

# A SPECIALTY SERVICE

## Chapter 15

Searching for a friend

By, Michael Lewis Collins

## Searching for a friend

I entered the warehouse through a broken window hidden by some crates. From what I can see there are no cameras. I have an ar15 and a Glock 17 with two magazines. The crates hid my progress into the warehouse. The side walls were lit with a yellow light that was useless for detecting movement. Whoever this was they must have not been able to plan this kidnapping out better. Or is it an abduction with an adult. Time was running out. There is a time for stealth and a time to be seen. I had time for neither. In the middle of the warehouse there was a clear area. It was deserted. The smell of cigarettes, and copper filled the air. The copper smell was blood. Whoever was here was now gone. A path was opened to a large sliding door. It was ajar. At the door I found the first body. A man about twenty-two or three. His neck was twisted around. Inside the room was the bodies of five other men of various races and ages. By the door I saw her. She was lying face down and there was blood. No.

## Twelve-Hours Earlier

I run an overpriced specialty security service. If you need a bodyguard and are going to be in Hawaii or need a security consultant and are going to be in Hawaii, then you call us. Basically, we are in Hawaii. I just like saying that. I started the business with some old friends as well as some new ones I met on a job. Before this I ran a very different kind of specialty security service. More mercenary than door blocker. We did the things that governments couldn't or wouldn't do. One of my best friends in the world once said we were mercenaries with a cause because we wouldn't work for the bad guys. That came from a woman named Tima Cocks, but everybody calls her TC because she hates it when people call her Tina. My best friend a man named David and I met her in Somalia several years ago. I started a company with her while David and she started a family. When I went back to start this thing a new I knew I had to include them and as a side effect have them move to Hawaii.

This morning I was on my way to pick up my new, well newish car. I had a Ferrari just like Magnums from the television show. I say had because I sold it at a drastically lower cost. After stripping out the gears on the stick shift again I decided I needed a car a little friendlier to

me and my bad driving. After some searching I found a Ferrari California. So, I was sort of Magnum again. Without the mustache and good looks. My wife Sara hated the other car but has said she would make this one hers before I knew it. I met her on my last job with the old company. In an act of self-defense and gravity she killed her first husband who was using their religion and his fists to beat her into submission. She has some scars on her face and back from him, but she has made peace with them. Sara knows we could have them taken care of, but she wants them to remind her of where she came from. She doesn't know I have a Ferrari California on its way for her. One painted in her favorite color. A bright orange. Yes, I know that is automotive blasphemy.

On the way out of the dealership I got a call from David. He hadn't heard from TC in a few hours and she was late with the kids to school. I said, "*I am closer to your house so why don't I stop by and see what's up?*" David said, "*no, I'll meet you there.*" The sound of concern in his voice was alarming. I asked, "*is there something wrong you don't want me to know about? Are you two in some sort of trouble?*" David hesitated for what was a very long second then said, "*well no I just don't like this second-hand approach anymore.*" TC had told him about some of our jobs and how much gun play there was. So, now whenever she and I are in the same place he likes to be there just in case we start talking old times again. She left the active side of the job after becoming pregnant with their first child. She said, "*it was selfish to put my wants before the baby's needs.*" I told him to bring a kit from the office. A kit is what we call an arms package containing two Glocks, two AR15s, two combat knives and the ammo for the guns. I have a very hard to get permit to carry a gun here in Hawaii, but I choose not to anymore. I am not sure why, but my wife says it was my decision. Just like it was my decision to paint the bedroom orange. It helped that the county sheriff was once a donor to a charity ran by TC's parents. But that's another story.

When I arrived, I found the door to their home open. I didn't wait for David just in case there was something bad inside. In the foyer I found their three kids dressed and waiting quietly to be taken to school. TC was nowhere to be seen. Their oldest told me that their mother went out to get the car about two hours ago but never came back. If I had left my kids alone for two

hours, the house would be on fire, but their children quietly waited. I searched the house and grounds but no TC. David pulled up. I told him what his daughter said. He picked up his phone and called her. As he did we could hear a distant sound of music. It was White and Nerdy by Weird Al Yankovic. The ring tone used by TC for David. I found the phone in some bushes by the house. It had blood on it. TC's Range Rover was still in the garage. The car door was open with her purse was inside. I called the office and told them what we found. A sort of trusted employee named Tina said she would start a trace looking for any sign of her. I say sort of not that because Tina isn't trust worthy. She is accident prone and has accidentally caused a few shootouts that were not necessary. I turned to David and said, "*don't worry we will find her.*"

I checked for a pulse as gently as possible. She had one. She also had what looked like a gunshot wound to the abdomen. I had a combat first-aid kit on me. I applied a bandage to the wound then I called for an ambulance. There were shell casings everywhere but no guns. I went to get up and search, but TC grabbed my wrist. She said, "*hurt my babies and I'll gut you.*" She then seemingly passed out. As I searched Dan pulled up in a Humvee. When it was clear I gave him my guns and told him to go. We didn't need any bad will with the locals. The medics arrived then the police. As they frantically worked on her the police questioned me. I went with the medics as the police took control of the scene. I left Tina's Honda back there. At the hospital I met up with David and the others. They wheeled TC into surgery right away. We found her, but we weren't done.

Nine hours ago.

Tina with help from the local law pulled up all the available cameras in the area. She found the image of a cargo van pulling out of their driveway then running a red light. A red-light camera gave us the plate. The plate gave us the name of the owner. In this case it was a rental company and luckily for us they have a GPS system on their cars and trucks, so they can locate them. It spoke to the nature of this abduction. A larger or longer planned plan would have gotten their vehicle from another source. It's like they wanted us to find them. Using the information, we plotted their route for the day as well as their final location about three hours ago. I split up

the workforce into four teams making myself the fifth team by myself. Just how I like it. David said he was going with me. I said, “*no you need to be with your children.*” He replied, “*my wife will be with our kids when we find her.*” I didn’t have time to argue with him, so I clocked him. I told Tina, “*when he wakes tell him I will give him the key.*” She gave me that dog cocked head look then nodded when I brought out a chain with locks. He may end up hating me but I’m not going to help make his kids orphans.

Thirty minutes of driving got me to the first site they spent any time at. It was a strip joint. Happy Haole’s Hard on. Haole is the Hawaiian word for basically white people. Its pronounced like howely. It’s a strip joint that caters to the lower class of tourists with all Polynesian, Chinese and Japanese ladies as dancers. You know for that Hawaiian feel to your lap dance. Grass skirts and nothing else. I went in and asked around. With no pictures I had no success in finding any information. This club was like most of these clubs. Once you get past the temptation of the naked women it was all dark and depressing. I knew I had something bright and wonderful back home. I went back to the parking lot to find my car on blocks and the tires gone. I wonder if that ever happened to Magnum?

I called for a tow truck and then I called Tina. Just as soon as she said my name David took the phone. I won’t repeat what he said but let’s just say he wasn’t my biggest fan. He gave Tina the phone back and I told her what happened. After she stopped laughing she said she would come there and I could take her car. I asked, “*besides all the cursing, how is he?*” She told me that David asked one of his daughters for help. She had him walk out as far as the chain would go. Then she went to a cupboard and grabbed a bag of cookies. She sat just outside of his reach eating the cookies. At one point she had reminded him of a day he hit a fire hydrant because he was mad about a parking ticket. She was worried about him and she also wanted a cookie. After an hour a tow truck and Tina arrived. Tina has a 1985 Honda Civic, red, blue and some sort of primer color. Luckily it had an automatic drive. I said to her, “*we need to pay you better.*”

I left her with the car and I went back on the trail. As I left I think I saw her going into the club. Well, I guess that is just none of my business. The next stop they stayed at was a hardware store. I met with the stores security. We searched the security system for any shots of the van and the driver. We got both. They bought two metal wash basins, two car batteries, several car jumper cables and some various other supplies used in the torcher of people. I need to send the pictures without letting David know about what they bought. If he knew he just might bite through the chain. Or his leg. There were three men in the van. One of them stayed in the van while the other two went in and bought the torcher kit. The man in the van look middle eastern while the other two were a special kind of redneck. Think the movie Joe Dirt with the mullets, cheesy facial hair, trucker hats and sleeveless flannel shirts. Almost more of a costume rather than everyday wear. In fact, it was just a little too much to be real.

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 were 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.

With TC safe and sound in the hospital I went to oversee the farmhouse and her parents remains. David is going to tell her when she wakes up. The county coroner suddenly became extremely careful with the bodies of my friends when I arrived. By the end of the day I had an offer on the property and a tentative acceptance. After I got off the phone with the owner of the property, I got a call from TC. David told her what happened to her parents, so I figured she wanted to know I was out there hunting. Instead she asked, "*where is Sara and your children?*" A cold chill went down my back just as the rage started to boil in my head. She said she knew what was happening and she would explain but first I need to put my family in a safe place. I went to the house with Tina, so she could pick up her car. I left her there to supervise the site while I went home.

We were in the process of building a house. Sara was overseeing it. She wanted to know everything about the process as well as make sure she can feel safe. We met in Alaska. She was on the run from her husband's family who wanted her head. No, they literally wanted her head. Sara's husband was a verbally and physically abusive ass hat who used their religion as a crutch

to abuse her. He went into a fit of rage after she was seen in public without her hair covered. She held a knife up to defend herself and the ass hat tripped and fell onto the blade. It was ruled an accident, but his family didn't see it that way. A local police officer helped her meet up with a charity Daniel and Dom ran that helped at risk women escape violence. When it became clear she couldn't stay, they helped her with an escape plan. Part of that plan was to move to Alaska while a permanent place was setup. I met her there and soon she and I were we. And we have been together ever since.

A few years and a few children later we now live on the big island. Sara wasn't answering her phone. I broke every speed law on the way to Sara. Someone radioed ahead and soon I had a police escort. After years of dealing with local law we or I have a good relationship with them. It helps that the local sheriff was a former employee as well as a donor to the charity. I hit the driveway and slid into a palm tree. And that was the end of the Ferrari California. Sara came running out to see what the sound was and saw the car. She was mad but more about how reckless she thought I was being than the destruction of the car. I ran up to her and hugged her. She could tell something was wrong. As I explained to her about the events of the last twelve hours, Jimmy came up in his car and crisp clean sheriff's uniform.

With the kids in her car we went to the hospital. She drove. TC and Sara insisted I get checked out. I think TC wanted some time to gather what she was going to say. After a way to slow quick exam I was released. TC said, *"those guys weren't after money."* She hesitated then went on, *"they wanted the list."* Sara asked, *"the list?"* TC replied, *"the list of all the relocated women."* I could tell Sara wanted to ask the question, but she didn't want to step on TC's parent's graves. TC said, *"my mom and dad were no longer in with the charity and even if they were there is no actual list. Everyone's information helped are kept separate from each other unless there is a family connection."* She wiped some tears away then said, *"they brutalized them for nothing. They hurt a woman who barely knew her own name."* I broke a moment of silence and asked, *"are you still working with the charity?"* TC got a defiant look then replied, *"what if I am white boy?"* I said, *"you are connected to my family and you couldn't be bothered to say you were doing something that could expose them to this."* Her defiance turned to worry then it got

worse. Sara said, "*I have been working with them too.*" The next part turned into some words and screams that I just don't want to relive. When things calmed down we decided we needed to do something.

Dan did his thing and soon we had a car to track. The people who were doing this rented their van and a couple of cars all using the same company. After a very large cash incentive they activated the tracking system and soon we had a couple of targets. On the way-out Sara said, "*Jack come back to us.*" I said, "*always.*" I think I knew I was lying to her. I would do whatever I had to do to keep my family safe. Even at the cost of my life. There were two cars. A Toyota Corolla went west while a Chevy Suburban went east. If the two dressed like stereo typical rednecks were real rednecks, then they would want the Chevy. I wanted the man in charge. Dan gave me a ten-minute head start then he told Jimmy about the cars. I went for the Corolla and Tina and Dan went for the Suburban. After a twenty-minute chase by Tina then the local law they stopped the Suburban and found it was being driven by two teenagers who stole the car and went on a ride. I followed the car to a private airstrip.

The car stopped and four men got out. Two of them were of middle eastern descent or maybe that was just my American bias. The other two were white men. They had the same build of the rednecks without the redneck attire. I took Sara's Porsche Cayenne and I forgot to check for a gun. In the back was her stainless Winchester 45-70 with a box of ammo. She liked the rifle for the range. Both the looks she gets and the feel of the round. I hid her car behind a building and made my move. The two other men were already in the plane, but the fake rednecks were on the tarmac making like they knew what they were doing. I got within twenty feet before dumb and dumber saw me. I hit one with a round in the knee then the other with the butt of the gun. The one I shot pulled a Glock 23 and I kicked it out of his hand. As he fought the plane took off. In the fight one of the men lost his wig and the Swastika tattoo on the side became visible. He said, "*you stupid fucking Jew bastard just who do you think you are.*" I kicked him in the nuts and said, "*my name is Jack Pressler and I am the stupid Jew bastard who you are going to spill your guts to.*"

A week later I received a DVD from a friend working at the Pentagon. The two men gave me everything we needed to bust the ring of men searching for their wayward women. Some of them had ties to terrorist so everyone was indicted as if they were terrorists. I would like to say it was over, but nothing is ever truly over. The lies have put a strain on our marriage that wasn't visible before. She first said it was to protect me then she said it was because she knew I couldn't stay away from the action. And in that she was right. If I knew, I would be in boots and on the ground. The events forced us to speed up the house. We move in next week. We also beefed up the security, but not to the point that it would be visible. We want our girls Trina and Jenna to live without fear of the outside world. Locking them in a prison and calling it home wouldn't do that. Jenna just turned one. She was not just walking, she was running.

Daniel and Dominique Cocks funeral was to be a quiet affair. That was until TC heard from three former Presidents as well as the leaders of several nations. It became this massive affair with one of the countries paying the bill. Because of all the press and the heat Sara couldn't go. I made sure to record the event. That is to say I made sure someone was there to record it. That night I stayed home with my girls and we watched Frozen. For the millionth time. We spoke that morning about starting up the other side of the business. She said yes as long as she could be a part of it.

Oh, yes that DVD. It was from a drone. It showed two familiar men going from a Mercedes to a house. Then it showed another drone firing a rocket into the house and the house going away. Trial by hellfire. What a shame no one brought any marshmallows.