

FITTING IN



BOOK TWO

Al Strano

Fitting In – Part 1

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## Chapter One All's Not Well

One year after its inception, the original nine agents of the Muslim outreach program were down to six. Out of the three agents who removed themselves, two agents found the work uninteresting. The third agent was attacked, unfortunately, by a gang of young Muslims. It would have been a very serious situation had it not been for an imam who came to agent's rescue. The imam apologized profusely and pleaded to the other agents that the young men had not been radicalized, just boys with time on their hands. Never the less, they were arrested, tried and given suspended sentences. It was a bad mark on the Muslim community, but no one considered it terrorism. The offended agent, however, wanted nothing further to do with Muslims.

Nine more agents were recruited and the training continued. As the group grew, Anthony was given more support, including a full-time office manager, which allowed Alex to concentrate on the training center. Anthony was in his office when Sally, the office manager, knocked and entered.

"There's a lawyer out here who insists on seeing you. She doesn't have an appointment, but claims you must see her."

Anthony was always easy going with visitors. Since he had nothing important to do, he told Sally, "Send her in." He probably couldn't have avoided inviting her in, but as soon as he did, he regretted it. The female lawyer approached his desk and handed him two objects. One was a business card with her name and position, which read "Agnes Strunk, Associate Counsel ACLU (American Civil Liberty Union)." The second object really got his attention. It was a subpoena naming Anthony as a defendant in a lawsuit entitled "Mabel Smiley vs. The FBI."

"One of my colleagues is serving your director."

"You're suing the FBI?"

"We certainly are – for employment discrimination."

"Who's Mabel Smiley? I've never heard the name."

"That's because you never allowed her to apply for a position."

“What position is that?”

“Muslim community field agent.”

“Is Mabel a female?”

“Of course she is, a very attractive blonde one, I should point out.”

'That probably makes it worse,' thought Anthony. He could just imagine an attractive blonde female trying to enter a mosque unannounced.

“I see where you're coming from, but any discrimination is coming from the Muslim religious community, not the FBI. The purpose of the position is to meld into the community. It sounds to me like Mabel would have trouble melding into an all male mosque. She wouldn't get through the front door.”

“That's not Mabel's problem. She's perfectly qualified in every way and you won't even give her an interview.”

“The first qualification for the position is male. She is not qualified.”

“That qualification is against the law, which is why we're suing your chauvinist organization.”

“The FBI is not chauvinist, we have thousands of female employees. This particular position has unique requirements.”

“We'll see how unique it is when we get to court.”

Sure enough, the director had been served also. Anthony was called to a meeting to discuss the situation. Also present was a lawyer from the legal department.

“What made you guys think you could advertise a male only position?”

Anthony shrugged and answered, “Because it's necessary. The Muslims won't tolerate non-Muslim women in the mosque.”

The director chimed in, “If she wins the suit, she still can't do the job. There are hundreds of jobs she can apply for and probably get. This is just a stunt by the ACLU to give me grief.”

The lawyer grimaced while saying, "I can't recommend going ahead with this, you're on the wrong side of the law," and he left.

Anthony and the director both sighed, but put their heads together and came up with the following plan. They will offer Ms. Smiley an opportunity to visit a mosque to introduce herself to the imam or whomever comes to the door. She will go alone, but be monitored by FBI agents, one of whom will be Anthony.

The ACLU lawyer was not satisfied with the idea and didn't want to present it to Ms. Smiley. She really wanted to go to court, she wasn't interested in justice, she just wanted to make a show of FBI bigotry. However, in order to do anything, Ms. Smiley needed to fill out an application, which meant she had to come into the office. And despite Agnes's complaint, she didn't need a lawyer.

Once in the office, it was obvious that Ms. Smiley wasn't that interested in the job, she would have been happy with another position and had been put up to the whole thing. But, being afraid of Agnes, she went through with the application and agreed to visit the Mosque. Agnes wanted to accompany her and Anthony wanted to agree, but the director said, "No she'll have to do the job by herself – no lawyer."

Mabel showed up for her visit in a bright pink, knee-length skirt, yellow blouse, plenty of makeup and a strong aroma of orange blossoms. Anthony had given her a choice of three mosques, which he hand picked and considered moderate. The director wanted to choose really tough ones, but Anthony was confident they would get what they desired with one on his list. Anthony and another armed agent discreetly followed her and observed from across the street. It didn't take long. Mabel knocked on the door of the mosque, which was opened by a stooped, gray bearded doorkeeper, who appeared shocked by the aberration before him. Mabel made an attempt to explain her mission, but the old man shook his head, pointed down the street and slammed the door shut. Mabel was undeterred and knocked again, the door was opened a crack and quickly shut. Mabel was now in a sour mood and beat on the door. Anthony started to move toward her but was held back by the other agent. "If you save her now, you'll never be rid of her." Mabel continued to pound on the door. Just then Agnes pulled up in her car. She wasn't supposed to be there, but she joined Mabel in her pounding. Next time the door opened, three burly young men were there and in very plain English told the two women to leave and aggressively pointed down the street. Agnes, of course, screamed in their faces and made all kinds of threats. The men's gestures showed their annoyance. Mabel wanted to leave, but Agnes didn't. Seeing a bad situation getting worse, Anthony sprang from behind his hiding place and shouted out in Arabic for the men to relax. He quickly took charge and escorted Mabel across the street. He left

Agnes on her own to face the three men. Fortunately, the men decided the fun was over and went back inside. Anthony escorted the shaken Mabel back to her car and waved goodbye to Agnes. Mabel withdrew her application and Agnes's protests fell on deaf ears. Unable to find another applicant, there was no longer any way for Agnes to pursue a lawsuit. At last, Anthony was able to continue the recruitment process.

## Chapter Two

### Prejudice Raises Its Ugly Head

It was supposed to be a happy day. It was Abbi's first day in kindergarten. He had been looking forward to it for weeks, continually asking Sara, "How many days, Mommy?" And she would patiently tell him the number. It turned out to be a teaching aid and the young boy got a head start on his counting. The whole apartment was excited. Sara dressed Abbi and Anthony prepared the twins for daycare; they were too young to understand, but they could feel the excitement.

It was barely lunchtime when Sara got a call from the school to come pick up Abbi. She hurriedly finished up with her patient and had the receptionist reschedule the rest of her morning appointments. When she arrived at the school, Abbi was in the vice principal's office. The boy was in tears and ran to wrap his arm around his mother's legs. Sara did her best to calm him while, at the same time, get to the bottom of the situation. The stern faced VP offered no help, but finally informed Sara, "You will have to remove this boy from our school."

Sara was stunned. Abbi had only been in school for three hours. What could he have done? "What's the problem?"

"He is a distraction to the other students."

"How is he a distraction?"

"He's an Arab. There is no room in our school for possible terrorists."

"He's an American citizen. He was born here. He's only five years old."

"We've seen news shows of suicide bombers who are only children. I owe it to the other parents to protect their children."

Sara bundled the still crying child into her arms and carried him out to the car. Once home she called Anthony to explain the situation. Anthony was equally shocked. With all his work with the Muslim community, it sounded like he'd have to work with the establishment. He instructed Sara to make an appointment with the principal for the next morning. They discussed taking Abbi to the meeting, but decided he had been through enough.

Their arrival at the school was greeted with thinly masked disdain. The principal's secretary showed them into the outer office and left them. An hour later they were

still there, obviously the principal thought they would get tired and leave. When the secretary finally ushered them in, the principal immediately told them, "I don't know why you're here. You were told we don't want that Arab in our school."

Anthony, in a calm manner, responded quietly, "I'm not sure you understand. You have no choice but to accept my son. He is a legal resident of this school district and is entitled to attend this school. And three hours is hardly enough time to decide he's a distraction. How did that come about?"

The principal shook his head and explained as if to a moron, "When the teacher told the class that he was an Arab with the name of Abdullah, the students became very nervous and the teacher couldn't get them under control."

"Sounds to me like the teacher provoked the students, not my son."

"Why do you insist on calling him your son. You and your wife are obviously not Arabs."

"He is definitely our son. We legally adopted him."

"Well, that's your problem. He should be sent back to wherever he came from. If Donald Trump were president, he would never have been allowed in the country."

"So you're saying you will not allow my son in this school no matter what?"

"Absolutely."

With that, Anthony pulled his tape recorder out of his pocket and showed it to the principal. "This should make interesting testimony in court."

The principal made a grab at the machine. Anthony was quicker and stuffed it back in his pocket. "You can't do that! I didn't agree to be taped; it won't stand up in court."

"Oh, yes, it will."

"No, it won't. I know the law."

As he withdrew his FBI credentials, Anthony smiled and said, "Better than I do?"

Getting the last word is always nice, but it wouldn't help Abdullah. Besides, no way would Sara and Anthony want their child to go to this school.

## Chapter Three

### More Bigotry

Sara was beside herself. Abdullah didn't understand why he couldn't go to school. He had looked forward to it for so long. They had picked their apartment because it had a great school district, or so they'd been told. Anthony could afford private school but thought public school was a good experience for Abbi to get exposed to more kids. He never dreamed he would get exposed to racist school officials. He had thoughts of making the staff pay for the treatment of his son, but what he really wanted to do is make sure this kind of hatred did not continue to hurt other kids. First, though, he had to get Abbi into another school. To help with this problem he invited Alex and Sally over for dinner to discuss his and Sara's options.

Alex was a lawyer and Sally had lived in the area her whole life. Dinner was over, the kids were in bed and the dishes were done. As the four adults gathered around the kitchen table, there came a loud pounding on the front door. Anthony sprang to his feet and told his guests to stay seated and he would see what the ruckus was about. The pounding continued and Anthony was glad that Alex was armed. He had come from the office and almost all agents wore their sidearms to and from work. (Even though Anthony was issued a weapon, which was in his home, he had gotten into the habit of leaving his sidearm in the gun cabinet securely locked. He had been chastised several times for not carrying it, but since he never knew when he would go into a mosque, he kept it locked up at home.) When he opened the door, with the chain in place, a very large, red faced man with alcohol on his breath tried to force the door open. Exasperated by the chain, he growled, "Is this where that Arab terrorist lives?"

"There is no terrorist here and I suggest you back off."

"Don't lie to me. The school principal told me you're harboring an Arab, who could be a suicide bomber."

"My son, who is of Arab decent, is five years old. He is hardly a threat to anyone."

"Yeah, well, why did they throw him out of school?"

"Because your friend the principal is an idiot."

"The principal is an educated man and knows what he's talking about."

Anthony shook his head. "That's one man's opinion. I believe he is seriously



uninformed.”

“Well, I'm telling you, he's a lot smarter than you. And you would be well advised to take that Arab some place else and don't dare try to take him to school.”

Anthony had already decided that none of his children would attend that school, but he would not let a drunken bully intimidate him. “If I want to, I will take my son to school where I like.”

“Oh, yeah! Well if you bring that Arab to school, I'll burn your house down!”

Anthony was shocked. “What did you say?”

“I said, bring that dirty Arab to our school and I'll burn your house down.”

Anthony was about to call for Alex, but he didn't have to, the agent was by his side in a heartbeat. The two Agents nodded to each other and Anthony unchained the door. The bully charged in and started to reach for Anthony. He was brought to a quick stop when he saw Alex with his gun drawn. Alex commanded, “Put your hands behind your back, you're under arrest.”

The bully wasn't about to oblige, he began backing up to leave.

“I said put your hands behind your back.”

Facing the gun, the man turned around and Alex snapped handcuffs on him and gave him the required warning about saying anything, adding that he was under arrest for threatening to commit arson.

The bully thought he could apologize his way out of his situation. “I didn't mean that. And you have no evidence that I said any such thing.”

Alex holstered his gun and pulled out his FBI creds. “Not only did you make that threat twice, you made it to an FBI agent in the presence of another agent.”

As the bully was digesting this information, Abbi dressed in his cartoon pj's came into the room. “What is wrong daddy, have I done something bad?”

Anthony rushed to his son's side and scooped him into his arms. “No, no, Abbi. You haven't done anything wrong.”

“Why is that man in handcuffs?”

“Oh, we're just trying them on for fun.”

Sara came into the room, took her son's hand, while glaring at the intruder, and led him back to bed.

Before Anthony could say anything, the bully asked, “Is that your son?”

“YES! Whose do you think it is?”

“He doesn't look like a terrorist. Clyde said he looked like a suicide bomber.”

“Who's Clyde?”

“Clyde Gomes, he's the principal. You were in his office today.”

“Well, he didn't bother to introduce himself. He was too busy insulting that little boy you just saw.”

“Yeah, when he came to the bar he made it sound pretty bad.”

“The bar?”

“Yeah, I was at Smitty's having a few with some of the other fathers when he came in and suggested that it would be good if some of us came by and told you we didn't want that ... [dirty Arab], uh, I mean, uh, your son in our school.”

“So, is that how you know where we live?” FBI Agents normally have unlisted addresses and phone numbers. But, of course, the school had them on file.

“Yeah, the rest of the guys chickened out, but it seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“Well, the rest of the guys aren't in handcuffs charged with serious crimes.”

“I'm really, really sorry. Clyde made it sound like your son was a danger to my kids and I'm very protective of my kids. What can I do to get out of these cuffs?”

Anthony thought for a minute and told him to sit still while he talked to Alex. Back in the kitchen the three FBI personnel decide they really didn't want to deal with the

paperwork of arresting this oaf. Since the real villain was the principal, they made the following proposal. "First you make a sworn written statement that Clyde put you up to this and then promise to be willing to testify to the same in court."

It took him two seconds to agree. After he was uncuffed, and with a little coaching, he wrote the required statement. And, much to everyone's surprise, Sally turns out to be a notary and was able to notarize the document on the spot.

Gil, the bully, very gratefully headed home. However, he was stopped and ticketed for DUI and had his car towed. It seems the local police received an anonymous tip of a drunk driver.

## Chapter Four

### Finding a School

Back in the kitchen, the four adults discussed their situation. First priority was finding a school for Abbi. Anthony had been opposed to private school, but when Sara reminded him that she had gone to private school, he relented. Sally was charged with researching the schools. Since they were living near the Capitol, there were several schools that had foreign students, the children of diplomats and overseas-based companies. With that out of the way for the moment, the discussion moved to Clyde Gomes. The most important thing was to have him removed from his position, so he couldn't use it to harm innocent children. Not every kid had an FBI agent for a father. Alex came up with the idea that everyone happily agreed to. "Let's sic Agnes on him. If we supply her with the tape recording and the affidavit, she should have no problem bringing suit against him and having him removed. She might even be able to get that teacher and vice principal who started the mess."

Next morning, Anthony called Ms. Strunk at the ACLU offices. She was surprised to hear from him and was less than cordial when she heard his name. "I haven't forgotten your illegal hiring practices. As soon as I find another candidate, we'll be back in court."

Having let her say her piece, Anthony, using his most pleasant voice proposed, "I would like to offer you a real discrimination case, which should make up for my hiring situation."

"And what would that be?"

"Denying a five year old child the right to attend school and inciting arson."

"And why would you be involved in this?"

"The child is my son and the home is mine."

This slowed Agnes up. It sounded like something she should be interested in, but she didn't trust Anthony. "Why don't you handle it yourself?"

"Because it doesn't come under federal law. What I want is for the individuals involved to be removed from their employment as soon as possible so that they don't harm anymore children."

“Well, I'll need evidence before I can proceed.”

“Fine. I have an audio tape and a notarized statement.”

“Is the tape legal?”

“Yes. I made it and as a party to the conversation, it's legal.”

“OK. When can I have the documents?”

“I will messenger them to you as soon as we hang up.”

Agnes brought suit against the school district and quickly negotiated a settlement. The principal, vice principal and teacher were dismissed immediately, with negative references and received suspended prison sentences.

By the end of the week, they had agreed on a school and Abbi happily started his formal education. As mentioned by Sally, the class consisted of kids from several different countries. Abbi fit right in. He immediately made friends with the son of an Israeli diplomat named Abraham. They became known as the Two Abbis.

One day Anthony heard Abbi speaking to Aladdin the cat in a language he didn't recognize. It sounded familiar but he couldn't place it. He told Sara, “Abbi is speaking to the cat in a strange language.”

Sara grinned and said, “I don't know if the cat understands him, but I do. It's Hebrew; he must be learning it at school. My mother will be delighted.”

## Chapter Five

### A Surprising Talent

Sara's mom was indeed pleased by Abbi using Hebrew words. It was assumed he was picking them up from Abraham. At five years old he was ahead of most children as far as speaking in sentences, but he was not expected to do the same in Hebrew. One day Sara received a call from Abraham's mother. It was a pleasant conversation, but Sara was shocked when the other mother asked, "Why are you teaching your son Hebrew? It's really nice he is passing his knowledge on to our son saving me from having to do it."

Sara didn't know what to say. She didn't really speak the language herself, just the phrases used in religious ceremonies. Finally, she just said, "I'm not. I barely know enough to participate in the dinner rituals." The subject was left there and the women discussed other things to do with the school their sons attended.

When Abbi came home, Sara asked him, "Is Abraham teaching you Hebrew?"

"No, mama. I'm teaching him."

"And how do you do this?"

"There is a book at school. I read it during play time and recess, then share it with Abraham. He can't read the book, so I tell him the lessons."

'Of course,' thought Sara, 'he reads a book in Hebrew. Doesn't every five year old?'

When Anthony got home, she shared this information with him. He was equally surprised. "He was only two when we adopted him. He surely hadn't learned before that and we usually do all the reading at bedtime. I know sometimes he appears to be reading along with me but I figured he had memorized the words from when you read to him."

That night Anthony got a brand new book off the bookshelf and handed it to Abbi. "Have you read this one," he asked.

"No, I haven't read 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.'"

The cover picture might have helped him guess the book's title, so Anthony suggested, "Where should we start?"

“From the beginning, Daddy.” Abbi opened the book and flawlessly proceeded, stumbling only when he encountered words dealing with incantations. Words that Anthony didn't know, either. So, they got out the huge dictionary and discovered the words weren't in it. Then they went to the computer and Googled them. First they typed in “basilisk,” which meant a giant snake and then “bezoar,” a stone-like mass taken from the stomach of a goat. Both Anthony and Abbi giggled when they read the definitions.

Sara heard them and came into the bedroom. “What are you two giggling about?”

Abbi looked at his mother and shouted, “Look out for the Basilisk!”

Sara looked around and said, “I don't see anything.”

Anthony got into the fun and laughed. “You should, it's a giant snake.”

With those exceptions Abbi breezed through the rest of the book. It all seemed harmless, but there would be ramifications.

Abbi's abilities embarrassed some of the other students, who in turn complained to their parents that Abbi was too old for kindergarten. So, once again, Sara was called into school. Though the principal was very understanding, which helped calm Sara for the moment, she thought Abbi should move to another school. “He's a wonderful boy and I would love to see him grow in our school. But it wouldn't be fair to him. He is a gifted child and will quickly outgrow our abilities to teach him. Plus, it isn't fair to the other kids who feel inferior around him. I would like to help you place him at an advanced school that will better suit his abilities.”

Sara felt it was a lot to digest, so said, “I must speak with my husband.”

Back at the kitchen table, the two adults found themselves with a ticklish problem. They had promised Abbi's mom to raise him as a Muslim, but weren't sure what that meant. If he went to a special school would that affect their promise?

The principal took things into her own hands by putting together a list of advanced schools, which she thought were appropriate. Some were in other states and immediately rejected. Others were boarding schools, also unacceptable. This narrowed the list down to two. Both were expensive, which created another problem. Anthony's fast advancement and responsibility had not resulted in a vast increase in salary and Sara's pay for working in the clinic was meager.

The solution, when it came, was from an unexpected source – the FBI. A recruiter in the Human Resources department called Anthony to advise him that Abdullah could be eligible for a grant, if his language skills were as reported. It seemed Abbi was awfully young for such a program, but Anthony was insured the bureau found that early immersion in language studies produced exceptional results. Before Anthony could even object, the recruiter guaranteed Abbi would not be obligated to join the FBI. So after visiting both institutions, Abbi was enrolled in the J. Edgar Hoover Academy for gifted students. The grant included a shuttle bus back and forth to the school.

Abbi proved equal to the task, quickly becoming the darling of the training staff. The academy was organized differently from other schools, in that there were very few formal classes and the students were encouraged to pursue their own agendas. Abbi proved to not only have a head for languages, but just about anything he tackled. Word of his abilities quickly spread throughout the academic community.



## Chapter Six

### A Real Prodigy

By the time he turned seven, Abbi's fame had gotten the attention of several universities and offers of placement had become a flood. Anthony and Sara were overwhelmed. They wanted the best for their adopted son, but didn't want him to miss being a kid. For his birthday, he received his own laptop and Anthony put up a kid-sized basketball hoop in the driveway. The twins were still a little young for it, but Anthony loved to play with all his kids. Anthony and Sara agreed to put off all the university offers for at least a year.

This commitment was soon upset when the Syrian's raised their ugly heads. The Syrian government was requesting that Abdullah be repatriated to his home country. The war ravaged country was desperate for some positive news and a child prodigy would certainly help. The fact that Abbi was a natural born American didn't seem to faze the Syrian Ambassador and since the Russians were backing them up, things got pretty dicey. The U.S. State Department was totally against the request. Abbi was an American and had been since the day he was born.

The Syrians then made a serious mistake by underestimating the staff at the academy. Posing as Abbi's aunt and uncle, a Syrian couple showed up at the front door asking to see their nephew. All of the staff at the academy knew that Abbi didn't have any Syrian relatives, but they played along for awhile. Abbi insisted he had never met any aunts or uncles, so when the Syrians tried to lure him out of the academy, they were greeted by Anthony requesting identification. When the two impostors refused, he placed them under arrest. All of a sudden the two claimed diplomatic immunity and produced their special passports. This got them released, but they were escorted to the airport, declared persona non grata and sent home. The Syrian embassy protested loudly that their citizens were being treated unfairly and would retaliate. The U.S. State Department replied that any retaliation would be met firmly.

That afternoon, the computers in the Syrian Embassy were hacked and all their secret records made public. The Syrians accused the state department, of course, but could prove nothing. Actually, the U.S. Government was innocent. It seems a seven year old in Virginia really liked his new laptop.

This situation did, however, highlight the possibility of further threats to Abdullah. Sending him to a large American campus didn't appear to be a great idea. But, Abbi needed the room to grow. Anthony was approached by the department of defense with a proposition. If major universities wanted him, what about the service

academies? They were certainly safer than college dormitories and Abbi's classmates would all be well vetted warriors in training. Abbi and his family could pick any one of them and he would be welcomed.

Sara hated the idea. Her son was not a killer, he was a peaceful seven year old. Anthony kind of liked the idea. Abbi looked at it as a great adventure. So, despite Sara's concerns, they decided on the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. It was actually Anthony's choice, as he had become friends with many of the Marines at Quantico, and Annapolis was where future Marine officers were trained. Also, Annapolis was closer to Virginia than West Point, New York or Colorado Springs, Colorado. Abbi would have a private room and not engage in military exercises. They did have special uniforms made for him and he became the unofficial mascot of the Midshipmen.

## Chapter Seven

### Life at Annapolis

Abbi was really enjoying his time at the Naval Academy. He attended classes of an academic nature only and excelled in them all. Because he actually had a lighter schedule than the other students, he was allowed to sit in on other classes. One day he wandered into the Arabic language class and listened to the visiting lecturer. When the lecturer miss-pronounced an important word, he couldn't help correcting him. Abbi felt the slight mistake changed the meaning of the word and would be regarded as an insult. The lecturer had no idea who Abbi was, but wasn't having some snot-nosed kid interrupting his class.

“Who do you think you are? Get out of here and go home to your mother.”

Abbi was not used to being addressed that way and fled from the room. The other students were shocked, Abbi was their little buddy, but they kept quiet and the lecturer continued with the same pronunciation. Abbi returned to his room and with tears in his eyes started to pack his suitcase.

After class, the instructor went to the dean of students and leveled a complaint against Abbi, demanding he be barred from the school. The lecturer didn't realize he was on dangerous ground, since he was only there temporarily. The Dean dismissed him and went to find Abbi. He was shocked to find the upset boy stuffing his clothes into his suitcase with tears streaming down his face.

“Abbi, what are you doing?”

“Going home to my mother.”

“Why are you doing that?”

“That teacher told me to get out and go home to my mother.”

“That man had no right to tell you that. You are to stay right here. But, before you unpack, tell me what happened.”

“That man was using a very difficult Arab word. The way he pronounced it, it would mean despicable. He said it meant desirable. So, I corrected him. I guess I should not have done so.”

“You're sure of that?”

“Yes, sir, plus his pronunciation is not exact.”

“OK. It's chow time. Why don't you go eat and I'll see you tomorrow.”

Abbi's stomach told him that was a good idea. In the mess hall several of the other students came over to console him, making him feel a whole lot better. A table full of female students beckoned him over and made a big fuss over him, which embarrassed him totally.

The dean consulted with the post commander. Since neither officer was able to pronounce the word, they decided to contact a professor from Johns Hopkins they had consulted before. It was agreed that the professor would come to Annapolis in the morning.

When the professor arrived, he was taken to meet Abbi. They immediately started a rapid fire discussion in Arabic ending with both of them laughing uproariously. The two officers looked on nonplussed. The professor turned to them and said, “Abbi is absolutely spot on. His pronunciation is pitch perfect – better than mine. He has an ability that only Arabs have to twist their vocal cords to squeeze out the proper sounds. However, that isn't necessary for the words we're discussing. If what he heard continues, it could cause real problems.”

The professor next interviewed the instructor and deemed his pronunciation unacceptable and recommended he not be allowed to teach anymore classes. As an aside, he advised that Abbi teach the class. As easy as that sounded, it couldn't happen, but Abbi became the unofficial tutor for Arabic. They also made a DVD with the corrected pronunciation and sent it out to all students from the previous two years, then hired another Arabic teacher, who Abbi approved of.

## Chapter Eight

### A Special Occasion

As the end of November approached, a feeling of excitement was in the air. The Army - Navy football game was scheduled to be played the next Saturday and the entire compliment of Midshipmen were going to Philadelphia to see the game. Abdullah was anxious that he wouldn't get to go, since he wasn't an official Midshipman. His fears were soon put to rest when the student commander informed him they wouldn't think of going without him. He was accompanied by a security officer who's position at the academy was for Abbi's protection, which could be forgotten amidst all the excitement. Abbi had never been to a stadium before. He was awed by all the people, noise and music. As the bands from the two academies marched onto the field, the crowd exploded with cheers. Abbi had never seen a football game, but had spent the previous week studying the rules and history. He knew that Navy was favored and enjoyed every minute of action. The final score of Navy 27, Army 20 sent all the Midshipmen home happy. When they returned to Annapolis, Abbi asked one of the team members whether he thought he himself could play on the team some day. The sobering answer was that since Abbi would probably graduate before he was big enough, it wouldn't happen. Not to be discouraged, Abbi started practicing how to kick a football. He had learned that several field goal kickers were diminutive and saw no reason why he couldn't do the job.

We'll leave that dream for sometime in the future.

# Fitting In Part 2

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## Chapter One Meanwhile

Sara missed Abbi while he was at Annapolis, not that the twins didn't keep her busy. She was looking forward to next year when they would start kindergarten. For now she or Anthony had the duty of dropping them off or picking them up at daycare. She still put in a full day at the clinic taking care of an ever growing patient list. She had a real connection with most of her patients and she felt it would remain solid, even if they learned she was Jewish. Anthony, on the other hand, had to spend more and more time in the office supervising his own ever growing list of imams and mosques. Every weekend, though, Abbi was escorted home and a conspicuous patrol car was parked in the driveway. Anthony was concerned the neighbors might be upset, but soon learned they felt comfortable with the security guards, anticipating that Abbi's protection would spread to securing the entire neighborhood. While he was home, big brother Abbi paid extra attention to his siblings, advancing their education. Although they couldn't come close to Abbi's level, they would be way ahead of other kindergartners when they started school.

Sara worked at the clinic every other Saturday. On one particular Saturday, she was taking care of a young boy with a fever, when she heard loud voices coming from the reception area. She opened her office door a crack and saw three men with guns herding the patients into groups. They were speaking in English to the patients, but were using Hebrew to communicate with each other. Sara immediately grabbed her special cellphone, pushed the panic button and sent a text message to Anthony. "Three intruders with guns speaking Hebrew." Then using a feature on the phone, she increased the volume of what was being said in the clinic and muted any incoming speech and placed the phone in a concealed place. After alerting the HRT (Hostage Rescue Team), Anthony summoned Abbi to his office. "We might need your language skills to help your mother."

With Abbi riding shotgun, they headed toward the clinic. As they listened to Anthony's cellphone, Abbi translated. "The three men are separating the Christians and Jews from the Muslims."

They then heard Sara's voice. "I'm a pediatric nurse and these are my patients. You have no right to do what you're doing."

One of the intruders spoke. "We have every right! Terrorists set off a bomb in a Tel Aviv bus station killing women and children. We are getting even for the families."

Sara held her ground. “These people are American citizens not terrorists. Most of their families fled to escape terrorists. What you are doing is wrong.”

The leader faced Sara. “Are you a Muslim?”

“No, I'm a nurse taking care of sick children.” As Anthony and the HRT got closer, Abbi continued to translate whenever the gunmen spoke in Hebrew.

“Their names are Solomon, Izaak and Jacob. They are not Israelis.”

When the rescue team got to the clinic, Anthony told Abbi to stay in the car and not get out. He signaled one of the rescue team to stay with Abbi. He grabbed a bullhorn telling the HRT to hold their ground and called to the clinic. “Solomon, Izaak, Jacob. This is the FBI. You are surrounded. You haven't hurt anyone, yet, and might face only moderate punishment. If you hurt or kill anyone, it's a terrorist act and you will face the death penalty. Surrender NOW!”

The three men were caught totally off guard. In Hebrew, Solomon said, “How do they know our names? No one sounded the alarm.”

Izaak spoke next. “It's got to be that nurse. Search her.”

Jacob grabbed Sara and roughly patted her down. Abbi called to his minder. “Tell my father they are mistreating my mother.”

Hearing this, Anthony spoke again. “You are making a big mistake hurting that woman. You will pay dearly for your actions. Surrender now or you will not see tomorrow.”

The gunmen had planned to bully some women and children and couldn't figure out how Anthony knew who they were and what they were doing. Solomon was the first to crack. “I want out of here. My father has a good lawyer. I can probably get off with probation.” Jacob and Izaak looked at each other and nodded. “We're coming out don't shoot.”

Anthony, on the bullhorn, “Leave your weapons on the floor and come out with your hands on your heads. One false move and you'll be dead.”

The three came out and were roughly thrown to the ground. “Which one of you manhandled the nurse?”

Both Solomon and Izaak looked at Jacob and in unison said, "It was him." So much for loyalty.

Abbi escaped from the patrol car and ran to his mother. Clutching her in his arms. The patients streamed from the clinic thanking the officers as they went by. Their minor ailments forgotten for the moment. "There's the one to thank," said Anthony pointing to his son. "He told us what they were saying in Hebrew, which is how we knew their names and what they were doing."

The three would-be terrorists stared at Abbi and shook their heads. "He's only a child and a Arab at that."

It turned out the three men were not Israelis but Americans who got all worked up watching the news. None of them had ever been to Israel, and wouldn't be going for a long time; Solomon's father's lawyer wasn't that good.



## Chapter Two

### A Real Whiz Kid

If he hadn't been popular before, Abbi was now a celebrity at the Naval Academy. Reports of his activity during the clinic drama had overshadowed the efforts of his father and the HRT. You might have thought Abbi had single handedly disarmed the misguided terrorists. He was thankful when a new event captured the attention of the plebes. A television network wanted to recreate the College Bowl which had been a quiz show in the sixties. The new format was to pit the military academies against each other. The three big academies, Army, Navy and Air Force, would be joined by a team made up from the Coast Guard Academy and the Merchant Marine Academy. Tryouts started and all the brainiacs competed. The contestants were finally whittled down to four, three men and one woman. Several students wanted Abbi to compete, but the dean of students said no. Abbi wasn't officially a student and wasn't eligible to compete. However, he was enlisted as a tutor to the team.

When the team set off to New York for the telecast, Abbi went along to continue his tutoring. The first match pitted Navy against the two smaller academies. Annapolis triumphed and awaited the victor of Army vs. Air Force. Army squeaked by and the battle lines were drawn. The ancient enemies would compete against each other the next day.

The Navy chaperons warned their team to behave themselves. Even though they did, a meal at a Chinese restaurant caused a violent reaction for one of the participants, causing him to be unable to get out of bed the next morning. The producers of the show were reluctant to proceed with only a three person team, yet, they wanted the show finished on time. When it was suggested that Abbi be a replacement, the head chaperon balked that he wasn't a member of the team. A forfeit was out of the question. The producers wanted to use Abbi since he was fairly famous. So they proposed the substitution to Army. The Army team captain laughed, "Sounds like navy is trying to back out. Sure they can use the kid. We might even give them a handicap."

Abbi was very excited, but nervous. He was representing the Academy. He was so nervous he missed his first question, which caused the Army team to guffaw. Abbi's face turned red, but the female member of the team leaned over and whispered in his ear, "Don't worry, you'll get them next time."

The contest went on and got down to the last questions. Abbi was asked, "Gowk is an alternative name for what bird?" Abbi froze, closed his eyes and thought. If he

missed this question, Army would win. The cadets were starting to congratulate themselves. The moderator said, "Five seconds."

"Cuckoo!" exclaimed Abbi.

"Correct," said the moderator. "Tie score. We will go to a tie breaker question. Each team will have a chance to ring in and answer. The question is, 'In what year did the initial colonists arrive at Jamestown an'" The Army team rang in stopping the moderator in mid-sentence. The Army captain loudly stated, "1607" with a broad smile on his face.

"That is correct, but you didn't hear the whole question so your answer is incomplete. I will finish the question and Navy will get a chance to answer. If they fail to get it right, I will ask another question. Navy, what ships brought the colonists to Jamestown?"

The Navy team was dumb struck. Who knew that kind of answer. Of course, Abbi did. In his almost inaudible voice, he said, "Susan Constant, God Speed and Discovery."

"That is correct. Navy wins. Congratulations."

Army tried to retract their agreement, but the producers were very happy with the result. It was better than they had hoped for.

## Chapter Three Recriminations

Sara, Anthony and the Naval Academy commanding officer were furious. The whole reason for Abbi being at the academy was for his protection. Now thanks to the TV producers, the entire world knew where he was. Sara wanted her son back. She had never been happy with him being away most of the time. Anthony was more concerned about the boy's security, but also missed him. Abbi had basked in his glory for a short while and was confused by his parents attitudes.

As if on queue, the Syrian government, which was involved in serious peace talks with other warring parties, put Abdullah's repatriation to Syria on the table. The State Department, along with representatives from Russia, were in favor of the idea, if it would help with the peace talks. Fortunately, Anthony and Sara had strong support from other branches of the government, including the President. It was a simple thing. Abbi was born in the USA and was a full fledged citizen. Syria claimed he was conceived in Syria, so rightfully was a Syrian. The idiots at the State Department (Anthony's phrase) thought sending one small boy to Syria in order to bring about peace in a bloody civil war was a small price to pay. The wrangling went on. Eventually, the discussion was brought to the UN Security Council, in which both the US and Russia had veto power. The drama captured the attention of the whole world.

Facing the loss of her son, Sara requested to address the Council. Everyone thought it was a bad idea. Sara was adamant and finally prevailed. When she was ushered into the chamber, she was stunned by the sea of faces staring at her. But, nothing in the world is stronger than a mother fighting for her child.

Taking a deep breath and swallowing hard, Sara faced the assembled world leaders.

“Distinguished representatives, I come before you as a mother who has raised her son at the request of his dying mother. It was not an easy decision to make, but it was the right one. Abbi is the love of our lives. We have cherished him before he could speak. We had no way of knowing how smart he would be. All we wanted was to provide him with a good home following his mother's wishes. He has never been to Syria and his mother's desire was that he not ever go there. You cannot repatriate someone to a place they have never been. That civil war has murdered thousands of children and someone thinks stealing my son will make it all right. Look to your actions and make the decisions which will bring about peace.”

The Syrian Ambassador rose and asked the following. "Where is your son? Shouldn't he be here to speak for himself?"

"My son is in seclusion for his protection. Syria has already tried to kidnap him." A gasp went up from the crowd.

"That's not true!" shouted the ambassador.

"Two members from your embassy posing as relatives tried to gain access to him at school. They have been required to leave the country."

"How do you know they were not relatives?"

"Because all of Abbi's relatives are dead. Your government murdered them all."

"But he had a mother. We didn't murder her."

"She died as a result of poison gas. You certainly did murder her, it just took a little longer."

Having lost that argument, the ambassador tried a different strategy. "I still want to see the the boy and ask him what he wants to do. It should be his choice."

After much heated discussion with plenty of support from Russia and only limp resistance from the US, it was ruled that Abbi should be brought to the chamber the next day. Sara was upset, but was promised he would be protected and no decision would be made that day.

When Abbi appeared the next day he was very nervous, but the same skill that allowed him to win the quiz show helped him appear calm. The Syrian Ambassador rose and immediately went on the offensive. "What did your mother tell you to say to us? Did she tell you to lie?"

"My mother told me what she always does. Be polite and tell the truth."

"Did she tell you to say that?"

"That would be lying. Did your mother tell you to tell the truth?" The hall erupted in laughter. Round one to Abbi.

"OK. Then do you wish to help your native country and return to Syria in it's time of

need?”

“My native country is the United States and since I've never left, I can't return.” A murmur came from the audience.

“Have you no love for your mother's homeland?”

“My mother's homeland poisoned her and killed my father. Why should I have love for it? My American parents have cared for me since I was two years old. I love them and wish to stay with them.”

“Well rehearsed, I'm sure. Don't you realize the special gifts you have are a result of your Syrian heritage?”

“If my special gifts are because of my Syrian heritage, why aren't there Syrian boys like me? I'll tell you why, your government probably killed them all before they could show their abilities.”

The crowd, as well as the ambassador, were mute. Finally, the ambassador sat down and said, “No further questions.”

Abbi was excused and Sara scooped him into her arms, forgetting that at ten years old and full of naval chow he was too heavy to carry.

A brief discussion was held and it was decided that no action would be taken and Abdullah would stay with Anthony and Sara.

The Syrian Ambassador was recalled to Damascus and stripped of his title. The final word from the Syrian President was, “You were out maneuvered by a ten year old.”

## Chapter Four Where to Next?

Sara did not want Abbi to go back to Annapolis. He needed his family and his little brother and sister missed him. He had completed all the allowable courses at the Naval Academy with distinction. If he had been old enough, he would be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. The idea of him becoming a language teacher at Quantico was discussed, which would allow him to live at home. Anthony, who had many fond memories of the base, was in favor of the suggestion. Sara, however, wasn't thrilled with the continuing military orientation to Abbi's education.

The FBI director had a hand in the final solution. Anthony was promoted to Director of Counter Terrorism and assigned offices at Quantico. He was back in the place he had occupied while starting the Muslim outreach program. Snowflake, the cat, was still there, so the offices were vermin free. Anthony's responsibilities included many more units. Besides the Muslim unit, he had a large contingent of rescue personnel and cyber experts. The cyber group brought along tons of computers and communication gear. In addition to maintaining contact with the friendly mosques, his duties now included monitoring suspected terrorist communications. Thanks to Edward Snowden, these efforts were severely handicapped. The need to obtain warrants slowed the process.

Abbi was given a classroom and large library to supervise. The two existing instructors were predictably unhappy about working with a child. However, once they realized Abbi's abilities with several different languages, they cooperated with him. The training went smoothly and the proficiency of the graduates increased measurably. The office next to Abbi's contained the cryptography department where the staff worked on cracking codes and encrypted messages. A problem they had was working with a whole slew of different languages. They might decrypt a word, but not know for sure what language it was. The work in this department was highly secretive and required a super high security clearance. As an instructor, Abbi had no clearances. Yet, one of the cryptologists, who was aware of Abbi's skills, secretly asked him to look at a word that was stumping the whole team. Abbi looked at the collection of letters and said, "It's an ancient language spoken in the border area between Afghanistan and Hindustan. It means to surround or cover-over. Does that help?"

As the analyst flew from the room he looked back over his shoulder and cried, "It sure does."

## Chapter Five

### Another Promotion

When the cryptologist returned to his office, he was very excited. “The word means cover-over in some old language. Combined with our other clues I think it's pointing to a large arms cache covered over with sand. We should launch a drone to check it out.” All this without a breath.

“Whoa! Where the heck did you get that from?” asked the supervisor. The analyst was a little squeamish to admit the truth and tried to fake it. “I just thought about it out in the break area and being outside it came to me.”

One of the other analysts spoke up. “I'll give you two seconds to tell the truth. I was on the other side of the break area and saw who you were talking to.”

“OK. I was trying to protect him. It was the director's son, Abdullah. He is a language expert and works here.”

“He's also eleven years old and has no clearance,” spoke the supervisor. “What will his father say if he finds out?”

The drone was dispatched, which detected a huge store of munitions. A Hellfire missile was launched with the resulting explosion far greater than expected. There was great celebration in the crypto lab; a large terrorist offensive had been prevented.

Anthony toured the cryptology lab to congratulate the analysts. He was surprised when the supervisor sheepishly admitted who the real hero was. He wasn't sure what to think; his son was truly amazing. But he knew that Sara would not be happy that Abbi was helping spies.

The next request wasn't what he wanted to hear. The supervisor couldn't help wanting to tap this resource. “Would it be possible to use Abbi as a source in the future?”

Sara definitely wouldn't like that. To fend off the cryptos, Anthony questioned if an eleven year old could get the necessary clearances. Anthony then announced he would need to take it to a higher authority. The code breakers thought that he meant the FBI director, Anthony meant Sara.

Predictably, Sara was not enthused. “If anyone learns that Abbi is helping track

terrorists, that's someone else after him. He's a little boy and needs to live like one.”

Anthony was sympathetic toward the situation, but realized the value of what Abbi could do. “I agree, but he still treats it like a game and is delighted when he helps out. Plus, his contribution to national security is significant.”

“OK. But I want serious precautions taken for his safety.” Sara would regret the last part of that statement.

With the Directors approval, one analyst was permitted to approach Abbi with problem words outside the cryptography lab. Abbi's name would not appear on the lab's roster. All seemed well.



## Chapter Six

### A Fly in The Ointment

Anthony had a bunch of FBI children in the post gym practicing basketball. The group was composed of all ages and included his three kids. Two FBI agents were quietly observing the activities. A smartly dressed young couple entered the gym and took seats in the stands. The two agents started toward them, but Anthony subtly waved them off. He told the kids to keep doing what they were doing.

Anthony grabbed a towel and approached the pair in the stands. "May I help you?" he asked.

The male with a snotty attitude replied, "No, we don't need anything from you. We are here on official business."

The female was obviously put off by her partner's attitude. But, before she could intercede, Anthony, in a commanding tone, addressed the overly opinionated man. "Well, first you need my permission to be here and next, lose the attitude."

The other man was not subdued, "And exactly who are you to speak to me that way?"

Anthony was really miffed and wondered how this clown had gotten into the gym, which he considered his domain. "I'm the Associate Director of this FBI facility. Now produce some ID while my security detail escorts you off the base."

"You can't do that. We are here on Presidential business."

He hadn't produced his ID, so with a nod from Anthony, the two FBI agents seized the man by both arms and lifted him out of his seat.

"I'm a Secret Service Agent, he shouted, "here to protect a significant asset by order of the President."

Anthony did not signal for him to be released, but turned to the female. "Are you with this clown? And if so, would you produce some ID?"

"Yes, yes," the young lady stuttered and produced a shiny new Secret Service credential folder.

Anthony carefully inspected the id badge and examined the photo. The male

squirming to get loose shouted at the woman, "Don't identify yourself! We don't know who this..."

Anthony growled, "You shut up until spoken too. Now, Miss, why are you here?"

"Our section leader was ordered to provide security for a gifted young man named Abdullah. So we were assigned to come here and take over."

Now Anthony was furious. He was mentally making a list of heads that would roll. "Let him loose," pointing to the male. "Where are your creds?"

"I don't have to identify myself to you without you identifying yourself first."

"What asinine secret service school taught you that? You're on an FBI facility, you had better have identified yourself on the way in."

The female agent spoke up. "We entered through the Marine Corps Museum that is open to the public and jumped a short fence."

"Shut up, you fool," cried the miserable looking man.

"Take their ID's and take them to brig. Before you leave, who is your team leader and his contact info?"

With that info in hand, Anthony sent the kids home and called the Secret Service office. When the team leader answered, Anthony introduced himself, then said, "I have two of your agents in my brig and I need a real good reason to let them out."

"What did they do? I told them to introduce themselves and ask if we could provide additional security for your son and your family."

"And whose idea was that?"

"Congressman Taylor. He's on the NSA overview committee. I didn't feel it was necessary, since your on a Marine/FBI installation, but I need to keep these bureaucrats happy. So, I sent my two most junior agents, one of whom is his son."

"This didn't come from the President?"

"No, goodness no. Did that idiot say that?"

“Yes. They snuck on base, refused to identify themselves and claimed to be on a mission from the Prez.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I'll keep them for a few hours and if you send a prisoner van to pick them up, I'll release them without charges. Don't ever send that clown back here. The girl was innocent, she unwisely allowed herself to be bullied.”

“Fair enough. Taylor's old man will go bonkers and try to get him off, but I'm not having him on my team. Please accept my apology. I guess you don't need any help from us.”

## Chapter Seven

### Fatherly Influence

It was a stormy day at Secret Service HQ in Washington D.C. It was warm and sunny outside, but very disturbing in the Director's office. Congressman Taylor had come calling and was reading the riot act to the director.

“What do you mean my son is no longer welcome in the Service. He's only been an agent for a month. He needs time to adjust. You should be going after that FBI agent for mistreating him. My son explained it all to me. He was testing the security at Quantico. He had stealthily penetrated the base. The FBI agent was embarrassed and took it out on my son, who should be getting an award for his vigilance. And you're firing him?”

The Director, while trying to hold his temper, tried to tell Taylor the real story.

“First of all, no one authorized your son to conduct a security check. He jumped over a small fence, was challenged by a Marine guard and showed his Secret Service ID. That hardly counts as penetrating the base. He then entered an area reserved for dependents of the base, refused to identify himself to the Associate Director of the base and claimed he was on a mission from the president. He was finally arrested and forced to surrender his ID. He was taken to the brig and was very abusive to the Marine Commander and then to the Secret Service guards sent to pick him up. He either resigns from the Service or he will be brought up on charges, dismissed from the Service and possibly sent to prison.”

You might think that this would slow the congressman down. But it just fueled another tantrum. “I'll see about that. My son will not resign and you might be the one getting the heave-ho. I'm on really good terms with the Vice President, he needs my vote.”

Next stop for the congressman was Quantico. He arrived at the gate and demanded to be taken to the office of the Associate Director. The Marine guard took his ID and called the main office. When the message reached Anthony, he eventually told the poor guard to inform the congressman to make an appointment. This of course got the guard a lot of grief, but Taylor finally turned around and headed back to D.C.

The next call Anthony received was from his boss, the FBI Director himself. “What did you do to Congressman Taylor? He's here raising heck about you being discourteous to him.”

"I simply told him he needed an appointment. I don't just drop what I'm doing to see every congressman who comes to the gate."

"You know why he was there. He wants his son reinstated and is threatening to hold an investigation into your conduct."

"There is nothing I can do about it. That's the Secret Service's problem."

"Well, you need to explain that to him. Come to my office pronto and clear this up."

Against his better judgment, Anthony drove into Washington. The Director and the congressman were waiting for him like two hangmen. It appeared the verdict was in and Anthony was guilty. The congressman immediately began his assault. "You impertinent fool. Who do you think you are? I've never been treated like that and won't stand for it." Turning to the Director he shouted. "I demand you fire this man. He's a disgrace to the Bureau. He should be put in that brig like my son was."

Finally the Director was able to get a word in. "How about you let Anthony speak?"

"I'm not interested in what he has to say. I want him fired now."

Anthony had heard enough. "I can see where your son got his bad manners. If you think that tirade is going to get him reinstated your wrong. He got what he deserved and I have an organization to run. I'm not going to tell 12 agents to cool their heels while I attend to an unscheduled visitor."

The Director knew Anthony was right but also knew that he was making an enemy of the wrong man.

"Now that both of you have stated your position. Can we have a civil discussion?"

"That's as civil as I plan to get. It's obvious you're going to protect your boy here, so I'll take things into my own hands."

With that, he did. Within weeks Anthony was served with a suit accusing him of civil rights violations. FBI budget hearings were put on hold and previously agreed pay increases were rescinded. Congressman Taylor was a very powerful man, one who had no regard for what was fair, only what he wanted. The Secret Service was also included in his rampage and reluctantly reinstated his son.

Anthony actually went on trial. Yet, even Congressman Taylor's influence was

unable to cause an unfair verdict. As they left the court room, Taylor was waiting and said, "I'll get you yet."

Anthony found it difficult to do his job. All of the FBI was being affected, so Anthony reluctantly submitted his resignation. The director pleaded with him to reconsider, but Anthony didn't want to see his fellow agents suffering.

## Chapter Eight

### A Return to His Roots

Anthony moved his family back to the old neighborhood. And considered going back to the police force, but father Dominic had another idea. “Anthony, why are you quitting the job you love?”

“Taylor is too powerful. If it was just me, I would stick it out.”

“You've never been afraid of a fight before.”

“What kind of fight can I wage against this guy?”

“Take his job away.”

“And how do I do that?”

“Run against him. He's the congressman for our district. Everybody hates him. They all love you.”

“He's our representative? I didn't know he lived here.”

“He doesn't. Like everything else he does, it's crooked. He uses an address on the edge of the district but never goes there.”

“How does he get away with it? Won't the other party turn him in?”

“These politicians are all the same. The two parties worked a secret deal. Taylor's party looks the other way so a guy in the other party has a safe seat where he doesn't live. Taylor's party doesn't run a strong candidate against him and their party does likewise. A real nice situation for them and no democracy for the rest of us.”

This deal didn't sit well with Anthony, but he still couldn't see how he could run against Taylor. The deadline to get on the ballot had already passed. Father Dominic looked into Anthony's face and smiled. “I wouldn't know how to do it either if I hadn't received my absentee ballot in the mail. Look at the bottom line of candidates.” Showing the sheet of paper to Anthony, the bottom line read “write in.” “That means people can write your name in and it will count.”

“But how will people know to do that and how can they get a ballot?”

“They need to apply in writing or online. There is still plenty of time to do it.”

“But it will take a lot of volunteers to spread the word.”

“I've thought of that. We'll use your friends.”

“I don't have that many friends.”

“That's what you think. First of all, everyone in this neighborhood still remembers how you helped get rid of Orlando and his gang. You will always be a hero at the police department, you have more connections with the Muslims than anybody, your mother-in-law is a strong force in the Jewish community and I'm pretty sure I can push a few Catholics your way. We would have all the religious groups locked up and they all have large networks set up.”

“But, just because I was a good cop doesn't mean anyone will vote for me.”

“The people I've mentioned would, but you'll need a platform to run on. Law and order is a good one.”

The talk went on and Anthony was still dubious. “The other politicians raise millions of dollars. I can't do that.”

“That's for ads that people hate. I bet this will become a human interest story and the television stations will want to interview you. That's for free.”

“I must talk to Sara about this. It's a huge step.”

Of course, when Anthony spoke with Sara, like a good wife she said, “Are you out of you mind?”

Anthony had been leaning that way when intervention came from a surprising source. Sara's mom came to see her granddaughter and noticed the strained expression on her daughter and son-in-law's faces. “Whats up, kids?”

“Anthony wants to run for congress against that rat Taylor.”

“That's wonderful!” enthused the leader of the Jewish Mothers' Society. “We need someone to attack that rotten scum and Anthony's perfect for the job.” (What ever happened to the boy she never wanted to come to dinner again?) “I'll organize a committee to elect Anthony and start raising money.”



Sara was stunned almost as much as Anthony. “Do you have any idea how we're going to pull that off since Anthony is not on the ballot?”

“No, but you'll figure it out.”

And so they did. A small office was rented for a very reasonable price that was never asked for. A local printer agreed to do the printing at cost and his employees volunteered to work overtime for free.

People really hated Taylor. When Anthony visited his favorite mosque, the imam was ecstatic. “You will be a blessing on our people. Tell me how to get them registered. Many of them have refused to do it, but for you, they will.”

THE PLAN: As many registration forms as possible would be obtained from the post office and requests for absentee ballots would be obtained from the state. These would then be distributed to individuals from each supportive group who would scour the district looking for unregistered voters. If the volunteers also found registered voters, the voters would be encouraged to submit requests for absentee ballots. It would also be possible for registered voters to request early voting ballots, which also would accept write-ins.

When it was discovered that they would need about 75,000 votes, Anthony got discouraged. “We can't make that number. We'd need thousands of volunteers.” He said this in front of Abbi and the next day Abbi approached him and informed him, “There will be 100 midshipman and an equal number of Marines available each weekend until the election and more if you need them.” After all, Abbi was the darling of the military. Not to be out done, West Point sent two bus loads of cadets. It was a great sight to see all these young uniformed people chatting and handing out information. Who could turn down these dedicated youngsters.

At first Taylor scoffed at the idea, but eventually all the activity got his attention. So he called in his chief of staff and ordered him to find a way to derail Anthony's campaign. Using a clerk at the state capitol, he arranged to have the supply of absentee ballots lost. This slowed down but did not stop Anthony's momentum. Unknown to Anthony, the Director of the FBI was a fishing buddy of the Governor. When he learned of the shortage, he whispered in the Governor's ear that something was amiss. The Governor had someone check into it, discovered where the ballots were and who was responsible for the disappearance. Then he had a bigger supply printed and fired the clerk responsible.

Father Dominic, the campaign organizer, judiciously scheduled Anthony's TV

interviews, keeping him fresh so as not to bore the voters. The week before the election, Taylor challenged Anthony to a debate. He figured a young inexperienced cop would be a push over and he would show him up. Father Dominic originally said no, but with Sara's encouragement, Anthony agreed. "I'm not backing down."

The debate was two days before election day. The absentee ballots had to be mailed and postmarked the day of the election so the timing was critical. Taylor started the debate by criticizing Anthony's inexperience, claiming he had no idea how to be congressman. Anthony's response was a scathing review of Taylor's record, especially his number of missed votes, plus he pointed out the budget overruns of construction jobs performed by Taylor's cronies, who were under investigation for corruption, and most of all the lack of education spending compared to other districts. Taylor had misjudged Anthony's ability to research his record. It was easy when you had the resources of the FBI working for you. (Who said, "All's fair in love and politics.") When the debate ended, Taylor was sweating and looked beaten.

In an after debate interview, Anthony was asked, "What if people had waited too long to get their ballots?" Anthony looked into the camera and sternly said, "The important thing is if you can't vote for me, don't vote for Taylor. Consider it a vote for none of the above."

On election night the tension was high in both camps. It was hard to measure the totals. Taylor's votes were electronic and Anthony's were paper. Taylor had the early lead but the election commission announced that the absentee count would not be completed for two days. Taylor demanded to be declared the winner because he was ahead at the end of election day. This was to be the first in a long line of protests from Taylor. He lost all of them, including the election. The final totals announced were: Taylor 73,404, Anthony 75,209, the third candidate 50,004. A recount demanded by Taylor gave Anthony 2 extra votes.

Everyone associated with Anthony's campaign was ecstatic. There were parties in Annapolis, Quantico and D.C. Anthony's election drew attention from all over the country and congratulations poured in from around the world. Everyone loves the underdog. Anthony was invited to be on every morning talk show as well as late night television. He was a media darling and his face became known worldwide. Now that the fun was over, Anthony had to prepare to assume his duties.

# Fitting In – Part 3

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Chapter One
An Honorable Gentleman

Once he won the seat, it was time for Anthony to get on with the job. January third, at noon, was the official day to be sworn in as a new representative. Anthony was joined by twenty other freshmen. All the others were members of one of the two main parties. Anthony was the only independent and therefore was considered an oddity. However, he had the biggest group of supporters in the gallery. He was, no doubt, the people's choice.

His day had gotten off to a rough start. He arrived at the capitol building early to find his office and check out the surroundings. A page directed him to the correct place. Anthony was shocked to find Taylor sitting behind the desk. Taylor stared at him with a malevolent grin.

“I guess you think you're moving in here. Well, you're not. This has been my office for twelve years and I'm not giving it up. I've challenged your election and when they rule in my favor you'll be out.”

Taylor had filed a number of suits and lost them all. Anthony bristled. He had beaten this creep fair and square and now he was trying to ruin his special day. Thoughts of physical violence passed through his mind, but he held his temper, contemplating what to do, and then the Sergeant at Arms appeared.

“OK, Taylor, out of there. I heard you had sneaked in and would cause trouble. You are no longer a congressman and not authorized to be here. Quietly leave or I will call the bailiffs.”

“I'm not leaving. I have possessions here and I'm not leaving them to this make-believe congressman.”

With that, the sergeant spoke into his lapel mic. Moments later, two burly men appeared. “Leave now or these two will help you.”

Taylor blustered some more. So, the two men grabbed him, one on each arm, and lifted him bodily out of the chair. As they headed toward the door, heads popped out of other office doors, as the group progressed down the hallway. A cheer went up from these offices.

Taylor was not a popular man and now his day was about to get worse. As the two bailiffs released him, two FBI agents approached and told him, "Mr. Taylor, you are under arrest for corruption, fraud and racketeering. You no longer have congressional immunity."

Taylor was going to federal prison. His acts of vengeance were coming back to get him. At about the same time, his son was being dismissed from the Secret Service. With daddy not able to protect him, he got the boot.

After the swearing in ceremony and the congratulations from his family and supporters, Anthony continued to organize his office and staff. He was surprised to learn he could hire up to 18 staff. He had already recruited Alex and Sally from his Quantico office and was inundated with requests to hire all kinds of supporters. Welcome to political payback. Father Dominic would make a great chief of staff, but it would conflict with his church duties. The Bishop was already unhappy about his role in the election campaign, and if he hadn't despised Taylor, like everyone else, he would have reprimanded the priest.

As Anthony pondered his wondrous problem, Sara called to remind him they were going to her father's retirement party. At first, Anthony wasn't interested, he had too much on his mind. But then he had a moment of inspiration, who could be better for the job? He and Ben Shapiro had worked closely together since Anthony was a teenager. Sara had mentioned that her mother was concerned about how Ben would occupy his time. Anthony smiled to himself, he loved solving his mother-in-law's problems. Now, how to approach Ben?

As the party wound down, Anthony moved to the center of the room and raised his glass for a toast to Ben. "I would like to salute my father-in-law for his successful career in the police department and invite him to join me in my new career as a congressman." After a moment of dead silence. The crowd erupted in cheers.

Ben looked dumbfounded. "What does that mean?" He finally croaked.

"I want you to be my Chief of Staff."

Ben's mind turned back to the day a skinny kid from a bad neighborhood approached him about a plan to clean it up. That had been the beginning of his rise to captain. And now the same kid, a mature young man, was asking him to join him again. Ben grabbed a glass and announced, "Of course, I will. I need to keep an eye on you."

Although his staffing was falling in line, Anthony still had much to do and wasn't sure how to approach the whole thing. Just as he started to organize his mind, he got a visit from the man who had secured his office for him. The Sergeant at Arms knocked and asked, "What's on your mind right now?"

"I'm trying to figure out my next move. All the other new members are receiving help from their party whips. I don't have one."

"Just as I thought, you need someone who knows the ropes and I know just who that is. You might not know that many congressional assistants don't belong to the state their boss represents. They work here to gain experience they can use in the future. Would you be interested in adding someone like that to your staff?"

It didn't take Anthony long to say, "Yes." The S.A. had two staffers in mind, one from each of the other parties, a male and a female. Their representatives were no longer in congress and they were looking for a job. After extensive interviews, he, with Ben's approval, hired Tim and Louise. Their experience would be invaluable in pointing Anthony in the right direction.

The office was starting to function as it should. Anthony was very excited to attend his first session of congress. Following the advice of his staff, he intended to just listen. When the session was adjourned, he was approached by one of the party whips. He was congratulated on his election and asked what party he planned to join.

"I haven't given it much thought. I think people voted for me because I ran as an independent. They're not happy with either party."

"Well, the party can do a lot for you in your next campaign."

"Next campaign? I just finished this one."

"Well, you'll learn that you never really stop. We'll need you to vote for the next education bill. It's important and you said education was one of the things you ran to support."

"OK. I'll read the bill and consider it."

Before Anthony got the chance. The whip from the other party showed up and they had a very similar conversation except this time they wanted Anthony to vote against the bill. When Anthony asked for a copy of the bill so he could read it, Tim

laughed, “Congressmen don't read bills, that's up to their staff – that's my job.”

“Well, when can you read it?”

“I already did when I was working for the other congressman. What do you want to know?”

“Is it a good bill? Should I consider voting for it?”

Tim was flattered. “That depends on the way the bill is worded. It looks good, but I believe it's a case of the rich getting richer. The increases are proportional, a percentage based on current levels. The poorer school districts get less than the richer ones.”

“So I should vote against it. My district is one of the poorer ones.”

“The opposing party would love that. The bill would fail to pass, which is what they want.”

Anthony was baffled. He wanted more money for his schools, but a fair amount. He would have to think about it. The vote was due in two weeks. Two weeks in which he was heavily courted by both parties.

Louise, the more crafty of his two staffers, came up with a possible solution. “You are in a unique position. Your vote is critical according to the pollsters, because the count is even. That's why you're so popular. Tell the sponsoring party to do something for your district or you'll vote against it.”

Anthony called a group brain session to come up with a plan. It turned out to be fantastic. Using basketball tournament logic the poorest district would get the same amount of money as the richest. The second poorest the same as the second richest, and so on until they met in the middle. Of course the plan met with skepticism. It would cost too much. In the meantime, Anthony's staff determined which districts received the least amounts and quickly convinced them to join in with Anthony's amendment. All of a sudden the party was losing support for their bill. A conference was called and a compromise reached. Using Anthony's basketball analogy, the richer schools got less, but the poorer schools still got more than the original proposal. The plan worked so well that some opposing representatives voted for it. And the bill passed.

Thus began Anthony's new career. What could the future bring?

Chapter Two

More Courting

Sara had assumed she would not be involved in Anthony's political career. She soon learned how wrong she was. The wives of other representatives started inviting her to luncheons and tea. She felt it was impolite to refuse, but between her job at the clinic and her kids, she had little time for socializing. So, when Sara asked Anthony's assistant Louise about all this, she learned that most congressional wives considered themselves part of the team. As in Anthony's case, she received invitations from both parties. The parties hoped to corral Anthony through his wife and Sara learned *that* was what these teas and such were all about. The other ladies talked about their husbands' parties and how one was better than the other. They also talked about fashion and the latest fads. Sara was embarrassed by her limited wardrobe and mentioned that it was difficult to buy high fashion on a congressman's salary. The other ladies laughed and told her that's what campaign funds were for. When Sara mentioned this to Anthony, he replied, "That's against the law. Campaign funds are for running your campaign not personal use. And besides, I don't have any campaign funds. We spent all we collected on the election. And since I may not run again, I haven't raised any more."

It was things like this that gave Anthony a dislike for politics. You ran for office to help people, not yourself, at least that's what he thought. So he eventually decided not to run for re-election, rather go back to the FBI and join the corruption unit. He felt he could do more good there than playing the politic game. There were obviously more Taylor's out there; he relished the idea of ferreting them out.