

Enshallah

EXCERPT #3

Chapter Seven

It was only because the water tanker was almost empty that Yasi was able to cruise along at 55 miles per hour. She sipped constantly from the water bladder, swallowing slowly, swishing water around her teeth and letting it soak into the membranes of her mouth. She reached into her pocket, took the greasy butter from the goat meat and rubbed it onto her tongue and teeth. She had seen the Bedouins put it in their camel's water before a long trek across the desert. It would help protect the delicate tissues of her mouth from drying out later on. While she drove, she searched the cab for anything that might be of help to her, but found nothing except for a disposable cigarette lighter. She put it in her pocket and pushed the truck's accelerator down to the floor. There were no other vehicles. The desolate roadside sped by as a brownish blur and the highway looked as straight as a hallway carpet runner.

As she drove, her emotions swung from solid determination to grim desolation. She remembered the headlines about her parent's murder. "Ah, my God," she moaned. Her parents died because of her, not only because she failed to complete the mission she was sent to do, but because she allowed herself to be uncovered as an Agency operative. She had no doubt that the news article had been genuine. The bastard told her, that night in Riyadh when he captured and tortured her, that he had a surprise for her. He had viciously doled out retribution for what he perceived as a personal betrayal. How had she once again allowed herself to become infatuated with him, and his God damned rich-boy lifestyle; allowed herself to be distracted from what was important? What an idiot she had been to be seduced by his ornate displays of Bedouin tradition, his privileges of wealth and power.

How had he become a trusted friend of the western diplomats and gotten unlimited access to their embassies? She knew international business had been a primary reason. Profitable business deals between his conglomerate and their countries had given western diplomats an excuse to be sloppy about security. Profit, like politics, made strange bedfellows. She too, had been duped into trusting him, but she should have known better. She had known what he was like before and, yet, he had played all of them for fools. "Son of a bitch, of course!" She shouted out loud in the truck cab. Mohammed al Rasheed was not just an al Qaeda operative, but a high ranking commander, maybe the commander controlling operations in Saudi

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Arabia. He had security contacts placed within all the embassies and the ability to glean information from the highest ranking diplomats. His network was far more sophisticated than anything the Americans thought. He had not been uncovered because no one was looking in the right places.

She remembered being thrown onto the sidewalk in Washington, DC on a spring night years before. She felt something dangerous had been close to her then, and now she knew why. He was the man the Agency was looking for, the butcher who had not only wrecked their information network, but murdered their agents. She remembered, too, he had left the United States right before the attack on America occurred, obsessed about taking her home with him to Saudi Arabia. Was he also part of al Qaeda involved in 9/11? "My God," she shuddered. Had she slept with one of the murderers that attacked the United States? "Fucking bastard, I will kill you!" She screamed at no one.

She had failed her parents, failed the Agency and had almost committed suicide by stupidity. As her Marine buddies would say, "She had fucked up to the max." She swore at herself again, banging on the truck's steering wheel with her palm, glaring at the tattooed fingers of her right hand. A cold chill raced through her body, causing her to shiver. There was an old cliché that claimed when a chill ran down your spine in hot weather someone had accidentally stepped over your future grave. If it was true, Mohammed had probably not only stepped over her grave site, but already had it dug and waiting for her.

"Shit!" She clenched the wheel with tight fists and blinked away the tears that fell heavily onto her shirt front. "Dimwit." she said to herself. She pictured him laughing at her. How naïve she had been. She recalled they had met while she was a freshman at Georgetown and he was a graduate student finishing his MBA. After their chance meeting at a reception for foreign students, Mohammed had proceeded to sweep her off her feet. All Yasi could remember was a blur of sex and conflicted feelings. Thankfully, she had found the common sense to refuse to marry him and accompany him to Saudi Arabia. She had not seen him again until six months ago, when he appeared at an American Embassy party in Riyadh and kissed her hand warmly. Even then, she hadn't connected the dots. As she pictured the infamous Rasheed smile and she once again swore out loud.