

Chapter 11: Knights of the Round Table

Monday morning during breakfast Lionel checks the local news station on his Android pad. The he finds news story:

Dateline RTP: A local biotech firm parking lot was the scene of a late morning gang gun fight. Shots were exchanged between two unknown groups. Two individuals were reported to have been shot. One unidentified person was taken into custody. The DPD speculates that this was a confrontation between two rival gangs. Local authorities continue their investigation.

This is second recent report of a shooting blamed on gangs at the Southpoint Mall

After Sandi and Lionel finish breakfast they head to Claude's Café for the morning coffee. Because Lionel pistol is being held in Durham, he substitutes his HK Mark23 which is also a 45ACP but not suitable for conceal carry. So instead of using the smart tablet bag he goes for the larger ThinkTank laptop bag with a shoulder strap. The pistol and four twelve round magazines fit well within the bag. But it is a good deal heavier than the Ruger XDE, holster, and smaller six round magazines. It definitely will not be a quick draw event if the Mark 23 is needed.

This morning's normal social chatter offers a sense of calm and well-being. Sandi and Lionel add simple prattle to the stream and threads of communication. The sanctity of the brew crew is broken by multiple unanswered vibrate only telephone calls, voice messages, and text message on Lionel's cell phone.

In the Acura returning home, Lionel checks call history and then his text messages.

Call Hisotry: Bob Uzzo, DPD, RPD, SBI (NC State Bureau of Investigation), ATF, FBI
Voice Mail: SBI, ATF, FBI, RPD
Text Message: Bob Uzzo, DPD

Text Message from Bob Uzzo: A little bird said there will be a bunch of buzzards soaring over the opossum corpse shortly. Enjoy. Coffee soon? Beat Navy.

Text Message from Detective Berry: The Bug is ready and waiting for you at the DPD Impoundment Lot. The pickup code number is:*****. Your Ruger and gun bag are being held a while longer. Two suspects stopped in Florence, SC for treatment. They are in custody and will be sent back to Durham within the week. Always glad to see a student of mine do well.

Before Lionel can respond, he and Sandi arrive home.

“Sandi, drive pass the house that HVAC truck should not be there. I am calling 911.”

Shortly, Lionel is holding for a pass-through call from the Raleigh 911 to an unknown entity.

“Mr. Jones, this is Agent Cribs with the ATF and Agent Marcus of the FBI. We were tasked to make contact with you at your home since you were apparently out of communication for a period of time. We are in Newton Brothers Heating blue coveralls out front of your place. Please land the Acura as soon as possible.”

“Roger that. I am exiting the Acura and walking back toward the house now. I will be there in two minutes. I am a licensed NC Conceal Carrier. I am carrying. My pistol will be ready for business. Place you id’s in the mail box, back the van until it is near the street stormdrain, and then go around the corner of the house where the creek and heating unit are. My wife will stay where she is until I text her an all-clear code. I am on my way. Bye.”

“If I remember, in ten minutes I will send you the old ‘tally-who’ if all is well. Otherwise call in the cavalry.”

Lionel exits the Acura with the ThinkTank bag concealing his HK Mark 23 in the loaded, cocked and safety off mode. He starts walking briskly toward the house. With his hand in the bag but holding the pistol grip he repeats, “Keep your finger off the trigger, keep your finger off the trigger.”

The agents have backed the van as requested and left their identification credentials in the mailbox. A quick check of the cards provides a “warm fuzzy”. He decocks the Mark 35. Taking both identification credentials in each hand he moves down the street to where he can see both agents. Setting down both sets of credentials he uses his left hand to dial 911 and asks for credential verification.

Once confirming credentials he retrieves the identification credentials. He raises them so everyone can see his hands and advance on the agents.

Near 10 yards from them, Lionel greets them with, “I am carrying. I am placing my placing my gun bag on the ground in front of me along with your credentials. While you pick-up them and the gun bag I will open the front door and wait inside to your left at the kitchen table. You will be able to see me at that bay window. My hands will be on the table. Good to meet you.”

Lionel places the gun bag and credentials on the ground, unlocks the front door, and sits in the kitchen so that he can be seen. He keys Sandi’s number from his favorite list. But holds at that point.

Shortly Agents Cribbs and Marcus enter the house and join Lionel at the kitchen table.

“Sorry guys but yesterday’s display in Durham has cast a new light on home protection.”

“We understand. It seems like we have an interesting many faceted operation into which you stumbled.

“First, the pistol that you recovered from one of perpetrator matches the finger prints of one of the persons detained at a hospital in Florence, SC with a gunshot wound. That particular pistol has ‘crime’ history attached to it.

“Second, there seems to be a tangential connection between the fire at NCSU, the deaths two young people in separate states, and a project called ‘Spinnaker’.

“Third, a recent gun battle seem to be the motivation by the first two items.

“Fourth, the ‘Spinnaker’ was funded and managed by a firm Catalina Software Engineering that no longer exists.

“Fifth, the moving company which loaded the possession of the young couple no longer exists.

“Lionel do you care to add anything?”

“I need to take a moment before I answer,” responds Lionel. He then texts the ‘tally-who’ all is well code to his wife. “I have copies of the inadvertent copy of made from the original micro-SD card

that I can provide to the various agencies and authorities. I also have a set of audio/video recordings that capture the process I went through to find the original micro-SD card, convert it to a usable format, extract a computer image from it, install the new image and analyze the contents.

“The number one rule to follow with anyone involved in the analysis is to use only computers that are not connected to the Internet in any manner: no WIFI, no ether net, no semaphore flags, no mirrors, no smoke signals. Whenever a new image is copied to a machine, the machine with the new copy now has an agent that is tracking keystrokes and mouse clicks. If the machine is connected the results are sent to anetswarf.com.

Just then Sandi enters from the garage. Lionel makes the introductions. Shortly the two agents and Lionel return to matters at the table.

“From the little bit I have been able to grasp it seems that the development team was duped into creating a means to penetrate at least one state’s election system absentee mailing process. The penetration included registering phantom citizens, obtaining absentee ballots, executing them, and submitting them via USPS.

“My limited analysis shows the feasibility of introducing 100K to 500 phantom citizens through a shell game of religious sanctuaries with legends for all as well as unique signatures.

“Now that I slept on it for a couple of nights and had some almost quiet drive time, my instinct tells me to look for other tactical pieces that when brought together would support a strategy of seeking chaos, confusion, and collapse.

“So, do you want to take a breather to see where the magic was revealed? I can start by showing how the micro-SD card was concealed. I can show the lucky breaks and the content that was discovered in the images that Frank left for us to follow.”

“That would be great but the ‘techies’ will have to talk the details with you later. We just want to secure the evidence and understand the order of discovery. So please save the deep technical discussion for later. It would breeze past us.

“Other than that please lead on,” instructs Agent Cribs .

As he hands Lionel his ThinkTank gun bag Agent Marcus states “Your Mark 23 has been unloaded and decocked.”

Lionel receives the Mark 23 and clears it.

“Please give me a moment so I can secure the Mark23. Then I will walk you to the workspace for the SD-card copies and the novel.”

“We will wait right here for you,” responds Agent Marcus.

After securing the Mark23 Lionel escorts the agents to his workspace. There he provides his remaining SD card copies to the agents. He also provides Frank and Stacy’s copy of a Song Yet Sung. Finally he provides copies of his audio/video recordings. Agent Marcus provides an inventory manifest of the artifacts that he has accepted for delivery from Lionel.

With that final piece of administration completed, the agents leave.

After the Agents depart Lionel turns to Sandi and says “It is time to make a field trip to the credit union.”

“What’s going on?”

“I don’t know. But I want to execute my Required Minimum Distribution now. And I want \$100K in my hands as soon as the credit union can deliver it.

“I think we need that flexibility, too. Let’s go,” agrees Sandi.

Entering the Credit Union Sandi asks for their normal account manager, Bryan. They explain that they want to execute the RMD and that they need \$100K for an opportunity to purchase a piece of property on Bald Head Island they found over the last weekend. The paperwork for both transactions is completed. They are asked to return at 4:40 PM to receive the cash.

Later in the day Lionel and Sandi return to the credit union. Upon entering Bryan’s office, Bryan places \$100K on his desk in a money bag. Lionel removes his US Army Soft Shell Cold Weather Jacket and then his Filson Fly Fishing Guide Vest.

Sandi double counts the cash and hands it to Lionel to double count stacking it on Bryan’s desk. Once it is all counted Lionel places it in the various pockets of his Filson Fishing Vest. Then he pulls a surplus the Cold Weather Jacket. Lionel rise with an extra twenty-two pounds of cash. Bryan shakes hands with Sandi and Lionel.

“Best of luck with the Bald Head Island property.” says Bryan at the close of the meeting.

When Sandi and Lionel reach the door, Sandi exits first. She drives the car to the front door where Lionel is watching. Sandi keeps the motor running, then unlocks the Mark 23, and waves to Lionel. Lionel enter the car and Sandi starts for home.

“With all the Mad magazine Spy versus Spy drama I wonder if the FBI are monitoring us yet?” quips Sandi.

“Let’s hope they are looking for the root cause of all this drama.”

About the same time as the ‘cowboys in white hats’ begin to look under stones for rot and worms, another meeting is underway in a parallel, evil universe.