

Chapter 15

How Frank killed the brother of his beloved Missile-Fits

“Dick?”

Dick appeared taken aback, then looked more closely at his guest. “Holy fuck! Frank?”

“Y-Yeah, man!” The two took a moment to let the surprise sink in. “Oh, man. You must be fuckin’ pissed at me!”

“What? No, man, that- all that stuff was *not* your fault. I mean, I know you, and you wouldn’t.”

“Yeah. Oh! She’s alive!”

“Huh?”

“Your sister! She’s alive and well. She faked her death back at the hospital in Indianapolis. She’s in Iskenderun, enjoying the hospitality of the governor.”

Dick suddenly appeared to suffer convulsions, as if having a seizure or a stroke. His face turned beet red as his shoulders shook, and he gripped the edge of the picnic table with white knuckles, sending vibrations through the wood. Coughing and choking with foam at his lips, he blessed Frank with a red-eyed glare of pure hate.

“YOU! LEFT! HER! WITH! HIM?” Dick threw the whole picnic table over and upside-down, smashing the soft goat cheese into the checkerboard lawn. He searched his person for a weapon, but had disarmed before entering his garden. Frank and Mahmud took the opportunity to move closer to the wide and shady bole where their own equipment lay resting.

Dick ran to a stone monument that stood in the garden and plucked a time-pocked scimitar from its display, charging at Frank. He took an angle to cut them off from their own cache of weapons, but then could not stop Frank from acquiring a scimitar of his own from the same display. Dick was a miserable swordsman, and angry besides. Frank parried his first clumsy blow, then kicked at his near shin, putting stress on the knee. Dick’s next charge was so far off balance that Frank was able to turn his opponent’s blade out. Frank kicked Dick in the stomach and sent him sprawling.

Standing over Dick, Frank swung his scimitar at Dick’s sword hand, meaning to disarm him. Yet Dick parried, driving Frank’s blow into Dick’s abdomen just below the ribcage. Frank let go of his weapon in horror.

Before Frank could begin stammering unhelpful apologies, Mahmud approached carrying their things. “We must go. Now.” He took up Dick’s keffiyeh and sunglasses, and put them on Frank. On their way to Dick’s truck, they found his bandoliers and grenade belts and holsters.

Frank put these on as well. He hadn’t shaved since Chicago, so his beard served well enough as he rode in the passenger seat of the bouncing truck, holding an assault rifle. Mahmud drove and honked with the exuberance of a caliph’s driver, and they were waved through every checkpoint with salutes and wild cheers.