as a sloppy way to run a universe.” Robert A. Heinlein (Jubal Harshaw in Stranger in a Strange Land)*

On Monday morning Toby awoke around 6 a.m., saw Tad lying in the bed next to him and recalled the events of the day before. “*Surely,*” he said to himself as he started to get out of bed, “*I’m one of the luckiest people on the planet.*” He then kissed his long-absent lover softly on the forehead and gently patted Jeddy before starting the coffee and taking a quick shower. After putting on a navy blue terry-cloth robe, he cooked some bacon and English muffins, cut a grapefruit in half, fixed two plates, arranged everything on a tray with a small bud vase and single flower that he took out of a larger arrangement in the living room, and carried it into his bedroom where Tad was just waking up.

“Good morning, sunshine,” he said as she looked at him through half-opened eyes.

“What day is it? Who am I? Where am I?” she asked groggily, obviously still feeling the effects of jetlag from the day before.

Toby smiled as he answered. “It’s Monday morning, March 2, 2020. You are Tiffany Ashley Davenport who just arrived back in the U.S. after five years as a spy. You are in the bed of Winston Tobias Sullivan. Any more questions?”

“Yea,” she replied light-heartedly. “How many laws did we break last night? I feel too good not to have done something illegal.”

“Almost everything we did was perfectly legal,” Toby said as he placed the tray on the nightstand beside the bed. “Fortunately, there aren’t any laws in D.C. against sex outside of marriage; they are only in effect in a few states in the Deep South and mid-west. And the laws prohibiting birth control are only being enforced here and there in a few Catholic states. The D.C. government hasn’t gotten around to them yet.”

“Give them time; they will,” said Tad as she stretched her arms.

Eyeing the bacon, muffins, fruit and coffee, Davenport perked up and smiled. “That looks good. You are truly a man of many talents. I’d almost think you were gay if I didn’t know better.”

“Because I like classical music and can cook?” Toby asked as Tad got out of bed. “What a stereotype.”

“That, and because you aren’t as much of a pig as most men,” she said laughing. “Would you excuse me a moment? I’m going to the powder room.”

While Tad excused herself, Toby put the tray of food on the bed and walked out to the hall to fetch the newspaper. The headline on the front page was the biggest he had seen since the morning after 9/11/2001.

***NATIONAL CATHEDRAL BOMBED!***  
*Several Dead; Nearly 100 Injured*

“Look at this,” Sullivan said as he returned to the bedroom and held up the paper. “Four bombs and nearly 20 people killed in less than a week. We have got to stop these people. After being at the Cathedral yesterday, this has become a little personal with me.”

“I can see how it would become personal,” said Tad while spreading butter on her English muffin. “But what do you mean when you say ‘we’ have got to stop them? Don’t you mean that you and the other men have to stop them?” Tad responded. “It’s clear that Director Drake has no intention of allowing the ‘fairer sex’ to be involved with the actual physical work of tracking these people down. For Pete’s sake, does he think it requires a penis to solve a crime like this?”

“It is strange,” Toby responded after a sip of coffee. “When I came into the terrorism division, Drake had a totally different reputation than he has today. I didn’t know him that well until recently, so I don’t know what caused the change, but some agents who have worked with him for a long time claim that he began to change after being ‘born again’ and becoming an evangelical Christian. Apparently, his attitude toward women became much more traditional, including convincing his wife to give up her law practice so she could home school their children.”

“That’s interesting,” said Tad, while holding her coffee mug up. “Can I have some more?”

“Of course you can,” Sullivan said. “I’ll get it.”

“Thanks, Toby. What do you think I should do?” Davenport called out to Toby as he made his way into the kitchen to get the coffee pot. “In spite of the religious drift of the country, I believe it is still illegal to discriminate against people based on their gender, isn’t it?”

“I believe it is,” Toby said as he returned to the bedroom. “So far, most of the laws that Congress and the state legislatures have passed to encourage women to stay home and raise families have been focused on economic incentives and disincentives. For example, Congress recently passed a bill that gives an extra \$10,000 per-child credit for every child who is home-schooled and a 15 percent tax break to any two-parent, single-income family in which there are children under age 18. The tax-break is taken away if both parents are employed. Talk about discouraging both parents from working.”

“Yea, and we all know which parent will be staying home, don’t we?” Tad asked rhetorically. “So what am I supposed to do about this, Sullivan? I’m not the type to just let it go.”

Toby had just taken a large bite of English muffin. After swallowing the muffin and taking a sip of coffee, he said sarcastically, “Oh really? I would never have known that—but let me make a suggestion. Don’t do anything drastic for a day or two. It may be that Drake will change his mind and give you more responsibilities in line with your training and skills. And you can be sure that I’ll keep you in the loop on anything that Trey and I hear or discover.”

Tad was now out of bed, taking off the T-shirt Toby had loaned her and putting on the clothes that she had placed neatly on a chair in the corner of the bedroom.

“You know that goes against my grain, but maybe it isn’t all that bad of an idea given the situation. If Drake continues to be a male chauvinist jerk, I’ll have to do something. Otherwise, I’ll try to impress him with my expertise and wait for my chance to get out in the field and do what I’ve been trained to do. In the meantime, Toby, please keep me in the loop. I promise not to get too emotional or cry every time something bad happens.”

“And by the way,” she continued, “what’s the story with your partner Trey? Is he some kind of Christian fanatic, too?”

“I don’t think I would go that far,” Toby answered. “He is very religious and an organization freak, but he’s not a bad guy. He comes from a very prominent old-line aristocratic Virginia family. You might have detected his accent—the way he says ‘abote’ instead of ‘about.’ He went to UVA undergraduate and Yale Law School, and he has a beautiful wife and four nearly perfect children that she home-schools.

“Trey could have done almost anything he wanted after school, but he chose to work for the Bureau because he really wants to make the country safer and a better place for people to raise their families. And he’s very sincere about it...and very good at what he does. He’s got a first-rate mind for detail and organization. You probably noticed that he’s got one of those little computer notepads that responds to voice, keying or a special stylus and can instantly organize and report the information in almost any format you want.”

“Okay, if you say so, I’ll give the little preppy bow-tied nerd a chance,” Tad said as she finished putting on her shoes.

After dressing, Tad opened Toby’s closet door.

“Just checking to see if you still have your eclectic wardrobe, or if you have become a company man who follows the Bureau’s boring dress code.”

“A company man?” Sullivan asked laughing. “No way. I still like to wear whatever fits my mood or, if I can’t make up my mind, I close my eyes, choose a tie and then pick things to go with it,” Toby said.

“Thank goodness you haven’t given in to the Bureau’s fetish for dark suits and white shirts,” Tad observed.

“I still get a lecture every now and then for wearing blazers, tweed sport coats, light gray suits, and colored shirts,” Toby answered, “but as long as I have a coat and tie on, no one says too much.”

“That’s one of the things I like about you, Sullivan,” Tad said as she kissed him good-bye and headed into the living area to retrieve her handbag. “You have a little touch of the rebel in you.”

Toby called after her. “When can the rebel see you again?”

“I don’t know,” she responded as she opened the door to the outside hallway. “Last night was wonderful, but I need to think about things a little before we get back in high gear. I don’t want a repeat of five-years ago, do you?”

“No, but we are both older and wiser,” Toby responded. “And, I will do my best not to rush things.”

Tad laughed and smiled. “Thanks, Toby, but after last night, it’s a little late for that, isn’t it?”

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Toby was rarely as obsessed with punctuality as his partner, but this investigation had, in fact, become personal, which gave him more than enough incentive to get to the office by 7:30. Although there were FBI agents all over the country working around the clock on the attacks, the only other members of the elite task force who had arrived were Trey and Margaret Peabody, who had flown-in from Atlanta the night before. She hugged both of the agents and wiped away a few tears.

“Margaret, praise the Lord; we are indeed blessed that you are safe,” said Trey, who was an upbeat Christian if ever there was one. “I know the Lord was watching over you this weekend.”

“Thank you, Trey,” said Margaret, who was in her mid-twenties, tall, attractive, blonde and very southern. “I do feel kinda like the Lord was watching over me. If Director Drake hadn’t talked me into going home to Atlanta this weekend I might could have been one of those poor people killed or injured. He said I should go home so my mother could see me and make sure I was okay after those car bombs last week, but I think he must have gotten some kind of message from the Lord.”

“I’m sure he did,” said Trey. “Sometimes the Lord sends us messages and we have no idea that He has. The main thing is that you are okay. We need you here.”

Sullivan didn’t agree with a lot of the Christian platitudes that Trey was espousing, but he did want Peabody to know that he was glad she was safe. “I was very relieved when I discovered that you weren’t at church,” he said. “I know that you usually sit near the front on the north side of the nave, and that is exactly where the bomb went off. Thank goodness you were in Atlanta.”

“Was anyone I know hurt?” Peabody asked. “I heard on the radio that Senator Stevens and his wife were not there—but, what about that sweet family that usually sits in the pew across from me—the Hendersons? I hope they are okay.”

“I’m afraid they were all hurt pretty badly, but I think they will pull through,” Toby answered, feeling genuine empathy for the young family. “And I’m afraid that Rector York was injured, too. His injuries could have been much worse had he not been standing on the south side of the altar.”

Margaret wiped away a few more tears and then asked what she could do to help catch the “dreadful people” that bombed her church and killed and injured nice people that she saw almost every Sunday.

“There is a lot you can do for us,” Toby answered as he picked up a laser pointer off of Peabody’s desk, using it to highlight the counties around Leesburg, Virginia. “You can help us contact the law enforcement personnel in the Leesburg sector. We need every law enforcement agency within 25 miles of Leesburg to send representatives to the new administration building for a meeting at noon.”

“I’ll do whatever I can,” Peabody said as she dabbed a few remaining tears with a paper tissue. “Y’all put me to work.”

By 10 a.m., all of the arrangements had been made for the two F.B.I. agents to travel to the formerly quaint, but now bustling Virginia town approximately 40 miles west of the nation’s capital. During the drive, first on I-66 West and then state road 267, Toby and Trey discussed the enormity of their task and the frustrations of hunting terrorists who often have virtually unlimited resources.



“I hope this plan works, but I admit I don’t have a lot of confidence that it will,” said Sullivan, who was driving the small electric sedan recently acquired by the Bureau. “History teaches us that anybody who has resources and wants to avoid being found is very difficult to capture, whether it is Eric Robert Rudolph, Osama bin Laden, John Chapman or Omar bin Mohammed. There are a lot of places to hide in the world.”

“Well at least our search area is somewhat narrower than the areas where all of them hid,” Trey suggested. “We have good reason to believe that the people we’re looking for are in a somewhat confined space.”

“Yea,” said Toby, “if you want to call an area that resembles a semicircle with a radius of 100 miles, “confined? That’s more than 15,000 square miles if my math is correct. That is a lot of area in which to hide, particularly if you have plenty of money to pay people to keep their mouths shut.”

“That might work for cult heroes who have loyal followers, but it won’t work for Muslim terrorists who have just killed and injured scores of women and children in a Christian church,” Rawlings argued. “I can’t imagine anyone in rural Virginia helping them.”

“Maybe you’re right,” said Toby. “That’s another reason I don’t think we’re going to turn up anything. If I were a Muslim terrorist, I would hide out in cities such as Detroit where there are a lot of other Muslims, not in a rural area where I would stick out like a gay couple dancing at a Baptist picnic.”

“Now that’s an image I just as soon not visualize, but I see your point.” Trey responded. “It is difficult to imagine any Muslim, much less a terrorist cell, going unnoticed in Leesburg, Virginia or the rural area surrounding it. Still, if we can organize this search well enough and if we all pray for guidance, we just might find them.”

“I’m sure prayer can’t hurt,” Toby said, “but I wouldn’t mind some concrete clues.”

“I’ll pray for some of those, too,” Trey said. “I know the Lord wants us to stop this senseless violence, but He needs us to reach out to Him.”

Sullivan wasn’t always sure how to respond to his partner’s religious references and pronouncements, but on this day—after witnessing death and destruction the day before at his church—he wasn’t willing to allow things that made no sense to him go unchallenged.

“What do you mean the Lord wants us to stop the senseless violence?” Sullivan asked. “Yesterday you implied that God took an active hand in determining who lived and died in tragedies like the bombing. Today you say that God will help stop the violence if we reach out to Him. Why the hell do you think those people were in church? How much more reaching out could they do?”

“Look Toby,” Trey responded. “You have every right to be upset about what happened yesterday, but don’t take it out on God. If anything, you should be thanking God that you are alive. He didn’t plant the bomb.”

“No, He didn’t,” Toby agreed. “So what makes you think that He had anything to do with determining who was injured and who wasn’t? What makes you so sure He even cares what happens to individuals on earth?”

“Like I said yesterday,” Trey explained, “I believe that Christ died for us and rose from the dead. That is all I need to know.”

“So you believe everything in the Bible?” Toby asked. “For example, do you really believe that the earth is only a few thousand years old and that Noah actually had two of every animal in the world on his arc? Both of those stories defy logic and common sense.”

“I don’t have to believe them literally, but there is no proof to the contrary,” said Trey to his doubting friend.

“Surely you aren’t saying that you actually believe the arc story is true,” Toby prodded.

Trey responded with as much logic and information as he could muster.

“I understand your skepticism, but the story is not as far-fetched as you and others say. Based on measurements given in Genesis, most experts agree that the ark had approximately 1,500,000 cubic feet of open space, or something resembling a three-level barge the size of one-and-a-half football fields. According to various feasibility studies, this was more than enough room to keep representatives of all of

the 16,000 to 25,000 distinct kinds of animals that were living then with all of their food for an entire year.”

Trey paused and then continued, “In fact, assuming that the average size of each animal was about that of a sheep, this barge could actually hold up to 125,000 separate creatures. Going one step further, not only was the ark large enough for its cargo, it was designed perfectly for stability and sea-worthiness. Several hydrodynamic tests have confirmed that it was virtually impossible to capsize this barge, even in the most violent waves and winds.”

Toby looked at his partner and, in spite of his general frustration with what he considered religious hocus pocus, he grinned. “And I suppose Noah and his sons were experts at identifying the sex organs of all the animals and they all just happened to be fertile as well as live within walking distance of the ark.”

“Whether it happened literally that way is not important,” Trey said, “but don’t be so dismissive of the story, because it is very likely that there is some truth to it. And besides, even if those Old Testament stories are not literally true, Christ lived just a little over 2,000 years ago and his life, death and resurrection are as well documented as the reign of Julius Caesar. How much proof do you need?”

“More than you have given me,” said Toby. “I don’t mean to make light of your beliefs, but I’m afraid I am just not very open to religion right now.”

“That is unfortunate,” said Trey, “because religion is what can bring us peace at difficult times such as this.”

“Yea, what was it Karl Marx said about the opiate of the people?” Toby responded. “But let’s drop the theological debate for the time being if you don’t mind.”

“Okay, but you can’t stop me from praying for you to find peace through Jesus.”

“I wouldn’t think of it,” Toby said.

For the next few minutes, the two partners sat quietly as they cruised through the picturesque Virginia countryside. Then Toby broke the silence.

“Boy, I miss those old gas-guzzling sedans we used to drive,” he said, not knowing for certain whether Trey was listening or praying. “They were real cars — unlike these small electric toys. But I guess we have to face the reality that we’re running out of oil. I would like to try one of those new hydrogen fuel cell cars someday. I understand they can really move.”

Toby glanced at Rawlings who was just opening his eyes, but had obviously kept up with the conversation. “Speaking of running out of oil, when are you going to do the responsible thing and get rid of that fuel-guzzling car of yours?” Trey asked his partner.

“My Jag? Get rid of it? How can you even suggest such a thing?” Toby asked as if someone were suggesting that he cut off a finger or a hand. “You’ve seen it. It’s a classic and there aren’t many 20th century gas-powered cars on the road anymore, and very, very few Jaguar 12 cylinder convertibles. It was the first car I bought after I got out of college, and I intend to keep it as long as there are parts—and gasoline—available to keep it running. And besides, I only drive it about 5,000 miles a year. I take the Metro most of the time.”

“At the rate that car goes through parts, it still might not be around very long anyway,” Trey joked as the on-board voice and video communications device suddenly activated. It was Tad calling, and her conversation with Toby and Trey seeking their advice about dealing with Carl Drake occupied them until they pulled into a parking lot adjacent to the Loudon County Administration Building.

Once inside, Toby and Trey located the local sheriff, Hollis Richardson, who took them into a conference room on the second floor. Already waiting were two-dozen law enforcement personnel from Leesburg and nearby jurisdictions. Most were seated around a long table upon which were spread a large selection of sandwiches and some bottled soft drinks and water.

“Help yourself to some food if you’re hungry, and then we’ll get to work,” said Richardson, a large man—probably 6’4” tall and 275 pounds. “We’re ready to do whatever we can to catch the SOBs that bombed the church and killed all those people. You just tell us where to go and what to do, and if we need more people, we’ll deputize as many as we need. No terrorists are going to get away with doing what they done.”

Toby glanced around the spacious room and noticed that it bore a remarkable resemblance to the task force conference room—a large rectangular table, leather swivel chairs and a plasma communications smart screen on one of the walls. He picked up a sandwich of ham on wheat with mustard, lettuce and tomato. Trey chose a turkey on wheat with mayo. While they ate, they made small talk with some of the law enforcement personnel from the surrounding area. After a few minutes, Trey began to explain what Desert Dan had reported about the al-Qaida cell operating near the nation's capital. He then described the general plan of the taskforce to divide the target area into zones that would be thoroughly searched by local law enforcement personnel familiar with the area.

“So just what are we looking for, here?” asked a deputy sheriff named Clyde Anderson from Charles Town, Virginia. “Some Muslims?”

“Probably,” said Trey, “although my partner, Sullivan here, isn't as certain.”

“That's probably who we're looking for,” Toby explained, “but it is also possible that someone else is responsible...or that al-Qaida has trained local terrorists who might blend-in with the local environment better—like the ones in France a few years ago. The truth is, we don't have a whole lot to go on, but we do know that we have to start someplace, and this is the best lead we have.”

For the next two hours, Trey, Toby and the local officials munched on sandwiches, chips and cookies and discussed how best to search the surrounding area for evidence that might lead to the terrorist cell. They were not making very much progress when Sheriff Richardson returned from taking a phone call in his office.

“I just got off the phone with my pastor, Reverend Duncan, and he gave me a great idea,” the sheriff explained. “Apparently a lot of the ministers in the area got together this morning to discuss the terrorism threat and decide what they could do to help their congregations deal with the fear and uncertainty that terrorism causes. And what they decided was to designate next Sunday as a special day of prayer for an end to terrorism. But they also plan to make it a day for their members to fight the fear that comes from terrorism by getting actively involved in helping prevent future attacks. That's why the reverend called me—to get some ideas as to what they might do to get the people involved. He thought for example that I could provide them with some literature they could hand out to their neighbors and friends that describes how to be more observant of potential terrorist activities.”

The imposing-looking sheriff paused to take a sip of his diet soft drink and then continued. “Well, all that got me thinking that we could not only provide the congregations with literature, but we could also organize their canvassing so that they cover all of our search area and report back anything that looks suspicious to them. We could even have some little ceremonies and deputize them for the day.”

Deputize church congregations? Toby knew that he had heard the sheriff correctly, but it sounded more like dialogue from an old western movie rather than a serious suggestion for fighting 21st century terrorism.

“I'm not sure I follow you, sheriff,” Sullivan said. “You can't mean that you want local pastors to encourage their members to participate in some kind of manhunt for the terrorists, do you? I really don't think it would be such a good idea to make this some kind of religious-sanctioned activity.”

The sheriff looked at Toby as if he had squirrels coming out of his ears.

“Well, I don't see what the problem is there, Sullivan. The pastors want something positive for their members to do to help them overcome their fears of terrorism. What's wrong with that?”

Before Toby could answer, Trey responded, “I think it is a terrific idea, sheriff. People want to be involved in homeland security, and what better way to get them involved. And besides, there is no other way I can think of to cover so much territory as quickly or thoroughly. Let's get Associate Director Drake on the video phone to see what he thinks.”

With a quick voice command, Trey activated the phone and large video screen. Seconds later Margaret Peabody's image appeared.

“Margaret, it's so good to see you,” said Trey. “Thank the Lord, again, that you weren't hurt yesterday.”

“Yes,” Margaret replied. “I am truly blessed.”

“Is it possible to put Director Drake on the line?” asked Rawlings. “We have something important to ask him.”

“Certainly. I’ll tell him.”

In just a few seconds, Drake joined their conversation on the giant screen, and Trey explained the plan. The deputy director was uncharacteristically enthusiastic.

“It’s a fantastic idea,” he said. “In fact, I think we should use the same plan throughout the entire search area, not just in your sector. We need to get all of the church congregations involved if we can. Anything suspicious should be reported back to local law enforcement personnel. If the terrorists are out there, I have no doubt that they will be found.”

“*Onward Christian soldiers,*” Sullivan thought to himself, prompting him to urge caution to the local officials.

“If we’re letting private citizens get involved in this kind of activity, I think we need to make sure that they know that Muslims and terrorists are not synonymous,” Toby reminded his law enforcement colleagues. “It is very important that all of the people who participate in this canvass or search, whatever we’re calling it, understand that they are only to report suspicious people to you and let you follow-up. We don’t want people turning into a bunch of Christian vigilantes.”

“I wouldn’t worry about that, Agent Sullivan,” Drake said. “These law enforcement people know what they are doing, and I believe that the idea to get people from the churches involved was divinely inspired. In fact, I think we need to stop right now and thank the Lord and ask him once more for his guidance.”

And then Drake asked all of those assembled in the room to bow their heads.

“Dear Lord, we thank you for this great country where we are free to worship you and thank you for the many blessings you have bestowed upon us. We know, oh Lord, that we have done something to displease you and that is why our nation is being punished. Help us to turn our hearts over to you and help us to turn away from all that is wicked and sinful in our world. And finally, Lord, we just thank you for your help and guidance in finding the instruments of Satan who seek to destroy our great country. All of this, we ask in your name. Amen.”

“Amen,” everyone in the room—except Sullivan—answered. He was still trying to recover from the idea of deputizing Christians and from Drake’s description of “instruments of Satan.”

## CHAPTER 6

*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:24*

*Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; Qur'an 4.34*

Tad took a cab from Toby's condo to her sister Catherine's Foggy Bottom apartment where she showered and dressed in one of Catherine's Chico outfits— a pale blue skirt, white satin blouse and navy jacket. With all that had happened so quickly, she found it difficult to focus on her first official day with the special taskforce. Her mind wandered rapidly from thoughts of her five years as an undercover agent in the Middle East (a difficult, but amazing experience) to the unpleasant meeting with Drake on Sunday (what a jerk) to her evening with Toby (fantastic).

While in the Middle East, Davenport had worked as a college professor, but she was in actuality an employee of the CIA who used her cover to meet and become good friends with influential foreign nationals and to monitor the degree of radical Islamic fundamentalism among college students. It had been an exciting job but also a very difficult one. For a liberated western female, living in a Muslim country was a constant challenge. Not only did she have to dress in much more modest—and less fashionable—clothes than she was accustomed to, she also had to refrain from drinking alcohol or being seen alone in the company of men. (She had seen far too many women who had been ostracized or even physically abused for being accused of having sexual encounters outside of marriage.) Additionally, she had to be very careful what, how and to whom she communicated, fearing that the host government or Muslim extremists might be monitoring all of her voice, written and data transmissions.

Being with Toby again last night reminded her how much she had missed him. They had become extremely close very soon after meeting six years ago, but during the past five years she had seen him only briefly on one trip home and two trips to the Scottish Highlands. Although Sullivan had a few more grey hairs than before, Tad thought that he still looked younger than his 40 years. At 6 feet tall and 165 pounds, he had the physique of a dancer or cyclist and a slight resemblance to the actor Richard Gere in his younger days—although Tad made sure that Toby knew he wasn't nearly as good-looking as Gere. There were many times that Tad wanted to marry or make some kind of commitment to Toby. There were also times when she wanted to wait until she figured out what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. And there were still other times when she didn't want anything to do with marriage—particularly as it was coming to be defined by modern America's Christian society.

As far as dealing with Drake and the taskforce were concerned, she didn't know what to think—or do. While she had been overseas, the climate in the United States regarding women in the workplace had obviously changed dramatically. With the Christian Democratic Republicans in power, more and more businesses were blatantly giving priority to hiring men, and more and more women were choosing to stay home in order to home school their children or just be stay-at-home moms. It seemed that society had been transformed back to the 1950's—or even the 1850's.

Tad's philosophy about all of this was that women who wanted to stay at home should certainly have that right—but so should men. And government should not attempt to coerce, encourage or bribe women into choosing home over a career. That was none of government's damn business as far as she was concerned.

When she finished dressing and applying some of her sister's makeup—a luxury she had not experienced in five years—Davenport checked herself in the mirror to make sure that her sister's clothes fit properly and then caught a Metro blue-line train to her office at Homeland Security to attend a memorial service for Assistant Secretary Charles Rutherford. After the brief, but tearful service, Tad

stayed around to talk to some of her new colleagues at the department and to pick up her miniature personal communications device (PCD). She also met with Charlene (Charley) McGill, who was instrumental in bringing her to Homeland Security and in having her assigned to the special taskforce investigating the bombings.

"It is sure good to see you, Tad," McGill said as she led Davenport into her office. "You look great. That's a fantastic outfit you have on."

"It's my sister's," Tad responded. "I was afraid it might be too tight. I think I gained some weight while I was gone."

"I don't think you've gained a pound," said Charley. "I can't believe you've been gone for five years."

"It is hard to believe," Tad responded, as she sat down in a leather wingback chair, "although in some ways it seems even longer than that. I'm really glad you thought of me for this assignment."

"I can't think of anyone who is as well qualified for it," Charley said. "Homeland Security doesn't have a lot of folks with your education and background, so who better to be one of our members of the special taskforce?"

"Well, thanks for the vote of confidence," Tad said to her friend. "Although I loved being in the CIA and wish I could have ended my assignment in a more orderly fashion, I was ready to come home, and since CIA agents can't spy in the USA, I think I can do more interesting things here with H.S."

"I hope you find them interesting," said McGill. "Surely your work at the taskforce should be challenging."

"I hope so, but I'm a little worried," Tad answered. "What can you tell me about this guy Drake?"

"Well, I can tell you that two of my friends who used to work for him thought that he showed favoritism toward male agents, particularly after undergoing a religious conversion a few years ago. After becoming an evangelical Christian he even suggested to his wife that she quit her job as an attorney so she could stay at home with their young children."

Charley paused briefly and then continued. "On the other hand, just to be fair to him, I know a couple of women who really like him because he helped establish a special 20 hour a week, semi-full-time position that allows them to maintain their employee benefits but also be at home when their children get out of school. They say that he is the most family-friendly boss they have ever had."

"But what about women like me who don't have families?" Tad asked, not waiting for an answer. "I don't want to work 20 hours a week, and I don't want to be treated like a member of 'the weaker sex.' Hasn't anyone ever brought a formal complaint against him?"

"Not that I am aware of," McGill responded. "You know what the religious climate in this country is like today. There is such a strong Christian network throughout the government that no one wants to be labeled as being anti-Christian or having anti-Christian values. The women I mentioned who were unhappy decided they would rather go to work in the private sector than be permanently branded as extreme feminists. That's the kiss of death."

"Damn. I'm overseas for a few years and come back to a country and government crawling with Christian fanatics. How has Homeland Security escaped the infiltration?" Tad quizzed her friend.

"Secretary Rosenthal is the main reason. He has been very careful to hire people who believe strongly in the separation of church and state," McGill explained. "He has gone out of his way to make sure that this agency is secular from the top down."

"How has he gotten away with that in this administration?" asked Tad.

"The CDR needs him to keep some of the Jewish vote by maintaining the pretense that the party embraces Judeo-Christian values, not just Christian," Charlene continued. "And besides, he has done an outstanding job and that has been a feather-in-the cap of the administration. Up until this past week's attacks, they couldn't afford to get rid of him."

"You think his job is in jeopardy, now?" asked Tad.

"I don't know," McGill answered. "I've heard rumors. I think he has the support of the president, but there are a lot of people in the CDR and in some national security agencies, such as the FBI, who

wouldn't mind if Rosenthal were replaced with someone more of their ilk," Charley said, almost in a whisper.

"By their 'ilk,' do you mean 'Christian'?"

"You got it," McGill said as she noticed a man in the hall motioning to her. "Sorry I have to break away, but I'm being called into a meeting about the naming of a replacement for Assistant Secretary Rutherford. What a tragedy that was. And I guess it could have been even worse, because the secretary was scheduled to be at that meeting. Fortunately, he was doing a spot check on commercial airline security procedures in Chicago, and his flight was delayed."

"Thanks for all of your help, Charley. I'll be back in touch," Tad said while thinking how fortunate they all were that Secretary Rosenthal had not been killed.

After leaving her old friend, Tad walked the five blocks to the special taskforce headquarters to begin her new assignment. Never—even in her days as an international undercover agent—had she been so uncertain about what to expect.

"Hello, I'm Special Agent Davenport. Which office is mine?" Tad asked the young woman who was sitting at a desk near the entrance.

"Oh yes, Agent Davenport. I'm Margaret Peabody, Director Drake's assistant. It is so nice to meet you. I was just looking through your resume. You have such pretty names, Tiffany and Ashley. Which do you prefer?"

"Actually, neither," Tad answered somewhat abruptly, although she did not mean to be rude.

Somewhat taken aback, Margaret responded, "Oh, I understand that you prefer to use your surname at the office, but I meant which do your friends call you?"

"Neither," Tad answered again. "I don't care for Tiffany or Ashley. They just don't seem to fit me. My friends call me Tad."

"Oh I see," Margaret answered. "I'd like to know how they came up with that. I bet it is an interesting story."

"Not really," Davenport answered. "It's just my initials — TAD."

"Now I get it," the blonde said in her slight southern drawl. "That is so...unusual."

"If you say so," answered Tad, who was becoming a little impatient with all of the fuss about her name. "Can you direct me to my office, please?"

"Oh, of course," Peabody said as she got up from behind her desk and pointed toward a hallway at the opposite end of the lobby. "It's the office at the end of that hall on the right. But before you go, here is a copy of the contact information for everyone serving on the taskforce."

"Thank you," Tad said as she took her briefcase from the corner of Peabody's desk. "I'm sure this will be very useful, and I look forward to working with you."

When Tad entered her office, she noticed that it was considerably smaller than the others she had passed along the way. "*I guess this must be a girl's office. I wonder where I'm supposed to put all of my makeup and accessories,*" she thought as she put her briefcase on the small, oak veneer desk and tried out the small black fake leather desk chair. Surveying the rest of the equipment and furnishings, she saw a state-of-the-art voice activated computer and communications module with a 32" screen attached to the wall above the desk and a small occasional chair near the window. "All the comforts of home," she murmured.

After putting a few personal items in her desk, she activated the communications screen and issued instructions to contact Toby since she wasn't sure where he was. "Phone 23," she said.

"Agent Sullivan is not in; transferring to his mobile communications device," came the reply.

Toby quickly answered and his image appeared on the large screen above Tad's desk.

"Hi Toby," Tad said. "I see you're in a car. Where are you headed?"

"I'm with Trey. We're on the road to Leesburg. Are you at headquarters?"

"Yes, I'm in my palatial new office," she responded. "Do you think there is some kind of not-so-hidden message in the office assignments?"

"I doubt it," Toby answered, "and what difference does it make? You don't really care about the size of your office, do you?"

“No; I’m just venting,” Davenport replied. “The reason I’m calling, though, is to see if you have gotten any more ideas since earlier this morning on how I can convince Drake not to treat me like a secretary. I really do think that I can do the most good for the taskforce by getting out in the field, possibly by setting up a clandestine meeting with the undercover guy in New Mexico and helping find some way to get more information from the terrorist cell he has infiltrated. Being in the field and getting information is what I did overseas, and I think that would be much more helpful than me sitting in a 10’ x 10’ room waiting to run errands for a bunch of helpless men.”

“Trey, what about it?” Toby asked his partner. “You know Drake as well as anyone. He isn’t really serious about confining women to the office, is he?”

“I don’t know,” Trey responded. “He actually does prefer that women not be put in dangerous situations, because he is very protective of them. However, I think that he is somewhat less protective of women who are unmarried and don’t have children, particularly if they are experienced in field work like Tad.”

“So do you think I should make an appointment to see him and explain how much more I could help if given the opportunity?” asked Tad.

“I don’t know if I would go quite that far just yet,” Rawlings said after a slight pause. “It might be better to give it a day or two and see exactly what he has in mind for you, first.”

“So, I’m just supposed to cooperate and be a happy little gofer?” Tad asked.

“I don’t think being protected should be viewed so negatively,” Trey retorted.

“I didn’t get into this line of work in order to be protected,” Tad answered. “I just want to do the job I trained for. What do you think, Sullivan?”

“Look, Trey knows Drake a whole lot better than I do, so my suggestion is to take his advice at least for now, but I know you are going to do exactly what you want to do regardless of what I say...and I wouldn’t expect any less of you,” Toby answered. “Unfortunately, I’m afraid I can’t offer any more advice right now, because we just arrived in Leesburg. I’ll talk to you later.”

“See you later, Toby. Twenty-five, terminate,” Tad said, ending the communication. For the next five or 10 minutes, she sat quietly at her desk mulling over her situation. Against all of her strongest instincts, she decided to follow the advice of Toby and Trey and do whatever she was asked to do—but she still wanted to talk to Drake.

“Gee, this is going to be hard,” she thought, as she gave a voice instruction to the communications module to contact Margaret, who quickly appeared on the screen.

“Margaret, is it possible for me to see the associate director sometime soon? It is very important.”

“I’ll be glad to check,” Peabody responded. “And I’m glad you called, because I was just getting ready to contact you. We have a request from one of our agents for someone to do a computerized background check on everyone in a three-county area in Maryland who has a Muslim surname, and the director thought you would be perfect to handle this. In fact, he wants the same type of search done for the entire target area.”

*That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard,* Tad thought, *but I’ve got to calm down before I say something really dumb.*

“Let me make sure I understand this request,” she answered in a slow, modulated voice. “The director wants me to do a computer search to find any people within the designated geographical area that have a Muslim-sounding surname and then do a background check on them. Is that correct?”

“Yes, I think so,” Margaret responded. “You know, names like Mohammed, Hussein and bin Laden.”

*So he thinks that the terrorists are going to be listed in the phone directory or some other public source of information and all we have to do is go through the thousands of Muslim-sounding names, conduct a computerized background check and bingo, we’ll find the terrorists?* Tad thought. “And like Mohammed Ali and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar,” she said, trying to mask her sarcasm as much as possible.

“I think that’s right,” Peabody answered with complete confidence in the infallibility of her boss.

*I hate these damn video communications devices,* Tad thought as she strained to keep from appearing as incredulous as she actually was at such a ludicrous request.



“Okay, I think I understand, but could you try to expedite that meeting with the director just so I can be certain I know everything he wants. I certainly don’t want to disappoint him,” Donahue said in the most controlled voice she could muster.

“I might could do that,” Margaret said, “but he already has several meetings scheduled today. I’ll let you know as soon as I find out.”

“Thanks.” Tad said, just before terminating the communication abruptly and pulling out her miniature PCD.

“Contact 5,” she said into the small device as she attached it over her right ear.

“Is that you, Tad?” she heard the voice of Charlene McGill ask.

“Right you are, Charley. Are you alone in your office?”

“Yea, why? Something the matter?”

“You might say that,” said Tad. “This Drake guy seems to think that I should spend my time doing grunt work for the male agents. He wants me to run a background check on everyone with a Muslim-sounding name in a 15,000 square mile area west and north of D.C. I don’t think anyone ever suggested anything that blatant even when the Patriot Act was in full effect, did they? Do we keep information like that in Homeland Security—or have access to it?”

“None that I’m aware of,” said Charlene. “I’ll be glad to have our data people determine what might be available if you’d like me to.”

“Great,” Tad answered. “See what you can come up with.”

“Consider it done,” Charley answered, “and Tad—I’m sorry that Drake turned out to be such a jerk.”

“Me too. I’ll talk to you later.”

No sooner had Tad turned off her PCD, than her office communications system began to ring. After pressing a button on her desk, the large LCD communications screen came alive with the image of Margaret Peabody.

“Agent Davenport, I’m afraid that the deputy director had to leave for an important meeting and won’t be back until much later this afternoon,” said the faithful assistant. “He asked me to see if there is anything you need to help identify and run background checks on the Muslims in the search area.”

Tad didn’t know whether to laugh, cry or scream, but contained her emotions.

“No, if it is possible to identify such a group of people and find information about them, I will,” she said, “although quite frankly, I doubt that such information even exists.”

“It must exist or Director Drake wouldn’t ask for it,” responded Margaret in a voice indicating her total devotion to her boss.

Tad instantly saw the hopelessness of her situation and decided it was best not to get into a confrontation with Peabody, who was just doing what she was told. Instead, she said good-bye, logged onto the FBI’s supercomputer and began to sift through every Internet, intranet and local file she could think of that might contain the names of Muslims living in the target area—from members of Mosques to the owners of convenience stores and mid-eastern restaurants. It clearly was going to be a long and tedious search.

## CHAPTER 7

*“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:4-6*

“Don’t you think we might be asking for the Lord’s help just a bit too often?” Toby asked Trey as they got in the car to head back to headquarters. “It’s beginning to seem a little—how do I put this—overdone.”

“What are you talking about? I don’t see anything wrong with it,” Trey responded. “You aren’t suggesting that Drake isn’t sincere, are you, because I know him and I know that he is an extremely dedicated Christian...and as long as someone is sincere when they call upon the Lord in prayer, it can never be too often.”

“No, I don’t question his sincerity,” Sullivan said. “Maybe it’s my problem. I’m just a little uncomfortable with all of the public praying and public displays of religion these days. It seems that everyone is trying to outdo everyone else in demonstrating how pious he or she is.”

“What do you mean?” Trey asked as he steered the battery-powered vehicle into the left lane and past a slower vehicle in the right lane.

“Well, for example, all of the bracelets that people are wearing with Bible verses on them. What’s that all about? I was in a bar one evening after work, and this young woman came up to me, pointed at her bracelet and said, ‘Hello, my favorite verse is John 3:16. What’s yours?’ I felt like a complete dolt and didn’t know what to say. What ever happened to signs of the zodiac? And just yesterday I passed a fast-food restaurant that was advertising a new salad with the slogan, ‘WWJE.’ It took me a little while to figure out that it meant, ‘What would Jesus eat?’ That’s a bit much, don’t you think?”

“Maybe some people do go overboard, but that’s what the Freedom to Practice Religion Act was designed for,” Trey explained. “People should be able to practice their religion whenever and wherever they wish without fear of breaking some law or hurting somebody’s feelings. That’s what the First Amendment really means.”

“That reminds me of something that Mark Twain once said,” Toby responded. “He said, ‘Man is a religious animal. He is the only religious animal. He is the only animal that has the True Religion—several of them. And he is the only animal that loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn’t straight.’”

“Cute,” said Trey, “but you do agree that people should feel free to practice their religion whenever they wish, don’t you?”

“You mean more accurately that Christians should feel free to practice *their* religion whenever *they* wish?” Toby retorted. “I don’t think Jews, Muslims or Hindus feel all that free these days to practice their religious traditions in public. And I know they won’t feel very comfortable if—God forbid—we should ever approve the constitutional amendment making this the Christian Republic of the United States of America.”

“You know I disagree with you about that,” Trey said as he turned the car onto I-66 heading east. “Just look at the good things that have happened in this country since the Christian Democratic-Republicans took control of the Congress and White House. Abortion has been greatly reduced. Divorce rates have declined. Out of wedlock births have declined. Violent crime is down. The death penalty has been abolished. We have universal health care. More housing is being built for the homeless. And our elderly and sick people have been protected from having nutrition or water withheld if they are incapacitated. Because people of faith put aside their liberal-conservative political differences and came together in support of Christian values, we now have a much more caring society. What is there not to like about that?”

“Of course there are some good things that have come out of the CDR administration, but the same might have been said about the old Soviet Union,” Sullivan said to his partner. “Compared to Russia and the other former Soviet republics, the old Soviet Union had lower crime rates, universal health care and very little homelessness. What the former communist countries have now is freedom and much greater prosperity—and most of these countries are not neglecting the needs of the disadvantaged.”

“But just think of the possibilities of a country that combines freedom with Christian values,” Trey interjected. “We’re not talking about Communism. In fact, it’s just the opposite. We’re talking about Christianity and implementing the teachings of Jesus.”

Toby shook his head in disbelief. “So you, a graduate of the University of Virginia, the college founded by Thomas Jefferson—a lover of liberty and science—would have no problem if the Christian Republic amendment passes and states suddenly require that public schools discontinue teaching Darwin’s theory of evolution completely?”

“First of all, I think the amendment is necessary to prevent anti-religious Supreme Court justices from undoing the progress we have made. And secondly, I don’t see what is wrong with teaching the Theory of Intelligent Design instead of Darwin,” Trey said, although Sullivan thought he seemed a little defensive about the issue. “The secular humanists have not presented a fair comparison of Darwinism and I.D. They have slanted the discussion so that a lot of children are now beginning to question their faith.”

“Jesus, Trey, you Creationists and Intelligent Design people make it sound as though a scientific theory is something someone dreams up after smoking pot all night. I hate to say, ‘I told you so,’ but a lot of religious people who accept Darwin’s theory as a valid way to explain the complexities of creation said many years ago that teaching Intelligent Design along with Darwinism as two equally plausible theories of creation would cause students to reject their faith, because I.D. could never withstand the rigors of scientific analysis as well as Darwin. So now, the same people who wanted the two-theory approach want to do away with Darwin altogether, because their theory can’t cut it in the classroom. And I’m afraid that the only thing that prevents them from excluding Darwin and replacing it with Intelligent Design or some other religious-based mumbo jumbo is the Supreme Court’s decision that such an action would violate the separation of church and state. If this amendment passes, who knows what might be allowed?”

“So you believe that having Christian values in our schools and government is a bad idea?” Trey asked his partner.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Trey. Having moral values in our schools and government is not a bad idea, and I know that some things in the country have probably benefited from the religious influence, but that doesn’t mean that I am willing to write the Christian majority a blank check. You will admit that even Christians can make mistakes and do bad things, won’t you?”

“Certainly, people who claim to be Christians can make mistakes, but God doesn’t,” said Trey confidently.

“You don’t want to go there,” Toby suggested. “I can think of several things that might be called ‘mistakes,’ like for example God making young boys as horny as a three-balled tomcat several years before they have any idea how to control it... or God giving cats the ability to climb 50 feet up trees and no clue how to get down...or God putting men and animals on an earth that was only half-baked and still having earthquakes and volcano eruptions. If it only took God a week to create the earth, maybe He should have taken a couple more days, or even another week to get things right.”

Trey laughed, but refused to back down. “Mock us if you want,” he replied, “but we Christians are making this a better, more caring and more just society. And the Christian Republic Amendment is going to allow us to do even more.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” Toby answered. “But let’s call a truce. How about stopping at that new coffee shop in Georgetown and I’ll buy you a double latte or mocha java, or whatever you want. Who knows, the Mormon faction of the CDR may gain enough influence someday to abolish the sale of caffeine drinks. We better get ours while we can.”

“That’s not very funny, Sullivan, but I will take you up on the coffee,” Trey said, with his sense of humor still in tact.

“Great,” Toby responded. “Maybe you could say a little prayer that we find a parking spot.”

Within a few minutes, the FBI duo arrived in Georgetown and, in a rare stroke of good luck—or divine intervention—found a parking place just two blocks from the coffee shop. After pulling into the spot, Trey looked at Toby and pointed up to the sky. “See, it works,” he said.

“A few more times and I might begin to believe you,” Toby replied as they walked on the narrow sidewalk toward “M” Street, barely avoiding being hit by a very large woman in an electric power chair.

“Damn electric scooters and power chairs. They’re everywhere. Who would have ever thought a decade ago that our sidewalks would become highways for the obese and disabled?” Toby whispered to Trey. “It’s one thing for the elderly to use these electric scooters to maintain their mobility, but it’s another thing entirely for relatively young people to be using them. The people who sell these things have made a fortune making it seem perfectly acceptable for the over-fed and under-exercised to keep getting bigger and bigger and yet stay mobile. No wonder private health care companies and the government health care system are all going bankrupt.”

“It is an amazing phenomenon,” Trey agreed. “Rather than diet and exercise so they can remain active, a huge portion of the population—no pun intended—have apparently decided to allow themselves to become totally dependent on technology. Maybe there should be a law to ban those scooters.”

“That wouldn’t be very Christian, would it?” Toby asked sarcastically.

“Probably not,” Trey agreed.

“Grab a table and I’ll get the coffee,” Toby said as they entered the shop where the aroma of freshly ground and brewed coffee saturated the air. “Two of your biggest mocha javas,” Sullivan called to the young woman behind the counter, not understanding why a “tall” size was so small.

In a few minutes, Sullivan brought the large cups to the table. “Here you are,” he said to Rawlings who nodded his head in appreciation “Now tell me the truth. Aren’t you at all nervous about turning a bunch of private citizens loose to track down terrorists?”

“There may be some small risks involved, but given the potential for a major success in finding the people responsible for these terrible bombings, I think it is more than worth the risks,” Trey said calmly. “And besides, all that the people will be doing is canvassing the area looking for things that seem unusual or out of place. They won’t be carrying weapons or trying to capture anyone.”

“We hope they won’t be,” said Toby after taking a sip of his chocolate-coffee drink. “And don’t you mean that they will be looking for people who seem unusual or out of place, or in other words, Muslims?”

“As close as you came to being killed just a little over 24 hours ago, I would think that you would welcome all the help we can get,” said Rawlings. “I know I would be furious if some maniacs bombed my house of worship. Church is supposed to be a sacred place. How can these people claim to have a religious motivation for the horrible crimes they commit?”

“I hate to bring this up again,” said Toby, “but didn’t Eric Robert Rudolph back in the late 1990’s and that guy Chapman a couple of years ago both justify their crimes as being necessary to stop abortion and homosexuality—practices that they said were abhorrent to God? And what about the Christian good ole boys who bombed the black churches and killed children back in the 1950’s and 60’s? Wasn’t their goal to stop the ‘ungodly’ practice of race mixing? We have to remember that people who commit crimes like these are not completely rational. There really isn’t much difference between a Christian extremist and a Muslim extremist, except that one commits his crimes in the name of Christ and the other in the name of Allah. Face it, religion can be a powerful motivator—for both good and evil.”

After taking several sips of coffee while listening to Sullivan, Trey put his cup back on the table. “I know intellectually that what you say is true,” he said to Toby, “but I honestly believe in my heart that Christianity as a whole is a much more enlightened religion than Islam.”

“I am not going to argue that point with you, because quite frankly, I don’t know enough about Islam,” Toby responded. “In my view, though, whether one religion or another is logically—or emotionally—more enlightened is really irrelevant, because people like Osama bin Laden and Eric Robert Rudolph so grossly distort their religions that they would not be recognized by Mohammed or by Christ.”

“I can’t disagree with that statement,” said Trey. “Killing innocent people—even to stop abhorrent practices such as abortion and homosexuality—is not permissible. But, to bring things back to the issue at hand, I don’t think any of our church-going helpers will take things that far.”

Toby finished his coffee and threw the paper cup in a nearby trash receptacle before sitting back in his chair. “I hope you’re right, but what happens, for example, if some of the more fanatical Christians encounter a gay couple at their home? How are they going to act? Will they call them all manner of derogatory names? Will they try to get them to repent their sinful ways? Or, will they turn them in to the local authorities for violating the state’s new and improved anti-sodomy statutes?”

“I’m not sure what some of the more zealous Christians might do,” said Trey. “But, don’t you think they should do something to help save the souls of these people? Don’t you agree that homosexuality is a practice strictly forbidden in the Bible?”

“Like I’ve told you before, Trey, I don’t accept the Bible literally. It is a great book with some wonderful stories, but I simply do not find it logical that it should be read as the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

“And what does your church teach about homosexuality?” Trey asked in obvious curiosity.

“Well, one of the reasons I go to the Cathedral is that the rector is a compassionate, open-minded man who believes that salvation is based primarily on the goodness in a person’s soul and how he or she treats other people.”

“Does that mean that homosexuality, abortion and mercy-killing are okay with him?” asked Trey.

“I can’t speak for Father York on all of those subjects,” said Toby. “I do know that he has spoken out in favor of ordaining gay men and women as ministers. Does that make him a bad Christian?”

“In my view, it is impossible to read the Bible and accept Jesus Christ as your savior and not condemn homosexuality, abortion and mercy-killing,” said Trey.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” Toby said, “but I know you will join me in praying that the rector makes a full and speedy recovery from the injuries he suffered in the blast.”

“Of course I will,” said Trey.

After a few awkward seconds of silence, during which the other conversations in the coffee shop seemed to grow increasingly loud, Trey tried to refocus their discussion on something they could agree on. “How can we make sure that no stone is left unturned to find the terrorists? ”

“I suspect this is going to be a long week of meetings with local law enforcement officials to make certain that the procedures are clearly defined and the areas thoroughly canvassed,” said Toby. “I have a feeling we will be drinking a lot of coffee at the office, and it won’t be nearly as good as this was.”

“I’m afraid you’re right Trey agreed as he got up to leave. “God help us to do what is right.”

“Amen to that,” Toby replied.

## CHAPTER 8

*“Whatever is not done with that assurance of faith is neither well in itself, nor can it be acceptable to God. To impose such things, therefore, upon any people, contrary to their own judgment, is, in effect, to command them to offend God.” John Locke*

When Rawlings and Sullivan arrived back at headquarters, they quickly said goodbye and headed their separate ways. Trey got into his electric car while Toby took the elevator upstairs to see Tad, whom he had phoned shortly after leaving the coffee shop. When he reached her office, he found her staring at a list of names on her LCD wall screen.

“Pardon my French,” said Tad, who actually spoke fairly fluent French, “but this sucks.”

“What does?” Toby asked, as he glanced at the list of names.

“I’ve spent most of my day generating lists of people with middle-eastern ancestry or middle-eastern names,” Tad said as she pulled up another list on the screen. “Hell, I don’t even know what I am looking for. There are thousands of people in our target area that have names that sound sinister to some people, such as Mohammed, Ishmael, al Libbi, Ahmed, and so forth. Trouble is, they could be names of NBA players just as easily as terrorists. I’m trying to cross-check them in our various terrorist databases, but it’s kind of like trying to identify a criminal in Alabama or Mississippi named Bubba Smith. I don’t know what Drake plans to do with these names.

“Tell you what,” Toby said as he gently massaged Tad’s shoulders. “I’ll take you to Old Ebbit’s Grill and you can vent all you want, and then I’ll bring you up to date on what Trey and I did today. You probably wouldn’t have enjoyed it any more than searching through these lists. Deal?”

Tad turned her chair so she could see Toby. “It’s a deal. Let me call my sister and let her know that I will be eating out. Will I be sleeping out, too?”

“Just as shy and subtle as ever, I see,” said Toby. “You are more than welcome to stay over. In fact, you can move in with me if you wish, although that may sound too much like a commitment.”

“It sure does,” Tad replied as she shut down her computer and began to straighten her desk, “but a lot less of a commitment than it seemed like five years ago. See how much progress you made over the last five years, and you didn’t have to do a damn thing except not get hooked up with someone else.”

“Lucky me,” Toby said as he took Tad by the hand and led her out of her office. “I always knew that doing nothing could sometimes be a good thing.”

—

Old Ebbit’s Grill had always been one of Sullivan’s favorite Washington, D.C. restaurants. It wasn’t as sheik or sophisticated as some of the newer eateries, and the cuisine was rarely mentioned on the *Gourmet Magazine* web site, but to Toby, it just felt like a restaurant should feel in the nation’s capital city. The atmosphere was strictly “old Washington” with dark, rich paneling, soft textured fabrics and crab cakes that, in his estimation, were as good as you could find anywhere—even on the Chesapeake Bay—and it was located just two blocks from the White House and across the street from the Treasury Building in one of the city’s most historic areas.

“You still come here regularly?” Tad inquired as she and Toby entered the popular old eatery.

“Not as regularly as when you were here. I still like it, but it just isn’t the same as coming with you.”

“If you’re trying to flatter me, it’s working,” said Tad.

“Good, how about a glass of Chardonnay?” Toby asked as the hostess showed them to a booth near the center of the main dining room.”

“How about a glass of single-malt scotch and then a good *bottle* of Chardonnay,” suggested the attractive brunette whose large eyes twinkled like deep blue sapphires, especially when she smiled.

“Single malt it will be,” Toby responded as he looked around the restaurant. “This place is nearly empty. But it is a Monday night after a week of terrorist bombings. I guess I shouldn’t expect a big crowd.”

“No, I don’t think you should,” Tad agreed. “Fortunately, we don’t get attacked enough to get complacent and accustomed to it, so one would expect blasts like those last week to send people back into their shells, just like after 9/11/01 and after the train bombings a few years ago.”

“Which is yet another reason that we have to catch these people quickly, before our economy goes further into a tailspin like it did in 2001 and 2002,” Toby said after ordering two glasses of single malt scotch. “It’s a good thing that our unemployment rate is fairly low.”

“I am no economist and probably wouldn’t admit it even if I were,” said Tad, “but any bozo who can subtract two three-digit numbers without a calculator knows that the unemployment numbers are, in technical terms, crap. The main reason that the unemployment rate is so low is because nearly one-fifth of the labor force has disappeared. That’s because nearly half the women who were working decided to stay at home to educate the kiddies or just be a mom and loving wife. And a lot of other women who would like to work just quit looking, because more and more employers are sending out not-so-subtle vibes that they prefer to hire men. The more I talk about this, the madder I get and the more I need that drink.”

Fortunately, the waiter, a tall, slim 20-something young man with thick brown hair arrived quickly with their scotch. “And have you made your food selections, yet?” he asked.

Tad took a large sip of the single-malt and then said, “I’ll have the crab cakes, but with broccoli instead of potatoes, if that’s okay.”

“I’ll have the same,” Toby said, “and a bottle of the Loudon Vineyards chardonnay.” Then, after the waiter departed, he began sharing his thoughts about the economic situation.

“You’re right, and I’m afraid that the effects of this phenomenon go far beyond a drop in unemployment. Productivity is beginning to decline, and a lot of employers say that they are having a difficult time finding highly skilled and highly educated employees for sophisticated jobs. That has to have a negative effect on economic growth in the long term, and that could be critical, because the workforce is shrinking as the boomers continue to retire. Add all that together and it could mean disaster for Social Security, the new health care system, Medicare and other retirement programs. I don’t think the economy can stand another increase in payroll taxes and I don’t think our generation wants to wait until age 75 or 80 to retire.”

“Well, it’s only going to get much worse, because a lot of young women are stopping their education after high school,” Tad responded. “After all, how much education does it take to download babies and teach elementary home school? But the guys in power now are never going to talk about those statistics, Toby. You and I both know that. They are going to talk about the fact that most men who want a job are able to get one and that home life has returned to like it was in the good old days —whenever that was.”

“I agree with you, but unfortunately, I don’t see things changing very quickly,” Sullivan said after a sip of scotch. “The politicians and religious leaders think that things are going in the right direction and so do a lot of the American people. The only question seems to be how much further we are going in merging government and religion.”

“How much further could we go?” Tad asked. “For Christ sake, Sullivan, it’s like we talked about yesterday—the government is well on its way to incorporating Christian values into almost everything it does.”

“That’s the point, Davenport. Most Americans think that is a fine idea. Who can argue against a country adhering to Christian values? Are you against any of the 10 commandments or the teachings of Christ? Are you in favor of pornography or child molestation? Do you think it is better that a child has two parents rather than just one? Do you think it is better that parents spend more time with their children? Are you in favor of someone aborting the next Einstein or Beethoven?”

Toby took time to take a sip of his scotch. “Face it, Tad, it’s not easy taking sides against these people, and I’m afraid that if the Congress approves the amendment to make this the Christian Republic

of the United States of America, it will be ratified by 3/4 of the states and then it will be too late to do anything about it.”

“But realistically, what more could they do even if the amendment is ratified?” asked Tad.

“How about passing a law that makes it mandatory to attend church? How about a law that makes sex outside of marriage a serious crime, as well as a sin? How about a law that forces homosexuals to undergo psychiatric treatment? Or a law that makes the man the legal head of the household? Or the worst possible law of all—making it illegal to play golf on Sundays? Want more suggestions?”

“No, but I either need another scotch or you need to get that bottle of chardonnay over here pretty fast.”

Toby got the waiter’s attention and held up his scotch glass and two fingers.

“More scotch on its way,” he said to Tad. “And to answer your question seriously, the backers of the Christian Republic amendment hope that its passage will be an insurance policy to prevent future generations from taking the country back to secularism. But if it makes you feel any better, I really don’t think the amendment will pass. Like I said before, it’s several votes short in the Senate.”

“How many exactly?” Tad asked.

“I think three or four at last count,” Toby responded.

“That isn’t many,” Tad replied. “I hope all of the opposition senators are healthy.”

“I think they are, at least all except the one from Arizona who is nearly 100 years old,” said Sullivan, who seemed to have a sudden revelation. “Wait a minute,” he said. “This discussion about the Christian Republic makes me wonder if the terrorists have decided to strike at this particular time, because they fear what might happen if the United States, which is still the world’s major superpower, does become more religiously motivated.”

“What do you mean?” Tad asked as she took a sip from the fresh glass of scotch that the waiter had just put on the table.

Toby took a sip of his drink before answering. “Well, suffice it to say that our relations with The Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and several other Islamic countries are not the best in the world. And it is no secret that most of the terrorist training and financing takes place in those countries. Don’t you think that they might fear what could happen if our country becomes a Christian Republic, particularly if they think that we will become as hostile to non-Christians as their societies are to non-Muslims?”

“So you think that the timing of these attacks is not just coincidental?” Tad asked. “You think that they are trying to weaken the current CDR government so that the country will stay at least partially secular?”

“Maybe,” said Toby. “I just can’t think of another reason why, after several years without any serious attacks in the U.S., we suddenly have this wave of bombings. And remember what Drake said after the church bombing – that maybe they were targeting Senator Stevens, just like they targeted the other two senators, because he is on the Intelligence Committee and is such a strong supporter of the country’s antiterrorism efforts.”

“That would at least give us a possible motive for the attacks,” Tad agreed, “but I am not sure the motive is all that important, because we still don’t understand the mental processes of Islamic extremists. How can we in this country understand the mindset of people who stone a rape victim to death because, according to their distorted beliefs, she has dishonored her family? In our way of thinking, that’s lunacy.”

“So you’re saying that motive, per se, may not matter,” Toby said just as the waiter brought their wine and entrees. “I think I agree with you in the sense that their motives for doing what they do will never make logical sense to us, but knowing the motives might at least give us some kind of clues as to the individuals responsible and where they come from.”

“That makes sense,” Tad said. “If we are pretty certain that the terrorists belong to al-Qaeda and have roots in Pakistan, Iran or Syria, for example, it may be easier to track them. That is clearly what Drake thinks, and if so, I would like to think that the CIA is already tracking them from their country or countries of origin. I’ll check in with my contacts tomorrow to see what they know. In the meantime, I’m tired of thinking about all of this. I want to enjoy the crab cakes, the chardonnay and the rest of the



evening. I still can't believe I'm back home. It's nice to be here and even nicer being with you, Toby Sullivan. I missed you."

"It couldn't be as much as I missed you," Toby said as he and Tad touched their wine glasses together. "I'll catch you up later about how Trey and I spent our day. You won't believe it."

## CHAPTER 9

*Those who believe in the Qur'an, and those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians—any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Qur'an 002.060*

The next morning, Toby and Trey both arrived at headquarters slightly before 7:30. Although Toby had fixed a light breakfast for Tad and himself at home, he decided to stop at Reeves' Famous Bakery, which had recently opened under new owners after being closed for more than a decade, to pick up a dozen of their famous blueberry donuts to share with his colleagues.

"Toby, please tell me you didn't stop at Reeves," Trey said when he saw the two white boxes that Sullivan was carrying. "You know I have no willpower whatsoever when it comes to their blueberry donuts."

"Don't feel bad, Trey," Toby responded as he opened one of the boxes and offered his partner one of the soft, warm, round pastries. "I don't know of anyone who can resist them. But watch—everyone who comes in will make some comment about being on a diet or 'I really shouldn't, but.' and then they'll cave in to the temptation and take one or two anyway. If Reeves could convince people that their donuts are as healthy as broccoli, they could make a fortune."

Toby and Trey stood near the box of donuts drinking coffee and savoring the mouth-watering delicacies when Margaret Peabody came in for a morning soft drink. They watched as she spotted the open white box.

"Oh, who brought in the donuts? I wish I could have one, but I really shouldn't because I'm on a diet," she said as she held her thumb to the print recognition pad of the drink machine and pulled out her diet cola.

After opening her drink and taking a sip, Peabody started to leave the room, but eyed the Reeves' box one more time.

"Oh well, I don't guess that one little donut will destroy my diet, do you?" she asked no one in particular. "These are just too good to pass up."

"Told you," Toby said to Trey as they headed back to their office. "They can't be resisted. In fact, I'll bet they are the work of the devil."

"Now, now," Trey said as he wiped crumbs off of his mouth with a paper towel. "You shouldn't make fun of those who believe in the devil. I am afraid that Satan is very real."

"Okay," Toby responded. "Whatever you say, but no religious discussions today. We've got too much work to do."

Rawlings and Sullivan spent most of the morning reviewing detailed three-dimensional electronic maps of the search area and communicating with their local law enforcement contacts—including big Hollis Richardson—to make sure that the entire area was carefully divided into manageable-size districts for canvassing. They had just completed talking to the last two sheriffs when Peabody announced that there would be a meeting in ten minutes.

After gathering some papers, Toby stopped by Tad's office on the way to the conference room.

"I'm glad you stopped by," she said. "Remember our discussion last night about where the terrorists came from?"

"Of course I remember," he responded. "We didn't drink that much."

"Well, I contacted a friend at the CIA who said that they have people working nonstop to identify the country or countries of origin of the terrorists. So far, though, they haven't turned up anything, in spite of the fact that five separate organizations have now taken credit for the attacks. Our people are amazed that they haven't been able to establish any concrete ties between any of these organizations and the suspected terrorists in our country. In short, no one seems to know where these people came from."

Toby looked puzzled. "You would think that the CIA would have some idea where these guys came from. In 2001 when our intelligence was far inferior to what it is today, we knew that bin Laden was

behind the 9/11 attacks, and we knew approximately where he was. In 2005, the Brits traced the London subway bombers in just a few days and then in 2006 stopped the plot to blow up planes bound for the U.S. And a few years after that, the French identified and caught the cell that was planning to blow up the Eiffel Tower. I don't understand why we know so little about our bombers when it has been more than a week since the first bombings. These guys must be really good or really lucky."

"Could be some of both," Tad answered, "but I guess we should get to the meeting. By the way, are you going to mention anything regarding the concerns you told me about after dinner last night?"

"You mean the ones about possible Christian vigilantism?" Toby asked.

"Yes, I think you have good reason to be worried," Tad said. "These people are getting almost no training and they are being told to look for anything suspicious in their neighborhoods, including people that may be responsible for bombing a Christian church and killing innocent women and children. In my mind, that is an invitation for all kinds of mischief, including possible violence."

"Not only are they getting virtually no training," Toby said, "but some of their ministers are probably telling them that Islam is a tool of the devil. I heard of one minister who said openly in the pulpit that the two major obstacles to the preaching of the Gospel have been Communism and Islam, both of which he called 'religions of Satan'. I'm very worried about this canvass, but I've already mentioned my concerns to Trey and to Drake and they don't seem in the least bit worried," Toby said as he and Tad arrived at the conference room.

After a prayer, Drake asked each of the taskforce teams to give a brief progress report on plans for the upcoming Sunday canvassing. Trey gave the report for Toby and him, and when he had finished, the taskforce leader responded with enthusiastic praise.

"I think this idea to get church congregations involved was brilliant," Drake said to the group. "It just goes to prove that we don't give nearly enough credit to local law enforcement personnel. They are the ones who know their communities best and how to get things done on the ground."

If Toby had any thoughts of raising the Christian vigilantism issue again, they quickly disappeared. Instead, when the timing seemed right, he broached another issue. "Rawlings and I just finished talking with the law enforcement personnel in our sector, and it occurred to us that we might want to take their ideas about how the canvassing should be conducted and the ideas of folks in other sectors and compile them so that the best ideas are put to practice throughout the entire search area. That way, we will have a better chance of preventing things from slipping through the cracks next Sunday. We'll only have this one opportunity, so we need to make sure it is done right."

Drake appeared thoughtful before responding. "Not a bad idea, Sullivan. You and Rawlings touch base with the other task force teams and put the ideas together. Then give them to Davenport and she will see that they are transmitted to all of the local law enforcement teams for dispersal to the various churches and their canvassers."

Toby looked at Tad, who, suffice it to say, was not smiling. He was certain it was taking every ounce of willpower she possessed not to scream. And he was amazed that she was able to appear so calm when addressing her question to the man she considered a male chauvinist pig of the worst kind.

"Director Drake, at your request, I spent a lot of yesterday trying to compile and search through lists of Muslim names, but came up with nothing of much value as far as I can tell. Any additional information you can give me about this terrorist cell would certainly be helpful. For example, does Desert Dan have any information about the countries of origin of the people in his cell or of those in the D.C. cell? If we knew where they came from, we might be able to trace their movements to this country and learn more about their identities and activities."

"As I said before, the agent does not know much about the D.C. cell," Drake answered, "but he has informed us that the cell in New Mexico is comprised mostly of Syrians and Iranians. I think there is probably better than a 50-50 chance that the same is true of the D.C. cell, but you leave that part of the investigation to your former colleagues at the CIA. In addition to contacting our local law enforcement partners, I have something else for you to do. I have just received information from Desert Dan that our D.C. terrorists have possibly been renting a house someplace in the search area. I want you to check with

all of the local real estate agents to compile a master list of rental houses and then check to see if any were rented to people of mid-eastern origin within the past three months.”

Compiling lists of Muslim names. And now this - calling real estate agents. Just a few days into her new job on a high-profile terrorism task force, Tad Davenport was as frustrated as she had ever been in any job. She was upset because her assignments were not much more than clerical, but even more importantly, she was upset because she really wanted to catch the terrorists, and both her instincts and her training told her that most of what the taskforce was doing was a giant waste of time.

## CHAPTER 10

*Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6*

*“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25:39-41*

It was Sunday, the day of the much-anticipated Christian antiterrorism day of prayer. Toby awoke early, feeling that almost everything that could be done to prevent a witch-hunt had been done, although he still had an uneasy feeling that it was not nearly enough. Knowing that nothing—good or bad—would likely happen until after the churches in the area let out—around noon for most Episcopalians and Presbyterians, 12:15 for the Methodists, 12:30 for the First Baptists and 12:45 or 1 p.m. for the Free Will and Primitive Baptists—he decided to attend his usual 10 a.m. service at the Cathedral, if, for no other reason, than to let the terrorists who had bombed it the previous week know that they had not intimidated him.

After putting on the coffee and bringing in the newspaper, Sullivan took a shower and fixed a fairly typical Sunday breakfast of waffles with fresh blueberries, Vermont maple syrup and thick-sliced bacon. He wished that Tad could be with him to enjoy the quiet Sunday morning, but he understood why she had decided not to spend the night with him. After all, she needed time to unpack and to think about where she was going to live and what she wanted to do with her life. So, Toby fell back into his normal Sunday routine and began eating his breakfast and reading *The Washington Herald*. Two articles were particularly disturbing to him, with the first concerning the churches’ antiterrorism activities planned for that day.

### **Churches Prepare for Day of Prayer and Action to Fight Terrorism**

Leesburg, VA—Near this historic town just 40 miles from the nation’s capital, the Reverend Thomas Duncan is getting ready for a big day on Sunday. Exactly one week after a bomb exploded in Washington’s National Cathedral killing nearly a dozen people and injuring nearly 200, Reverend Duncan and more than 100 other ministers in some Virginia and Maryland counties west of Washington are preparing to hold a Special Day of Prayer to help bring an end to terrorism. But this day of prayer will also include something unusual—sending church members out into the community to help educate their neighbors about ways to combat terrorism.

“I am a firm believer in the power of prayer,” Duncan explains, “but I also know that the Lord expects Christians to be active witnesses in our communities and to confront and defeat Satan wherever he is. We cannot say a few prayers and leave the rest to God. We must help God in this battle against terror and terrorism.”

With the support of local law enforcement agencies, members of the participating congregations will fan out from their churches after the special prayer services and personally deliver antiterrorism pamphlets to friends and neighbors. And, while they are making their way through the neighborhoods, they will be gathering information about vacant buildings, dangerous chemicals and other possible facilities and materials that could be used by terrorists to launch another attack in the D.C. area.

“We are very grateful to have the assistance of these patriotic Christians,” said Loudon County Sheriff Hollis Richardson. “Anything they can do to make people more aware of how they can help combat terrorism—just by keeping their eyes and ears open—will be invaluable, and it will help them feel more in control and less vulnerable...”

Toby wished the article had not been in the paper at all, but at least neither the minister nor the sheriff had said anything inflammatory about Muslims. Thank God for small favors, he said to himself as he started reading another troublesome article.

## How Will Senate Changes Affect War on Terrorism?

WASHINGTON—Overlooked in most discussions of the recent terrorist attacks in the nation's capital is the effect that the deaths of two prominent senators will have on the balance of power in the senate, particularly as it pertains to the continuing war on terrorism.

The two senators killed, John Morgan of Virginia and Charles "Chip" Madison of Oklahoma, were staunch supporters of the war on terrorism that began in the administration of George W. Bush after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. While most senators continue to give at least tepid support to this war, there has been a gradual reduction in funding, particularly in light of recent budget deficits that have soared to all-time highs. Senator Morgan, a member of the CDR Party and chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee, and Madison, a member of the opposition National Liberty Party, were among the strongest supporters of funding the war on terrorism. It is uncertain how their deaths will affect funding of this war, particularly in light of the bombings last week in the nation's capital.

Since the governors of both Virginia and Oklahoma are members of the Christian Democratic-Republican Party, it is likely that the CDRs will pick up one new member to add to their decisive majority. It is also possible, however, that they will gain two votes on some important issues, since Senator Morgan often sided with the minority NLP on matters related to women's rights and individual liberties.

Based on information from reliable sources, it is expected that Virginia Governor Howard Latham will name Lieutenant Governor Thomas Radford to fill the remaining nine months of the late Senator Morgan's term. Sources close to Oklahoma Governor William Rogers confirm that he will announce tomorrow the appointment of the state's speaker of the house, Daniel Smith, to fill the remainder of Madison's term.

Both Radford and Smith have expressed support for the war on terrorism, especially in the past week. However, both have also given speeches in which they have been critical of the growing federal budget deficit and have indicated that defense spending may need to be curtailed in order to pay for rising costs in the new government healthcare system, Social Security and Medicare. Radford and Smith are also considered likely supporters of the Christian Republic of the United States of America amendment, which at this point is still a few votes short of the 67 votes needed for ratification.

To Toby, this seemed to provide further validation of the theory that the terrorists were targeting key supporters of the war against terrorism. And if killing U.S. senators had not been the motive for the recent bombings, the article would almost certainly give the terrorists some new ideas.

After cleaning the kitchen, finishing his last cup of coffee and reading a few more articles in the paper—including one about the massive clean-up necessary to get the National Cathedral ready for Sunday services—Toby dressed in gray slacks, a blue pinpoint shirt, a red and blue striped tie and a navy blazer, retrieved his Jag from the garage and drove just over a mile to the Cathedral. From his apartment, he headed south on Connecticut and then turned right on Cathedral Avenue. It was a beautiful day, and Sullivan wished that he and Tad were heading to the Virginia countryside to hike in the Shenandoah Mountains or visit some of the small vineyards that produced incredibly rich, buttery Chardonnays. As he turned right on Garfield Street and then quickly onto Massachusetts Avenue, he saw the Cathedral and resigned himself to the fact that he would have to put off his day in rural Virginia with Tad until another time.

As he pulled into the parking lot of the magnificent Gothic edifice, he was amazed at how normal things appeared. Except for the presence of a few extra Metropolitan Police vehicles, nothing looked very different from any other Sunday. He was also pleased to see that the parking lot was almost full, indicating that many others had the same idea as he about not living in fear of terrorism.

Inside the church, with the exception of the area where the bomb had exploded being blocked off with portable room dividers and two stain-glass windows being temporarily replaced with plywood, things looked amazingly normal. Clearly, law enforcement personnel, church officials, structural engineers, contractors and cleaning crews had worked long hours the past week to make sure the church was safe and ready for this service.

Taking his usual spot near the rear of the church behind his “lucky” column, Sullivan sat quietly as the organist played Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto #1. While listening to the soothing music, he looked around the house of worship to see if those present were primarily regulars or visitors and tourists who seemed to flock to places that had been in the news recently, regardless of the reason.

The faces of two regulars were easily recognizable—Senator Langdon Stevens and his wife, Dana, who were sitting several rows further back than usual, because their row of seats had been blown apart. From the appearance of the two large gentlemen behind them, Toby was almost certain that they were Secret Service agents who had been assigned to the senator after what appeared to be a serious attempt on his life.

Sullivan noticed several other familiar faces, as well. There was the family of six, including four boys under age 10, that always sat two rows in front of him and the family of five, including three young girls, that usually sat in the second row to the right of the center aisle. And there was the family comprised of two women and their adopted Asian children, two girls whom Toby guessed to be approximately two and four years of age.

Among the faces he did not see was that of Margaret Peabody, which surprised him. He was almost certain that she would want to be at the special service that was dedicated to those who were killed and injured, including Rector Samuel York, who was still listed in serious condition at George Washington University Hospital.

For a few brief seconds after the conclusion of the Bach concerto, the giant church was strikingly quiet. Then suddenly, it seemed as if every molecule of air filled with sound. Toby recognized the tune immediately as the Ode to Joy from Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. After the brief musical introduction, the choir and congregation stood and joined together in singing “Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee” as the celebrant, Bishop Benjamin Churchwell and the alter boys and girls processed down the center aisle.

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!*

What glory? What love? Sullivan wondered as he reflected on the blast that had killed and injured so many.

*All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,  
Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
Singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,  
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, all who live in love are Thine;  
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.*

Two thousand years of teaching about love, with what results? Toby reflected.

*Mortals, join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;  
Father love is reigning o’er us, brother love binds man to man.*

*Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,  
Joyful music leads us Sunward in the triumph song of life.*

Clearly someone didn't get the e-mail about brotherly love, Toby thought as the hymn came to an end and he settled into his private world of thought and reflection. He thought mostly about Tad. He wondered if she really knew how much he cared for her and wanted to be with her. He also wondered if being cared for and loved was enough for such an independent, strong woman. Could she ever be truly happy in a relationship that in any way limited her professional ambitions?

Toby also thought yet again about the massive canvassing that was about to begin in Virginia and Maryland. No matter how many assurances he had received from Trey, Drake and the local authorities, he was nervous about sending untrained civilians into unfamiliar neighborhoods to distribute antiterrorism information and look for evidence that terrorists were—or had been—there. This was far more difficult—and potentially dangerous—work than sending the church welcome wagon volunteers to visit a new homeowner. The closer to the end of the service, the more nervous Toby became.

Lost in his private thoughts, Sullivan paid little attention to the service. He did, however, listen carefully to the homily delivered by Bishop Churchwell. Although most of the bishop's words—including the tried and true passage from Ecclesiastes about a time for every purpose under heaven—were designed to soothe a distraught congregation, Toby particularly noted these words about Rector York.

"I am very happy to report to you that Father York's condition is much improved and that he will make a full recovery," the bishop said. "However, I do not believe that it is in the best interest of Father York, or of the Cathedral, to bring him back to this church as the rector. In order to protect his health, I have decided to reassign Father York to a smaller parish in Maryland. As of May 1, the new rector of the National Cathedral will be the assistant pastor, Father Jon Oosterhoudt."

"Oosterhoudt." Toby knew the name, but didn't know much about him except that he was the one that Father York routinely relegated to the 7:30 a.m. service and visiting hospitals. Apparently, the two clergymen had serious disagreements over theology and church management. It was going to be interesting to see how this change affected the congregation.

After the homily, Sullivan drifted back into his private world of thought—until he heard the organist hit the first notes of the recessional, the very familiar, "Praise to the Lord."

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;  
Praise Him in glad adoration.*

*Praise to the Lord, Who over all things so wondrously reigneth,  
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!  
Hast thou not seen how thy desires ever have been  
Granted in what He ordaineth?*

*Praise to the Lord, Who hath fearfully, wondrously, made thee;  
Health hath vouchsafed and, when heedlessly falling, hath stayed thee.  
What need or grief ever hath failed of relief?  
Wings of His mercy did shade thee.*

*Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.  
Let the Amen sound from His people again,  
Gladly for aye we adore Him.*



As the recessional ended, Toby sat down and remained for a few minutes, listening to the postlude, the Voluntary in D by John Stanley. He found himself hoping—and praying—that nothing disastrous would happen on this beautiful Sunday.

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Davis P. Rawlings, III, known to everyone since early childhood as “Trey,” was awakened on Sunday morning slightly after 7:30 a.m. by his wife, Tricia, who told him that breakfast would be served in the dining room in 30 minutes, provided that gave him enough time to get ready.

“That will be fine,” he assured her. “Are the kids up?”

“Yes dear, they are,” Tricia responded. “I got them up first to take their showers so that you would have plenty of hot water.”

“Thanks, I appreciate that,” he responded as he began to get out of bed. “I’ll be down shortly.”

After showering and dressing in a blue pin-striped suit, crisp white shirt and solid red bow tie, Trey descended the stairs to the main floor of their late 20th century French provincial style home in suburban Maryland. He hung up his suit jacket in the entry hall closet and then walked into the large, formal dining room where Tricia and his four children, Matthew, Mark, Luke and Mary, were already seated, waiting for him.

As soon as he sat down, everyone bowed their heads and held their right hands in the air.

“Dear Lord, we just thank you for this wonderful day that you have made for us and this wonderful food that you have given us,” Trey prayed. “Please help us, Lord, to do only those things that are pleasing to you, for we know that we can do nothing worthwhile without your help.”

Looking up, Trey said: “Everyone,” after which Trey, Tricia and all of the children said in unison, “All praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”

“How is everybody on this blessed morning?” Trey asked his family.

“I think everyone is doing very well,” Tricia said. “Matthew got a perfect score on the history report I assigned him last week. “Mark has learned his multiplication tables up through nine, and Luke is learning to count. And Mary, why don’t you tell your father what you learned last week?”

Eight-year-old Mary smiled and said excitedly, “I learned how mathematics is used in recipes for things you can cook in our new oven—like brownies. They were really good.”

Trey smiled at Mary and at Tricia. Seeing how happy and well behaved his children were, he was certain that he had made the right decision to home-school them. Tricia had been a little reluctant at first to leave her job as a researcher at the National Institutes of Health, but she seemed now to enjoy being at home with their young family. And the children seemed to be thriving.

After a pleasant breakfast of fresh grapefruit, cereal, scrambled eggs, bacon and toast, Trey dismissed the children from the table with a reminder that they would be leaving for church in 25 minutes exactly and should be ready to go without having to be called twice. He then went into the living room, where Tricia brought him a fresh cup of coffee and the newspaper.

After glancing through the new expanded religion section, a front-page story caught his eyes:

### **How Will Senate Changes Affect War on Terrorism?**

After reading the story, Trey handed it to Tricia.

“Look at this, honey. I think it confirms that we are on the right track in searching for the terrorists. Clearly, their motive is to disrupt the war on terrorism that this country has been so successful in fighting. I guess they figure they can scare our government into backing off. I think they are wrong.”

“What about these new senators that may be appointed?” Tricia asked. “Will they support the war?”

“I hope they will,” Trey answered, “and I hope they will also help in the effort to make our government more value-oriented. From what I have heard, they are both strongly-committed Christians.”

“Well speaking of Christians, Tricia said, “it’s time to get this family to church.”

“Everyone in the car,” Trey called out in a loud voiced. “The Lord is waiting for us.”

Dutifully, Tricia and the children piled into their late model minivan with the latest generation hybrid technology, as Trey climbed in the driver's seat.

After a short drive during which Tricia and the children sang several songs of praise, the Rawlings family arrived at the Holy Trinity Evangelical Church at the usual time—ten minutes before the start of the Sunday School classes at 10 a.m. Waiting for them at the entrance of the huge megachurch was Associate Director Drake, his wife and three children as well as someone Trey did not expect to see, Margaret Peabody.

“Hello Margaret,” Trey said. “I am surprised, but very glad to see you at our church today. I believe you will enjoy the Sunday school service and find the minister's message very inspiring. Let me introduce you to my family. This is my wife, Tricia, my daughter, Mary, and my sons, Matthew, Mark and Luke. This is Margaret Peabody, assistant to Director Drake.”

After Margaret exchanged pleasantries with Tricia and the children, Drake asked Trey if he could see him a moment in private. They met briefly and then returned to their respective Sunday school classes, with the older children heading in one direction and the adults and very young children in another.

At the conclusion of their classes, they all met at the entrance to the church and Trey and Drake lead their families and Margaret to the center of the massive theater-style sanctuary which had comfortable individual seating, state of the art sound and light systems, and an adaptable performance stage.

The service began with a song of praise from a teenage chorus accompanied by a piano and two guitars.

*Come Lord Jesus come  
for my soul is thirsty.  
Living water run  
purify and cleanse me.*

*Holy river run through me.  
Living fire burn in my soul.  
well of mercy, power and grace  
wash my sin away*

*Come Lord Jesus come  
Holy fire consume me  
let Your will be done  
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus come*

Trey looked around the huge building, which certainly did not resemble the more traditional—and much smaller—house of worship he attended as a boy. Once again, the megachurch was filled to capacity - nearly 10,000 worshippers. Why were they all here? Trey wondered. Was it the eclectic mix of hymns, jazz, and praise choruses, combined with liturgical readings and charismatic healing sessions? Or, was it the hard-line, back-to-basics theology that the ministers preached?

Rawlings didn't particularly care for the modern “Praise” music and all of the audio-visual presentations, himself, but his children seemed to enjoy it all, and besides, worship for him wasn't really about enjoyment. As their minister had once said in a sermon, “Let us come into the sanctuary, not with the thought, ‘What can I get out of this?’, but rather, ‘Are my approach and my praise acceptable to the infinite God over all?’ Then we will indeed be led into His holy presence, and find the joy of that presence.”

Trey's thoughts about the Praise hymns soon vanished as the minister asked the congregation to repeat a prayer written in the program.

“Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me your servant.”

After another Praise hymn, the pastor began his sermon – a timely one to be sure.

“Last week, I talked about each of us writing an autobiography in the way we lead our lives. Well, this week, I want to talk about one more chapter in the autobiography of every Christian.”

Trey listened intently as the minister continued.

“In these dark days of America’s history, this is the chapter you and I want the lost and dying world around us to read. Paul gives us the chapter with these words: ‘But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.’ Paul is telling us that he is an example of what God’s Amazing Grace is all about.”

For a brief moment, Trey found his mind distracted from the minister’s words. He wondered if Toby’s fears about the antiterrorism activities in the Virginia and Maryland churches would be realized, or would the Christians act like Christians should. For the sake of the country, he hoped that his partner’s fears would prove groundless.

He also thought about his brief conversation with his boss in front of the church. Drake asked him if he could stay a few minutes after the service was over to meet with him. Trey had, of course, said yes. But why did Drake want to meet with him? He was more than a little curious, but managed to refocus on the sermon, because he knew he would have to lead the family discussion on it later.

“The Lord Jesus rescued this chief of sinners from the fires of hell,” the minister continued in strong voice. “And then the Lord Jesus took his worst enemy and changed him into his most loyal friend, the apostle who became the most dedicated missionary for Christ there ever was. No wonder Paul says: ‘Now to the king, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.’”

And on he went for another half-hour as Trey absorbed the divinely-inspired message and thought to himself about how fortunate it was that America was on the path to becoming a Christian nation.

Yes, it truly was fortunate, he thought, that Christians had come together a few years ago, put aside their political and theological differences, and joined together to form a powerful religious and political force to remake America. Surely, this whole movement was divinely inspired, because there were then—and still were—serious differences of opinion among Christians over issues such as abortion, war and the death penalty. In Trey’s mind, the mere fact that such diverse sects could put aside their differences proved that God had obviously chosen America to be an example to all of the world as a Christian nation.

Why good, intelligent Christian people like Toby couldn’t appreciate and accept the change from a secular to a Christian society bothered Trey. Yes, he understood that non-Christians and secular Christians made up a large part of the nation’s population and that many of them considered separation of church and state to be sacrosanct. He also understood that many Americans had difficulty reconciling the exclusionary nature of religion and the proselytizing aspect of Christianity with a government that purports itself to be representative of the people.

What they—and Toby—didn’t seem to grasp, however, was that times and realities had changed. Most Americans now considered themselves devout Christians and wanted their government to reflect their values. They were no longer willing to allow their government to tell them that faith must play an inferior role in their lives. In order for the government to remain a government “of the people, by the people and for the people” as Lincoln had said, it must become a nation that reflects the Christian values of the majority. Why couldn’t well-meaning people like Toby understand that?

As the minister's voice rose a few more decibels, indicating that he was nearing the end of the sermon, Trey put aside his thoughts and questions and focused once again on the spiritual leader's message.

*Fellow Christians, you and I are living examples of what God's Amazing Grace is all about. Jesus has rescued each of us from the fires of hell...Our messed up world needs such examples of God's amazing Grace— you and me!*

*I know how difficult life can be sometimes, but I also know that Jesus cares and Jesus can help. He's carried me through so many tough times. He will do the same thing for you. Put your life in His hands. Dear friends, be such an example of God's Grace to others.*

*And beware of those pluralists who would have you believe that other religions are just as good as Christianity, because I'm here to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that other religions are not just as good as Christianity.*

*For example, Islam is not just as good as Christianity. How could it be? Islam was founded by Muhammad, a demon-possessed pedophile who had 12 wives — and his last one was a nine-year-old girl. And I will tell you Allah is not Jehovah either. Jehovah's not going to turn you into a terrorist that'll try to bomb people and take the lives of thousands and thousands of people."*

*Dear friends, there is no salvation except through Jesus Christ, so let us make it our concern here and now that the story of our life may be summarized in these words:*

*Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed his blood for me;  
Died that I might live on high, lived that I might never die.  
As the branch is to the vine, I am his, and he is mine.  
Amen.*

"Amen," Trey, along with his family and the rest of the congregation responded.

And then the service concluded with another hymn of praise, one that had the entire congregation holding their arms in the air and singing robustly,

*You are holy, You are mighty  
You are worthy, worthy of praise  
I will follow, I will listen  
I will love you, all of my days*

Although Trey found the minister's words about Islam somewhat harsh, he agreed with his basic message that Christianity was superior to other religions. And he really didn't have much time to think about it, because it was now time to meet with his boss.

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Tiffany Ashley Davenport awoke early on Sunday morning, somewhat regretful that she had not stayed at Toby's, but aware that she had some important decisions to make. She also knew that she needed to get ready quickly, because she had promised Sister Mary Frances Sweeney that she would be at St. Jude's church by 6 a.m.

Tad took a shower and dressed as quietly as possible so as not to awaken her sister, who had been kind enough to let her stay in her spare bedroom/office until she found a place of her own. After making sure that the pants, blouse and sweater that she had borrowed from her sister fit reasonably well, she retrieved the newspaper from the hallway and, while downing a small glass of grapefruit juice, quickly read the stories entitled, "How Will Senate Changes Affect War on Terrorism?" and "Churches Prepare for Day of Prayer and Action to Fight Terrorism."

"There's apparently no stopping the Christian fanatics," she thought as she washed out her juice glass, dropped the paper on the kitchen counter and headed out the door to catch a cab to St. Jude's, which was

just 15 minutes away. During the ride, she thought about Toby and about some of the wonderful Sundays they had spent together driving in the Virginia countryside, hiking and sampling wines at local vineyards. She hoped that they could spend some Sunday soon in a similar manner. But seeing her old parish church and elementary school made her happy that she was where she was today.

“How are you Sister Mary Frances?” Tad asked as she went into the school kitchen and snuck up behind the short, thin woman dressed in a gray skirt and white blouse with nothing to indicate immediately that she belonged to the Sisters of Mercy.

“Tiffany Ashley Davenport! It’s been such a long time,” Sister Sweeney exclaimed. “I was so happy to get the phone call that you had finished your secret mission, whatever it was, and that you were home. You didn’t by any chance stop being an agnostic while you were gone, did you? We can always use a few more good Catholics, don’t you know.”

“Actually, Sister, I am happy to report that I am no longer an agnostic. The bad news is that I am now an atheist. Whatever my religious beliefs are—or aren’t—however, they will never stop me from helping you here at the food kitchen on Sundays whenever I can, so put me to work.”

“Well dear, whether you’re an agnostic or atheist, you’re always welcome here. Let’s get busy scrambling a few dozen eggs. A lot of hungry people will be here in less than an hour.”

Tad was not an accomplished cook by any definition, but she knew from previous years working at the shelter how to scramble eggs and cook sausage in large quantities. Being away for five years had not impaired her skills with the large pots and pans.

Within an hour, Sister Sweeney and Tad were ready for the line of hungry people that had formed in back of the school. And in another three hours, they had fed all who had come.

After the last man and woman had departed and the pots and pans had been cleaned, Tad sat down with Mary Frances to relax with a cup of coffee.

“How are you and the other sisters doing?” Tad asked after taking a few slow, relaxing sips of her coffee. “How many are left in the convent?”

“I’m afraid there are only four of us left in this parish,” the aging, but still spry nun said. “Sister Rosalie passed away last year and Sister Bonaventure moved in with her family back in Ohio. Only the four Marys are left—me, Mary O’Neal, Mary Louise and Mary O’Hara. We still teach in the school and run the homeless shelter and we’ll continue to do both as long as the good Lord allows us to.”

Tad reached out and touched Mary Frances’ arm. “You know, Sister, I sometimes have a difficult time thinking that the Lord is that much in command these days, but I do know that He is damn lucky to have you and the other Marys on his team. If His entire team were comprised of people like you, I might consider joining. Unfortunately, a lot of people who claim to be on the team are not much help to Him.”

“I can’t argue against that,” Mary Frances responded. “A lot of people who claim to be part of the team, as you put it, are nothing but hypocrites, don’t you know.” After lowering her voice to a whisper, Mary Frances continued, “In fact, if you want to know the truth, they are nothing but a bunch of self-righteous jackasses.”

Davenport chuckled, not because of what her long-time friend had said, but because it reminded her of similar things she had said in the past. Sister Mary Frances Sweeney had always been one hip nun.

“What do you think about the new Pope and the direction of the church?” Tad asked.

“You know, I was hopeful at first that Pope John Paul II would continue some of the reforms that Pope John XXIII started, but that didn’t pan out the way I would have liked,” Mary Frances answered. “He was an affable man, but he was still an old foggy as far as I was concerned. No women in the priesthood; no married priests; no birth control. What is this hang-up the church has with sex, anyway? And then Pope Benedict XVI came along, and things went from bad to worse. We had all of these far-out cults being formed within the church, because some people thought it was still too liberal. Can you believe it? And now this latest Pope is likely to be even more conservative.”

“Have you ever thought about leaving the church, Sister?” Tad asked.

“It’s too late for that,” Mary Frances replied. “And besides, I like my work with the children and the homeless. I think I am still doing God’s work even if the old fogies who run the show wouldn’t recognize

Christ if he stood naked in the Sistine Chapel. They would probably tell the Swiss guards to ‘put some clothes on that homeless man and get him out of here.’”

“I hope I’m not keeping you from something,” Tad said as she poured her sincere Christian friend and herself another cup of coffee, “but I am enjoying our visit so much.”

“No, dear, not at all. I’m off the clock until tomorrow morning’s mass at 6:30. I can’t imagine what I’ll do with all of this free time,” Mary Frances said with a chuckle.

“Well good; let me ask you a couple more questions before I have to take off,” said Tad. “What do you think about this proposal to change the name of our country to the Christian Republic of the United States of America?”

The quick-thinking nun left no doubts about her position. “In one word—or is it two words—it’s hogwash. What are these people thinking? This country was founded to avoid having a national religion. I don’t want to be part of any country that is so insecure about its values that it has to cloak its authority in religious symbolism. And I don’t want to be part of any religion that needs to have the government help force people to adhere to the religion’s teachings. God doesn’t need a bunch of privileged old men in the Congress to help Him do his work, don’t you see.”

“I couldn’t have put it better myself,” said Tad. “But what about the Christian Democratic-Republican Party. Hasn’t the administration increased spending for some social programs?”

“That it has,” Mary Frances confirmed. “A good percentage of what we spend at the shelter comes from Uncle—or is it now Reverend—Sam. But, all that money has done is replace what we used to get in contributions. Now that people know the government is involved and taxes have risen, very few donate to the shelter or any other charity.”

“I must say that it’s all a little scary to me,” Tad said. “A friend of mine who works for Homeland Security seems to think that is about the only department of the government that doesn’t have a religious agenda. I don’t know if that’s true or not, but I’m beginning to believe her.”

“I wouldn’t doubt it. We have several parishioners who work for the government and they tell me that there are secret religious cliques in some of the departments, and if you want to get promoted, you have to belong to the clique, and it helps to be an evangelical. But don’t you worry, Tad. I don’t think they’re looking for evangelical atheists,” said the nun.

“No, I don’t imagine they are,” Tad replied with a laugh. “But that is one good thing you can say about atheists. You’ll never find one of us on your doorstep on a Saturday morning trying to convert you.”

Then Tad stood up to leave. “Thank you, Sister, for letting me help out today. Can I come again next week?”

“You bet you can,” Sweeney said. “Who knows, maybe working here will at least get you back to being an agnostic. And even if it doesn’t, Tiffany Ashley, you know you are always welcome.”

“Thank you, Mary Frances. I have to go now. A few hundred Christian churches in Virginia and Maryland are sending their congregations out to search for terrorists. I need to help monitor what happens.”

“God protect us all,” Mary Frances said while making the sign of the cross.

“From the terrorists?” Tad asked.

“No my child,” Sister responded. “From the Christians.”

## CHAPTER 11

*“If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (Submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.” Qur’an 3:85*

*“In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3:3*

After leaving St. Jude’s, Tad took a cab directly to taskforce headquarters, arriving shortly after 11 a.m. When Toby showed up a few minutes later, he found her in the conference room where she was busy checking the communications network that would be used to monitor all of the activity surrounding the Antiterrorism Day of Prayer and Action.

“Boy, I missed waking up with you this morning,” he said quietly as he snuck up behind the attractive, sensuous brunette and put his arm around her waist.

Tad smiled, looked around to make sure no one was watching and gave Toby a quick kiss. “I missed waking up with you, too, but I needed some time to think—and I really enjoyed being at the shelter with Sister Mary Frances. She’s still as sharp as ever—and she has more common sense and compassion for other people than most of the men she has to take orders from. If they made her Pope, I might actually consider joining the church, again. How was your service at the Cathedral?”

Sullivan thought for a moment before answering. “I enjoyed the music,” he said. “As far as the sermon, the bishop said little to inspire me. He did tell us that Rector York is better, which is good news, but he also announced that the rector is being replaced by the associate pastor, who I believe is on the other end of the theology spectrum from Father York. That wasn’t such good news.”

“Well, that’s the trend these days, isn’t it?” Tad asked rhetorically. “Even Mary Frances seems to be a little afraid of the direction things are going—in both the church and the government.”

“I think she has reason for concern,” Toby suggested. “I’ve worried about this antiterrorism day of prayer and action most of the morning.”

“I’m concerned, too,” Davenport answered. “I have little hope that anything substantive will come out of it as far as finding evidence about the terrorists is concerned, because they are much too smart to be discovered by a bunch of amateur sleuths. The more likely result is that a few zealots will make fools of themselves by harassing some poor, innocent mid-eastern immigrants who own the local convenience stores. Hopefully nothing really bad will happen, and if that’s the case, it will just have been a lost week in the investigation.”

“I hope you’re right about nothing bad happening,” Toby replied. “Setting off a religious war among Americans is the last thing we need.”

Tad continued checking all of the channels on her communications screen as she responded. “I’m actually surprised we’ve made it this long without a major conflict. Fundamentalists in both religions are convinced that their understanding of God and truth is the only one possible. Neither side sees how crazy that idea is.”

“I’m afraid you’re right about that,” Toby replied, “and speaking of crazy, before things get too crazy around here, I’m going to run down to the deli to grab a sandwich. Can I bring you something?”

“Sure. Any recommendations?”

“Everything they have is usually quite good. You still like chicken salad? Theirs is exceptional.”

“Sounds great,” Tad responded. “Let me have it on wheat bread, with some chips and a bottle of sparkling water.”

“Will do. See you in about 15-20 minutes.”

Before leaving the building, Toby stopped briefly at his office and contacted Sheriff Hollis Richardson in Leesburg, just to see if he had any early reports from the churches.

“Nothing yet to report, Agent Sullivan, but don’t worry, everything’s going to be just fine. I expect we’ll be getting some early reports in an hour or so from the first group of canvassers that left out of First Methodist Church a little while ago. Don’t worry, the Lord is on our side.”

Toby suspected that if the Lord took sides he would have stopped the bombings before they occurred, but not wanting to upset the sheriff, he said, “I’m sure you are right, sheriff. I’ll be here if you need anything.”

After terminating the audio and visual communication, Toby took the elevator down to the lobby, crossed the street and walked a block to the small corner deli that had become a popular source of takeout breakfast and lunch food since opening just three years before. He ordered two chicken salad sandwiches, two bags of chips and two bottles of water and then picked up a copy of *The Washington Tribune*, a highly partisan, pro-CDR newspaper, to read while he waited for his order. He was particularly intrigued by the front-page below-the-fold article:

### **Senate leader says Christian amendment just two votes shy**

WILMINGTON, NC— A key senate leader says that the senate will soon be just two votes shy of having enough votes to pass a momentous constitutional amendment. The amendment would officially change the name of the United States of America to the Christian Republic of the United States of America and would prohibit Congress from passing any laws in direct conflict with the New Testament and tenets of Christianity.

Speaking at a Saturday morning pancake breakfast at the Eastern North Carolina Evangelical Church, Senate Majority Leader Roger Williams (CDR-NC) told those in attendance that the recent deaths of two senators may help pave the way for passage of the controversial amendment.

“As tragic as the deaths of Senators Morgan and Madison were,” he said, “the appointment of two pro-amendment senators to replace them is almost certain, which means that we will be only two additional votes shy of passage.”

Asked by a church member in the audience how likely it would be to secure the two additional votes, Williams sounded optimistic.

“I think the chances are very good,” he said. “One of the opponents is nearing his 100th birthday, and I understand that he may retire before the end of the year. And if we come within one vote, I like to think that constituent pressure on the remaining 34 senators will convince at least one to change his mind.”

Toby put the paper back on the counter when he heard the clerk call out that his order was ready. After scanning his fingerprint to debit his bank account for the amount of purchase, he headed back to the office, wondering if passage of the Christian Republic amendment was really that likely, or if the senator was just telling the homefolks what he thought they wanted to hear.

As he entered the lobby, he ran into Trey and Associate Director Drake, who were waiting together for the elevator.

“Hello, Sullivan. How were services at the Cathedral today?” Drake asked.

“Fine,” Toby answered, assuming that Drake was interested in knowing how the congregation had responded to the previous week’s bombing. “There was a packed house.”

“I heard through the grapevine that the bishop is replacing your rector,” Drake continued with a slight grin—or was it a smirk—on his face.

Toby clearly did not expect such a comment and had no idea how to respond, except to ask the first question that came into his mind. “How did you find out so quickly about that?” he asked as the three men entered the elevator. “It was just announced in church today, by the bishop himself. I didn’t realize it was general knowledge already.”

“Actually my pastor told me,” Drake answered. “There is a network of evangelical ministers in the D.C. area who try to keep their fingers on the pulse of everything taking place in the religious community. Their mission is to encourage all churches and all Christians to stay close to the Bible and keep Christianity pure.”



“Oh, I see,” Sullivan said, for lack of anything more intelligent or relevant to say. “I’m sure Reverend Oosterhoudt will do that.”

“What’s most important,” Trey said, “is that your congregation will almost certainly have an opportunity to hear God’s message in an entirely new way—more directly through the Bible, rather than through an imperfect filter.”

“Hearing God’s message is important, but people attend church for a lot of different reasons, many just because it is uplifting and makes them feel good,” Toby said, “and that can’t be all bad.”

“That’s the problem with some churches,” Drake responded a bit testily. “I don’t think the church’s purpose is to provide a social club or to make people feel good about their sins. It’s purpose is to cut to the heart when we sin and to make a difference in people’s lives. Christ doesn’t want us just to ‘play church’. We are to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus even though it means suffering for Him.”

Now Toby really was completely clueless as to what to say, so he was glad that the elevator door opened just as Drake finished his mini-sermon. This allowed him to make his escape with an innocuous comment about his lunch.

“Well, I’ll see you two shortly, just as soon as I finish this sandwich,” he said quickly as he exited the elevator.

Toby hurried into Tad’s office, handed her a brown paper bag containing her lunch and told her about his conversation with Trey and Drake. “It’s absolutely incredible that Drake had already heard about our rector being replaced,” he said. “I never realized that the evangelicals had such an extensive network.”

Tad took her sandwich out of the bag and then responded, “Face it, Toby, they’re everywhere.”

“Yes, and that worries me,” he replied as he took a large swallow of water. “A priest friend once warned me to beware of humorless Christians, because Christianity is supposed to be a joyful religion. Unfortunately, I don’t see much joy in people like Drake. I guess we just have to hope that they truly do practice what they preach.”

“I’m not sure whether that would be a good thing or not,” Tad said just before Trey called out for Toby to come to their office.

“I hope this is an isolated incident,” Rawlings said as soon as Sullivan arrived, “but Sheriff Longino of Clarke County just reported that two canvassers from a local Baptist Church got into a confrontation with the owners of a convenience store about 10 miles from the church. It seems that the canvassers made some remarks about Islam and the Qur’an that did not sit well with the Pakistani-American storeowners.

Before Toby could respond, the videophone was ringing again. This time the call was from Sheriff Richardson in Leesburg.

“I’m sorry to have to report this,” Richardson said without even saying hello, “but we’ve had a bit of a problem with two members from one of our churches leaving some unsolicited religious materials at the home of two gay guys a few miles east of here.”

“What kind of religious materials, sheriff?” Toby asked.

Here’s a copy. I hope you can see it alright,” said the sheriff as he held up a little pamphlet with the following verses:

*Leviticus 18:22, God reveals homosexual practice to be an abomination in His sight.*

*Romans 1:26, 27 declares homosexual activity is a lust of the flesh which is unnatural, degrading, and totally contrary to God’s will.*

*I Corinthians 6:9, 10 reveals that homosexuals are to be denied entrance into the eternal Kingdom of Heaven if they do not repent, receive Christ as their personal Savior, and abolish their homosexual life-style.*

This was exactly the kind of thing that Toby had feared would happen when a bunch of Christian zealots were turned loose on a mission for which they had no training. “I can’t imagine why the couple would have been offended by such material,” he said in obvious displeasure that the canvassers were attempting to proselytize rather than concentrate on the task at hand.

“I know it may not be the most sensitive thing to have done, but you can’t blame the canvassers,” Trey said, trying to calm his partner. “After all, they merely want to prevent them from being turned away from God’s presence on Judgment Day.”

“Maybe that is their motivation,” said Sullivan, “but I thought we had made it pretty clear that such activities were entirely inappropriate.”

“You did, and I’m sure it won’t happen very often,” the sheriff acknowledged, “but evangelicals feel obligated to bring souls to God. What they did was well-intentioned.”

“I don’t know whether it was or not,” Toby answered, “but they have to maintain a little objectivity. They are not on a religious crusade. I hope you will do all you can to get that message through to people before something more serious occurs.”

By the tone of his voice, Sheriff Richardson was clearly not pleased at being lectured by the FBI agent.

“Look, Sullivan, you do your job there in Washington, D.C., and we’ll take care of our end of things out here in the country. These are good folks we have out there giving up their Sunday afternoon to help prevent future acts of terrorism and possibly find some clues about those responsible for your bombings. If a few homosexuals get their feathers—or plumes—ruffled a little, I don’t think that is such a big deal. I probably shouldn’t have called you about this little incident in the first place. If anything serious pops up, I’ll let you know,” said the sheriff just before the screen went blank.

“Damn it, Trey. We should have foreseen that this would happen and sent in some of our people to make sure it didn’t,” Toby said, still agitated.

“Look, Toby,” Trey responded. “I know you have a hang-up about evangelical Christians and how they approach religion, but don’t let your personal feelings interfere with your objectivity. Remember, the goal today is to help prevent terrorism. I don’t think that a few Christians leaving some unwelcome Bible verses with people is at all comparable with what the terrorists did.”

Toby thought carefully before responding. “You’re right. It isn’t comparable. It’s just unfortunate that the people conducting the canvass don’t see the larger picture, too. There is no reason they have to take on homosexuality or other religious issues as a cause when terrorism is our common enemy.”

“We don’t disagree about the main objective,” Trey assured his partner. “It’s just a question of how much in the way of collateral activity we are willing to tolerate to achieve the objective.”

“You mean collateral damage, don’t you?” Toby asked.

“Minor damage at most,” Trey responded. “We’re not talking about anybody getting killed, you know.”

At this point, Toby was willing to concede and drop the issue, but Tad, who was monitoring communications throughout the entire search area, suddenly appeared on the large LCD screen.

“I think you two will be interested in something that could be extremely explosive,” she said. “Turn your video screen to television station 11 and take a look.”

Toby used a voice command to turn the receiver to television and then channel 11. He was shocked at what he saw. A large crowd of people—at least 200—who, based on their clothing, appeared to be Muslims, were shown in front of a church. After turning up the volume on the audio, he listened to the reporter.

*If you just tuned in, we are covering a fast-breaking story in Germantown, Maryland. Apparently, about an hour or so ago, a small group of people who claimed to be members of this Evangelical Christian Church in Germantown, paid a visit to the a local Islamic Center located just about a mile west of here. While they were there, some words were exchanged between the Christians and some Muslims who were at the center. What happened next is disputed. Members of the church*

*claim that they simply asked some questions about the center and whether any strangers have been seen around the center in the last few weeks.*

*Muslims with whom we spoke tell a different story. They claim that at least one Christian made anti-Islamic comments and said that all Muslims are condemned to go to hell. The Muslims are here at the church demanding an apology from the pastor, who, apparently says he has nothing to apologize for, because the evangelical Christians were simply attesting to their faith.*

“Jesus Christ,” Toby exclaimed while turning down the volume. “What next?”

“Toby, I would appreciate it if you would not invoke the Lord’s name in that manner,” said Trey, obviously exasperated with his partner’s insensitivity. “It is not His fault that some of his followers might be a little too zealous.”

“No, it isn’t,” Toby agreed, “but what is wrong with these people? Have they no common sense? Why in the world are they trying to make American Muslims hostile to us? Isn’t it enough that a good percentage of the world’s billion or so Muslims in other countries already hate us?”

Suddenly, Margaret Peabody’s image appeared in the bottom right-hand corner of the LCD screen, a section that could be utilized by the director at any time for announcements.

“All members of the task force please report to the conference room immediately,” she said. “Director Drake has an important update on today’s canvassing.”

Toby and Trey halted their discussion and joined the rest of the taskforce around the large conference room table. Drake asked Margaret to turn down the audio on the large LCD receiver before he spoke.

“I’m sure you’ve all seen the reports of the incident in Germantown,” he began. “But before everyone gets worked up about a few Muslims being insulted, which I in no way condone,” he added with a slight grin, “let me bring you up to date on the bigger picture.”

After pausing to look through some handwritten notes, he continued, “There are more than 20,000 people participating in today’s canvassing, and only a handful have been involved in anything controversial. For the most part, things have been extremely peaceful and virtually all of the designated search area should have been covered within the next couple of hours. I want all of you to stay focused on our mission and not get too worked up if there are a few missteps along the way. I have a good feeling that someone will turn up something important, so keep in close contact with your local officials and be ready to move on a moment’s notice.”

And then, almost as an afterthought, Drake said, “Remember, the war on terror is a struggle between Judeo-Christian values and Satan. We in the army of God, in the house of God, kingdom of God have been raised for just such a time as this.”

Toby looked at Tad, who appeared about to say something when Drake rose from his chair and said abruptly, “Let’s get back to work.”

Toby followed Tad to her office. “What were you about to say?” he asked.

“You could tell, huh?” she answered. “I was about to tell him that I thought it was a mistake to downplay the importance of the incident in Germantown and of several other incidents involving homosexuals, Asian-American convenience store owners and at least one Pakistani cab driver. Maybe no one has been killed, but we’re damn lucky that no one has been.”

“So why didn’t you say something?” Toby asked.

“After Drake’s comment about the ‘army of God’, I was too stunned,” she responded, “and besides, do you think it would have done any good?”

“No,” Sullivan said. “He obviously has strong beliefs and doesn’t want to hear any information that challenges those beliefs. I’m going back to my office, but keep me apprised of anything else you hear. I do want to know everything that’s going on—good or bad.”

When Toby arrived back in his office, he and Trey began contacting all of the local officials in their target area. After nearly two hours, they had not talked to anyone who had information that seemed relevant to the investigation. Then suddenly, just when they had begun to think the day had been a total lose, they received a call from Sheriff Richardson.

“Agents, I think you two ought to get out here as quickly as possible. A team of canvassers from St. Paul’s Evangelical Church just contacted their pastor, who then contacted me. They say that they have found an abandoned house that they think might have been recently occupied by several Muslims.”

“And what makes them think so?” Trey asked.

“Well, you may find this strange, but the back door was open so they went in,” said the sheriff, “and when they got in, they heard something that sounded like a foreign language. Checking further, they found a clock shaped like a Mosque, with a recording that they think was in Arabic. They looked around a little more and then contacted their pastor who, like I said, contacted me. I’ve sent some of my boys over there to make sure no one else gets in. How quickly can you get here?”

“We’re leaving right now,” said Trey. “Give us about 50 minutes.”

Toby and Trey stopped briefly by Drake’s office to tell him of the discovery.

“Well, let’s go,” he said before asking Peabody to have his driver bring the car around immediately.

Rawlings and Sullivan followed Drake out the front door and hopped in the back of his new hydrogen fuel cell powered sedan. In addition to being quite luxurious and spacious, it had the latest navigation equipment and, they soon found out, an extremely powerful engine.

“Darn, this thing has almost as much pep as my Jag,” said Toby as the driver stepped on the accelerator when he left the garage.

“Oh, it’s peppy alright,” the driver replied. “This is one of the cars that the Bureau is testing. I love it. It’s smooth and powerful, and the engine is no bigger than a briefcase. Look at all of the extra room the cabin has, and yet the overall dimensions and weight of the car are much less than the old models. It is definitely the wave of the future.”

On the way, Drake contacted Tad and told her to get as much information about the house and renters as possible from Sheriff Richardson and from the agency handling the rental.

“This verifies the information that we received from New Mexico,” the director reminded Toby and Trey. “I have a feeling that we’ve hit the jackpot.”

Being in the new hydrogen fuel cell vehicle on a Sunday afternoon with little traffic, the three taskforce members arrived in Leesburg in less than 40 minutes and then followed the sheriff west on Highway 9 just a few miles out of town. By the time they arrived at the suspect house, down a dirt driveway nearly 1/4 mile long, it was surrounded by patrol cars from several law enforcement agencies, and crime tape had been wrapped around the yard to secure the investigation site.

“Be my guests, gentlemen,” the sheriff said to Drake, Toby and Trey as he pulled back the yellow tape on the front door that appeared orange in the direct light of the evening sun.

The three FBI agents walked together, with Drake in the lead. As usual, Trey had his miniature notebook computer out and made detailed notes after entering each room. Toby pulled up the rear and, believing that a picture is usually worth at least a thousand words, made numerous digital photographs as well as his own subjective observations that he filed away loosely in his head for possible future reference.

From the beginning of the search, Drake seemed convinced that this was the house used by the terrorists. One by one, the threesome entered each room, with Drake commenting on items he considered important clues. He was particularly intrigued with the small alarm clock housed in a model of a mosque. Although he wanted to hear the message that the sheriff had described, he carefully picked up the mosque using his latex gloves and put it in a plastic bag that the sheriff provided. He did the same thing with some eating utensils that were left on the kitchen table and some clothes found in one of the closets. “I’m going to make sure that these get quickly to Henry in Quantico,” he told Trey and Toby.

Drake also called attention to one room that was empty, except for three prayer rugs near the front windows, which Toby noticed were quite colorful as they caught the orange rays of the evening sun. And he pointed out a white powder residue in the basement. “This should be easy for the lab to identify,” he said.

After they had searched the house and yard thoroughly, Toby and Trey had the driver take them to the two closest houses, both nearly a half mile away. Neither of these neighbors had ever seen anyone at the remote suspect house.

“It’s getting late,” Drake said around 7 p.m. “You two should put together as many law enforcement officials as possible and spend the next several days in the area talking to anyone and everyone you can find. Someone is bound to have seen the people who stayed here. I have a team coming to seal the house and Henry’s team will be here later tonight. Meanwhile, Davenport is trying to track down whatever information she can through the rental agency. Let’s get back to headquarters and then get some rest. Tomorrow is likely to be another eventful day.

“I’m sure it will,” Toby said to Drake and Trey. “But I hope it will be a little less eventful than today,” he thought to himself.

## CHAPTER 12

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Matthew 5:9*

*And make not Allah because of your swearing (by Him) an obstacle to your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. Qur'an [2.224]*

On Wednesday evening, three long days after the putative terrorist house was discovered, Toby, Tad and Trey met at the outdoor restaurant on the roof of the Hotel Washington. As they arrived, the sun was just about to set over the White House.

"I love this spot," Tad said after they were seated at a table near the railing on the southwestern corner of the roof deck. "My parents used to bring me up here at least once a year when I was a little girl. Watching the sun set over the White House and seeing the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial in the distance is something I never get tired of."

"It is a fantastic view," Toby agreed as he noticed a stunning young woman and her male companion seated at the adjacent table, also noticing that the two were sharing earphones for an i-Pod and that the young woman had pushed her right hand a good distance up one of the legs of the pair of shorts that the young man was wearing. "You can see a lot of amazing sights up here."

Suddenly, the waiter—he said his name was Barack—appeared. "May I get you something to drink?" he asked.

"I'd like a white wine," Tad said.

"I'll just have a cup of coffee," said Trey.

"Do you have an oaky, buttery Virginia chardonnay?" Toby asked the waiter.

"Yes sir. We carry Piedmont Vineyards' chardonnay."

"Excellent," Toby said happily. "Let us have two glasses of the Piedmont and one coffee."

"Yes sir," said Barack as he finished writing on his order pad. "Will there be anything else?"

"I don't believe so," Toby said to the waiter while tilting his head toward the young couple at the adjacent table, "unless you can find out what they are listening to on their iPod."

Tad stared at Toby and then noticed the couple that he had been eyeing. "Men!" she said while laughing out loud.

Trey, who was absorbed in thought and unaware of the joke, unconsciously straightened his bow tie and asked, "Anyone got any idea why Drake called the meeting tomorrow?"

"Not a clue," Toby answered as he looked to see how close the sun was to the horizon. "Maybe the lab has finally turned up something worthwhile."

"Let's hope so," said Tad, who Toby thought looked particularly alluring in a light blue silk—or was it microfiber—blouse that accentuated her well-proportioned breasts. "We certainly didn't learn much from the real estate agency that handled the rental house. The name George Clinton is obviously a fake name—probably from George Bush and Bill Clinton—and no one at the agency actually saw this Mr. Clinton. He paid in advanced for six months using cash."

"We haven't had much better luck," Trey said as he paged through the notes he took on his electronic notebook. "During the last three days, local law enforcement personnel and Toby and I must have talked to nearly 500 people in that area and we only found one person—a Latino package delivery driver—who could remember seeing anyone who wasn't eventually identified as being someone who belonged in the area. He thinks he remembers seeing three men in an SUV leaving the suspect house early one morning."

"Yea, I remember him well," said Toby. "I have his photograph somewhere on a microchip. He has a very interesting face and an unusual voice for a man. It isn't exactly feminine, but it isn't very masculine, either."

"What does his appearance have to do with anything?" Trey asked.

“Probably nothing,” said Toby, “But you know that people’s faces interest me. And I was impressed that he was so precise in his description of the three men. According to him, they were all olive-skinned and all had facial hair. Two had both a beard and a mustache and one had only a mustache.”

“Unfortunately, though,” Trey continued, “he didn’t believe he could describe them to a sketch artist.”

“Well, from my perspective it appears that the late, great Virginia crusades were basically a waste of an entire week and a lot of energy,” said Tad.

“I wish you wouldn’t refer to the canvassing as the crusades,” said Trey as the waiter arrived with the drinks. “Just because most of the people involved in the canvassing were members of Christian churches, doesn’t mean that they were on a crusade against non-Christians.”

“It seems to me that is exactly what they were doing,” answered Tad. “After all, the mission was to help prevent terrorism, and I would bet for most Christian Americans their perception of terrorists would be people of Middle Eastern origin and the Islamic faith. Maybe they weren’t killing Muslims in the name of Christ, but they sure were hunting them.”

“I detect that you aren’t a big fan of Christianity, are you?” Trey asked Tad after taking a sip of his coffee.

Tad took a sip of wine before answering. “Don’t be offended, Trey; I’m not a big fan of any organized religion. It seems to me that organized religions—including Christianity and Islam—have been responsible for far more death and destruction than for anything positive. What was it somebody once said, ‘The nearer to the church, the further from God?’”

Trey answered just as the sun began to disappear behind the White House. “Just because man has misinterpreted Christ’s Word doesn’t mean that the Word is imperfect; it just proves that we are imperfect and need to turn our lives totally over to Christ. If all people truly knew Christ and gave their lives to Him, there would be no wars or conflicts.”

“Sure,” Tad responded quickly. “And if everybody lived their lives according to the teachings of Buddha, there would be no wars or conflicts either. And, if everybody lived their lives according to the Qur’an—at least as a vast majority of Muslims interpret it—there would be no wars. Every religion claims to be the one and only true religion. So what makes Christianity so special? Out of all the religions in the history of mankind, why is the one that just happened to catch on during the days of the Roman Empire the only path to heaven? It makes no sense that any God would leave people out of his or her heaven just because they didn’t live in the right time or place to hear about the one ‘true’ religion.”

“That is why we as Christians have an obligation to make certain that everybody does hear the Word of Christ so that they have the chance to be with Him in heaven,” Trey answered.

“You folks have a non-responsive answer to every question, don’t you?” Tad said, refusing to accept Trey’s explanation. “That does nothing for the people you don’t reach.”

“Well, let me ask you a question about your faith—or lack of it,” Trey said calmly, but with intense fervor. “Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?”

“No, he can’t be,” Tad said after taking another sip of her chardonnay.

“Why not?” Trey asked with a puzzled look.

“Because there is no God,” Tad answered. “No God. No Son of God. No Grandchildren of God. Just people who developed out of cells that came together somehow and somehow that I admit I don’t totally understand.”

Although Toby found himself much more on Tad’s side of this discussion, the gorgeous sunset he was watching made it hard for him to believe that there was not a creator of some type.

“I agree that Christians have no more claim to the truth than any other religion,” he said, “but when I see a beautiful sunset or sunrise or hear particularly beautiful music, I think that there has to be someone or something ultimately responsible for such beauty.”

“Obviously, everything that is beautiful in this world is the work of God,” Trey said to Toby before then replying to Tad. “I’m very sorry to hear that you have no faith in God, Davenport. I will pray that Christ comes to you in some manner so that you, too, will know of His existence and His love for you.”

Tad looked at Trey and smiled. “I appreciate that, Trey. I know you mean well, but I don’t need to be saved. When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad, and that is my religion. I just wish that the Christians who are trying to take over our government would somehow find enough humility to realize that they do not have a direct pipeline to God.”

“Anyone like another drink?” Toby asked after Tad finished, but before Trey had an opportunity to respond.

“Nothing for me, Trey answered. “I need to get home to Tricia and the kids. But it was nice to see the sun set, and I always enjoy a lively religious discussion. And, if I can say just one more thing, Tad, Christians do have several pipelines to God. They are the Bible, the Word of Christ and prayer.”

Trey mentioning his stay-at-home wife and his pipelines to God at the same time was like adding kerosene to a fire burning deep within Tiffany Ashley Davenport.

“Does God tell you through his Biblical pipeline that women should be second-class citizens?” she asked.

“What do you mean by that?” Trey responded curiously.

“Do you believe that women should have the same rights as men?” Tad responded.

“Of course I do,” Trey answered. “God loves women as much as men.”

“As long as they have children and stay at home?” she asked.

“No, women should have the right to do whatever they wish—although, it is obvious that they were designed to bear children and they have the maternal instincts that make them far superior to men in raising children.”

“So, God did make women to bear children and raise them?” Tad asked.

“Yes, but I hardly think that most women consider that to be second-class citizenship,” Trey answered. “In fact, most women I know say that they feel privileged to be able to stay at home with their children.”

“So you favor the laws that the CDR has passed to encourage women to be stay-at-home moms?”

“I think that families are better off if one parent is the primary care giver and homemaker,” Trey admitted.

“And, based on what you said about women, you probably believe that women are the ones who should be the primary caregivers?” she asked rhetorically.

“I’d have to say yes to that,” Trey responded.

“Well, I can see there’s no need to discuss this issue any further then, because I can’t argue with what God has ordained,” Tad said, “but it does bug me that so-called Christians want to impose their values about women and everything else on the rest of us.”

“That’s not exactly true,” Trey responded, “but even if it were, Christians make up about 85-90 percent of the population. Shouldn’t society’s values reflect the values of the vast majority?”

“First of all, I disagree that a majority of Americans are Christians,” Tad answered. “Sure, a majority *claim* to be Christian, because that’s how they were raised. If they had been brought up in India, they would probably be Hindu. And if they had been brought up in Pakistan, they would very likely be Muslim. I would guess that less than half of Americans actually practice Christianity and less than half of those actually believe what they profess to believe. Therefore, the values being imposed on everyone are actually being determined by the most militant Christians in our society.”

“You make some valid arguments,” Trey responded as he stood up and reached to get his wallet, “but I believe this is clearly a Christian country and should reflect Christian values as much as possible. I do admire you for standing up for what you believe, however, and I wish some Christians I know had your fervor. How much do I owe?”

“I’ll get it,” Toby answered. “We’ll probably hang around for awhile longer.”

“Thanks,” Trey answered. “I’ll buy next time.”

As Trey left, Toby ordered two more glasses of the Piedmont chardonnay and he and Tad watched the sunlight gradually fade until the streetlights and building lights illuminated the magic city spread out before them.



“It’s almost scary that Trey is so serious about that religion stuff,” Tad said. “I don’t understand how he can be so intelligent and yet so narrow minded.”

“I wonder the same thing sometimes,” Sullivan said as he gazed out a Lafayette Park across from the White House. “But I have come to realize that there doesn’t seem to be any correlation between a person’s intelligence and his religious beliefs. I know very religious people who have the I.Q. of a corn cob and very non-religious people who are equally as stupid. And I know very religious people who are brilliant and equally as brilliant people who are not at all religious. What separates people is faith or the lack of it, and there doesn’t seem to be any correlation between I.Q. and faith.”

“I guess you’re right,” Tad said as she took another sip of the full-bodied, buttery chardonnay. “And I certainly have nothing against people being religious. But I have seen entirely too much religious-sanctioned discrimination against women to believe that any god would sanction any religion, including Islam or Christianity, that treats women as inferior to men.”

“Agreed,” said Toby, “but you have to admit that women fare much better under Christianity than under Islam. You don’t see Christians stoning women for being raped.”

“That may be true,” Tad admitted, “but a lot of the mistreatment in Muslim countries is due more to culture than any religious requirements. The Qur’an itself is addressed to all Muslims, and for the most part it does not differentiate between male and female. Man and woman, it says, ‘were created of a single soul,’ and are moral equals in the sight of God. In Islam, women have the right to divorce, to inherit property, to conduct business and to have access to knowledge. Any money or property owned by women is theirs to keep, and they are not obliged to share it. Similarly, in marriage, a woman’s salary is hers and cannot be appropriated by her husband unless she consents.”

“Are you saying that Christianity isn’t much better than Islam in terms of treatment of women?” Toby asked.

“What I’m saying is that a lot of the mistreatment of Islamic women is more cultural than religious. And, I’m saying that it really doesn’t matter that Christianity isn’t as bad as Islam. This is the United States in the 21st century for God sakes. Women in this country, whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu or any other religion, should be able to decide what they want to do with their bodies and their lives. It is their choice, not the men who write the laws.”

“No argument here,” Toby said both out of conviction and a keen sense of self-preservation. “But I have two important questions for you.”

“What are they?” Tad asked with a somewhat puzzled look.

The first question is, “Do you want to get a hamburger before we leave? And the second question is from J. Edgar. He wanted me to ask you if you would consider sleeping with him tonight?”

“Yes to both questions,” Tad answered, “and if you are real good, Jeddy and I might even consider letting you join us.”

## CHAPTER 13

*“...be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity: And whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah.” Qur’an 002.110*

It had been more than two weeks since the first in the recent series of bombings occurred. Members of the special taskforce gathered around the conference table to learn what the taskforce director considered so important that it could not be conveyed by videophone, e-mail or some other instant technology.

“I want to bring you up-to-date with where we are in our search for the terrorists,” Drake said as he looked around the conference table with his penetrating steel grey eyes. “Although our Sunday canvassing did not result in the capture of the terrorists, the evidence we uncovered at a house near Leesburg, including various Islamic items and fertilizer residue, indicates that the terrorists were almost certainly there and that we now have them on the run.”

“Desert Dan has confirmed this,” Drake continued. “He says that the canvassing by the church groups caused the suspects to flee their hiding place and head south, possibly to Georgia, South Carolina or Florida. According to his intelligence, the terrorists plan to launch another attack soon, hoping to keep the country on edge in the short term and disrupt our economy in the long run.”

“I’ll bet anything their target is Hartsfield-Jackson Airport in Atlanta,” Trey suggested. “It’s the busiest airport in the world and a key link in our country’s transportation network.”

“That’s what Desert Dan thinks, too, although he admits that he doesn’t know for sure what the target is,” Drake agreed. “Just to be on the safe side, we have notified the TSA, the Atlanta police and the local FBI to put on additional personnel. We still don’t have positive identification of the terrorists, but Henry Nelson is confident the lab will find something to help identify them from the items we found in the rental house.”

Just as Drake concluded the sentence, his personal communications device began to ring. “Excuse me a minute,” he said.

After listening for a minute, Drake began to respond in short, choppy questions. “What happened? When? How many fatalities and injuries? Have the roads and bridges been closed? What about the Coast Guard? Have they been notified? Hold on. I’m transferring you to the large communications screen so the entire task force can see and hear you.”

Drake gave a voice command to transfer the call and then said, “It’s Tony Giordano in Savannah. He has some important news... there he is now on the screen.”

Hearing the serious tone in Drake’s voice, everyone in the room looked anxiously at the three-dimensional projection of Agent Tony Giordano, whom Toby and Trey knew slightly from working a previous case together. Giordano was standing in what looked like a park with a river and bridge in the background. “Can you hear and see me okay?” the olive-complexioned, middle-aged man asked.

“Yes, you are coming in fine,” Drake responded. “Tell everybody what you just told me.”

“About five minutes ago a car bomb was detonated about 100 yards from here just as Georgia Governor Paul Arnold’s car passed by. He was on his way to participate in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, which is a huge event here in Savannah. The governor was rushed to St. Joseph’s Hospital where he will undergo emergency surgery. That is all I know about his condition at this time.”

“How many other injuries?” asked Toby.

“At least two people, including the governor’s driver, were killed and more than a dozen others seriously injured,” Giordano responded. “To answer your other questions, director, the police and the state patrol have blocked all of the roads and bridges leaving town, and the Coast Guard is patrolling the river and coastline for 100 miles to the north and south. Unfortunately, there are about 400,000 people in town today for the St. Patrick’s Day festivities, and things are a bit chaotic. It wouldn’t be too difficult for someone to paint his face green and blend in with the crowd.”

“Can you tell us anything about the bomb?” Trey asked.

“Afraid it’s much too early,” Giordano responded. “The car looks like an old SUV of some type—an older model that hasn’t been made in a decade or more, but that is just a guess. I would just be guessing about the bomb, too, but judging from the damage, it may have been fertilizer. I’ll notify the lab in Quantico to send Lu—I mean Henry—Nelson down here ASAP. As soon as I get anything else I’ll let you know. Unless there is something else, director, I need to get back to the crime scene.”

“That’s fine, Tony,” Drake responded. “You go ahead. I’ll be sending two members of our taskforce down there later this afternoon. They’ll contact you before they leave.”

Drake looked at Trey. “Rawlings—I want you and Sullivan to pack your bags and get to Savannah. Margaret, see if a military or FBI plane is available or get them booked on the earliest flight possible out of Reagan National.”

—

No military or FBI planes were immediately available, so Toby took a cab to his condo, told the driver to wait, and hurriedly packed a new black suitcase that he had gotten for Christmas. In 25 minutes he arrived at Ronald Reagan Airport where Trey was waiting for him at the gate.

“How’d you get here so fast?” Toby asked his partner. “You live a lot further from the office than I do.”

“Easy,” Trey answered. “I called Tricia and asked her to pack my bag and bring it here. It helps to have a wife.”

“I imagine it does,” Sullivan answered. “Have you checked to see if our flight is on time?”

“It is,” said Rawlings. “We leave in 20 minutes and they’re boarding now.”

Before boarding, Trey contacted Giordano in Savannah to arrange for transportation from the Hilton Head-Savannah Airport. “We are scheduled to arrive in Atlanta at 2:10 p.m. and then to catch a flight arriving in Savannah at 4:20 p.m. If we’re late leaving Atlanta, we’ll let you know.”

On the way to Atlanta, Toby and Trey, who were sitting in the exit row of the 767, reviewed everything that had happened over the past few weeks and the information that had been gathered during the investigation thus far. It did not add up to much.

“Let’s start with means—what we know about the explosives used and who might have had access to them,” said Trey, who thought like an attorney putting together evidence for a jury. “The two car bombs were made from ammonia nitrate fertilizer mixed with diesel fuel. The fertilizer could have been purchased at virtually any farm supply store in the United States. The Metro bomb and the church bomb were both Composition C4, a common variety of military plastic explosive used by insurgents during the past three decades in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. And the one today, we don’t know yet. From what Giordano told us, though, I would bet fertilizer again. Ammonium nitrate bombs have more than half the force of dynamite.”

“That really doesn’t narrow our lists of suspects, does it?” asked Sullivan. “Even with the reporting requirements for large purchases of ammonia nitrate, anybody with any sense and a little patience can buy a few bags of fertilizer here and there, and over time they can accumulate enough to make a very powerful blast. As far as the plastic explosive is concerned, there are arms dealers all over the world who will sell anybody with enough money almost any kind of weapons or bomb-making materials they want.”

“True enough,” said Trey. “Almost any terrorist—domestic or international—would have access to the materials used in making these bombs...which brings us to motive. Who has a motive to kill and injure government officials and other innocent people in Washington, D.C. and Savannah, Georgia? Is there any connection between the two cities or the people targeted?”

“The main connections seem to be choice of weapon—a bomb—and choice of targets—government officials,” said Sullivan. “There has been a government official either killed, injured or present at every bombing location,” Toby said. “Am I right?”

“Except for the church bombing,” Trey observed.

“Yes, but Senator Stevens normally is at the Cathedral on Sundays and he usually sits almost exactly where the bomb was hidden,” Toby said. “Most likely, the bombers thought he would be there. They had no way of knowing that he had to fly to Georgia that weekend for a last-minute family engagement.”

“Probably,” Trey agreed. “But I think we should keep in mind that we may never find a logical motive for these bombings. Based on their past actions, it is clear that radical Islamic terrorists don’t need a logical motive for what they do. They just want to cause as much pain and suffering for Americans as possible. Destruction and disruption are their primary motives.”

“Which makes me wonder if these really are al-Qaida connected,” Sullivan suggested. “None of the bombings were as powerful and deadly as is usually the case with al-Qaida, and they were not simultaneous, which is also one of their trademarks.”

“True, but al-Qaida has proven over the years that it is very adaptable,” Trey observed as the plane began its decent. “Going after American politicians one at a time may be their latest tactic, since our government has made massive strikes of the 9/11 variety almost impossible to carry out.”

“That makes sense,” Toby agreed, as the plane touched down on the runway in Atlanta. “Plus, I have no idea who else would want these particular politicians dead.”

Although the plane was a few minutes late arriving at Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, Toby and Trey made it to the gate for their flight to Savannah with time to spare because the gates for the incoming and outgoing flights were both on Concourse C.

“Let’s check in with Giordano before we take off,” Toby suggested. “Sometimes the reception on the plane isn’t very clear.”

Trey pushed the recall button on his phone and Toby listened to Trey’s side of the conversation.

“Giordano, it’s Trey and Toby. Can you hear me, okay? We should be at the Savannah Airport on time. Will you be able to meet us? Great. See you soon.”

“All set,” Trey said after turning his miniature phone off.

Once they were seated on the plane, Trey reviewed the copious notes he had stored in his electronic notebook while Toby glanced at some of the photos on his digital camera and listened to classical music.

Shortly into the flight, as Trey continued to review his notes, Toby put his camera away. His gut feeling was that there just weren’t enough pieces of information available yet to solve the puzzle, no matter how many times he examined them. He felt that the remaining time on the flight would be better used to think about the most important person in his life. Impulsively, he activated his PCD and called her number. She didn’t answer, so he left a message.

“Tad, it’s Toby. I love you. I’ll call you tonight from Savannah. Bye.”

“So the love bug has struck, has it?” Trey said, smiling at his partner.

“Oh, it struck long ago,” Toby replied. “The only problem is that it may have bitten me harder than it has bitten Tad.”

“Well, I’m sure things will work out for you if it’s the Lord’s will that they do,” Trey said. “That’s what happened with Tricia and me. We met at Yale at a Christian fraternity party and knew instantly that God had brought us together. Where did you and Tad meet?”

“We both had a bit too much to drink at a friend’s wedding and wound up back at my apartment in the sack together,” Toby said just to see if he could get a reaction from his straight-laced friend. “You might say that alcohol, sex and rock and roll brought us together.”

“Well, I’m sure the Lord will forgive you if you are both truly sorry,” Trey said in a subdued tone.

“Oh, lighten up, Rawlings,” Toby said smiling. “I was pulling your leg. We actually met at a national security conference a few years ago and began to see each other socially a few weeks later. It was pretty close to love at first sight for me, and after we got to know each other, Tad seemed to fall for me, too. Then she was sent on the undercover mission and just came back into my life last week. It didn’t take long for all of the old feelings to return, that’s for sure.”

“I’m sorry I’m such a prude,” Trey said, smiling. “It’s just that religion is a big part of what gives me purpose, and I don’t know how to separate it from the rest of my life. No matter what the situation, I always try to abide by the admonition to ‘worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’ I can’t be just a Sunday Christian.”

“Nor should you be,” Sullivan responded as the plane landed softly on the runway at Savannah-Hilton Head Airport. “There are far too many of those already.”

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Agent Tony Giordano met Sullivan and Rawlings at the gate, helped them load their luggage into the rear of his hybrid SUV and drove them into the city, using the time in the car to bring them up-to-date on the investigation. “The first thing I need to tell you is that Governor Arnold is not expected to live. The good news—praise the Lord—is that the early reports were erroneous. With the exception of the governor and his driver, there were no other deaths and only a few minor injuries. The car bomb exploded exactly at the time that the governor’s car drove by, shielding the people on the sidewalk from the force of the explosion.”

“So you were close by when it happened?” Toby asked the middle-aged, six-foot tall FBI agent with salt and pepper hair and dark brown eyes.

“Yes, as fortune would have it, I was here for St. Patrick’s Day and was standing across the street about 100 feet from where the explosion occurred,” Giordano explained. “I was looking right at the governor’s car when it happened. It was horrible.”

“And you are pretty sure that the governor was the target?” Trey asked as he verbally entered more information into his electronic notebook.

“It certainly appeared that way,” said Giordano. “I can’t imagine who else it could have been.”

“If he dies, the governor will be the fourth public official to be killed since this rash of bombings began,” Sullivan observed. “And, if Senator Stevens had been at church last Sunday, he may also have been a victim. It is becoming more and more obvious that the bombers, whoever they are, want to strike directly at our government. They apparently have decided that there are too many barriers to them staging a massive 9/11 style attack, so they have resorted to the same tactics that radical Muslims have been using in the Middle East for decades.”

“That’s my theory, too,” Giordano agreed. “They’ve had to shift tactics.”

“I have in my notes that you have already requested Henry Nelson to come down from Quantico to examine the car,” Trey said. “Why bring him all the way from Virginia? Can’t the Atlanta office send a team down here?”

“Sure,” said Giordano, “but I understand that he is the one who examined the stuff from the previous bombings. I thought it might be best to have the same team examine the car.”

“That makes sense,” Trey agreed.

“I need to tell you, too, that Director Drake wants the two of you to get with the local law enforcement personnel and do whatever you can to assist in the search for the people responsible for this horrendous act,” Giordano continued. “I spoke with him just before your plane landed.”

“Let’s just hope no one suggests another massive antiterrorism campaign by local church congregations,” Toby responded.

“Why not?” Trey asked. “It did lead us to the terrorists’ hideout.”

“Maybe and maybe not. I’m still not so sure of that,” Sullivan responded. “No one except the package delivery driver ever saw anyone there. Doesn’t that strike you as a bit odd?”

“Do you think that someone just planted that stuff?” Trey asked. “To me it just indicates that they were smart enough to come and go when they wouldn’t be seen. That’s clearly why they rented a place off the beaten path with no immediate neighbors.”

“That’s possible,” Sullivan said without very much conviction.

By the time Giordano pulled his SUV to a stop on Waters Avenue in downtown Savannah, he had conveyed everything he thought the two D.C. agents should know about the bombing.

“I think we can walk from here to the crime scene,” Giordano said. “You can leave your bags in the car and we’ll get them to the hotel after I show you around.”

The trio walked through much of Savannah's old historic district, including several of its famous squares, before arriving at East Bay Street and the site just a few hours earlier of the deadly explosion that might very well have taken the life of Georgia's governor.

"You can see that there isn't much left of the car containing the bomb," Giordano said as he pointed to the shell of what appeared to have been an old, large-size SUV that had been illegally parked on the corner of a side street.

"I'll say there isn't," Trey exclaimed as he held up his badge so that the Georgia State Troopers guarding the crime scene would let him get closer. "I'm frankly amazed that more people weren't killed or injured."

"The Lord was with us," said Giordano. "Almost no innocent bystanders were victims."

"What do you mean 'innocent bystanders'?" Toby asked as he, too, moved closer to examine the SUV. "Weren't the governor and his driver innocent?"

"Maybe that was a poor choice of words," Tony quickly corrected himself. "What I meant was that almost no one was hurt that probably wasn't the specific target of the terrorists."

"Right," Trey said as he continued to take electronic notes and examine the scene of destruction. "When you talked to Drake, did he say how long he wants us to stay here? I can't imagine that we will be able to add much to the local efforts."

"He didn't say specifically," Giordano answered. "He just said that you should stay as long as it takes to find the terrorists before they strike again."

"My guess is that whoever is responsible for this is probably in Florida by now," Trey suggested. "I'm sure that he—or they—had a car waiting and took off immediately after detonating the bomb, west on I-16 and then south on I-95."

"Good chance of it," agreed Giordano. "I doubt they were able to block the roads that quickly."

"I wouldn't be so sure," Sullivan said. "I think the safest thing for our bomber or bombers to do would be to blend in with the St. Patrick's Day crowd and then leave when law enforcement officials aren't on such high alert. It's too risky to leave today, which makes me think that we are going to be here for a good while. Oh well, there are a lot worse places to be than Savannah, Georgia in the springtime."

For the next half-hour, the three agents continued to examine the crime scene. Once satisfied that they had seen all there was to see, Trey put in a call to headquarters in D.C., arranging with Margaret Peabody to connect Drake simultaneously with all three of the agents in Savannah.

"I suggest that you pay a courtesy call on Director Barnes of the GBI as soon as we hang-up," Drake said. "Giordano, you met with him earlier, right?"

"That's correct," Giordano said. "I'll make sure that Sullivan and Rawlings get introduced."

"Good," Drake said. "Then I suggest that you all get some rest, because you're going to need it. I want these Muslim terrorists found, and I want them found before another bomb goes off."

With that unambiguous request having been made, Drake terminated the call and the agents took a water taxi to the Savannah Trade and Convention Center on Hutchinson Island, where a temporary command center had been established. It was there that they ran into Director Patrick Barnes of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. After Giordano made the introductions, Barnes, a no-nonsense, stocky man with short brownish-gray hair, gave the FBI agents a rundown on the investigation.

"Since the bomb exploded this morning—at precisely 9:25 a.m. local time—the GBI, Georgia State Patrol, Savannah Police, Chatham County Police and other local sheriff and police departments have been conducting a massive manhunt throughout Georgia, Florida, Alabama and South Carolina, concentrating on the Savannah area. We have questioned more than 300 people who were near the site at the time of the explosion, but, unfortunately, no one saw anything that has been of help to us. As is true in many cases involving an explosion, the shock of the experience tends to distort people's observations. They see someone running, for example, and think he or she may have been the one responsible, when in actuality that person was just fleeing the perceived danger."

"What about that guy I brought to you?" Giordano asked.

"Oh, you mean that guy with the green face and hair and the high-pitched voice?" Barnes asked.

"Yea, that one," Tony said.

"I had him get with our sketch artist, but he had obviously been drinking a good bit and couldn't remember enough about the three men to be of any help with a composite. About all he did remember was that he saw two mid-eastern looking guys with mustaches and beards and one with a mustache only running from the area after the bomb exploded. Just in case we need to track him down later to help with identification, we took down all of his contact information and put it on file with this digital photograph."

Barnes showed Toby, Tad and Tony the photograph—which Toby photographed with his miniature camera—and then pointed to a large map on a giant video screen. "We have also established roadblocks on all routes heading out of Savannah. The roadblocks have been established in concentric circles, with the outermost circle being 100 miles from the city. Because Homeland Security had helped us formulate plans for a terrorist attack, we were able to have the inner perimeter of roadblocks in place within 45 minutes after the explosion. Then we added the other roadblocks at 20 miles out, 50 miles and 100 miles. We believe the bombers are still in the immediate Savannah area."

"What about the car? Any leads on that?" Trey asked while feverishly adding information to his electronic notebook.

"Our forensics experts have looked it over pretty carefully, but they are waiting on your hotshot from Quantico to get down here," Barnes explained. "They feel pretty confident that they will find a VIN in tact and be able to trace the car to the last person who owned it, although the chance of that person being the one responsible for this is nil. This seems to have been a well-executed plan with few fingerprints—literally or figuratively—left behind."

"Director Drake has asked me to cancel my vacation and stay to assist you for a couple of days," said Giordano. "Rawlings and Sullivan are also at your disposal. How can we be of the greatest assistance?"

"Unfortunately, most of what we need done is old-fashioned street cop work—interviewing hotel, motel and restaurant owners to see if they saw anyone suspicious; tracking down the origin of the SUV; and networking among some of Savannah's less savory types to find out if anyone on the street knows anything."

"What about street cameras?" Giordano asked. "Are there any in the area used for traffic enforcement or just for security?"

"We haven't reached the point down here like they have in London, New York and other big cities," said Barnes, "so I doubt that there are many public cameras in the area. There may be some on private businesses near by."

"I'm sure our forensics people will want any video that is available," Giordano said.

"You'll get whatever there is," answered Barnes.

"What about local Muslims?" Toby asked. "Has anyone contacted them yet to see what they know?"

"We have no evidence of any kind that the people behind this were Muslim," said Barnes. "It is just as likely to have been a political enemy of the governor's for all we know. If you folks in the D.C. Bombing Taskforce have any evidence to the contrary, please let me know."

"We don't have any concrete evidence," said Trey, "but we do have an undercover agent who has provided information that would lead to the conclusion that international Islamic terrorists are behind all of these attacks—that they are all related."

"It's certainly a legitimate theory," Barnes agreed. "I wish I could assign someone familiar with the Muslim community to work with you, but I'm afraid our liaison to that community, Wahid Hassan, is in Saudi Arabia on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He won't be back for 10 days."

"That's okay," Toby replied. "I think I can find someone to help us."

## CHAPTER 14

*“The highest form in music is spirituality.” Pandit Ravi Shankar*

Toby’s phone played a few notes of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, interrupting his efforts to clean and unpack his new black cloth suitcase that appeared to have gathered quite a bit of dust since he left his condo.

“Toby, I love you, too, but don’t get any ideas. I’m not ready to jump into marriage or anything that drastic, yet,” said Tad, who continued talking before Toby could respond. “You do understand, don’t you? My whole life has just been turned upside down, and I hardly know where I am, much less what I want to do. Don’t get me wrong. I love being with you, even if you do let that spoiled cat of yours sleep with us.”

Toby chuckled as he used a paper tissue to wipe the dust or powder off his suitcase and then sat on the edge of the bed.

“Of course I understand,” he replied. “I just wanted you to know how I feel—which you should already know. I know your head must still be spinning after all you’ve been through in the last two weeks. You certainly don’t need to make any commitments now.”

“I knew you’d understand,” Tad said. “By the way, where are you?”

“At the Mulberry Inn,” Toby answered. “You remember. It’s the small hotel on East Bay near the historic district and the river that you and I stayed at the month before you left.”

“Of course I remember,” Tad replied. “What a wonderful place. I remember they had a really good jazz group that played in the evenings. And what I remember most is that they had a great bed—or maybe that was just because you were in it.”

“Don’t get me thinking about that,” Sullivan said. “I think I may actually be in the same room that we were in. If not, it’s close to it. It’s on the second floor in the rear, overlooking the courtyard.”

“I can picture the view of the courtyard—and what the room looked like,” said Tad. “That’s a pretty fancy place for a government employee. Is Trey staying there too?”

“No, and that is an interesting story unto itself,” Toby responded. “After Giordano picked us up at the airport, we toured the crime scene and met the local law enforcement folks. Then we tried to check-in at the hotel where Tony is staying on Hutchinson Island next door to the convention center that serves as the temporary headquarters for the investigation. Unfortunately, there were no rooms left, but Giordano suggested that one of us might stay with him, since he had two double beds in the room.

You know how I feel about sharing a room with anyone except you and J. Edgar, so I wasn’t going to offer. Fortunately, the decision was made when Tony said that he is a very religious person and hoped that his Bible reading and praying wouldn’t bother whoever stayed with him. That’s when Trey volunteered to be his roommate—praise the Lord. So, anyway, to answer your question, Trey is across the river at the headquarters hotel and I am here at the Mulberry. I was able to get the room cheap, because I am a government employee and because several people cancelled their reservations after the explosion.”

“Somehow, I can’t imagine Trey sharing a room with anyone except his wife,” said Tad. “I know I don’t know him that well, but anyone as obsessed as he is about his appearance and organization has to be pretty set in his ways. I doubt that arrangement will last very long.”

“Somehow, I think you’re right,” Toby agreed. “But enough about them. Let’s talk about us. Do you think you can come down here to help?”

“To Savannah? Did you forget that I’m working here under the watchful steely eyes of Director Drake?” Davenport asked. “I can’t just pick up and join you, as much as I might like to.”

“But I need some help and I don’t know of anyone as well qualified as you to provide the skills needed,” Toby said.



“And what skills would those be?” Tad asked. “I hope you aren’t still thinking about that bed, are you?”

Toby laughed. “No I wasn’t, although you definitely have skills there, too. I was thinking of your expertise in the Islamic culture. We need someone to help us tactfully question the local Muslim population to see if anyone knows something that might help us find the terrorists,” Sullivan explained. “You are the only one on the taskforce who has the skills necessary to do that.”

“Well, that certainly sounds like a much better use of my skills and time than sitting at a desk and sifting through endless computer files looking for who knows what,” Tad said, seemingly intrigued with the idea.

“In that case, why don’t I broach the idea with Drake to see if he’ll let you come? Toby asked. “The worst he can do is say no.”

“Go for it,” Tad responded. “It’s not as exciting as international espionage, but it beats the hell out of sitting in front of a computer screen all day. Call me as soon as you get off the phone with Drake...and Toby?”

“Yes,” he responded.

“I do love you,” she said.

“I’m glad. I love you, too. I’ll call you tomorrow,” he said as he pushed the off button on his phone.

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After hanging his shirts in the closet and putting his small shaving kit and toiletries case in the bathroom, Toby reached Trey on his personal phone. “What are you and Tony doing for dinner?”

“I believe we’re just going down to the hotel restaurant,” Trey said almost in a whisper. “I think he wants to talk to me about some religious issues. Drake must have told him I was an evangelical and Tony is suddenly in the mood to talk scripture. You’re welcome to join us if you want.”

Sullivan chuckled. “Yea, like that’s really going to happen. Talking about scripture just isn’t me. I would ruin the party for sure. When and where should I meet you guys in the morning?”

Trey laughed, too. “Why not our usual time—7:30—in our hotel lobby?”

“Seven-thirty it is,” Toby said, wondering why he even bothered to ask, since Trey always began work precisely at the same time every morning.

When he finished unpacking the rest of his clothes and putting them in the small bureau below the large plasma video screen, Toby left the comfortable inn to take a walk and, hopefully, find an interesting restaurant that was open in spite of the bombing. Rather than head down to the waterfront where most of the remaining tourists would be, he decided to walk south, through the historic squares of the city. It was in this area that a large number of 19th century homes and businesses still remained, tucked among the moss-laden live oak trees, giving the city its unique southern charm.

After walking through several beautifully landscaped squares, Toby came across a statue of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church and then the grave of Tomo-chi-chi. He was a famous Creek Indian who, more than any other person, helped General James Oglethorpe establish the colony of Georgia.

It was a beautiful evening, and the azaleas, dogwoods, sweet tea olives, camellias and other spring flowers were in full bloom, but Sullivan saw few people enjoying the nice weather and vibrant color that nature had provided. In many of the squares, he was all but alone. That was certainly not surprising, given the shock of the day’s events and the fact that the state’s governor was still listed in critical condition.

When Toby reached Johnson Square, he suddenly saw dozens of people, all apparently heading in the same direction. He joined the procession and discovered that the crowd’s destination was Christ Church, which, according to a sign on an easel near the front door, was the site of a prayer service for healing and reconciliation. There could be no better place to hold such a service, Toby thought, because Christ Church was known as the mother church of Georgia, having been established with the founding of the

colony in 1733. One of the first rectors had been John Wesley, who later abandoned the Church of England.

At first, Toby thought about continuing his walk and finding a restaurant, but then he heard the pipe organ. The magnificent sound was like a magnet.

Unable to resist the call of an organ playing the music of Johannes Sebastian Bach, Toby followed the crowd into the historic building. As soon as he reached the top step and glanced inside the quaint church, he was very glad that he had. The building, he learned from a booklet he picked up on the way in, had been designed in 1838 and rebuilt after a fire in the 1890's, and it was in beautiful condition. The magnificent Ontko Pipe Organ that dominated the entire West end of the building, was built in England in 1972.

After taking a seat toward the rear of the church, Toby listened as the organist worked his way through several familiar pieces. Then suddenly, the minister, who had been seated near the altar, climbed the dozen steps that led to the lectern and began to offer words of solace to a community in grief.

Although he questioned the power of prayer—since he wasn't sure who was supposed to be listening—Sullivan nonetheless prayed with the minister and the congregation for the recovery of their governor. And then he listened to the minister's words of solace and comfort—words that failed to provide him much of either, or with a rational explanation for God's inattention, indifference, or whatever allowed such horrendous acts of violence to occur. *Maybe it's too much to ask for a rational explanation for something that is inherently irrational*, he told himself.

The minister did say something that made sense to Toby, however, and that was an admonition to the congregation not to jump to conclusions regarding who was to blame for the recent bombings.

"Yes, it is a sin to commit such horrendous acts that take innocent life," he said, "but it would be just as great a sin—or greater—to unjustly blame and punish an entire group of people on nothing more than a guess or feeling that someone in that group is responsible for these crimes."

And the minister continued, "And even if it is eventually proven that individuals belonging to a particular religion were to blame, we cannot blame every member of that religion. Would it be fair to blame every pro-life Christian, because of the actions of a few who have murdered in the name of their religion?" he asked rhetorically. "Of course not," he answered his own question. "We all need to be patient and wait for the law enforcement authorities to bring charges and for them—whoever they are—to receive a fair trial. None of us should attempt to make judgments based on prejudice and fear."

After the minister gave the blessing of peace, the organist finished the service with a stirring rendition of God of Our Fathers, which Sullivan found as uplifting and moving as all of the words the minister had used. When it came to emotions and feelings of spirituality, music often meant much more to him than any sermons or Biblical passages.

Leaving the historic church, Toby renewed his search for a restaurant that might be open in spite of the day's events. He walked east on Congress Street, through Johnson Square, Reynolds Square and Warren Square until he came to East Broad, the street on which the historic Pirate's House Restaurant was located. When he reached this famous landmark, he was relieved to see that the original building—the oldest in Georgia—was still in use and that the restaurant was open in spite of the tragedy earlier that day.

The hostess seated Sullivan in one of the vintage downstairs dining rooms, where he ordered a glass of chardonnay and began looking over the menu. When the waitress returned with his wine, he placed his order for one of the house specialties, fried chicken with pecan-honey dressing, along with mashed potatoes and green beans. As the waitress wrote his order down, Toby chuckled to himself, recalling something a southern chef had once told him: "You can cook anything you want for Southerners as long as it is chicken and fried."

While waiting for his food, Toby looked around the small dining room and soaked up some of the old tavern's three centuries of history. According to the short narrative on the menu, the small building adjoining the Pirates' House was erected in 1734 and was very likely the oldest house in the State of Georgia. Then around 1753, when Georgia had become firmly established as a colony, the site was developed as a residential section with one of the first buildings constructed being an inn for visiting

seamen. Situated a scant block from the Savannah River, the Inn became a rendezvous of pirates and sailors from the Seven Seas.

On a trip to the restroom, Toby discovered something he remembered seeing on a previous visit—a sign about a tunnel that had allegedly led to the sea, via the Savannah River. With such atmosphere, it is no wonder that the old tavern helped inspire Robert Lewis Stephenson as he wrote his famous *Treasure Island*.

When his dinner arrived, Toby ordered another glass of wine and thought about what the minister had said at Christ Church—that no one should prejudge any person or group of people as being responsible for the bombing in Savannah today, or any of the other bombings of the past two weeks. Were the members of the taskforce looking for the right people? Was the New Mexico agent, Dessert Dan, getting accurate information? Was Drake too eager to believe that Muslim terrorists were responsible? Had al-Qaida operatives actually been living in the rented house near Leesburg, Virginia? Had these same terrorists come to Savannah to plant the car bomb that had seriously injured—and possibly killed—Georgia’s governor? If so, why was the governor a target, since he had no influence in foreign policy? If Muslim terrorists were not responsible, who was? And perhaps the most important question of all—why hadn’t the taskforce been shown or told about any physical evidence?

By time he finished savoring the last bite of the Pirate House’s famous key lime pie and taking his final sip of decaf coffee, Toby had discovered no answers to his questions, but he had decided that his earlier instincts had been correct—the way to find Muslim terrorists (if there were any) was not by mobilizing Christians in some modern day crusade, but by working quietly through the American Islamic community. They should know better than Christians if foreign terrorists were in the country.

This is what Toby was thinking when his phone began to ring.

## CHAPTER 15

*“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth;  
I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34*

Giordano asked the hostess to show Rawlings and him to a table in a corner so that they could talk privately. Both had their electronic Bibles with them, something that might have seemed strange a decade or two earlier, but seemed quite ordinary now.

“Is that one of those new voice-activated Bibles with commentary and search tools?” the hostess asked as she saw Trey place the black palm-sized device with an in-laid silver cross on the table.

“Yes, it’s the newest and most powerful model,” Trey said proudly. “It has everything needed to make any Christian an expert on God’s word, including the complete Old and New Testaments in both the KJV and World English translations. It also features inspirational verses grouped by topic, random verses for daily devotionals guidance, auto-scroll for continuous reading, favorite verse storage for quick retrieval, and search options by version, book, chapter or verse.”

“Wow. I know what I’ll be asking for next Christmas,” the young woman said as she placed two menus on the table.”

As soon as the hostess left, the waitress appeared. After ordering two glasses of sweet tea—with extra lemon for Trey—the two men looked over the menu and decided what they wanted to eat. Then Giordano told Trey why he had wanted them to have dinner together.

“Director Drake has told me a lot about you,” Giordano began. “He says that you are not only a good agent but also a good Christian who is committed to make America a more Christian nation.”

Trey was pleased that the director apparently thought so highly of him. “I’m flattered that the director thinks that,” he said. “I do believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only path to eternal life, and I believe that those who truly accept Christ as their savior are obligated to tell others about Him so that they, too, can be in His presence after their life on this earth is over.”

“So, you believe that we are obligated by our faith to help make this officially a Christian country?” Tony asked just as the waitress arrived to take their order.

After ordering—shrimp scampi for Tony and sea bass for Trey—Rawlings tried to answer Giordano’s question as succinctly and honestly as he could. “If you mean by that, do I favor the constitutional amendment to make this the Christian Republic of the United States of America, the answer is yes—as long as the rights of people of other faiths to practice their religions are still respected. I don’t believe people can be turned into Christians by force of law, only by patient evangelizing.”

“But you do believe that our country will be better off when Christianity is recognized as the official religion?” Giordano queried further.

“I believe that a country should be based on clear values accepted by the majority,” Trey answered, “and in our country those are Christian values.”

“But what about the arguments related to separation of church and state?” Giordano seemed to be testing the younger agent—a test that Trey, a history scholar in college, had no trouble passing.

“The concept of separation of church and state is grossly misused,” Trey said without hesitation. “I believe it confuses religious doctrine with religious denominations. Back in the late 19th century the Supreme Court issued what is known as the Trinity Decision. In that decision the Court declared, ‘this is a Christian nation.’”

“Or go back further in history. John Quincy Adams once said that the highest glory of the American Revolution was that it connected the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”

Trey continued, demonstrating both his thorough knowledge of the subject and keen analytical mind.

“Remember, most all of the original European settlers were Christians. I think there is plenty of evidence that the founders of our country thought that Christianity was actually the default state religion. Rather than being something to fear, Christianity was something they believed to be vital to the success of

our government. What they didn't want was for the state to give preference to one denomination of Christianity such as Catholicism, Anglicanism or Calvinism. ”

Trey took a sip of tea before resuming his explanation.

“And just think about the historical validation of religion in our country,” he said. “The Supreme Court building has carvings of Moses and the Ten Commandments. God is mentioned in stone all over Washington D.C. on its monuments and buildings. In the early days of the United States, the capitol building frequently served as a church on Sundays. As a nation, we have celebrated Christmas to commemorate the Savior's birth for centuries. Oaths in courtrooms have invoked God from the beginning. Even the Liberty Bell has a Bible verse engraved on it. There is no doubt in my mind that this country was founded as a Christian nation and will be much better off if it becomes one again.”

“But what about situations in which the nation's laws conflict with God's law?” Giordano asked. “How far should a committed Christian go to make sure that God's law becomes the only law?”

“How far should he go?” Trey responded with the question first. “I think he should do everything possible, following God's law, to implement God's law.”

Giordano pulled up Matthew 28:18-20 on his electronic Bible and asked Trey to find the same section.

“What do you think this means?” he asked Rawlings.

Trey recited the passage without even looking.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

“As far as I am concerned, this is one of the most important passages in the Bible and I think it means just what it says,” Trey responded. “As Christians we are commanded by Jesus, Himself, to bring others to Him and to observe all of His teachings. Once we decide that Jesus is worth anything, then we must decide that Jesus is worth everything. Being worth everything, Jesus is worthy of being first in our lives.”

“And this means that as Christians we may be obligated to follow God's law even above the civil law?” Giordano asked.

Trey wasn't sure why Tony asked this question, but he gave his opinion. “Obviously, that would be the case if there were no alternatives, but again, as I said before, it would have to be a very, very serious situation. I love this country, but obviously, that love is not absolute, whereas my love for God must be.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Giordano said. “In my mind, this passage contains the essence of what it means to be a Christian. It validates His power in the lives of all Christians and our total commitment to Him. If Christians don't believe this statement, they do not have complete faith. Jesus is very clear about His authority in the world — it is complete and total from the beginning of time itself.”

“What about Matthew 10: 34-39?” Giordano asked, almost as if he was the host of the hot new television quiz show, “For the love of God.”

Trey knew the passage, but pulled it up on his electronic Bible and reviewed it.

*“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”*

“I think that in this passage Christ is telling us that peace does not come easily,” Trey said. “Right now, all over the world, wars are being fought and terrorists are blowing up innocent people. Peace is

always preferable, but the reality is, when two sides strongly disagree on something conflict is inevitable. What Jesus is doing is warning us that conflict should be expected between those who accept the Gospel and those who reject it.”

“Does that mean that violence is permissible—or even unavoidable?” Giordano prodded.

“I don’t think I can honestly say that it would never under any circumstances be permitted,” Trey responded, “but only as a last resort and only if all other means have been exhausted.”

“I think this passage means that there are times when the ends do justify the means,” said Giordano. “No one likes violence, particularly Christians, but there are rare situations in which violence may be the only way to protect and promote our faith. Don’t you agree?”

“Like I said,” Trey repeated, “only as an absolute last resort. There are other ways to get our message across.”

“Which reminds me,” Tony said, “I understand that Mat—I mean Drake—spoke to you on Sunday at church about becoming involved with a society of government officials who believe that Christ needs to be an integral part of government service. Have you decided to join the society?”

Trey took a sip of his sweet iced tea before answering. “From what Drake told me, the society has different levels, kind of like the Masons and Shriners. I told him that I would be honored to join the group that I think he called the Saints.”

“That’s great news,” Giordano said. “We need a government that is not just Christian in name, but also in practice. The only way to make ours a better society and country is to permeate the government with the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ. That’s what the Society of Saints is all about.”

“And what about the next level?” Trey asked. “Drake never told me anything about it, except to say that it was limited to a very few, totally-committed and dedicated people.”

“That’s true,” Giordano acknowledged, “and I’m afraid I can’t tell you any more than that just yet. I will tell you, however, that being in the Saints can do nothing but help your career.”

Although he would have liked more information, Trey felt that he had gotten about all Giordano could or would tell him about the Saints. And besides, his food had just arrived, and he was starving.

## CHAPTER 16

*“Because I believe that abortion is murder, I also believe that force is justified in an attempt to stop it. Because this government is committed to the policy of maintaining the policy of abortion and protecting it, the agents of this government are the agents of mass murder, whether knowingly or unknowingly. And whether these agents of the government are armed or otherwise they are legitimate targets in the war to end this holocaust, especially those agents who carry arms in defense of this regime and the enforcement of its laws.” Eric Robert Rudolph, 2005*

Just as Toby took his last sip of coffee at the Pirate’s House, his miniature phone began to ring quietly in his ear. He could tell by the special ring that the caller was Tad.

“Hi, what’s up?”

“A lot,” Davenport replied. “Are you alone?”

“Only if you don’t count the restaurant employees and customers,” Toby replied. “But, I’ll be back to the hotel in five minutes. Why don’t I call you then?”

“I tell you what,” Tad replied. “I’ll call you when I get home. I’ve been here at the office much too long already.”

Toby paid his bill and then headed back to the Mulberry. By the time he got to his room, changed into his pajamas and watched a little of the news, Tad called. She wasted no time explaining the reason.

“After we talked earlier this evening, I received a call from my friend Charlene McGill over at Homeland Security,” she said. “You remember Charley?”

“Of course,” Sullivan responded.

“Well, Charley has been looking into all of the information that Homeland Security has regarding the terrorists who were supposedly living in the house near Leesburg, and their folks have no intelligence at all on these people except what the FBI has provided. Charley finds that to be a little odd, because Homeland Security has a rather extensive list of people in this country who have even remote ties with al-Qaida, and this includes people who know people who know other people who know people in al-Qaida.”

“Which means what?” Toby asked.

Charley doesn’t know, and neither do I,” Tad said. “The best guess we have is that the terrorists may have just recently snuck in, probably from Canada or Mexico. Or another possibility is that they could be American Muslims who have been in this country their entire lives.”

“Which, if that is true, will make the search even more difficult,” Toby said. “Anything else?”

“Not an awful lot,” Tad said, “but I do have some more information about the rental house. It seems that the rental agent is the sister-in-law of Sheriff Hollis Richardson. Isn’t that a hoot?”

“You mean the terrorists—if that’s who they were—rented the house right under the nose of the local sheriff?” Toby laughed. “That is amazing. How did you find that out?”

“Remember the day that you, Trey and Drake searched the house,” she reminded him. “Drake called and told me to call the agent who rented the house and find out what I could. I tracked down the agent’s name— Jennifer Edwards—but she was out of town. When I finally did reach her, her relationship to the sheriff just came up in our conversation.”

“And how was she contacted about the house?” Sullivan asked.

“She received a phone call from someone she says had an mid-eastern accent who claimed to have business in the D.C. area and wanted to know if he could rent that particular house for three months,” Tad explained. When she said that the owners would take nothing less than a six-month lease, he agreed. She mailed the lease to an address in Washington, which we now know is a box in one of those privately owned packing and shipping companies. And we also know that the name given, George Clinton, was fictitious.”

“And so Ms. Edwards never saw the mysterious Mr. Clinton?” Toby asked. “Didn’t she think it unusual for someone with a mid-eastern accent to be named George Clinton? Didn’t that set off any bells?”

“She admitted that it should have,” Tad said, “but the house had been vacant for so long and the owners so anxious to rent it, that she decided to leave well enough alone, especially when Mr. Clinton, or whoever he was, paid all six months rent up front in cash.”

“I see that money talks—even in a Christian society,” said Toby. “Anything else?”

“As a matter of fact, there is one more thing, although it may mean nothing,” Tad answered. “I talked with a colleague at the CIA who says that the terrorism experts in the agency are extremely surprised that there wasn’t more Internet chatter over the few weeks leading up to the first bombings and that there hasn’t been much since the attacks began. They also find it interesting that a lot of the chatter that they are hearing seems to be among terrorists trying to find out who is responsible for the bombings.”

“So even the terrorists themselves don’t know who is responsible,” Toby said. “That could lend support to the idea that we have some homegrown terrorists, or a very deep-sleeper cell, amongst us. One thing is sure, and that is that these are very clever people. They don’t leave any tracks.”

“That’s why I found all of these things so interesting,” said Tad. “Taken together, they indicate to me that we may not be looking for the usual international terrorism suspects such as al-Qaida operatives. If that were the case, we would at least have some idea of who they were and where they came from. In my view, we are looking for a new breed of terrorist.”

“So where would you begin searching?” Toby asked.

“Given the targets, I think I would look at anti-government groups, such as the Thomas Paine Society, or eccentric types such as the Unibomber,” she responded. “At the very least, I would expand the investigation beyond al-Qaida.”

“You don’t have to convince me,” Toby said. “But I still may ask Drake to send you down to help reach out to the Muslim community, if for no other reason than to convince him that we’re looking for the wrong people.”

“That will be fine with me,” Tad responded. “Anything beats the boring stuff he has me doing. And besides, I wouldn’t mind being with you in Savannah again—especially at the Mulberry.”

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The next morning, Toby awoke around 6 a.m., showered, dressed and walked down to the lobby to get a cup of coffee from the silver-plated urn near the entrance to the restaurant which overlooked the same courtyard as Toby’s room. After fixing a cup of coffee to his taste, with heavy cream and no sweetener, he found a table and ordered a light breakfast consisting of a bowl of oatmeal and a bagel. As he ate, he read the Savannah newspaper’s account of the previous day’s tragic bombing.

### **GOVERNOR ARNOLD CRITICALLY INJURED Car bomb kills driver; injures others**

Savannah — A powerful car bomb exploded just as the car carrying Georgia Governor Paul Arnold passed on the way to the annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade, killing the governor’s driver and sending the governor to the hospital, where he remains in critical condition. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the blast and authorities have no suspects. Lieutenant Governor Peter Hunt is serving as acting governor until such time as Arnold is well enough to resume his duties.

“It is my fervent prayer that Governor Arnold will recover quickly and fully,” Hunt said as he addressed members of the Georgia General Assembly who were in session in Atlanta. “I will exercise only those official duties of the office of governor that are essential to keep state government operating,” he told the legislators.

Because Georgia’s governor and lieutenant governor do not run as a team, Arnold is a member of the National Liberty Party, while Hunt is a member of the Christian Democratic-Republican Party. During the 14 months they have both been in office, they have clashed often on issues, particularly those relating



to separation of church and state. Personally, however, they are said to be good friends, having served together in the state senate for 10 years.

Toby put the paper down and buttered his bagel while it was warm. Then he began eating his oatmeal while thinking about what Tad had told him the previous night. This latest bombing seemed to support her theory, because there was no reason that he could think of that an international terrorist would want to harm the governor of the state of Georgia. He had nothing to do with foreign policy, and besides, he wasn't a nationally known personality. But to a domestic, anti-government kook, the governor of Georgia was as good a target as any other government official.

After finishing his bagel and cereal, Sullivan saw another headline that peaked his interest:

### **Polls Show Close Race for President; Congress**

Washington, D.C.—A poll commissioned and just released by a consortium of national news organizations shows a race that is too close to call between incumbent President John McNeal of the Christian Democratic-Republican Party, and Senator Robert Clay of New York, frontrunner for the nomination of the National Liberty Party. The same poll shows that voters are almost evenly divided in their choice for congressional candidates, with the minority National Libertarians in a good position to win four or five house seats and three or four in the senate.

“Damn, I hope that the NLP gains some seats,” Toby said to himself, as he opened the paper to an editorial calling for the president to get tougher on governments that harbor terrorists. After glancing at a few other articles, he took a final sip of coffee and headed out to catch the water taxi to Hutchinson Island where he was scheduled to meet Trey at the hotel.

Walking toward the river, Toby breathed the cool, spring air, scented with the fragrance of sweet tea olives, camellias and roses. He found himself asking once again how a God that could create such beauty could allow people of different faiths to kill one another in His name. *If people from different cultures believe with all their being that theirs is the one true religion, doesn't it make more sense that they are all mistaken rather than that only one group is right?* he asked himself.

Arriving at the dock just as a water taxi arrived, Toby made it to the hotel about five minutes early.

“Can't believe you're actually here early?” Rawlings said,

“Come on, Trey. I'm always on time,” Toby said as he flashed one of his more charming smiles. “Where's Giordano?”

“He said he had to make a couple of calls and would be down a little later,” Trey responded. “He asked if we could wait for him in lobby.”

“How did you two survive the evening?” Sullivan asked. “Did you come up with any interesting theories about the case?”

“Now that you mention it, we barely talked about it,” Trey answered. “We talked almost the entire time about scripture.”

Given the importance of the case, Toby thought it a little odd that the two FBI agents had spent most of their time talking about religion, but he decided not to make an issue of it.

“That's right,” he responded. “Who won the ‘Name that Scripture Verse’ contest?”

“Irreverent as usual,” Trey responded. “No one ‘won’. Giordano just wanted to share some scripture passages and get my take on them.”

“I didn't think you evangelicals were allowed to have a ‘take’ on the scriptures,” said Toby. “I thought the words of the Bible were meant to be taken at face value with no interpretation needed or allowed.”

“That's not entirely true,” Trey explained. “Let's get a cup of coffee and I'll try to explain it to you while we're waiting for Tony.”

Having raised the topic himself, Toby agreed to allow his partner to give him more information than he had ever wanted about evangelicals and their perspective on the Bible. He followed Trey to the coffee stand where they purchased tall cups of the coffee of the day, and then returned to some comfortable chairs in the lobby. Rawlings began his explanation, aware that he was talking to someone who was skeptical not only of Evangelicalism, but of religion in general.

“The first thing you need to understand, Sullivan, is that not all evangelicals believe that God made the world in seven 24-hour days and that Noah had a pair of every living animal on the arc.”

“Well, that’s a relief,” Toby said before taking a small sip of the hot coffee.

“The truth is that many evangelicals struggle to understand the meaning of the Bible. This is where translation, incomplete knowledge and interpretation come in,” explained Trey. “However, it is interpretation based on some fairly clear principles, not just personal speculation or feeling.”

“Principles such as?” Sullivan asked.

“The first principle is that Biblical passages must be taken to mean what their human writers were trying to express,” Trey answered. “This reflects the Renaissance concept—which led to the Reformation—that all ancient documents should be understood literally as opposed to allegorically.”

“Literally. Okay, I got it,” said Toby.

“Okay, then, the second principle is that the harmony and truth of all biblical teaching must be taken as a working hypothesis in interpretation. What this means is that one text of Scripture cannot be set against another, nor must what appear to be contradictions or inconsistencies be taken or treated as such.”

“Well, how convenient,” Toby said. “If two passages of the Bible appear to be conflicting, you simply say that they aren’t and can’t be, because they are both in the Bible, and therefore must both be true.”

“It’s not that simplistic,” Trey said, continuing his explanation. “We evangelicals proceed on the basis that all parts of Scripture must be in perfect agreement, which careful study will be able to bring out once the relevant facts become accessible. If we cannot see or discern agreement among the various parts, we conclude that the problem lies either in our lack of competence or our lack of factual information.”

“Oh,” Toby said with unabated skepticism. “If something seems inconsistent, it is only because I’m either stupid or I don’t have all the facts. That is an airtight excuse if ever there was one.”

“Maybe so, for those who are looking for excuses,” Rawlings continued, “but not for those who really want to understand God’s revelation, which brings me to the third principle: interpretation involves synthesizing what the various biblical passages teach, so that each item finds its proper place and significance in the organism of revelation as a whole.”

“And that means what in common English?” Toby asked his scholarly friend.

“It means that just as a physical organism is a complex unit of life, so the canons of Scripture are a complex unit of divine communication. The full significance of each part is only appreciated to the extent that we are enabled to grasp that relationship.”

Toby wasn’t buying it, but he was coming to understand Trey’s explanation.

“So what you are saying is that one must have some knowledge of the whole of Scripture before he or she can have adequate knowledge of any single part,” Sullivan said.

“Yes, exactly,” Trey said, pleased that his message seemed to be getting through. “The full significance of each passage appears only in its connection with all the rest of Scripture, which brings me to the final principle: all the biblical books were written for a purpose, and that purpose is to increase their readers’ faith, obedience and worship. Therefore, interpretation is neither complete nor correct until the passages read and synthesized have been presented to further the original purpose, and to reapply them to ourselves in the places, circumstances and conditions of our own lives today.”

“Well, I have to admit that was the most comprehensive and understandable explanation I’ve ever heard,” Toby said. “I may still be a skeptic, but at least I am a better informed skeptic. But your explanation also raises a major concern for me regarding the Christian Republic amendment. If it becomes part of the Constitution and Congress is prohibited from enacting laws that conflict with the tenets of Christianity, who is to determine whether the laws are in conflict? Who is to determine what the

tenets of Christianity are? Are we to set up some kind of religious tribunal that serves the same function as the Grand Ayatollah in Iran?"

"Of course not," Trey answered. "It would be up to the courts to decide, using their best judgment."

"So I guess we won't be appointing very many Jewish or Muslim judges to the courts, will we?" Tad asked.

As Trey was preparing to respond, Giordano arrived in the lobby. "Sorry I'm late," he said. "I had some important calls to make."

"That's alright," Toby answered. "My partner has been giving me some tips on how to interpret the Bible."

"Well, you couldn't have a better instructor," Giordano answered. "He is one of the best at Biblical interpretation that I've ever met."

"I don't doubt that," Toby said. "I'm afraid I'm not the best of students, however. It's kind of like having Tiger Woods explain the theory of the golf swing to me. I may know exactly what he's saying, but all those years of hitting the ball a certain way are ingrained in me."

"It's never too late to change," said Giordano, "especially when it comes to your own salvation."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," said Toby. "I hope it applies to my golf swing, too."

Trey and Toby both laughed, but Giordano only grinned. "I guess we better head over to the convention center to see how we can help," he said. "I imagine that Henry has arrived from Quantico by now and had time to look over the crime scene."

The three agents walked the short distance to the convention center, talking along the way.

"Tony, weren't you working in counterterrorism in Baltimore last time we saw each other?" Toby asked.

"Actually, I'm part of a "flying quad" whose members are sent as needed to help local offices in times of crisis." That's why I ran into you in Baltimore. My home is in Atlanta, and I occasionally work out of our office there on Century Boulevard, but most of the time I help manage crime scene investigations."

"And you were here on vacation?" Toby continued making small talk.

"A short one," Giordano said. "I came down for the St. Patrick's Day bash. It's the Irish genes from my mother's side."

"Didn't bring your family?" asked Trey.

"My kids are in college and my wife said she had better things to do than watch a bunch of drunken kids with green hair and green makeup on their faces," Giordano answered. "As it turned out, I'm glad they weren't caught up in all of this mess. Praise the Lord."

"Praise the Lord," Rawlings responded. "And thanks that you were not hurt."

"Or any other innocent bystanders," Tony answered as they entered the convention center and spotted Barnes, the GBI director.

"Good morning, director. Anything new on the investigation?" Trey asked.

"I'm glad to see that somebody got some sleep last night," said Barnes, who appeared to be wearing the same clothes as the day before. "Several items of interest to you. First, your forensics expert, Nelson, arrived from D.C. late last night and has been going over the crime scene ever since," Barnes answered. "He says that he personally will go over every inch of the car and then have it packed in a sealed container and flown back to Quantico this afternoon."

The GBI director took a sip from a paper cup and then continued. "The second thing I wanted to tell you is that the car was apparently stolen several nights before the explosion from a house whose owners were away on vacation. Unfortunately, they have no security cameras or other detection devices. The local police didn't find any clues, but Nelson says he will go over the place with a fine-tooth comb just as soon as he gets the car ready for shipment."

"I'll lend him a hand if he needs one," said Giordano. "We've worked together a lot."

"I'm sure he'd appreciate it," said Barnes. "Also, Rawlings, I spoke with Director Drake about an hour ago. He suggested that you and Sullivan work with our folks in the canvassing of local hotels, motels, gas stations and restaurants to see if we can turn-up any new information on the bomber. As you

can see from the map on the screen, we are planning to have law enforcement officials visit every hotel, motel, service station and restaurant from Brunswick and St. Simons, Georgia in the south, to Macon to the west and Hilton Head, South Carolina to the north. If anyone finds anything of interest, you'll be told immediately so that you can conduct a follow-up investigation. The person or people who did this had to stay, eat or refuel someplace, and in all likelihood, someone saw them."

"That's a huge area," Toby commented as he pointed to the map. "How long do you think the entire canvass will take?"

"Best guess is about three or four days," Barnes said. "We're using every policeman, sheriff and state patrol officer we can spare."

Toby suddenly had a bad feeling about the next several days. "Trey, can I see you a moment?" he motioned to his friend. "This investigation is getting more than a little frustrating. What are we supposed to do while local law enforcement officials are traveling throughout a massive area looking for a needle in a haystack? Sit around here waiting to get a call to interview some motel owner in Metter, Georgia because he's Pakistani and could possibly have a link to al-Qaida? This is nuts."

Trey smiled at his partner. "I know you like to operate a lot on instinct and feelings, but sometimes investigations are nothing but boring, monotonous, meticulous drudgery."

"Oh good, I feel better already," Sullivan said, smiling in spite of his frustration. "As long as I know that all of the boring, monotonous, meticulous drudgery has a good purpose. But think about it. What are the chances that anyone will find anything at a motel, restaurant or convenience store? In my mind, we have two lines of investigation that offer much greater likelihood of achieving results."

"And those would be?" Trey asked.

"Well, if our theory remains that al-Qaida is responsible, we probably should talk to leaders in the Muslim community to see if they have heard any chatter or gossip. The other target of our investigation should be the vehicle in which the bomber or bombers transported the bomb. The bomb had to come from someplace, and I bet none of the checkpoints that have been set up have dogs or devices that can detect fertilizer or other bomb-making materials."

"Actually, that does make sense," Trey answered. "Let's check with Drake."

Trey contacted Margaret Peabody and asked her to connect him with the boss. In just seconds, the connection was made. Trey put his phone on conference mode so that Toby could participate, too.

"Director, Toby and I have something we want to run by you," Trey began.

"Yes, what is it?" Drake asked in his usual blunt manner.

"Rather than interviewing motel and convenience store owners, we think our time would be better spent talking to some of the people in the Muslim communities here and elsewhere in the country and in trying to improve the roadblocks and checkpoints outside the city to make sure that every vehicle is checked for residue of bomb-making materials. We're afraid the perpetrators might go right through the checkpoints if they don't fit the profile we're using."

"I don't know of any reason why they wouldn't fit the profile," said Drake. "Our own agent in New Mexico has given us the profile."

"But he has never actually seen these terrorists, if they exist," Toby interjected. "We have no idea what they look like. As far as we know, they could look like Eric Robert Rudolph, Timothy McVeigh or that Christian fanatic—I think his name was Murphy—who bombed the mosque in Detroit a couple of years ago."

Drake hesitated before responding. "I think it would be a serious mistake to abandon the strategy that is based on the only solid information we have. We have an undercover agent who has inside information about an al-Qaida terrorist cell. We have evidence taken from a house near the D.C. bombings that indicates that some possible al-Qaida members were very likely there. And we had knowledge prior to the Savannah bombing yesterday that our suspects were headed down South. In my mind, that is a fairly substantial amount of evidence that we are on the right trail. And besides, it would be a huge waste of time talking to people in the Muslim community. As far as I am concerned, their God is an idol and their religion is anti-Christian. They aren't going to be of any help."

Trey had apparently been persuaded by Drake's summary of the evidence. "I see your point," he said. "Maybe the motel and restaurant search will turn up something."

Toby was bothered, but not surprised, by Drake's description of Islam, but took Trey's cue not to press the issue since Drake's mind was clearly made up.

As Trey terminated the call, Giordano joined his colleagues. "What are you two up to?" he asked.

Trey described the conversation with Drake, including Toby's concern that the bomb transport vehicle might slip pass the roadblocks if more thorough searches were not conducted. Giordano seemed to share the concern.

"That's a good point," he said. "I'll talk to John Schroeder, the southeast region director, and have him ask Drake to authorize some additional men and resources to use at the main roadblocks. "Then, after giving Nelson a hand with the forensics work, I'll drive up to Atlanta to pick up some clean clothes"

"But I thought you were going to help us with the hotel, restaurant and convenience store interviews," Trey said.

"I can't go around interviewing people in these kind of clothes," Giordano explained as he pointed to his khaki pants and golf shirt. "And besides, there are a few things I need from the office. It isn't that long of a drive, and if I leave soon, I'll be back late tonight and join you in the morning."

"I can't believe you're not sticking around for all of the fun," Toby said, "but it is definitely more important to beef up the roadblocks. Getting that done would be a much better use of your time."

"I think so, too," Giordano said. "Without the bomb sniffing dogs and equipment, the bombers could slip through the roadblocks."

## CHAPTER 17

*And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in faith; to establish regular prayer, and to practice regular charity, and that is the Religion Right and Straight. Qur'an 098.005*

After a long and frustrating day in which Sullivan and Rawlings were called to 10 different locations to interview witnesses about allegedly suspicious people they had seen before and after the St. Patrick's Day bombing, Sullivan stretched out on the comfortable bed at the Mulberry and placed a call to Tad.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"At my sister's, why?" she answered.

"Just wondered," he said. "How would you like to stay at my place for awhile?"

"Without you there?" she responded.

"J. Edgar would be there," he said.

"Oh, now there's an incentive if I ever heard of one," she said with a chuckle. "Did he call you up to say that he was short on staff and ask when you were going to rectify that problem?"

"Actually, I have one of those pet robots that sees to his majesty's basic needs for food, water and clean litter, but Jeddy misses the human touch," Toby explained.

"You mean his heated half and half and a warm body to sleep next to, don't you?" Tad asked rhetorically.

"Okay, you got me. That's exactly what I mean," Toby confessed. "But there is also a slight possibility that I might be able to come home briefly this weekend."

"I tell you what, Sullivan. Your place is a lot bigger than my sister's and you have better views, so what the heck, I'll take care of that spoiled feline of yours, and if you come home, that will be a bonus."

"Great," Toby answered, clearly excited at the possibility of spending time with Tad. "Do you still have the key card I gave you, or do I need to call the resident manager to put you into the fingerprint recognition system?"

"Believe it or not, I still have the card you gave me."

"Good, I really hope I can make it home tomorrow night," he said.

"Why wouldn't you?" Tad asked.

"Because I'm doing such important work here; you wouldn't believe what Trey and I did today."

"I'm listening," Tad said.

"We interviewed people with some of the strangest stories about alleged terrorist sightings that you can imagine. For example, there was the manager of a restaurant in Metter, Georgia—you know, 'Things are better in Metter.' Well, this guy says that a woman who claimed to be the youngest sister of Osama bin Laden was in his restaurant on the day before the bombings, and she became very indignant when she wasn't served promptly and then walked out without paying the bill."

"You don't mean it?" Tad said.

"Oh there's more," said Toby. "Shortly after that woman left, another group of mid-eastern men and women arrived and the manager told them that he didn't serve bin Ladens in his restaurant. I think I see a lawsuit coming".

"I think you're right," Tad said. "Any more interesting stories?"

"Oh yea," Toby responded. "We also talked to a woman in Hahira, Georgia near the Florida border who was convinced that she had seen a car with three Muslim men dressed in white gowns heading toward Tallahassee.

"By gowns, I assume she meant thobes?" Tad asked

"Is that what they are called?" Toby responded. "I'm sure that was what she thought she saw. It turned out, however, that what she really saw was a car with three interns from a local hospital who were on their way to a local seafood restaurant. They were all from India, so I imagine they looked like Islamic terrorists to her."

“People are amazing,” Tad said. “Do you think there will ever be true understanding—or at least peaceful coexistence—among people of different faiths?”

“Not much chance of that, I’m afraid,” Toby answered, “particularly, when every major religion seems to be becoming more and more parochial. When someone believes that his religion is the only path to heaven, how can he compromise on anything?”

Tad screamed. “Ahh! It is so frustrating. I can’t stand it. The more that people describe their gods, the less I believe in any of them. How can any rational person believe some of the garbage they espouse?”

“I don’t know,” Toby answered. “I’m not quite ready to give up on the existence of God, because I can’t rationally explain how people, the earth, the solar system, the universe and whatever else is out there just happened. I don’t understand how all of it came out of nothing.”

“Sometimes I have those thoughts, too,” Tad said, “but it makes more sense to me that somehow it all did just happen over billions and billions of years, rather than at the snap of the fingers of some guy man created in his image.”

“Getting back to your question about people of different religions getting along,” Toby said, “it reminds me that I was supposed to call you after talking to Drake about questioning people in the Islamic community.”

“That’s right. You were,” Tad replied. “What did he say?”

“You won’t believe this, but he basically said that it would be a huge waste of time talking to people in the Muslim community, because their God is an idol and their religion is anti-Christian.”

“I don’t believe it,” Tad sounded shocked. “Talk about culturally insensitive.”

“Just a little,” Toby agreed. “And what’s worse, it means that Trey and I are stuck with listening to more of these inane—although admittedly, sometimes amusing—stories about terrorist sightings. That’s why I may not make it home tomorrow or Sunday. As long as there is even a slight chance that one of these people did see our bomber or bombers, we can’t justify taking a day off.”

“Well, I’m afraid that I have no problem justifying taking Sunday off, because there isn’t anything I’m doing in this investigation that is going to lead to the terrorists, whoever they are,” Tad said. “I can do a whole lot more good by helping Sister Mary Frances at the homeless shelter.”

“That’s probably true,” said Toby, “but there is something you can do that could be helpful.”

“And what’s that?” Tad asked, hopefully.

“You still have contacts in the Muslim community in D.C., don’t you?” he asked,

“Some,” she replied.

“Well why don’t you see what you can discover from them about the alleged New Mexico al-Qaida cell or the one that is supposedly responsible for the bombings?” Toby suggested. “It certainly can’t hurt if handled properly, which I know you’ll do, and it could help a lot.”

“But when and how am I supposed to do this?” Tad asked. “Drake has me looking up all kinds of useless stuff and rarely lets me out of the office.”

“Make up some excuse about having to run some personal errands, such as moving into a new apartment on Saturday,” Toby said. “Heck, that’s even partially true, and for someone who has been out of the country as long as you have, it is certainly a reasonable request.”

“That should work,” she said. “I’ll let you know how it goes.”

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On Saturday morning, Tad called the office and told Peabody to let Drake know that she might not make it in that day, because she had to move into a new apartment. Then she headed for the Islamic Mosque and Cultural Center on Massachusetts Avenue where she had arranged to meet an old friend.

Forty-year-old Hakim bin Muhammad bin Abdul Al-Mansur looked only slightly older than the last time Tad saw him. Clearly, he wouldn’t remind anyone of a member of Hizbullah, the sort of Muslims

who make headlines, she thought, and anyone who knew him knew that he had never built a biological weapon, issued a fatwa or burned Uncle Sam in effigy.

“How are you, Hakim?” Tad asked. “You don’t look a day older than the last time I saw you.”

“Tad, how are you my friend?” he responded. “You look even younger than before.”

“Still full of it, I see,” she answered with a broad smile.

“Is this visit business or pleasure?” Hakim asked.

“I won’t kid you,” she answered. “It is mostly business. I need your help with something.”

“I imagine it’s about the bombings,” her friend responded.

“How did you guess?” she answered.

“I know you’re joking, of course,” the Muslim cleric said. “Whenever there is a terrorist act, the first suspects are Muslims. Within hours of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, we were prime suspects. ‘You’ll die,’ was one of the few printable messages left on mosque answering machines around the country.

“Later in 1995, arson destroyed an Islamic center in Springfield, Illinois. In 1996, there was an arson attack on a Greenville, S.C., mosque, and in 1999 an attack on a Minneapolis mosque. And, as you well know, since 9/11/01 anti-Muslim incidents have spiraled out of control. And don’t forget the statement recently by a congressman from out west who suggested that if Muslim extremists attacked the United States, we ought to respond by ‘taking out their holy sites,’ meaning to bomb Mecca.”

Tad shook her head in sympathy. “I admit. It’s awful that America’s Christians know so little about America’s Muslims. What are there—something like 1,500 mosques spread from Alaska to Florida? Most Americans have no idea that Muslims pray daily in State Department hallways, in corporate law firms and in empty boardrooms at Silicon Valley companies. And they certainly don’t know that Islam passed Judaism as the country’s second largest religion a few years ago.”

“No they don’t,” said Hakim. “And they don’t understand that Islam is a very peaceful and simple religion. The essence can be boiled down to this verse from the Qur’an: ‘And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in faith; to establish regular prayer, and to practice regular charity, and that is the Religion Right and Straight.’”

Then Hakim continued. “Unfortunately, we know from the crank phone messages, letters to the editor and even the statements of public officials that Muslims are the prime suspects in the recent bombings. Americans think that every Muslim is a relative or former best friend of Osama bin Laden.”

“I’m afraid you’re right,” Tad said. “I serve on the taskforce investigating the bombings, and the investigation is clearly focusing on Islamic extremists, probably al-Qaida. That’s why I’m here. I think we may be looking in the wrong direction, but the only evidence we have points us toward an al-Qaida cell that was supposedly hiding for a month or more in Leesburg, Virginia. I can’t tell you where the information came from, but I hope you can help me determine whether it is valid or not.”

“How can I do that, my friend?” Hakim asked. “I don’t know any terrorists.”

“I know that,” Tad responded, “but I also know that, like all religious denominations, the Muslim community in America has a network of sorts. I was hoping that you could talk to some of your friends at mosques and Islamic centers around the country, particularly in the D.C., Virginia and Maryland area, and see if anyone has heard anything about a terrorist cell—or if anyone has any information of any kind that they might have been afraid to come forward to share.”

“I really don’t think it will do much good, Tad, but I will make some calls and see what I can turn up,” the deeply religious man said.

“That’s all I can ask,” Tad said. “You are a good friend.”

And you, too,” said Hakim. “I wish you shelter from all your storms, roses without the thorns, and may your dreams be always within reach.”

“An old Muslim saying?” Tad asked.

“No, an old American folksinger—Mary Chapin Carpenter,” Hakim responded with a wry smile.



## CHAPTER 18

*I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use. - Galileo Galilei*

While Tad spent Saturday morning at the mosque, Toby and Trey continued their follow-up interviews with hotel, restaurant and convenience store owners near Savannah who were convinced that they had seen the terrorists. They interviewed a waitress who claimed to have overheard “two foreign men with funny accents” talking about a plot to “bomb Mt. McKinley.” When asked if they could have said, “climb” Mount McKinley, she admitted that was possible.

They also talked to a convenience store clerk who said that he had seen “an olive skinned, black hair 40-year-old male in a white pick up truck, license number GA11X22, staring at a gasoline tanker truck with a strange look in his eyes.” Upon further inquiry, Toby and Trey determined that the pick up truck belonged to the clerk’s brother-in-law with whom he had recently had an altercation.

“I don’t know about you, but as far as I’m concerned, this has been an exercise in futility,” Toby said as they drove back to Savannah after their fourth interview of the morning. “What happened to Giordano? Wasn’t he supposed to come back last night and join us today?”

Trey looked at his partner. “I’m sorry. We were so busy with the interviews that I forgot to tell you that he called late last night to let me know that Drake had called him to Washington. Apparently he has a lot of training in identifying the origins and signatures of bombs and bomb-making materials.”

“So we get to keep all of the glamorous work to ourselves,” Toby said. “Maybe I would feel a lot better about things if I could catch a late afternoon flight back to D.C. so I could get some clean clothes and catch a little rest on Sunday. Doesn’t that sound appealing to you?”

Trey responded quickly. “It sure does. I’d like to see my family and attend church. Let’s call Margaret and ask her to get us on the next flight out of here.”

After grabbing a few things from their hotels, they raced to the airport and caught a 5 p.m. flight, via Atlanta, which arrived at Washington National a little after 9 p.m. While in Atlanta, Toby contacted Tad to let her know approximately when he would arrive. Trey contacted his wife, Trisha, who was waiting for him when their plane landed in D.C.

“Can we give you a lift home?” Trisha asked Toby after greeting her husband with a smile and a kiss on the cheek.

“That would be nice,” Sullivan answered, “but I don’t want to take you out of your way. It isn’t that hard to catch a cab.”

“Don’t be silly,” Trisha responded. “It’s just a couple of minutes longer, if that much.”

“Well, I accept then,” Toby responded. “How are the kids? Trey tells me that they are growing up much too fast.”

“They sure are,” said Trisha as the trio made their way toward the parking garage. “Matthew turns 13 next week and he is starting to put pressure on us to allow him to attend what he calls a ‘real school’ next year so he can have more friends and play on the football team.”

Before Toby could respond, Trey answered rather emphatically, “Well that just isn’t going to happen. The public schools in our area are overrun with kids who use drugs and have sex parties, and most of the private schools have too many secular-leaning teachers who fill the kids’ heads with anti-Christian propaganda.”

“What about a Christian school?” Toby asked. “With the new school-choice and voucher legislation, they’re springing up like weeds all over the country. There must be a hundred of them in the D.C. area alone.”

“Matthew’s just going through a stage,” Trey responded. “Trisha is doing a great job with the kids academically, and they can play sports in the local church league.”

“It’s not the same to them and you know it,” Trisha said. “And besides, the children need to be exposed to other kids and teachers to get a better-rounded education than I alone can give them. I think we need to pray about this a little more.”

“I’ve already prayed about it enough and have made a decision,” Trey said with a sense of finality that Trisha apparently did not share.

“We’ll see,” she said, leading to a very quiet walk to the parking lot and their mini-van.

Once inside the van, with Trey occupied driving, Tricia turned her head toward Toby who was sitting behind her. “I haven’t seen you since all of these terrible terrorist attacks. I’m so glad that you weren’t injured in the bombing at your church. Do you agree with Director Drake that Islamic terrorists are responsible for all of the bombings?”

“It appears that way,” Toby responded, “but all of the evidence we have is either circumstantial or hearsay and there is no direct link to al-Quaida such as we had after previous attacks.”

“But who else could be behind such horrible acts?” Tricia asked as if she already knew the answer. “Who else would bomb a church filled with innocent worshipers including children? Muslims are the only ones I know who will even bomb their own mosques. The Sunnis bomb the Shiite mosques and the Shiites bomb the Sunni mosques. It doesn’t make any sense.”

“I admit that I have no better suspects,” Sullivan answered, “but I want to keep an open mind so that we catch the people who truly are responsible.”

“That’s wise,” the attractive and smart scientist—turned homemaker and teacher—agreed, looking first at Toby and then at her husband. “I wish some other people I know would keep an open mind about things.”

Toby exchanged smiles with Tricia and then glanced at Trey who was not smiling. The three remained quiet for the final few minutes up the Rock Creek Parkway and Connecticut Avenue to Toby’s condo. When they arrived, Toby thanked his friends, grabbed his suitcase and placed his finger on the new fingerprint identification device that unlocked the lobby door. As he rode the elevator to the top floor, he wondered what Tad had in store for the evening, because they had made no firm plans during their phone conversation earlier. After rolling his suitcase from the elevator to his condo, he opened the door and was greeted by J. Edgar.

“Jeddy, buddy, how are you? Did you miss me?” he asked as he held his hand down to rub his furry friend.

“Why should he miss you when he has me? Trey asked as she came into the entrance hall wearing nothing but an unbelievably skimpy nightgown.

Suddenly, Toby could feel his plans for the evening firming up.

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On Sunday morning Tad awoke very early in order to make it to St. Jude’s in time to help Sister Mary Frances Sweeney prepare breakfast for the homeless. Before leaving, she gave Toby a kiss and asked if he planned to sleep-in or attend his usual 10 a.m. service at the Cathedral.

He awoke long enough to answer, “Yea, I’m going. It may be the last time I ever go there, but I think I at least need to give the new rector a chance. Would you like to meet me at the new coffee shop in Cleveland Park around 11:30? Then we can take a walk through the zoo if you’d like.”

Tad agreed to meet at 11:30, encouraged Toby to get more sleep and then headed out the door to catch a cab. She arrived at the school kitchen at 6 a.m., just as Mary Frances was unlocking the door.

“Good morning Sister,” Tad said cheerily. “How was your week?”

“Pretty good, dear,” the spry nun responded as she led the way into the kitchen, activating the motion sensor that turned on the lights. “How about yours?”

“Not too bad,” said Tad. “It would have been better if we’d made any progress in finding the people responsible for the bombings.”

“A horrible thing,” Sister said, shaking her head. “If I live to be 110, I don’t think I’ll ever understand how people can be so cruel to each other. I’d like to believe it is because they have no moral or religious

framework, but too often these days it seems to be just the opposite. They use their religion to justify violence.”

“Watch out, Sister,” Tad said with a grin. “You’re beginning to sound like me.”

Mary Frances looked very serious as she spoke to her former student. “Tad, I’d rather sound like you than some of the religious kooks I know. They scare the bejeevies out of me.”

“How’s that, Sister?” Tad asked, bothered by the pained look on her friend’s face.

“Oh, I shouldn’t be so dramatic,” Mary Frances responded. “It’s really nothing new. We’ve had kooks in the church for as long as there has been a church. It’s just that there seem to be more of them today.”

“What kind of kooks?” Davenport asked.

Sister Mary Frances looked at Tad and lowered her voice. “Well, the kind that scare me the most, don’t you know, are the ones who are always quoting the Bible to justify anything that they or the government does or, in their opinion, should do.”

“What do you mean?” asked Tad as she reached for a large pan hanging over the stove.

“Well, most of them are just talking and probably don’t believe half of what they say,” Sister Sweeney explained. “They talk about bringing back the death penalty, because the Bible talks about an eye for an eye. And they talk about having to wipe all Muslims off the face of the earth, because the Bible says that believing in Jesus is the only path to heaven.”

After a slight pause, the nun continued. “But the ones who really scare me are a few I have encountered here and there who seem to believe very sincerely that violence is justified, not just in response to violence or to prevent further violence—such as stopping the people responsible for the bombings, don’t you know—but also to achieve the goal of making this a more Christian nation and world.”

“Sounds like a modern day crusade,” Tad said.

“You might call it that,” Sweeney replied, “a crusade proclaimed by some really misguided people.”

“What kind of violence are they talking about?” Tad asked. “Do they actually advocate overthrowing our government and installing a minister and a bunch of deacons to run the country?”

Mary Frances smiled. “No, I can’t actually say that I have heard anyone talk about a coup, but in discussions I have heard people—even some who work in the government—say that violence against the government could be justified if it resulted in making this a more Christian country.”

“Well, to play devil’s advocate here—not that I believe in the devil any more than I do the other side,” Tad responded, “but hasn’t the church always taught that there are times when violence can be justified if oppression is the alternative?”

“At one time or another I believe the church has taken almost every side of every issue,” Sister Mary Frances responded, “but, I don’t believe the modern Catholic Church has ever taken the position that people in a democratic society are justified in using violence to further any goal, however well intentioned.”

“Well, if the church doesn’t teach these ideas, where do people get them?” asked Tad as she pulled several cartons of eggs out of the refrigerator.

“That’s a good question, dear, and I’m afraid I don’t know the answer. I do know that there are a lot of religious societies—some small and some large—that have been formed within the Catholic Church and across denominational lines whose members espouse a much more fervent and evangelical brand of Christianity. And I have heard that there may even be some secret societies that are more radical in their beliefs.”

“Radical secret societies, huh?” Tad didn’t seem shocked. “I’ve heard the same thing from friends. Doesn’t surprise me in the least. People like that feed off each other. Look back in history at organizations like the KKK. Put people like that together and pretty soon, they think that everyone else is nuts. Only the ones inside the secret society really understand how to view the world.”

“Enough of this,” Sister said in a voice that she might have used to quiet a class of second-graders. “We have more important and uplifting things to do this morning. Let’s not worry ourselves to death over a few kooks.”

“Whatever you say, Sister,” Tad said while remembering the comfort and stability of being a student at St. Jude Elementary School. “Can you please hand me some bacon?”

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Toby heard the organ as he neared the west entrance of the Cathedral. He was comforted by the fact that the music was a familiar composition of Handel. He had no idea what to expect under this new vicar’s administration.

Taking a seat in his usual spot close to the column near the northwest corner of the main nave of the Church, he thought about his evening with Tad—especially the closeness they felt while making love—as he waited for the service to begin. Probably he shouldn’t be thinking about such things in a church, but it seemed perfectly appropriate to him, because love should be what religion is about, and yes, sex can be a wonderful expression of love, and certainly was last night.

Suddenly he was shaken from his pleasant—or were they prurient—thoughts as the pipes of the giant organ filled the church with the familiar sounds of Hymn Number 362.

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.*

*Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

So far, so good, Toby thought as he sat down and prepared to think about the events of the past week. The new rector had kept the classical music that he loved.

Through the Acclamation, the Collect, the first and second lessons, the Gradual Hymn and the Holy Gospel, Toby’s mind wandered from one memory to another of the bombing in Savannah, the interviews and his evening with Tad.

But then the rector began his sermon, and Sullivan listened with rapt attention. He wanted to know whether the new rector believed—as Father York did—in a “big” God who could be sought and discovered in many ways or a “small” God found only through the words of a single book. It did not take long to find out. This was a different kind of Christianity than he had previously encountered at the National Cathedral. It was a sermon that might have been delivered by one of those television evangelists.

“I am often asked,” said the rector, “what evidence exists that Christ is the only path to heaven. Well, the answer to that question is that Christianity is not based upon evidence...but it is backed by evidence.

Obviously anyone could ‘claim’ to be God. The difference with Jesus is that His life completely backed those claims. If you don’t believe me, check out the history, check out the claims.

A primary focus for your study should be that Jesus fulfilled over 300 messianic prophecies written in the Old Testament scriptures. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the reliability of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, both of which have been proven to exist prior to the time Jesus walked on the earth, you can be assured that these prophecies were not ‘conspired’ after-the-fact. They were truly fulfilled by the Messiah, Jesus Christ.”

*So that’s why so many people believe that Christianity is the one and only true religion*, Toby thought as the rector continued with his sermon. Finally, after reciting scripture verse after scripture verse to bolster the claim that salvation comes through Christ alone, the rector concluded.

“Christians do not go around saying Christianity is the only way because we are arrogant, stupid or judgmental,” the new rector said.

“We do so because, based on the evidence, we believe what Jesus said. Christians believe in Jesus, who claimed to be God as written in John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14; who forgave sins as written in Mark 2:5 and Luke 5:20; 7:48; and who rose from the dead as reported in Luke 24:24-29 and John 2:19. Jesus said that He was the only way.”

“Well, that does it,” Toby thought as the homily concluded. “No Muslims; no Jews; no Buddhists in our heaven.”

And then when the choir director announced that the next hymn would be a special hymn of praise found in the program, and a guitarist appeared, Toby listened briefly:

*You are holy, you are mighty.  
You are worthy, worthy of praise.  
I will follow, I will listen.  
I will love you, all of my days.*

Then he turned and walked out, taking one final look at the dimly-lit, but still beautiful Rose window above the west entrance door and thinking to himself. “*No Muslims; no Jews; no Buddhists in our heaven and no Winston Tobias Sullivan in this Cathedral.*”

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The Rawlings family arrived at the Holy Trinity Evangelical Church at exactly 10 minutes before 10 a.m., as they did every Sunday morning, rain or shine, cold or hot. Associate Director Drake greeted them when they arrived and pulled Trey aside for a quick word.

“I had a talk with Giordano yesterday, and he tells me that you are quite the Bible scholar,” the taskforce leader said to his agent. “He also said that you seem to have a real grasp of the true meaning of scripture and of the importance of Christianity to our country,”

Trey wasn’t sure how to respond except to say, “Well, that was nice of him. I hope that my knowledge of Christ’s word helps me live a Christian life.”

“I don’t think there is much doubt about that,” Drake responded. “You can tell just by looking at your family that you are raising them with the right Christian values. But what I want to talk to you about concerns the Society of Saints. I want you to come to a meeting tonight at 8 p.m. Can you do that?”

“Eight p.m.? I guess so,” Trey answered. “We eat dinner early on Sunday so the children can get to bed and get a good start on the week. I normally go to bed early myself—around 9:30—but I can stay up a little later tonight. Where is the meeting?”

“It’s at my house in N.W. Washington,” Drake said. “It isn’t that far from where you live. Here are the directions. I’ll see you at eight.”

## CHAPTER 19

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1*

*SCOPES TRIAL – July 1925*

*Darrow: “Do you claim then that everything in the Bible should be literally interpreted?”*

*Bryan: “I believe everything in the Bible should be accepted as it is given there ...”*

*Darrow: “Do you think the earth was made in six days?”*

*Bryan: “Not six days of 24 hours ... My impression is they were periods ...”*

*Darrow: “Now, if you call those periods, they may have been a very long time?”*

*Bryan: “They might have been.”*

*Darrow: “The creation might have been going on for a very long time?”*

*Bryan: “It might have continued for millions of years ...”*

Toby and Tad met as planned at the new coffee shop in Cleveland Park. After ordering tall cups of a special Guatemalan blend they began their stroll down Connecticut Avenue to the zoo, catching up on their morning’s activities along the way.

“So, you’re not going back to the Cathedral?” Tad asked as she blew gently in the small opening of her coffee cup to cool down the hot liquid.

“Not for now,” Toby replied. “I always felt a little hypocritical anyway, because I really can’t say in good conscience that I am a Christian. I enjoyed going when Rector York was there, because the God he talked about was a big God—one that you found by seeking the truth and treating people well. For some reason, I get the feeling that the God a lot of Christians are looking for these days is a very small God—one that fits their idea of what truth is and one that they can understand without having to ask or answer any difficult questions.

“And, I assume you are also leaving because the organist quit playing your favorite music,” Tad said smiling.

“Yea, that, too,” Toby said with a chuckle. “But the fact is that hearing great classical music played on a magnificent organ is as close to a religious experience as I have ever had in a church. Having some kid play a guitar and people sing words like ‘you are holy; you are mighty; I will love you,’ reminds me too much of a football cheer: ‘You are holy; you are mighty; go God!’”

Tad laughed. “I can’t say I’m disappointed, because I hope you’ll start going with me to help Sister Mary Frances. You might not have a religious experience, but you’ll know you’re doing something worthwhile.”

They reached the entrance to the National Zoo clearly marked with a large sign, causing Toby to remark, “Don’t you think this sign would be more appropriate for the large building with the dome at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue?”

Tad laughed again. “The way some of them are acting these days, the word ‘zoo’ might be too good for them. ‘Insane asylum’ might be more appropriate.”

As they walked past the visitor’s center, Toby picked up a small information booklet and glanced at it.

“As many times as I’ve been here, I never realized this zoo was so big—163 acres, 2,700 individual animals of 435 different species, and they have more than 3 million visitors a year,” he said. That’s pretty impressive.”

“Looks like a lot of the 3 million are here today,” said Tad. “But it’s understandable with the weather so nice. Where shall we go first? I want to see the Pandas for sure, but I’d just like to take our time and enjoy being together.”

Then Tad put her arm around Toby’s waist and pulled him close. “What’s that old saying about not knowing how much you miss someone until they’re gone?” she said. “Well, in my case, I didn’t realize how much I missed you until I got back. I was so excited about becoming a real spy that I pushed aside

the memories of all of the wonderful times we shared. And now that I'm back, all of those memories have come rushing back."

"Maybe I should take the cue and ask you to marry me right now while you have all those good thoughts," Toby said. "It would be really hard on me to lose you again."

"Be careful what you wish for," Tad replied, "because you might just get it. But, let's wait until this bombing case is over and I can sort out what my options are in terms of a career."

Before Toby could respond, Tad continued. "Let me rephrase that. Let's wait until the case is solved so that WE can look at the options available. Is that better?"

"Much better," Toby replied as they strolled past two cheetahs in an open conservation area. "I think we will be able to find some mutually acceptable options that will allow us to be together much of the time."

"I hope so," Tad said as they stopped in front of two zebras that appeared to be flirting with one another.

After watching the flirtatious black and white striped African mammals for a few moments, Toby remarked, "If our future together depends on solving the case, we need to get busy. Tell me about your visit with Hakim."

"There's not much to tell," Tad answered as she glanced back at the zebras. "He doubts that he'll be able to find out anything, because, as he pointed out, he doesn't know any terrorists or anyone who does know any."

"Maybe somebody someplace knows something that they will share with him, but wouldn't share with us if we asked," Toby suggested. "After all, the police and the FBI are not exactly on the top of the favorite people list for most Muslims."

"You're right," Tad agreed. "Can't say that I blame them for not trusting the authorities when so many public officials—and some law enforcement big wigs—use the Muslims as scapegoats for everything that goes wrong in this country and in other parts of the world."

"Well, you have to admit that Muslims have caused their share of problems, don't you?" Sullivan asked.

"Yes, but Americans also have to recognize that most American Muslims are not radical and they are doing everything they can to try to reform Islam in foreign countries," Tad explained. "They believe just as strongly as any other Americans that the terrorists and religious zealots have hijacked what is basically a very decent and peaceful religion. American values are, by and large, very consistent with Islamic values, with a focus on family, faith, hard work and an obligation to better self and society."

"I know that," Toby agreed. "If we could just keep religious fanatics of all types out of the political sphere we would all be better off."

"Tell me about it," Tad sighed. "What was it Oscar Wilde said? 'I sometimes think that God in creating man somewhat overestimated His abilities.'"

Toby laughed and then said, "We're here. There's the Panda Cafe on the other side of the walkway."

Tad and Toby strolled across Olmsted Walk, by the Panda Cafe and down a sloped walkway to the giant panda habitat, where the latest two giant pandas on loan from China hung out, ate bamboo and entertained most of the 3 million people who visited the park annually.

"Aren't they cute?" Tad asked as she spotted the two giant pandas munching on some bamboo shoots.

"Yea, they are cute," Toby replied. "You can see why they are so popular. Unfortunately, they are also one of the most endangered species in the world. It is estimated that as few as 2,000 pandas remain in the wild today."

"Every time I see them, they are eating," Tad observed. "they must eat an incredible amount."

"That's what it says right here," Toby replied as he read information printed on a wall plaque. "It says that they eat almost nothing but bamboo shoots and leaves, with bamboo accounting for 99 percent of their diets. It also says that they eat fast and eat a lot, and spend about 12 hours a day doing it."

"Why do they eat that much?" Tad asked.

"Because they digest only about a fifth of what they eat," Sullivan continued reading. "Apparently, bamboo is not very nutritious. The shoots and leaves are the most valuable parts of the plants, so that's

what a well-fed panda concentrates on eating. To stay healthy, they have to eat a lot—up to 15 percent of their body weight in 12 hours—so that’s why they have to eat fast.”

“Amazing,” Davenport said as she watched the giant pandas continue to munch away.

After a few minutes, Tad interrupted the silence. “So, you and Trey haven’t turned up any clues in Savannah, yet?”

“Not a thing,” he replied. “I’m hoping that we’ll get some kind of report from what’s-his-name in the lab by tomorrow.”

“You mean Henry Nelson?” Tad answered with a question.

“Yea, Nelson.” Toby replied. “He came down and supervised the evidence gathering and removal of the vehicle. He’s going to compare what he found in Savannah with what he found in the house outside of Leesburg and at the first three bombing sites. Hopefully there will be some human fingerprints, some bomb fingerprints or something useful. As I see it, what we are doing now is a gigantic waste of time until we have something concrete to go on, but obviously Drake thinks otherwise. Shall we move on to another exhibit?”

“Sure, though I hate to leave the pandas,” Tad answered. “As far as feeling like what you’re doing is a waste of time, we’re in the same boat. I know that Drake has a great reputation for fighting terrorism, but I don’t understand his plan in this case.”

Sullivan and Davenport walked out of the panda habitat, around the cafe and back across Olmsted Walk, which put them in front of the Kangaroo habitat.

“These are such interesting animals,” Tad said when they spotted several of the large marsupials.

“They sure are,” Sullivan agreed. “What an interesting way to transport their young. I wonder why God didn’t give people those little pouches.”

“You mean female people, don’t you?” asked Tad. “Why would men have them, since they aren’t likely to spend much time toting the little rug rats around? And by the way, would men think that pouches are sexy? I can hear it now. Look at that babe over there. She’s got incredible breasts and would you just look at that pouch on her.”

Toby started laughing and couldn’t stop. “You’re too much. Are you sure you don’t want to marry me, today?”

“Well, this would be a good place for it,” Tad replied as she took a final look at the roos. “Let’s move on.”

“Lead the way,” Toby said.

While walking past the bison, the two agents started talking again about the investigation.

“Something else that bothers me about this case is the fact that we seem to have information about where the terrorists are and where they are going, but we know nothing about their identities,” Tad said.

“What do you mean?” asked Toby. “I’m not sure I follow you.”

“Well think about it,” Tad responded. “Remember during the days after 9/11/01 and then during the Iraq War back in the early years of this century, we knew who the terrorist leaders were – Al Zaquari and bin Laden—but we didn’t know where they were. Now, we seem to be getting information about where the bombers have been and where they are going, but we have no idea who they are.”

“Now I understand what you’re saying,” Toby said as they arrived in front of the giraffe exhibit, “but is that so unusual? Don’t law enforcement personnel often have an idea about the location of a criminal without knowing his or her identity?”

“I’m sure it happens,” Tad responded, “but we ought to have some idea who these people are by now.”

“Remember the Unibomber,” Toby said. “If it hadn’t been for his brother turning him in, we may never have known who he was.”

“That’s my point,” said Tad. “We didn’t know where he was either. How can we know where people are until we know who they are?”

“Point well taken,” said Sullivan as he pointed toward the giraffes. “These are amazing creatures, too, aren’t they? Just look at those necks. They remind me of this kid I went to grammar school with. We nicknamed him ‘Giraffe’ because he had such a long, skinny neck. We were cruel little buggers.”



"I hope you didn't nickname any kids after these guys," Tad said as she pointed to the elephants in the adjacent habitat. No 'elephant boy' or 'elephant girl', I hope."

"No, smarty, we weren't that cruel," Toby responded. "And we didn't name anyone after these guys either," he said while pointing to the hippopotamus.

"Well, I have a question for you," Tad said. "Does being here at the zoo and seeing all of these strange creatures give you more reason or less reason to believe in the existence of a creator?"

"That's a good question," Toby replied, "and it's actually one I have thought about many times as I have walked or jogged through this park. On the one hand, it definitely makes me believe less in the God that the Bible literalists try to sell. I mean, just look around. How can anyone look at all of these different species of animals and think that God created them all in just a few days and then a few thousand years later, Noah rounded up two of every animal here—and more—and put them on a giant boat that he and his sons built? That defies all logic and common sense."

Toby stopped for a moment as he collected his thoughts. "On the other hand, when I look at the complexity, beauty and mystery of life in this park, it is difficult for me to believe that it all just happened—poof—out of nothing. That's when I think that maybe there is a prime mover, creator, or whatever you want to call him, her or it. What about you?"

"I admit that it makes me think more about the possibility that some force put it all in motion," Tad answered, "but I'm afraid I still come down on the side of the atheists. I know that devout Christians will think my views are as loony as I think theirs are, but I honestly believe that somehow, it all just happened."

"You know what's really ironic," Toby continued, "is that as much as the fundamentalist Christians disdain scientists, it is science that is causing a lot of atheists and doubters such as myself to think that there may actually have been some kind of intelligence involved in the creation. How else does one explain the incredible complexity of the DNA encoded in each cell? And how does one deal with the fact that if the constants of physics were different even to the slightest degree, then no planet capable of permitting the evolution of human life could have evolved? And an even more interesting question is how can there be a godless explanation for the development from nonliving matter of living things that have the ability to reproduce themselves genetically? Biochemists and mathematicians have calculated that the odds are astronomical against life arising from non-life naturally via unintelligent processes."

"You don't mean that you buy the Creationist or Intelligent Design argument, do you?" Tad asked.

"Not as it is commonly espoused," Toby assured her. "No, I don't buy their definition of intelligence as the well-defined, personal God of the Bible. This intelligence is a much more vague, remote entity that's uninvolved in everyday life. This intelligence, unlike the God that the evangelicals pray to constantly, doesn't care who wins football games or even wars."

"It's all so fascinating and so mysterious," Tad said as she squeezed Toby's hand.

"But don't worry, Tad," Toby said as he put his arm around her and pulled her close. "When the Christianization of the government is complete, we both will be sent to a camp where we will undergo reorientation that could include either minor therapy sessions or major brain rewiring. The mystery will be gone and we'll be singing from the same hymnal as the great Christian majority."

"Ahh, don't say that," Tad said while attempting to smile. "I know you're joking, but who's to say that such things won't happen?"

"What's a little brain reconfiguration if it's done for a good cause?" Toby asked. "Shall we go to the great ape house next?"

"Sounds good to me," Tad said. "At least they won't try to reprogram me."

"Now I've got a question for you," Sullivan said as they began walking toward the ape habitat. "It's not as philosophical as yours. It involves the bombings."

"What?" Davenport asked.

Toby waited until they arrived at the great ape habitat before responding. "Do your friends at Homeland Security have any information about homegrown terrorists who could be responsible for these attacks?"

“I’m sure Charley would tell me if they had any such information, but I’ll check with her tomorrow to see if there is anything she knows that she hasn’t told me.”

“Let me know what you find out,” Sullivan said while studying the actions of a female ape who seemed to be engaged in a thorough cleaning of her cage.

“Why some people feel so threatened to think that we may have evolved from these creatures is beyond me,” he said. “That ape keeps her place a whole lot neater than some of the guys I knew in college.”

“I don’t doubt that for a second,” Tad answered as they moved near a large group of children who were wearing matching t-shirts with the words “Biblical Zoo Tour” printed on the front.

Toby and Tad stood quietly listening to an adult in a white lab coat who was explaining to the children that all of the descriptions in the zoo that dated the origin of animals in terms of millions of years were simply incorrect. “God has revealed the truth to us in the Holy Bible and it is clear that the earth is approximately 6,000 years old,” he told the children, “Who should we believe, man or God?”

“God,” they all answered in unison.

Tad grabbed Toby’s arm and pulled him away.

“I can’t believe this crap,” she said. “How can they flat-out lie to young children like that?”

## CHAPTER 20

*“We reiterate that terrorist acts are utterly criminal, totally reprehensible, and absolutely un-Islamic. There can never be any excuse for the taking of innocent life, and terrorism has absolutely no sanction in Islam. Nor is there any justification whatsoever in our noble religion for such evil actions. Our message is unambiguous: the authors of terrorist attacks and bombings are criminals, and we should not accept their justifications, whether ideological, religious or political.”*

*American Muslim Imams and Community Leaders, July 2005*

On Monday morning, Toby and Trey took the early bird from Washington to Atlanta and then caught a commuter flight to Savannah. Toby was wearing a blue and gold striped tie, a pair of light gray wool pants, a blue pinpoint shirt and a double-breasted blue blazer. Wearing his customary blue suit, white shirt and red bow tie, Trey looked every inch the Wahoo and Yalie that he was, but he seemed a little tired as they boarded the flight to Atlanta.

“What’s the matter? Stay up past your bedtime?” Toby asked.

Trey smiled. “Matter of fact, I did,” he answered.

“So you put the kids in bed early and you and Tricia, you know, got involved in some extracurricular activities?”

“Gosh, you have a one-track mind sometimes,” Trey responded. “No, as a matter of fact, I went to Director Drake’s house for a religious meeting.”

“And I have a one-track mind?” Toby answered laughing. “Didn’t you go to Sunday school and church earlier in the day?”

“Yes, but this was completely different,” Trey explained. “It’s a group called the Society of Saints and it’s comprised totally of men who work in the government.”

“Isn’t it a little presumptuous to call yourselves saints?” Toby asked.

“We don’t mean that we are saints like Saint Paul or Saint Peter, only that we want to emulate them,” Trey responded. “Everyone who truly follows Christ is a saint in the way we mean it.”

“I gotcha. And what is the purpose of this SOS?” asked Toby, skeptically.

“It’s purpose is to find ways to bring Christ into our work so we can make the government more Christ-like,” Trey answered.

“Doesn’t that cross the line separating church and state just a little?” Toby asked.

“Somehow I knew you would say that, but it really doesn’t,” Trey answered. “The goal of the society isn’t to take away anybody’s religious freedom. It is to imbue the government with the principles of Christianity, and I don’t think that even a skeptic like you would think that’s a bad idea.”

“I don’t know,” Sullivan responded. “Give me an example.”

“Okay, for example, we want people who work for the government at all levels to treat citizens as Christ would treat them. We want people in government to look at themselves, not as bureaucrats, but as servants of the Lord. And we want all government policies, where possible, to have some basis in the scriptures. You can’t argue with any of that, can you?”

“Who could argue with better customer service?” Toby answered, although he thought to himself that there could be plenty to worry about. “How often do you meet?”

“Every two weeks,” Trey responded. “It is a very serious group motivated by a love of Christ and a love of country.”

“Well keep me posted,” Sullivan said. “It does sound...” he searched for the right word... “interesting,” while thinking to himself, “scary as hell.”

“I will,” said Trey, but right now, if you don’t mind, I think I’ll just close my eyes for a few minutes and get a little rest.”

“Okay, but before you do, let me ask your opinion of something that I saw yesterday at the zoo.”

“Okay, what?” Trey asked.

“Do you agree with the statement that God is truth?” Toby asked his partner.

“Of course He is,” Trey responded. “God epitomizes truth and all truth leads to God.”

“And so, whatever truths we discover about God or about the universe bring us closer to understanding God. Is that right?” Toby asked.

“Yes, I believe that is true,” Rawlings answered.

Well, how do you justify the lies that children are being told by some Christians?” Toby asked.

“What lies?” Trey responded.

Toby described the Biblical Zoo Tour that he and Tad had encountered at the National Zoo and then asked, “Don’t you find these tours as offensive as I do?”

“Why do you find them so offensive?” Trey responded. “They are just giving the children another perspective on things.”

“I find it offensive that adults would blatantly lie to children about science and the world around them, just so they can indoctrinate them with their religious propaganda. Telling children that the world is only 6,000 years - 10,000 years old because the Bible says it is...come on, Trey, you can’t support that kind of crap?”

Trey thought for a moment and then responded. “Look, Toby. There are all kinds of Christians in our country. Some believe that the Bible should be interpreted literally. Others see the Bible only as a collection of stories to be used as a general guideline. They’re the ones who believe the Ten Commandments are the ten suggestions. And there are those like me, who believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but must be studied throughout a lifetime to be understood. Of all these Christians, there are some who undoubtedly go overboard in defense of the faith and others who probably aren’t vigilant enough. But the balance that holds our Christian government together is very delicate, so I am not going to criticize anyone who is sincerely trying to make this a more Christian nation. I think we have just one chance to enact the amendment to make this the Christian Republic of the United States, and I am not going to do anything to upset the delicate balance that exists.”

“So telling lies to children is acceptable as long as it helps bring about a Christian nation?” Toby asked.

“I don’t like it,” Trey answered, “but, yes, it is an acceptable price to pay.”

“What else would be acceptable?” Toby continued pressing his partner. “Would murder be an acceptable price?”

“I can’t answer that in the abstract,” Trey said. “I can’t think of any case in which I would find killing another human being to be acceptable, but I would have to know the circumstances. Now, if you will excuse me, I am going to rest my eyes.”

Although Toby did not find that to be an acceptable answer, he decided it was useless to argue with Trey in his tired and defensive state, so he might as well let his partner rest. He also appreciated having the time to reflect on the very special day—and night—that he and Tad had just shared.

After listening in amazement to more of the Biblical Zoo Tour and then finishing their own tour of the zoo, including the small mammal house, the reptile center and the bird house, they had walked down to Woodley Park for an early dinner at a local Thai restaurant and then walked back to his—he would prefer to think of it as their—apartment. Once home, they made sure J. Edgar knew that he was still the king of the household, and then Toby played the piano for about half an hour before he and Tad downloaded and watched one of his favorite movies, *Inherit the Wind* with Spencer Tracy. When it was over, Tad had shaken her head and said, “I can’t believe it has been about a hundred years since the Scopes trial and we’re still arguing about the same issue. Maybe Darwin was wrong. Clearly man isn’t evolving.”

Finally, after capping the evening off with a touch of brandy, they had gone to bed and—somewhat later—to sleep.

While thinking these pleasant thoughts, Toby drifted into a half-sleep state, only to awaken as the plane touched down in Atlanta.

On the second leg of the trip to Savannah, he read the Atlanta paper, with two stories in particular catching his attention.

### **Al-Qaida Link to Bombings Stronger According to Source Close to Investigation**

WASHINGTON—A source close to the investigation of five recent bombings has told reporters that the link between the violent explosions and the radical Muslim terrorist group, al-Qaida, is getting stronger with each passing day. Speaking on condition of strict anonymity and only on background, the high-level source told the reporters that evidence found at several of the recent bombing sites indicates that the attacks were committed by the same individuals and that these individuals were—“probably Muslims of middle eastern origin.”

Since the first bombs were detonated more than two weeks ago, there has been a lot of speculation in the media that al-Qaida or some other Muslim extremist group was behind the attacks, but until now, no one close to the investigation has offered any support for the speculation. The source would not say, however, if it is believed that the terrorists are still be in the United States or have fled to another country.

Meanwhile, officials in Georgia are preparing to swear-in the state’s lieutenant governor as the acting governor to replace Governor Paul Arnold who remains in a Savannah hospital in critical condition.

“Very interesting. I wish someone would let us in on this evidence,” Sullivan said to himself as he began reading the other article that had caught his attention.

### **Governor Still In Coma Lt. Governor Hunt to be Sworn-in Today**

ATLANTA—Georgia Governor Paul Arnold remained in a coma at St. Joseph’s hospital in Savannah according to a medical bulletin released by the hospital late Sunday night. The statement gave no information on a prognosis for the governor’s recovery. Meanwhile, back in Atlanta, plans are being made for Lieutenant Governor Peter Hunt to formally assume the responsibilities of the office of governor. The state’s great seal will be delivered to the lieutenant governor and the oath of office as acting governor will be publicly administered at noon today by the chief justice of the State Supreme Court.

This is the first time since 1947 that Georgia’s lieutenant governor has had to assume the duties of governor. It was in that year that one of the most bizarre incidents in the history of U.S. state politics occurred.

Eugene Talmadge had been elected governor of Georgia for the fourth time in November 1946, but he died of cirrhosis of the liver in December before being inaugurated. Knowing that Gene Talmadge was not well going into the November general election, some of Talmadge’s followers undertook a write-in campaign for Gene’s son, Herman Talmadge. The reason for the write-in campaign was due to a provision which stated that the Georgia General Assembly would elect a governor from the next two candidates, “then in life” if the winner of the general election died before taking office.

Before 1945, this ploy would have been constitutional since Georgia had no Lt. governor. The 1945 Georgia Constitution, however, created the office of Lt. governor to succeed governors should they die while in office. In 1946, M.E. Thompson, an anti-Talmadge candidate, was elected Georgia’s first Lt. governor. With the presence of Lt. Governor-elect Thompson, the attempt of the Talmadge camp’s write-in effort was in doubt.

Simultaneously, the outgoing governor, Ellis Arnall, refused to relinquish the office of governor until the Georgia Supreme Court heard the case and made its decision concerning this crisis. All three of these individuals claimed to be governor in January 1947 when the General Assembly convened.

Eventually, the Georgia Supreme Court overturned two lower court rulings and decided that M.E. Thompson was the acting governor and the “three governors crisis” was averted.

Although Talmadge and Thompson were both Democrats (as there were very few Republicans in Georgia at the time), they were bitter political enemies. The same can be said of Arnold and Hunt, who

although personal friends, have decidedly different views on issues. Until being critically injured in the Savannah bombing, Arnold was a rising star in the National Liberty Party, while Hunt is mentioned frequently by leaders of the Christian Democratic-Republican Party as a potential opponent to U.S. Senator Langdon Stevens when he runs for reelection in three years.

By the time Toby finished reading the paper, the plane was landing in Savannah. And then it was back to the grunt work he and Trey had left behind on Friday. In Toby's mind, it was like looking for a needle in a haystack—and possibly the wrong needle in the wrong haystack.

On the way to their first interview—a barmaid in St. Simons, Georgia who was certain that she had heard two guys wearing turbans talking about killing the governor—Toby suggested that Trey contact Drake about the al-Qaida link story in the Atlanta paper. Trey agreed and placed the call on conference mode so that Toby could participate, too.

“Margaret, it's Trey and Toby to speak to the director. Can you connect us to him?”

“Certainly Agent Rawlings. Please wait just a minute.”

Trey finished reading the article while waiting for Drake to pick up.

“I wonder where the press gets this stuff?” he asked Toby.

“You're asking me? I don't have a clue,” Sullivan responded.

Suddenly, Drake was there. “Rawlings and Sullivan—What can I do for you?” he asked.

“We were just wondering what you can tell us about the wire service story in the Atlanta paper today concerning the al-Qaida link,” Trey responded. “Is there new information that we haven't heard about?”

“No, I'm just as puzzled as you are,” Drake answered. “I don't know who their source is, but it really doesn't matter. After all, we know there is a strong link with al-Qaida, because of our agent in New Mexico. All of his information about the terrorists, including about them heading south proved to be accurate.”

“Have Nelson or any of his lab guys been able to find any evidence yet that might help identify specifically who we are looking for?” Sullivan asked.

“You don't want much, do you, Sullivan,” Drake answered with a slight trace of humor. “Would you like an address and phone number to go with those names?”

“That would be great if you could arrange it,” Toby answered. “But seriously, hasn't the lab turned up anything that might help in identifying who it is we are supposed to be searching for? In most investigations we generally know who we are looking for well before we know where they have been or where they are going.”

“I see your point,” Drake responded, “but I really don't know what I can do about it except to contact Nelson and tell him to pull out all the stops to find a finger print or something that might help identify at least one of the terrorists. But don't get your hopes up too high. The lab has been working day and night going over all of the evidence.”

“That would be great if he could find something,” Toby replied. “If we knew who we were looking for, it would make it so much easier to find them.”

“I'll contact Lu, I mean Henry, right now,” Drake answered. “Meanwhile, good luck on your follow-up interviews. Maybe you'll catch a break and someone will remember something useful.”

“There's always that chance,” said Trey. “I'll ask for a little help from upstairs.”

“That can never hurt,” Drake answered. “I'll do the same.”

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Later that evening at the hotel, Toby was getting ready to call Tad when his phone rang.

“Tad, I was just getting ready to call you. What's up?”

“A lot of stuff you should know about before it hits the fan,” Tad answered.

“Oh yea? Like what?”

“Well, for starters, the American Muslim community is about to publicly blast the taskforce for leaking stories to the media that ‘radical Muslims’ are responsible for the bombings,” Tad answered.

“Hakim and other Islamic leaders are scheduling a press conference at noon tomorrow to ask Carl Drake to either disavow the story that appeared in the paper today or share whatever information he has with Muslim leaders so they can help find the people responsible. They are pretty hacked off that no one from the taskforce has officially contacted them to ask for their help. Obviously, my contact with Hakim was completely unofficial.”

“Wow. I imagine that’s going to send Drake up the wall,” said Toby. “He doesn’t seem to take criticism from anybody very well, and he has never had the very much appreciation for Islam or tolerance for Muslims.”

“And they put someone like that in charge of the investigation, why?” Tad asked. “How do you think he’ll respond?”

“Oh, he’s smart enough not to say anything in public that will get him in trouble with his superiors. He’ll make a fairly moderate, non-committal response, but it won’t change anything that he does in the investigation,” Toby answered. “His natural instincts—or prejudices—lead him to suspect Muslim terrorists for the bombings, and the evidence, if you want to call it that, gathered so far, just confirms his suspicions.”

“From what you and I have seen, there is no evidence, only the allegations of an undercover operative,” Tad exclaimed. “Has Drake forgotten the lessons of Iraq and the alleged WMDs? You can’t always trust information gathered by spies. I know, because I was one, and I know that a lot of the information I passed on was probably planted in order to further various agendas. That could be the case here, too.”

“The problem is that there are no other logical suspects, and until there are, radical Muslims will win that honor by default,” Sullivan responded.

“Oh, that reminds me of the other thing I wanted to tell you,” Tad said. “I contacted Charlene over at Homeland Security and asked her if they have any information about domestic terrorist types that might be responsible for the bombings, and she said they don’t. However, she suggested that I meet with Secretary Rosenthal and her tomorrow to discuss the entire matter, and she said that I shouldn’t tell Drake that I am going. Do you think there is some kind of intergovernmental warfare going on here?”

“Wouldn’t surprise me in the least,” Toby answered. “Cover your tracks as best you can.”

“Don’t worry, I’ve been doing that for the last five years,” she answered confidently. “Did you and Trey get any leads today?”

“Surely, you jest,” he answered. “We talked to a barmaid in St. Simons, Georgia who was certain that two guys with turbans that she served were carrying on a conversation that had something to do with killing the governor. Of course, the guys were probably Sheiks, not Muslims, and from the records at a nearby motel, we think that they were in town for a software convention. Lord knows what they were actually talking about.”

Toby paused briefly and then continued. “Then there was the guy in Statesboro, Georgia who is absolutely convinced that the Muslim proprietor of a convenience store on I-16 has been plotting to overthrow the government. So we go to interview the Muslim guy, who turns out to be a Pakistani-American who has been in this country for 20 years and has raised two children who both attended Yale. He is a really nice guy, and get this. During our talk, he tells us that there is a man who comes in from Statesboro on a regular basis and always looks suspicious, like he’s eavesdropping or something. From the description, it is clear that it is the guy who told us about him! I’m about to go nuts talking to all of these paranoid people.”

“Watch out,” Tad said. “Even paranoid people can sometimes be right that someone is out to get them.”

“Maybe so,” Toby responded. “And speaking of paranoid, how is Jeddy?”

“Jeddy is doing just fine,” Tad answered, “but we do have a little problem.”

“What’s that?” Toby asked.

“Do you heat his half and half for five seconds or eight? I couldn’t remember.”

Toby laughed. "All you have to do is pour the cream in his bowl, put it in the microwave and say "Warm - Jeddy," and the microwave will do the rest. But whatever you do, don't spoil that cat more than he already is."

"That would be impossible," Tad answered. "When are you coming home?"

"If it were up to me, I'd be there right now, but we talked to Drake this afternoon and he wants us to stay here until we have followed-up on every lead that the local law-enforcement folks are turning up. At the rate we're going, that could be the rest of the week, at least."

"Well, Jeddy and I will be here when you get back," Tad said softly, "and if it encourages you to come home any quicker, I've got a nightgown even skimpier than the one I wore on Saturday night."

"It must be invisible," Toby answered. "I can't wait not to see it."



## CHAPTER 21

*“An oath on the Qur’an is not a lawful oath under our law.”  
Guilford County, North Carolina Senior Resident Superior Court Judge’*

The next day at headquarters around noon, Tad told Margaret that she had to run some errands and would return in about an hour and a half. She then caught a cab to a small delicatessen in Dupont Circle that was well known for its oversized sandwiches, but was not one of the “in” spots for government officials and reporters. She asked for a table for three in a small back room and ordered a glass of water. After the middle-aged, balding waiter left, she saw Charlene and Secretary Rosenthal enter the restaurant and motioned for them to join her.

“Hello Mr. Secretary; and Charlene,” she said. “I really appreciate your meeting me here.”

“Happy to be here,” Rosenthal said. “I want to do everything I can to help find the people responsible for these terrible bombings, and so-far, I don’t feel that I have been able to contribute very much.”

Almost as soon as Charlene and the director were settled in their chairs, the waiter returned and the three diners placed their sandwich orders. Then they began a serious discussion of the ongoing investigation.

“I’m very glad that Charlene arranged this meeting,” Rosenthal said, “because I’m afraid that I may not be in a position to help you much longer.”

“What do you mean?” Davenport asked with a puzzled look.

“I mean that my days as head of Homeland Security are probably numbered,” he said. “There is no way that the president is going to go into an election campaign with me in his cabinet, especially if we haven’t caught the terrorists. It’s bad enough that this happened on his watch, but it’s even worse that the people responsible haven’t been caught. Someone has to fall on a sword, and I will likely be that someone.”

“But surely President McNeal doesn’t believe that there is anything you or Homeland Security could have done to prevent these attacks,” Tad responded. “In a country of more than 350 million people if someone wants to put a bomb in a car or a train and blow it up, there really isn’t much that anyone can do.”

“The president knows that, but he is running for reelection, and he has to convince the public that he is doing everything possible to protect them from acts of terrorism. With the economy possibly slipping into recession, he has to seem very strong and very competent on the national security issue.”

At this point Charlene added, “It’s also no secret that a lot of the president’s political advisers want the secretary out of the way, because he isn’t seen as a team player on the Christian agenda.”

“Regrettably, that is probably true,” Rosenthal agreed. “I was an early supporter of the CDR and of President McNeal, because I do believe in the Judeo-Christian principles on which this country was founded, and I know that the president is personally a very open-minded man who believes strongly in the right of all people to practice their religions freely. But I was blindsided. I never dreamed that, once in power, the Congress and the administration would move so quickly to make this a Christian nation. Boy, was I naive!”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself, Mr. Secretary,” Charlene said. “A lot of us were duped. We all thought that most people in the CDR simply wanted to make the government more caring, not turn it into a theocracy.”

“And, obviously, the secretary isn’t playing ball at Homeland Security,” Tad stated.

“No, and I won’t,” Rosenthal said. “I agree that in the past we may have gone too far in restricting the public display and practice of religion, but we have now gone much too far in using government to promote one religion to the detriment of all others. That’s not what the framers of our government had in mind.”

“And so your political enemies can use the bombings as an excuse to get you out of their way.” Tad said.

“Yes, and the really disturbing thing is that I want the people responsible for these bombings punished as much or more than anyone,” said Rosenthal, “because Chuck Rutherford was one of my very best friends, and I feel a little responsible for his death. I was supposed to be the one at the event to which he was headed when he was killed, but my plane was delayed in Chicago.”

Before Tad could speak, the waiter arrived with their sandwiches and drinks. After everyone had been served, Tad asked Rosenthal what he knew about the investigation.

“I can’t say that I’ve been kept in the dark about the investigation, but I surely haven’t been kept in the inner circle, either,” he said. “Carl Drake seems to be keeping everything pretty close to the vest.”

“What do you know about Drake?” Tad asked.

“I know that the FBI director thinks highly of him and that he has the reputation of being a no nonsense, tough crime fighter, especially when it comes to terrorism,” said the Homeland Security chief.

“And even more especially when it comes to radical Islamic terrorism,” Charlene added.

“That may be true,” Rosenthal agreed. “It is no secret that Drake sees things through Christian lenses and has little tolerance for Muslims, especially radical Muslims who want to harm Americans.”

“I don’t think any of us have much tolerance for the Muslims who want to harm our country,” Tad said, “but it seems to me that Drake has been so blinded by his dislike of Muslims that he refuses to acknowledge the possibility that anyone else could have been responsible for the attacks. Does Homeland Security have any information that might implicate any other group or individuals in these bombings?”

“No we don’t, but there is something that Charlene and I think you ought to know about,” Rosenthal said in a hushed tone as he looked around the restaurant to see who else was there. “But, before I tell you, you need to understand that the information we have is very preliminary, totally unsupported and completely confidential. I haven’t even told the president about this yet.”

Tad put down her turkey sandwich and leaned over the table closer to the secretary who spoke in even more hushed tones.

“We have heard from some former government employees, including a few who were with the FBI, that there is some kind of shadowy network within the government that attempts to promote Christianity while discrediting other religions.”

“I thought the entire government was attempting to promote Christianity,” Tad said, “but what do you mean by discrediting other religions?”

While Rosenthal took another bite of his corned beef on rye sandwich, Charlene attempted to answer Tad’s question,

“It’s no secret that the administration has a pro-Christian agenda,” McGill said, “but that’s not what we’re talking about. This goes much deeper. There is some kind of network of people who are much more activist in promoting their Christian agenda, and apparently—according to these former employees—this includes doing things to discredit other religions.”

“What kind of things?” Tad asked.

“Well, for example, making sure that information about any crime or alleged immoral behavior committed by a Muslim, Jew or Hindu finds its way into the media in a way that everyone will know the person’s religion,” Charlene explained, “while religion is never even an issue if a Christian does something wrong.”

“And you think this group may be exerting influence on our investigation?” Tad asked.

“We don’t really know that,” Rosenthal answered, “and, like I said, our information is very, very murky. We just want you to know that there may be people in the government who would like to make sure that Muslims are the ones convicted of the bombings in the court of public opinion in the event that no one is ever convicted in a court of law.”

“So as to convince the public that we need a more Christian country,” Tad said.

“Apparently,” said Charlene. “There are a lot of people in this government who are not going to rest until this is the Christian Republic of the United States of America. They are pulling out all of the stops to get that amendment passed.”

“Well, I’ll be damn,” Tad said. “I must say that this isn’t the first I’ve heard of a Christian network, but it is the first suggestion that the network might actually be tainting the investigation. I wonder if Drake is aware of this.”

“I honestly don’t know,” Rosenthal said. “From what I can tell, he is sincerely convinced that the bombings are the work of Islamic terrorists. Whether he is getting accurate information or not, I can’t say.”

“That is always a problem,” Tad agreed. “Far too often, the people in positions of power get incredibly poor information from their most trusted sources. From the Bay of Pigs, to Vietnam to Iraq, it is amazing how many important decisions have been based on false or incomplete information. I hope that is not what is happening in this case.”

“I hope not,” Charlene agreed. “We need to catch these damn terrorists so that people can get back to living their lives without fear. Our economy is hurting and it’s going to get a whole lot worse if people don’t feel safe.”

“That brings up an interesting question,” Tad responded. “It may be one that you don’t feel comfortable answering, Mr. Secretary, because it has some political ramifications and you are part of this administration.”

“I’ll answer if I can without being disloyal to the president,” Rosenthal said. “Shoot.”

“Okay,” Tad said. “What effect do you think the bombings will have on the upcoming elections?”

“Well, speaking academically, I would think that not solving the case would be detrimental to the president and to all CDR candidates,” the secretary said, “while solving it would obviously help the president and his party.”

“And it might be particularly helpful to the CDR if the public believes that Muslims were responsible and they are captured or killed,” Tad suggested.

“I would imagine so,” said Rosenthal. “I don’t think there is anyone in the government from either party, however, that doesn’t want this case solved as quickly as possible.”

“I hope you’re right—which brings up another question,” Tad said. “Are we looking for the right people? Is it possible that domestic terrorists might be responsible?”

“It’s possible. There are a lot of domestic terrorists and whackos that the FBI and Homeland Security have under constant surveillance—from individuals to loosely knit groups such as the Confederate Christian League, a radical offshoot of the Confederate Heritage Organization,” Rosenthal answered as he motioned for the waiter to bring the bill. “I’ve sent everything we have on all of them to Drake, but apparently he doesn’t think they are the ones responsible.”

When the waiter arrived, the secretary took the check.

“I’ll take care of this,” he said.

“Thank you for lunch and for the information, Mr. Secretary,” Tad said, “and good luck in keeping your job. We need people like you in government.”

“Thank you, Agent Davenport,” Rosenthal replied. “You and Charlene keep sharing information and she’ll keep me in the loop.”

“Don’t worry, we will,” Tad responded, as she, Charlene and Rosenthal stepped out onto Connecticut Avenue and flagged two cabs.

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When Tad arrived back at headquarters, she saw several news reporters leaving Drake’s office. She surmised that they may have been there seeking a response to the news conference that Hakim and other Muslim leaders were scheduled to hold at noon.

After reaching her office, she closed the door and set her large video screen on television mode. Then she flipped through the news channel spectrum until she saw Hakim on the screen. He was standing at a microphone with several other men, some dressed in western-style suits and others in more traditional Muslim tunics and turbans. She turned the volume up in time to hear her old friend speak.

“The reason for us being here today is to express our outrage; our sadness and our patriotism,” Hakim began. “As Americans, we are outraged that anyone—regardless of their cause— would resort to violence against innocent men, women and children. No cause justifies killing and injuring innocent people.”

“We are also saddened that the people leading the investigation to find and apprehend those responsible for the bombings have chosen to leak stories to the media that place the blame for the bombings on Muslims, although no one has produced any evidence that Muslims are responsible.”

“And finally, we want to express our patriotism, because as Americans, we want these people caught as quickly as possible and subjected to all of the penalties allowed by law. And we want to offer our assistance in any way possible to help capture those responsible for these horrendous acts. They are acts that violate the most basic principles of the Qur’an and of our faith.”

And then a familiar news reporter appeared on screen.

“That news conference was held just a little over an hour ago,” the reporter said. “And then, just a few minutes ago, this is what Associate Director Carl Drake had to say in response.”

Tad looked at the screen carefully. Drake was sitting behind his desk responding to the newsman’s questions.

“Director Drake, what is your response to the news conference held today by several national Muslim leaders criticizing the taskforce for leaking information to the media that they say unjustly implicates Muslims in the recent terrorist bombings?”

Drake sat straight in his chair with a photograph of the president on one side of the wall behind him and what appeared to be a framed quotation of some type on the other side.

“My response is very simple. I have not authorized the release of any information to the media and I cannot comment on any aspects of an on-going investigation.”

“But, Mr. Director,” will you take the Muslims up on their offer of assistance?”

Apparently aware that whatever he said could have serious political ramifications, Drake waited before answering.

“We appreciate the assistance of any and all American citizens,” he said. “If the Muslim leaders have any information that they believe is important, I urge them to call the hotline that we have established for just such a purpose.”

“So you have no plans to set up a meeting with the Muslims to allay their fears that the investigation is targeting them?” the reporter asked.

“I can assure the Muslims that no one is being singled-out in our investigation,” Drake responded coolly. “We are simply following the evidence wherever it leads us.”

“With that remark, the director ended the questioning, claiming that he had important work to do on the investigation,” the reporter said, as he closed the story.

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In a phone call with Toby later that evening, Tad told him everything about her lunch with Rosenthal, including the tip about a Christian network and the information about domestic terrorists. They also discussed the press conference and Drake’s response.

“You had Drake pegged,” Davenport said. “He was just diplomatic enough, but he also made it clear that he wasn’t going to give any special attention to a bunch of Muslims.”

“No surprise there,” Toby said. “But back to the Rosenthal thing for a minute—I wonder if the Society of Saints thing that Trey is in could be related to the Christian network that Rosenthal mentioned?”

“Well, Rosenthal wasn’t sure what to make of it,” Tad explained. “He and Charley just thought that somebody on the taskforce ought to know about it just in case someone is actually trying to taint the investigation.”

“I’m glad he did mention it,” said Toby, “and at some point when the time is right, I might ask Trey to look into this further. If anyone is in a position to find out about a Christian network trying to make Muslims look bad, Trey is that person.”

## CHAPTER 22

*Believing that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their Legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. Thomas Jefferson’s Letter to the Danbury Baptists, 1802.*

“That was certainly a close call,” Toby said as he and Trey came out of the fast-food restaurant in Statesboro, Georgia. “Can you believe that the manager actually put those two guys in the freezer and kept them there for two hours before calling the police? They could have frozen to death if they had been in there much longer.”

“I guess he did go a little overboard,” Trey answered.

“A little overboard?” Toby asked sarcastically. “A little overboard would have been to call the police in the first place, because there was nothing about the two guys to indicate that they had anything to do with terrorism.”

“Well, they were dressed in traditional Islamic garments,” Trey responded. “And they were talking about having to work all night to get their project ready for the ‘big day.’”

“That’s true,” said Toby, “but it turns out that the project was for a science class at Georgia Southern University involving the genetic engineering of plants.”

“Yes, but the restaurant manager had no way to know that,” Trey said defensively.

“Well then, he should have attempted to find out more before he pulled a gun and ordered the two students into the freezer,” Toby said. “What’s really scary is that this type of paranoia is growing. We’re just lucky that no one has been killed yet.”

“It’s easy to understand why some people are becoming paranoid,” Trey responded, “but you’re right that the bombings don’t give people the right to take the law into their own hands. Hopefully, we’ll find the terrorists and solve this case before there are more incidents like this one.”

“Hopefully,” Toby agreed.

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The next stop for Toby and Trey was a barbecue restaurant called “Bubbacue” near Reidsville, Georgia. The owner had called the taskforce office in Savannah claiming that he had overheard a disturbing conversation between three Muslim men on the day before the bombing that injured the governor. He was waiting for Rawlings and Sullivan when they arrived and apparently had little difficulty picking them out from the rest of his customers.

“You must be the two FBI men that they told me was coming,” he said as they opened the screen door leading into the large room filled with picnic tables and wooden, slatback chairs.

“Oh, we’re that obvious, are we?” Toby asked jokingly. “What gave us away—the suits or my partner’s red bowtie?”

“Actually, everything about you tells me that you ain’t from around these parts,” the large, balding man in jeans and a “Bubbacue” T-shirt replied in a deep voice with an even deeper southern accent.

Both Toby and Trey laughed along with the man who introduced himself as the owner, Larry “Bubba” Johnson.

“Well, I’m glad to see you. Have you had lunch, yet?” he asked.

“As a matter of fact, we haven’t,” Toby replied, “and something smells awfully good. What do you say, Trey, we might as well grab a bite while we have the chance.”

“Fine with me,” Trey said somewhat hesitantly as he surveyed the sawdust-covered floors and wooden planked walls that were decorated with old license plates, gasoline signs, and other memorabilia from the early- to mid-1900’s.

“Well that’s good,” Bubba said as he pointed to a table in the rear of the restaurant. “Let’s sit at that table back there where we can talk privately.”

Looking at the large room that was packed with noisy customers chomping down on plates of pulled-pork sandwiches and ribs, Toby wasn’t exactly sure how their conversation could be kept “private,” but he agreed to follow Johnson to the only vacant picnic table in the room. “That will work,” he replied without hesitation.

Once seated, Bubba called a waitress over to the table and asked Trey and Toby if they had any specific requests. Trey asked if he could have some barbecued chicken and cole slaw.

“Now I know you ain’t from around these parts,” Bubba said with a wide grin. “Down here, the words barbecue and chicken don’t belong in the same sentence. The fact is, in this area, barbecue is a noun, not a verb. We don’t barbecue no steaks or chicken. Barbecue is what it is, and that is slow-cooked pork. That is barbecue.”

Without waiting for Toby to state a preference for the kind of pork barbecue he preferred, Johnson asked the waitress to bring a good sampling of pulled pork and ribs along with some sides, including onion rings and Brunswick stew. “And honey, bring us three glasses and a pitcher of sweet tea.”

Before the sweet tea had even arrived and before Toby or Trey had a chance to ask the first question of their host, Bubba Johnson began telling the FBI agents why he had called the taskforce office in Savannah.

“I thought it was a little strange when them three Muslim guys came in the restaurant,” he said, “but I had put it out of my mind until the next day when I heard about that bomb that almost killed our governor. Then I began to put two and two together and came up with four. That’s when I decided I should tell the police about what those three men was talking about. As it turned out, Troy Johnson—he’s a distant cousin of mine—was in here eating a plate of ribs. Well, Troy is a trooper in the state patrol, so I figured he was as good as anyone to tell. And after I told him, he said I should call that Barnes guy who was heading up the investigation in Savannah.”

“Yes, and Barnes must have thought what you said was important, which is why he sent us,” Trey said just as the waitress brought three glasses, a pitcher of iced tea and a plate of lemon slices.

“We’re anxious to hear what the three men talked about.”

“Well, like I said,” Bubba began his story, “these three men came in on the afternoon before the bombing. It was kind of late in the afternoon, around 2:30 or something like that. I remember, because we had been real busy at lunch time—a lot of tourists on the way to Savannah for St. Patrick’s Day—and things had just begun to quiet down a bit.”

Johnson paused as two waitresses arrived at the table and began putting down plates piled high with barbecue ribs, pulled pork, onion rings, corn-on-the-cob and slices of white bread, along with bowls of Brunswick Stew, baked beans and cole slaw.

“Thank you, Rita. And thank you, Louise,” Bubba said after the last plate was placed on the table, leaving scarcely an inch of the red and white checkered plastic tablecloth visible. “How bout checkin back with us in a few minutes to make sure we ain’t run out of anything.”

“Now where was I?” Johnson asked as he picked up the plate of ribs and passed it to Toby.

“You were just about to tell us what you heard the three men say,” Trey said.

“Right,” said Bubba. “They sat right at this very table that we are sitting at, and seeing as how the lunch crowd had about gone, I was helping clear some of the tables so that the men and girls in the kitchen could get busy washing all of the dishes before the dinner crowd come in.

“The first time I heard them talk, after they had placed their order, I heard one of them say just as clear as could be, ‘There is no God but Allah.’ Well, as you might imagine, that kind of got my attention. And then I heard another one say something about believing in Allah and achieving salvation, and I heard some other things about Allah that I can’t remember. But I do remember one of them using the word ‘jihad.’ That really got my attention.”

Toby pulled a paper towel from the spool on the table and wiped his face and hands. “That is interesting,” he said. “How were these men dressed?”

“Well, they weren’t wearing those gowns that some of them wear, if that is what you mean,” Bubba responded. “They were wearing pants and sweaters I think. There weren’t nothing special about their clothes.”

“I see,” Toby said after taking a drink of his tea, to which he had added the juice of several slices of lemon to cut the intense sweetness. “So, what made you think that they were Muslims?”

“The way they was talking, and the fact that they had one of them Korans with them. I saw it on the chair between two of the men.”

“Do you recall what they ordered?” Sullivan asked as he squirted a little more of Bubba’s Famous Hot Sauce on his pulled-pork sandwich.

“I think they all ordered ribs, but I can’t be real sure,” Johnson answered. “What does that got to do with anything?”

Sullivan finished chewing a bite of his sandwich and wiping the sauce off of his mouth before responding. “Well, I don’t think it is very likely that the three men you called us about could be Muslim terrorists if they were reading the Koran and eating barbecue pork ribs at the same time. I admit that eating Bubbacue ribs might be considered a religious experience by some, but I’m afraid Muslims are not likely to be among them.”

“That’s right,” Trey agreed as he wiped some sauce off of his fingers. “Devote Muslims consider pigs to be dirty animals and it is strictly forbidden that they should eat pork.”

“Well, maybe they weren’t real strict Muslims,” Bubba answered. “After all, I know some Jews who eat pork and their religion forbids that. And I know Catholics who eat meat when they are supposed to eat fish. And I even know some Baptists who take a drink of wine or beer every now and then. You know as well as I do that a lot of people like to customize their religion.”

“That is true,” Toby said, “but I find it very difficult to believe that three Muslims would be planning Jihad and reading the Koran in a restaurant where pork is the primary food item sold.”

Bubba looked thoughtful as he used a piece of white bread to wipe some of the excess Bubbacue Extra Hot Sauce off of his plate and then ate it in two large bites.

“I never thought about that,” the restaurant owner said. “I hope I didn’t lead you on a wild goose chase.”

“Don’t worry about that,” Toby said. “We’re glad you called, and we’ll do some more checking. You didn’t by any chance catch any of their names, did you?”

Bubba reached into one of the pockets in his jeans, pulled out a business card and handed it to Toby. “On the back is the license number of the car they was driving. Maybe that will help you find them.”

“This is fantastic,” Sullivan said. “I wish all of the people who contacted us were so observant.”

“Well, like I said, I hope this wasn’t a waste of your time,” Johnson said. “Would you like some banana pudding or peach cobbler for desert?”

“I can’t eat another bite,” said Toby as he surveyed the table filled with dirty plates, piles of meatless rib bones, crumpled paper towels covered in Bubbacue sauce and two half-eaten pieces of white bread. That was some of the best barbecue I ever ate, and so there is no way that this visit could be considered a waste of time—regardless of what we find out about your three lunch guests who were reading the Koran and talking about Jihad.”

“That’s for sure,” said Trey as he did his best to wipe the sauce off his hand with a clean paper towel. “The lunch was outstanding. Do you have our bills?”

“It’s on Bubba,” said Johnson. “Tell all your Yankee friends who think that barbecue is a verb that it is really a noun and you had some real barbecue down in Reidsville, Georgia.”

“Well thank you,” said Toby. “You can be sure that I’ll try my best to straighten out the terrible misconceptions about barbecue that my Yankee friends have. And, you can also be sure that we’ll let you know what we find out about the three men you saw.”

As soon as Trey and Toby got in the car—before they could decide the best way to check out the lead they had just received—they had a call from Director Drake.



“Desert Dan has just contacted us to let us know that the terrorists have left Georgia and are headed north, possibly back to the D.C. area again,” he said. “The two of you need to get back here as quickly as you can.”

On the way back to Savannah to retrieve their belongings from their hotel rooms, Trey placed a call to GBI Director Barnes and explained that he and Toby had been called back to Washington. After giving him the car tag number and the other information that Bubba Johnson had provided about the three men who had been in his restaurant on the day before the Savannah explosion, he asked if Barnes could have someone follow-up on the lead. He also explained his and Toby’s doubts about the three being Muslims. After a brief conversation, Barnes agreed to have someone track down the three men and said he would let Toby and Trey know the outcome.

Once in Savannah, the two agents packed quickly and headed for the airport where they dropped their rental car and prepared to board the next flight to the District of Columbia. Not only were they leaving behind one of Georgia’s most beautiful and stately cities, but they were also leaving behind nearly 60 individuals whose terrorist sightings had proven to be either figments of vivid imaginations or simple cases of mistaken identity.

“Well, that was an interesting couple of weeks,” Sullivan said as he buckled himself into the seat of the plane. “I hope our next assignment turns up some actual evidence that can help solve the case.”

## CHAPTER 23

*“We pattern our thoughts and actions after the God or Gods we worship. They are more a part of us than we realize. Only by understanding how in our own minds we have defined their nature can we begin to understand the underlying forces that make us behave the way we do.”*

*David Anderson*

On the day after they returned to the nation’s capital, Toby and Trey received a call from Director Barnes in Georgia. He had a report on the three suspected Muslims that had eaten at Bubba Johnson’s restaurant on the day before the bomb exploded in Savannah.

“Well, your instincts about these three men were right,” Barnes said. “It turns out that they were no more Muslims than you or I.”

“Oh really?” Toby answered, although not at all surprised.

“Nope,” Barnes continued. “They were students at the University of Georgia who were heading for the St. Patrick’s Day festivities and decided to take a little detour to eat at the Bubbacue.”

“But what about the Koran?” asked Trey. “And all of the talk about Allah and Jihad.”

“I was coming to that,” said Barnes. “Turns out that they were all in the same comparative religions class and were studying for a test that they had right after the St. Patrick’s Day break. My men said they were very cooperative and actually got a big laugh about being suspects. They said they will always have a good story to tell about being suspected of being Muslim terrorists while eating pork ribs at Bubbacue’s. I have to admit that it is a pretty good story.”

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After hanging up the phone with Barnes, Sullivan and Rawlings were put to work interviewing people whose names were on the lists that Tad generated for Drake. It was a miracle that the media had not jumped all over the profiling that the task force was getting away with.

A week of 12-hour shifts passed, and then another one, and another. Before anyone knew it, March had turned into April and April into May. Easter and Passover had come and gone, as had the cherry blossoms and school children on field trips. Spring was giving way to summer. No more bombings, but no arrests either.

On the home front, the good news for Toby was that Tad had decided to move in with him. “No long-term commitments until the case is solved,” she had said, “but the food and the sex are both pretty good, so why not?” (When Toby had asked which was better, the food or sex, she had only smiled coyly.)

Politics replaced terror on the front pages of the nation’s newspapers and on the television news shows. It was on one of these shows that Georgia’s Senator Stevens was a guest one evening while Toby was preparing dinner and he and Tad were enjoying a glass of wine.

“There’s Senator Stevens,” Toby said as he inserted a lemon into the large cavity of a five-pound chicken. “Is that loud enough?”

“It could be a little louder,” Tad responded as she looked at the small screen that Toby had installed under one of the cabinets. “I’m anxious to hear what Stevens is saying. He seems to be one of the few senators with common sense these days.”

Toby gave a voice command to raise the volume just in time to hear the question asked by the show’s host.

“Senator Stevens, as you know, the majority leader has promised to bring the Christian Republic Amendment up for a vote in a few weeks, after both political parties hold their conventions. Our network has just received the results of a poll we commissioned that indicates that 60 percent of the American people favor the amendment and it would likely be ratified by all but three of the states—New York, California and Massachusetts. You are on record in opposition to the amendment. Given the fact that a

clear majority of the people support the amendment—including 65 percent in your state of Georgia—are there any circumstances under which you would vote for the amendment?”

“Absolutely none,” Stevens responded.

“Would you care to elaborate?” the questioner asked.

“I think my views on this issue are well known,” the senator said. “This country was founded by people who risked everything to come thousands of miles across an ocean expressly so that they would be free to practice their religion—or not practice any religion. I believe we would be denigrating the contributions of these courageous men and women if we passed an amendment that essentially says that we no longer believe in religious freedom.”

“But senator,” the newsman continued, “what do you say to those people who claim that the United States has always been a Christian nation and that the First Amendment was enacted only to prevent the favoring of one Christian sect over another.”

“I’d say they’re idiots,” Tad interjected.

“I say that they either can’t read very well or they simply don’t grasp the concept of separation of church and state,” Stevens answered.

“But you would agree, wouldn’t you, that the First Amendment was intended primarily to prevent the establishment of a state religion, such as the Church of England?” the questioner asked.

“You know, John, I wasn’t there, so I don’t know what each of the founding fathers thought about the First Amendment, but I do have a little common sense, and that common sense tells me (1) that the concept of freedom of religion doesn’t mean much if one religion is given a higher status in law than all the others, and (2) it is a form of religious establishment to recognize one specific religion within a country’s name.”

“You tell them, senator,” Tad exclaimed as she looked at Toby who was putting the chicken in the oven.

“Well, give me your prediction, senator. Will your side prevail? Will the amendment be defeated in the Senate?”

“It will be a lot closer than it would have been a few weeks ago before two senators were killed in the bombings and replaced with amendment supporters,” said Stevens, “but I believe the final vote will be 65 votes for and 35 votes against.”

“That means that a change of just two votes and the amendment would pass. Are you sure the administration can’t find two more votes?”

“Anything is possible,” the senator said, “but I believe our votes are firm.”

“If that’s the case, why is the majority leader bringing it up at this time?” the newsman asked.

“Simple,” Stevens responded. “It’s now or never. The house has already voted in favor by a one-vote margin, but 2/3 of both the senate and house have to vote in the affirmative during the same term of Congress before an amendment can go to the states. I think the supporters realize that if it doesn’t pass now, there is no way they can get it passed in both houses next session, because our party is very likely to gain seats in the upcoming election.”

“I see, so this definitely will be a historic vote in a few weeks,” said the television interviewer, stating the obvious. “We’ll be watching closely. But if I can switch to another topic, senator, how is Governor Arnold doing?”

“Governor Arnold is a very close personal friend of mine. He has always been a fighter and he is fighting each and every day to get better. I don’t know what his prognosis is for the long term, but I am hopeful he will be able to reassume his duties as governor some day. I visited him recently and he has come out of his coma. He recognized me, but he was unable to communicate much more than recognition.”

“And finally, Senator Stevens, you know that I have to ask you about the upcoming election,” the newsman said. “Do you think that Senator Clay will be your party’s nominee and can he win in November?”

“Yes and yes,” Stevens answered.

“And, if asked, would you run as his vice-presidential candidate?”

“That’s putting the cart before the horse,” said Stevens.

“I sure as hell hope that Stevens is right about the big vote on the amendment,” Tad said as she took the re-filled glass of wine that Toby handed her. “I don’t believe I care to live in a country in which institutional religion plays such a prominent role.”

“Nor do I,” Toby said, “but if it does pass, I think that the biggest losers won’t be agnostics or atheists or even Jews or Muslims.”

“Oh no, well who then?” Tad asked.

“As hard as it may be to believe, I think the biggest losers will be Christians,” Toby explained. “In the long run this will cheapen their religion.”

“How so?” Tad asked.

“By making it so common,” he said. “Think about it. People value those things that are scarce or things they have to work or sacrifice for. We don’t value things that are in our face constantly. It’s already started with the Freedom to Practice Religion Act. People are now praying all the time—before every meal; before every meeting; before every sporting event. Do you think that most people are really paying attention to those prayers? Do you think they really believe that God cares who wins their first-grade kid’s soccer match? And look at what the private sector is doing to capitalize—WWJ this and WWJ that. Heck, I saw an advertisement yesterday at a car dealership that said ‘What Would Jesus Drive?’ Their answer, of course, was one of the new hydrogen fuel cell cars. I felt like going up to the manager and yelling at him, ‘He wouldn’t drive, dummy. He would walk or ride a donkey.’”

“I see what you mean,” Tad said with a big smile. “You have a way of seeing the big picture. But I still hope the amendment doesn’t pass, because it could cause a whole lot of grief for a lot of people.”

“A lot of grief, and maybe worse,” Toby said while taking a peak at the chicken in the oven. “Let’s hope that Senator Stevens is right.”

“And let’s hope that chicken doesn’t take too much longer to cook,” Tad said. “I’m starving.”

“It’ll be done in about 45 more minutes,” Toby said. “I’m using the high temperature method—450 degrees—the total cooking time for this size bird is just an hour.”

“So that’s the secret,” Tad replied. “My mother used to cook chickens for nearly two hours, and they were always tough and as dry as sawdust. Yours are moist and tender.”

“Most people cook things, especially chicken and pork, much too long,” Toby explained. “The high temperature method seals the bird, the lemon gives it a wonderful flavor, and the real key is cooking it breast side down. That way, the juices flow into the breast meat, which tends to dry out if it is cooked breast-side-up.”

“I see,” Tad replied. “It seems as if you still enjoy cooking.”

“Put it this way— I still enjoy eating,” he replied. “Can you think of a better reason to enjoy cooking?”

“No, guess not,” she answered as she poured herself another glass of wine.

“Pour me some, too,” Toby said as he put some water in a pan to steam a few small florets of fresh broccoli. “And help me figure out what we can do to get the bombing investigation moving again. It’s like watching paint dry. We’re getting absolutely no where interviewing all of the people on those lists you are generating.”

“I wish I knew,” Tad said as she bent down to give J. Edgar some attention. “I honestly don’t know what else we could be doing, given the evidence—or lack of it—that we have.”

“That’s it,” Toby said as he opened the refrigerator door to get the half and half for his spoiled cat. “We have never seen any of the so-called evidence. Nelson and his lab assistants need to show us

everything they have. There has to be something there that is being overlooked. I've never been involved in a case in which so little hard evidence has surfaced."

"You're right," Tad said. "First thing in the morning, you need to march right into Drake's office and demand a presentation by Henry Nelson to the entire taskforce—including the women."

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As soon as Toby reached the office that next morning, he met with his partner, who agreed to join him in a meeting with the boss. He then talked to Margaret, who arranged the meeting for 10 a.m., subject to the director's approval. Toby returned to his office and thanked Trey for his help. "Let's face it, Trey. You have the director's ear much more than I do, so I appreciate your support on this."

"I'm glad to do it," Rawlings replied. "You're absolutely right that we have to do something to get this investigation off the dime. It's been nearly three months now and we're no closer to identifying the people responsible than we were on the day of the first bombing."

"Well then, while I'm at it, I've got another favor to ask, too," Toby said. "What else can you tell me about this Society of Saints thing you're in?"

"There isn't much more to tell you than I already have," Trey responded. "We just try to make the government more like Christ would have wanted it to be."

"Okay, let me be straight with you," Toby said. "I have heard from sources I can't reveal that there is some kind of shadowy Christian network within the government that purposely tries to make sure that Muslims receive negative coverage in the media."

"What do you mean?" Trey asked. "You don't think that the Society of Saints has anything to do with that, do you? I thought you knew me better than that."

"Look, Trey, don't get your boxers in a twist," Sullivan responded. "Of course I know you well enough to know that you wouldn't participate in a smear campaign against Muslims or anyone else, but it isn't too difficult to believe that there are people within our government who would do such things. Would you just do me a favor and keep your eyes and ears open when you're at your meetings to make sure that there isn't some secret society that you don't know about that is actively working to harm Americans' perception of Muslims?"

Trey was clearly bothered by his partner's accusation against Christians.

"You really don't like the fact that Christians are finally out of the closet, so to speak, do you?" Trey asked. "You are like a lot of Americans who want people to keep their religion private—in the church on Sunday and within the confines of their own homes. Any public exercise of religion—outside of church—makes you uneasy, doesn't it?"

"I admit that the public display of religion does bother me a little," Toby said, "but what bothers me most is the use by the government of a particular religion in ways that adversely affect other religions. My comfort level isn't important, but the right of people of all faiths to practice their religions is."

Trey thought for a moment without speaking, and then he said, "Okay, I'll keep my eyes and ears open, but do me a favor and try to look at some of the good things that Christians in our government are doing."

"I'll try," Toby said. "I'll really try."

After making a few phone calls to contacts in local FBI offices around the country, Toby and Trey were summoned into the director's office for their meeting. Drake was seated behind his large desk in what looked to be a very comfortable leather executive chair. The two agents sat in leather wingback chairs in front of the desk.

"Okay, what can I do for you two?" Drake asked.

"We'd like you to arrange for the full taskforce to visit Henry Nelson at the lab in Quantico so we can all get a closer look at the evidence," Trey said.

"What good will that do?" Drake asked, "If Nelson and his crew had found anything, they would have already shared it. They are working as hard as they can to find something to help us."

“But it’s hard to believe that they haven’t turned up anything,” Toby said. “Maybe if we all have the chance to see what is there and let Nelson tell us what tests they have run and what they have found, someone will see something that will trigger some ideas. If nothing turns up, what have we lost? We’re getting nowhere doing things the way we have been.”

Drake seemed taken aback at Sullivan’s bluntness. “Perhaps you would like to see someone else in charge of the investigation, Agent Sullivan?”

Sensitive, isn’t he, Toby thought before saying, “I did not mean that,” although he had thought many times that a new leader with fresh ideas might be necessary at some point. “All I meant was that the investigation has stagnated and doing the same thing over and over and expecting the results to be different is foolish.”

Sensing that Drake was finding Toby’s bluntness a bit annoying, Trey took a more tactful approach.

“What Toby is trying to say is that we are as frustrated as you are that we haven’t solved this case yet, and we think there may be some information that has been overlooked. If we all look at it together, we might get lucky and find some little thing that will turn the whole investigation around.”

While Drake leaned his chair forward and tapped on his desk, Toby studied the wall behind him that contained several plaques and photos, including a photo of Drake with President McNeal and a plaque on which the words “Matthew 28:18-20” appeared.

Finally, Drake spoke.

“Okay, I’ll call Nelson and arrange for him to give us a video tour of the lab and all of the evidence on Thursday. That way he doesn’t have to interrupt his day as much as he would if we all were trampling through his labs. You’ll be able to ask him and his staff any questions you wish. Is that acceptable?”

Before Toby could say anything, Trey answered for the two of them. “That would be great. Thank you.” And then he rose out of his seat and made sure that Toby was out of his, too.

“Okay, are you satisfied now?” Trey asked once they were back in their office. “You got what you wanted—a chance to look at the evidence.”

“Yea, but only on the screen, not in person, but it’s definitely better than nothing,” Sullivan said. “I am very anxious to understand how the bombers were so careful that they didn’t leave even a slight trace of evidence that might help identify them. It is as if they are ghosts—or forensics experts.”

## CHAPTER 24

*Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Mark 10:21*

On Wednesday morning Toby and Trey were in their office discussing things they wanted to ask the FBI's forensics experts—such as why there were no useable fingerprints, footprints or tire tracks at any of the crime scenes. Suddenly, they saw Margaret on their video communications screen and then heard her deliver the shocking news.

"Attention, please. There has been an explosion on the Mall near the Smithsonian Metro Station. There is no word yet regarding fatalities or injuries, but all taskforce members are asked to go to the conference room immediately for an important briefing."

Trey and Toby looked at each other in stunned silence. Then Trey bowed his head in prayer, while Toby cursed out loud, "Damn it. We have to stop these lunatics. We can't allow them to turn our nation's capital into a place of fear."

On the way to the conference room, Toby stopped in Tad's office. He could tell that she was as angry as he about this latest attack. "This has got to stop," she said. "These people, whoever they are, are making all of us look like idiots. They seem to be able to come and go at will and set off bombs wherever they like. Why can't we catch them?"

"Maybe this time they made a mistake," Sullivan said hopefully as he and Tad made their way to the conference room. "Even the best criminals, including terrorists, eventually leave something behind or the good guys eventually just get lucky."

After everyone was assembled for the briefing, Drake entered with Margaret at his side. She was wiping away tears as the director asked everybody to bow their heads.

"Dear Lord, we know that America is being punished because there are too many people in our country who have not accepted you as their Savior. We ask that you help us make this great land one nation under God—a nation unified in its acceptance of the one true Lord, Jesus Christ. We know that once we have become a truly Christian nation, you will look down upon us with favor and provide us with your many blessings. In your name we pray, amen."

After the prayer, Drake continued, "Apparently Desert Dan was correct once again. He told us a few weeks ago that the terrorists had escaped our roadblocks in Georgia and were probably heading back north, possibly to the D.C. area. And today, in all likelihood, these same terrorists have struck again, this time on the Mall near the Smithsonian Metro station. As Margaret told you, we have no knowledge yet how many people were killed or injured.

"Here is how we are going to proceed," he continued as he referred to some notes on a small pad. "I have contacted Henry Nelson and told him to get to the site as soon as possible. And Tony Giordano called to tell me that he was driving near the Mall when the explosion occurred and would get over there immediately to help secure the site.

"Because the explosion was at the Mall, it is technically within the jurisdiction of the Federal Park Police, but I have contacted the appropriate authorities and offered our help in securing the area and questioning anybody who happened to be in the vicinity when the bomb exploded. I want all of our investigative teams to go over to the Mall as soon as we are finished here and begin questioning people who were anywhere near that Metro station when the bomb exploded."

Finally, thought Toby, an opportunity to question people immediately after an explosion—people who may have actually seen something of value. He did wish, however, that Drake had not confined those participating to the "investigative teams," which was another way of saying "men only."

As soon as the meeting ended, Toby told Trey to wait for him just a minute at the elevator while he paid a quick visit to Tad.

"What has Drake got against the women in this group?" she asked as Toby followed her into her office.

"I don't know," he answered. "I've given up trying to understand the man. I just hope we find someone who actually saw something useful. I'll call if I'm going to be very late tonight."

"I'm sure I'll be home fairly early for all the good I'm doing here," Tad said. "Except for all of the stupid Internet searches that Drake has me doing, I don't think he even knows I'm around."

Toby put his hand on Tad's shoulder. "I can't believe he is wasting your time and talents doing computer searches that someone with one-tenth of your education and training could be doing,"

"I can't either," Tad responded. "About the time I think I've found every list of Muslims and Islamic organizations that exists, he comes up with some new off-the-wall list that he wants. I assume he is somehow comparing these with other lists that he has and then gives them to you, Trey and the other men to interview. But the truth is that I really don't know, because he doesn't bother to tell me what he is doing with them. It's like I'm working on one case, and he is working on something entirely different."

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Sullivan and Rawlings decided to walk to the Mall, which was just a few blocks away, because they knew that traffic in the area would be at a standstill and that the Metro would be closed for security reasons. When they arrived they spotted Tony Giordano outside the opening to the Smithsonian Metro Station. He was standing amongst dozens of uniformed police officers and a few men who appeared to be plainclothes detectives.

"We have to quit meeting like this," Giordano said with only a slight trace of humor in his voice, "but I'm glad you're here, because we can use all the help we can get."

"How many casualties?" Toby asked.

"I think we were extremely lucky this time. There were no fatalities and only six injuries, most of which are minor," Giordano answered. "It could have been much worse, because that school bus over there had just dropped off a load of students at the Freer Gallery. If those kids had been on the bus, there may have been some children hurt—or worse."

"Where should we start?" Trey asked.

"We've tried to keep everyone that was in the area available for questioning. We've moved them into the various buildings around the Mall and secured the entrances and exits so that they will feel safe while they are detained. Perhaps you two would like to start with the people in the American History Museum across the Mall, although you might want to talk first to that homeless guy over there by the ambulance. He was one of the closest people to the explosion, but fortunately wasn't injured."

"Okay, thanks," Toby said as he and Trey headed over to the street where several ambulances were parked.

"What's your name?" Trey asked the man with unruly hair, a scruffy beard and clothes that were obviously dirty and tattered even before the bomb exploded.

"My name?" he asked as if no one had asked him that question in a long time.

"Yes, sir, your name please," Trey asked again.

"It's John—John Porter," he said in a shaky voice.

"How are you feeling, Mr. Porter? Are you feeling well enough to answer a few questions?" Toby asked as he studied Porter's angular face, slim body and long fingers.

Porter thought a minute before responding. "I think I'm okay, but I might feel better if I had something to eat."

"Of course you would," Toby said as he pulled a \$10 bill out of his wallet. "I think all of the vendors have closed up shop for the day, but you take this and get yourself a couple of hotdogs and fries as soon as you can find some place open."

"Or you could go to one of the government-financed kitchens located at churches and other facilities throughout the city," Trey added. "You are familiar with those, aren't you, Mr. Porter?"

Porter shook his head in the affirmative as he took the money from Toby and put it in his pocket. "What is it you want to ask me?" he responded.

"First, can you show us where you were when the bomb exploded?"



"I was right over there," he said, pointing to a spot about 25 feet from the Metro entrance. I think I was sleeping on that bench over there, and next thing I knew I wasn't sleeping no more."

"It would have been hard to sleep through a blast like that. You're lucky you weren't killed or more seriously injured," Toby said, as he took photographs of the witness and the crime scene. "Did you happen to see anybody hanging around the Metro station before you dozed off?"

"I saw a lot of people coming and going, but I don't remember no one hanging around exactly," Porter answered. "There was just people going up and down the stairs. Some of them may have been Muslims."

"What do you mean?" Toby asked.

Porter seemed to be searching his memory for more details. "Well, I'm not sure. I may have seen three Muslim guys, but I really can't say for certain. They looked like Muslims. Two of them had a beard and mustache and one had just a mustache."

"But you don't know for sure?" Toby asked.

"Well, I know there were three guys with beards and mustaches, wearing funny clothes, but I don't know for certain if they was Muslims," Porter said as he looked at the two FBI agents.

"What about after the explosion, did you see anybody that acted different than everybody else—you know, like they weren't surprised by the explosion?" Trey continued, trying to solicit information.

"After the explosion, I didn't pay attention to nothing except trying to figure out what happened to me," said Porter, who was undoubtedly more confused than when in his usual state of confusion.

"We understand," Toby said as he made a motion with his head to signal Trey that they should probably move on. "I'm glad you weren't seriously hurt. Thank you for your time."

"That was a strange interview," Toby said as he and Trey began walking across the Mall toward the American History Museum, which was one of his favorites of the Smithsonian museums. "I wonder why Giordano wanted us to talk to him. I doubt that he could have told us much if he had been wide awake and no where near the explosion, but the shock of being rudely awoken by a bomb blast pretty much took him off the helpful list."

"But what about the Muslims?" Trey asked. "Do you think he really saw some?"

"What do you think?" Toby asked. "Do you think he even knows what he saw?"

"I doubt it, but we better pass the information on just in case," Trey answered. "After all, that is the third witness in three different locations who claims to have seen two men with a mustache and beard and one with a mustache only. I'll go over and tell Giordano just in case he wants to get a sketch artist to work with Mr. Porter."

"Now that you mention it, I guess you had better tell Tony," Toby agreed. "Those three descriptions are much too similar to ignore."

When he returned, Trey was still concerned about Mr. Porter's condition. "I thought the current administration had passed laws to take care of the homeless problem in this country," he said. "It is un-Christian to allow people to be homeless and hungry."

"That's one of the problems with mixing government and religion," Toby said. "What may be the religious or moral thing to do can't always be accomplished simply by passing a few laws. Unless the government is prepared to force people to live in shelters against their will, there will always be some people who, for a variety of reasons, prefer to live on the streets."

"So you suggest that the government simply abandon them?" Trey asked. "You have to admit that there are far fewer homeless people and beggars on the street now since the CDR took power than there were before."

"That might be true," Toby agreed, "but I would venture to say that no more of these people are living productive lives than they were before. Sure, a lot of them are better hidden in shelters and at free food kitchens, but they still have the same mental problems, and alcohol and drug problems. And they are no better equipped to function productively in society than before. What was it Christ said—something about the poor always being with us?"

"Ah, quoting scripture on me, are you?" Trey asked with a grin. "If you want to discuss the issue of poverty from a Christian perspective, you need to know a lot more than one verse. Poverty is the defining

issue in the Bible, and when Jesus describes Judgment Day, he says he will welcome into the kingdom those who have fed the hungry, offered hospitality to the stranger and clothed the naked.”

“Yes,” said Toby, “but I don’t recall Christ saying that we should turn that responsibility over to the government and pretend that it isn’t a problem anymore.”

“Point taken,” Trey said as they arrived at the museum. “But maybe the government should be doing more, rather than less.”

“Sure,” said Toby, getting the last word in before they entered the building. “Our economy is going down the tubes anyway. Might as well speed up the collapse, then we can have even more poor people so that everyone who isn’t poor can feel really good about the government helping those who are.”

As they entered the Mall-side lobby of the American History Museum, Trey and Toby encountered a huge throng of people who were obviously becoming restless as they waited among the display of old television and radio shows and other mid-20th Century memorabilia to be interviewed. Toby asked one of the museum guards if there was a portable public address system that he could use to communicate with the crowd. The guard said there was a wireless system available that he would get immediately.

While waiting for the guard to return, Toby and Trey discussed how to handle the large crowd. They decided that it would be most prudent to ask everyone some general questions that would quickly weed out those who could contribute nothing of value to the investigation. Those who had no information to provide would be allowed to leave after their names were taken down and their identification checked. Their exit would also be recorded by the museum’s video surveillance cameras.

As soon as the guard returned with the equipment and someone who knew how to operate it, Trey tried to get the crowd’s attention.

“If I may have your attention, please,” he said four or five times before finally beginning to explain how they were going to proceed.

“I am agent Rawlings and this is Agent Sullivan. As you know, a bomb was detonated abote and hour ago on the Mall near the Smithsonian Metro Station. According to the latest information we have received, there were fortunately no fatalities and only a few injuries.

“Agent Sullivan and I are members of the special taskforce investigating all of the bombings in the United States in the past several months, and we hope that someone here may be able to provide some information that will help us identify and apprehend the persons responsible for this and possibly other bombings. We know that you are tired of being detained here, so we are going to attempt to let you go as quickly as possible. We are going to ask some general questions of everyone. Those who can honestly answer “no” to every question will be free to leave—after checking in with one of the officers at the exit door and providing your name and your national identity card, state driver’s license or a passport.”

Trey handed the mike to Toby to ask the three questions they had decided to use as a screen.

“Our first question is: Did you see anyone on the Mall either before, after or at the time of the explosion who looked in any way suspicious to you?”

“Next question: Did you take any videos or photos on the Mall shortly before, during or immediately after the bomb exploded?”

“Final question: Do you remember seeing anyone on the Mall wearing or carrying a knapsack or package any time in the hour prior to the explosion?”

“If your answer to all of these questions is ‘no,’ you may leave through this door—after providing your name, address, phone number and identification to the men and women seated at the tables near the exit.”

As soon as Toby finished speaking, 95 percent or more of the crowd started moving toward the door, obviously excited about the prospect of leaving.

Toby turned back toward those who were not leaving and asked them to move toward the back of the lobby as far from the door as possible. He and Trey then moved toward them.

As quickly as they could, the two agents walked among the approximately two-dozen people remaining and asked what they had seen or photographed before, during and after the explosion. The amount of information gathered from the interviews was minimal, but they did find six people who had

been taking photos of the Mall area shortly before the explosion. That meant that at least one of these people could have accidentally captured a visual image of the person who planted the bomb.

After letting everyone go except for those who had taken the photographs, Trey and Toby gave a receipt and business card to the owners of the film taken from the two vintage 35 mm cameras and then attempted to find a computer on which they could review the photographs or video from the four digital cameras. They had just located a computer and were about ready to look at the images when Giordano appeared and confiscated the memory chips so the boys at the lab could review them more carefully. When asked by the owners if they could copy the chip's photos onto a disc before turning over the chip, Nelson said there was no time for that. Toby wrote receipts to the owners, gave them his card and said that he would try to get the chips returned to them as soon as possible—with the images still intact.

Rawlings and Sullivan spent the rest of the day on the Mall talking to Smithsonian employees, cab drivers, delivery truck drivers and others who may have been in the area at the time of the explosion. They found no one who could provide any information of value to the investigation.

When Toby finally arrived home around 7 p.m. Tad was watching the television coverage of the Mall bombing.

"What are you watching?" he asked before looking to see for himself.

"It's some amateur video footage of the blast," Tad replied. "Some guy just happened to be shooting a home video of his family's visit to Washington and captured the explosion."

"I wonder how he managed to keep the film or digital media out of the hands of the authorities," Toby asked. "I thought that Nelson and Giordano managed to confiscate all of the video taken by anyone at the Mall this morning."

"Apparently not," Tad said as J. Edgar jumped onto the couch beside her, obviously upset that more attention was focused on that rectangular screen than on him. "It doesn't show too much, although there might be something more valuable in the footage taken before the blast. Of course the media is only interested in the sensational stuff."

"Can you do me a favor tomorrow and contact that television station and all of the others in town and see if we can get a copy of any photos or video footage of the bombings that they may have purchased?" Sullivan asked Tad as he sat down on the other side of J. Edgar, who seemed pleased that he now had two staff members on duty. "Trey and I will go to the stations to review whatever they have."

Before Tad could respond, Toby motioned for her to be quiet, because the words "A Special News Bulletin" had just appeared on the video screen.

"This just in," the male news anchor with the blonde blow-dried hair said. "The nation's oldest living senator, Robert McIntyre of Arizona, has been hospitalized in Phoenix. There is no information available at this time as to his condition. We'll keep you posted as more information becomes available on the senator, who turned 100 years old just last month."

"Can you believe that?" Tad asked. "Isn't he one of the votes that opponents of the Christian Republic amendment are counting on?"

"He sure is," said Toby. "That vote is going to be as tight as a snare drum."

"God help us defeat those Christians," Tad said without realizing the irony of her request.

## CHAPTER 25

*Jesus is about to return. The Bible says He will not return until the Gospel is preached to all the world. (Matthew 24:14).*

*There have been two major obstacles to the preaching of the Gospel— Communism and Islam, both religions of Satan. Communism collapsed and the former Communist countries are now open to the Gospel. The final barrier to be overcome is Islam.*

*Lamb and Lion Ministries – Home of Christ in Prophecy, 2005*

After going through almost as much security as encountered at Washington’s Reagan National Airport, Toby and Trey finally entered the newsroom of WNDU, Channel 11, where they were introduced to the news director, Patrick Murphy.

“I was surprised when Agent Davenport called this morning,” Murphy said, “because one of your guys had already been by late last night to confiscate the video that we aired yesterday evening.”

“Let me guess,” Toby said. “Was his name Giordano?”

“Yes, that’s the one,” Murphy confirmed Toby’s speculation. “He said he needed the originals of everything that we had acquired from any source that showed the Mall before, during or immediately after the bombing.”

“And you gave everything to him?” Trey asked.

“Of course we did,” the news director replied. “He didn’t phrase it as if we had any choice.”

“Did you make a copy of anything before you turned it over to him?” Sullivan asked.

“I’m sure we must have made a copy when we first acquired the video,” Murphy said,—“but all I’m positive we have now is the footage we showed last evening. As you know, people like to see explosions and other dramatic stuff. We didn’t have much use for the footage of the guy’s family and tourist attractions.”

“Do you have the name of the guy who brought you this footage?” Toby asked.

“Of course,” Murphy responded, “but I already gave that to the Giordano guy, too. Isn’t he in your office?”

“He works with us, but he isn’t exactly in our office,” Trey responded. “We’re sorry to have bothered you again.”

“No problem,” Murphy said as he handed both Toby and Trey one of his business cards. “If you get any good information you can pass on, please give me a call. As you might imagine, this is about the only news our viewers are interested in these days—and who can blame them. No one knows from day to day where the next bomb is likely to go off.”

“Well thanks for your time,” Trey said as he and Toby concluded the visit and were guided by Murphy’s assistant back through the maze of hallways to the station lobby.

“That Giordano is everywhere, isn’t he?” Trey said as they arrived back at their car.

“Sure is,” Toby answered. “He seems to be drawn to bombings like a moth to flames.”

“Where next?” Rawlings asked.

“We could go to the other television stations, but I’ll bet anything that Tony has already been to them, too,” Sullivan responded. “Why don’t we visit the Mall again and make sure that Giordano, Nelson or somebody from our office has tracked down every surveillance camera in the area. It’s possible that at least one might have been missed.”

“Can’t hurt,” Trey said. “Videos can be crucial in solving crimes like this.”

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When they arrived at the Mall, Toby and Trey made the Smithsonian Information Center, also known as the Castle, their first stop. Although located fairly close to where the bomb exploded, the oldest building of the Smithsonian Institution had survived with no apparent damage. Once inside, they showed their badges and asked to see the person in charge of security for all of the Smithsonian's 16 museums and galleries. Within a few minutes, they were introduced to Fred Beecher, the acting director of security.

"What can I do for you gentlemen?" he asked. "We want to do anything we can to assist in your investigation."

"Thank you," Trey responded. "We are just trying to ensure that nothing, however small, falls through the cracks. We want to make sure that our office has identified every surveillance camera that the Smithsonian has that might have captured digital images of the people responsible for yesterday's attack. Do you know for a fact that every one of those cameras has been identified and the tapes, discs or memory chips given to the FBI or bombing taskforce?"

"Yes, I am certain of that," Beecher responded. "I went over the list very thoroughly with Agent Giordano yesterday. He was also very concerned that we not miss any cameras. I made certain that he had all the media from cameras at the American History Museum, the Natural History Museum, both the East and West buildings of the National Gallery of Art, the American Indian Museum, the Air and Space Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Arts and Industries Museum, the Castle, the Freer Museum and the Ripley Center."

"What about the Sackler Gallery and the African Art Museum?" Trey asked.

"Yes, of course, those, too," Beecher answered.

"I assume you gave him the video from the inside surveillance cameras as well," said Toby.

"Actually, he didn't ask for those," the security director responded. "Would you like them?"

"I'm not sure if we will need them or not, but would you please make sure that all of the output from all of your Mall cameras—inside and outside—for that day are saved and secured. There may come a time when we do need them."

"That has already been done," Beecher said. "We always save the output on computer discs and keep them for three months. I'll make certain that these are saved for even longer."

"That was good thinking," Trey said. "I hope we don't need them, but it is always better to be safe than sorry."

Satisfied that any images of the bombers that existed were being preserved, Toby and Trey thanked the acting security director and started walking back to their car. Just as they arrived at the vehicle, both of their personal communication devices began ringing. It was Margaret at the office.

"Ya'll should come back to headquarters just as soon as possible," she said. "There's been a big break in the case."

Being only a few blocks away, Sullivan and Rawlings were back at headquarters in just a few minutes. As soon as they walked in the door, Peabody directed them toward the conference room.

"Everybody's in the conference room," she said, "The director has some big news."

And big news it was.

"If you will turn your chairs to face the media screen, I'm going to contact Henry Nelson who has finally made a major breakthrough in our case," Drake said as he pushed some buttons on a remote device to contact the forensics expert working the case.

"Are you there, Henry?"

"Yes, Director, I'm here and can see all of you," Nelson, who was now visible on the screen, replied. "Can you see me?"

"We can see and hear you perfectly," Drake said. "Please share with the rest of the taskforce the information you shared with me a few minutes ago."

"Well, as I told you, we think we finally have pretty good descriptions, and possibly names, of our suspected bombers."

Suddenly everyone in the conference room responded with a cheer or fist raised in the air. The relief in the room was obvious. After nearly four months, there was finally something to cheer about.

When the excitement had died down, Nelson continued. “We caught a little break when examining some photos that a guy from Idaho had taken shortly before the bombing on the Mall,” he said as he held an enlarged photograph up to the video camera. “Here is a photo that shows three men who appear to be of mid-eastern origin coming out of the Smithsonian Metro Station just 12 minutes before the bomb exploded.”

Nelson held up another photo that was an enlargement of a portion of the first. “If you look closely at this photo, you can see a knapsack carried by one of the three men. This is significant, because we found fragments of a bag of the same make, color and markings as this one at the crime scene.”

Nelson then focused the videocam on a board on which he had separated the original photograph into individual photographs of the three suspects, with three names listed to the side.

“And here are our suspects with names supplied to us by our undercover agent in New Mexico,” Nelson continued. “The only problems at this point are that the photos are, as you can see, a little blurry and we don’t know which name goes with which photo. Our agent has never seen the suspects, but he recently overheard a conversation in which he learned their names and their country of origin— Iran.”

Toby could see Tad studying the photos carefully and writing down the names that the undercover agent had provided:

“Hakim Chishti bin Muhammad bin Hafiz”

“Hamid bin Muhammad bin Abdul Al-Mansur”

“Salam Dehlavi bin Muhammad bin Hafiz”

Davenport seemed puzzled.

Trey, as usual was taking meticulous notes in his electronic notepad.

Toby, on the other hand, chose to study the fuzzy photos very carefully, because, as an artist, faces were of interest to him. He was pleased to hear Nelson say that his photo experts were working to make the photographs clearer, which should be done in a matter of hours.

“As soon as we have the images sharpened, we’ll e-mail them to you in a very high resolution,” he said.

“And as soon as the cleaned-up photos arrive, I intend to release both the names and the photos to the media in order to solicit help from the public,” Drake said.

Tad looked up from her notepad and without thinking said, “You can’t do that.”

Drake was clearly taken aback by her response.

And why can’t I, Dr. Davenport?” he asked in a restrained, although clearly disgruntled voice.

“I mean that you shouldn’t release both the photos and names yet, because we don’t even know if they go together. And, as little as Americans understand Muslim names, they will be turning in a large percentage of the Muslim population—or even worse, harassing them or attacking them.”

“I’m afraid I don’t follow your logic, Dr. Davenport,” Drake responded. “We have names and we have photos, and unless people know of someone whose name and description is the same as in the information we release, they shouldn’t bother them. And how many people would look like the people in these photos and have one of these three names?”

“That’s my point, Director,” Tad tried to explain her concern. “Americans don’t have an ear for Muslim names, and they certainly don’t understand their structure. All they will hear is that there are three Muslim guys named Muhammad, which, as I am sure you know is the most common name among Muslims in the world. I would guess that more than 15 million people have the name Muhammad. And the name also has many variants such as Ahmed and Mahmoud. If one also counts all those who use it as a middle or family name, the number probably exceeds 60 million people. So you see that we’re not exactly narrowing down the field, are we?”

“So you would have us release the photos with no names?” Drake asked.

"I'm not sure if we should release the photos to the public at all—only to law enforcement officials," Tad responded, "at least until we are more certain that these are the ones we're after."

Drake looked at Tad and then at the rest of the taskforce.

"When the photos are ready, I will release them along with the names," he said abruptly. "We need the public's help to find these people, and this is the best way to get it."

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Later that afternoon, Drake held a news conference and released the photos and names of the suspected terrorists to the media. As three witnesses had previously indicated, two of the suspects had a beard and mustache, while the third had only a mustache. Although the task force director urged the public to be cautious and use common sense and good judgment before contacting the hotline or Internet site with information, his words apparently fell on deaf—or stupid—ears.

Within 30 minutes of the close of his news conference, the hotline and Internet site combined had received more than a thousand tips regarding the suspects' location, and more than a dozen threats to "take care of the anti-Christian devils without needing any assistance from cops." After two hours, more than 10,000 tips had been received.

While Tad and Toby sat in Tad's office and ate chicken salad sandwiches from the deli across the street, they reviewed some of the so-called tips that had come in on the Internet.

"Listen to these," Toby said as he read some e-mails out loud.

"I think I know one of those Muhammad guys in the picture. He works at the Magic Market here in Dayton. I'm pretty sure he's the one with the big ears and no beard."

"I am almost positive that the guy in the middle in the photograph shown on television was a student in my computer class at the junior college here in Webster Grove."

"The Muhammad guy in the photographs on your Internet site looks exactly like a guy named Muhammad that runs a motel down on the four lane highway here in Marietta, Georgia. Do you want me to grab the SOB and hold him for you?"

"And listen to a few of the phone messages that have been transcribed," Tad said.

"I don't know what has taken you feds so long to find these anti-Christian, godless terrorists. If I see them, I ain't going to take the time to call. I'm going to blow their Muslim brains out."

"I drive an 18-wheeler. After seeing the photographs of those terrorists on television about an hour ago, I remembered something that happened yesterday. I was passing through Grand Rapids, Michigan and stopped for fuel just off the Interstate. As I was getting back on, I am almost certain I saw the same three guys that were in that picture. They was driving an old blue Mustang convertible."

"I guess it wouldn't do any good to say, 'I told you so,' would it?" Tad asked.

"No, I don't think that it would," Toby responded with a big grin. "And the amazing thing is that Drake probably still doesn't think it was a mistake to release the photographs and names. I'm sure he's convinced that it was the only way to locate the terrorists."

"And everyone else in the United States who looks Arab and has the name Muhammad," Tad added.

"When the names were first given to the taskforce this morning, you had a strange look on your face," Toby said. "What was that about?"

"You noticed, huh?" Tad responded. "It was because something doesn't fit."

"Such as?" Sullivan asked.

“Such as the fact that Desert Dan says that the suspects are from Iran and yet two of the suspects have names indicating that they are from elsewhere.” Davenport explained.

“I don’t follow,” Toby said.

“Well, for example, the name Hakim Chishti bin Muhammad bin Hafiz would be Hakim from the village of Chishti, son of Muhammad, who was son of Hafiz, and Chishti is in Afghanistan,” Tad explained. “And the same for Salam Dehlavi bin Muhammad bin Hafiz. Only he would be from Delhi in India. Same family names, but from different countries, neither of which is Iran. Makes you wonder if old Desert Dan was fed a bunch of bull.”

“It does make you wonder,” said Sullivan. “And something else that’s a bit strange is the remarkable resemblance among the three suspects. Not quite triplets, but clearly with a lot of the same features, such as their cheek bones,” he said while showing Tad the similarities among the three. “It will be interesting to see if anyone really does have information that helps locate them, whoever they are.”



## CHAPTER 26

*“To say the religion of Islam is peaceful, I do not think that is accurate... The Koran teaches that the end of the world will not come until every Jew is killed by Muslims. Now that is what it says in the Koran, written by Muhammad.” Reverend Pat Robertson, 2002*

Toby awoke the next morning a little before 6 a.m. and walked into the kitchen. While making the coffee, he turned on the small LCD television. He was shocked at what he saw. There were reports from throughout the country of violent attacks against Muslims, as well as some non-Muslims who appeared to be of middle-eastern origin. With a map of the United States on the screen, the reporter reeled off the names of cities from one coast to the other in which the attacks had occurred. After all of the cities had been mentioned and highlighted on the map—Miami, Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington, D.C., New York, Detroit, Dallas, Denver, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Seattle—it seemed as if the entire country had gone mad.

Sullivan finished grinding the special breakfast blend coffee beans, filled the water reservoir of the coffee maker to the six cup line and hit the switch to start the brewing process. Then he went quickly back into the bedroom and turned on the large plasma television mounted on the wall opposite the bed.

“Tad, wake up,” he said while gently touching her shoulder. “I think you will want to see this. It looks like the whole country has gone nuts.”

Tad stirred slowly until she became aware that the television was on and then sat up so she could see the screen. Toby sat down on his side of the bed and turned the volume higher.

“For those who are just waking up, let me recap our main story this morning, and it is not a pretty one,” the middle-aged newsman said. “We are receiving reports from throughout the country of violent attacks against mosques, Islamic centers and individual Muslims from one end of the country to the other. The only good news is that, as far as we can tell, no one has been killed yet in the attacks, although there have been several very serious injuries.”

“Surprise, surprise,” Tad said. “I wonder if Drake still thinks his decision to release the names and photographs was a good one. Surely he understands by now how stupid that was.”

“Don’t count on it,” Toby replied. “Unless the director or the president gives him heat about it, chances are he will consider a few injuries to be acceptable collateral damage, especially if someone provides a legitimate lead to find the terrorists.”

“We’re just receiving word from James Camp at the White House that the president was awakened at 5 a.m., about an hour earlier than usual, to be apprised of the anti-Muslim violence that seems to be spreading throughout the country.”

“That’s right, Skip. I have just received a copy of a statement by the president urging all Americans to respect the rule of law and refrain from attacks on anyone because of their ethnic origin or religion. In part, the president says, ‘I am extremely distraught to learn of the violent behavior of some Americans against people of the Islamic faith and others of middle-eastern origin. Although I understand the strong feelings of both anger and fear that the recent bombings have aroused in many Americans, I urge my countrymen to refrain from violence and allow the proper law enforcement officials to do their jobs. Please—Before you commit an act of violence, ask yourself, What would Jesus do? May God bless our great country.’”

“What would Jesus do?” Tad asked loudly. “Where does the president of the United States get off asking Americans such a question? Do most Jews or Muslims have more than an academic interest in what Jesus would do? Do agnostics or atheists really care? What is going on?”

“What do you expect?” Toby responded more animated than usual. “If restaurants, car dealerships and other retailers are using Jesus to sell their products, can you blame the president of the United States for doing the same thing, especially in an election year? The sad thing—as I see it—is that Christianity is being so trivialized. Because everything in the religion has to be explained in great detail and accepted word for word, there is no longer any mystery or majesty in the religion—nothing that allows a person to search for God in music, art, love or even science. No, God only exists today in words on a page—and only in slogans. I’m afraid that if Jesus were alive today, he would answer the question WWJD with four words—“put the mystery back.”

“Wow, I can see that this bugs you as much as it does me, if for somewhat different reasons,” Tad said.

Before Toby could respond, Tad’s phone rang. She reached for it on the nightstand next to the bed.

“Hello. Yes, Hakim, I’ve seen the reports. They’re awful. Where and when do you want me to meet you? Okay, I’ll be there.”

Tad looked at Toby and said, “That was Hakim. He wants me to meet him at the Islamic Center at 8 a.m. That will give me just long enough to shower, get dressed and grab something to eat. Do you mind if I take the first shower?”

“That’s fine,” Toby said. “I’ll have breakfast waiting for you when you get out, then I’ll take my shower.”

“What would I do without you? Tad asked.

“I don’t know,” he answered. “WWTD?”

“What?” she replied with a puzzled expression.

“WWTD,” he said again. “What would Tad do?”

Tad laughed and then gave Toby a kiss on his cheek. “Maybe it’s a question I won’t have to answer.”

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Tad arrived at the Islamic Center a few minutes before eight. The entire center was surrounded by Muslim men kneeling on small prayer rugs that had been placed on the pavement facing east toward Mecca. Hakim was standing at the front entrance.

“Welcome, my friend,” Hakim said. “We thought that we should make ourselves visible and make it clear that we are a peaceful people who are not terrorists and don’t believe in terrorism.”

“I think that you are making that point in a way that is both peaceful and forceful at the same time,” Tad said. “What can I do for you?”

“Hakim responded. “First, please come inside. I have some coffee if you would like some.”

“That would be nice,” Davenport said as she followed her friend—dressed in a light blue labbadeh with matching pants and a white turban—into the center and then into a small kitchen.

“I’m not sure that there is anything you can do for us, Tad, but you are the highest-level person in the government that I know,” Hakim responded as he placed two cups of coffee along with cream and sugar on the table. “I just felt that I needed to talk to someone who might be able to explain to the people who have power that we are Americans and deserve to have the same rights as all other Americans. All we want is to be able to live like other people in this country. Most Muslims, just like most other Americans, are good citizens. We have families and responsible jobs and go about our business just like Christians, Jews and people of other faiths.”

Tad could tell that Hakim had probably spent a very sleepless night and was clearly distraught by the recent events. “Look, my friend,” she said to him. “I am just a little fish in the big sea of government. I tried my best to talk my boss out of releasing those names and photos yesterday, because I was afraid that something like this would happen, and you can see how much weight my opinion carries. And the really frightening thing is that I don’t think the violence that has occurred will cause him to rethink what he has done. And, even if it did, it’s probably too late—the barn door has already been open.”

“Is there nothing you can think of that might be done to protect our people?” Hakim asked with great concern. “You can tell from the number of men outside that I am not the only one worried.”

Suddenly, Tad put her coffee cup down and snapped her fingers as if she had just been given a revelation.

“That’s it,” she said. “You’re already doing it.”

“What do you mean?” Hakim asked.

“You need to shame the Christians in this country into recognizing that American Muslims are just as American and just as peaceful as Christians,” she explained. “You need to contact the American Muslim Alliance or whatever organizations bring Muslims together and hold a nationwide prayer vigil– just like the men outside are doing. Once it is organized, hold a press conference and announce that American Muslims will be holding a prayer vigil until violence against Muslims stops AND the people responsible for the bombings are apprehended. Make sure that the television people take a lot of shots of Muslims at prayer so that Christians will be ashamed of the violent attacks against people who are basically peaceful. What do you think?”

“I don’t know,” Hakim responded. “I’m not much of a P.R. person, but it sounds as if it might work, and I don’t see how it could do any harm. I think I’ll contact some folks I know in the Alliance and see if we can get it organized. At least it is something positive we can do and it will keep us close together.”

“And another thing,” Tad added. “You might have the Alliance contact some higher muck mucks of the Christian and Jewish faiths and ask that they join in your ‘vigil for peace.’”

“I like it,” said Hakim. “I’ll get to work right away.”

“I hope it helps,” Davenport said as she put her cup on the table and pulled some photographs out of her purse. “Now, can I ask for your help with something?”

“Of course you can,” Hakim said.

“It’s about these names and photos,” Tad said.

## CHAPTER 27

*That Religion, or the Duty which we owe to our Creator, and the Manner of discharging it, can be directed only by Reason and Conviction, not by Force or Violence, and therefore all Men have an equal natural and unalienable Right to the free Exercise of Religion, according to the Dictates of Conscience, and that no particular religious Sect or Society ought to be favored or established by Law, in Preference to others. – George Mason*

It was a rainy Sunday morning in the nation's capital. As Toby awakened, he was aware that dangerous terrorists were still on the loose and vigilantes might be attacking Muslims from Miami to Seattle. And yet, he was looking forward to this day, because it would be the first full day in several weeks that he and Tad had to spend together. He had no desire to attend church, and Sister Mary Frances had urged Tad to take the morning off, because several nuns visiting from Chicago had offered to help serve breakfast to the homeless.

Although Sullivan had awakened briefly at 6 a.m., when he saw that it was raining, he closed his eyes, rolled over and quickly fell back asleep. It was about 8 o'clock when he awakened for the second time and decided to get up and fix breakfast. He slipped out of bed as quietly as possible, so that he wouldn't disturb Tad or J. Edgar, both of whom were sleeping like logs.

After grinding the coffee beans and starting the brewing process, Toby brought in the continuously shrinking Sunday paper and glanced at the front page. Three headlines caught his eyes:

*Muslims condemn violence; announce national call to prayer and fasting*

*Christian Democratic Republican Delegates prepare for show time*

*Illness may keep Arizona senator from crucial vote*

Sullivan put the paper on the counter and started preparing his special occasion waffles, which he sometimes made completely from scratch and on other occasions from a prepared pancake mix. On this day, he was using his "from scratch" recipe. What made the waffles special were extra butter, extra milk and whipped egg whites folded into the batter.

Toby let the batter sit on the counter as he whipped the egg whites and started cooking the thick-sliced Virginia bacon. After the bacon was done, he poured some half and half and coffee into Tad's favorite mug and carried it and the newspaper into the bedroom, stopping briefly in the living room to cue up Beethoven's Wellington's Victory March—followed by some softer piano and classical guitar selections—on his vintage compact disc player.

When Toby arrived in the bedroom, he found Tad just opening her eyes. Jeddy, on the other hand, showed no signs of moving from the spot in which he had settled the night before.

"Good morning," Toby sang, as he placed the newspaper on the bed next to Tad and the coffee mug on the nightstand. "This is your wakeup call. Breakfast will be served in the dining room in about 15 minutes."

"What a treat," Tad said. "And what a treat it was to sleep so late. I'll be ready to eat whenever you're ready to serve."

As Wellington's cannons started firing, Toby turned up the volume and returned to the kitchen to complete preparations for breakfast. After folding the egg whites into the batter, Sullivan opened his antique 1980's waffle iron, sprayed liquid butter onto the griddle and then poured in the batter. While the first large waffle was cooking, he melted a stick of butter and heated the Vermont maple syrup in the microwave. Then he placed the bacon on plates he had warmed in the oven and waited for the first waffle to reach the perfect degree of doneness—not soggy and yet not too crisp. When he felt the amount of

steam coming from the iron was just about the right amount, he opened the iron and removed the four-sectioned waffle, putting two sections on each plate.

By the time Toby arrived in the dining area with the waffles, Tad was at the table, and Wellington was just about ready to destroy the last of the French armies and seal Napoleon's fate.

"Wow, what timing," Tad said as the last barrage of cannon fire coincided perfectly with the delivery of two hot waffles and all of the necessary accompaniments. "This looks phenomenal. What a treat."

"Eat them while they're hot," he said as he passed Tad the melted butter and hot syrup. "There are plenty more where these came from."

For the next few minutes, neither Toby nor Tad said very much, because they were busy savoring the sweet, buttery, light waffles and salty, thick-sliced bacon.

"I'll be right back," Toby said as he went back into the kitchen to make another waffle and melt some more butter, although this time he was not alone—Jeddy was suddenly awake and obviously hungry.

After pouring more batter into the waffle maker, Toby poured a little half and half in J. Edgar's personal kitty bowl and heated it in the microwave. After testing it with his finger, he placed it on the floor and then watched as the finicky cat sniffed it and walked away.

"Ingrate," Toby said to Jeddy as he reached down to rub his head.

Once the steam from the waffle iron had reached the proper level, Toby removed the waffles and headed back into the dining area.

"Here are a couple more," Sullivan said as he put two additional waffle sections on Tad's plate and his.

"I don't know if I can eat both of them," Tad responded. "And I know I shouldn't, because I've already gained about five pounds since I came back. But, they really are good, and I will probably eat every bite, so I should just shut up and enjoy them, right?"

"That's right," Toby answered. "I think you're entitled to something special after being away for so long."

And then there was a longer interval of silence as the two relaxed lovers ate their breakfast and read the paper while the rain fell steadily outside and Christopher Parkening played Mozart, Vivaldi and Bach on his classical guitar.

"Do you want anything else?" Toby asked as he put all of the dishes on a tray.

"Maybe a little more coffee if there is any," Tad answered, "but let me come help you with the clean-up."

"Absolutely not," Toby responded. "This is your day to rest. I'm just enjoying having you with me."

"And I'm enjoying being here," Tad answered. "I can't think of a better way to spend a rainy Sunday in Washington."

Toby took the dishes away and then brought Tad some more coffee before returning to the kitchen to clean up. With his new dishwasher, it was a simple task. He was back in the dining room with Tad—and Jeddy—who had also returned—in just a few minutes.

"Did you read the story about the Muslim call to prayer and fasting?" Toby asked. "Apparently your talk with Hakim had quite an impact."

"It sure did," Tad answered. "And that reminds me that I also talked to Hakim about the names of the terrorists and he agrees with me that there is something fishy about them."

"How so?" Sullivan asked.

"The similarity of the names, yet from completely different countries. It was as if they were made up, he said."

"So you think that Desert Dan is being fed false info?" Toby asked.

"Possibly," Tad answered. "It happens all the time. Let's go into the living room and turn on the television to see if any of the news shows have more information about the prayer vigil."

Toby gave a voice instruction—"Television On"—and the large plasma screen lit up. Then he said, "Channel 7" and one of the weekly news shows appeared. As Toby and Tad got comfortable on the couch, the host was just introducing his guests.

“We are pleased today to have as our guests Senate Majority Leader Roger Williams of North Carolina and the ranking National Liberty member of the Homeland Security Committee, Senator Langdon Stevens of Georgia.

“This should be interesting,” Sullivan said as he turned the volume up a little. “Can you hear okay?”  
“I can hear fine, and you’re right, it should be interesting,” Tad agreed.

“Gentlemen, I appreciate both of you being here today,” the moderator said. “And, we have a lot to cover, so I’m going to jump right in with our first topic, which I am sure is no surprise to either of you—another explosion this week in Washington and possibly a break in the investigation. What are your thoughts—Senator Williams, why don’t you start?”

“Well Jonathon, I believe that the terrorists may finally have made a fatal error, and I am optimistic that we will find and capture or kill them fairly quickly now that we know who they are,” Williams said. “I feel confident that their rein of terror is almost over.”

“Is this confidence based primarily on a feeling, or have people within the investigation provided you with concrete information that has you so encouraged?” the host asked.

“A little of both, the North Carolina senator answered. “Let’s just say that my prediction is based on more than just a hunch.”

Senator Stevens, “What are your thoughts on all that has transpired this week?”

“I hope Senator Williams is right about the terrorists making a mistake, because so far, they have been extremely clever in eluding those who have been trying to find them,” the Georgia senator responded. “I must also say, however, that I am more than a little concerned about the violence that erupted this week against Muslims and people of middle-eastern origin. I don’t believe that these lawless outbreaks should have been such a surprise to the FBI and others involved in the investigation, particularly in light of the manner in which the names and identifications of the so-called suspects were released.”

“What about that, Senator Williams?” asked the show’s host. “Do you agree with your colleague that the FBI should have anticipated the outbreak of violence against Muslims?”

“No, I am afraid my good friend Senator Stevens is just engaging in the traditional Washington sport of Sunday talk-show quarterbacking.”

“But you will admit, want you, senator, that the violence might have been avoided if those leading the investigation had taken a little more care in how they released this information to the public?” Stevens asked.

“No, I don’t admit anything of the kind,” Williams answered defensively. “I don’t think anyone could have anticipated such activity.”

“Which brings me to our next topic,” the show’s host declared. “Yesterday afternoon, a group of Muslim leaders called on all American Muslims to join together in their mosques, Islamic centers and homes to read the Qur’an, pray and fast until the violence against Muslims stops and the people responsible for the bombings are apprehended. And already we are getting reports from throughout the country from tourists and others that motels, convenience stores and restaurants have been closed so that the owners and their employees could participate in this extraordinary event. What do you make of this, senators? Senator Stevens—you first.”

“Well, Jonathon, I believe this may go down in history as one of the most important examples of non-violent protest since the Montgomery bus boycott in the middle of the last century,” Stevens said. “Since the beginning of the prayer vigil or whatever it is called, there have been almost no incidents of anti-Muslim violence reported, partially, I imagine, because Muslims have joined together in their communities, thus making it more difficult for the cowards who would attack them to find individual targets.”

“Senator Williams, your thoughts?” the moderator asked.

“No one can be opposed to people practicing their religion,” Williams answered, “although I do have some concerns about the economic impact of what they are doing.”

“So you would rather them stay at their businesses so they can remain targets for the self-proclaimed Christian vigilantes that have been attacking them?” Stevens asked.

“There you go again, Senator, twisting what I said,” answered Williams. “Of course I do not want them to be targets of anyone—any more than I want Christians to be targets of Muslim violence.”

“I’m sure we could discuss this topic for the entire time, senators, but there is a lot more in the news that I want to cover when we come back,” the newsman said before breaking for a commercial.

“Maybe Senator Williams doesn’t want Muslims to be targets, but he sure isn’t offering any better ideas for how they should protect themselves,” Tad said. “I am really excited that the prayer vigil seems to be working so well.”

“It was a brilliant idea, Tad,” Toby said as he smiled at Davenport. “But I always knew you were smart. Can I get you anything else—more coffee perhaps?”

“Nothing,” Tad said as she leaned over to rub J. Edgar who had fallen asleep on the couch. “The breakfast was great. I am full and content. In fact, if I were a cat like Jeddy, I’d be purring up a storm.”

“I’d like to hear that,” Sullivan said as the commercials ended and the news show was back on.

“We’re back with our guests,” the moderator announced, “Senate Majority Leader Roger Williams of North Carolina and the ranking National Liberty Party member of the Homeland Security Committee, Senator Langdon Stevens of Georgia.

“The next topic I want to cover is the amendment to officially change the name of this country to the Christian Republic of the United States of America. Senator Williams, are you still planning to bring the amendment to a vote after the two parties hold their conventions, and if so, do you think that Arizona Senator Robert McIntyre will be able to participate in that vote?”

“Well, Jonathon, as far as the first part of the question is concerned, the answer is yes, I do plan to bring the amendment up for a vote in the week after the end of the NLP convention in mid- August,” Williams answered. “As to whether Senator McIntyre will be able to participate in the vote, I have no idea.”

“Well don’t you think, senator, that with an issue this important, you should wait and hold the vote at a time when every senator can participate?” the host asked.

“Ideally that might be a good idea, but from a practical standpoint, that would be almost impossible to ensure,” Williams said. “With 100 senators, it seems as if someone is always sick.”

“Any predictions as to the outcome?” the moderator asked. “Senator Stevens has predicted that the amendment will fail by two votes.”

“I’m sure he has,” Williams answered, “but there is still a month until the vote. ‘I’ve always felt that if we can come within one or two votes, we’ll be able to switch one or two.’”

“Senator Stevens, are you still predicting that the amendment will fall short of the necessary 2/3 vote?” the moderator asked.

“Yes, I am,” Stevens responded, “but I also want to ask my colleague why he is so anxious to take this country down the same road as the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries whose national identities are based on a single religion rather than on broad principles of religious equality?”

“Senator Williams?” the host asked.

“I’m happy to answer that,” said Williams. “This country was founded as a Christian nation and Christianity remains the foundation of our moral and legal codes. If we are to remain a favored nation, we must pay homage to the God who created us and gave us so many blessings.”

“I’m afraid that will have to be the last word, today,” the moderator said. “But I am sure we will be discussing this topic a lot more over the next few weeks.”

“I can’t believe that intelligent people are actually defending this amendment,” said Tad after Toby said, ‘television off,’ when the show ended. “Is their god so insecure that he needs to have a country named after him? Or are Christians so insecure that they need to be reminded that they are in the majority in this country? What is it that makes this amendment so important to them?”

“I don’t claim to know why people think as they do, but I’m sure a lot of it has to do with wanting the majority to be heard,” Toby said. “Remember in the early years of this century, there were court decisions against posting the Ten Commandments in courtrooms and government buildings. And judges also struck down the decisions of local school boards to require the teaching of Intelligent Design. One court decision after another, and before long, a lot of Christians began to feel that their religion was under attack by the courts and that they were actually losing ground. That’s when they began to become much more aggressive.”

Toby took a sip of coffee and continued.

“And then came the great religious compromise of the left and right, the rise of the CDR, and several significant successes, including legislation to allow the Ten Commandments in government buildings, prayers at public events and Christian concepts of science taught in schools. This amendment is just the culmination. I think the religious majority sees it as an insurance policy—a way to consolidate and protect the gains they have made and open the doors even further to bringing religion into government and society without fear of a future Supreme Court rolling back their gains.”

“That’s what is so frightening about it,” Tad said. “If this passes, it may be decades—or even centuries—before the damage is undone.”

“I’m afraid you’re right,” Sullivan responded. “I still find it hard to believe that an amendment like this could pass, but I admit that I am less optimistic than I was a few weeks ago.”

After Toby finished his explanation, he and Tad sat quietly on the couch listening to soothing sounds of Chopin and watching the rain fall over Rock Creek Park. In a few minutes Tad said that she was going back to bed and suggested that Sullivan come, too. “That is, if you would like to help make me purr,” she said.

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When the phone rang, Toby was initially confused. He wasn’t sure what time or even what day it was. Then he recalled that it was Sunday, and glancing at the clock, he determined that it was almost two o’clock in the afternoon.

The call was from Margaret Peabody. It was short.

“I can’t believe it,” Sullivan said to Tad as he hung up the phone. “It looks like Drake was right all along. They’ve got the three terrorists surrounded in a rural area of West Virginia. Trey and I are supposed to meet up with Giordano in Charleston and be available to assist local law enforcement personnel.”

“Why the three of you?” Tad asked with a tinge of worry in her voice.

“Beats me. Obviously, Giordano and Trey are two of Drake’s favorites. This will certainly be a feather in their caps come time for promotion.”

“So he’s letting a Yale nerd in a bow tie and a musician/artist/chef help track down three dangerous terrorists?” Tad asked incredulously.

“It’s not that bad,” Sullivan said with a grin. “Trey was an eagle scout and I’m not a total weakling. I did win a softball-throwing contest at day-camp when I was ten. And besides, it’s not as if we will be the ones actually engaging the terrorists in a firefight, if it comes to that. We’ll just be there to help coordinate resources with the local authorities and make certain that all possible routes of escape are secured.”

“I know; I’m just giving you a hard time,” Tad said. “And, I admit, I am a little worried.”

“No need to worry,” Toby said as he pulled a large sports bag from the closet and began to fill it with a variety of clothing suitable for trampling through the woods. “I’ve been in the Bureau for more than 15 years and I have yet to fire a weapon or be fired upon. I assure you that I’ll stay as far away from flying bullets or exploding bombs as possible.”

“You had better,” Tad said in response. “I don’t think Jeddy would ever forgive you if you got yourself killed. How inconsiderate of his needs that would be.”



## CHAPTER 28

*The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people. -G.K. Chesterton*

Toby met Trey at headquarters where a helicopter was waiting on the roof's new helipad to take them to Charleston, West Virginia. Once inside the chopper, they put on headphones that blocked out the engine and wind noise so that they could communicate with one another.

"This is so strange," Toby said. "I can't believe the terrorists are finally trapped. I was actually beginning to think that they didn't exist. I hope they don't get away."

"They won't," Trey said confidently. "Drake says that they are completely surrounded in an old mining section of West Virginia and there is no way that they can escape."

"Maybe they can't escape, but they might not be that easy to find either," Toby replied. "I have spent a lot of time hiking in West Virginia and there are still nearly 2,000 coal mines in operation and thousands of others abandoned. I think there are mines in every county of the state except maybe two or three."

"Well, it could be a challenge then," said Trey.

"How do we know for sure that the terrorists are there?" Sullivan asked. "Has anyone actually seen them?"

"Apparently there have been at least nine separate sightings of three men resembling the ones in the photos called into several different law enforcement agencies as well as the hotline," Trey answered. "And the West Virginia State patrol found a stolen and abandoned SUV containing several bags of fertilizer and other bomb-making supplies on a dirt road in Boone County. The FBI is preparing to impound it and take it to Quantico. Based on the locations and times of the sightings and the current location of the car, more than 500 local, state and federal law enforcement personnel are being divided into 25 teams of 20 men each and given designated areas to search. Our job is to help oversee the operation and make sure they get anything from the Bureau that they need."

"I see," Sullivan said. "I sure hope these guys are captured alive so we can get some intelligence from them regarding their sources of funding and training. I doubt very seriously that these three planned and executed all of these bombings on their own, and if we don't find out who actually planned the attacks, there will almost certainly be more in the future. You can count on it."

"I think you're right," Trey agreed. "As much as I personally would like to see them dead, they can help us a whole lot more if they are alive, and besides, killing them is not what Christ would want us to do."

In less than an hour the helicopter landed in a private airfield just outside of Charleston in the heart of West Virginia coal country. Giordano was there to greet them.

"Good to see you guys," he said. "I think we really have them this time. There is no way they can escape. We've got the perimeter covered from the air and on land. It's just a matter of time."

"What can we do to assist?" Trey asked. "Drake said to make sure that the people involved in the search have everything they need."

"I know," Giordano replied. "I talked to him, too, and I've told the local folks that cost is no object. We want these guys bad."

"I hope you've also told them to do everything possible to capture them rather than kill them, because they can tell us a whole lot more alive than dead," Toby interjected.

"Of course," Giordano replied. "That's exactly what Drake told me. The only condition under which these men should be killed is if there is no other way to prevent more innocent people from being killed or injured."

Trey and Toby hopped into the middle seat of a large SUV powered by the latest hydrogen fuel cells technology.

“Look at the space in this thing,” Toby said as he and his partner sat down in the middle row. “It’s amazing how much more passenger and hauling room there is when the engine is about the size of a briefcase.”

“Yea, and it really moves, too,” the driver responded.

“I understand that these are probably the future of transportation,” Toby said, “but they haven’t come along as fast as people thought they would 15 or so years ago. I read somewhere that the scientists and engineers still haven’t overcome all of the challenges of hydrogen storage, cost, durability and infrastructure development. Until they solve those problems, most cars are still going to use gasoline-electric hybrid engines.”

“Until every last drop of oil is gone,” Trey added. “Then you’ll have to get rid of that gas-guzzler of yours.”

“I’m sure I’ll have to part with it long before then,” Sullivan said. “Late 20th century Jags were never the most reliable of cars and they didn’t make that many of this model, so parts are getting almost impossible to find. But when it’s running well, there is nothing to compare with the feeling you get driving it on the back roads in Virginia and West Virginia—particularly with the top down on a pretty spring or fall day.”

Changing the subject, Trey asked, “Where are we headed now?”

“We’re going into Boone County where the SUV was found,” Giordano responded. “The local folks think that the three terrorists are most likely hiding in one of the abandoned mines in Boone or Fayette County. There are probably a few hundred old mines in that area.”

After driving on Highway 119 to Madison and then following narrower and narrower roads past towns called Uneeda, Jeffrey and Bob White into the heart of Boone County, the three agents and their driver arrived at the end of a dirt road where several law enforcement cars were parked. It was from here that the search for the three terrorists was being coordinated.

“Any news?” Giordano asked a big man with a clean-shaven head and a large belly hanging over a belt that was having difficulty keeping his West Virginia State Patrol uniform pants from falling off.

“Naw, nothing yet,” he responded. “We’ve heard from 22 of the groups and should hear from the other three in a few minutes. They’ve all got GPS electronic maps that have most of the old mines located on them, so it shouldn’t take too long to search everything in both counties.”

“Anything you need from us?” Giordano asked.

“Can’t think of anything,” the state patrolman responded, “unless you can make this rain go away.” Then he added, “Except to keep the copters and spy planes circling around just to make sure that these Muslims don’t get away, particularly now that it is getting dark.”

“The aircraft aren’t going anywhere,” Giordano assured the man. “They’ll be up there day and night tracking every warm-blooded thing on the ground.”

Once again, Toby began to feel like a fifth wheel. Although he was now at ground zero of the investigation, he had no useful purpose as far as he could tell. Giordano had obviously arrived much earlier and the entire investigation was well under way and, seemingly, completely under control. All that Sullivan and Rawlings could do was wait.

Several hours passed with no news and, since it was now midnight, it was unlikely that anything—or anybody—would be discovered until dawn broke and the searches could continue. Giordano suggested to Toby and Trey that they all get some rest, even if it was just to close their eyes for a little while in the car.

Having slept very late that morning and taken a nap after breakfast, Toby found that he was not at all tired and chose to pass the time talking to some of the local sheriffs, police and state patrol officials. He could tell from his conversations that they understood quite well the gravity of the situation and the likelihood that whoever captured or killed the terrorists would be an instant celebrity. More than fame, however, what these local law enforcement people clearly wanted was justice. They loved their state, their country and their Christian religion, and they wanted to make sure that justice was done for the sake of all of the innocent people who were killed by these Islamic fanatics.

Toby was curious, too, about when and where the first leads were received. He was surprised to learn that the phone calls reporting the sightings had come into several different offices all within an hour’s

time beginning around 10 o'clock that morning. He was curious why it was not until 2 p.m. that he learned of the situation.

Finally, around 4 a.m., Sullivan joined Trey in the roomy SUV and caught a couple hours sleep, waking when it was almost dawn. When the sun finally did make its appearance, it cast a golden glow and created a rainbow over the green, hilly terrain—quite a contrast from the gloomy, rainy weather of the day before. More than one of the local officers claimed that the rainbow was a sure sign from God that this would be the day that the terrorists would be captured.

“This is a sign, for sure,” said Billy Johns, the bald, overweight patrolman. “It is a sign from the Lord that we will find those Muslims today. I don’t have any doubts about it.”

Lacking anything more pressing to do at that particular moment, Trey and Toby asked the driver to take them to the nearest fast-food restaurant, where they loaded-up with several bags of biscuits filled with various combinations of sausage, ham, bacon and eggs—each wrapped in paper printed with the words: “Warning—eating high fat and high cholesterol foods may cause serious health problems.”

“I can’t remember when the last time I had one of these was,” Toby said to Trey as they got back into the car to head back to the search area in the woods.

“I know I haven’t had one in at least 15 years,” Trey said. “Even before the government required the warning labels, everyone knew that they were no good for you, and no one should consciously defile the temple that is his body.”

“Right, but now that Uncle Sam has become Father Sam, Doctor Sam and Environmental Sam, the government makes sure that we all know what is best for us,” Sullivan said with his tongue firmly planted in his cheek.

“So you don’t think that the government has a responsibility to protect its citizens?” Trey asked his partner.

“I can’t believe that you’re going to drag me into another one of these discussions,” Toby responded. “I don’t mind the government helping educate people about health and environmental issues and helping take care of people who have no ability to take care of themselves, such as people born with serious physical limitations,” Toby explained, “but I am afraid we are on the verge of trading all of our individual liberty for security. That bothers me.”

“Why does it scare you so much that a nation based on Christian values is putting those values into practice?” Trey asked. “Isn’t it about time that we tried to create a society that truly demonstrates in every way possible that it values every human life? Don’t we have an obligation to protect all life, whether that life is unborn, born with defects that make it physically or mentally impossible to earn a decent living, or critically ill and in need of extraordinary measures to keep it alive? Isn’t this what Christ told us to do?”

“Christ said a lot of things to his followers,” Toby responded. “And quite frankly, I don’t claim to know exactly what He meant in the context of His time or our time. I do not believe, however, that He ever said or meant that the only just way for people to govern themselves was to establish a government that codified what the majority of people think He meant.”

“What do you mean by that?” Trey asked.

“It’s simple,” Toby said. “You and others who support the current government believe that government should reflect what Christ said. Is that right?”

“Well, yes,” Rawlings answered. “We certainly don’t want government enacting laws that violate what Christ said.”

“But how do you know that you are interpreting what Christ said correctly?” Sullivan continued. “How do you know, for example, that Christ wants accident victims who are in a vegetative state to be kept alive with a ventilator and feeding tube, rather than be allowed to die a natural death? And how do you know that Christ wants government to provide food and housing to people in need, rather than letting individuals take care of them? And how do we know for certain that Christ really cares what type of health care system a country has? Frankly, as I’ve said before, I don’t see much difference between the so-called Christian society some people want in this country and the Marxist society that the Soviet Union tried unsuccessfully to create.”

“And as I’ve said before,” Trey responded, “the two are complete opposites. Communism was the antithesis of Christianity. It was a godless form of government, whereas we are striving to establish a God-centered government. I don’t understand why you can’t see the difference.”

“Probably because the end results are so similar,” Toby answered. “In both cases, the individual becomes nothing and the state everything.”

“You’re exaggerating, Sullivan, and you know it,” Rawlings answered. “People in this country are free to do pretty much what they wish as long as they don’t hurt other people.”

“And,” Toby responded, “as long as they help other people with their tax dollars and allow people of the favored religion to determine what constitutes right and wrong for the entire society.”

“Do you want one of these biscuits?” Trey asked, realizing that no one would ever win the argument.

“You bet,” Toby answered. “I’ll take one with country ham, and since there is no way that Jesus would want you to defile your temple with such horrible food, can I have the one we got for you?”

“No you can’t,” Rawlings answered, “I prayed about it and Jesus said it was okay as long as I just had one.”

“How convenient,” Toby said as they arrived back at the search headquarters. “Anything happen while we were gone?” he asked Giordano as Trey handed the bags of biscuits to one of the slimmer law enforcement personnel, hoping that he would make sure they were distributed to everyone who wanted one before they got to Billy Johns.

“Nope. All of the groups have reported in and said that they have started their searches again,” Giordano answered. “I think we’ll hear something pretty soon.”

“Why so?” Sullivan asked as he took the final bite of his salty country ham biscuit.

“Just a hunch,” Tony answered.

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Several hours passed with no word. Lunch was brought in from a local barbecue joint, but before anyone had an opportunity to sample the pulled pork sandwiches, Brunswick stew and French fries, Billy called out, “We’ve got something! Group 19 over in Fayette County says they have found tracks leading to an abandoned mine.”

Immediately, Giordano called Toby and Trey and they all jumped into the SUV. “Take us here,” Giordano told the driver as he pointed to a GPS map showing the general location of Group 19.

Within 20 minutes, the three agents, along with a phalanx of local law enforcement personnel, were walking quietly through the woods toward the GPS location of Group 19. Twenty minutes later they spotted the search group, led by Lieutenant Adam Baldwin.

“We think they are over there,” Baldwin told the newly arrived legion of law enforcement personnel as he pointed toward a mine that appeared to have been abandoned for quite some time. “We found recent shoe tracks and what appears to be traces of fertilizer. That’s why we are so far away. Knowing how them Muslims operate, they could have the place booby-trapped, and they don’t mind blowing themselves up as long as they kill some of us.”

“That was smart,” Giordano said. “Make sure that everyone stays well back, and wait until all of the backup units have arrived and sealed off every possible avenue of escape. We don’t want any more lives lost to these madmen. Who has the map of this mine?”

“I do,” Baldwin answered. “I’ve already called the Bureau of Mines and they assure me that there are no other exits. The only other entrance was closed permanently a decade or two ago. This is the only way in or out.”

“Rawlings and Sullivan, you stay here,” Giordano said, making it clear who was in charge of the operation. “I’m going to take a look around to make sure that there are no possible routes of escape.”

“You shouldn’t go out there alone,” Toby said as he checked the rifle he had been given by Giordano to make sure it was properly loaded. “Trey and I will go with you.”

“No,” Tony said firmly. “You two need to stay here to help direct an assault on the mine if one is needed. I can certainly handle the scouting on my own.”

“That’s crazy, Tony,” said Trey. “You should never go into a potential ambush situation alone.”

“Don’t worry about me,” Giordano answered. “I’m confident that I will be fine. You can do more good here.”

Neither Toby nor Trey could understand Giordano’s stubborn insistence on going to the mine alone, but they did what they were told and settled down with several other law enforcement personnel to make certain that anyone hiding in the abandoned mine did not have an opportunity to leave.

Thirty minutes passed, and then an hour. Nothing. No movement. No sign of any terrorists—or of Tony Giordano. Then suddenly, it appeared that something moved near the mine. A few seconds later a shot rang out, and then another and another. No one could see who was firing, but there was little doubt as to whom they were firing. The first bullet hit a good 20 yards away from Toby and his group. The next one hit closer, and the next one closer still, although all landed in the trees at least ten feet above their heads. No one seemed to know whether they should return fire or just hunker down and wait for the mine’s occupants to get tired and give themselves up.

About this time, Giordano returned and ordered everyone to fall back so that they would be well out of the reach of the terrorists’ weapons.

“We want to capture them if at all possible,” he said. “Let’s fall back so that we are out of harm’s way.”

The entire group dropped back and waited. An hour passed and then another, and another. It was almost dark. Portable flood lights were brought in and focused on the mine and the area around it.

Toby was getting ready to tell Trey that they had better get prepared for a long night when he heard what sounded to him like someone reading in Arabic, or perhaps praying. Then silence. And then all hell broke loose. There was an enormous explosion that seemed to occur deep down inside the earth. The ground beneath them shook and a cloud of dirt and coal dust engulfed the entire area. When the dust settled, Toby, Trey, Giordano and all of the other law enforcement personnel cautiously stood up to see what had happened. It did not take long to recognize that the explosion had occurred in the mine. All that was left was a pile of rocks and other debris.

Almost instinctively, several of the law enforcement personnel headed toward the mine, but Giordano urged them to stop.

“Hold up,” he said. “It would be just like these people to blow themselves up in order to entice us to investigate and then have another bomb timed to go off about the time we arrived. Or, the first explosion might trigger secondary explosions of gases that have accumulated in the years since the mine was closed. I think everyone should move back even further. I’ll contact our bomb and forensics experts and get them out here immediately.”

The entire group of law enforcement officials, including Sullivan and Rawlings, took Giordano’s advice and moved back another 100 yards from the mine entrance. Their move came just in time, because less than a moment after they arrived in their new location, an even more powerful explosion than the first sent pieces of debris flying high in the air, with much of it landing where they had previously been.

“We’re sure lucky that we were as far back as we were,” Trey said after the shock of the second explosion subsided.

“That’s for sure,” Toby agreed. “I guess we have Tony Giordano to thank for that. It was as if he had a sixth sense about what was going to happen.”

## CHAPTER 29

*The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. -William Shakespeare*

### **TERRORISTS BELIEVED TO HAVE DIED IN W. VIRGINIA MINE EXPLOSION**

CHARLESTON, W. VA — After a three-month reign of terror, a two-day manhunt and a tense standoff between suspected terrorists and a small army of federal, state and local law enforcement officials, two massive explosions in an abandoned West Virginia coal mine have apparently ended the manhunt—and the terrorists’ lives.

It was about 8 p.m. yesterday evening, just as the sky was beginning to turn dark, when the explosions ripped through an abandoned mine in Fayette County West Virginia where the three suspected terrorists were thought to be hiding. It is believed, although not yet verified, that the terrorists themselves detonated the first blast, choosing suicide rather than capture. The second blast may also have been detonated by the terrorists using a timing device, or it may have been the result of gases trapped in the mine being ignited by the initial explosion.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the terrorists were in the mine at the time of the explosion,” says FBI Special Agent Tony Giordano, who headed the manhunt for the three men since Wednesday when they were identified in a photograph taken shortly before the explosion on the Washington Mall at the entrance to the Smithsonian Metro Station. “They were tracked to the mine and then they fired upon the team of law enforcement personnel who had them surrounded. They knew that there was no way for them to escape, so they apparently chose to take their own lives rather than face the humiliation of spending the rest of their lives in an American prison.”

FBI Associate Director Carl Drake, the head of the special terrorist task force that was set up after the first explosions three months ago, said that the nation owes a debt of gratitude to all of the men and women serving on the task force for finding and bringing to justice the men responsible for the deaths of many prominent Americans. He also called Agent Giordano “a true hero,” for moving the other law enforcement personnel away from the mine shortly before the explosions.

“Agent Giordano was truly an agent of God yesterday,” Drake said. “The Lord directed him to move the law enforcement personnel out of harm’s way and he heard the Lord’s word.”

According to the morning paper, it was over. The terrorists were dead. Giordano and Drake were heroes. Americans could resume their normal lives, whatever that meant.

For Toby, however, there was no closure. Something just didn’t seem right.

“Did you see the article in The Herald today?” he asked Trey during breakfast at their Charleston, West Virginia hotel. “Where are the bodies? Where is any direct evidence linking the three men in the photo to any of the bombings? Doesn’t anyone care that no law enforcement personnel ever saw these men?”

“Settle down, Toby,” Rawlings responded. “The investigation isn’t closed. Drake is sending a team of forensics experts down to the mine to search for any evidence that will tell us conclusively once and for all who the people in the mine were and whether they were connected with the bombings.”

“I can tell you right now that they won’t find anything useful,” Sullivan said decisively. “You were there. You heard and felt those explosions. You know as well as I do that they won’t find any fingerprints. Hell, they probably won’t find any fingers. Maybe they’ll find some teeth or pieces of teeth, but what good will that do? We don’t have dental records of the suspects. No, there won’t be enough left of whoever was in that mine to determine if they were even from this planet.”

“So what are you suggesting?” Trey asked. “Are you saying there wasn’t anyone in the mine? We both heard the shooting, and we both heard and felt the bombs. There were definitely people in there and I’d say that the chances were very good that those people were the terrorists. Who else would have

explosives like that and blow themselves up except for Muslims who have this strange belief that there are virgins waiting for them in heaven?”

“Maybe you’re right,” Sullivan said, “but I would feel a whole lot better about this case if I could see some real terrorists — alive or dead.”

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“Do you feel better about things now that all of the evidence is in and it supports the theory that there were three men in the mine and that their facial features and teeth make it likely that they were the men in the photo?” Trey asked Toby when the preliminary forensics report was released a week after the West Virginia explosions.

“No, do you?” he answered with a question of his own.

“Why wouldn’t I,” Trey answered. “Everyone that matters is satisfied. Drake is convinced the terrorists are dead. The director is convinced. The president is convinced. And even the American people are convinced. You saw that poll in the paper this morning: seventy-nine percent of those who were aware of the bombings believe that the terrorists were in the mine and killed in the explosions.”

“Well, I don’t think I’ll ever be completely convinced, because I never laid eyes on the terrorists alive or dead, and it is difficult for me to believe what I can’t see,” Sullivan said, “but it doesn’t matter much what I think, because the taskforce is going to be dissolved and that will be that.”

“That’s true,” Trey answered as he sifted through some mail that had been placed in his in-box. “Oh, here’s one for you,” he said as he handed an envelope to Toby.

“For me? I wonder what it is?” Sullivan asked as he tore open the padded envelope.

“It’s a DVD with a note: ‘Sorry I forgot to give you this at the Smithsonian. I found a memory chip that I had just taken out of my camera before the explosion. I put all of the photos on this disc. It probably doesn’t mean anything now, but I found the card you gave me and thought I should send it to you.’ It’s from some guy named Marvin Moore.”

“Well, he’s most likely right. It probably doesn’t mean anything, but he took the time to send it, so I’ll take the time to look at it — but it will have to be later after our close out session with Drake.”

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“Could you believe that meeting today?” Toby asked Tad as they were having a glass of wine before dinner. “It was more like a prayer meeting than a closing meeting.”

“Yes, and I don’t think Drake appreciated you disturbing the mood by insinuating that the forensics report wasn’t conclusive enough,” Tad responded.

“Well, it wasn’t conclusive enough and you know it,” said Toby. “Not even a jury of 12 evangelical Christians would have convicted three unidentified Muslims of the bombings with that little evidence. It was a decision based on wishful thinking rather than evidence—which reminds me, I might have in my possession the only real piece of evidence I have ever seen or touched during this investigation.”

“Oh yea, what is that?” Tad asked with obvious curiosity.

“This,” Toby said as he pulled the photo disc out of his briefcase. “Let’s watch it on the big screen.”

Toby put the disc in the player and turned on the large television monitor. Then he began flipping through the digital photographs.

After seeing the first five photos of Marvin Moore’s family in front of various D.C. sites, Toby started pushing the advance button a little more rapidly. After looking at 20 or so more, he suddenly stopped and went back to the previous photo. Walking closer to the screen, he pointed to a man standing near the entrance to the Smithsonian Metro station. “Is that who I think it is?” he asked Tad.

“Who?” she asked. “That guy with the beard?”

## CHAPTER 30

*That is the whole trouble with being a heretic.*

*One usually must think out everything for oneself. Aubrey Menan*

“What’s so important that it couldn’t wait until Monday?” Trey asked Toby as he walked into Sullivan’s entrance hall on Saturday morning.

“You, Tad and I are going to solve a mystery. Did you bring your electronic notebook and all of the notes you made during the investigation?”

“Just like you asked me to,” Trey answered.

“Good, the coffee and Reeves’ donuts are on the counter in the kitchen,” Toby said. “Help yourself and then come into the living room. This may take awhile.”

Trey walked into the kitchen, poured himself some coffee, picked up a donut, and said hello to J. Edgar. He then headed toward the living room, stopping briefly in the entrance hall.

“I haven’t seen these before. Are these photos of your family?” Trey called to Toby.

“Don’t they look like me?” Toby answered.

“They sure do,” Trey said. “This skinny guy in the suit is a dead ringer for you. And this couple here with the baby. Is that you? You’ll never be able to disown this family. You all look too much alike.”

“Your right,” Toby replied, while smiling at Tad. “I’ll never be able to disown them.”

When Trey reached the living area, he greeted Tad and sat down on the couch across the coffee table from the video/communications monitor.

“What I am going to show you is probably going to shock you, but something very strange is going on and we need to find out what it is,” Toby explained.

With that introduction, Toby put up the photo that he and Tad had seen the previous evening.

“Who does that look like to you?” he asked Trey.

“I don’t know. Who is it?”

Toby showed the same photo with the beard removed and the hairstyle changed..

“Recognize him now?”

“I’ll be darn. It looks like Tony Giordano,” Trey said.

“According to the guy who sent me these photos—and the time and date stamp—they were all taken before the bomb exploded at the Smithsonian Metro Station,” Sullivan answered. “Do you have in your notes anything that refers to when Giordano arrived at the Mall that morning?”

Trey said the name Giordano and the date of the Mall bombing and all of his notes relating to Giordano on that date appeared on his screen. “I put down something about Giordano being in the neighborhood when the bomb exploded.”

“That’s what I remembered, too,” Toby said.

“I do, too,” Tad agreed.

“Which means what?” Trey asked.

“I don’t know, yet,” Toby said. “It’s just one piece in our puzzle, but it is a piece that raises a lot of questions about the entire investigation.”

“Like what?” Trey asked skeptically. “Maybe Giordano had been working undercover at the Mall earlier, which is why he was in the neighborhood...or maybe that’s not even him in the photo, just someone who looks like him.

“Possibly, but if it is him, wouldn’t he have likely told us that he was there wearing a disguise?” Toby asked. “There are a lot of unanswered questions. Let’s look at some other puzzling things.”

“Such as?” the skeptical partner asked.

“Such as the fact that Giordano did not ask the Smithsonian folks for any surveillance photos from inside any of the buildings,” Sullivan said.

“I remember that, too,” Trey said, “but what of it? He obviously didn’t think they were important.”



“Why wouldn’t they be important? The only reason they wouldn’t be important to him is if he knew that the person responsible for the bombings had never gone inside,” Toby conjectured.

“And another thing,” Tad asked after taking a sip of coffee. “Why did Giordano just happen to be in Savannah when the bomb exploded there?”

“He explained that,” Trey said. “He was attending the St. Patrick’s Day celebration.”

“That’s right, he did say that,” Toby agreed, “but he also said that he attended because his mother’s side of the family was Irish. It’s amazing what you can find on the Net these days, and among those things in Giordano’s case is a newspaper article about his family being fourth generation Italian-American on both sides—which I admit proves nothing, but is interesting.”

“And, something else he said in Savannah also puzzles me,” Sullivan continued. “When he was describing the bombing, he said something like, ‘almost no one was hurt that wasn’t the specific target of the terrorists.’ How would he have known who the targets of the terrorists were?”

“Surely, you’re not accusing Giordano of being involved with these bombings?” Trey asked.

“No, at least not yet,” Toby answered while chewing on a blueberry donut. “We may have some evidence that points to him having opportunity in two of the bombings, but we have no motive and, as yet, no means. So, let’s don’t focus on Giordano. Let’s just focus on things about the investigation that—given all we know now—seem out of place. For example, the three witnesses who all saw three Muslim guys, two with a beard and mustache and one with a mustache only.”

“What about them?” Trey asked.

“Look at these,” Toby said as he put photographs of the Latino delivery man, the green-faced St. Patrick’s Day reveler and the bearded homeless man at the Smithsonian on the video screen. Do you see anything interesting about them?”

“Not really,” Rawlings responded. “I do recognize two of them as being people we interviewed—and the guy with the green face as the one the guys in Savannah talked to.”

Then Toby performed his photo magic. He removed the mustache from the Latino, removed the green makeup and green hair from the St. Patrick’s Day reveler and removed the beard from the homeless man. “What do you see now?” he asked.

Trey studied the photos for a moment. “Well I’ll be darn—they look amazingly similar,” he said.

“I think it is the same person,” Toby responded. “If you will look at your notes, I think you’ll see that they all gave almost identical descriptions of the three mysterious Muslims. That is something that almost never happens among three eye-witnesses.”

“You mean that this guy was planted to make us look for three Muslims?” Trey asked in disbelief.

“And to bolster what Desert Dan and Drake were telling us,” Toby answered, “and there is more.”

“Like what?” Trey asked.

For example, the prayer rugs in the house near Leesburg.”

“What about them?” asked Trey.

“Look in your notes and tell me what you recorded about them,” Toby responded.

Trey called up the appropriate section of his notes. “Let me see. Here it is. I said that there were three prayer rugs near the front window.”

“That’s how I remembered them, too,” said Toby, “and then when I looked at this photograph I took, it dawned on me that the evening sun was shining on the front door when we went in, which means...”

“That no real Muslims would have put prayer rugs facing west,” Tad said excitedly. “Mecca is almost due east of Virginia.”

“That’s what I thought,” Toby said.

“Maybe they were just confused,” Trey argued.

“Maybe,” Sullivan said, “or maybe they never existed. Did anyone except the alleged package delivery guy ever see them?”

“Someone rented that house,” Rawlings said.

“Yes, someone did, which brings me to another small thing,” said Sullivan. “Do either of you remember when Drake contacted Tad to investigate who leased the house?”

“I am almost certain that he called me from the car on the way to the house,” Tad answered.

“And what did he ask you?” Toby queried.

“I think he asked me to contact the rental agency to find out who had rented it,” Tad answered.

“And you found out that the sheriff’s sister was the agent, right?” Toby asked.

“That’s right,” she replied.

Again, a small thing,” said Toby, “but how did Drake know that an agency was involved or did he just guess? A lot of houses are rented by the owners without an agent, and yet he didn’t say anything about trying to contact the owner.”

“Come on, Sullivan, you’re really reaching now,” Trey interjected. “Everything you have mentioned can easily be explained.”

“I’m willing to admit that some of it might be explained away,” said Sullivan, “but there is something else that might be a little more difficult to explain away.”

“And what is that?” Trey asked.

“The suitcase that I took to Savannah was a Christmas present that I had never used before,” said Toby.

“So?” Trey asked after taking the last bite of his donut.

“Well, when we got to the hotel, the suitcase had a white powder all over it, and it dawned on me later when I became suspicious of Giordano that the powder could only have gotten on the suitcase in the airplane or in the back of Tony’s SUV. And so yesterday I took it to a friend who can analyze such things and, you guessed it, it was the kind of fertilizer used to make bombs.”

“I admit that is more substantial,” said Trey, but I’m still not convinced.

“Okay,” said Toby, “but wait until we’ve discussed everything that seems even slightly strange. Then, we’ll add it all together and see if it amounts to anything.”

“Fair enough,” Trey said, “but I need some more coffee and another one of those darn donuts.”

“I’ll get them for you,” Tad said. “I’d like some more, too.”

“Thanks,” Trey responded, and then talking directly to Toby, he said, “Can we try to discuss these things in some kind of logical order, such as chronological—instead of artistic—order? It’s hard to make any sense out of these random bits of information.”

“Loosen up, Trey. Things in life—and investigations—aren’t always organized. Let’s continue brainstorming and then we’ll try to arrange the pieces of the puzzle in the proper order.”

“I’ve got something else,” said Tad as she returned with the coffee and donuts. “It’s the names of the suspects. Toby, you remember how that bothered me at the time.”

“What about the names?” Rawlings asked.

Tad explained how two of the names indicated that one of the men was from India and another from Afghanistan, and yet all three were said to be from Iran. “How do you explain that?” she asked.

“I can’t,” Trey said, “but it might have just been some incorrect information given to Desert Dan.”

“True, but there is another problem, and that is the photo of the suspects,” Toby said as he brought the photo up on the large video screen. “Here is the photo, and here is a close-up of each of the faces,” he said as he brought up another image. “If you take away the facial hair and look very closely at each of the faces, you’ll notice that the noses are identical on two, the eyes on two and the jaw lines on two. What makes them look different is the facial hair and shape of the hair on the heads. If we take this photo to an expert, I’ll bet almost anything he’ll tell us that it was digitally created.”

“And since you mentioned Desert Dan,” Sullivan continued, “wasn’t it convenient how he consistently provided us with just enough information to keep us searching for Muslim terrorists although no one ever saw them? And when we finally asked Drake to let us see the evidence, there was a mysterious bombing on the Mall with no fatalities and no apparent target.”

“I admit that all of these things are a bit strange,” Trey agreed, “but I don’t see that they prove anything. After all, the FBI forensics experts saw all of the evidence and concluded that the three suspects died in the West Virginia mine.”

“Ah, yes, the forensics experts,” Toby said as if he had been waiting for this statement. “Don’t you mean the forensics expert—singular? How do we know that anyone besides Henry Nelson ever saw the evidence, and why didn’t anyone on the taskforce—during a three months investigation—ever see a

single piece of evidence? Have you ever been involved in an investigation in which all of the physical evidence was held so tightly? It's like there were two different investigations going on—one by Drake, Giordano and Nelson and the other by everybody else.”

Trey looked puzzled. “I don't disagree that it was an unusual investigation, but I don't see how all of these bits and pieces add up to anything except that it was a strange investigation. What would be the motive for Giordano or Nelson to fabricate evidence or be involved with bombings?”

“I admit that's the difficult part, but I have a theory,” Sullivan said as he picked up a newspaper article off the coffee table and handed it to Trey.

“What's this?” Trey asked as he looked at the article.

“It's a list printed four months ago of all 100 senators and how they were expected to vote on the Christian Republic amendment,” Toby explained. “You'll see that at the time, the amendment was projected to lose by four or five votes.”

“So?” Trey asked. “What's that got to do with terrorist bombings?”

“Well, you will also notice that the two senators who were killed in the bombings were opponents of the amendment and Senator Stevens, who would normally have been sitting at the location of the Cathedral bomb, is also an opponent,” Sullivan continued.

“That could very well have been coincidence,” Rawlings said.

“Maybe, but look at this chart that I made,” Toby said with a sense of urgency. “I have listed all of the opponents of the amendment four months ago and put next to them the political party of the governor of their states and guess what?”

“I'm sure you're going to tell me,” Trey said.

“In only three cases was the governor of the state a member of the Christian Democratic-Republican Party,” Toby continued explaining.

“So, what does that mean?” Trey asked, obviously frustrated with the whole explanation to this point.

“Okay, to get to the point, it means that out of the original 38 opponents of the measure, only three came from states having governors who were likely to replace them with proponents of the amendment should anything happen to them,” Sullivan said. “And guess which three—Senators Morgan of Virginia, Madison of Oklahoma and McIntyre of Arizona. Is it just coincidence that two are dead and one is gravely ill?”

“But what about Stevens?” Tad asked. “Why was he a target?”

“Same reason,” Toby suggested. “I think it is much more than just coincidence that the governor of his state, who is not a supporter of the amendment, was almost killed, making the lieutenant governor, who is a supporter, the acting governor.”

By now, Trey was beginning to see the big picture, and it was one that he did not find very pretty.

“I cannot believe you are implying that supporters of the Christian Republic amendment had anything to do with these bombings. No real Christian that I know would ever do such a thing.”

“Okay then Trey, you take all of the bits of information that we have discussed and tell me what they add up to,” Toby said. “I'm open to any other explanations.”

“Are you actually suggesting that Drake, Giordano and Nelson were involved in the bombings?” Rawlings asked. They are all devout Christians. In fact, they are all members of the Society of Saints.

“What other explanation could there be?” Tad asked. “Why was Giordano at the site of the Mall bombing before it occurred? Why were he and Nelson always Johnny-on-the-spot to seal the crime scene and take the evidence away? And why was there always one convenient witness at each of the crime scenes—probably the same witness at all three scenes?”

Trey responded very defensively. “You both would like nothing better than to have Christians blamed for this, wouldn't you? In fact, how do I know you aren't working with some feminist or libertarian group to sabotage the Christian Republic amendment by raising doubts about the investigation?”

Toby saw that Tad's face was turning the shade of an Irishman's nose after several hours in the pub, so decided to respond before she could.

“Trey, I know this is hard for you, and I’m not asking you to take my speculation as fact,” he said. “I just want you to review your notes carefully, consider the things we’ve raised and come to your own conclusion. And I suggest that you do so quickly, because if I’m correct about this, Senator Stevens is still in grave danger.”

## CHAPTER 31

*It is a truism that almost any sect, cult, or religion will legislate its creed into law if it acquires the political power to do so, and will follow it by suppressing opposition, subverting all education to seize early the minds of the young, and by killing, locking up, or driving underground all heretics. -Robert A. Heinlein*

The third convention of the Christian Democratic Republican Party opened in Orlando during the last week of June. Temperatures were unusually pleasant for the beginning of summer, and delegates seemed in a festive mood as they visited the local theme parks— particularly Christian Disney, purchased three years earlier by the Christian Entertainment Network. The totally revamped park now boasted a completely new section called Bible Land and the new owners had pledged to make the park Christian-friendly at all times, meaning that there would be no more “Gay Days” for Mickey, Donald, Goofy and the gang.

As the delegates played and prayed in the Florida sun, they were buoyed by polls showing that the presumed death of the terrorists in the West Virginia mine had given President John McNeal a slight lead against Senator Robert Clay, his likely National Liberty Party opponent. The party-faithful were hopeful that a strong showing by the president could prevent the predicted loss of several seats in both the house and senate. They were also hopeful that the new poll numbers, along with strong speeches by the president and the keynoter, Reverend Jerry Robinson, would galvanize the nation in support of the Christian Republic Amendment. These delegates were clearly on a mission, and that mission was to once and for all make it clear that the United States had been founded as, and would always be, a Christian nation.

With the best and brightest from the world of Christian broadcasting now handling all media and communications strategy for the White House and the CDR Party, it probably should have come as no surprise to anyone that the final report of the Special Terrorism Taskforce had been released just in time to make every newspaper, drive-time radio news broadcast and the morning television news shows on Wednesday, the day the convention was scheduled to nominate the president by acclamation and the Reverend Robinson was scheduled to deliver the keynote address. Whether one loved or hated the evangelical media, very few questioned its effectiveness.

The story in The Washington Herald was similar to that in papers throughout the nation:

### **CONFIRMED: TERRORISTS KILLED IN WEST VIRGINIA MINE**

WASHINGTON—The White House will release this morning the final report of the Special Terrorism Taskforce that was established in March after three bombs were detonated in the nation’s capital. Based on early summaries given to the news media, the report confirms that the terrorists presumed to be in the mine at the time of the explosions were indeed killed by those explosions.

According to Associate Director Carl Drake, the man in charge of the task force, “Our forensics experts have concluded that the three men we had been seeking as suspects in the bombings were in fact in the mine at the time of the explosion and that the explosion was detonated by the terrorists themselves so as to avoid being captured by the law enforcement officials who had them surrounded.

“Although we may never know for certain their identities or their country or countries of origin, it is likely that they were the three men identified after the D.C. Mall bombing and that they came from Iran or Syria. According to some documents they left behind near the West Virginia mine, their motive was to punish the United States for its ongoing crusade against the Islamic people.”

In congratulating Director Drake and the members of his taskforce, President McNeal had this to say: “I want to express my sincere thanks and congratulations to F.B.I. Associate Director Drake and all of the other men and women who worked on this taskforce. Without their dedication and hard work under

difficult conditions, there is no telling how long the evil terrorists would have continued to threaten our nation.”

The president continued. “I also want to thank all Americans in all parts of this great country for standing firm and refusing to be intimidated by these horrendous acts of terrorism. Our citizens have shown that terrorism will never be successful against people who cherish democracy and the democratic way of life. And, of course, I want to thank the God who watches over all of us in this blessed land for delivering the terrorists to the justice they deserved.”

It was stories such as this that had dominated the media the entire day as the delegates came together in the convention hall later that evening to nominate by acclamation President McNeal for a second term and then to listen to the prime time address of one of the founders of their party, Reverend Jerry Robinson.

After a wild 10-minute ovation and demonstration, the delegates finally sat down and listened to the spiritual leader of their party as reverently as if they were in church.

*Mr. Chairman, delegates and my fellow Americans: It was just 12 years ago that a group of Americans—statesmen, clergy and average citizens—came together in our nation’s capital to reclaim the promise of this special country that we call the United States of America.*

*The men who founded this party had been Republicans, Democrats and Independents.*

*They had been Republicans who had labored in the vineyards of their party, some for as many as 30 years, trying in vain to bring an end to the crimes against God known as abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality.*

*They had been Democrats who had seen their influence in the political process and their dreams of creating a more just society wane year after year. They believed that Christ meant what he said that we will all be judged by how we treat the least fortunate among us. They believed that a just society rehabilitates—not murders—its criminals and that a great society feeds its hungry and provides health care for all who need it.*

*And they had been independents with no political home, finding both parties corrupt and hypocritical.*

*They came from different political homes, but with a shared political soul and a shared vision. And they came together to form a new kind of political party—one unlike any other in the history of our nation. This new party was to be based not on meaningless labels such as liberalism, conservatism, states rights, national rights, pro-business or pro-labor, but rather, it was to be based on the only values and principles that matter—those found in the Holy Bible. And it was to be based on the shared belief that government should be an instrument of God on earth.*

*It was during this meeting just a few years ago that the Christian Democratic Republican Party was born—and just look at what we—with God’s help—have accomplished in the years hence.*

*First and foremost, we have created a society that is more just—a society that no longer kills other human beings in the womb, in their hospital bed or on a prison gurney.*

*We have created a society in which the least fortunate among us are treated with dignity and given the assistance they need.*

*And we have created a society where the sick receive health care based on their needs, rather than on their ability to pay.*

And then, after providing nearly 20 additional minutes of his party’s accomplishments, the Reverend reached the heart of his address.

*But my fellow delegates—our work; God’s work is far from done. All of what we have accomplished to this point could vanish virtually overnight if we don’t make it more difficult for anti-religious judges to strike down the laws we have been able to pass. So please, join me now in prayer.*

The delegates rose, bowed their heads and held one hand in the air as the reverend prayed aloud.

*Dear God, we have worked hard these last 12 years to make this country more like we believe You would want it to be. We have tried to make a society that recognizes the sanctity of life and treats all people with dignity.*

*We have also worked to make You and Your teachings acceptable in all aspects of our life. So we are asking now for Your help. We ask that You come into the hearts of all Americans listening or watching tonight and move them to contact their senators and urge support of the amendment to make this the Christian Republic of the United States of America. If this amendment is adopted, we will be able to make You and Your Word even more important in our government and society.*

*We ask this in Your Holy Name.*

*Amen*

Watching together at Sullivan's apartment, Tad and Toby could hardly believe what they had witnessed.

"I would never have thought that we could have reached a point when religion was so ingrained in the political process," Tad said. "In their minds it is clear that there is no such thing as separation of church and state."

"Of course there is," said Toby. "It's just that they don't want it to exist much longer."

And a few miles further up into northwest Washington, a group of men who had gathered to watch the convention, were also reacting to the keynote address.

"Amen," they said in unison, and then the man known as Matthew turned to three of the men and said, "Mark, Luke and John, welcome our new disciple, Paul."

And then turning to the fourth man, he said, "You are now one of the chosen—one of the Disciples. Do you understand and accept your mission?"

"Yes, Matthew, I know what Christ wants me to do," Paul—known to those on the outside as Trey Rawlings—said to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

## CHAPTER 32

*Say nothing of my religion. It is known to God and myself alone. Its evidence before the world is to be sought in my life: if it has been honest and dutiful to society the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one. - Thomas Jefferson*

Two weeks later, the National Liberty Party held its convention in Philadelphia. The weather was sweltering, but the delegates seemed no less determined in their mission to restore to their country what they believed to be the most basic of human rights—freedom.

For 12 years these delegates had witnessed the revolution that had changed the political landscape of the nation. They watched in disbelief as the Christian Democratic Republican Party became the dominant political party of the nation and its Bible-based values gradually became more important to a majority of Americans than the traditional American values of liberty, individual freedom and free-market economics.

They had fought with every legislative tool at their disposal the CDR measures to reward single-income families, knowing that the hidden intent of the legislation was to dissuade women from working outside the home.

They had fought legislation to provide tax credits for home-schools, not because they objected to children being taught at home, but because the intent was clearly to keep women out of the workplace.

They had fought against the new government health care system, not because they objected to health care for the poor, but because they feared that the system would eventually provide poorer care for everyone.

They also fought against legislation to increase economic protectionism, because they saw this as an unrealistic attempt to avoid or delay the inevitability of a world economy.

And they fought against the “Christian Society” legislation that provided greatly increased government assistance to churches to aid the poor and homeless, not because they were anti-poor, but because the national debt was soaring and government aid to churches was making church and state more and more dependent on one another.

And, most of all, they fought against several new laws that seemed designed to make Christianity a national religion and people who held other beliefs second class citizens.

But in every case, they had lost.

And so now they had come to Philadelphia, home of the Liberty Bell and birthplace of America’s democracy, to dig-in and try once again to restore what they believed had been lost—basic American freedoms, such as the freedom to choose a career; the freedom over one’s body and one’s life; the freedom to access the best medical care that a person can afford; the freedom to succeed—or fail—in a business; and the freedom to practice—or not practice—any religion—without being penalized.

The Liberty Party’s candidate for president would almost certainly be Senator Robert Clay of New York. He was a devout Evangelical Christian who was not likely to antagonize the swing voters that the NLP needed desperately in order to win, and he would certainly carry his home state and its 31 electoral votes, which would be crucial on Election Day.

The favorite of many of the delegates, however, was Senator Langdon Stevens of Georgia, a maverick who had been elected three times by the people of his state, in spite of the fact that the state had gone strongly for the CDR candidates in the last two presidential elections. Stevens spoke eloquently about the core values of the party and the delegates were looking forward to his keynote address on Wednesday.

Toby, Tad and Trey were also looking forward to hearing the senator. With the terrorist case now “solved” Toby and Tad had both taken the week off and had been taking turns serving as ad-hoc bodyguards for Stevens. Trey was planning to come to Philadelphia on Wednesday to join the protection detail—as soon as he could get permission from Drake to take some time off.



Until then, Toby made certain that either he or Tad was close to the senator at all times and that he moved through the city using a different mode of transportation every trip—sometimes rental car; sometimes taxi; sometimes bus. He also stayed at the vacant home of an old college friend rather than in his hotel room. Toby’s analysis of the bombings had impressed Stevens enough that he agreed to take the precautions that Sullivan and Davenport recommended, although he refused to change any of his scheduled activities at the convention.

While the senator was safely ensconced at the ultra-secure convention center on Wednesday afternoon, Toby and Tad took a little walk around the city of Philadelphia, stopping to visit Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed and the United States Constitution written.

“It’s amazing how much history occurred here,” Toby whispered almost reverently as he and Tad took a guided tour of the restored 18th century building. “Washington was made commander of the army; the Declaration of Independence was adopted; the design for our flag was determined; the Articles of Confederation were adopted and the Constitution was drafted.”

“That is incredible,” Tad agreed. “I hope that holding the NLP Convention in Philadelphia is a good luck charm. I might not agree with everything in the Party’s platform, but I am petrified of the direction that our country is headed under the Christian Democratic Republicans. It’s not that they are bad people. It’s just that they seem to be blinded by their religious fervor not to question anything that their leaders determine is the will of God.”

“I think that’s what makes it so difficult for some people to see what is happening,” Sullivan answered. “They think that just because the motivation of something is pure, the result must be positive, too. After all, how could something mentioned in the Bible not be the right thing to do?”

“With that in mind, do you think we can trust Rawlings to protect Senator Stevens?” Davenport asked. “How do we know he isn’t involved with the people who killed the other two senators and possibly have something to do with the condition of Senator McIntyre?”

“I think I know Trey well enough to know that he could not be connected with people who would kill innocent people to further a cause, however worthwhile he might think the cause is,” Toby answered. “I just don’t believe he could be part of a group like that.”

“I hope you’re right,” Tad said as she took one more look at the “rising sun” chair used by George Washington as he presided over the Constitutional Convention. “Senator Stevens may be the deciding vote on the Christian Republic Amendment.”

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The time had come for Senator Stevens’s keynote address. As expected, the delegates had nominated Senator Clay as their candidate for president and now, they were ready to be called to battle by the man they had nominated to be vice-president and who better than any other, gave voice to the values in which they believed.

*Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates and all those who cherish freedom and liberty:*

*I could talk tonight about the stagnation in our economy and growing national debt due to skyrocketing costs for social services. I could talk about the deteriorating quality of our health care system, including the lack of new drugs and equipment. And I could talk about the soaring inflation resulting from economic protectionism and decreasing productivity. These are problems well known to all Americans.*

*But I want instead to talk to you tonight about one word—one word that draws a clear distinction between our political party and the other political party—and that word is “liberty.”*

*When William Penn created Pennsylvania’s government he allowed citizens to take part in making laws and gave them the right to choose the religion they wanted. The colonists were proud of their freedoms, and in 1751 the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a new bell for the State House. That bell, now on display on Market Street, between 5th and 6th streets is known as the Liberty Bell and*

contains a Bible verse, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto the inhabitants thereof." As the official bell of the Pennsylvania State House, it has rung many times, but none with greater importance than in 1776.

Almost 250 years ago in a building just a few blocks from here, a group of patriots from throughout the English colonies came together in the heat of the summer to draft a document that would forever alter the course of human events. That document was the Declaration of Independence, and the mere act of signing it was a treasonable offense. In spite of the personal risk involved, the men assembled at what is now known as Independence Hall adopted that declaration and declared that men have a God-given right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Throughout most of our history, Americans never questioned the wisdom of Jefferson's words. Indeed, we have taken these three rights very much for granted. It is true that at several times in our history, we have allowed the government to limit our rights. During the Civil War, President Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus. During World War II, President Roosevelt interned Japanese-Americans. And after 9/11/2001, the Congress passed the Patriot Act, giving the government extraordinary powers to spy on American citizens. Some of these actions were less justified than others, but all were strictly temporary measures to protect the American people. Never, until the past decade, have Americans voluntarily surrendered so many of their rights and freedoms on a seemingly permanent basis.

I can almost hear some of my friends from the other political party saying to their friends and companions, "What is he talking about? What freedoms have Americans lost?"

Well, let me see if I can explain it so they can understand, because I know that you do.

For starters, I believe that fully one-half of all Americans—women—have lost the freedom to make the most basic reproductive choices. The government has decided that all women must do what the men running the government have determined is the moral thing to do. Is a ban on birth control next? There is a loud voice within the other party that believes it is as wrong as abortion.

Women are also losing the right to pursue careers and professions of their choice. True, there have been no laws passed to restrict their access to an education or career, but there have been several measures enacted that make it economically undesirable for families to have two wage earners. And the real effect of these laws will not be felt until a generation or two from now, when today's young girls decide not to pursue higher levels of education, because they have received the clear message that society wants them to be housewives and mothers..

Others who have lost rights are the 50 million plus Americans who are non-Christians. These include Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Scientologists, agnostics and atheists among others. These Americans have lost the right to participate in American secular activities without having the Christian religion imposed upon them. They cannot attend sporting events, city council meetings or even business meetings without having to endure public prayers that they may find either meaningless or offensive.

And, I contend that we all are losing a very important right—the right to participate in a truly free economic marketplace. Little by little, this Christian government of ours is accomplishing in the name of religion what we fought against for nearly 50 years when it was called communism or socialism. Just as a rose by any other name may smell just as sweet, a thorn by any other name is just as dangerous.

Are people who have surrendered all decision-making to a theocracy really any more free than those who have chosen the dictatorship of the proletariat? If the government takes from those according to their ability to provide for those according to their need, does it really matter whether the motivating philosophy is Christianity or Marxism? Are not the results the same?

Our opponents talk about creating a society based on God's laws as if they know what God's laws are. They say that government should enforce God's will, and yet they use government to take away God's most basic gift to man—free will—the very thing that makes us human.

In just a few days, the United States Senate will hold one of the most important votes in our nation's history. The issue is one that I believe was settled in Independence Hall in 1787 when men such as James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and even pious old John Adams met with other great statesmen to write the Constitution of the United States. These men had the opportunity at that time to call this country by any

*name they wished, including the Christian Republic of the United States. But the Founding Fathers chose instead to call it simply the United States of America.*

*I think they knew what they were doing, and I think a lot of well-intentioned, but seriously misguided people are attempting to do something that probably has some of the greatest Americans—men such as Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Lincoln— spinning around in their graves.*

*My fellow Americans, I would never be so arrogant as to ask you to join me in prayer, because frankly, I don't believe that God takes sides in our political debates. But I am asking you to search your own hearts and minds and to study some of the great documents of American history, including the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. And after you have studied these documents, I ask that you think very seriously about the type of country that you want your sons and daughters to grow-up in—a country based on the religious beliefs of some at the expense of liberty for all, or a country based on freedom in which freedom of religion is enjoyed and respected by all.*

*God created every individual with free will and a brain. I ask that you put them both to good use. The future of the United States of America is in your hands. Thank you.*

Toby and Tad jumped up off the couch in the hotel room where Trey and they had watched the speech and applauded the video screen as if they were among the wildly cheering delegates.

“What a great speech,” Toby said. “I think he really nailed the key differences between the two parties.”

“I think so, too,” said Tad, “although I wish he hadn't dwelled so much on the economic issues. I happen to agree with some of the CDR's programs such as free health-care, and I think a lot of Americans do.”

“You mean taxpayer-financed health care, don't you?” Sullivan said. “Just keep in mind, that it's all connected. Before we can make any changes in the economic system, the health-care system or virtually any other aspect of government, we've got to change the mentality and motivation behind the decisions.”

“What do you mean?” asked Tad.

“I mean that we have to get institutionalized religion out of government,” Sullivan said. “Decisions can still be based on collective moral values, but they should also be based on reason and experience. What we are in the process of creating now are political and economic systems based on how some people interpret the Bible, rather than on the best knowledge and experience available. In order to keep the religious coalition together, the CDR is leading us into economic AND social disaster.”

“I don't know where you come up with doomsday stuff like that,” said Rawlings, who was still sitting in his chair, choosing not to join his companions in celebration. “There are a lot of economists who believe that we are just about to turn the corner and should begin to whittle down the debt fairly soon.”

“After eliminating another 10 to 20 percent of our workforce over the next decade?” asked Toby. “How is this miracle going to occur?”

“It's true that we will probably have to reduce our standard of living,” Trey admitted, “but Americans can afford to live in smaller homes and drive smaller vehicles. It's a trade-off for a more compassionate society,”

“I wish it were as simple as that,” Toby said, “but it just doesn't add-up to me.”

“That's because you don't accept the premise that God will watch over our country if our country pays homage to Him,” Trey continued.

“You're right, I don't,” Toby responded. “I'm afraid I agree with Senator Stevens. I don't think that God really gets involved in our political decisions.”

“We're never going to agree abote any of this,” Trey said in exasperation. “But I have faith that you'll understand someday when you see how God rewards us for trying to make our country the kind of society that Christ taught us abote. Some of the things we do to achieve the reality of a Christian nation may seem extreme to some, but in the end, they will be rewarded.”

“That's scary talk to me,” Toby said.

“Doing what Christ wants is scary only to those who don't truly believe,” Trey said. “Where am I supposed to meet Senator Stevens?”

## CHAPTER 33

*All sects are different, because they come from men;  
morality is everywhere the same, because it comes from God. -Voltaire*

During the week after the NLP convention, the nation's attention turned to Washington, D.C. and the United States Senate. News crews from around the globe had flooded into the nation's capital, and every seat in the Senate gallery for the day of the historic Christian Amendment vote had been claimed for weeks—most by members of the clergy. Every day leading up to the vote, crowds of people had jammed the hallways of the Russell, Dirksen and Hart Senate Office Buildings, trying desperately to lobby their senators one final time—including small groups holding prayer sessions outside members' office doors. But scarcely anyone believed that there existed a single senator whose mind was not firmly made-up on this historic issue. After all, the amendment on which they were voting was crystal clear: The Congress of The Christian Republic of the United States of America shall make no laws in violation of the New Testament of the Holy Bible and the tenets of the Christian religion."

And now, it was Thursday, the day that the entire nation had been awaiting. Toby had barely slept during the night, because neither Trey nor Senator Stevens had been heard from since lunchtime on Wednesday. After resting for perhaps an hour or two, Sullivan got up around 5:30 a.m. and turned on the large video screen in his bedroom. The vote on the amendment was the only story. And the latest twist to the story was the apparent disappearance of Senator Langdon Stevens.

"The biggest question on the minds of most political observers this morning is 'Where is Senator Langdon Stevens of Georgia?'" the capitol reporter said. "The senator disappeared on the eve of what may be the most important vote of his career and possibly of this generation. No one, including his wife or his staff has heard from the senator since he left his office for a luncheon with constituents yesterday around 11:30 a.m. Trey Rawlings, the FBI agent who was accompanying him, has also vanished."

"What does this mean for today's vote?" the anchor asked the reporter. "Will it be postponed?"

"That is a good question," the reporter replied, "but the latest word we have is that the majority leader decided that Stevens could have vanished for the very purpose of delaying the vote, fearing that his side would lose. Therefore, the voting will begin as previously scheduled—by roll call exactly at 10 a.m."

"What did I just hear?" Tad asked as the voices on the television began to awaken her.

"The senator and Trey are still missing," Toby replied.

"Oh my God," Davenport answered. "You don't think that Trey has done something to Stevens, do you?"

"I think—I hope—that I know Trey better than that," Sullivan answered. "We knew he was going to hide the senator someplace, but he was supposed to be in touch with us last night."

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At 10 a.m., more than 100 million people were believed to be watching or listening to the proceedings in the chambers of the United States Senate. The tension inside the chambers was extraordinary, as it was also in churches, office buildings, homes and automobiles throughout the country. This was clearly one of those defining moments in the history of a nation.

Although there can be no tie vote on an amendment, which requires a 2/3 majority of those present for passage, the vice-president was presiding in the hope that his presence would keep in line the one or two members of the CDR Party who had committed to support the amendment, but were clearly not enthusiastic about it. The administration was counting on passage of this monumental measure to prove to the Christian Council of Churches that it could deliver in the Congress so that the Council would deliver on Election Day.

At exactly 10 a.m., the vice president had the clerk begin the roll call.

“Adams of Missouri.”

The short, balding junior senator from the Show Me State answered “Aye,” and the clerk repeated, “Adams of Missouri votes ‘Aye.’”

Next came Anderson of Tennessee.

“Aye,” said the senior senator from the Volunteer State.

“Anderson of Tennessee votes ‘Aye,’” recorded the clerk.

The vote proceeded extremely slowly, because some senators were not present when their names were first called, and some took time making their way to their desks to call out their historic votes.

Meanwhile, Toby and Tad were frantically attempting to reach Senator Stevens and/or Trey. When Trey left the day before to pick up the senator, he was supposed to keep in touch. Obviously, something had gone wrong. They tried every phone number they had, but with no luck. They also had the Bureau activate the tracking equipment on the car Trey had been driving, but it led them only as far as his home, where he had possibly switched to another car.

“Bates of South Carolina.”

“Bates of South Carolina votes according to the wishes of my Lord, ‘Aye,’” said the dark-haired middle-aged man in a deep southern drawl.

“Bates of South Carolina votes ‘aye,’” repeated the clerk.

Next, the clerk called out, “Callahan of New York.”

A tall, distinguished-looking grey-haired man replied loudly, “Callahan of New York, home of Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America, votes as Hamilton would have voted, ‘Nay.’”

The secretary repeated, “Callahan votes ‘Nay.’”

Sullivan and Davenport were sick with worry and had no idea what could have happened to the senator and Trey. Rather than sit around and do nothing, they decided to join the massive FBI search that was underway. Their first destination was Trey’s house, and they continued to listen to the senate vote on the car radio as they sped up the Rock Creek Parkway.

“Clay of New York,” the clerk called out.

“On behalf of people of all faiths, Senator Clay votes, ‘Nay,’” said the NLP presidential candidate.

“Clay votes, ‘Nay,’” the clerk repeated.

“Elliott of Nebraska,” called the clerk.

“Aye,” a deep voice responded.

Elliott votes, “aye,” the clerk repeated.

“How’s the vote going?” Tad asked Toby who was driving his Jag well over the posted limit, but at a speed that he thought was safe.

“I don’t think there have been any surprises yet,” Sullivan responded. “According to the latest count I saw in the paper, the amendment should fail by one vote—if Senator Stevens is there to cast his vote.”

“You don’t think that Trey would purposely detain the senator to prevent him from voting, do you?” Davenport asked. “After all, Rawlings is a staunch supporter of the amendment.”

“I don’t believe Trey would do that,” Toby answered. “Unless I have judged him wrong, he has too much respect for our political system to do anything to interfere with the way the system is supposed to work.”

“Unless he thinks he is responding to a higher calling,” Tad suggested.

“I hope that’s not the case,” Toby replied. “And I hope that he and Stevens haven’t become the victims of people who do believe that they are responding to a higher calling.”

“Humphreys of Kentucky,” the clerk called out.

“Humphreys of Kentucky, home of Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, votes as Lincoln would have voted—‘Nay.’”

“Humphreys of Kentucky votes, ‘Nay,’” the clerk said as he recorded the vote.

“You tell ‘em, Humphreys,” Tad said as Toby pulled the car into the Rawlings’ driveway.

“That’s strange,” Toby said as he opened his door and got out of the car. “I don’t see Trisha’s car anywhere. “Where would she have gone?”

Davenport and Sullivan walked up to the door and rang the bell. No one answered. They rang it again. There was still no answer. They walked around the entire house, but saw nothing out of the ordinary.

Toby walked over to the FBI sedan that Trey had left in the driveway and opened the door. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, and there was nothing that provided any clues as to where his partner might have gone.

“Let’s go. There’s nothing here,” Sullivan said.

Davenport and Sullivan returned to the car and headed back down the Parkway.

“Johnson of Florida,” the clerk’s voice called out.

“Based on my strong Christian beliefs, I vote ‘Aye,’” a voice responded.

“Johnson votes, ‘Aye,’” the clerk recorded.

“Still going as planned, I think,” Toby said.

“Jones of Illinois,” the clerk called.

“Jones of Illinois, home of America’s greatest president, Abraham Lincoln, votes ‘Nay.’”

“Jones of Illinois votes ‘Nay,’” the clerk said in a strong voice.

“It’s helpful that ole Abe had several states that claim him,” Tad said.

“Manley of Mississippi,” the clerk continued.

“Aye,” the senator answered.

“Manley votes ‘aye,’” the clerk repeated.

Still according to plan,” said Toby. “If Stevens shows, the amendment is defeated. If he doesn’t, it passes.

“Where could they be?” asked Davenport. “Do you have any idea?”

“I’m afraid not,” Sullivan answered. “I’ve racked my brain and tried to think where they might have gone, but I can’t think of any place they could be. We might as well drive down to the capitol and go to Stevens’ office just in case he tries to contact his staff.”

Toby pulled off the Parkway in Georgetown and headed down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol. They continued to listen to the vote along the way.

“McIntyre of Arizona,” the clerk called.

No one answered.

“McIntyre of Arizona,” the clerk called again.

“How is Senator McIntyre?” Tad asked.

“I understand he is still very sick, but his condition began improving once he left the hospital and got a private health service to take care of him at his home,” Toby responded.

“Is there any way he can vote from his home?” Tad asked.

“No, I’m afraid all senators still have to be present to vote,” said Toby.

“But you’ve already counted his not voting in your tabulations, right?” she asked.

“That’s right,” he said. “We don’t need his vote to win—if Stevens shows up.”

After three more votes were cast, the radio commentator said,

“We have just reached the half-way point in the voting with the tally to this point being 32 in favor, 16 opposed and so far, two—Senator Jones of Nevada and Senator McIntyre of Arizona—not voting. Based on all of the information we currently have, it appears that this amendment to change the official name of the country to the Christian Republic of the United States of America will pass with one vote to spare if Senator Stevens, who has been missing since yesterday, fails to return to the capitol in time to cast his vote against the amendment.”

“Senator Morrison of West Virginia,” the clerk continued the roll call.

“Aye,” a soft voice responded.

“Morrison votes, ‘Aye,’” the clerk answered.

Sullivan pulled their car into a lot reserved for senate employees and showed his badge to a guard at the entrance who directed him to a spot in the back of the lot. He and Tad then took an elevator up to the street level of the garage and walked across the crowded capitol grounds that were covered with people holding up signs for and against the pending amendment, although the majority clearly favored the measure. Eventually, they reached the Dirksen Senate Office Building that was also packed with people on both sides of the issue. A large number of these people were kneeling and holding hands quietly near the office doors of individual senators.

One of the office doors opened long enough for Sullivan to hear the clerk of the senate call out, “Senator Slevin of California.” Toby and Tad stopped to hear Senator Slevin respond in a loud voice, “Nay,” and the clerk answer, “Slevin votes, ‘Nay.’”

After passing many more offices surrounded by groups of praying people, the two agents finally reached Senator Stevens’ office—an office in which they found several very sad and dejected-looking staffers.

Toby approached the receptionist. —“Hello, I’m FBI Special Agent Sullivan and this is Agent Davenport. Is your chief-of-staff here?”

The young woman, obviously very curious that someone from the FBI was there, called a Ms. Williams and told her of the visitors.

“Bring them back,” came the immediate response.

The receptionist led the two agents to a large back office filled with photos of Senator Stevens posing with various politicians and constituents from back home in Georgia.

“Hello, I’m Donna Williams,” said the attractive woman who was dressed in a fashionable navy blue business suit with a white silk blouse. “Do you have any news about Senator Stevens?”

“No, I am afraid not,” said Toby. “We were hoping that you had heard something.”

Dejectedly, she responded, “No, not a thing since he left yesterday with that agent wearing the bowtie. This is completely out of character for him.”

Toby glanced at the large plasma screen mounted on the wall.

“What’s the latest on the vote?” he asked.

“Not good, she said. “Unless Senator Stevens shows, it looks like the other side wins.”

“Willingham of North Dakota,” The clerk called.

A tall, rugged-looking man wearing a suit clearly in need of pressing called out, “Willingham votes ‘aye.’”

“Willingham votes ‘aye,’” the clerk said as he recorded the vote.

Toby noticed on the bottom of the screen that the vote now stood at 64 in favor, 32 opposed, 4 not voting.

“Yates of Idaho,” called the clerk.

“Senator Yates votes ‘aye,’” said the young, handsome junior senator.

“Yates votes ‘aye,’” repeated the clerk.

“It looks like it’s all over,” Williams said as a tear rolled down her cheek.

“Doesn’t it take 67 votes to pass an amendment?” Tad asked

“No,” explained the chief-of-staff. “In the National Prohibition Cases related to the 18th Amendment the Supreme Court established that the vote required to propose an amendment was two thirds of the Members present—assuming the presence of a quorum—and not a vote of two-thirds of the entire membership.”

“Has everyone voted?” the vice president asked the clerk. “If not, call the names of those who have not voted.

Suddenly Toby’s phone rang. He glanced at the number on the caller i.d. and quickly answered. “Trey, where in the hell are you?”

“At the capitol. Where are you?” Rawlings answered.

“I’m in Senator Stevens’ office. Where is he?” Toby asked.

“If you’re watching television, you’ll see in a second,” Trey responded.

Toby glanced at the television.

“Jones of Nevada,” the clerk called, but there was no answer.

“Where is Jones?” Davenport asked Steven’s chief of staff?

“Our information is that he planned to oppose the amendment, but received a lot of pressure to stay away.”

“McIntyre of Arizona,” the clerk called.

After waiting, the clerk called, “Stevens of Georgia.”

As Toby and Tad stared at the screen with Senator Stevens’ dejected chief-of-staff, they suddenly saw the doors of the senate chamber swing open and Senator Langston Stevens of Georgia stroll in and proclaim in his booming voice, “When God gave us life, he gave us liberty at the same time. Senator Stevens of Georgia votes ‘nay.’”

Suddenly, everyone in Stevens’ office began to scream with joy. Not only were they relieved that their boss—and political mentor—was safe, but it appeared that he had cast the deciding vote in defeating the amendment.

But just as quickly as their hopes had risen, they were suddenly dashed.

“The chair calls on the senator from Nevada,” yelled the vice president.

Suddenly from nowhere a tall, lanky man entered the chamber and said, “Senator Jones of Nevada votes ‘aye.’”

“What happened to Jones?” Tad asked. “I thought he wasn’t going to vote.”

“Apparently his blackmailers demanded more,” Williams said angrily. “We heard that he was being blackmailed by someone working for the Christian Council of Churches and the CDR,” Williams responded.



“Blackmailed, how?” Davenport asked.

“Well, it has long been rumored that Jones may be gay—or at least had a gay relationship sometime, and apparently someone in the Christian Council has some photographs of the senator with another man in a...well, you get the idea.”

“So they got to him and told him how to vote?” Toby asked.

“I don’t know for certain,” Williams answered, “but that is the rumor.”

Meanwhile, Sullivan was still talking to Rawlings. “Damn, Trey, where have you two been?” Toby asked, happy that his friend had returned, but still upset that they had vanished.”

“We had to pick someone up,” Trey answered. “Keep looking at the television and you’ll see what I mean.”

After Jones had voted, giving the proponents of the amendment what appeared to be a certain victory, but before the vice-president could close off the voting, the doors to the senate chamber swung open once again and, as a murmur swept the floor and gallery, a young man pushed a wheelchair into the chamber.

“Not so fast there, Mr. President,” a feeble, old man in the wheelchair said in a rasping voice. “McIntyre of Arizona votes ‘nay.’”

Suddenly an obvious minority in the gallery burst into applause and the vice-president slammed his gavel down several times.

“The senate and gallery will come to order. Doorkeepers – Escort anyone out of the gallery who is demonstrating in any way.”

Instantly the mood in Senator Stevens’ office transformed again from downcast to ebullient. Staffers rushed into the senator’s office where Toby and Tad began to share in the excitement.

“I can’t believe it,” Tad said. “The Christian jihad has been defeated.”

## CHAPTER 34

*With or without religion, you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.*

*-Steven Weinberg, winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize in physics*

“You had a lot of people worried to death,” Toby said to Trey when Sullivan and Davenport finally met up with Rawlings outside the capitol. “Why did you just disappear like that?”

“It’s a long story,” said Trey. “You were right about the existence of a secret Christian network inside the FBI. We need to get this information quickly to somebody who can be trusted completely. Until we do, we all may be in danger, or the real bombers may escape.”

“Secretary Rosenthal,” Tad and Toby said in unison.

“Good, let’s contact him as quickly as possible,” Trey answered.

Tad called her friend Charlene and told her that it was urgent that they see the secretary right away. After putting Davenport on hold, Charley came back to the phone within a few seconds and told Tad that she, Toby and Trey could come over to the Homeland Security headquarters immediately. Within 15 minutes, they were sitting in the secretary’s office listening to Trey describe the shocking details of a secret Christian society of government employees that had resorted to murder to make the United States a Christian nation.

“From what I can tell, it is a very small group comprised of five or six “disciples,” Trey explained. “Associate Director Drake, known within the group as ‘Matthew’ is the leader.”

“Tony Giordano, known as ‘Mark’ is a member, as is Henry Nelson, whose disciple name is ‘Luke.’ And there is another agent who works with Nelson who is called ‘John.’

“I was accepted in the group recently under the name of ‘Paul.’ There may also be additional members that I do not know about.”

Rosenthal appeared shocked. “I had heard rumors about a group like that, but I never thought it would condone murder,” he said. “How did such a small group manage to kill all of those people and almost get away with it?”

“Because of their positions,” Trey explained. “Drake controlled the taskforce, which meant that he was able to manage the flow of evidence. Like you figured out, Toby, it was certainly no coincidence that Tony Giordano was the first one on the scene after most of the bombings. And, it was no coincidence that Nelson supervised gathering and analyzing all of the evidence. They controlled the murders and the investigations.”

“But what about the terrorists in West Virginia?” asked Charlene. “Who was in that abandoned mine?”

“My guess is no one,” Toby answered. “Giordano had it all planned to perfection. He probably planted the SUV in the woods and rigged up some explosives in the mine. Then he and others called local law enforcement officials claiming to have seen the three terrorists who never really existed. And, after organizing the massive search party, he made certain that a lot of people, including Trey and me, were close by when he fired some shots over our heads and detonated the explosives. It worked like a charm since Nelson was the guy responsible for looking for the terrorists after the explosion.”

“That’s my guess, too,” Trey agreed.

“So why did you disappear with Senator Stevens?” Tad asked Trey.

“Because I was supposed to kidnap or eliminate him,” Trey answered. “Or, I should say that the disciple, Paul, was supposed to eliminate him. And, I was afraid that all of our communications might have been bugged. These people were deadly serious about winning the Christian Republic Amendment vote, and I could tell that they were monitoring my every move. That’s why I ditched the FBI car and whisked the senator out of the area. It’s also why I had Trish and the kids go stay with her mother in Florida for a few days. And, it’s why I didn’t contact any of you. It was just too risky.”

“So what should we do, now?” Toby asked. “How can we prove what we believe is the truth about these people?”

“That’s why we needed to tell someone we could trust,” Trey explained. “I don’t know who else in the government might be part of this secret society or sympathetic to it. And the more time they have to figure out what happened, the more likely they are to destroy any incriminating evidence or flee the country for Mexico or someplace else. They don’t believe they have done anything wrong in the eyes of the Lord, but they know that a lot of people in this country won’t share their perception.”

“How could they not think they have done anything wrong?” Tad asked. “That’s nuts.”

“Oh, they know that it’s wrong to kill, and I think that they regret that so many died, but they thought that sacrificing a few innocent people to make a country of 350 million people a truly Christian nation was acceptable collateral damage.”

“In other words, the ends justified the means,” Rosenthal said as he called to his assistant. “Get the president on the phone and tell him that it’s a national emergency.”

## CHAPTER 35

*If it were proven that there is no God there would be no religion....But also if it were proven that there is a God, there would be no religion. - Ursula K. Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness*

The sounds of Bach gave Toby a particularly good feeling on this first Sunday morning in September. Maybe it had something to do with the delightfully cool weather, or maybe it had more to do with the fact that he was with friends and they actually seemed to be doing something worthwhile.

"We need more waffles," someone called out to Sullivan who was refilling the eight professional waffle irons as fast as he could remove the golden brown waffles from each machine.

"Your special waffles are quite the hit here at St. Jude's, don't you know," said Sister Mary Frances to Toby. "And it was awfully nice of you to bring your music system. It makes this Sunday breakfast for the homeless so special that a lot of our parishioners want to come. I told them that they could come, but they would have to work for their breakfast."

"We need more bacon," said Trey, who, dressed in a white apron, along with his usual white shirt and red bowtie, looked somewhat like a 1960's carhop at a drive-in.

"Coming right up," said Tad. "How are you, Tricia, and the kids doing out there?"

"Very well," Trey answered. "You were right about this being a spiritual experience. It makes you think about Christ and his teachings in a completely different way."

"Well, for me, it isn't so much about Christ as it is about people," Tad responded, "but whatever floats your boat."

"I'm not as 100 percent certain anymore what floats my boat," Trey responded. "It was really difficult for me to have to admit that people who call themselves Christians could do such horrible things as Drake and his "disciples" did in the name of Christ. And these were people I respected and admired. That was a real blow."

"But you are a Christian, too, and you did the right thing," Tad said as she handed Trey a large platter of bacon, which he proceeded to pat several times with a paper towel to soak up some of the excess grease. "You acted against your own desire to see the Christian Republic Amendment pass and flew out to Arizona with Senator Stevens to pick up Senator McIntyre and then made sure that they both got to the capitol safely in time to vote against the amendment. And then you told Secretary Rosenthal everything you knew about the society, which led to the president appointing a special prosecutor to look not just into the bombings, but also into the role of secret Christian organizations in the government. In my mind, that proves that you are the one who truly deserves to be called a Christian."

"Thank you, Tad," Trey said with a smile, "although I'm not quite certain what that means coming from an atheist."

"Think of it this way," she said. "I don't pass out very many compliments dealing with religion."

"True," Trey answered. "I didn't think of it that way."

While Trey took the bacon to one of the tables where eight hungry people were ready to make it disappear rather quickly, Toby filled a warm metal serving dish with more waffles.

"I'll have some more ready in a few minutes," he said as he handed the dish to Tricia. "How is Matthew enjoying his new school?"

"You mean his 'real' school?" Tricia said. "He loves it. And he's doing very well."

"Has Trey adjusted yet?" Toby asked.

"Yea, he's adjusting. He even gets a little excited at the football games," Tricia replied. "The real test will come when Mark, Luke and Mary get older and I send them off to real school and go back to work. That might really cause his bowtie to spin."

"Give him time," Toby said. "He'll come around, although I don't think he'll ever come around when it comes to fashion. Is that bowtie permanently attached?"

Tricia laughed. "Sometimes I think it is."

Toby and Tad continued cooking until everyone had been served—and given seconds if they desired. Then the cleanup began.

“Where are y’all getting all of these serving dishes?” asked Margaret Peabody, who had volunteered to be a dishwasher. “I didn’t realize what I was getting myself into.”

“Don’t worry,” Tad responded. “I’ll give you a hand.”

“Oh, I’m just kidding,” Peabody answered. “I can handle it.”

“No, I want to help you, because I want to thank you for coming.”

“I am the one who should thank you for inviting me,” Peabody responded. “My world was shattered when I learned what Director Drake and those people had been doing. To think that he was responsible for killing and injuring all of those people, including the ones in my church.”

“Which is why he made sure you weren’t at church that day,” Tad said. “At least he didn’t want you to be hurt.”

“That’s true,” said Peabody, “but I still can’t believe he did those horrible things—and all in the name of religion.”

“I’m sure it is hard, which is why I’m glad you’re here, because you can see another side of people, both religious and not religious. There are good and bad people in both camps.

“I know there are,” the disillusioned young woman answered, “but it will be hard to ever trust anyone as blindly as I trusted Director Drake. Why do you think he was involved in the horrible things that he did?”

Tad came closer to Margaret and put her arm around her shoulder.

“I know it’s hard to accept what he did,” she responded, “and we may never know why he did it. I was curious myself, though, so I did a little research, and I discovered that his father was a fireman who was killed in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It’s hard to know how that affected Drake, but it must have had some effect.”

“I still wonder if I will ever be able to trust anyone again,” Peabody responded.

“Trust is something that has to be earned over a long period of time,” said Tad. “You have to really know someone through and through.”

“Is there anyone you trust completely?” asked Peabody.

“Yes, and two of them are here today—Sister Mary Frances and Toby.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, are you and Agent Sullivan ever going to get married?”

“I don’t mind you asking at all,” Tad answered. “We may have an announcement about that sometime pretty soon.

—

On a crisp evening in October, Toby and Trey were married on the rooftop of their building under the laws of the District of Columbia. Officiating was a local justice of the peace, with a reading from the Holy Qur’an by Hakim bin Muhammad bin Abdul Al-Mansur, a reading from the Torah by Secretary of Homeland Security Rosenthal and readings from the Holy Bible by Sister Mary Frances Sweeney and Roland P. Rawlings, III.

When asked why an agnostic and atheist would have so many religious readings at their wedding, Toby quoted Voltaire:

*You see many stars at night in the sky but find them not when the sun rises; can you say that there are no stars in the heaven of day? So, O man! because you behold not God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God.*