

A SPECIALTY SERVICE

Chapter 15

Part 3

Searching for a friend

By, Michael Lewis Collins

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Three hours before the warehouse.

I followed the trail to an abandoned house out in the middle of nowhere. There was a van outside, but the plates didn't match the one I was following the trail of. I called in the plates and to my absolute no surprise they were stolen from a delivery van from a county over. Tina packed me a new kit which included the over-priced thermal camera, but it takes too long to calibrate. Time is not on my side. No, it isn't. She also packed an ar15 and a Glock17. I am not a fan of either gun but when you can't have the gun you want, use the gone that you're with. I was still in daylight and in a semipublic setting, so I hid the ar15 in a backpack. There are a lot of backpackers on these roads and I just might not stand out. Behind the house, I drew the ar15 and went for the back door. The yard was open. With no cover I just ran for the door and into a scene from hell.

The house was in a state of decay suggesting it was abandoned. A kitchen countertop had a mishmash of household tools and surgical instruments. Hammers, forceps, and scalpels all covered in blood. There was a bloody handprint on the door leaving the kitchen. It was well defined with the prints in view. I took a snapshot and sent it to the office. Then I opened the door and the story changed. In the middle of the room were Daniel and Dominique Cocks. TC's parents. They were naked with their feet in the metal wash basins half-filled with water. They were tied to chairs back-to-back with wire. Someone had spent some time torturing them before they shot both in the head. They had electrical burns all over with cuts and gashes. The car batteries sat next to them with the jumper cables still attached. About six months ago they moved to the islands to be with TC. Her mother was in the end stages of Alzheimer's disease. She still had a few days where she could remember what she called the important things, but those days were few and far between. They most likely hurt her to get to him. My trail ended here with no clue on where their daughter was. But I wasn't out of clues.

I called the office and told them what I found. Daniel and Dom were some of the best people I got the privilege to meet. He was a doctor with the World Health Organization or WHO and she worked as a translator. They met in the jungles of South America. He was from Harlem New York and she was from Senegal. They traveled the world together fighting disease and ignorance. A life that could easily be a television show with all that they saw. I am not sure how long I just stood there staring at the ruins of my friends. My phone rang. It was the office. Dan did a search and found their car was near a warehouse. He also called the charity Daniel and Dom started back in the 1980's that helps women and their children escape violence. They said that Daniel had taken a million dollars from the vault. In some places in the world you need cash and the American dollar is still king. Dan said they would send someone to the scene.

I knew that time was running out if not already past. Someone took TC for ransom but after getting the money they tortured them. But why? Maybe they wanted the charity to send more money, but Daniel and Dom didn't cooperate? Maybe they wanted account numbers not realizing they didn't have that information? I don't have time for questions. I jumped into the Honda and nothing. It tried to turn over but nothing. The gas gauge said it was half-full. I tapped it and it went to empty. I found a pump syphon and a gas can. I used it to take gas out of the van. This took too much time. As I left I looked back at the house. A big part of me was there. All I had was the need to find their daughter alive or the people who did this. No, I want both. I stopped at the closest gas station. I just happened to find a full-service station which was a good thing seeing I was covered in blood. As I sat there I saw a couple of our panel trucks pass by on the way to the house. When I called they said that David was free and on his way to the house. As much as I want to be there for him I need to find his wife. TC's older sister was with the kids. Tina told me he took a gun from the safe.

At the warehouse I found Daniel and Dom's car. A Cadillac Escalade in a cream color with a ghosted Louis Vuitton pattern done in a metallic flake so it was almost invisible unless in the sun. The car was a gift from Sara and myself. Daniel and Dom were not the type to spend money on such things. If they had money, they wanted it to do some good. Daniel had laughed the first time I wrecked the transmission in my Ferrari. I quietly searched the building. All the

doors were locked. There was only one main loading door. Tire tracks said there was several other cars. The size of the tracks said they were large maybe off-the-road vehicles. The ground was littered in cigarette butts. As I searched I found a broken window that was hid behind some large crates.