

**STELLEN QXZ**



**THE  
UNDERCOVER  
GROOMSMAN**

A Derrick Olin Novelette

# *The Undercover Groomsman*

XIII of *Derrick Olin*

Stellen Qxz

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Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

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Same-sex marriage is now the law of the land, but in the hearts and minds of some, it's just one more reminder of how much they've lost to the other side. In Birmingham, two dedicated people have waited for years to get married in their home state of Alabama, and now that day is finally here. But will the haters let them have their day, or will anger erupt into violence and destroy their happiness forever? Not if Birmingham's best bodyguard, aka the Undercover Groomsman, has anything to say about it!

*The  
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# *Engage!*

I was in Phoenix working for a documentary film producer/director the day a federal judge in Alabama struck down the state's ban on gay (same-sex, homosexual, alternative lifestyle, take your pick) marriage. It didn't take long for opponents, mostly on religious/moral grounds, to rally and find a way not to comply with the federal order.

After much back and forth, going all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, the state was still defiant. Eventually the original federal judge relented, staying her order of compliance until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the question of the aforementioned issue later in the summer.

Later in the summer, I was in Paris doing more work for the entertainment industry the day the United States Supreme Court, in a split 5/4 decision, issued its ruling, declaring that homosexuals had the same rights as non-homosexual citizens to marry and live happily ever after; or not.

Coincidentally, on that same day there was a terrorist attack in Southern France that would have taken center stage in world attention had it not been for the Supreme Court decision in the U.S. Of course, in France, the terrorist attack was center stage. Lucky for my client and me, it occurred several hundred miles away from where we were at the time.

A week later, I was back in the U.S., and done with the entertainment industry for a while, probably forever. Not my cup of tea, which I knew ahead of time, but the money was good and it was a chance to get outside the country for a while on somebody else's dime. And Europe is always lovely this time of year.

WHILE OUT OF TOWN, I received a call from an occasional client asking if I would be available for a job in ten days time. I told her it would be close, as I was out of the country, but I should be able to get back in time. It was only a one-day job, actually one night.

So two days after I returned to Birmingham, I was dressed in a dark suit and attending a fundraising gala at the Sheraton Hotel at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex downtown. I still called the place the Civic Center, but most people just say BJCC, thus avoiding the question of what exactly the *CC* stood for.

The sponsor of the gala was the Alabama Republican Party, also known as AL-GOP, and my client is the current chairman, or chairwoman, as it were. *CeCe* Hopewell, a woman with deep ties to the state's banking industry, currently CEO of her own accounting and financial services firm down in Montgomery. We had met a few years ago through a former client of mine and colleague of hers, also a banker. Politics aside—because that's the only way I take them—I can say one thing for certain, Mrs. Hopewell really knows how to throw a spectacular party.

I wasn't actually invited to the party, and most people attending it had no idea who I was or why I was there. And I knew my employer would prefer it stay that way. So I moved around the large Birmingham Ballroom on the first floor of the hotel, avoiding lingering con-

versations, holding up a wall whenever I could find a spot, and seeing how many well-fed faces I could recognize.

Turned out to be quite a few, including both of the state's U.S. senators, three congressmen, several members of the business community, and a very well known member of the State Supreme Court, its chief justice in fact. He had been in the news a lot lately, voicing strong opposition to the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, telling local probate judges they didn't actually have to comply with the ruling. And he had some support, though not as much as he had believed he would. Several prominent probate judges, including the one in my home county of Jefferson, had told the chief justice, in so many words, to go screw himself and immediately started issuing marriage licenses to everyone as soon as was feasible. Bully for them.

I suspected this moron was one of the key reasons CeCe Hopewell had called me, to make sure nobody shot up or blew up the place to get to him. A tall order, given how many people he had pissed off in recent weeks. And this might just be the one time that I *failed* in my mission to protect.

In reality, I knew this would not be the case because I wasn't wired that way. If it came down to it, I'd do my job and protect even this prick. Although, in getting him out of the line of fire, Mr. Chief Justice Troy Boer might just suffer some injury that could take a long time to heal, perhaps some *bruised* vocal cords due to an errant elbow strike.

HOPEWELL MOVED TO THE podium set up at the head of the room, tapped the microphone several times to get everyone's attention. She was stunning tonight, wearing a sleeveless black dress ex-

pertly tailored to fit her tall, slender frame. I knew she was in her early fifties, but in great shape, with a body that could easily put women half her age to shame. Her dark blond hair, though perfect, was a dye job. I knew this because when I first met her years ago she had brown hair, and it was longer, past her shoulders. Now it was cut closer to her face, off the shoulders. Still quite attractive, sensual even. What many would consider *MILF* material. That is, if she was actually a mother. Still...

I didn't listen to what she had to say, moving around the room instead, looking at faces, watching hands, looking for anything that seemed out of place. So far, beyond me, there wasn't anything.

I made my way over to the bar and refreshment area by the west wall, noticing a uniformed police officer nearby. I did a double take, realizing that I knew this police officer. Very well, in fact.

"Don't tell me they let you on this detail?" I said, shaking my head. Paige Palmer grinned as I approached.

"I should be saying the same about you. Who the hell in their right mind would invite you to this thing? Although I must say, you're looking good, Derrick. Real good."

We embraced for a few moments, probably longer than we should have.

"You look good, too, *Lieutenant*. And when did that happen?"

Paige beamed at me, a hand on her rather nicely formed left hip as she struck a pose.

"Six months ago," she told me. "You haven't been around much, bud. Lots of changes in the department."

"I've heard about some of them," I said, turning so that I could keep an eye on the large room, and everyone in it. "Not all good,



from what I gather. But you getting your gold bars is excellent. Are you back in uniform or just working this detail?”

“Nope, back in the uni,” she confirmed. “But it’s not bad. I got a command now, if you can believe that. Took me till my fifties with twenty years on the job.”

“Congratulations,” I said. “Where?”

She smiled again. “Right next door.”

“The downtown substation?”

“Yep. Took over two months ago. Been good for other stuff, too. Lot of security work for cops at the BJCC. Every time they have a bar at a function, they gotta have a cop. Pay’s great, too. That never hurts with all the bills I’ve got.”

I nodded, paused when I saw CeCe step back from the podium to make way for Troy Boer. Great. The dipshit was about to start talking.

“So how’s life otherwise? Hubby, kids, *grandkids*?”

Paige smiled again, then brought me up to date as we tried very hard to ignore the vile bullshit spewing forth from the mouth of the asshole at the podium. Part of my mind was listening to Paige, the other was thinking about how satisfying it would be to empty my Glock into a certain state Supreme Court chief justice.

“Well I’m glad to hear everything is going well for you, Paige. I see you’ve gone back to your maiden name?”

She glanced down at her nameplate, then back at me.

“It wasn’t intentional. At least at first. When I got the promotion and had to go back in uniform, the only nametag I had was the one with Palmer on it. Then I never got around to getting a new one, although my police ID card does say Turner. I’m still Mrs. Turner, and largely happy about it, but at work, I’m *Lieutenant Palmer*.”

I chose to ignore that bit about her being *largely* happy as Mrs. Turner. For a number of years, before her second marriage, Paige and I had been *fuck buddies*, and neither of us had any regrets about that, least of all me. But that was a door I wasn't really looking to open again, at least not right now. Odd, too, because even in her fifties, and maybe the uniform had something to do with it also, but damn did the woman have an incredible body. And her ass...

THE FESTIVITIES CONCLUDED just after eleven, with CeCe standing at the ballroom exit shaking hands, kissing cheeks, hugging necks, thanking everyone for their attendance and generous support. When the bars closed, Paige and the other uniformed officer on duty were done. She came over to me, hugged me again, admonished me to do a better job keeping in touch, and departed with a huge grin after pecking me on the cheek.

Unable to help myself, I cast a covert glance at her retreating posterior, my mind filling with fond memories. Too many, and too much time. My client came up from behind and managed to startle me, which I found just the tiniest bit annoying.

"Were you staring at that lieutenant's ass?" she said, a hint of disapproval in her tone.

I turned toward her.

"Just making sure it wasn't concealing a deadly weapon, ma'am," I responded, deadpan.

She blinked first, giggling and shaking her head.

"Unlike the pistol on her side, right? And hell, with a butt like that, even I glanced at it for a few seconds."

She said she was finished in the ballroom and would be heading over to the Westin next door where she had a room. She'd drive

back to Montgomery in the morning because she had afternoon meetings.

“My husband couldn’t make it tonight, and he’s really sorry because he’s a huge fan of the chief justice.”

We were taking the escalator to the second floor of the hotel intending to take the crosswalk that connected the two hotels without having to go outside. When I didn’t respond, she glanced at me.

“But I take it you’re not a fan?”

“No comment,” I said.

“Well Troy is an acquired taste,” she conceded.

“If you say so. By the way, I checked with hotel security, there were about half a dozen protestors outside, none were able to breach the interior. They’re all gone now.”

“Let me guess,” she said. “*Occupy* whackos screaming some nonsense about the *one percent*, extolling the evils of corporations and financial institutions? Please. I get so tired of their rhetoric. Without corporations, big business, do they have any idea where this country would be? The so-called one percent do a lot for America, and without them, this country really would be in more trouble than it is thanks to the current *occupier* of the White House.”

Again, I had no response. Don’t do politics.

We passed into the Westin and she fell silent for a few minutes until we reached the elevators.

“Thanks for doing this tonight, Derrick. I know you just got back to town, but I feel better having someone I trust and who knows what he’s doing at things like this. Today, so many people are angry and crazy. You never know who’s going to do what. The hotel has security, of course, and there were police here, too, but none of them

is you. I've seen you work before. Anything bad happens, you're the man I want there to deal with it."

We were outside her tenth floor suite and she reached into her small purse and retrieved a cardkey. She glanced into my eyes and a small smile formed at the corners of her mouth.

"And what about when something good happens?" I said taking the cardkey from her. I unlocked the door and pushed it open, stepping aside.

CeCe took a step past me, stopped, turned just her head, looked deeply into my eyes. "That usually means that we're both naked," she said, turning and walking into the room.

I smiled, felt a surge south of my waistline, walked in behind her and closed the door.

A FEW DAYS LATER, I RECEIVED two telephone calls regarding the same subject. And then a third. Two hours later, I was at a meeting with the third caller at a Mexican restaurant out on Highway 280. The Superior Grill. I'm not a great fan of Mexican food, even *superior* Mexican food, but the choice wasn't mine, and I wasn't paying.

There were actually two people at the meeting, both of whom I knew, although one I had only met a couple of times.

"Good to see you again, Tommy," I said, shaking hands.

"You, too, Derrick," said Tommy Garcia. "You, too. And thank you for coming so quickly. You remember Gabe?"

I nodded, extending my hand. "Of course. Good to see you, too."

We all sat at a table near the back, a waiter coming over for our drink orders. We took the time to glance at the menus as well, placing our food orders, too, and the waiter departed.

Tommy Garcia was office manager for a downtown law firm that I consulted with from time to time and we had worked together now and then. I knew he was gay, I knew he and Gabe Alderson had been partners for several years now, and I knew they both wanted to get married, but had put it off until they could do so in their home state of Alabama. A day that many, myself included, believed might never come. But it had. It was here.

“Can’t believe it finally happened,” Tommy said, a tear in the corner of his left eye. “I just can’t believe it.”

Gabe put his arm around his partner and squeezed his shoulders.

“As soon as the ruling came down, we both dropped to our knees to propose.”

“And this one had the nerve to tell me he had to have time to think about it,” Gabe said, smiling and shaking his head.

Tommy patted his hand.

“Didn’t want you to think I was easy.”

“Nothing easy about you, husband-of-mine-to-be.”

The two men stared at one another for a long time, the love and happiness in their eyes impossible to miss or deny. Our waiter brought the drinks, looking slightly uncomfortable, and said our food would be ready shortly. Then he quickly went away.

“So, to the reason we called you,” Gabe said, drying his right eye with the back of a thumb. “Of course we want to invite you to the wedding.”

“Yes, Derrick, we definitely want to do that,” Tommy continued, now looking a little awkward. “But there is something else.”

I waited and watched as he struggled with what he wanted to say next, then decided to let him off the hook.

“Let me save you the trouble, Tommy. I already got calls from Ashley and Nadya this morning.”

Relief flooded over him as he turned to Gabe, then back to me.

“I should have known they’d call you. Both of them are such busy-bodies. And I love them for it. I’m sorry, Derrick, I just didn’t know how to ask.”

“Not a problem, Tommy. And it’s okay. I can do it. Just need to know when and where.”

“Well the when is this weekend,” Gabe said. “Saturday afternoon at four. It’s supposed to be such a beautiful day, too. Perfect for making an honest man out of Tommy.”

Tommy shot him a sarcastic grin, then kissed his cheek. “Can’t wait to get you on the honeymoon, honey.”

I smiled, watching the two of them, and seeing nothing more or less than a happy, loving couple looking forward to the next chapter of their lives together. The fact that they were both dudes or that one was black and the other Latino meant nothing. They were just another pair of lovers who wanted to be together, hopefully for the rest of their lives.

“So that takes care of the when,” I said. “Just need to know the where.”

Tommy glanced at Gabe one more time, then back at me.

“Actually you already know the place, from what I understand. Although you haven’t been there in quite a while, according to my sources.”

I frowned slightly, seeing the waiter out of the corner of my left eye. He brought our food to the table, asked if we needed anything else, then departed to take care of other customers.

“So tell me, Tommy,” I said finally.

He did, and his answer surprised the hell out of me.

I HAD KNOWN TOM BOONE SINCE I was a child. He was a Lutheran minister and way back in the mid-1970s, Pastor Boone was assigned to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in a western section neighborhood called Titusville. It was the church my family attended when I was growing up, and consequently, so did I until I was old enough not to.

Despite my current views on religion, which were nonexistent, I still kept in touch with Tom Boone from time to time, even assisted him with problems that required my kind of help when he needed it. He retired as senior pastor two years ago, elevated to the honorary position of Pastor-Emeritus by the congregation, many of whom were not ready to see their long-serving shepherd leave them. He'd served for almost forty years and had become both legend and tradition at St. Paul's. It was where he belonged and would always be welcome.

Today, though, there was new blood in the pulpit. Reverend Pryce Babcock was senior pastor, another change from the old because for most of the time Tom was in charge, he was the only pastor at the church. Now there was a staff of four, which I suppose took some of the pressure off the top dog.

The church itself is still located in the same spot it had been when I was a kid, and most of the neighborhood has not changed, even the barbeque place that opened on the corner down the street thirty-five years ago was still there. The only significant change was that across the side street to the left of the church where once houses had stood, now a *Family Dollar* occupied a large parcel of land. Those places seemed to be popping up everywhere these days. Progress, I sup-

pose, unless you needed a place to live rather than another discount store.

Despite being located in virtually the same spot as before, the church itself had undergone a major refit a few years ago and was now quite modern. If I hadn't known what I was looking for, I might have driven right past it. There was even a paved parking lot on the side of the building instead of roadside parking and a dirt lot out back that I remembered fondly from my youth.

I parked and went inside.

PRYCE BABCOCK AND TOM BOONE were in the senior pastor's office on the second floor. I was shown in by the secretary who asked if I wanted some coffee or other refreshment. I declined and she left the three of us alone.

"My god, Derrick," bellowed Reverend Boone as he stood to shake my hand. He was nearly seventy, his hair almost completely white on top of his head and on his face. And he was no longer the slender man I remembered meeting for the first time in about 1975, life had been good to him, and it showed on his fleshy body.

Still, he had a crushing handshake and when he grabbed my shoulder, I resisted the urge to flinch.

"Hey, Tom, good to see you. You're looking well."

Tom laughed, clapped me on the shoulder again. "Not nice to lie to a minister, Derrick. Even one who's sort of retired."

He introduced me to Pastor Babcock and then the three of us sat, Babcock behind his desk, Tom and I on uncomfortable metal chairs in front of it. Tom spent a few minutes bringing his successor up to speed on my background, something I'm sure he had already done before this meeting, but wanted to do it again in my presence in case



anything needed clarifying. I watched Babcock as Tom spoke, sensing an unease in the man.

From my research, I knew he was forty-three, an Indiana native, graduate of Notre Dame, married, father of three girls, and lived in a three-bedroom house in Homewood. And before he was assigned to Birmingham, he'd spent the last three years working as a senior assistant pastor in St. Louis. He had no criminal record, had never served in the armed forces, and he was a great believer in charity work. In other words, an actual decent human being. At least on paper. If I had more time and thought it was necessary, I'm sure I could find something unpleasant in the man's past. If only a string of unpaid parking tickets or overdue library books.

"So, Derrick," Tom was saying. "I understand you already spoke with Nadya Shaba and Ashley Milner?"

I nodded. "Yes. And with the happy couple themselves."

Tom smiled, glanced over at Babcock. "It's a good thing Reverend Babcock is doing here at the church on Saturday, Derrick. Very courageous. Not to mention timely, and the *right* thing to do."

Babcock cleared his throat, raised his eyes to the ceiling for a moment.

"I just wish everybody felt that way," he said, sighing. His gaze now focused on me. "I understand from Tom that you are very capable, Mr. Olin. Your reputation is quite solid. I'm sure you understand that I did my own research. Just to be thorough."

I nodded. "A sensible thing to do."

"Yes. And from everything I have learned, you are a man of unusual courage and great skill when it comes to the work you do. Some of the people I spoke with say you are the best. Some say you

are a gigantic pain in the rear end, but even they say you're very good at what you do."

"It's good to have fans," I offered.

"Not all of them were fans, Mr. Olin," Babcock continued, not registering my sarcasm, or simply ignoring it. "But I trust what they said to be true. I also trust Tom implicitly. What we are doing here on Saturday will be momentous, and as Pastor Boone said, it is the right thing to do. But as I'm sure you're aware, there are a lot of people who do not believe it should happen, that two people of the same sex should not be allowed to marry, least of all in a Christian place of worship. When I made my decision and announced it to the congregation last week, I knew there would be opposition, anger even, but some of the threats that I have received personally, and against the church, they are far more worrying than I could have imagined. I have contacted the police and made a report, many of them in fact, but they can't do much unless something actually transpires. I would like for that not to happen, Mr. Olin.

"There is a fight coming within the Lutheran Church itself over this issue, and within this church here in Birmingham. I fully expect to lose several congregants over this, perhaps as many as half, but we may gain others within the gay community, which I would consider a welcomed turn of events as we strive for more diversity here at St. Paul's. In the meantime, however, I have to expect and be prepared for trouble. Which is why I asked Tom to call you."

I nodded, glanced at Tom, then back at Babcock.

"Okay," I said. "Let's talk."

I WAS FIVE FEET AWAY FROM MY target when the last round left my weapon, slamming into the center of the target's forehead and

cutting a clean hole in the paper. I'd started firing from fifteen yards out and all of my shots were within an inch of each other. Pretty good, if I do say so myself. Of course, here on the range, there was nobody firing back.

There was still shooting taking place on either side of me and I waited for it to cease before pushing my ear protectors up on the sides of my head. To my right, a small white male in his early thirties sporting light facial hair, wearing jeans, a green polo, and brown hiking boots. To my left, a small black female in her late twenties, close-cropped afro, wearing jeans, a black long sleeve man's military style shirt with the sleeves rolled up on her forearms and the tails hanging out, and unpolished side-zip black combat boots.

Frankie Burrage and Sheila, no last name that I have ever known. To look at them passing on the street, you'd probably never guess that these two were among the most effective and prolific killers you never wanted to meet. But if you've ever seen them shoot, in practice or in actuality, there would be no doubt. Hopefully you'd never be one of their targets. Or mine for that matter.

Frankie had once been the top trigger-puller for Birmingham's former *Godfather of Crime*, the late Innes Redbone. He'd been the only Caucasian in Redbone's inner circle, and one of the few to have survived the purge after he was killed a few years ago, a case that was still unsolved, and probably always would be because it was a sure bet that Birmingham Homicide detectives were not clocking a lot of overtime hours trying to crack it.

Sheila, even though I have known her for several years now, was still largely a mystery to me. We were introduced by a mutual acquaintance when I needed help on a job. Coincidentally, that job involved Innes Redbone, at least peripherally. I was very impressed

with the young woman's work, and the quick intelligence behind her dark eyes, so when other things came up later, I gave her a call, through our mutual friend, to see if she was interested. These days, I just called her direct.

I called Frankie direct, too, and when he wasn't off freelancing on something else, he worked for me when I needed him.

I took a few steps back and checked out their targets. Tight groupings on either side, which I expected no less.

"So, how about it?" I said once they removed their ear protectors.

Frankie glanced over at Sheila, then back at me.

"Fine by me," he said, removing the empty magazine from the well of his SIG.

Sheila pulled the empty from her FEG, nodded. "Sure," she said, feeding a fresh magazine into her weapon. "Never been to a gay wedding. Or any wedding for that matter."

"Then it'll be a double treat for you," I said, reloading my Glock and dropping my ear protectors back in place. "And you get a good day's pay to boot."

When everyone was reloaded and ears covered, we all moved to the back of the range. A count of three-two-one, weapons up and fire!

I HAD LUNCH WITH NADYA SHABA (formerly Simon), Founder and Chief Executive Officer of *Magic City Dreams*, a private philanthropic foundation dedicated to social causes, mostly (*all*) liberal, and Ashley Milner, CEO and Managing Partner of the Milner Law Firm, arguably the best collection of litigators in the southeast. These were two of the most powerful women in the Birmingham

metro. Two of the most powerful people. And they wanted to have lunch with little *ole* me.

“You’re looking good, Derrick,” Nadya said over the top of her wineglass, her black eyes gleaming cheerily in the subdued lighting of the Harbert Club Restaurant on the top floor of Harbert Plaza in the heart of downtown Birmingham. “But then, when have you not?”

Ashley Milner rolled her small blue eyes and shook her head, taking a sip from her glass. “Easy, Nadya. I know you’re still relishing your freedom after the divorce, but do try to restrain yourself. Or you might wind up having to register as a sex offender.”

Nadya chuckled, glancing sideways at the lawyer. “Well I know a very good attorney who can probably get me off with a few hours of community service.”

Ashley smiled, set her glass down.

“Or none at all. I’ve got some really great lawyers on my staff these days. And you do look good, Derrick.”

My expression was a hybrid demur-smirk, and I probably pulled it off pretty well.

“Good to see the both of you again, too,” I said, raising my glass of water to my lips, taking a couple of swallows, before returning it to the table. “Life appears to have been very good to you ladies.”

Both grinned, both were gorgeous, kind of hard to believe that both were now over sixty, Ashley much closer to seventy in fact. Something that I really found hard to fathom. Nearly impossible. Of course, I was a lot closer to fifty than I would have preferred, but it beat the hell out of the alternative. Probably.

“I know you talked to Tom and Pryce,” Nadya said. “And Gabe and Tommy. Do you think there will be any problems you can’t han-

dle?”

I shook my head.

“No doubt there will be problems, but none I think I can’t handle.”

Ashley chuckled. “After all, you are talking to *the* Derrick Olin, Nadya. The man who’s taken on gangsters and terrorists single-handedly and bested them every time.”

“I wouldn’t go that far, Ash,” I said.

“I would,” she replied. “And so would many others. We all know how a lot of people feel about the issue of same-sex marriage, especially right here in Alabama. Some will fight it till the day they die, and in the meantime, try to make life as miserable for the rest of us as they can. Tommy and Gabe are great guys, Tommy’s been my right hand for eight years and I don’t know what I’d do without him. He and Gabe love each other and they have the right to marry and be happy together. I want to do everything in my power to make sure their day is special and wonderful. And most of all, safe.”

Nadya nodded, suddenly her mood serious, a rare state for her.

“Which is why we all agreed that you should be hired to handle security. Whatever you need, any resource we can provide, no matter the cost, just tell us and it’s yours.”

Ashley smiled suddenly, staring at her cohort.

“And she means *no matter the cost*. Without divulging a confidence, considering who represented her, the former Mrs. Simon did very well in her recent divorce.”

Nadya laughed, reached over and patted the other woman’s hand on the table.

“And my lawyers did pretty well, too. Anyway, Derrick, you need something, just tell me.”

I nodded, picked up my glass again.

“Of course.”

WEDNESDAY I SPENT MOST OF the day in my loft apartment on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street North, also in the heart of downtown. It rained in the morning and the sun came out and dried everything by one in the afternoon. The weather didn't matter much, I was doing homework, studying. With a laptop computer and internet connection, I had everything at my fingertips that I needed, could find out practically everything, and could do it all while sitting or lying around in my underwear. Or naked for that matter, although it was a lot less fun if you were alone.

Around four, I decided I had gone as far as I could with my own resources, but felt I still needed more, knew I needed more. So I grabbed my cell phone, scrolled down to the name I was looking for, pressed SEND. It was answered three rings later.

“It's the man of your dreams, and I need some help. No, not that kind of help. Well, maybe that, too, but right now I need information. And, yes, I thought of you. For that, too, yes.”

I was laughing a few seconds later, and suddenly quite horny.

THURSDAY MORNING IT RAINED again. Once more, I was at home, this time watching TV, catching up on the news, which was a mistake; it always pisses me off or depresses me. Usually both.

Troy Boer was all over the local channels, warning about the evils of *the homosexual agenda*, amoral judges who legislated from the bench, and several other things that he found objectionable. I could only take a minute or less of listening before the sudden urge to climb onto the roof with a sniper's rifle overwhelmed me. So I switched to something else.

On the eleven a.m. newscast, the local NBC affiliate carried part of an interview their lead anchor conducted with the state Republican Party chair, CeCe Hopewell. Her full name was actually Colleen Chapel Hopewell, but everybody called her CeCe, even before she married Bill Hopewell a few years back. I really wasn't in the mood for more political spin, but got a kind of wicked pleasure out of watching a woman on television that I *knew* as well as I did Mrs. Hopewell. And the lead anchor wasn't bad to look at either.

I sat for a few minutes and listened as the head of the Alabama GOP hit all the talking points about *traditional* marriage and family, the dangers of extending marriage rights to homosexuals, and decrying what she termed the *reckless* manner in which the federal courts seemed to be treating state governments and their citizens these days.

“I mean, it's no wonder so many people are angry and feel alienated from the federal government, and are desperately seeking a change from bottom to top. And I truly believe that we in the Republican Party represent the kind of change the majority of Americans are looking for.”

There was no doubt about it, the camera loved her. She was lovely, eloquent, obviously very intelligent, and could make bullshit sound so reasonable.

I knew that she had a brother in North Carolina who was gay, an activist no less, and she hadn't disowned him, something that might cost her her chairmanship if some in her caucus found out. And when it came to traditional values and the sanctity of relations between one man and one woman, well I knew something about that, too.



The image of that black dress hiked up over her slender hips as she bent over the bathroom sink in her hotel suite last Saturday night, her hazel eyes glued to mine in the mirror as she screamed at me, urged me to do things to her that I'm sure her husband never heard, and if he did, would probably have no clue about.

I was sitting on the sofa in my living room, thinking about those long, foldable legs of hers trapped between my chest and hers, the light brown hairs of her trimmed bush, the little noises she made when I slid my tongue all the way inside her, and then it suddenly dawned on me that I had to make lunch.

“Shit,” I swore, standing. I was sporting a significant hard on right now. Too bad CeCe wasn't here to do one of several deliciously naughty things that she really liked doing with her mouth. Bet her husband never found out about that either. Nor her colleagues at AL-GOP.

Off to the kitchen I went.

I MET THE CURRENT SPECIAL-Agent-in-Charge of the FBI's Birmingham Field Office last November, about a month after she was posted to the job. And for some reason I couldn't fathom, the SAC did not take to me right away.

Millicent Trent—never *Millie*, unless you didn't like your balls hanging from their natural position—was in her mid-forties, tall, slender, athletic, with long jet black hair that she liked to wear down, even when working. I knew she had been with the Bureau 17 years before coming to Birmingham, a native of Southern California with a bachelor's in political science from UCLA and an MBA from the Wharton School in Pennsylvania, and for some inexplicable rea-

son, had spent most of her mid and late twenties working at the Internal Revenue Service before switching over to the FBI.

Her early assignments were in the White Collar Crime Division, where the skills from her previous job were in high demand. But over time, she decided she wanted to expand her portfolio, and managed a transfer in to, of all things, Domestic Counterterrorism. Turned out to be a good fit, and in short order, Special Agent Trent found herself in the thick of several prominent investigations that garnered her a lot of praise from higher ups. Praise and promotions.

Her last assignment before Birmingham was with the Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York where she served as a unit chief in Brooklyn. Her reward for the good work she did there was the top slot in Birmingham, a position that many would not consider to be high profile enough or career enhancing after working in New York. However, Trent knew better, and had actually campaigned for the job.

Unfortunately, she arrived just as *The Magic City* was gripped by a string of horrific attacks on businesses, community centers, and places of worship operated and attended by Muslims. Multiple vandalisms, three arsons, and one bomb detonated in the span of a week and a half had the city on edge and the politicians all over the news demanding *immediate action* to bring the cowardly perpetrators to justice at once.

Naturally, the Bureau took the lead in the investigation, with strong support from ATF and other federal agencies, and the many local jurisdictions that were involved, Birmingham and Jefferson County at the head of the list.

I became involved in the matter because of Nadya Shaba, as was usually the case. She didn't put much faith in law enforcement being

able to resolve the situation quickly and wanted me to see what I could do. When I pointed out that the FBI and the whole alphabet soup of other agencies had far more resources and bodies than I did and were generally quite good at catching terrorists, she laughed down the phone line and said, “*Yeah, but none of them is Derrick Olin.*”

THE FIRST TIME I MET MILLICENT Trent was on the night I narrowly managed to escape an ambush in Walker County, arranged courtesy of a group of skinheads who didn't like the questions I had been asking in and around the city of Jasper. My whole point for asking those questions in those places was to provoke a response such as that, and was prepared for it. What I was not prepared for, and should have considered a distinct possibility, in retrospect, was the fact that this group was under law enforcement surveillance. When the watchers realized something was about to go down, they called for reinforcements, and a team from Birmingham, led by Special-Agent-in-Charge Trent, responded.

There were five ambushers, and by the time the law arrived, none were standing, but they were all alive, and I was in the process of questioning one of them. I managed not to get myself shot, but was arrested and held in federal custody for more than a day. Not the first time that's happened. Ashley Milner got me out. Again, not the first time that's happened.

I was warned to stay out of the way and not to interfere in a federal investigation again. Instead of pointing out that I hadn't actually interfered in their investigation, I simply smiled graciously, collected my things, and departed with Ashley.

The second time Trent and I met was after a shooting at a community center in Homewood about a mile from where I used to live. She spotted me in the crowd, sent an agent over to get me, and asked, none too pleasantly, why I was there. Again, I smiled graciously, and stepped away without answering. To her credit, I didn't get shot in the back, or arrested.

Meeting number three took place in Hoover four days later. Trent was leading a team to serve a warrant on a local antigovernment type that evidence led the feds to believe might somehow be involved in the attacks. Evidence also led me to the same conclusion, and as a result, I was also there that night. Good thing for the feds, too, otherwise they would have walked right into the ambush that was waiting for them.

Later, after she had arrested me again, Trent told me that in seventeen years with the Bureau she had never fired her weapon anywhere but on a shooting range. That night she had emptied a fifteen round magazine and was halfway through a second before the shooting stopped. Although I had saved her and her team from certain death, SAC Trent was still not happy with my continued *meddling*, her word, in her case. Which is why I was arrested again. This time Ashley had me out in three hours. I had called her as soon as I realized I was going to have to intervene to keep Trent and the others from being killed. She was waiting at the FBI offices by the time they brought me in.

Trent found herself in the middle of one more gunfight before her case concluded, and it was at the very end. Through sources of my own, I found the person ultimately responsible for the attacks in Birmingham, and was not surprised to discover that he lived up in Walker County. Deciding to play nice, I called Trent and gave her

the information, but I was already on the road to the farm just outside of Jasper where I was told he and some of his supporters were hole up.

Trent ordered me to stay away from the place, yelled some very unladylike things through the phone when I told her I couldn't do that. When the cavalry arrived two hours later, I was already inside the compound, scoping out defenses. It wasn't Fort Knox, but the opposition was well and heavily armed, and there was every possibility that this could turn into another high-profile disaster for the Bureau, on the scale of Waco or Ruby Ridge. But as I said, I was already on the inside.

Still, there was shooting, a lot of it, and there were casualties on the side of right, but all the fatalities were on the side of wrong, including the forty-nine year old well-known white supremacist who had orchestrated the attacks in Birmingham with the goal of starting a holy war against Islam around the world. He really did think a lot of himself. Probably hated the fact that it was a woman from Southern California who shot him dead, too. But hey, at least she was white.

TRENT HAD ME ARRESTED THAT night as well, but released me herself after an hour in back of a Walker County Sheriff's car. She told me what a gigantic pain in the ass I was, looked as if she wanted to punch me for several seconds, then put out her hand and shook mine, staring hard into my eyes. She had never killed anyone before, but hadn't hesitated in the slightest when pulling the trigger that night. She was in for some rough nights in the weeks and months to come, but I could tell she was a strong person, and was confident she'd come through it. She'd never be the same, but she'd be okay.

Mostly.

And now she and I were fast friends.

Kind of.

“YOU’RE STILL A DICK. BUT man can you cook scalloped potatoes. And that bread pudding was delicious, too. Who would have thought that somebody as skilled as you are with a gun would be so good in the kitchen?”

“It’s called being a well-rounded human being,” I said. “Or at least that’s what I’m told. By the way, how much stock do you put in these intelligence reports and analyses? They’re current as of yesterday, but I’m seeing a lot of caveats, which one would expect in government work.”

Millicent Trent smirked, chewed another bite of her food, dabbed at her thin lips with a paper towel.

“Yeah, I keep forgetting you spent some time in government service. Air Force OSI, right?”

“Yeah,” I nodded.

“Well then you already know the answer to your question. It’s the best the Bureau has, and probably in the ballpark, but without any specifics that suggest anything explicit. You know the way analysts work, Derrick.”

I sighed, nodded, shuffling through the papers on the desk in front of me. It was one-thirty, I had made us lunch. I was at the desk in the back corner of the front room, which I considered to be my in-home *office*. My only office actually. Agent Trent was standing at the island counter in the kitchen eating from the plate I had prepared for her, a glass of red wine at her left hand. It was still raining outside.

I sighed again, stood up, and went over to the bank of large picture windows that framed the front of the loft. There were no interior walls, everything was open in the front and Trent could see me and I could see her, or I could when my back wasn't turned.

She took a couple more bites, put the fork down, and picked up her glass. I saw all of this in reflection from the window in front of which I was standing.

"You're worried about this thing, aren't you?" she said, close to my left ear. "That something might happen at the wedding?"

"Yeah," I said, still staring down at the wet street and the activity below, pedestrians hurrying, cars stopped at lights, the ground glistening and wet. "Considering what we had going on in this town a few months back with those idiots going after Muslims, I think it highly likely that some other group of nutjobs will want to go after gays now. Especially with asshats like the state's chief justice stoking the flames."

Trent snorted derisively.

"That guy is a Grade-A asshat," she said. "And an asshole. I find it nearly impossible to believe this state keeps reelecting him to the Supreme Court, especially after he was removed once before for refusing to comply with a U.S. Supreme Court ruling."

"Never underestimate the stupidity of Alabamians," I said drearily, my tone matching the scene outside my windows. "Some of them, at least."

We were silent for a while, then I felt her hand on my right shoulder.

"Derrick, if anyone knows how capable you are at your job, it's me. As much as I hated to admit it back when we met, you are very good at what you do. I couldn't think of anybody better to oversee secu-

rity at this wedding. And if something does happen, I have little doubt you will handle it. And handle it well.”

I smiled, reached back and put my hand on top of hers.

“And if I have to shoot anybody, can I expect to be arrested by the FBI again?”

I heard her snicker, pull her hand away.

“And personally strip-searched by yours truly,” she said, setting her glass on the window ledge in front of me. Now her slender arms circled my waist, her chest pressed into my back. Her nipples were erect, digging into my skin. I was completely naked, and so was Millicent Trent.

THE WEEK AFTER SHE'D KILLED the man in Jasper, I received a call from the FBI SAC asking if we could meet and talk. For a brief moment, I wondered if perhaps she was trying to lure me somewhere so I could be arrested again, but decided it probably wasn't the case. Nonetheless, I did send an email to Ashley Milner telling her that if she didn't hear from me in twenty-four hours, to come-a-calling on the FBI.

We met in Kelly Ingram Park downtown, less than a half mile from Bureau headquarters and not that far from my place. As soon as I saw her, I knew she was in trouble. She looked harried, like she hadn't been sleeping well, if at all, and even though the designer pantsuit she was wearing was neat and pressed, it hung from her lean frame in a disheveled fashion. Yeah, she was in trouble, and I knew exactly why. What I was unsure of was just how to help her.

We sat and talked for a long time, she cried, she became angry, she cried again, and then she fell silent. She told me that she was thinking about quitting the Bureau, maybe doing something with



her MBA, although she wasn't sure what. Wasn't sure about anything.

She was married and had two daughters, ages ten and seven, and had been neglecting her family for the past week, not to mention her work. She couldn't stop thinking about the man she killed, saw him every time she closed her eyes, and sometimes when her eyes were open. She felt as if she was going to go crazy.

I took her hand, squeezed it tightly, made her look into my eyes. Then I told her about the first person I killed. I told her that the first time was hard for me, too. It wasn't, but she needed to believe that it was, so I let her. I told her that she was right to feel bad, but she had been right to do what she had done. There had been no other option, he didn't give her one. He didn't want one. He wanted to die for his cause. What she had done had ended one life but had saved untold others. That was the truth. And she would have to find a way to live with it.

She said she didn't think she could.

I told her she had to. She was too good at her job to quit. The Bureau needed people like her, people with brains and heart.

"Besides, at least when you slap the cuffs on the perps it feels kind of nice."

She stared at me incredulously for almost a minute, then burst into laughter, unable to control herself, falling back on the bench and holding her stomach. It was a wonderful sight because up until then I had never seen Millicent Trent smile. She was gorgeous when she did so. Actually, she was gorgeous when she didn't.

She saw me staring at her, maybe even sensed what I was thinking, sat up and straightened her jacket.

“I really needed that, Derrick. Thank you. I don’t know why you were the one I called, but I guess it was the right call after all. Thank you.”

I told her she was welcome, then asked if she was going back to her office. She said she should but probably wouldn’t. I nodded, glanced around, then stood up and extended my left hand to her. She stood up but I didn’t let go of her hand.

I turned to face her full on and her expression was curious, and a little apprehensive.

“My place is maybe three quarters of a mile east of here,” I said.

She stared at me for a long time, the beginnings of another smile forming at the corners of her thin lips.

“Then I suppose I should walk you home to make sure some bully doesn’t jump out and take your lunch money,” she said.

After another minute, we started off toward my place, our pace unhurried, my mind filled with happy thoughts. I wasn’t sure what she was thinking, but I could have guessed.

And would not have been wrong.

NOW WE SAW ONE ANOTHER on occasion, whenever the timing was right and one or the other or both of us were in the mood. A phone call, email, or text was all it took. She was married and happy, had two children she adored, and loved her family life, but that afternoon a few months ago, she discovered that something had been missing in her life, a hole she didn’t even know was there. Enter Derrick Olin, the missing link, *filler* of holes, so to speak.

I LOVE EATING PUSSY, CAN’T seem to get enough, and with Millicent Trent, that was most assuredly the case. I could do it exclu-

sively all the time and never be left unsatisfied.

I had her pressed into the very window that I'd been standing in front of, the right side of her face against the glass, both palms flat on it, shoulders and upper chest, pressed to it. Her small butt was pushed out, her long sinewy legs spread apart, and I was on my knees behind her, my mouth buried between her thighs, my tongue as far inside her as I could send it. She was dripping wet, moaning so deeply that it made my cock ache; and my tongue more insistent.

She screamed at one point, reached back with her left hand, put it on top of my shaved head.

“Oh, Derrick! Oh god, you're going to kill me. Oh fuck! *Fuck!* Oh *gawd, oh fuckkkkkkkkkkkkk!*”

I pulled back, glanced up at her, pulled her hand away and put it back on the glass, briefly glancing at the diamond wedding ring on her finger, the sight of which brought a wicked smile to my lips.

“Hardly,” I said as she quivered before me. “But I am going to make you come again.”

And I did.

MILLS—SHE LETS ME CALL HER that, no one else—likes to be fucked doggie style, in the middle of my bed, on all fours, knees far apart, with me holding onto her supple waist and pulling her back as I rock forward into her, smacking against her tight backside, my balls doing the same thing to her clit. She has the most intense orgasms this way, nearly as powerful as the ones she experiences when I go down on her.

I like this position, too, particularly because of the mirror on the dresser across the room. We can see ourselves in it, Mills watching me pound her from behind while I watch her eyes widen, her mouth

open each time I thrust deeply into her. She turned beet red when she came, shaking and panting, her eyes rolling back in her head before the lids shut tightly. She screamed once more, shuddered uncontrollably, then collapsed onto her face, unable to maintain her balance.

I eased myself down onto her sweat slickened back, my heart racing in my chest, matching the tempo of hers.

After a minute, she caught her breath enough to raise her head and look back over her shoulder.

“You didn’t come yet, did you?” she asked.

“Nope,” I said.

“Good,” she said. “Because there’s one more thing I want you to do to me before we’re done today.” She was grinning now and I loved that grin. My cock stiffened inside her and she pressed her butt into me. I kissed the side of her neck, then pushed up and withdrew.

MILLS CAME THREE MORE TIMES and I watched with delight each time, standing behind her in my bathroom at the sink, the mirror above it capturing our reflections. She was bent forward, hands gripping the faucet, I stood with my knees slightly bent, her waist once again in my hands, this time with my heavily lubricated cock inserted deeply into her tiny tight little asshole. An experience I loved, one she had never had until recently, but now loved nearly as much; evidenced by the three orgasms.

Mills glanced up at me and made a face, *that* face, and it’s what sent me into madness. Pumping, pushing, grinding, moving all the way into her, her ass so tight around my engorged cock, feeling myself start to release, ejaculating, my cum spurting into her while I

groaned and growled and shuddered. And Millicent Trent screamed herself hoarse, nearly shattering my eardrums.

I loved every fucking second of it.

So did *Mrs. Trent*, by the way, but Mr. Trent would never know it. His loss.

“I’VE BEEN IN MEETINGS ALL AFTERNOON, away from the office, the busy life of an FBI Special-Agent-in-Charge. So when I go home tonight exhausted, my husband will think nothing of it.”

“And when you have trouble sitting down?” I said, smiling impishly.

She was buttoning her blouse, smirked at me.

“I probably won’t tell him it’s because I spent part of my afternoon letting a large black dude with a fat cock fuck me in the ass until I nearly passed out.”

“Smart,” I said, walking over and kissing her. “And next time I promise to make you pass out.”

At some point, the rain had stopped. I walked her out into the front room when she was fully dressed, including the regulation Glock .40 caliber on her right hip.

“Thanks for the help,” I told her at the door as we stood embracing.

“And thanks for the orgasms,” she grinned, kissing me. “Licking my pussy, fucking my pussy, and, of course, fucking my ass.”

“My pleasure, ma’am,” I said seriously, then we kissed again, for a long time.

She left just before five and I went back to my desk, sat down carefully, Mills wasn’t the only one a little sore for a good cause. I started going over the FBI intelligence and analysis reports yet

again, hoping to find anything I'd missed before, even though I was sure I hadn't.

I WASN'T ACTUALLY ATTENDING THE wedding, despite the invitation by the grooms. I was working today, and my job was to make sure that whatever nutjobs tried to make trouble did not succeed. I thought about Tommy's suggestion that I could perhaps serve as a groomsman, an offer I had declined because it would have put me on display when I needed to blend in to the background and see what I could see. Then Gabe had made another suggestion, a joke really, but now that I thought about it, probably most accurate. Derrick Olin, *the undercover groomsman*.

Forecast-wise, Gabe was correct, it was going to be a beautiful day for their wedding, but being August in Alabama, it was also going to be hot and humid. Thankfully, I didn't have to wear a suit, and for more reasons than one. In addition to the discomfort from the heat, there was the fact that I currently only owned one, and had worn it last weekend at the BJCC. It was still at the dry cleaners, a *stain* that was a bit tough to get out via conventional means, and I hadn't had time to stop by and retrieve it.

I was going to go casual. It was expected that a crowd of some kind would gather outside the church to protest, and it was a good bet they wouldn't be wearing suits either, at least I hoped not. Anyway, I was going with blue jeans, a well worn, slightly faded blue T-shirt, an oversized long sleeve button-down shirt in olive drab, most of the buttons undone and the sleeves rolled up past my elbows, and very comfortable black leather hiking boots that I've owned for nearly fifteen years. A lightweight and functional outfit, and one that concealed everything else I was carrying with me today.

A subcompact .45 caliber Glock in a MIC<sup>[i]</sup> holster on my right hip, a .380 caliber super small Glock in the left front pocket of my jeans, a Kel Tec .32 auto strapped to my left ankle, a Ka-Bar combat knife left over from my Air Force days strapped horizontally across the small of my back in a quick-release sheath, and a T-16 expandable tactical baton attached to my belt on the left side. As I looked myself over in the mirror, I detected no telltale bulges to give anything away. Which was saying something because I was also wearing lightweight body armor under my T-shirt. Looked like I had gained some weight since yesterday, ten pounds, but it couldn't be helped.

Yeah, I was probably going to burn up this afternoon when the temperature reached ninety-seven, and hopefully I would need none of the items I was concealing. Still, better safe than dead.

I left my apartment at zero-seven thirty. The wedding didn't kick off until four, or sixteen hundred for the military-minded, but there were lots of preparations to be made before the festivities began. And I'm sure the protestors would arrive early. I wanted to be there for that, have time to see what was what, and look for anybody who seemed like they might be interested in doing more than protesting.

**GOD HATES LIBERALS, JEWS, NIGGERS, AND FAGS!**

Good to know, I thought to myself. One can never be too informed, I always say. I also resisted the urge to tell one of the jackasses holding those signs that JEWS was not spelled *JOOES*, but somehow thought the correction would be lost on them. Then I wondered if perhaps it was *Joes* instead of *Jews* they were trying to spell. Heck, maybe god didn't like Joes either.

I was right; the protestors arrived early, and weren't wearing suits, although a few men were sporting blazers and casual trousers

and some of the women had on lightweight sundresses. The crowd started off small, with only a dozen or so at first, and they mostly held hands and prayed, and then started to sing. But then the whackos started showing up, and that's when the placards and large-scale posters came out.

At that point, the groups started to separate, with what many would consider to be the legitimate protestors moving across 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South so they could put distance between them and the fruitcakes holding the signs that even they found offensive. The whackos stayed right where they were, on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul's, holding their signs, chanting, yelling: "*WE DON'T WANT NO FAG MARRIAGE; WE DON'T WANT NO SODOMITE WEDDING NIGHTS!*"

Catchy tune, and I wondered how long it took them to come up with it.

The police showed up around eleven, three cars with six officers, a sergeant leading the detail, a tall black man in his mid-thirties. He disbursed his officers along the area, then went up to the group in front of the church, started talking to the man who appeared to be in charge. They had a brief conversation, the man becoming animated and pointing his finger at the sergeant. The sergeant remained calm, leaned in close to the other man at one point, spoke a few words, and the other man flinched, taking a step back. The sergeant turned and walked away after that, his expression unreadable, but there was a certain *spring* in his step that spoke volumes.

By noon, it was well over ninety degrees and the sun was beaming down on everything. Wedding prep people were already inside the church setting up, each of them receiving unwelcomed insults as



they passed the protestors, but none even acknowledged them, as they had been instructed not to.

I had decided that Frankie and Sheila should be visible, so I posted him at the front of the church up the steps near the door. Sheila was out back, and covered the side the parking lot was on. Both were dressed for the occasion, Frankie in a black suit, matching tie, and white shirt. He looked very dapper. And this was the first time I had ever seen Sheila dressed in anything other than jeans and baggy shirts. She wore a suit as well, navy blue, a light blue button-down shirt, and red bowtie. I was suitably impressed. I also had no doubt that she and Frankie were appropriately armed and ready should the situation call for it.

Hopefully it wouldn't, but as someone reasonably smart once said, *hope is not a strategy*.

BY TWO O'CLOCK, THERE WERE about two hundred people on the street, on both sides of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a lot of them with signs, but not all of them protesting, some were counter-protesting in support of gay marriage, world peace, nuclear disarmament, and free love. Now we're talking.

More police were on hand as well, six deputies from Jefferson County, one with a canine partner. Wonder what his/her position was on Liberals, Jews, Niggers, and Fags? Probably didn't have one or care one way or the other. A lot of dogs I knew were far smarter than a lot of people I knew.

I WAS BEGINNING TO SWEAT A lot because I had been outside for most of the morning and afternoon. I'd added a ball cap to my head before getting out of the car, and shades, and neither did any-

thing to abate the heat. But at least I wouldn't get sunburn on top of my head nor have my corneas burned out.

I was over by the Family Dollar at three, leaning against the side wall a few feet from a small group of people who were talking about the goings on across at the church. All of them were women, all black, and all well into their sixties. None of them was in favor of same-sex marriage, but none of them liked the protesters either, least of all the ones carrying the offensive placards and shouting even more offensive slurs as guests started arriving at the church.

I watched as a silver Mercedes Towncar pulled into the lot from the back street and stopped at the side entrance. The driver climbed out and hustled around to the rear passenger's door. The distance and the sun in my eyes made it kind of hard to make out who exited the vehicle, but I did notice a lot of thick dark hair on the head of one of the two people. The other, shorter than the first, seemed to have blond hair and this led me to believe that Nadya Shaba and Ashley Milner had decided to come together, both going *stag*. Or hell, maybe they were an *item* now.

Probably not, I knew for a fact that Nadya liked dick far too much. And while I had never deduced Ashley's stance on the subject, I would be more than a little surprised if she swung the other way on the issue. However, I have been wrong before.

THREE-THIRTY. HALF HOUR TO GO until the nuptials. Not much had changed outside the church in the last hour or so, other than the fact that now it was even hotter, without a cloud in the sky. I had seen Reverend Boone and his wife arrive a little while earlier, parking in a reserved spot near the side entrance and strolling in holding hands. I observed that while Tom had kind of let himself go during

the last decade or so, Monica, his wife, even in her mid-sixties, was still a looker. And yes, I did briefly consider her attitude toward dick before turning my attention back to the protestors, pro and con.

I CIRCLED AROUND BACK OF FAMILY Dollar on a walkabout down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, pulled off my cap and wiped sweat from my forehead. There were a lot of cars parked all over the place, most probably belonging to the people who were currently surrounding St. Paul's. Didn't see that many people around, except for a few local residents on their porches, a couple with hand fans that did nothing to dispel the oppressive heat. But then again, it was probably better than nothing.

I walked all the way down to Center Street, intent on taking the left and heading back over to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the side of the Public Library. It was closed on Saturdays, and, no doubt, its parking lot would be full of cars, too. I reached the corner, glanced around, started to make the turn, and then, out of the corner of my right eye, something caught my attention. White male, mid to late twenties, red ball cap, white T-shirt was all I could see from my position because he was on the other side of a row of cars parked south of me on Center Street. He hadn't registered me yet because his attention was on something else.

I wasn't sure what it was about him, but something set my *Spidey* senses a tingling, so instead of turning toward 6<sup>th</sup>, I continued on across the intersection after a car drove past. I stopped a moment, turned, and crossed 5<sup>th</sup> so that I was now diagonal and parallel to the young man in the red cap and white T-shirt; now I saw he also had on blue jeans and black boots, possibly combat style. He bent down and was now leaning into the back of a dark green Ford

Tempo that had seen better days, and next to him was another young man in a similar state of dress, only his ball cap was blue and his T-shirt green.

Maybe it was nothing, but somehow I didn't think so.

It was three thirty-five.

I WAS AIDED BY THE FACT THAT BOTH men were so engrossed in what they were doing in the trunk of the Tempo that neither glanced around once. I was able to make it down the street undetected, to the point where I was directly across from them. I waited for two more cars to pass, then took a quick breath and moved as swiftly and quietly as I could to the other side of the street, and right up behind them.

That's about the time that one of them, blue ball cap, decided to look up and back, but by that time it was too late. I was a mere two feet behind both of them. I could smell the gas fumes, and not from the car, but from the ten glass bottles in a plastic box in the back of the trunk. These fuckers were preparing Molotov Cocktails, strips of cloth already affixed to the mouths of the ten bottles.

Blue ball cap froze when he saw me, but it wouldn't have mattered if he had tried to do something. I was prepared, they were not.

The ASP baton had been in my left hand since I started down the street, now I extended it with a simple flick of my wrist, raising it into Blue ball cap's stomach before he could say anything. He was doubling up and clutching himself before his partner even knew what was happening, and before red ball cap could turn, I struck him across the right shoulder blade with the baton and he fell into the open trunk and on top of the box of bottles.

I hit blue ball cap again, this time on the left knee, and his leg gave way. He was on the pavement whimpering when I shoved his partner on top of him and closed the trunk. I glanced around quickly to see if anyone was looking, and amazingly, despite all the houses around, no one appeared to be, at least as far as I could tell.

I closed the baton, returned it to the sheath on my left side, pressed the transmit button on the Bluetooth in my left ear.

“Listen up, guys,” I spoke quietly but urgently. “We’ve got a situation...”

RED BALL CAP’S NAME WAS TIMOTHY Fredrick “Freddie” Breedlove, and I did know him, although I’m not sure I recognized him because I *recognized* him, or if it was simply the fact that something registered in my brain as being *off* in the brief peripheral glimpse I had of him from the corner. Either way, whatever the reason, my *Spidey* senses had been correct.

Mr. Breedlove, along with his friend, Earl Patrick Carpenter, was a member of a local Aryan group that the FBI was keeping tabs on. His photo and particulars were in one of the intelligence reports Millicent Trent had given me on Thursday afternoon. I didn’t realize this, of course, until I had a look at the ID in his wallet, then the name clicked. Earl Carpenter, blue ball cap, clicked, too. The Bureau would be so happy they actually got a couple right.

After my call to alert Frankie and Sheila, I quickly picked up and placed the would-be firebombing duo in the front seat of their car, Breedlove on the driver’s side. Then I climbed in behind them, pulling out my Ka-Bar.

Black, sleek, razor sharp, perfectly balanced, and twelve inches long, in total. A truly frightening weapon in the hands of somebody

who knew what they were doing with it.

I know what I'm doing with it.

"No time for bullshit, boys," I said quietly, leaning back in the seat. "I need to know now if you two shitheads were operating alone or if there are more of your brethren out there. Other sterling members of the *Pureblood Confederate Brotherhood of Alabama*."

That got their attention. They had been squirming about, checking out their injuries, no doubt trying to come up with some way of turning the tables on me. During a quick search, I'd found handguns and cheap folding knives on both men, discarded them in the trunk with the bottles of gas. There could be other weapons in the car that they knew about and I didn't, but I was behind them and felt confident I could keep the tables turned the way they were if they tried anything.

"Yeah, I know who and what you are, gentlemen. And so does the FBI, by the way. That's how I recognized you. The Bureau has extensive files on both of you, everything from birth to last Monday." Not exactly true, but it gave them something to think about.

"You a scumbag fucking fed, nigger?" Carpenter blurted, some of his bravado returning. "Fucking government assholes! *Fuck* all you niggers!"

Sighing, I shook my head.

"You have anything more helpful to offer, Mr. Breedlove?"

"Fuck you, nigger!" he spat, eyeing me in the rearview mirror. "Fuck you and your nigger mother, too! I ain't saying shit, so read us our fucking rights and let us call a lawyer! You ain't got shit on us and we gonna sue your nigger faggot-loving ass and the fuckin' FBI for everything you got!"

I nodded again, sighed again, then leaned forward and, without apparent effort, stabbed Carpenter in the back of his right shoulder, only driving the blade in about a quarter inch. He screamed and grabbed for the wound, and by this time I had already turned the blade and done the same thing to the side of Breedlove's left shoulder.

Both men were screaming, clutching bloody wounds. I leaned between the seats, my face very close to theirs, my tone quiet and respectful when I spoke.

“Gentlemen, a couple of things you should know. Number one, I have no time or patience for bullshit. Number two, I'm not a federal agent or an agent of law enforcement whatsoever. Which means I will not be reading you your rights. Instead, I will be cutting on the two of you until you either tell me what I want to know, or you pass out from blood loss. And that might take a long while, I've had a lot of practice doing this sort of thing, know how to keep a man conscious and in agony for hours and hours. Oh, and one more thing. Although I was not the biggest fan of my late mother, if either of you ever speak disrespectfully about her again, I'll cut your tongues out. For starters.”

A minute later, both men lay unconscious on the front seat of their car and I was climbing out, double tapping my Bluetooth once more. The Ka-Bar, wiped clean of blood on Carpenter's shirt, was returned to the sheath at my back.

“Okay, guys,” I spoke as I started to run up Center Street toward 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. “Listen up. We don't have much time.”

It was three fifty-four p.m.

ACCORDING TO CARPENTER AND Breedlove, and somehow I didn't believe they had it in them to lie to me at this point in our relationship, there were two more teams planning to join in on the firebombing of St. Paul's at precisely three minutes after four, once the wedding had begun. Other members of the Pureblood Confederate Brotherhood of Alabama. They had given names, but only one I recognized. I suppose the FBI needed to step up its game a bit. And right now, so did I.

One team was parked at the intersection of Omega Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South about four hundred yards from the church. They were in a black Jeep Cherokee. I passed this information to Sheila, told her to get over there fast and to do whatever she had to in order to prevent what they were planning. She didn't need much direction, and understood perfectly well the stakes.

Frankie was now the sole protection for the church itself, other than the cops, but they weren't really there for that. I told him to take whatever action he deemed necessary if something happened. Frankie didn't require much direction either.

This left the last vehicle for me. It was parked just around the corner from St. Paul's, in the back lot of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School, a gray Honda Accord. Approximately two hundred yards from the church.

About six hundred yards from where I was when I learned this information. Ordinarily, I was a better distance runner than a speeder.

Today was not an ordinary day.

THEIR NAMES WERE HORACE Patterson and Irving Cross. Cross was the one name I had recognized, although I didn't recall much from the file. But he was a member of a racist terrorist group about



to perpetrate an outrage on a bunch of innocent people, so what more did I need to know about him or his buddy Horace?

I stopped running when I got to the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the school was half a block up 1<sup>st</sup>, but I couldn't see the back lot from here. I took a couple deep breaths while glancing down the street at St. Paul's. Some of the protestors had thinned out, mostly on the peaceful side across the street, but the ones who remained continued to sing and chant and shout, while the cops on duty there continued to stare at them impassively.

I started up 1<sup>st</sup> Street, seeing that the time was one minute after four. I was about ten feet from the alley that led to the back of the school when I saw a gray Honda Accord rolling to a stop just short of the street, two men in the front seat, one leaning into the back. I had a pretty good idea what he was reaching for.

Shit!

Another deep breath, the Glock concealed on my right hip now in my right hand, held low behind my leg. I continued forward, keeping my pace as casual as possible, my eyes locked on the Honda and the two men in it. The passenger turned and said something to the driver and the driver nodded, the car rolling forward again.

That's when they saw me, our eyes meeting.

They froze, I didn't.

THE CAR WAS STILL ROLLING forward and suddenly the driver, Cross, remembered to turn the wheel. He did so violently, oversteering, then fighting to regain control of the car. The passenger, Patterson, was urgently reaching toward his right side, trying to tug something out, probably a gun.

I stepped out into the street, raised my Glock in a two-handed grip, modified Weaver stance (just because I still love it), one foot slightly in front of the other, left elbow bent, sighting along the top of the barrel, aiming at the middle of the windshield.

Patterson managed to free his weapon, some kind of semiautomatic pistol, and leaned out the window, trying to aim at me. The Honda was still moving, although awkwardly and not fast. I adjusted my aim, fired at the passenger's side of the windshield. Two shots, then a third.

Patterson's pistol dropped to the ground and I saw his arm go up in the air, hit the frame of the car door as he sank back in the seat. That's when the car shot forward, and I'm not sure whether Cross was actually aiming at me or just scared, but he was coming in my direction very fast.

I dodged to the right with about three feet to spare, dropped and spun at the same time, firing another four shots through the driver's side window and door. The Accord blew through the intersection, swerved violently, and plowed headlong into one of the concrete bench and table combinations outside the barbeque place down the street from St. Paul's. Leonard's. Luckily no one was eating outside in the heat today. And since this wasn't an episode of television or a big budget action movie, there was no spectacular explosion resulting from the unlit Molotov Cocktails in the backseat suddenly igniting, or because one of my bullets hit the gas tank, turning the car into a gigantic fireball. Nope, just a quick and violent crash. End of story. Sort of.

By the time I crossed the street, several officers and deputies had run down, weapons drawn. When they saw me, several of their weapons aimed in my direction. I quickly raised my hands, dropped

down to my knees, then flat on my stomach on the concrete. I pushed my pistol out of my reach and then interlocked my fingers behind my head.

Obviously, I knew the drill very well.

AFTER CONSULTATION WITH ASHLEY Milner, someone quite well known to most law enforcement agencies throughout the state, not to mention feared, Birmingham PD *graciously* consented to allow me to stay at the scene and watch the conclusion of the wedding inside the church. I stood in back, in the overcrowded and standing room only section. Ashley stood on one side of me, Nadya on the other. And two uniformed Birmingham Police officers were right behind me.

Pastor Babcock administered the vows, Tommy and Gabe took the traditional ones, with a modification or two for clarity's sake, and then the kiss. Followed by ebullient applause with everyone now on their feet, tears, laughter, and complete joy. At least in here there was.

Outside, most of the protesters had hit the road after the shooting, and when word leaked out about the planned Molotov Cocktail *party*, the rest took off. What remained now were a bunch of gawkers, the press, and lots and lots of cops from multiple agencies. My dance card was going to be very full for the next few days, perhaps longer.

The cops found the Tempo with Breedlove and Carpenter in it still parked where I had left them, both still incapacitated. They had also found a Black Jeep Cherokee over on Omega Street near 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, two men inside, both shot, one dead, the other not looking so

good. In addition to handguns, their backseat contained a case full of glass bottles, each one filled with gasoline, cloth wicks attached.

I was questioned regarding this find but answered honestly that I had nothing to do with it. Of course, I knew who did, but there was no reason to burden them with that information right now. Or ever. Sheila never hung around to talk to the cops, but she always got the job done. Didn't know what happened to Frankie Burrage either, but I could guess. He and cops didn't get along well either, and where there is shooting, the cops always like to look in his direction, even when they already have their shooter in custody.

I felt a firm hand on my right shoulder.

"Time to go, Mr. Olin. My lieutenant is getting impatient."

I nodded, turned to Nadya and Ashley in turn.

"Well, ladies, it's been momentous, I can definitely say that."

They both hugged and kissed me, and Ashley told me that her top criminal litigator was already enroute to police headquarters and that I shouldn't say anything until I met with him.

"And I'll be available, too," she added.

I nodded, turned toward the cops, and when I glanced past them, while I didn't exactly smile, there was an unexpected surge of relief rising in my chest. Not to mention a *stirring* much lower. The cause of both was my favorite FBI agent walking up behind the cops.

ALTHOUGH I HAVE SEEN HER NAKED many times, I've never seen Millicent Trent wearing anything other than a pantsuit. She was off duty today, or had been before getting the call about what happened at St. Paul's. She was dressed casually, sung blue jeans, black cowgirl boots, and a purple T-shirt. And owing to the necessity of professionalism, and the Glock on her hip, she had no doubt

added the black blazer she probably carried in her car at all times. Just in case she got called in to work and didn't have time to go home and change. Like today.

The feds were asserting jurisdiction, and the locals had no problem with that, less hassle for them. So I was now, once again, in the custody of the FBI. This time though I wasn't in cuffs. Millicent Trent walked on my right side, her hand on my elbow, and another agent was on my left. She stopped at the back of a black government SUV, opened the door.

"Watch your head, Mr. Olin," she said formally.

I nodded, doing so as I climbed inside. The other agent moved around to the driver's side, and in the brief time that he was out of earshot, she leaned in and grinned at me.

"Looks like I'm gonna get to do that strip search after all."

I smiled.

"As long as you get naked, too, Agent Trent."

She smiled again, squeezed my thigh. What I said next nearly made her choke with laughter, but then she managed to check herself, stepped back, and closed the door.

It was a good thing the windows of the SUV were tinted, otherwise bystanders might wonder why a *detainee* in federal custody was grinning from ear to ear.

They'd probably wonder even more why he was sporting a huge erection in his jeans.

***Halt!***

<https://payhip.com/b/Rse1>

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[\[i\]](#) Minimal Inside Carry.