Open Frequency

By Steven King

Chapter 1

Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The three-Humvee military convoy traveled across the long dry highway. Sand blew across the poorly paved road and filled in the bumps hiding them from the drivers.

“Sorry for the rough ride Mr. Black,” the young marine charged with Judson Black’s safety said in the front passenger’s seat said over his shoulder. “These transports are not built for comfort.”

“Not to worry Corporal. I don’t think there is going to be a comment card with a suggestion box at the end of the trip. Actually, this is not the worst road I have been on.”

“What was the worst sir?”

Judson leaned forward and tried to speak over the sound of the all-terrain tires on the road and the roar of the v12 engine. He was seated behind the driver with a Private 1st Class to his right. “In every country I have been to I have to say Haiti has the worst roads.”

“If you don’t mind my asking, how many countries have you been to? So I can know if your are an expert on transport infrastructure?”

“Well I am obviously not a member of the Corp of Engeneers but I have ridden on roads in 23 countries.”

They had a long ride ahead of them to get back to the Forward Operations Base or FOB as Judson had learned to call it. Judson was storyteller and always enjoyed an opportunity to share a good one with anyone who would listen and here he had a captive audience of three. To bad the eight other marines in the other two vehicals could not listen.

“It’s funny, back when my wife and I worked and travel together, she was the writer and I was the photographer, we went to do a story in the rural areas of the tropical island before the earthquake. We took a four-seater Cesna airplane from Port A Prince to some small village and there was a small jeep to take is the next four hours. “We were jerked, bounced, lifted, vibrated and bumped all across that SUV. When we arrived at the small guest house I felt like my legs never stopped shaking from the vibrations and my butt was bruised. That night, while trying to stay cool under the fan, my wife told me something that would change our lives.”

“I know where this is going,” Crp. Jason Beasley irrupted.

“You are probably right. She said, ‘Judson, I think I am pregnant.’

“I knew it. I have heard those words twice myself.”

“Well, I was not shocked because we had been trying but it had not been long. I was thrilled, excited and a little scared. And the next thing that ran through my mind was, ‘We are going to have to get an airlift to get her out of here because as bumpy as those roads are it can’t be good for the baby.”

The group laughed. Actually all four of them in the Humvee were fathers. There were six kids between the four of them.

“Well you guys know I was pretty ignorant as to the size of the baby at that time but all I could think about was protecting mom and child.”

Crp. Beasley continued the conversation, “When I heard those words I was 18 and I was much more scared than excited. I had no idea what to do. Then a few months later when they told me she was a girl, I was even more scared. ‘What was I to do with a girl?’ I did not know a thing about hair, dresses or baby dolls. But the day she was born and I saw them place my little Eden on Beth’s chest, the tears just came. I am not ashamed to admit I cried like a girl. And now, I can braid hair and dress a Barbie with the best of them!”

Each Marine traded stories and of the defining moments of being a father and the trip went by quickly. As the conversation drew to a close, each father had his children on his mind and they all sat quietly watching the road mountains pass in the distance. It would be the last pleasant thought Cpl. Beasley would have.

Chapter 2

The first Humvee in the convoy struck the roadside bomb and Judson saw the explosion. The forced of the blast threw the vehicle and it’s passengers high in to the air above Judson’s field of view. The driver of the middle vehicle, Judson’s ride, reacted quickly and pulled hard to the right slamming on the breaks when the second explosion blasted underneath the passenger’s engine compartment. This flipped the five tone armored car into the air like a bottle top landing upside down twenty yards away.

Judson Black heard nothing. His eardrums were blown. The world moved in slow motion. He was covered in black grit and blood, but not sure if the blood was his or his friends’ Judson looked around but was highly disoriented and could not even figure out where the other Marines were. He tried to see if they were OK but he could not find them. He was trapped in a twisted heap of metal hanging in his seat by his seat belt upside down.

In a matter of moments a Marine appeared outside the metal cage he was strapped in. Judson could see his moth moving but could not hear or understand what he was saying. He pulled his seven inch field knife from it’s sheath and cut his seatbelt. In only took a few seconds for the sharp blade the rip through the woven belt. Then he carefully and methodically pulled him through what might have been the passenger door. He pushed his rifal out of the way to his hip and threw Judson over his shoulder. Judson watched the blood poor out his sleeves and drip from his hands as his hero carried him to the safety of the trailing Humvee. Judson did not feel the large metal shard that pierced his back. Somehow they loaded all eight injured Marines either inside the Humvee or on top. The drive to took it slow as the three rescuers stood on the bumper hanging on with one hand and pointing their rifles with the other.

Lying on his back, Judson watched his protectors out the window looking across the top half of Cprl. Beasley who died immediately in the second explosion.

*Dear Jesus, please be with these injured men. Heal them as only you can. Protect my heroes from further casualties and I pray for Beasley’s girls. Care for them*. Amen

Judson passed out from the loss of blood before they made it to the FOB.

Chapter 3

XX, Germany

Judson woke in a hospital room on the U.S. military base in XX, Germany. It looked like a hospital in the states and Judson knew he was not in a field unit. Sleeping in the char beside him was his beautiful red-headed wife.

“Honey.”

She awoke quickly and leaped to him as her tears fell. It was not the first tears she had shed and Judson could tell by looking at her swollen eyes.

“It’s Ok Baby. You are Ok.”

“Where are we?”

“Germany.”

“You flew to Germany? Where are the boys?”

“With your mom and dad. They are will be here tomorrow.”

“So you just jumped on a plane and flew to Germany to see me?”

“Did you think I was going to wait around sitting at home?”

“Guess that is not your style. Becides, you are always looking for an excuse to stay in a nice hotel room.”

The two laughed and held each other before Judson asked the question he had been afraid to ask.

“What are the doctors saying?”

“They said you should make a full recovery. The shrapnel missed your spine by two inches so you will be able to walk soon. If you did not have 900 stiches in your stomach and back you could probably walk now. They kept you asleep for a while to heal. You needed some rest.”

“So is that the only way you can get me to rest these days is to drug me?” he said jokingly.

“Something like that… Everyone’s been praying for you. Our church has been so supportive. Our inbox is filled with prayers and messages of support.” Brent took me to the airport while Tilly kept the boys till your parents got there.

“Once the doctors said they were going to bring you out of sedation I told your Mom to bring the boys.”

“That’s good. I can’t wait to see them.”

“Your co-workers have been emailing. There is a link to the article about what happened on the Post homepage and they call me every 6 hours to update the company blog about your status. Tom Kennedy has called several times. He is praying for you too.”

“All this fuss over a journalist getting hit. How many times has this happened and it was not even on the homepage during the overnight hours, much less a constant presence… Amy…What happened to the boys in the Humvee with me?”

“Two of them made it and are here,” she said as she stroked his short dark hair. “One did not.”

Judson knew who did not make it. He remembered that from the ride to the FOB. He did not remember the more than thirty field medics, nurses, surgeons and flight doctors that had cared for him over the last six days.

“So they put a journalist in a military hospital. Wonder who I owe for that one?”

Chapter 4

Washington, D.C.

Nine Months Later

Judson was back in the Washington Post newsroom. He had been given a desk job for a while, editing video from the wires and other reporters but that was not what he enjoyed. Judson was a field guy who missed the hunt of the story. He had enjoyed his time off and the time this new position allowed for him to spend with his boys but deep inside he missed his old job. He wondered if there was something wrong with him.

*Why do I enjoy airports? Who does that? I love my boys, love my wife but why do I feel the need to go?*

He had promised Amy he was done with conflict coverage. No more wars, no more hot-zones, no more volunteering for dangerous stories. It was a promise he made willingly out of love for his wife and two sons and one he intended to keep. He wanted to be there when they grew up much more than being a war correspondent. There were other people who could pick that up. Younger guys, without families to come home too. But he need to get back into the field. Not combat but reporting.

He started working his Washington contacts looking for stories where there were none. He called old sources that had moved up in the Pentagon. He pored through company fillings of major companies and look for small discrepancies. And he found a few things. He worked on several videos in the Washington area and got back on the streets. It was not the same as before but it was much better than an edit bay all day looking at someone else’s footage.

Judson did not really have a beat or an editor for that matter. He was one of the few in the newsroom that reported directly to the executive editor of the newspaper. He had earned this special privilege reporting stories that brought attention to the newspaper and won awards. This was not a privilege he had asked for but it just evolved as the relvolving door of editors turned over the years.

Judson was different than most journalist at this level who have an arragont air about them. Judson always felt his obligations were to first his God, who had put him in this place and second was his subjects. They outranked any contest, byline or editor’s ambition. Awards were not Judson’s thing and he was one of the few journalist who did not look for his byline on the homepage. He felt reporters held themselves in too high regard and the awards had become far to important in the journalism industry. Reporters shooting to make a name for themselves would seek glory that could sometimes come at the expense of truth. This was not true for all journalists but there was a motive behind every reporter that was for sure different than money.

For Judson, that motivation was more of a calling rather than just a job. He believed his job was to give a voice to the voiceless, to use a his videos to shed light and show injustices. He was not some superhero from a comic book or Hollywood movie but he did think of himself as having a duty. A duty that impacted each story he did.

The country was recovering from the banking crisis and there was a lot of money that had been hastily thrown around, most with good intentions but with that much money at stake and available, greed is something people have trouble pushing aside. Judson had read a book a behavioral economist at The University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The book intrigued him and he thought the professor was on to something. Chapel Hill was only a four-hour drive from D.C. Judson called Dr. Heidi Kaminski and set up an interview. She did not teach on Fridays so Judson decided to make it a weekend getaway to the small southern town. He got a recommendation of a place to stay from Dr. Kaminski and then got on the phone to his friend Jason Small.

Jason worked at the State Department and his wife Missy worked on Capital Hill. They had been great friends in their DINKS, Dual Income No Kids, days but were even closer after having kids. It was if they were in the toughest job they had ever had, parenting, and need each other more to make it through.

“Jason, West Africa Desk,” Jason answered his direct line.

“Hello Deputy Director, how are things on the Ivory Coast?”

“As termoiltous as normal.” Jason knew this call was a call from a friend and off the record. They had a standing agreement that Judson initiated years ago that everything was off the record unless he called and said something to the nature of, “Mr. Small, this is Judson Black from The Washington Post.”

“Are you expecting a coup this evening?” asked Judson.

“I don’t think so but it is Monday which give them five days in the heat of May so you never know.”

“Do you think you and Missy could watch the boys this weekend so I can take Amy on a getaway.”

“Let me talk to Missy first but I don’t think that is a problem this weekend.”

“OK. Let me know and then you guys plan one in a month or so and we will keep Henry.”

“Sounds like a great plan, where are you going.”

“I have some work in Chapel Hill, N.C. so I thought we would make a weekend out of it.”

“Great, I will call Missy and text you back.”

While Judson waited on the confirmation text from Jason he looked up the Carolina Inn. This has been the professor’s recommendation and it seemed perfect for the weekend. It was an old southern Inn right in the hart of the downtown, across the street from the campus with lots of restaurants in walking distance.

*Perfect!*

A few moments later Jason gave the all clear from Missy. Judson booked a King size suite for Friday, Saturday and they would drive back on Sunday. After getting the email confirmation he called the hotel and heard a wonderful female sothern accent.

“Carolina Inn this is Barbara, how can I help you today?”

“Hello Barbara, I just booked a room and I would like to see if you can have something special waiting in the room when we arrive?”

“Sure, I can take care of that for you. The strawberries down here are delicious, how about some dipped in chocolate?”

“Perfect!”

Amy like the romantic idea of a suprize but actually she liked planning a trip more than being surprised at the last minute. This was the prefect situation. He could surprise her while giving her four days to plan. He printed off the email confirmation, folded it up and placed it in an envelope. He wrote her name on it and put it in his jacket pocket as he headed out of the office for the day.

By Friday morning Amy had already found more restaurants to visit then they had meals in the three days and a few other things she wanted to do. They dropped the boys off at the Small’s house in Arlington and got on I95 headed south.

They arrived just before lunch at the place Amy had put into the GPS app on her phone.

They pulled into an old gas station that is now a small lunchtime grill that was famous for their BLT sandwiches. Judson loved bacon and fresh tomatoes so this was a perfect first stop to the trip. A brass bell rang as they entered the local stop. They walked across the hardwood floors and picked up a menu. There were several options for sandwiches but Judson went with a Single. The locals don’t order a BLT, they order a Single, Double or Triple stack of bacon lettuce and tomatoes on toasted sourdough. The unspoken letters of BLT is just assumed.

They got their sandwiches and Judson added sweet tea while Amy drank milk from a local dairy.

“I was thinking we would drive out to this dairy for some homemade ice cream,” she said holding up the bottle.

The two enjoyed the sandwiches and made their way to the hotel. The interview was scheduled for 2:30 so they had just enough time to check in before Judson had to leave his bride.

The hotel was better than expected. They pulled up to the antebellum front porch where the bellmen took their bags and valet took care of their car. Inside was high ceilings with detailed crown molding and walls formally and tastefully decorated with southern artwork. Amy explored the lobby while Judson took care of checking in.

“Mr. King, we have everything setup as you requested,” Barbara whispered as to not give away a surprise. “Also, after I recognized your name I put you on the third floor where we have the Carolina Journalism Hall of Fame.

“You recognized my name?” Judson Black was a known journalist in the D.C. area but he did no think his reputation would have carried this far south and be recognized by a twenty year-old college student.

“I am a journalism student here at UNC. We studied about you in class.” Judson was surprised and not sure what to say so a simple “Thank you followed.”

They made their way through the Journalism Hall of Fame, apparently each floor has it’s own discipline where the famous members of that field that attended the oldest state school in the country.

They opened the white door to see a beautiful southern-style room complete with a large white and brass-footed tub. On the bed was the tray of chocolate covered strawberries with the words, “Welcome Judson and Amy” written in chocolate. Amy was thrilled and showed her excitement by jumping into his arms, holding his cheeks in her hands and kissing him firmly. This was going to be a very relaxing and much needed weekend.

Chapter 5

Judson washed his face while his wife started a bath in the deep tub. She drew a paperback book from her purse and began to undress behind him and she waited for him to see her in the mirror before saying, “Sure you don’t want to just stay her and join me for a bath?”

She was only teasing him. She knew this meeting was the reason they were down her and did not mind him going. She was going to enjoy her hot bath in the peace and quite without any interruptions. Judson gave her a long, slow kiss and said, “I guess it will have to wait till I get back.”

“But I might be hungry when you get back and be ready for dinner,” she teased. She already had a plan for his return.

Dr. Kemiski was an attractive woman in her late thirties. Her office was more organized than most professors but you could tell she was busy. The books that held her name on the spine were on the shelf behind her.

“Welcome Judson. Thanks for driving all this way. We could have done this on the phone,” she said as they shook hands.

“Thank you Dr. Kemiski, but I made it a getaway weekend for my wife and I.

“Great, but call me Heidi. We are less formal than some of the other schools on this campus.”

They talked some small talk about Chapel Hill, D.C. and her home state of Michigan before getting into the interview. Judson had brought his camera but did not pull it out. This more of a meeting to see if he could help her find stories in places he had not looked before. Her research showed in a very tangible way that humans were at the core, dishonest and when given enough opportunities would cheat or steal. To many this might sound strange but to Judson this was not an unfamiliar idea. Fundamentally, he believed that man had been doing wrong since Adam and Eve and had a nature to want to disobey. Secondly, he has seen far too much hurful actions by powerfull people during his years in the field though there was something to her research.

“I am most interested in your research reguarding financial choices.”

She began to explain that 92% of the people she tested when given an unmonitored situation would eventually steal a few dollars if they thought they would not get caught. “No matter the religious afflilation, age, sex, ethnicity or occupation.Almost everyone eventually cheated in order to gain just $5.”\

“If this is the case then why is there not more stealing going on?”

“Because we have laws that are enforced and they keep a check on most people. But when a person believes they will not get caught, they begin to steal in small amounts, justifiying it in their mind that they deserve it and then it grows and grows. This is what you see in politicians with power and business men with money. This was a major contributing factor in the calapse of Wall Street. Un checked greed.”

Chapter 5

Jakarta, Indonesia

Judson Black wrote in the back of a black sedan he and his local fixer, Eddy had hired to take them the six miles from Judson’s hotel to a high-rise office building in the center of Jakarta. The traffic was horrible, as it seemed to always be in Jakarta and it took over an hour to get there. Every few minutes as they sat still on the busy streets in the comfort of air conditioning while horns seems to be blowing constantly, Judson checked his watch. Judson was never late and though he anticipated the traffic, and left two hours before their appointment he continued to count the minutes.

Judson was an experienced international journalist. He had worked in more than 20 countries through out Europe, Asia and the Middle East over the last six years. Before moving overseas he was a video journalist and later became the Director of Video for The Washington Post. Right out of college he had the opportunity to learn storytelling from one of the best in the industry, Tom Kenned. Tom had been the directory of photography for National Geographic before moving to The Post and pioneered the concept of short documentary storytelling on the web. Over the years, Judson developed his skills received better and better assignments with many overseas in tough situations like hanging out with Talliban fighters in Bora Bora region of Afganastan or tracking down stories Pynyangue, North Korea. But today Judson was going to be interviewing a high-class international business name.

XX was the owner of the fourth largest airline in Asia and was number 19 on Forbes’ list of the World’s Wealthiest Individuals. Judson was dressed respectfully, ironed jeans, dark dress shoes, white dress shirt and a blue sports coat. Judson wanted to dress nice for the interview but always tried to dress one step down from how he thought the person he was going to interview would be dressed. This made sure the subject would not fell awkward and five them the subconscious feeling of having the upper hand. Judson also liked interviewing in his go-to jacket. For one, it hid his sweaty armpits that always occurred when he workd and second he just felt comfortable in this jacked that had traveld so far with him.

The black taxi finally pulled into the circle in front of the 46 floor tower. The driver helped Eddy unload the gear from the back while Judson counted the money for the Fare.

“It still seems like Monopoly money to me no matter how long I am in country and how many times I visit,” said Judson as he tried to find the right amount to pay. “There are too many zeros.”

He paid the driver, without overpaying too much and they walked up the granite stairs to step through the automatic glass doors. The large office building had electronic turnstiles like you would be entering the Subway in D.C. though shinier. People moved through steadily, swiping their access cards on the red light while security guards in pressed black suits watched. Eddy approached the main desk and presented Judson’s business card.

*Judson Black*

*Freelance Video Journalist*

“We are here to see Mr. XX with Asia Atlantic.”

“Just a moment,” the guard answered as he looked at his computer screen.

“And your name sir,?”

“Eddy YY.”

“I need to see your ID card and Mr. Black’s passport.”

While Eddy produced the documents the man called presumably the 46th floor.

“Wait here and someone will be down shortly. I need to x-ray your bags. You can receive your documents before you leave.”

Judson never liked leaving his passport with anyone. Over the years he had made a few enemies with stories he had run and always felt the need to be able to get out of a country as fast as possible which is impossible to do without a passport. But he also knew the profile of the many they were meeting.

Eddy and Judson placed the tripod bag, audio gear and Judson’s personal camera bag on the best to be searched. They took a good look at everything, unlike most places in Jakartat where security seems to be more of a showpiece rather than a line of defense.

They stepped through the medal detectors and then a man wiped Judson with the metal detecting wand. He reached in Judson’s pocket and removed his LeatherMan Tool which included a four inch blade among other tools.

“I am sorry sir, you will need to leave that here.”

“No problem.”

Two guards in suits stepped off the elevator to meet Judson and Eddy.

The security guard at the desk gave them a nod of assurance and one of the men said, “Mr. Black, we will take you to the conference room where you will meet Mr. XX.”

“Thank you,” Judson said as he picked up the camera bag and Eddy grabbed the tripod and other bag.

“You have a lot less gear and less people than most TV people arrive with,” said the guard as he held the elevator.

“I like to travel light and work alone,” said Judson, “except for my partner here ofcource.”

The two smilled and made eye contact but Eddy knew Judson liked to work alone. He he did not need a native speaker, Eddy would not be along for the ride. The two had worked together since Judson’s first trip to Indonesia about six years before. Eddy came at the recommendation of a reporter from The New York Times and Judson has been pleased his work but most importantly, their relationship. Eddy worked hard just like Judson, putting in 14-18 hour days sometimes. They also go along on long trips, talking over meals and most of the time, sitting in traffic. He knew how to keep a secret, something most international journalist have trouble doing as they like to tell war stories to each other at the bars of international hotels. Judson was sociable and could carry a conversation just fine but always felt showboating for colleagues of competing publications was juvenile.

Eddy was a freelance journalist himself writing for the English newspaper The Jakarta Post but he made much more money “fixing” for foreign journalist. Fixers fix things and Eddy was good at it. His English and Indonesian was strong. His connections better. He could set up interviews with just about any government official in the country and in this case, he somehow found a way to get Judson in the door with one of the worlds’ wealthiest and busiest people. The effort was not lost on Judson and he planned to thank him both verbally and monetarily when this interview was over.

Judson’s ears popped under the pressure change as they passed the 30th floor. The trip to the 46th took just over a minute.

“After you sir,” said the guard as he held the button to keep the door open.

They walked to a medium sized conference room where one of XX’s personal assistances met the group.

“Hello, I am Fabree, and I can help you with whatever you need. Would you like some water?”

“Yes, please, thank you,” said Judson who was not thirsty but thought it would be polite and it would avoid the possibility of an excuse for a break for his interview subject.

Before she walked away she said, “This is Mr. GG,” he is Mr. XX’s stand-in. He is the same height, build and very similar skin tone so you can get everything set.”

Judson was amazed at the likeness to XX. He had worked with stand-ins before but typically they are just the same height. This guy could have been his brother.

Eddy set up the tripod while Judson got the microphones ready. They repositioned the chairs a few times, looking for the best light and composition. The stand-in was helpful and patient while the two worked. It made things much less stressful to get set up with someone besides the subject, especially someone who’s time is limited. Judson placed one of the two lapel microphones on the tie of the stand in and ran the power pack to his back belt. The other he placed on himself so he could record the questions.

“Look at me, say your name and count to five,”

The professional stand-in cleared his throat and said, “Hello, My name is Mr. XX and I am president of Asia Continental. One…Two…Thee… Four… Five.”

The group laughed.

“That is the best impression I have ever heard of Mr. XX. You really have it down.”

He continued in character. “Thank you sir, as a businessman I take great pride in making sure everything is perfect, including my tone and mannerisms,” he said while gesturing with his hands and leaning forward like Judson has seen XX do so many times while watching previous speeches and interviews of the man. The guards in the room also smiled at the impersonation and the feeling in the room was light.

“Everything is set. Thank you Mr. XX, I mean Mr. GG, or whatever I should call you!”

The stand-in stood up, took off his mic and left the room. The rest of the group, Eddy, Judson, Fabree and the guards waited for the guest of honor to arrive. Judson looked over his notebook making sure he was ready. This was more of an act, he was well prepared and had his questions memorized. A trick he learned from experienced video storyteller Bob Sacha was to memorize five questions that hit the important topics you want to discuss and then wing it from there. Judson liked this method because it meant he spent more time listening in the interview than he did looking at his notes. It also gave him the freedom to go in different directions. To make it more of a conversation than an interview. It was hard enough getting people to open up when there are microphones and cameras pointed at them. He did all he could to minimize the equipment, people and himself and let the subject be the focus. Three things made Judson a good journalist. First was his ability to track down a story that no one had hint there was a even story there to begin with. Second, was his ability to get people to open up. He could get people to tell the truth and to share the intimate most details of their lives with him. From heads of state to Tibetan villages, people felt comfortable with Judson. Part of this was his interview techniques of making eye contact, his body language, his gestures. But it was more of his honesty. Judson had an air about him that was different than most journalists. He never sugarcoated the situation or made promises he could not keep. He was open with his subjects and they wanted to be open with him.

The other aspect that made Judson the go to person for the major news organizations for the last few years was what they thought was a lack of fear. It was not a lack of fear but an appreciation for tense situations. Judson had something different in his life that made him not afraid of death. When most would turn back, he pushed forward. This was true in war zones and in interviews with important people. He never backed down.

His subjects knew that about him. Anyone who sat down with Judson Black knew what they were getting into and did so for reason Judson could never figure out.

This interview was going to be one of those Oprah Tell All interviews or a Barbara Walters on the most influential people in the world. This was going to be a pretty straightforward story about a man and his business. One of the five questions in Judson’s mind was about recent allegations about employee harassment but this was far from an *I got you, how do you plead?* interview.

XX walked into the glass conference room with his antroage. Fabree stood to her feet quickly and Judson and Eddy followed suit.

“Hello Mr. XX, I am Judson Black.”

“Hello Mr. Black, Nice to meet you.”

“Thanks for taking the time to talk with me sir.”

The group of suits that entered the room in order of importance was first, Mr XX immediately followed by his personal body guard dressed in a dark suit that fit tight across the chest but hid his gun or guns well. The third person through the room was his lawyer who was not as thrilled about the meeting as his employer.

Right after the short introductions and formalities, the Indonesian lawyer said, “Mr. Black, we will not be discussing anything dealing with the recent allegations against Mr. XX and no specifics regarding financial data will be given. Is that clear Mr. Black?”

His tone made his objections to this interview clear and Judson answered in a polite but firm way. “That is not what was agreed to when we scheduled this interview but I appreciate you making opinions known. Now, I do not want to waste any more of Mr. XX’s time with this discussion because everyone in this room knows I am going to ask the question anyway.”

They all took their seats and Judson attached the microphone onto XX’s tie in the same place he had before on the man who looked just like him. Judson never let Eddy or anyone else attached the mic. It is fairly awkward to hide the cord of a lapel mic inside someone’s shirt and requires the breaking of personal space for this to be accomplished. Judson felt once someone lets him into their personal space they were much more likely to be open him.

Judson took his seat, check the shot on the camera, started recording and began the interview. No need for thankyour and introductions on tape, or pointless biographical information that could be read on Wikipedia. This was a busy man and that was not Judson’s style. “Mr. XX, you are quite a successful man with a thriving company. What give you personally the edge that separates your from similar men?”

This question was direct, to the point but not too difficult. The kind a man of his stature would enjoy answering.

While Judson conducted the interview in English, Eddie listened on the headphones to make sure they got good audio, Judson in his right ear, XX in the left. During one of XX’s answers there was some interference coming in the right channel. It sounded like someone talking on a security radio. It was filled with static and hard to make out but continued for a while. Since it was only on the right side, Judson’s side and they did not need his audio Eddy let the interview continue without interrupting.

And he did. He rambled on about his commitment to excellence, his hard life as a child, his employees and all the things Judson knew he would say. Judson went with it and asked a simple follow-up question before moving to the tougher question.

After about twenty minutes or so, Judson decided it was time to ask the question on the topic he was told was off limits. He did not want them to have the opportunity by saying, “*we are out of time.”*

“XX, (first name), you know the allegations before you about unlawful hiring of minors and the scrutiny you put on the appearance on your flight attendants. I have a source, a former employee who worked on this exact floor who had provided me with documents and emails that show an ongoing effort to hire young girls from low-income areas, train their bodies and attitudes to your liking so they can flirt and serve your customers while you make millions and they make very little.”

XX was not surprised by this question but was surprised by the evidence Judson said he had. But he was an astute businessman and as his lawyer started to interrupt, he gave him a wave of his hand and the lawyer promptly stopped speaking and sat down.

“We provide a service that people enjoy. I employ people and give them an honest wage for honest work. Yes, it is true we have a recruitment program where we look for the prettiest and smartest Indonesians from all parts of the country. From the islands to the enter of Jakarta, including the slums. But I have nothing to be ashamed of. I am proud that I can give opportunities to children from SLUM NAME or SMALL ISLAND NAME.”

“But, is it not true that you make them dependent on your company and they have no other choice but to do whatever you say because you control their home, income and their livelihood?”

“My employees are extremely loyal. Maybe they are loyal because I provide a home for them. Is that a crime? I am not ashamed of the fact I can give a home to my employees and other benefits that make them grateful and want to continue to work for me.”

The moment he completed the sentence, Fabree stood up, and said right on cue, “That is all the time Mr. XX has today. Thank you for coming.

The two men who had spent the last half hour sparing stood up, shook hands like opponents at the end of a Little League Baseball game. Both said goodbye and then the VIP left the room with everyone that entered with him following.

Eddy and Judson started packing up while the security guard watched.

“Here to make sure I don’t take the coasters?” Judson asked jokingly but his humor was not appreciated.

“Guess so,” said Judson under his breath.

In a sing-song tone of voice, Fabree said, “Well that went *great*, don’t you think?

“Yes, thank you, said Judson trying to be polite but Eddy knew that was not what Judson really thought. They had worked together so much that they could read each other’s expressions. Eddy also knew not to talk about the interview till they got out the door.

They finished rolling cables and packing up and made their way to the elevator with the guard in tow.

“Thanks so much for coming!” Fabree said as she walked them to the elevator.

“Here is my card with my local cell, if you want to provide anything for the story let me know. I would be happy to listen.” Judson said with a smile knowing her loyalty stood with her boss.

After they got into one of the many WhiteHorse executive taxis that was waiting in front of the highrise Eddy started talking first.

“Well, how do you think that went?”

“It went fine. He said what I expected, actually he spoke better than I expected.”

“So what does that mean for your story?” Eddy continued.

“Well, it means the story is not earthshattering but I will edit the interview I have with the girl and him and it will be a basic news story. Nothing special.”

The two sat in silence while waiting in traffic. Eddy knew Judson liked to think by himself right after an interview. Sometimes they did not have the lecture and had to be off to another meeting or gathering b-roll but the traffic provided the necessary slowdown to the day.

“There was a weird interference on your audio channel during part of the interview,” Eddy said after a few slow blocks.

“What happened?”

“Not sure, it cut out after a while and was only on your channel, not XX’s.”

“Good. Must have been something interfering with the frequency. Both mics are on two different frequencies. Glad it was not his that was messing up.”

“Me too,” Eddy replied with a sigh.

They arrived back at their hotel, the Swiss BelHotel, just a few blocks from the National Monument in downtown Jakarta. It was Swiss owned, obviously, so it was clean with nice service but was not one of the $300 per night international hotels right on the main square. The taxi let them out at the door and a bellmen came quickly to help with their bags. “Welcome back sir.”

“Thank you. I will bring these up to your room for you Mr. Black.”

Judson grabbed his shoulder bag that held the camera and memory cards from the interview. He did not want that to be out of sight. Eddy and Judson went up to their adjacent rooms on the 19th floor. Judson open the door with the key card, placed the card in the switch just inside the door which is needed in most hotels in Asia. His room had been cleaned and the curtains drawn back. The view was overlooking several six to eight story buildings and a residential neighborhood. Not the majestic view of the city, which he saw from the conference room of Mr. XX earlier that morning but not a view of the slums either. He walked across the large room that included a desk and love seat, used the bathroom, which was also much larger than necessary, and then decided he would go for a swim.

Judson phoned Eddy using the room phone. “Eddy, I am going for a swim. Would you like to come?”

“No thank you sir. I will stay here and begin capturing the footage from today.”

“That can wait, you can relax a little.”

“I am not one for swimming sir, I have only been swimming one time and that was when my boat had a problem.”

“You will have to tell me about that one sometime soon. I will bring over the cards in a minute.”

Judson hung up, changed into swim trunks, t-shirt and flip-flops. He picked up the card wallet that contained the memory cards from today and the b-roll they shot on the streets the day before and took them over to Eddy before making his way down to the big pool.

The pool was an indoor infinity edge pool complete with a stone waterfall on one side and a view that looked towards the sky on the other. From a swimmers perspective it gave the appearance you could swim into the clouds. Judson had the pool all to himself. He swam a few laps in the cool but very comfortable water while under the watchful eyes of the security guard and the pool attendant. When he got out an attractive Indonesian woman in a traditional island skirt ambrorded golf shirt came to him with a menu.

“Can I get you a drink or something Mr.”

Judson smiled. He was getting used to this live of luxury and people calling him Mr. everywhere he went. He looked at the menu and she tried politly to sell him on some fancy detoxification fruit and vegetable drink but Judson settled for some fresh Strawberry juice. Somehow detoxification did not sound like a good experience but the Tuna Sandwich for only $3.50 seemed like a deal.

Judson looked out he open-air window and felt the warm sun drying him off as he thought about the story. Nothing ground-breaking came to him before she returned with a fancy glass complete with fresh strawberries and a toasted tuna sandwich with lettuce, tomato and the edges cut off. Billed the sandwich to his room and enjoyed it in the sun before heading back up to his room.

Judson’s shorts were almost dry as he walked down the air conditioned hall to the elevator. There was a guard standing at the elevator in a black suit with a radio in his hand. He greeted him as he awaited the elevator with the typical, “Good afternoon Sir,.”

“Good afternoon.”

When he arrived on the 19th floor he passed two Indoneasian men in black suits he assumed was security. They greeted him just as the guard on the pool floor did and Judson returned with a proper smile and nod as he passed. He placed the key in front of the door and it unlocked to revel something Judson was not expecting.

Judson placed his key in the swich and the lights came on. He walked in and noticed the full-length curtains slowly moving, as if there was air blowing on them but the air conditioner was at the other end of the room. By itself it could be anything but then he looked around to see if anything else was weird. Judson looked around and noticed the light behind the small closet door was illuminated and the sliding door slightly ajar. He walked over, pulled it closed and exited the room.

*Is Eddy OK?”*

He did not use the phone because he figured that was how they knew he was gone. He knocked on the door. No answer. He knocked louder and waited. This time he beat the door as hard as he could and a few seconds later Eddy open the door.

“Sorry boss, I was listening to the footage with my headphones, been waiting long?”

“Not long. I need to use your bathroom, I think mine has a leak.”

Eddy knew there was no leak, at least not the kind that leaks water. Eddy followed him into the bathroom behind the frosted glass. Judson turned on the water in the shower, the bathtub and the sink.

“One second boss, I want to catch the scores,” Eddy said as he went into the main room, and turned on the TV before returing to the oversized bathroom.

“Are we going to be working in here for the rest of your trip boss?”

“Maybe, someone was in my room. Nothing was missing, not the camera or my passport but I know someone was there.”

“How do you know this?”

“I saw two men in suits walking down the hall and I think they had a lookout downstairs. When I got to the room there was light coming from the closet but I never use the closet. I keep my clothes in my bag. This meant the door was left open because there is a small switch that cuts off the light when the door closes but when the key is not in the main power switch by the door, this light would have been off. They did not notice the door was about half and inch open as I did because they were working in the dark.”

“What were they doing there?” asked Eddy.

“I guess they were placing bugs in my room.”

“Did you find them?”

“No, I did not look. I did not want to give away the fact that I know they are there. If we know they are there and don’t let them know that we know then we have the upper hand.”

“But why would someone bug your room? Our government is not like China. They don’t care what you are printing.”

“I don’t think it was the government. I think it was Mr. XX’s guys.”

“Working here at the hotel?”

“No, I think they might have paid a guard to give them information and be a lookout but I am guessing the guys in the hall are friends with that large bald guy that sat with us in the conference room this morning.”

“But Why?”

“Not sure, the story is nothing more than what every other newspaper is reporting. The only difference is I have a source who used to work for him.”

“Maybe he wants to find out your source,” Eddy thought out loud.

“But it is not like he is going to face charges. He has so many friends in the government and so much money there is nothing to worry about with these allegations. There has to be something else.”

“Do you think my room is buged?”

“I am not sure. Did you leave, even for a minute since we got back from his office?”

“No, I have been here the whole time.”

“Then I am guessing this room is clean, for now. But let’s be carful. We will never discuss details about my source over the phone or in either hotel rooms. We need to set up our own bug.”

“What do you mean?” asked Eddy.

“We need to know when someone enters this room to bug it. You keep working and I am going to go for a walk to the electronics square and pick up some things. You stay here and do not leave.”

“Ok.”

Judson took the elevator down to the lobby and walked around a little to see if he saw those guys again. He thought about talking to hotel security but with the money and reach of XX he was not sure how many employees were involved. He suspected only one, maybe two low level people but he could not be sure. Judson discovered a back exit to the hotel that let out into an allyway. He also walked to the nice open-air lounge just off the lobby were there was an exit to outdoor seating. A third exit would be open at night but that was not the type of door he liked to use.

It lead to a Dance Club that Judson was pretty sure was filled with women looking to make come cash from the foreigners. Not Judson’s choice of lifestyle. He avoided any temptation whenever possible. Over his years of traveling alone he had been propositioned by taxi drivers asking if he needed a girl, by late night phone calls to his room asking him if he wanted a massage and by girls on the street looking for a foreign boy friend. Judson knew the way to be faithful was to avoid the situation whenever possible. He had once read, “If your eye causes you to sin, cut it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.” He took this to heart years ago and he had remained faithful since the day he was married.