

1 Making Contact

November 6, 2012
Our House
Island of the Allar Tribe
off the Coast of Colombia
South America

Dearest Dan-love, it's hard to believe we're still alive. Since an Al Ghazi (Translation: The Warrior) cell attempted to kidnap us from our Central Park West apartment, you and I have succeeded in faking our deaths, and we have been in hiding on this enchanted island for a year, against the advice from a special Presidential task force, headed by CIA Director Nathan Symes. We've agonized throughout the 2012 Presidential election campaign: Democratic incumbent Rigoberto Domingo Machado vs. the Republican fundamentalist Tammi Mae Welker from Tennessee. But for the lack of a penis, she's a redneck male chauvinist racist pig wearing a skirt. We worried that Machado would be a one-term president. The polls had Machado and Welker neck and neck, up until yesterday, at which time the House finally passed a new, single-payer healthcare bill that originated and passed in the Senate. I have my former Vermont Governor, Charles McHugh, to thank for that. Brilliant physician and political miracle man, he lined up enough Blue Dog Democrats and moderate Republicans in a row, and got it done.

You and I wish we could vote, but it is what it is. Last time I checked, dead Americans can't vote, *and for us to stay alive, we have to stay dead*. Rigoberto Machado wins tonight, with nearly the mandate that he received in 2008. As I did in 2008, I cry during his victory speech.

The most exciting news about President Machado is that he has used his golden tongue and shrewd diplomacy to mobilize the Muslim countries of the world in an initiative to dissolve Al Ghazi (Translation: The Warrior) and Al Aziz (Translation: Strength/Power). The new governments of Iraq and Afghanistan are honest, democratic, and strong. Pakistan and Afghanistan harbor only a few terrorist cells, with weak leadership. The Saudis are reaching with long fingers into the individual Al Ghazi cells and neutralizing them, all the way down to the 10-year-old recruits. The effort appears successful. Virtually all of the most-wanted Al Ghazi and Al Aziz leaders have been located, captured, and brought to justice. Drones and robots have taken out the rest. We were concerned that a Welker victory would reverse this process, and throw the country into a tailspin, and into another recession at best.

I have a half-baked idea. I tell you that I'd like to find a way to bring our friend Kiri and her daughter Joely down for the holidays, and perhaps longer.

“I think they’d love it here. I’ve hated leaving them under the impression that we’ve been dead, for a whole year.”

“Really?” You ask me, “You think it’s safe? What about my parents? I hate having them think we’re dead, too.”

“I’m not sure it’s safe. Let’s run it by our favorite guy at Langley, who can run it by the big guy, if he needs to. We’ve been so low-maintenance, Nathan Symes ought to be willing to do us this small favor.”

“Far out. You know what, baby? I probably shouldn’t say this out loud, but maybe we’re an inch closer than we’ve been, to going home.”

“Sweetie. Let’s not dream that big, yet. Let’s try for Kiri and Joely, and if that works, then your parents.”

“Yah. When do you want to reach out to Symes?”

“We’ll make the call from Wing’s sat phone, as soon as we’re far enough away from here. I’m thinking we’ll sail back over to Achutupo Island, and do it from there. We can spend a few days there, since we had to come back early the last time.”

“You want to bring everyone?”

“Yeah, everyone who wants to come. That way, it’ll be an easier sail. I think if we get off our butts, we can pack and provision the boat by this evening, and head out first thing in the morning. Does that work for you, sweetie?”

“Yah.”

Before we make love tonight, you surprise me. “Angel,” you say, “now that John Lauria is gone from our lives, it may be advisable for you to re-arm my C³D.” The Command, Control, and Countermeasures Device (C³D) is smaller than a pacemaker. With your consent, my best friend, Ric Ronveaux, brilliant biophysicist and physician, implanted it in the “love handle” area above your left hipbone in 2010, after you cheated on me during a men’s party cruise out of Miami, Florida. Perhaps the hint of going home has raised the possibility of temptation in your mind. Nicknamed “the beltless chastity belt,” the C³D is packed to the max with remote and infrared sensing capabilities, along with a transponder and a pod of plastic explosive. With its sophisticated Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, I can locate you anywhere in the world with a single button-push on a modified Apple iPhone; and a clear, sharp, infrared picture will appear on the cell phone’s display. I can see clearly if you have gotten yourself too close to another woman, or man. I can also plug the iPhone into one of my iMac’s USB ports, and see greater detail on the larger screen. If I think you’ve gotten too close to someone, I can press the pound (#) symbol, and deliver an excruciating, 625,000-volt jolt that will send you to your knees. I have no idea how Ric made the countermeasures component of the C³D so damned smart, but he did. If penetration of any orifice with a body

part (like a tongue into a mouth) occurs between you and another person, the powerful little gadget when armed is wired to self-detonate the explosive, at which instant you, baby Dan, will be history. Unless I am the other person. Ric has programmed my DNA into the device so that it will sense a match and disarm, automatically. I haven't a clue how it can detect DNA through tissue and skin, but it can.

"Okay, sweetie," I say. "I think that's a good idea, and I love you for thinking of it. Let me do it now, before I forget." I find my customized iPhone, open it, press my index finger on the glass and look into its camera lens. The camera takes a picture of my iris, and the modified software in the phone compares it to the image of my iris that's stored in memory. When the software detects matches of both my iris and my index fingerprint, the screen flashes green, and I simply push the star (*) button, once. I can repeat this step to disarm, if, for example, a physician or dentist needs to penetrate one of your orifices to perform a medical or dental procedure.

We make love with impunity, and I fall asleep with peace of mind.

Sherrill Aileen Meloney

November 10, 2012
Achutupo Island
San Blas Archipelago
Panama

Well, Angel, you've sailed us back to Achutupo Island, off the coast of Panama, in our 102' Alden Schooner, named Wing. Last time we were here, we spent only a few hours, due to John Lauria's disappearance and death. We arrived late last night. I think your plan is for us to hang out and sail around here, until we get through to our man in Langley, Virginia.

We've eaten breakfast, and you and I are sitting in the office. The sat phone is on speaker, and you're dialing the number of Symes's scrambled line. I hope the number's still good. If not, well, I don't know if you have a Plan B, but you and Ric will probably think of something.

Nathan Symes answers on the third ring. "Symes."

You're in a good mood. "Good morning, Mr. Symes. It's another crystal-clear day in paradise. And here's a blast from the past. A lot has happened since our last meeting at the Trump SoHo, a little over a year ago."

"Yes. I know who you are. What is your reason for calling?"

"First, to tell you I still think you need to lighten up. Second, I need a favor, which I think is reasonable since we have been maintenance-free all this time. We've saved the taxpayers a pant load, by staying out of witness protection."

“And what is that favor?”

“I have some dear friends I need to see. I’m tired of having them think I’m dead, and my impression is that the risk has lessened, considerably. I would like you to transport them down to meet me on Achutupo, one of the San Blas Islands, off the coast of Panama. I’m sure you can find a way to convince them. It’ll be a great school project for my friend’s daughter. I’d like you to make it a surprise, if you can. Through her school, maybe. You know, hype it as a trip contest of some sort, won by one of her daughter’s teachers. If you can drop them in front of the Puesto Policial de Achutupo, the police station, my two friends, Mahri and Maire, will pick them up.”

“I need the particulars.”

“Sure. Here goes.” You provide Kiri’s address, phone number, the name of her daughter, Joely, and the name and phone number of Joely’s school.

“What’s the desired ETA?”

“Tomorrow’s not too soon.”

“I’ll have to get back to you.”

“No. I’ll need to get back to you, in two hours. Is that enough time?”

“Make it three hours. Wait. I have a question. Is the other package viable?” He’s asking you if I’m still alive.

You smile at me, rise from your seat on the banquette, walk two steps over to me, and sit on my lap. “That is affirmative. I’m sitting on it.”

I snicker, and whisper in your ear. “Dude’s jealous, now.”

“That’s good news,” Symes acknowledges. “We’ll speak in three hours.”

“Thanks, I really appreciate it. ‘Bye.’”

We all sit around the salon table and shoot the shit, until it’s time for you to make the callback. I’m a little nervous. “You really think this is safe to do?”

“Well, maybe not safe as milk, but if Symes says it’s a go, I think it’s safe enough for me. Note that I’m not sending Vee One and Vee Two to meet them. I think Maire and Mahri are perfect envoys. They’ll put Kiri and Joely at ease, immediately, double-dose. They’re not going to realize it’s us until after they’re on the boat.”

“Yah. Right.” You and I both giggle.

“It’ll be great to see them again,” Ric says. “Last time I saw them, you’d just gotten married, American style. And Joely fell in love with you when you took her out for a wild ride in that hot-rod McLaren Mercedes.”

“Yah. I miss that car. I miss driving. It’s hard to believe I haven’t driven a car for over a year.”

“I’m sure you haven’t forgotten how,” you say. “Just like you haven’t forgotten how to swim, ride a bicycle, or do that other thing you remembered how to do this morning. I can’t wait to pull Kiri off to the side and tell her about our most recent, seven-day marriage. Especially the wedding tent part.”

“Before or after the ceremony?” I ask.

“Both. Absolutely.”

I smile, and I feel my cheeks heat up under the dark, sun-kissed skin that you tell me makes you crazy-hot for me.

After you win a game of hearts (You are nicer to me this time and dump the Queen of Spades repeatedly on Ric.), it’s time for you to make the callback. You make it, and your second conversation is shorter and sweeter than the first.

Symes’s response is agreeable. “Yes. ETA is Wednesday, November 14, and the two packages will be at the police station at 3:00 PM local.”

“Hey. Thanks so much. You have no idea how grateful I am. May I call you when it’s time to send them back?”

“That is affirmative. By the way, the boss sends regards, and he’s glad to know both packages are viable.”

“Hugs and kisses back at the boss,” you say. “Bye.”

After you end the call, I have more to say. It’s serious. “Angel. If this goes off without complications, I want to bring my parents down here. I imagine they’re desolate, in their belief that we’re gone for good, especially with the holidays coming.”

You nod, vehemently. “I couldn’t agree more, Daniel. I’m sure Matt and Mimi miss you terribly. It would be good for them, and especially good for you.”

DDM