

Kalup's Crossroads
A Sonny Kalup Mystery
By
Don Lewis

Kalup's Crossroads Book Review

By Jane Smith, writer for the Meadville Tribune

Augustine "Sonny" Kalup, of Cambridge Springs, PA, now a resident of Golden Living Center at Cambridge Springs, is a former tool and die maker. Injuries from wounds suffered after being shot when he was a Navy SEAL in Vietnam have now taken their toll on his body, and he can no longer live on his own. "I got shot through the gut," he said very matter-of-factly during my interview of him. Six bullets entered his lower intestines, and now those injuries are causing him to need assistance for almost everything.

And, although Sonny now is confined to the nursing home, his name is making news in the world of mystery fiction. His name is used as the main character in the latest book by Don Lewis, former Crawford County District Attorney and defense attorney and now a mystery writer. Lewis, a personal friend of Sonny's, asked for and received permission to use his name for a book someday. The reader will find Kalup's Crossroads a real thriller and a very easy book to read. Lewis writes in such a manner that the reader quickly envisions all the action.

In the story Sonny is charged with murder, and as a reader, the book becomes even better to read as the action moves quickly with details of the trial, the investigation and what ultimately happens to Kalup.

In this book — as in others — Lewis shines when writing about this action. His experience as a former Assistant U.S. Attorney helps him create the drug world scene. But his experience as a prosecutor and courtroom attorney is what makes this book so very interesting, and so easy to read.

This is the third book that Lewis has written and he continues to keep readers wanting to learn more. Lewis' descriptive nature of writing makes this a great book to read and a great book for "would be" detectives to try to solve.

Reader's reviews

Mr. Lewis,

I just returned from a cruise to Virgin Islands, San Juan, and the Grand Turk Islands. Took "Kalup's Crossroads" along and could not put it down!!!! It is your best work so far!!!

Howard Bruce, Rural Retreat, VA

Hi Mr. Lewis,

I wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed "Kalup's Crossroads!" The fast pace of the story was great, and I liked Sonny! For me, this was your BEST!

Kathie Scopel, Myrtle Beach, SC

Mr. Lewis,

I read your book. When I started, I couldn't put it down! You have an amazing ability to tell a story and bring the characters and events to life. The subject matter made me sad. (I'm a "wimp" for pain and suffering, and want the world and everyone in it to be good and happy...). I, for one, couldn't predict the ending. It was a total surprise.

I suspect you have many more stories to tell and will do it well.

Rose Ann Maloy, Hershey, PA

Excerpts

Prologue

Turbo, Colombia, 1988

The day was stagnant hot; the white sand and shell road reflected the sun, and his eyes squinted behind sunglasses as he walked along a quiet, surfside street in Turbo, Colombia. Augustine "Sonny" Kalup didn't look much like what you would think a DEA agent should look like. Oh, he was a tall, handsome, and tough Irishman, but he didn't have the overall bearing one would expect from a government agent. He was more than a little rough around the edges, ala Bogart, and had the look and carriage of a man who had been through a lot of tough times. He was about to go through another.

His internal system was on high alert as he headed for the bar, just a block away from where he had parked his car. The air filled his nostrils with the odor of dead and rotting fish that washed ashore in the flotsam. He paused on the empty street outside the sun darkened wood building, capped with a corrugated metal roof. He glanced about, pushed the sunglasses to the top of his head, and entered the shadowy, plank-floored, dockside bar bearing only partially blinking neon letters advertising *Cerveza Fria*. The tavern, *Mundo de Sueños*, was perched on stilts over rainbow-colored oil-slick water. The name meant "Dreamworld", but it looked more like a nightmare. The home-made liquor sold there out of bottles bearing soiled Seagram labels was consumed by the many nefarious looking characters that frequented the place. Most of them were common seamen, drinking up their wages before heading back out into the darkness beyond the shoreline.

During his time in Colombia, his work had taken him to this place on only one other occasion, and the man he was there to meet never showed. Sonny walked slowly to a table at the rear of the bar, noted the slope in the floor, and sat with his back to the wall. He was waiting for a man known to him only as Fernando, a young, lower echelon, but up-and-coming member of the Ochoa Cartel. Fernando had been told that Sonny was an American looking for a major connection in Colombia, from whom he could buy large quantities of cocaine for re-sale in the United States.

Peeking at his watch, Sonny noted that the time for his meeting had passed by ten minutes. He casually scanned the room from one side to the other, and then back again, looking for a sign of the man he was to meet. All he saw were rough looking men bearing scars and tattoos, and staring ominously at the “*gringo*.” Sonny sat in his chair, elbows resting on the arms, with the fingers of both hands laced at his chest, and in a show of bravado, returned their menacing glares. To act any less unconcerned would have invited a more physical confrontation.

An old panhandler, who had been eyeing Sonny since he entered the bar, moved over to him, and with his hand out, asked for enough to buy a drink. Sonny obliged. Without an expression of gratitude, the old man moved over to put the money on the bar. Grabbing the glass, he took a quick gulp, then skulked off in a corner of the bar to finish it, his boney knees visible through his ragged trousers.

A waitress, tattooed from shoulders to wrists, ambled over to Sonny’s table, and in a grating, tobacco-roughened voice, asked, “*Que quieres?*”

“Tequila.”

She brought the shot glass of clear liquid. Sonny lifted the drink to his lips and placed it back on the table. Knowing it was nothing more than a glass of whatever panther-piss that was being passed off for tequila that day, he only feigned taking a drink.

He looked up from the table and saw two men entering the bar, one fitting the description he had of Fernando. The man was a somewhat taller than the average Colombian, about six feet, and slim, with sloping shoulders, small suspicious eyes, and a humorless expression. The other man was shorter, and much bulkier. They walked to his table.

“May we sit down, *señor*,” Fernando asked in Spanish.

Sonny nodded, motioning to the other chairs at the table.

“I am Fernando,” the man said, without offering his hand.

“Terry Nance,” Sony answered, using his undercover name.

“You are well?” Fernando asked.

“I am; and you?”

“*Bastante bien, gracias*,” Fernando said. “If you prefer, I will speak English.”

Sonny shrugged and shook his head. He was fluent in Spanish.

Fernando nodded, and continued in Spanish. “I am sorry to be late,” he said.

“It’s of no consequence,” Sonny answered in Spanish. He wondered why a Colombian would apologize for being late. In Colombia it was a common occurrence. In all of his time there, Sonny didn’t remember ever seeing a clock in a public place. Time meant little to the average Colombian. They did what they did, and it took as long as it took.

“That is kind of you *señor*. You are an American.”

“Yes, is that a problem?” Sonny asked coldly.

“Which part of the States do you come from?” Fernando asked.

“What difference does it make where I’m from; do you want to do some business or not?”

“You are not very polite, *señor*,” Fernando said.

“Oh yeah; well I’m sorry, but whoever the asshole was who decided to put a metal roof on this oven, he’s ruined my day. So, if you don’t mind, can we just get to business?”

Fernando cocked his head to one side. “I see. It will be as you wish. I’m told you are interested in purchasing some merchandise for transport back to Florida.”

“That’s correct.”

At that moment the waitress returned, and asked if anyone wanted to order. Fernando, irritated at Sonny’s attitude, turned to the waitress and waving her off, gruffly said, “*Nada. Vaya!*”

Then, turning his attention back to Sonny, he said, “It’s odd that you haven’t stated that you wanted a high quality product.”

Sonny raised his half-lidded eyes to Fernando. “This is Colombia, señor; I assume all your stuff is high quality.”

Fernando showed a wry smile. “How much are you willing to pay?” he asked.

“How much are you asking?”

Fernando scanned Sonny for a moment, then replied, “More than you can afford, I’m afraid.”

Sonny, his look turning hard, and his eyes fixed coldly on Fernando, replied, “Don’t worry about what I can afford; how much?”

Fernando smiled. “Ten thousand a kilo,”

Sonny wasn’t sure what these guys were up to, but he knew he was getting jerked around. The price they were asking was a joke. He feigned a laugh. “You want ten grand a kilo for delivery in Florida?” he asked, his tone growing angry.

“That is the price, but for delivery here, not in the United States.”

“If this is a joke, it’s not funny.”

“I do not joke about my business,” Fernando replied.

Sonny scanned both men, his eyes narrowing with contempt. “I don’t need this horseshit. You know the going rate is seven thousand a kilo delivered in Florida. I’ll give you four thousand a kilo, or seven a kilo delivered in Florida. Take it or leave it.”

“How much did you bring with you?” Fernando asked.

“Don’t worry about it; I have enough.” Sonny was becoming seriously irritated, and his nerve meter was going up.

The man who came in with Fernando moved his hands under the table.

Sonny shot an angry glance at the man “Get your fuckin’ hands back up on the table where I can see ‘em,” he growled.

Fernando jumped out of his seat and pulled an automatic handgun from his belt. “No, you get your hands up, Agent Kalup,” he shouted, pointing the weapon at Sonny. At that same time, the other man pushed his chair back and brought up a .45 from under the table. Sonny flipped the table up, deflecting the man’s arm and pulled a 9mm Glock from his belt. In one motion, he moved quickly to his left out of Fernando’s way and fired twice through the bottom of the table, hitting the other man in the throat. The dying man fell back against another table and onto the floor, firing his weapon in the air. Sonny

turned to face Fernando, who had begun to fire. Before Sonny could get another shot off, he felt a painful sting in his right side. Fernando's bullet had hit him. Sonny returned fire and hit Fernando in the leg. The Colombian grabbed his leg and limped back from the table. He fired a second time, hitting Sonny in the upper chest, spinning him around, and splattering blood on to the rear wall. Sonny turned back, slapping his left hand over his chest wound, and fired again, but he missed his target. Fernando turned and hobbled out of the bar.

Sonny pushed the overturned table out of his way. The pain of the bloody wound in his chest was quickly draining his strength as he followed in pursuit. He grimaced and staggered to the door, leaving a trail of blood along the way. He could barely stand as he pushed the door open and went outside. He saw Fernando jump into the front seat of a dark car. Then his eyes fell upon a man pointing a large gun out of the rear window at him. "*Put a madre,*" the man yelled as he fired.

Sonny was hit again, this time in his stomach, and he went down onto the ground falling into the darkness of unconsciousness. Fernando got back out of the car and was about to take another shot at Sonny when two men, unknown to him, came running down the street from the opposite direction. They were yelling and firing their weapons at him. Fernando jumped back in the car and it sped away.

An old woman across the road, pushing a wooden cart, cast a disinterested glance at the two men bending over Sonny, and paid no attention to the car as it disappeared into a cloud of dust.

Chapter 1

Twelve years later, Tampa, Florida

At 7:00 on a clear evening, Richard Stanton, a detective with the Tampa, Florida Police Department, sat in his office catching up on his report writing, when his phone rang.

"Narcotics, Detective Stanton," he said.

"Yeah, Richie, this is Poker," the caller replied. It was one of Stanton's informants.

"Poker, what's up?"

"I got somethin' for you if you want."

Stanton quickly grabbed a pen and turned a page in his notebook. "Go," he said.

"You know the old abandoned school house over on Homer Avenue in Sage Hill?"

Stanton thought for a moment. "Yeah, I know the one you're talking about. What about it?"

"Did you know there was a big time meth lab there?"

"No, I didn't. We know there's one somewhere in Sage, but so far we can't get a fix on exactly where it is."

"Yeah, well now you know. It's been there for a little over a week but they'll be moving it pretty soon."

Stanton made a note, and then asked, "You've been there?"

"Just once; last night."

“What’s the deal?” Stanton asked.

“I’m kinda hurtin’, Richie.” Poker said in a depressed tone.

“What’ll it take to get you better?”

“A couple hundred askin’ too much?”

“Not if you can give me this lab, it isn’t,” Stanton said, noting the amount.

“I just did.”

Stanton smiled. “I need more info on the place,” he said. “I need to know how many guns; where in the building; all that.”

“OK,” Poker replied, and then began to provide the information.

Stanton interrupted. “I need you in here,” he said. Poker agreed, and arrangements were made to pick up the informant, and bring him to the detective’s office.

Forty-five minutes later, the two men arrived back at Stanton’s office to find Capt. Sherk, the commander of the S.W.A.T. team waiting for them. Stanton had called him before leaving to pick up Poker. The Captain asked Poker to draw a floor plan for the building.

“It’ll be a little rough, but I can give you the general idea,” Poker replied.

Once the drawing was complete, Sherk and Stanton studied it with an eye to a take-down operation that evening. The building was 5 floors high, with a door to the roof. There were several entrances, but Poker told them only two of them were open; the others were nailed shut. Both the main, and rear entrances were guarded, and there were several armed look-outs on the roof. The lab was on the third floor, at the southeast corner of the building. There were about 8 or 9 workers inside, with several guards watching them. All together there were about 10 or 12 armed men inside, and on the roof. The main stairway was located in the center of the building, and there was always a guard posted on the third floor outside the lab.

Stanton gave Poker two hundred dollars and told him that, for his own safety, he would have to remain in lock-up at the station until the operation was completed. Poker understood and agreed.

An hour later, after meeting with the entire S.W.A.T. team, the plans were solidified, and the operation was ready to go.

At 11:05 all members of the team were in place outside the abandoned school house. Three snipers were on the roof of a six-story building across the street, putting them one floor higher than the suspect look-outs. The officers, using night-scopes, confirmed that there were seven lookouts on the roof, all armed with automatic weapons; four spread out along the front of the building and three in the back.

All members of the team were in radio contact with each other. Capt. Sherk gave the order for the diversionary team to go, and a car roared past the front of the school building, with a patrol car, siren blaring, following closely behind. Half a block past the schoolhouse, another police car blocked the street. As the diversion car approached, it careened off the street and into the side of an abandoned building. One officer on the roof across from the schoolhouse, radioed that all of the guards had moved to the front of the building and were looking down on the action. At that moment, Sherk gave the word for the rear entry team to “go”. As another police car rolled past the building with its siren also going, the team crashed through the rear door, and immediately took control of the surprised guard, putting him on the floor and cuffing him. Moments later the rest of the team entered. One of the men instructed the captured guard to call for the guard at

the front entrance to come to the back. The man did as he was instructed, and within a minute the second guard was also in custody.

Knowing that the only armed guard who now stood in their way to the upper floors was the one on the third floor, Capt. Shenk summoned a sharpshooter to the bottom of the stairway. Another of the team dropped a can on the floor. Immediately, the man guarding the stairway poked his head over the railing and, with his weapon pointed down to the lower floors, called down. At that instant the sharpshooter put a silenced round into his forehead, and he fell quietly to the floor. All of this was accomplished within a minute and a half of the initial entry into the building.

Seconds later the entire team was on the third floor, four men poised at the closed entrance to the lab, and six more wearing gas masks, stood at the stairway awaiting orders to ascend to the upper floors.

On the signal they all moved, those at the lab door smashing through and, waving their weapons, identified themselves as police officers. They screamed instructions for everyone to hit the floor, hands out to their sides. All those in the lab immediately did as they were instructed.

Shank received a call from one of his men on the roof across the street, telling him that several of the roof-guards left the roof. Shank assumed that they had heard the noise made while taking of the lab. He immediately alerted his men and, at the same time, heard several men yelling down for the guard who had been on the third floor. Shank signaled three of his men up the staircase in a staggered formation. Slowly the men ascended the stairs, their short-barreled automatic rifles at the ready. Shank and the others followed behind. When they made the turn halfway up the staircase, the officers threw tear gas canisters up to the fourth floor. A second later, shots rang out from the stairwell leading to the fifth floor. The fire-fight was on. Bits of plaster flew off the wall, and the old carpet jumped on the stairs. One of the officers was hit in the shoulder, just off the end of his flack jacket. He said he could make it down by himself. The team returned fire and lobbed a smoke bomb up in the direction of the fire, and inched their way forward. Coughs, curses, and short bursts of automatic weapons fire lit up the haze. At last, running, stumbling footsteps told of a hasty retreat.

As the resisting force withdrew back to the roof, the snipers across the street poured fire into them. Two of the suspects immediately fell dead. The others took cover between the air conditioning units. Once again, an officer using a bullhorn informed the resisting force they were surrounded, and to throw down their weapons. Flashes of light and the pap, pap, pap of weapons fire came from the roof. The officers at the doorway to the roof lobbed another smoke bomb toward the air conditioners, and dashed for cover on the roof. For a full ten seconds they poured fire into the area where the suspects were hiding. When they stopped shooting, a silence hung over the scene.

“This is your last chance,” screamed the voice on the bullhorn. “Come out with your hands up, or die where you are.”

The fight was over. Automatic weapons were thrown out from between the units, and two men scrambled into the clear. Two others screamed that they were wounded and couldn't move.

A moment later the smoke from the canisters cleared, and the team moved forward to secure the area. Three of the suspects were dead; one was wounded in the leg,

another in the stomach. the others were not hit. All of the weapons were collected and put in a pile, guarded by several officers.

“We need some medics up here,” Stanton said into his two way radio. “And call for some ambulances. We have one wounded officer.”

“You mean in addition to the one who came down by himself?”

“Roger that,” Stanton answered.

“How about the suspects?”

Three dead, two wounded, one pretty badly, and two uninjured.”

“How bad is the officer?” the uniformed Captain asked.

“He caught one in the calf,” Stanton replied. “He’ll be alright, but he’s bleeding pretty good. Officer Blount has put a tourniquet on it and is bringing him down now, but we can’t move the wounded perps yet,” he added.

“What about the perps who weren’t hit?”

Stanton laughed. “Yeah, Lt. Shank has both of them on the wall. There are several more already downstairs. We’re going to need some help getting the weapons down. There’s a shit load of ‘em.”

“Any dope?”

Shenk laughed. “Yeah, we got the whole lab, and just enough meth to keep a platoon of your average Hollywood stars happy for about a year.”

Chapter 2

The hallway lights flickered as DEA Agent Tracy McBain unlocked her office door and stepped inside the large room. The grandfather clock, in a darkened corner of the room, began chiming softly. It was nine o’clock in the evening. Hard wind and rain were pounding against the windows. Lightening illuminated the room like flash bulbs going off at a news conference, followed seconds later by a vibrating and rumbling thunder.

Tracy switched on the lights and, removing her raincoat, glanced in the mirror hanging on the wall beside the brass coat rack. “Oh brother,” she whispered to the mirror. The 35-year old was blind to the beauty that was hidden beneath the tired looking eyes and drawn features that stared back at her. She wondered, as she touched her hair, whether the long hours at the office, and in the field, were taking their toll? Or, maybe it was the beginning of the inevitable transformation to middle age, she thought.

She shook the coat and hung it on the rack, and then walked lazily toward her desk and sat down. She hit the message button on the answering machine. It beeped, and regurgitated mundane messages as she looked around the room and sighed at the bulging stacks of files piled neatly on her credenza; all demanding attention. She switched on the desk lamp and leaned back in the comfort of her office chair. The flower patterned material which covered the other chairs in the office, and the plants, and wall-paintings placed around the room, all added warmth to the otherwise bland room. She particularly prized a single; small print of “Luncheon in the Garden”, a famous Monet that was left to her from the estate of her beloved grandpapa.

The clean desk top was a testament to Tracy’s methodical efficiency, and her line of defense against the unrelenting paper work that kept calling her name. She picked up

one of her files and began reading. Some time later, her office phone rang. She picked up.

“Yes?”

A husky male voice, revealing a fairly heavy Spanish accent, spoke in English, “Good evening, Bonita.” “Bonita” was his code name for Tracy. “This is Enrique.” It was Enrique Chavez, one of Tracy’s informants. “I have confirmation on that shipment we discussed last week.”

“Enrique, how are you?” she returned.

“Hungry, Bonita. I am very hungry.”

“From Colombia, to somewhere on the Florida coast, you said, correct?”

Receiving an affirmative reply, she asked, “Do you know for certain now that it’s cocaine?”

“I’m not saying that,” he answered. “No one told me exactly what the cargo is, but I will get a thousand dollars for one night of work to unload the plane somewhere close to Fort Myers, and they don’t pay that much money for unloading marijuana, so I think it is *cocaina*. That is my thinking.”

“Yes, yes. Go on.”

“Do we still have a deal, Bonita?”

“You have my personal assurances, Enrique. If the information proves reliable, you’ll be generously rewarded by the government, but you understand, no seizure, no money.”

“*Si Bonita, entiendo.*” He understood. He said it wouldn’t be long, and that he would give Tracy a call when he was told of the exact date and time. “I am going to need a car, but not one of those shiny new ones. I would like to have an old one, one that is not so new; one with many dents. *Comprendes señorita?*”

“Yes; I’ll take care of it. Anything else?”

“No.”

“I’ll expect your call, then.”

The informant hung up.

Tracy sat back in the chair, spun around, and looked out the window at the storm. After a few minutes of deep thought, she turned back to the desk. Thoughts of the conversation with Enrique filled her mind. She opened a drawer, and pulled out the file containing the information Enrique had already given her on the case. She wanted to refresh herself as to the existing details, and add the ones she had just received. She wanted no flaws in her game plan, and no interruptions to her thoughts.

Several days earlier, Tracy had called the Washington, DC headquarters of the DEA, asking for Agent Roger Nydes. He wasn’t there, and she left a message. The next day Nydes, who was the leader of a special assault team, called back. He assured her that his team was at her disposal to go anywhere in the world to assist in this or any large-scale take-down operations. All he needed, he said, was information about where and when the operation was to go down. Then, he gave her a phone number where he could be reached at any time, night or day.

Pouring over the file, she soon became deeply engrossed, losing all sense of time.

Chapter 3

Some time later, Tracy was startled by the unexpected ring of another call. As she lifted the receiver, the grandfather clock sounded a single bong. Tracy glanced at it to see the hands straight up at midnight. She was pleased to hear the voice of her friend, Detective Richard Stanton.

“Richard, how are you?” she asked warmly.

“You’re sounding awfully chipper for the middle of the night,” he joked.

“Not chipper, Richard; punchy is more like it,” she returned. “How did you know I’d be here?”

“I left a message at your office for you this afternoon, and later I tried your cell, and then your apartment. You have no social life, so where else would you be?”

“Yeah, thanks,” Tracy replied with a sigh. “I didn’t get it on my message machine.”

“I talked with your secretary.”

Tracy quickly sorted through the pile of messages. “Oh, yes, here it is. I’m sorry I haven’t gotten back to you. So, what’s going on?”

“We made a major bust last night over in Sage Hill; well, I guess it’s actually the night before last. Anyway, it’s kept me going straight through.”

“OK, so?” Tracy replied.

“Well listen, I picked up a guy there who gave me some information I thought you might be interested in.”

“Information is my business, my friend. I’m all ears.” She said, quickly retrieving a sharp pencil and a note pad.

“Do you remember we talked about that tip you got from your informant last week about a big load coming in by air?”

“I sure do. Why?”

“Did you ever get the details of it?”

“As a matter of fact, he just called me a little while ago. I know it’s going to go down somewhere near Fort Myers.”

“Ah hah!”

“Oh, please, tell me you have something more. My informant says he’s not going to get the details until the last minute, and I need as much lead time as I can get to coordinate everything.”

“Did he give you a date for the delivery?”

“No, he doesn’t know it yet.”

“Well, I might have something for you,” Richard declared, sounding pleased with himself.

“Well, come on, Richard, what is it?”

Richard chuckled at her eagerness, then continued. “Now, I’m not one hundred percent sure this is the same gig, but it sure sounds like it. The mope I’m talking about is trying to make a deal, and told me he had information about a big load flying into some airfield east of Ft. Myers on the 23rd of this month. You said the load you’re waiting for was supposed to come in fairly soon. That’s ten days away yet, but this guy tells me that it was supposed to come in three days from now, on the 16th but that things got delayed. Anyway, I figured it might just be the same one you’re talking about.”

“Did he say how he knew this?” asked Tracy.

“Yeah. He said he was told he could make a thousand bucks for helping to off-load the stuff if he was willing to go down there.” Stanton laughed, and added, “I asked him if he needed any help.”

“Does he know where the airfield is?”

“He says he was given directions on how to get there. He was told he should be there by eight in the evening, and he was given a name of someone to contact there and a card showing that he was okay.”

“Isn’t it odd that they would give him directions that far in advance?” Tracy asked.

“When they told him that, it was still supposed to be on the 16th.”

“OK, eight O’clock; that’s well after dark. That’ll work well for us. What directions?”

“From Ft. Myers, he’s to go east on Route 78 to a little place called Denaud. One mile east of there he is to turn onto a small dirt road and follow it until he gets to the airfield, about three-quarters of a mile away.”

“Got it. Listen, Richard, I really appreciate this.”

“I know.”

Putting down the receiver, Tracy made a note that the first thing in the morning she would call Chad Green, the Assistant US Attorney working the case.

Immediately, she picked up the phone and called Agent Nydes, telling him of her conversations with her informant and Detective Stanton.

“Once we get a confirmation on the time and location of the operation, we can be prepared be in Fort Myers within a matter of hours. I already have up-to-date topographical maps of every area in the world.”

“I think I can confirm both the date, and the location, now,” Tracy said, and relayed the information about the airfield near Denaud. “The date is supposed to be on the 23rd of this month. If anything changes, I’ll contact you immediately, and I’ll confirm all this information again on the 21st.”

“I’ll need transportation from the airport in Ft. Meyers to the location for up to fifty of my agents. I’ll have some other needs also, but I’ll e-mail them to you tomorrow.”

Once the conversation ended, Tracy turned off the desk lamp, crossed the room, put on her raincoat, and switched off the lights. She opened the door, and then looked back across the room. A satisfied smile crossed her face. The storm outside was breaking.

As she would soon learn, however, the one in her life was just about to begin.

Chapter 4

Agent John Holt moved silently along the back streets of Medellin, Colombia, heading for a midnight rendezvous with an informant; a Colombian, named Hector Swarez. Though he was fluent in Spanish, he was otherwise unable to pass for a Colombian, so as much as it was possible, he stayed in the shadows of the dimly lit street.

Being an American in Colombia wasn’t particularly dangerous, even in Medellin, the birthplace of big time drug cartels. But, being an American in places where tourists

aren't found, especially at that time of night, can be very dangerous. Yet, Holt had to venture into such "forbidden" places from time-to-time in order to meet with people, whose presence in plain sight with an American could have dire consequences. Hector Swarez was one such person. Although he was paid well for the information he passed on to DEA agents, discovery of his activity by the Cartel would spell a certain and painful death.

As Holt carefully made his way, an arm reached out from the shadows and pulled him into a doorway.

"Quiet, *senor*," Hector whispered, momentarily putting his finger to his lips.

"Hector," Holt replied, also whispering. "You scared the shit out of me."

"I'm sorry, *senor*, but I believe I am being watched."

"Watched?"

"*Sí*, so I must be very careful. I have some important information for you that should be very valuable."

"What kind of information?"

"I have the name of the person in America who is responsible for providing information about your agents here in Colombia."

"You're certain about this, Hector?"

"*Sí senor*; I am very certain."

"That indeed is important information, my friend."

"How important?"

"About five thousand dollars important," Holt said. To one such as Hector, five thousand dollars was a fortune.

Hector agreed, and passed the information by handing Holt a piece of paper with some writing on it.

"You'll be paid as soon as I can get the money, maybe a day or two. And, thank you Hector, thank you very much."

With that Hector stepped out of the doorway, and disappeared down the street.

Chapter 5

When Agent Holt reached his car, he flipped open his cell phone and hit his boss' speed-dial number.

"Bill," he said, when a man answered. "John here; I just left Hector Swarez. He gave me some very valuable information."

"What is it?"

"Not on the phone. What time will you be in the office tomorrow?"

"Regular time, why?"

"Go back to bed. I'm sorry to have awakened you. I'll tell you all about it in the morning."

Chapter 6

Two blocks away from Hector's meeting with Holt, a car awaited and, as Hector approached several minutes later, two large men got out of the black sedan, and stepped in front of him. Hector stopped immediately, and thought briefly about turning to run.

Noticing that another man had gotten out of the other side of the car and stepped behind him, he decided against it.

“Hey, *que pinto*?” Hector asked.

“Get into the car,” one of the two men in front of him said.

“I am on my way home. It is just down the street,” Hector replied, pointing nervously.

“Get into the fucking car,” the man repeated loudly.

Believing he had no choice but to get in and hope for the best, Hector complied.

When the other three men got in, the car pulled away.

Minutes later they pulled into the large parking lot of a soccer stadium, and Hector was forced out. Minutes later, the distant headlights of another car came toward them. When it arrived, a man who Hector recognized immediately, got out of the back seat and walked over to him.

“You have been a bad boy, Hector,” the man said in a sing-song voice.

“I don’t understand what you mean, Patron,” Hector replied.

The man shook his head lazily. “Aw Hector, don’t try to bullshit me. We know what you’ve been doing.”

“Please, Patron, I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Do you think me to be stupid?” the man asked.

“No Patron.”

“Well, then, why do you act like you do?”

“Patron ...”

The man, again shaking his head, interrupted him. “Hector, Hector, have I not treated you well over the years?”

“Si’ Patron, but ...”

“And haven’t I given you more than enough to take care of your family?”

“Si’ Patron.”

“Then why do you betray me?”

“Patron, I ...”

“Why do you betray me, you fucking dog?” the man shouted, spraying Hector with his speech.

Hector fell to his knees. “Please, Patron,” he said, making the sign of the cross. He was crying.

“Hector, my friend, this is not going to end well for you. I can, however, make this very easy and painless, but you must tell me the truth. Otherwise, the end will come slowly and very painfully.”

“I know nothing of what you speak, Patron,” Hector said, hoping his continued denials might save him, and knowing that to confess was to die.

The man grabbed Hector by the collar, yanked him to his feet, threw him up against the car and said in a low voice, “If you don’t tell me what I want to know, I will cut off your balls and feed them to you.” Then he pushed Hector down to the ground.

“Please, Patron, I don’t understand,” Hector said, tears rolling down his cheeks.

“Your tears will not save you this time, Hector,” the man said, and he stepped back. Another man stepped forward, standing in front of Hector. He pulled, and opened a very large, and very sharp knife.

The next morning, Hector's body was found lying in a dried pool of blood in the parking lot. He was dead and mutilated. His balls were found in his mouth, his lips sewn shut.

Hector's days as an informant were over.

Chapter 7

Working as a DEA agent in Colombia is a very risky business. The danger is lethal and constant, and many wonder how the agents handle the pressure. Agent John Holt had been one of them for almost fifteen years. He could have been transferred back to the United States any time he wanted, but he felt he could contribute more there than in the states. The extra pay he received working in Colombia didn't hurt, either.

On that sunny morning following his meeting with Hector Swarez, Holt was several miles outside the Colombian City of Medellin, heading for his office and his meeting with his boss, Agent Bill Martin. He was anxious and excited about showing Holt what he had learned about the attacks on their agents. Maybe this information would put an end to the problem. He reminded himself that he would call his home in Ohio that morning to wish his 12-year old daughter a happy birthday.

On a particularly barren stretch of road, he approached what appeared to be an accident. Three vehicles; a truck, a large black car, and a police van, were blocking the highway. Holt slowed to a stop, and recognized one of the police officers as a man he had known as a friend for several years.

"Eduardo, *como esta*?" he greeted as Eduardo approached him. Holt thought it odd that the normally friendly, and talkative Eduardo, made no verbal reply as he simply nodded. "Is there a problem?" Holt asked in Spanish.

"We will be only a minute, señor," Eduardo said, as he stopped about ten feet from Holt's car.

"Eduardo, it is me, John Holt," Holt said. "Do you not recognize me?" Suddenly, Holt saw another man, carrying a submachine gun, step out from behind the police van. Then, another armed man appeared from behind one of the cars. Holt looked back at Eduardo.

Eduardo glanced aside at one of the men. "Fernando," he said, then he pointed at Holt.

Holt understood immediately. He was to be assassinated. They had chosen Eduardo to approach him because Eduardo could identify him, and because they knew he would not feel threatened by the appearance of his friend. Holt slammed the car into reverse and stood on the accelerator. Another car pulled onto the road behind him, blocking his escape. Holt continued on, increasing his speed until he smashed into the car. He reached for the pistol at his shoulder, pushed open his door, and rolled out of his car. Regaining his feet, and holding his gun at the ready, he could see that four more men had appeared. They had surrounded him, preventing any escape on foot. As time slowed, turning seconds into what seemed like hours, the men approached Holt's position, their guns pointed at him. He was a dead man, and he knew it. He dropped to one knee and began firing.

Bullets from every direction ripped into his body. Holt took careful aim at Eduardo and, in quick succession, fired the last three shots of his life. The last thing he saw before he died was Eduardo's lifeless body dropping to the ground like a bag of rocks.



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