

## Chapter 19: Going Remote

Lionel meets the new day in a quiet house and has a silent breakfast.

After breakfast Lionel thinks to himself, “This is M-Day or R-Day depending on whether you are moving or remote-ing in attitude. I guess I will pack the Bug. That’s the heavy stuff anyway.”

Working on the Bug load-out first Lionel places the ammunition, extra magazines, cleaning equipment, HK USC-UMP format 45ACP, HK Mark 23 45ACP, S&W MP15 5.56mm modified with to use gas piston, an old Ruger M77 Mark II .234 Winchester, optics, tactical lights, Leica Rangefinder Binoculars 8x56, Nikon D70S with AF-S 18-200mm lens, Sony SplashProof video camera, and range bag. A quick check of tier pressure brings the tires to 32psi. For good measure the trickle battery charger and extension electrical cable are added. Jumpers and road tools are already loaded as is a solar battery charger.

Now he begins to pack the Acura with clothes for two weeks casual and a week of field duty. Bread, peanut butter, unopened blueberry spread, cereals, crackers, eight cans of black beans , eight cans of baked beans, six pack of chicken soup, six pack of chilli, plasticware, paper plates, paper bowls, hot and cold cups, a mess of paper towels, toilet paper, soaps, etc. are boxed or bagged then toted to the Acura. Room is left for a regular ice cooler and a Pelican 70qt Elite cooler.

“I will pack a load of books for reading around the coolers just before we leave,” Lionel finalizes the loading plan.

The out loading of the Bug and Acura just about consumes the remainder of the morning.

After lunch Lionel begins to load the coolers. A short time after 1:30PM the FBI cell phone rings.

“Yes?” queries Lionel.

“Agent Marcus here. We are located behind the Crunch Gym of he Creedmoor Road Shopping Center. Drive up this way to pickup Agent Howe in the Acura. We will be waiting.”

Exiting the garage in the Acura, Lionel proceeds to the back of the Creedmoor Road Shopping Center. He picks up Agent Howe and returns to the house. In short order Lionel finishes packing.

“Before we start our trip we have stops to make,” instructs Agent Howe. “The first is the at Exxon Station on the corner of Lynn Road and Creedmoor for gas and diesel. Then we stop next door at the Jiffy Lube for a sweep of the two vehicles to insure they are clean of unwanted tracking devices.”

“And to add a couple,” quips Lionel. “I do have some frozen items in the coolers so we can not dill-tally too much.”

“Let’s do this” Agent Howe says as she heads to the garage.

“Just a moment, I need to use the restroom,” halts Lionel.

Inside the house on his pre-paid he texts Terry, “Garage side door unlock. House key in garage fridge under birdseed bag on door shelf. Extra garage door opener in house fridge. Opener code on side of garage door 7741.”

Lionel flushes the toilet and washes his hands. He then starts the Bug and joins the parade to the Exxon and Jiffy Lube.

The road trip to 253 Marlin Lane. Vass, NC is uneventful. Crystal Lake is just a bucolic and quiet as it was in the 1970’s and 1980’s. The Acura and Bug are parked around back on the grass. Lionel and Agent Howe begin unpacking. A casually dressed dog walker approaches the almost rustic house on Marlin Lane.

“How do you like the FBI accommodations so far,” quips Agent Marcus. “It at least gives me a chance to be walk McGee in the country. He is really a useless hound except for cover assignments like this.”

“You carrying?” retorts Lionel.

“I always carry. FBI agents can’t leave home without it.”

“No, I mean ‘doggie bags’. Or is the FBI going to clean my shoes and the floors.”

“You got me on that one,” acknowledges Agent Marcus. “But business-wise we need to have a meeting at 1730 at Ed’s Guns. They have a classroom building around back that they sublet to Asymmetric Services sometimes. The classroom also has parking behind it away from easy Observation from US1. So that structure is rented for the next three weeks by Asymmetric. There will be a briefing and barbecue. The dress is conceal carry casual. It should wrap-up about 1930. See you two then.”

“Well anyway it is good to meet you neighbor. Thanks for the invite. My personal FBI agent and I will be happy to attend. But first we have to negotiate the bedroom – bath protocols.”

“Don’t spend too much time worrying about that. Agent Howe is listed as working a hazardous undercover assignment. She is paid to sleep and wash as the situation dictates. Plus she won’t be here all the time. We two other agents with approximately the same physical appearance. We also have a few male visitors scheduled to rotate in/out.

“Since you are more or less the permanent resident here, the FBI feels that it would be best for you to be assigned to the master bedroom and bath. We will explain later tonight.

“Until 1730 McGee and I bid you farewell.

Lionel returns to unpacking the two vehicles with Agent Howe. The coolers have been unpacked from the Acura. Lionel begins to unpack the heavy toys from the Bug. The master bedroom is easy to recognize. It is to the right in a u-shaped house. It is all the way down at the end. He takes a look at the gun safe. The FBI left the combination in an envelope taped to the front. Inside Lionel places the M&P15, USC-UMP, 243, and Mark 23. The next couple of loads are all ammo. Once that has been stowed he locks the safe and places the combination card in his conceal carry bag.

The tools, range bag, cleaning supplies are then brought in and placed along the wall in the master bedroom.

Then he joins Agent Howe completing the unpacking of the Acura. Since they are closing in on 1600 hr he places the clothing and books along the wall in the master bedroom. Then the two of them complete the unpacking of the Acura's non-perishable groceries and household items that Lionel threw in the car in Raleigh.

After reaching the point of diminishing returns he asks, "Have you ever been to Ed's Gun, Agent Howe?"

"Please call me and the other two female agents 'Rose' when we are alone or you need to introduce us to someone outside of our security perimeter.

"No I have not been to Ed's. Is it anything special?"

"Okay Rose. But please just call me Lionel or Geek or Heh-you.

"No it is a gun store with great pricing. It has been around since I returned from Texas in 1981. I have purchased a number of guns there over the years at Ed's. With the Pandemic and supply shortage they have been having trouble maintain a stocked inventory.

"We could go down a bit early to see what's new. It should not take more than five-ten minutes."

"Sure, let's go. I'll drive if you do not mind."

"Fine with me, lets book, book."

They board the Acura and head toward US1 make a hard right and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile or so from US1 where they make a right.

About two miles down the road Lionel starts point towards the right front saying, "On the right front up the road you'll see the white background sign with orange "Ed's Guns". The sign is about fifteen feet up. There are two entrance drives. Try to make the first. Start slowing. There you go. Now go around back of the red brick store and you'll see a white aluminum and sheet metal class room. Drive around behind it and park. The rest of the crew should arrive in a few minutes."

For the next twenty minutes Rose and Lionel wander through the two sections of Ed's Guns. The Main Room and the Gun Room. The Gun Room still seems a little light on inventory and ammunition. They do have Federal 100 grain .243 WIN, so Lionel buys five cartridge boxes. Then he checks the reloading supplies to see if the Berry .243 copper clad bullets have arrived. Which they had not.

He places the five cartridge boxes near the register and continues to spend time. Rose is off talking to one of the gun salesmen. As the hands of the clock approach 1625 Lionel completed the purchase transaction. He waits for Rose in the Main Room. She appears shortly and they walk to the classroom.

A small crowd has gathered on the backside of the classroom to watch the barbecue-doings. As Lionel and Agent Howe approach Agent Marcus greets them.

"Join us for an ice cold lemon seltzer water," greets Agent Marcus. "How is the working couple?"

“We’re fine,” retorts Agent Howe. “Are you doing the burgers again. The last time we did this we had to cancel the stakeout because half the crew came down with food poisoning.”

“Nah, tonight we are having fresh take out from the re-built Pik-N-Pak barbecue in Carthage. Agent Wilson driving and Agent Olinis riding shotgun. They should be here any time now. It is not that wild pigs roast you girls shot in Arkansas. Pik-N-Pak have great pulled pig and pulled chicken, hush-puppies, potato salad, coleslaw, and banana pudding. We had to wait until 1700 hr that is when they pull the meat from the the ‘barbe’.”

The banter goes back and forth and the crowd grows and shrinks as agents and whoever move about the gathering. Everyone is softball casual except two guys from the US Attorneys Office. Agent Howe explains that they flew in from DC earlier today for this meeting. She suggest it could be interesting. She also mentions that there is one US Marshals Service representative but dressed casually. She motions towards four casually dressed men with crew-cuts whom she does not recognize.

As Agent Wilson arrives with the barbecue eats, Agents Olin and Marcus gather helpers to move the dining inside. The agents make work in setting-up the chow line. Agent Marcus introduces the two attorneys from DC to Lionel and invites them and Lionel to start the line moving. Then he invites the crew-cuts and US Marshal to join the line. By that time the FBI Agents are representing themselves in line. Chow is consumed and chatter ensues.

Agent Marcus has Lionel sit with him at a table with Agent Howe, the two US Attorneys, and two female agents who vaguely appear to look similar to Agent Howe. Agent Howe introduces the two female agents as Agent Faraday and Agent Moore. Informal table talk continues as everyone works through the Pik-N-Pak supper spread.

As a few begin to work their way to the serving tables for seconds on banana pudding Agent Marcus rises to open the meeting.

“Feel free to partake in additional eats as I start this meeting

“Welcome everyone to busy Vass, NC and Lakeview also know as ‘ole Muddy’. From this point forward everything but the menu is top secret. Agents Faraday, Moore, and Marlowe will pass among the tables handing-out an affidavit for you to read and sign acknowledging that your understanding of this meeting’s need for containment of what is discuss in this building tonight and in the various break-out meetings. The meeting will pause now while we read, affirm, and collect. A copy of your affirmation along with a stamped endorsement by the US DOJ representative will be handed to you at the end of tonight’s meeting.

After having collect the affidavits Agent Maruc resumes, “We are gather here this evening for a general meeting. Once items of a general nature have been discussed, we will break into select sub-teams to hold compartmentalized discussions.

“General situation is this. Lionel, please raise your hand. Thank you. Lionel is a civilian who has the role of technical linchpin. Basically, he made a serendipitous discovery of a large conspiracy to introduce large masses of fraudulent virtual citizens voting in controlled blocks. The objective does not seem to favor one political party but to control Congressional direction and legislation designed to destabilize the US Government and our culture.

“This is a ruthless enterprise. We believe that at least three people have met untimely deaths and one person, Lionel, may have been exposed to hired hit teams.

“The application and the database was developed across the South East by a network of software engineers working on what they thought was a benign project to help test a states voting process vulnerability. Unknown to the members of the software engineers their every digital movement made on or associated with the project, let’s call it Sunfish, was being tracked. We believe that triggered actions to remove three players as well as to cause an arson event to destroy potential evidence. The interesting thing is that Sunfish had been launch and tested as a prototype in an election and found to be sound. At that point the operational part: application, database, front and back end were taken off-shore to a ‘safe compound’. Out-sourced off-shore, if you will.

“We have a multi-prong operation underway, that would be all of us. Round of applause, please.

“Tonight we will not go deep into details during the general meeting. But the decision was made to attempt ‘a sting operation’. What has been done is we have contact with the ‘safe compound’ operational director with an bid to buy a user license to replicate and scale up Sunfish on the West Coast States. There has been enough interest shown by the ‘safe compound’ that we know the Bit Coins we placed in an escrow account has been verified.

“That’s everything I have of a general blue marble view of our operation.

“We are now going to start the sub-meetings. The discussion leader of Session 1.A you have the floor.

Agent Howe rises, “As I read your names please join me up front here. Lionel Jones, Agent Faraday, Agent Moore, Agent Olin, Agent Marlowe,.....five other agents are called forward.

“Okay please follow me for a short walk.”

Agent Marcus instructs the remaining individuals to stay seated to await the beginning of Session 1.B.

Agent Howe leads the members of Session 1.A to a smaller classroom with more than enough seating for everyone.

Agent Howe opens the meeting. “Session 1.A is concerned with the health and safety of Lionel while he is at the Ponderosa. We are members of his security team. For the ladies each of us will be called Rose while on this detail. The guys will allow us girls to take time out of our rotation occasionally.

The per diem, mileage, and weekly report needs to be filed each Monday morning. As such I think we should scheduled regular changing of the guard each Sunday at 1800 hr. That way having an extra vehicle visit will seem more casual.

“We feel that we pulled Lionel out of Raleigh at an auspicious time. Plus with the ‘commonality’ of his last name in Raleigh there is very low risk to his extended family.

“While this detail is running we need to be armed. Gun safes have been provide for storing weapons and ammo. The detail’s gun safe is in the family room just off the hallway leading to the bedrooms. Lionel has been provided with his own gun safe. He is encouraged to employ his conceal carry card.

“When you go off campus we will go in pairs unless there is an emergency. If there is an emergency use you FBI cell phone ‘MAYDAY’ icon. If there is a need to evacuate the Ponderosa on Matthews Road, we have three rally points identified. Which one you pick depends upon the direction that offers the best chance of escape. The rally points are: behind the post office, behind the Lakeview Presbyterian Church, in the empty lot at the apex of the right turn of Haynes Road.

“Be advised that the ‘reaction team’ will be monitoring inside and outside activities. What is said or seen may become evidence in future litigation. The Acura and Bug have tracking devices and dashboard audio/video recording capability.

“In case someone is watching we need to insure that only one of us girls appears outside at a time.

“The FBI has fortified the architecture a bit with bullet resistant glass and brick veneer. This house is not a fort. But it can be defended long enough for the Reaction Team to arrive.

“Agent Olin has loaded the Ponderosa’s entertainment center with plenty of audio/video to help make our stay a bit homier.

“If you learn of a personal emergency that demands your departure, contact Agent Marcus. He will either send someone from the Reaction Team to pair with Lionel or provide a ‘Rose’ if one is available at that time. Stand your post until relieved.

“Because of the need to compartmentalize and to maintain a tight lid, Lionel and I will be departing shortly. Agent Marcus will sound a warning bell shortly. When it sounds, please return to the main room where we ate. Session 2 will start shortly and you will join a new Session 2 group.”

The warning bell sounds. All the agents return to the main room.

Agent Howe waves to Agent Marcus. She motions for Lionel to follow. Agent Howe goes to the table where the DOJ representative has setup shop.

“Agent Howe and Lionel Jones,” she reports. The DOJ representative locates the two affidavits she had signed earlier.

“Let’s split.” Agent Howe says.

Agent Howe and Lionel return to their Ponderosa for the evening.

On the way back to the Ponderosa Lionel checks for the ‘boots’ message. He confirms receipt and sends ‘shine’.

Meanwhile meetings continue in the classroom building behind Ed’s Guns.

Session 2.A: Agent Faraday, Agent Moore, Agent Marlowe,.....five other agents from the earlier Session 1.A (minus Agent Howe, Agent Olin, and Mr. Jones reconvene in the same room as before.

Agent Faraday takes the lead by announcing, “We have completed our meetings for tonight. Agent Marcus will have the compound duty roster available in the project folder within the next two weeks. He will announce it via email.

“Other than that we need to remain in the building until Agent Howe calls me to let me know they have arrived at the Ponderosa. We needed to have Mr. Jones to participate in the opening of the meetings. But he has no need to know what the topics are that are being presented in the next room.”

Session 2.B: Starts with the addition of Agent Olin.

We are going to continue to use the term ‘Sunfish’ for the remainder of the meeting. The physical hub or body of the Sunfish operation has been located electronically. Please give it up for our cousins in the NSA and CIA. Some of our associates resident in-country have located the ‘safe compound’. The ‘safe compound’ includes operational facilities and living quarters of apparently differing status. A small local rent-a-cop plus a minimal strength mercenary team is active as site security. The region is touted as an elite vacation locale. There is a concrete airfield about fifty miles away. It has nice coastal beaches drawing the young money and social elite.

“Travel brochures will be handed-out shortly. Take one only if you are interested in a short temporary duty assignment. Sorry, just a little FBI humor.

“Moving along, now. The NSA intelligence contribution has been to advise us of a ‘readiness review’ that will be taking place shortly. Apparently NSA heard the ‘drones and worker bees’ planning menus and entertainment for executive level visitors. Our plan calls for inserting a close surveillance team in-country. The goal of that team is to identify ‘executive players’ and to collect as much content as possible. The close surveillance team will be in place and operational a few days before the ‘readiness review’ attendees arrive. The expected date for the on-site Sunfish executive ‘readiness review’ team is 2/10/2022.

“While that is underway the ‘sting’ will continue to seek a stronger contact with decision-makers for the Sunfish project. We are preparing a crew to act as an executive committee if we find a need to have a face-to-face. The committee is from a dummy corporation that has a legend of property, small capital for startups, and Bit Coin investments using funds from abroad and US institutions.

“We are also tracking activity at our ‘sting’ bank to try to determine who has interest in the bank’s accounts.

“We have active investigation ongoing in the states which were impacted in the earlier Sunfish testing. We have identified the fraudulent, ‘virtual’ citizens. As well as their original legends and voter profile. We will work with the appropriate involved states’ authorities once the ‘sting’ has been strung.

“Untying the political knot that Sunfish caused will be left to higher pay grades than ours. That is why the affidavits you signed tonight required an agreement of twenty years of silence from all participants. We want this to be like Area 54.

“If this ever goes to court we will need Mr. Jones’ testimony to link the murders to the perpetrators of the Sunfish scheme and appropriate stipulation to protect national security and extraordinary rendition that might be required.

“Now you have the 100,000 foot view of our project.

“Good hunting and keep your yaps shut. Good night.

“Pick-up a copy of your affidavit from DOJ rep as you go out the door tonight,” closes Agent Marcus.

The troops head towards the DOJ rep who is being assisted by Agent Faraday and Agent Howe.

Agent Marcus holds in place for the farewell to the troops. Once the troops have depart the four team leaders reassemble for quick summary.

“I think things went well,” says Agent Marcus. “I believe the participants are committed to this inter-agency project. At our level we are using the name Dorsalfin. The in-country surveillance of the ‘safe compound’ meeting in task force is called ‘Trawler’. The banking side is ‘Pikes’. Any approved extraordinary rendition task force will be ‘Flyball’. The sting task force is known as “Nutty”.

“The Flyball team will be housed at Camp Darby in Vicenza, Italy. They will go operation only if we can learn that the ‘head’ is present at the compound and appropriate approval from a ‘higher pay grade is obtained.

“Are there any questions?” finishes Agent Marcus.

A question is raised, “I detected the presence of Asymmetric Services personnel the meeting. How are they involved?”

“They are involve in three ways. First they are providing a backup response team locally to address threats against our witness within five minutes of call-out. Second in the city where the ‘safe compound’ is located they guarantee a response team buffer within a thousand yards of the compound is if it should be needed until assets from Camp Darby can be on-hand.

“Finally, they also provide extraordinary rendition capabilities in case someone needs to become a “guest of the US Government”.

“You remember the old ‘Bob Newhart’ show with Larry, Darrel, and Darrel. They are the “brothers who will do anything for a buck.”