

## The Silent Watchman

### Part 3. Journeyman

#### Sunday Sentinel Book Reviews

WASHINGTON, DC – Tomorrow, at the weekly luncheon of Washington’s chapter of the National Press Club, Marcello Barcqe, award-winning journalist based in Mexico City, will discuss his frightening new book, Nexus: Cartel Cash, Terrorist Tactics, and Social Angst, the dramatic account of a growing threat to the American homeland. Based on extensive research, including one-on-one interviews with many figures from the shadowy worlds of lawbreakers and law enforcement undercover operatives, Barcqe has woven facts and expert opinions into a tale that both terrifies and titillates. The Sentinel also contains a feature article with the same title.

#### Previously

At the sunset of a beautiful day in Casco Viejo, Amos Sanson sat contentedly sipping a red wine of local vintage. He often sought refuge in Panama from the daily routine of the bookshop proprietor; it was a quick trip over familiar pathways that he looked forward to, along with book fairs and buying expeditions, with alacrity. Turning toward approaching foot steps, he recognized a familiar figure.

“You do not appear surprised to see me.”

“The passage of time, Mr. Barcqe, brings much that is new but little that surprises.” Pointing to the chair opposite him, Sanson continued, “You reported an explosion caused by the accumulation of gas in an aging sewer. Your reputation for veracity suggests that you do not often sheath the facts. Why, I have since wondered, did you choose to do so on that occasion?”

“We, each of us, have reasons, Mr. Sanson, that we prefer to hold closely lest they cease to serve our best interests. On this occasion, however, I appear at the request of a

mutual acquaintance to discuss a matter of paramount urgency and, as you are beyond his direct approach while here, to invite you to visit him. Shall I relate to you the tale that roused his concern?"

"Por favor."

"About a year ago, a US Border Patrol undercover agent, a young Latina named Mara de Jesus, was found partially exposed in a shallow grave on the US side of the border near Nogales. Her body displayed the marks of horrendous and prolonged torture. Ms. de Jesus was part of an international investigation into rumors that a drug cartel had approached a Spanish terrorist organization with a proposal to fund training for an anti-abortion group in the United States that wished to commit arson, bombing, and, if necessary, assassination among abortion advocates and clinical facilities on both sides of the Mexico-US border. I believe that this rumor was the focus of the Santos-Garfield meeting ... supposition on my part, but believed by important people in your country and mine. The trail from de Jesus' grave led to another shallow grave in which three low-level cartel enforcers were found. Mexican authorities believe that the three were executed by the cartel because their actions brought unwanted scrutiny at a time when a major cross-border drug movement was being planned.

"Mara de Jesus had a very close relative living in a small university city ... her aunt, Rosada Angel Jesus ... a friend of Devon Xander, local police chief, who was an integral part of the security force for the Santos-Garfield meeting. Angel Jesus retired from US federal service after distinguished assignments in Latin America, and is owner of a rental property known to have been occupied briefly by a quiet gentleman whose

right hand was sheathed in a color-coordinated cloth glove even during sultry weather ... a gentleman with whom she shares a professional interest in books.”

Barcqe paused.

“Interesting. You appear quite confident in your story.”

“I am a noted, in some circles even renowned, journalist, Mr. Sanson, and, as I believe you know, integrated into various networks within which such stories circulate. Included among my acquaintances is an equally well-networked gentleman: Mr. Simon Stoddard. He suggested that you might be interested in my story, and he asked that I convey to you his invitation to meet at noon two days hence in his sanctum. And now, Mr. Sanson, I must depart to prepare for ...”

“... an interview tomorrow with the constructor responsible for increasing the capacity of the Canal.”

As he rose, Marcello Barcqe smiled and raised his glass in silent salute. A moment later, he emerged from the Meridor and crossed the street as a large SUV approached. From the shadows of a doorway, a well-dressed, imposing man emerged, glanced casually up and down the street, opened the door of the SUV and followed Barcqe inside.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Amos Sanson mused, sipped his wine, and thought about ...

*It is often difficult to know the silent watchman's mind.*

Two days later, at precisely noon, Sanson selected a small gourmet sandwich, poured a cup of coffee, and seated himself across from Simon Stoddard. Slowly he ate, then

drank, watching as Stoddard stared at his computer monitor. Abruptly, Simon stroked a few keys, hit “enter” with a flourish, and turned to greet Amos. “Welcome old friend. I trust you and Marcello had a fruitful exchange.”

“He is an interesting conversationalist.”

“Coming directly from a meeting with Malcolm Garfield, Marcello brought me unsettling news, and the prospect of a complex but intriguing project. Garfield wants us to look into a pressing concern near Nogales.”

“Garfield seems constantly pressed by one thing or another. But, he deals in significant matters, so ...”

“Both Garfield’s intelligence and Barcqe’s contacts indicate that a major cross-border movement of illicit narcotics is being planned. It involves, so the information suggests, multiple crossings, elaborate diversions, and a nexus of interests that could be devastating. Government response to such an operation requires the commitment of many resources at substantial cost; the command and control apparatus alone is daunting, and standing-up the military and police forces on both sides of the border may not be possible without such an array of signatures that tipping our hand cannot be avoided. Garfield wants to nip it in the bud, but not before an actionable conspiracy case can be brought. Marshaling the necessary forces is costly, and the stand-by expenses are high; so authorities are reluctant to commit at current levels of uncertainty. As usual, the balance is precarious, so stealth is essential; however, Garfield believes that a low-profile effort can acquire sufficient evidence to convince higher authorities to support prosecution of a conspiracy case, and if necessary, upset the diversionary nexus and

allow the military and law enforcement folks to deal with the border crossings.

Interested?”

“Being interested and being willing are often different. I have no doubt that Rosada Jesus can handle the research and information requirements, but whether Xander and I can meet the demands in the field is at issue. Xander’s previous success is encouraging, but his activity was overt. Whether we can move him completely into the shadows is questionable; not impossible, but questionable. I had hoped for another mission for which I could exercise overwatch. This, however, will require full commitment for both of us. Have I time to formulate an action plan for your perusal?”

“Amos, at noon three days from today, I must respond to Garfield.”

“I need all summary analyses, including conclusions, compiled by Garfield and Barcqe.”

“All that they will share is in this briefcase. They assure me that it is substantive and expertly analyzed. Sources are expunged but nearly all is independently corroborated, uncertainties are quantified or described using standard terms, unanticipated impacts and uncertain outcomes are discussed; it is the best they can do.”

“I will talk with you in three days time. At this stage, Simon, life should have become a bit simpler.”

At 0900 three days hence, Amos Sanson began: “The project Malcolm Garfield proposes is comprised of three complex elements, any one of which would be suitable for us, but the whole is too much for us to undertake. The information in the briefcase is extensive

and, I believe, will enable us to successfully complete one of the elements: protective surveillance of the Nogales abortion clinic.”

“Why do you think that is the one?”

“It involves a stationary target on a city street in a low traffic area affording both surveillance and counter surveillance perches, and does not require that we cross an international border. Recently, both Xander and I completed international missions that exposed us to formal identity checks when crossing borders, and I think a little more time should pass before we risk another trip through Homeland Security and other border scrutiny. Perhaps more importantly, the scale and scope of this operation lie well within the capabilities of one person; Xander can do this by himself without undue risk.

Demonstrations are not uncommon at this location and Malcolm has monitored them well, so we have a sound baseline. Rosada can support the activity. She and Devon are well versed in the context and will be briefed on the possible connection with Malcolm’s larger picture. I shall watch over the operation, but Xander will not know of my presence. Rosada will keep me in the communications net, but she will not know that I am near Xander. This is a final test, Simon; after this, you may very well have an additional asset capable of independent action.”

“Malcolm Garfield has confidence in Xander, so that should not be a hard sell. Fill me in.”

Two hours later, Amos Sanson rose to leave Simon Stoddard’s sanctum, pausing as Simon dialed Garfield’s private number. After a brief conversation, Simon hung-up the phone and turned toward Amos. With a theatrical voice framed in a sly smile, he said, “The game’s afoot.”

A day later, cups of coffee and tea upon the table in Rosada Angel Jesus' bookstore, Amos read Rosada and Devon Xander into the operation.

At the same time, in a gracious hacienda somewhere in Mexico, the heads of three drug cartels believed by Mexican and US authorities to be locked in genocidal war for dominance in the North American narcotics market were sitting down to the latest of their periodic conferences. On the streets, their soldiers were engaged in local battles for the retail trade; but at executive levels, the three cartels had formed a consortium, supported by sophisticated private military forces capable of standing toe to toe with almost any light infantry or special operations forces their size in the world, which surpassed credulity among the politically appointed policy makers on both sides of the border.

Surrounded by a thousand meter moat of grass no higher than a man's knees, inside a walled complex electronically shielded as only the highest levels of secure intelligence facilities in US military and law enforcement organizations, amidst a green sea patrolled by fighting bulls conditioned to hate men, the three leaders, each accompanied by only three of his most trusted lieutenants, chatted casually before opening the meeting to an agenda of unusual complexity. They were planning an operation that would combine their money with terrorist trainers and generally well-meaning social activists in a deceptive dash through Mexican and US border security forces to move the largest overland shipment of illicit drugs ever attempted into the bottomless market north of the border. Forced by increasingly active anti-drug operations to turn south into Central America to secure their operational bases, they were looking for a grand success before relocating their executive operations into the more

easily managed countries in the isthmus south of Mexico. As in a military retrograde, they were trading space for security, but they wanted a major score to both finance the transition and impress those in their new residencies. It was a high-risk, high-payoff attempt to secure kings of the mountain.

Amos Sanson looked again. Lillian de Vizcaya? Why? Delving into memories more than two decades old, Sanson searched for connections with the current situation. Lillian de Vizcaya did not appear in the briefing documents furnished by Simon Stoddard and Malcolm Garfield. She was from a by-gone era, from a time before Sinn Fein was accepted as a legitimate political actor on the Irish stage. Irish? Of course! “Irish Jack” Kavanaugh! A constant companion of the vivacious Irish-born Basque separatist, Jonathon Cotswold Kavanaugh, twice arrested but never convicted, was an ideologically motivated master planner and, some believed, master bomb maker for the Irish Republican Army during earlier rounds between the IRA and the UK.

Slowly a connection emerged from Sanson’s mind: An Irish-Catholic ideologue, Irish Jack’s presence near demonstrations outside an abortion clinic made some sense; and his thoroughly black and white, right or wrong conscience insulated him from the despicable trade in illicit drugs. The perfect foil, Kavanaugh could be an unwitting accomplice in a cartel deception plan.

Sanson followed de Vizcaya very carefully. Her tradecraft seemed somewhat relaxed, but Nogales was not Belfast or London. An hour and a half later, his patience paid off. Seated outside a small cantina in the barrio, an aging Irish Jack sipped alternately from a wine glass and a small cup. Kavanaugh watched Lillian’s back trail as



she strolled past the cantina and rounded the corner at the end of the street. A few minutes later, she appeared in the cantina doorway, deliberately surveyed the street, then disappeared with Kavanaugh into the bar.

Sanson waited under the trees, but they did not immediately come out. Aware that his idle presence would raise hackles, he backed off and called Rosada. Within minutes, the sighting was correlated into their growing database and forwarded to SCION ...EYES ONLY, aka Malcolm Garfield. Garfield added the information to his list of indications that the cartel operation probably was underway.

In his own way, Amos Sanson was pleased to see the two old acquaintances.

Immediately upon learning that Kavanaugh and de Vizcaya were in Nogales, Malcolm Garfield directed one of his analysts to review their MOs. Within the hour, the analyst returned to brief Garfield:

Irish Jack specialized in property destruction with no attendant deaths, though occasional collateral damage brought casualties. Generally his intent was to draw police, military, and other first responders away from higher priority targets that were to be attacked by others. He was, of course, equally guilty as an active participant in the operations, but though imprisoned several times Kavanaugh was never convicted of killing anyone. He was cast as a courageous ideologue with firm convictions against murder and assassination. Often, he stood nose-to-nose against IRA gunmen without flinching, but he supported the cause.

Lillian de Vizcaya's, however, was a different profile all together. Born of Irish and Basque parents and raised among a mixture of opposition intellectuals and stone-cold

killers, she was volatile, brilliant, and brave to the point of recklessness. The young de Vizcaya was more likely to stand with the guns; but for some unfathomable reason, she became devoted to Jonathon Cotswold Kavanaugh, and turned to his cause.

Conclusion: Together, they were formidable, but thought to be reasonably predictable. They were not in Nogales to kill people, but to train anti-abortionists to provide fireworks to divert attention from the drug kingpins' cross-border operation. If Kavanaugh were threatened, he would defend himself; but de Vizcaya would seek out and destroy anyone who threatened him.

Garfield sent a warning to Rosada for immediate transmission to Xander. The warning was accompanied with instructions to find out where and with whom Kavanaugh and de Vizcaya were meeting and, if possible, where and how the trainees intended to strike.

The test Sanson and Stoddard had set for Xander was ratcheting up.

Feeling secure behind the moat of grass, the consortium finished its most important meeting. Within days, authorities in and around Nogales would be inundated with emergency calls reporting explosions of natural gas lines and gasoline filling stations throughout the area. The emergencies would occur seemingly at random, drawing all public safety and gas utility resources to widely scattered sites and occupying all investigative and disaster management resources in attempts to get a handle on the events. Roads and streets would be jammed with emergency vehicles, and detours would confuse motorists. In the midst of the chaos, two bombs would be detonated at the abortion clinic. The first would be a small bomb in the clinic lab that would force

evacuation of the clinic. It would be followed by a larger blast with a fire accelerate placed to completely engulf the structure within minutes. One clinic destroyed, no significant casualties.

At the first reports of disaster in Nogales, bulldozers at three construction sites on the Mexican side of the border, two east and one west of Nogales, would drive through the border fence in remote areas within the greater Nogales region. The dozers would be followed by convoys of off-road vehicles loaded with narcotics. After clearing the fence, the heavy pick-ups and all-wheel drive vans would fan-out along the trails and roads that interlaced the deserted backcountry. Soon they would be beyond the area patrolled locally to prevent relatively low volumes of infiltration through the region. Some would not get through; that was expected. But the consortium believed the amount of product that did get through would be the largest single shipment of drugs ever to enter the vast US market, in itself a major victory.

The plan was not foolproof, but it was judged to have a high probability of sufficient success to warrant its undertaking. The event was planned for late afternoon or early evening so the chaos would occur during the afternoon rush hours and the border-crossing elements would soon be cloaked in darkness. High risk, high return, even with the “fog of war” looming. With this success, the consortium would be able to withdraw its executive functions to relative safety in Central America.

*Report Nbr 03-Instant To SCION...EYES ONLY*

*1730, Tracy Owen entered cantina (photo attached). Exited 1830. Source reports he passed through the bar and entered the storeroom. On legitimate pretext,*

*source entered storeroom. Owen was not present. Nor did he exit the cantina by the back door. At 1830, Owen entered the bar from the storeroom and exited the cantina through the front entrance. REPORT ENDS*

Malcolm Garfield sent the photo to the identity division for verification. Owen was indeed the same Tracy Owen known to be a leader of the Saviors, a radical element of the Southwest Division of the American Chapter of the International Association for Anti-Abortion Advocacy. Garfield ordered a 24/7 stakeout on the cantina and surveillance on Owen.

But, a mystery remained: After entering the cantina, where had Owen gone?

A plausible answer was provided by the local police force. During prohibition, the cantina was part of a small network of establishments linked by tunnels through which tequila was transported. With the end of prohibition and the passage of time, the tunnel system was forgotten. Perhaps it had been reopened for a similar purpose but a new product.

Four other bars were included in the original network; all four were still in business. Garfield ordered round-the-clock surveillance on all four. Within a week, each was visited by a different member of Savior in a manner similar to Owen's visit to the cantina.

The puzzle was filling in.

*Report Nbr 12-Instant To SCION...EYES ONLY*

*2300, Owen returned to the cantina, remained inside for three hours, exited at 0200, 13-Instant. On legitimate pretext, inside source entered storeroom and lower-level wine cellar; Owen was not there. REPORT ENDS*

Simultaneous reports from surveillance of the other four bars in the network reported similar occurrences.

*Conclusion: Both Kavanaugh and de Vizcaya were seen entering the cantina at 2100, remaining inside throughout the report period. We believe a major meeting involving them, Owen, and four additional members of Savior, was conducted in the tunnel system, probably to coordinate an attack upon or disruption of services of the clinic. This correlates with other-agency reports of the acquisition by Savior of materials sufficient to construct either one very large or approximately 25 small bombs. Savior has had sufficient time to construct the bombs. We believe attack is imminent, within the next 24-48 hours.*

*RECOMMENDATION: Simultaneously take down the five (5) Savior cells soonest!*

Garfield ordered the takedown. Twenty-two hours later, the cells were in custody, but EOD personnel reported that the amount of explosive material recovered was less than expected. They suspected that some of the bombs had already been placed. Based on information discovered during the raids, they began to search; but the number of potential targets for small bombs like those found in the extremists' arsenals was endless.

At 16:12:46 hours, the phone rang in the call center of Nogales 911: A gasoline-dispensing pump in a downtown filling station was afire and threatened seven other pumps. Patrons reported that the fire was preceded by "a muffled boom." Rapid response was warranted, but it was treated as a routine emergency call. Within the next

103 minutes, five additional calls -- two at filling stations and three at shopping mall natural gas meters -- were registered. The periods between calls varied in magnitude. The third similar call evoked concern among supervisors in the emergency operations center that these were not random events, so they opened the city's disaster plan and notified the mayor's office and the police and fire departments that a serious situation might be developing. The seventh and eighth calls for explosions and jetting fires at cut-off valves on a ten-inch gas transmission line near a heavily populated northwestern suburb convinced them that a major manmade incident was in play.

The alarm cascaded up through the regional emergency response system. The governor was alerted. Public safety units assumed control at critical points in the rush-hour traffic patterns, but movement within the city slowed. Streets were jammed; emergency vehicles had to creep through masses of irate drivers. Regional officials were convinced that something more sinister than coincidental or systemic failure was occurring in the natural gas distribution system.

Homeland Security picked up on the electronic chatter among the local authorities even before formal notification arrived.

Then a fire erupted in the medical laboratory of an abortion clinic, but the simultaneous occurrence of demonstrations at the clinic and fires scattered through the city had overwhelmed the city's emergency responders. Patients and staff evacuated the clinic without casualties, and firefighters entered to suppress the fire. A deafening explosion ripped through the clinic storeroom, engulfing the structure in fire and causing injuries to the firefighters and a few evacuees and bystanders. Emergency medical

services and firefighting reinforcements could not respond because the streets were jammed with traffic. Clinic staff turned their attention to the casualties.

Within minutes of the last reports to 911, three bulldozers slammed through the chain-link fence along the US-Mexico border near Nogales, clearing paths for convoys of trucks and vans to sprint through. West of Nogales several vehicles were delayed or stopped; but east of the city, an unknown number of vehicles reached the rural tracks, trails, and roads leading north and east into the mountains. Occupants of the vehicles opened fire on the border patrol officers who attempted to stop the onslaught. The firefights forced the officers to deploy and engage in scattered battles all along the infiltration path. Dusk, swiftly followed by nightfall: the convoys fanned out and disappeared into the darkness and the rough terrain. The wolves were afoot in the fold.

Long before the alarm had passed up the chain of command from Nogales, Malcolm Garfield had read flash reports from Devon Xander, alerted his people, coordinated with the taskforce agencies, and arranged both aerial surveillance of the area north and east of Nogales and flights for himself and his field command staff to Tucson. The battle had been joined, and he expected to be on the ground in force by first light. This was a job for law enforcement, assisted by backcountry experts from Native American reservation police forces and Arizona National Guard units trained especially for surveillance and interdiction in the rugged terrain. The cartel consortium had planned a historic score, but Garfield had waited a long time to get at them on his ground. Enthusiastically, he loosed the hounds.

Garfield met Xander at the airport in Tucson, and quickly integrated him into the Federal command and control staff. Xander would be the liaison officer between

Garfield's intelligence and operations unit and local police and National Guard operations centers. Devon's experience with local law enforcement and National Guard deployments was immediately put to good use. And Garfield wanted him nearby as his advisor and agent.

Aerial surveillance and real-time satellite imagery had already found a number of vehicles moving rapidly through the backcountry, and interceptors had been dispatched to their locations. If the vehicles turned out to be elements of the consortium invasion, firefights and hot pursuits were likely. Legitimate travelers would be informed of the situation and either directed to leave the area or detained until the area was cleared. Some of the mules would get through, but Malcolm Garfield was determined to limit the consortium to less than their usual success rate. They would not be permitted a record on his watch! His goal was to contain them and, if all went very well, to make their audacity so expensive that they would not attempt another such action.

Xander was in constant motion, communicating with and moving from O&I to police and military commands to Garfield's headquarters. Garfield's authority went with him, so he could make decisions and resolve differences wherever he went.

Garfield's HQ was adjacent to the tactical operations center (TOC) from which the field operations were directed. The TOC was up 24/7, crammed with sophisticated communications equipment and surveillance monitors, and people conferring in small groups or scurrying from place to place. It was at the same time chaotic and controlled, quiet and cacophonous, and deadly serious. Radio traffic was generally confined to headsets, but occasionally something was fed to speakers so all could hear. Real-time



surveillance imagery was generally limited to specialized monitors, but occasionally something was fed to a giant screen so all could see. Sections for Navaho police, designated “Hawk,” National Guard, “Minuteman,” and Federal drug enforcement, “Eagle,” were clearly marked. Deputy Sheriffs and State Police represented local and state law enforcement.

Xander moved among them, and between the TOC and Garfield’s headquarters. He paused to speak with someone, read a brief message, or stare for a moment at a monitor. He listened as Hawk reported a positive bandit sighting and Minuteman moved to intercept. He watched the interception on a surveillance monitor, and listened to the cheers when the bandit went down. And he carried the news, good or bad, to Garfield.

Garfield pretty much stayed in his HQ, nearby if needed but out of the way of the professionals who were expert at their jobs. This was a tough time for him. Having set all this in motion, he had the good sense not to micromanage the battle; but he ached to get into the thick of it. More than once, Xander met him at the door, always with a piece of news or to relay a question that only he could answer. Periodically, he walked through the TOC, asked a question here or there, chatted momentarily with Xander, and returned to the HQ. Later, he was told by Xander how much the people up to their necks in alligators appreciated his presence, and his leaving them alone to grapple with them.

Reviewing the operation at the end of the first 12 hours, it was apparent that a number of successful intercepts had been accomplished. Reports from the field showed positive results. As the countryside cooled through the evening, thermal imagery revealed far fewer vehicles moving through the operational area, and friend or foe indicators showed that nearly all were friendly. Whether some bandits were lying low or

had passed beyond the cordon was unknown, but the attitude in Garfield's headquarters and the TOC was "cautiously optimistic."

Behind the bulls on the hacienda, the Consortium quietly surveyed the results following the convoys' thrust through the border defenses.

"Initially," reported the Consortium intelligence officer, "the deception achieved its purpose and the penetration appeared to have succeeded. But, with the passage of time, the number of trucks and vans reporting they had reached points beyond the US response cordon is not reassuring. The operation will likely move a lot of product into the United States, but the hoped-for record is slowly slipping away. The results appear to have been sufficient to reimburse the costs, but little or no money will be made."

They decided to rest, and continue in the morning when more definitive information would be available. Just after dawn, 16 hours after launching their convoys, the Consortium reconvened around a sumptuous buffet to continue its review.

"News reports alternately chastised American authorities for "allowing" the border penetration and praised them for their rapid response and apparently successful outcome. If we are patient, the Gringo press will fill in many of the details, and our regular sources will provide salient insights.

"We are satisfied with the results of our collaboration with the Basque terrorists. The deception unfolded as Kavanaugh predicted: A sufficient number of explosions and fires occurred to distract the local community.

"In the primary assault, the bulldozers fulfilled their purpose, and our convoys achieved success initially. The confounding factor was the preparedness of the Norte

Americanos. They were able to marshal a force unanticipated in both quantity and quality much more quickly than we thought possible. As an operation, the attempt may achieve less than we hoped; but as an experiment, the attempt may reveal much.”

“We should never close our minds to the lessons presented to us,” opined the host. “We must conduct a thorough post-mortem, and benefit from both the successes and failures it may present to us. There will be other opportunities. Let us begin the preparations now.”

The leader of cartel operations in Sonora interjected: “I believe our project was compromised by the discovery of the dead Border Patrol officer. We have reviewed her time with us and are reasonably sure of the degree of her access to our planning. Therefore, retrospectively and with more details about the American actions, we can infer the content of her reports. Had we been able to interrogate her, we would have discovered exactly what she had conveyed to her superiors. The conduct of our three hyenas deprived us of that opportunity, and of the possibility of our feeding the voracious appetite of Washington with misinformation. At present, we may only surmise that at the very least she was able to tip our hand, and that the level of the US response reflected her forewarning. I concur with our host’s suggestion.”

Quiet murmurs of assent passed among them as they turned their attention to breakfast. Later, they returned to the review, and peered into the future.

Near dawn at the end of the second night of the incursion, Garfield and Xander, disheveled but wired by stale coffee and the spirit of the chase, sat quietly in the HQ, reviewing status reports and talking about the detailed after-action review to come.

Looking at a handful of printouts, Xander said, “We brought down all five of Savior’s three-man cells, but ten explosions with fire occurred and the community was pretty thoroughly disrupted. In the confusion, Kavanaugh and de Vizcaya slipped away. We don’t have a line on them ... yet.

“The initial assault on the fence was successful. Two corridors were opened through our wire, and 70 or more off-road pick-ups and vans broke through. About three quarters of the bandits passed east of Nogales, and sprinted into the rough country to the northeast. The others passed west of the city into more populated areas. We stopped seven in that sector, but the difficulties in intercepts were exacerbated by pursuit in a more populous area.

“Preliminary thinking is that the thrust west of Nogales was part of a deception plan, along with the explosives and fires set by Savior. Following the breaches of the fence, we had blips everywhere west and northeast of Nogales.

“So far, we have intercepted about 85 percent of the blips to the east and north; about 15 of these intercepts were legitimate travelers who were detained for their safety. We are still receiving reports of the hot intercepts.

“We’ve taken down 48 two-man mule teams and recovered their cargos; Drug Enforcement is assessing the take. But, Malcolm, we’ve also taken casualties: So far, two KIA and eighteen WIA. The guys running these drugs are tough and well armed: automatic weapons, hand grenades, and two bandits used LAWS. They came to fight, and win.

“For the moment, analysis strongly suggests a well planned, financed, and executed military-style operation. Our intercepts have revealed cartel soldiers from two

organizations we thought were at each other's throats, and the use of known terrorists and terrorist tactics multiplied their capabilities. A practical, low profile deception was employed, and their OPSEC was pretty damn good. We were able to respond with effective field forces outside the city, and our admin/log support has kept them in action continuously from the beginning of our response. Our pre-op surveillance and counter-surveillance on this side of the border tipped us to an operation, but not to its full scope and scale. Currently, our thinking is they have achieved only partial success because we were able to put boots on the ground quickly. Hawk and Minuteman have performed very well.

“Malcolm, the full AAR will tell us a lot more; but, for now, I think the bad guys came to play a much bigger game ... maybe even to severely test our capabilities. They may be sitting in a safehouse somewhere evaluating the benefits and costs of financing an operation combining their money and personnel with terrorist trainers and tactics and deception built around social activism.”

Malcolm Garfield had listened intently to Xander's report. He remained silent for several moments after Xander concluded. Then, in a thoughtful mood, he began: “Your conclusion is sobering, Devon. But it suggests a new line of response on our part. You might be amazed at who think we are *at war* with drug cartels and terrorists. But, is it war, or is it good, old-fashioned intelligence, diplomacy, and police work? Maybe we can convince them to provide Homeland Security with its own drones to complement the Border Patrol, reconnaissance satellites, and HUMINT by keeping real-time eyes on our remote border areas. Who knows, we might someday locate that safehouse and drop a

little surprise package on those fat cats.” His eyelids slowly lowered and his chin sank onto his chest. Garfield slept.

“Tired and wired, the cerebral Yetti loose in a dancing landscape,” muttered Xander to himself as he rose from his chair and shook the cobwebs from his head. “Out-of-the-box thinking for a civil service wonk from Justice, the bastion of conservative bureaucracy.” He slowly walked over to the TOC.

Despite their aging, Lillian de Vizcaya and Jonathon Cotswold Kavanaugh remained sensitive to their surroundings. Situational awareness had carried them through many years of engagement under careful scrutiny. Though their work in Nogales was complete, they did not relax their guard. Kavanaugh and de Vizcaya began every contract with a thoughtfully conceived exit strategy. This one included a middle-aged Arizona couple interested in vacationing south of the border.

Three weeks after the Nogales affair, a well-dressed couple entered a luxurious suite aboard a cruise ship in Los Angeles for a transit of the Panama Canal with stops along the way at Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta, Acapulco, Panama City, Cozumel, and Fort Lauderdale. It was a celebration of their first wedding anniversary. They had been happily looking forward to the trip for nearly six months.

When the ship docked for the day at Puerto Vallarta, they disembarked, strolled through the town, and stopped for coffee and tequila at a café made famous by Robert James Waller in his book, Puerta Vallarta Squeeze. Shortly after being served, they went to the rest rooms, returning minutes later to sit quietly, sip coffee and tequila, and rise to return to the ship. Later, shipboard security officers would recall small differences in the

appearance of the couple when they returned to the ship; but their personal identity and ship credentials were correct, so they were welcomed on-board. They continued the cruise, enjoying a beautiful day of scuba diving in Cozumel, and flew home from Fort Lauderdale to Phoenix. On Monday morning, they returned to work, where they delighted their fellow assistant prosecutors in the drug enforcement division of the state department of justice with tales of sharks, rays, and sea turtles sighted during the dives. Their colleagues were, of course, envious, and several vowed to undertake a similar excursion; for now, however, the voyage was simply beyond their means.

In the meantime, a handsome couple traveled from Puerto Vallarta, through Guadalajara, to Mexico City, where they emplaned for Lisbon. In due time, they returned to their modest flat in a small town overlooking the Bay of Biscay. The next morning, to the greetings of friends, they entered a neighborhood cafe for their usual café con leche, queso, and panecillos.

In pursuit of de Vizcaya and Kavanaugh, US authorities sought assistance from both Ireland and Spain, but the Irish reported no trace of them and Madrid hardly ever achieves success among the Basque.

As Amos Sanson placed his hand upon the ornate knob of Simon Stoddard's outer door following their routine after action review, Simon said, "Amos, take some time to reconsider your inclination to retire. Xander has advanced to become a capable independent operative, but he is not you, nor will he ever, in my opinion, acquire your properties. He is known to be a confidant of Malcolm Garfield, and it is this knowledge that both qualifies him for and perhaps limits him to overt activities. People know of him

and the roles he played in Mexico and Nogales. You and he complement each other, but he is not a substitute for you. Please return at the time of the next new moon to renegotiate your future and the time, effort, and compensation for continuance.”

Thoughtfully, with eyes cast upon the Persian carpet at his feet, Sanson paused, then turned to look directly into Stoddard’s eyes and nod slightly. At Stoddard’s silent acknowledgement, he departed.

Simon smiled a bit, turned and moved his fingers toward the computer keyboard, then laced his fingers behind his head, leaned back in his chair, turned to his left, and gazed deeply into “Deus Ex Machina.” He sat quietly, thinking himself to have triumphed in this round with Amos Sanson. But, a thought interjected itself, and he could not escape it. He had to admit his profound respect, admiration, and ... yes ... affection for the silent watchman.

Devon Xander and Amos Sanson had come to sit around the book-strewn table in Rosada’s shop, and sip coffee from brightly colored paper cups, and share the terrible hurt as only those who know can.

Memories flooded Rosada Angel Jesus’s mind as she alternately read Marcelo Barcqe’s account of Mara de Jesus’ death and cried uncontrollably. Rosada remembered walking hand-in-hand with eleven-year-old Mara through the San Diego zoo, laughing at the monkeys swinging from perch to perch, and Mara graduating from San Diego State with a bachelor degree in criminal justice, and Mara receiving her badge and gun and being sworn into the United States Border Patrol, and endless days and weeks and



months when Mara was somewhere doing something that no one would talk about. And now her one and favorite Mara was dead.

A furtive glance brought Xander and Sanson together in a single thought: For this devastating act against one they cherished, they would exact a terrifying price. But for now, they sat in silence and shared the hurt.