

VALIANT DUST

Chapter Six

The drone of the four stroke, four cylinder, sixteen valve motorcycle engine was not soothing to Jack. His hands were tied to railings, one hand to the left and one hand to the right. His feet were also tied to pegs to the left and right. He leaned forward against the back of his abductor.

He could feel every movement of the operator as the motorcycle weaved precisely along the highway. He occasionally heard another vehicle pass them going the opposite direction.

Jack had not ridden a motorcycle since the day of the accident at which he ran over the little girl's foot while driving on a revoked license. He once again enjoyed the leaning over of the machine to maintain balance and the smooth acceleration. He thought again of that moment when he stopped and debated whether to run or stay. His life would have certainly been different had he gone the other way.

Jack Daggett had stayed; he had not left the scene.

At the crash that he had happened upon he had turned off his engine and put his kickstand down and gotten off to meet the red faced man coming towards him. Jack assumed it was the father of the little girl whose foot he had run over.

Jack flipped up his visor. "Is she all right?" he asked.

"You just stay right there, don't move, don't move or I'll kill you." the man said.

"Is she all right?" Jack repeated.

"You've done enough already; the police are on their way."

Jack walked over to the little girl who was in pain sitting on the ground holding her right foot and crying. It was starting to swell.

"Did someone call the paramedics?" Jack directed the question to the woman next to the girl.

"Not yet," the woman looked up and said.

"Where's the phone, I'll do it," Jack volunteered.

He was about to call when a patrol car arrived. The policeman took charge, called the ambulance, and organized the traffic flow. He motioned Jack to come over to him after the man pointed him out. Jack walked over and explained everything. The policeman nodded, took notes, license numbers and told Jack to leave the cycle where it was. Jack rode back with the policeman.

There were no formal charges laid against Jack but were against the drunken driving father who caused the single car crash. Two bones in the foot of the girl were broken. She wore a cast and healed with no limp.

There were no lawsuits against Jack; however, for driving on a revoked license, his motorcycle was seized and sold at auction and Jack was sent to the New Mexico Youth Authority until he reached twenty one years old.

Jack often fantasized about how his life might have been. He could have left the scene, sold the motorcycle, graduated from high school and then gone to college. His life would sure be different as a college graduate with contacts than being a non-high school graduate released from a work camp with no job and little money.

Jack Daggett returned to the present. What was going on? he thought. Have I been kidnapped? And why?

He sensed that the road was twisty for a spell and then was straight for a time. He waited for a straight stretch and started to bang the visor of his full face helmet on the back of the fiberglass helmet in front of him. After he banged harder and harder he felt the motorcycle slow and pull off to the side of the road. After the engine stopped he felt the motorcycle tip to the left side and he was untied and lifted off the back.

His helmet was removed and the hood taken off. Jack saw a person in front of him dressed all in black riding leathers with a full helmet and reflective visor.

"Eye contact," Jack yelled.

The person hesitated and then quickly took off the helmet to reveal a face.

Jack was surprised to see a person in her mid-twenties staring directly at him. She was motionless with her hands by her sides and her helmet on the ground. She had no makeup, no jewelry, and no pierced ears. Her hair was brown and short. Jack knew she was a woman but couldn't explain how he knew.

"What's going on?" Jack asked.

"I'll tell you everything later. We have to go someplace special. It will be easier if you cooperate," she said in a plain but clear voice.

Jack liked the voice. He liked looking at her, too. She had a purity about her; she was clean and direct.

They stood for a few seconds just looking at each other. Jack was not scared, in fact he felt pretty good. He looked around him. The area where she had stopped was desert land with mountains in the distance. The road was a straight, two lane road with no traffic either way for ten miles and only turned when it curved up and started going through the mountains.

"I could run," Jack said.

"Try it, Jack," she said and smiled.

He liked the way she said his name and he looked around for some place to run too. There was nothing to run to, but maybe there was something to run from.

"OK, I will," Jack said and took off running along the road. He was in good shape and knew he was fast. He ran at a medium pace and enjoyed the freedom. He whizzed past the bushy chaparral and did not slip on the gravel and loose sand on the highway.

He looked behind him and to his surprise saw her following ten feet away, neither gaining not losing ground.

Jack ran faster. After a few seconds he looked around and there she was again at the same spot at the same pace.

He suddenly cut right into the desert. The terrain was rocky and sandy with narrow gullies eroded into the desert floor. He jumped from rock to rock and across dry stream beds. He looked back and she was right there grinning and hopping with him.

He angled sharply back towards the motorcycle. He thought he might beat her there and take off on the bike, leaving her there.

As he drew near the motorcycle she caught up with him and ran side by side with him.

They got to the bike at the same time and Jack stopped by the side panting. She did the same.

"That was great, let's do it again," she said.

"I'm going to get on this bike and leave you; don't try to stop me," Jack gasped.

"I don't think so, Jack," the woman replied, "I can stop you. Let's test our strength."

"How?" Jack asked.

"Boys like to arm wrestle, shall we?" she answered.

"Boys, who you calling boys?" Jack said as he kneeled by the cycle with his right elbow on the seat and right hand up, ready to grasp.

The woman smiled, kneeled down opposite, grasped Jack's right hand and said, "Ready when you are."

Jack waited for a second, enjoying touching the hand of the woman. It was soft yet firm, smooth yet solid, and warm, not hot. Her hand felt as if it fit perfectly into his.

All of a sudden he tightened his grip and moved his hand and forearm sharply down toward the gas tank.

Both of their hands moved towards the tank with Jack being an inch from victory when the woman's arm stopped and held. Jack grunted and the woman strained but he could not move their hands any closer to the tank. He looked into her eyes and they stared at each other.

By strength alone, the woman slowly moved her hand with Jack's in it up and over in an arc towards the tail of the bike. Jack did everything he could but could not stop her. Their hands hit the metal rear end of the bike. She had won. She was definitely stronger and faster than he was.

Jack sighed. "Congratulations, what's your name?"

"Catherine Furness," she replied.

"How do you know my name and why me?" Jack asked again.

"All in good time, Jack; let's hit the road."

"Wait, why a motorcycle?" Jack asked.

"Because of the disguise of the leathers and the helmet," she answered. "Cars numb but motorcycles arouse. Plus it's maneuverable and high speed; and I felt we would both enjoy it."

"Do not confine me," Jack said.

"Will you cooperate?" she asked.

What do I do if I don't go with her, he thought. She takes off and leaves me here out in the middle of nowhere. There was a way to be safer, more in control, though.

"Let me drive, I know how, you sit on the back," Jack said.

"If I let you control it, we have to go on regardless of weather or circumstances; no stopping until we're there, we are in a rush," she said.

"No problem, through thick and thin we stick together and tough it out," Jack said.

"All right," she said, "let's go."

They put on their helmets and gloves and mounted the motorcycle, Jack in front and Catherine behind him. She put her feet on the passenger pegs and wrapped her arms around his waist.

"Just follow this road until I pat your right shoulder or left shoulder, then go in that direction," she yelled over the drone of the engine. Jack nodded and settled into controlling the five hundred pound machine. He accelerated shifting with his left foot through the six speed gearbox.

The road surface was worn asphalt, two lanes, narrow shoulder, single dotted white line in the center, slightly crowned in the center, and straight as an arrow. Jack let the speed creep up to 90 MPH as he appreciated the power of the cycle.

The dark, treeless mountains were approaching and had clouds around the peaks. They were crossing the valley between mountain ranges in the middle of Arizona. Jack relaxed his hands on the handlebars keeping just enough pressure with his right hand on the throttle to keep the speed steady. He enjoyed the good feeling of the woman in back of him holding him with just the right amount of pressure. Jack concentrated on the pleasure of the smooth vibration of the engine, keeping his balance right on vertical, his speed right for the road, and the absolute concentration required to maintain control of the machine second by second.

As they cruised along the highway, a memory returned to Jack during his road gang days at the New Mexico Youth Authority. He was working the side of a two lane road, clearing brush alongside a construction site with four other men. Traffic was stopped in one direction because of obstructions in the road which caused alternate traffic lanes.

Waiting to go behind the flagman was an older, large red American convertible with a sleek, older woman behind the wheel. Jack looked at her as she looked at him. It was a hot, dry, dusty day and Jack wiped the dirty sweat from his forehead and neck. The woman smiled, reached over to the passenger seat and pulled out a tall can of beer, dripping wet from the portable cooler. She held it up for Jack and everyone to see and then threw it in a high arc towards Jack.

All eyes from the five men were on the beer can. The supervisor sitting in the shade watched, too. The beer can rotated in the air end over end in a rainbow arc towards the captives. Just as it was about to go over Jack's head he reached out with his right hand and gracefully picked the beer can from the air. He grinned at the woman who quietly clapped her hands together. Jack pulled open the tab and, without stopping, drank it all up.

The highway flagman signalled to go ahead and the red dressed lady in the red shiny car gave a wave and drove on with a last smile to Jack. The men cheered her, asking for more, and the supervisor had said, "Ah, if only we were all as good looking as you, Jack Daggett. OK, let's get back to work."

As Jack and Catherine rode their one hundred horsepower, stealthy motor machine up the winding road into the mountains the traffic got heavier. They drove slower and slower behind cars. After they passed a small town the traffic became lighter and only one vehicle was in front of them. It was a older, green Volvo station wagon. The road was curvy, then hilly, with blind corners so Jack could not pass. The Volvo was driven by a woman with three children and a large dog in the back. The dog was fenced in with a wire barrier between the seats. Jack reviewed the driving rules he knew Volvo drivers obey. The first was that whatever the appropriate speed for the conditions is, drive ten percent slower. Second was when approaching a curve regardless of speed or direction, apply the brakes lightly with the left foot while keeping the gas pedal pressure steady. Third rule was when preparing to turn off the highway, start decelerating two miles prior to turn. The last rule was slow down going up hills and speed up going down them.

This last rule was the worst for Jack because just as he was about to pass, the station wagon would speed up and he had to pull back in line. Finally the green boxy vehicle followed rule three, started slowing up and a few minutes later did turn off on to a side road and drove off.

Another vehicle was waiting to get on the highway. It would have waited for Jack and the Volvo to pass by, but when they both slowed up, it pulled out in front of them.

After the Volvo turned off Jack pulled up behind the very slow accelerating very old Volkswagen bus. The road started to twist and there was no way to pass. Jack laid back and told himself to grow up and join the parade.

He felt very adult, mature, and wise as he followed at a steady pace of thirty miles an hour and made no effort to pass. He looked at the aerodynamically challenged vehicle. It had rusting white paint. There were faded, peeling decals of daisy flowers all over it. The muffler was hanging loose and spewing white smoke, especially up hills. The bumper was gone. The windows were hazy and opaque. The rear was covered with bumper stickers.

Jack read the stickers. "Before You Were in the Womb, I Knew You, signed, God." Ah, thought Jack, God. Now there's a subject. All in God's plan. Another sticker read "Visualize World Peace." Jack wanted to say to the person I visualize you kneeling on the side of the road begging for mercy as the enemy rolls by in their tanks. Another read, "Save the Whales." Jack believed all non-human animals would eventually end up in zoos or aquariums sooner or later and many humans were already there called schools or hospitals or labor camps. What the sticker meant was, "Save Me." Jack was ready to bet the driver was an older white man with a beard and sunglasses.

The exhaust smell from the van was particularly bad for the motorcycle behind it and Jack decided to pass.

On a short hill the van slowed down, Jack downshifted to third and attempted the pass. The bike accelerated up from thirty five miles per hour to seventy five miles per hour in just fifty yards. Even then a car was approaching and Jack just made it back into his lane in time. He was able to note the driver as a gray haired white man about sixty with a white beard, sunglasses, and wearing an Australian bush hat. Jack wondered what music he was listening to on the radio.

Near the top of the winding drive up the mountain the air got colder and a wind picked up, slightly buffeting the full fairing. As they reached the plateau with good visibility on top of the range, Jack kept the speed at a comfortable 80 miles per hour as he leaned the cycle over to the left and right as he maneuvered through the shallow switchbacks.

Ahead was a twenty five mile mildly twisting stretch of road which ran along the top of the mountain range. The only vehicles were an occasional slow recreational vehicle which was passed easily. There were short scrub pines mixed with brush and an occasional group of range cattle along the road. They drove as if they were flying three feet above the ground.

On the other side of the mountain range the clouds became thicker and it started to mist up on the windscreen and visors. The road became slippery with drizzle. Jack slowed down on the unfamiliar road. Catherine was holding on giving just the right amount of lean to maintain balance through the turns.

The clouds got lower and darker. The drizzle turned to rain. The rain became heavier. The wind buffet became more severe. Jack pressed on; minutely aware of the effect each natural event was having on the controllability of the cycle. He could feel Catherine tense lightly on his back.

At the peak of the storm the wind was gusting and pushing him to the right while the turns in the road would have him leaning to the right. There was gravel lessening his traction. The visibility was poor through the drops of rain on the visor and windscreen. Lightning struck off to his right fairly close by and a few seconds later the long lasting boom reached them starting with a crack. A stretch of rain grooved pavement made the front wheel slightly wander along its track.

At one point, as the road was curving down and to the right, the gusts were misdirecting the front wheel, there was some water and gravel in the turn, fog was obstructing the exit line of the curve and then the hail started. The small, ball bearing sized round rocks of ice and frozen rain made a metallic ping when they hit the steel gas tank, a pock pock when they hit their helmets and stung whenever they hit an exposed wrist or neck.

It was at that moment Jack started laughing and humming to himself. It felt so good to be challenged by the worst nature could give and to be winning, or at least surviving. He felt Catherine squeeze him and hug him tighter. He felt pure joy as he felt that he and Catherine were one unit melded together.

Soon the rain and wind stopped, the visibility cleared up and the road became straight and dry again. They dried out as the speed went up to a very stable 105 miles per hour through the desert.

They were cruising comfortably along across another valley when Jack looked up and noticed a small high winged airplane following along off to the left about a thousand feet above them. There was no other traffic. Jack slowed down to 75 miles per hour and crested a small hill. Immediately he saw two black and white California highway patrol cars off to the right as he passed them. He slowed further to 55 miles per hour but he saw in the mirrors that one of them was in pursuit with red and white flashing lights.

He didn't know what to do. Catherine reached around in front of him and pushed her right hand up meaning to speed up and go.

But Jack slowed and stopped by the side of the road. The black and white highway patrol Mustang pulled up behind them. For a few moments nothing happened and Jack guessed they were checking the license plate of the cycle.

Jack got off the front after turning off the engine but leaving the key in the ignition while Catherine got off the back. She flipped up her visor and Jack did the same.

"Let me handle this," Catherine said to Jack.

"What seems to be the problem, officer?" she asked.

"No problem, ma'am," he said and turned to Jack, "may I see your license and registration, sir, our friend in the sky said you were doing 75 on this 55 highway."

Jack remained motionless, frozen with memories of previous stops and wondering what would they do when they found out he had no license or registration. Would they arrest him? And then he thought maybe I have been rescued and should tell them what happened and start all over again after putting this weird experience behind him.

"Sir, let me see your license now," the highway patrolman said again to Jack, reaching for his radio.

"Officer," Jack said, "I have been kidnapped by this woman. She jumped me and tied me onto the back of this motorcycle. I don't know why she did it and I don't know who she is," Jack said in a rush.

The officer looked at Jack a moment then said something into the radio and turned to Catherine. "What's all this about?" he asked.

Catherine looked from the patrolman to Jack who wouldn't look at her.

"I don't know what he's talking about, sir," Catherine said and turned and looked at Jack. Jack finally looked at her and stared into her eyes and felt something was drastically wrong. He felt he had betrayed the one who trusted him. The police were not his friends and he felt this woman was. He still didn't know what to do.

Another highway patrol car slowly approached in response to the radio call for backup and the officer got out. Everyone looked at him as he walked up.

Just then Catherine flipped her visor down, tripped up, then pushed the first patrol officer to the ground, gracefully hopped onto the motorcycle, started it up, and started to drive off at high acceleration.

Jack decided what to do and ran towards the motorcycle and jumped on the back and held on to Catherine. The motorcycle started to swerve because of the imbalance of Jack's weight and Catherine fought to maintain control.

The patrolmen drew their service revolvers and aimed at the departing motorcycle, then aimed upwards and fired two warning shots each. The four shots startled Catherine who took evasive action and lost control of the handlebars which jerked quickly left and right. The motorcycle leaned first to the right almost out of control and then spun quickly to the left out of control. It started sliding on its left side at forty miles an hour with Jack and Catherine holding on.

The motorcycle exhaust fell on Jack's left leg and ankle as the cycle continued sliding. The friction of the leg grinding on the asphalt road wore the leather boots down to the sock. The weight of the cycle squeezed Jack's leg and twisted his foot severely down and away from the ankle. The crash force over-stretched the many muscles and tendons which join his foot to the ankle. He cried out in pain.

The exhaust started to burn Jack's bruised ankle but the cycle struck a curb and threw Jack off. Catherine remained with the sliding bike. Jack was now sliding on his right side at only twenty miles an hour. The speed seemed so slow to him that he felt he had stopped and tried to stand up. As he got up in a semi-erect position his feet grabbed traction and again threw him into a somersault. He landed head first on the road sliding into a guardrail. His skull would have been cracked open and his brains would have leaked out into the road but the helmet took the force. The outside fiberglass cracked and the inside layer of foam was crushed.

The guard rail was like a razor blade and tore into Jack's leather clad arm from the shoulder to elbow. Inside the black leather jacket were energy absorbing foam pads at the shoulders, elbows, and back. The guardrail edge cut the leather and foam pads but stopped short of cutting Jack's skin and arm.

Jack had finally stopped rolling on the ground near Catherine who had jumped off the moving cycle and landed on her feet uninjured.

Fuel started to leak out of the gas tank vent on the horizontal motorcycle. The highway patrolman was driving up in his car.

Catherine picked herself up, walked over to the five hundred pound motorcycle, lifted it up and got on it.

She looked at him, "Make your decision now, Jack Daggett. Do I return for you, or do I leave you?"

"Leave me alone!" Jack cried out loudly, "No, come back for me!"

She twisted the right handlebar throttle and was off quickly. Jack could not move and lay back in pain. The patrolman took off in pursuit after Catherine, leaving Jack writhing on the ground. The first highway patrolman then arrived in his vehicle, got out and stopped at Jack.

"Can we talk?" he asked.

"Yes," Jack said.

"Can you walk?" he asked.

Jack slowly got up with assistance and said, "It's my ankle, it really hurts."

The patrolman looked at Jack and said, "Follow me to my vehicle and get in, then tell me your story."

Jack limped over to the car, got in the passenger seat of the Mustang and said, "I don't know what is going on, she jumped me, tied me up, put me on the back, and took off. My name is Jack Daggett and I've just been released by the New Mexico Youth Authority."

The policeman was writing all this down but stopped and asked, "You've just been released from a Youth Authority, you have no driver's license, you're riding a motorcycle at an illegal speed with a young woman on the back breaking laws left and right and you're saying you're the victim?"

The patrolman closed his notebook, put the pen away and said to Jack, "Step out of the car, young man."

Jack gingerly stepped out of the car and the patrolman walked around and patted Jack down looking for weapons. He overlooked a small red pocket knife. He then handcuffed Jack.

"Hey, I've haven't done anything and my leg is killing me," Jack protested.

"Get back in the car, sir, the back seat, and relax, I've got a first aid kit and some pain pills for you," the patrolman said.

On the chance that the young man was telling the truth and was the victim, the patrolman decided to give him four locator pills that would allow authorities to track him for up to twelve hours. The faintly transmitted signals would be picked up by a tracking satellite and transmitted to earth.

Jack got in the small back seat and put his leg up on the seat. The patrolman leaned over and gave Jack four large, oval, orange pills to swallow. "Here, these will fix you right up and here's a bandage to wrap around your ankle. Sit back there and relax."

Jack swallowed the pills. The throbbing pain was just as intense and the ankle was turning dark red from the broken blood vessels. He wrapped the bandage around his ankle. He lay back in the seat to try to stop the pulsing pain.

"Thirty one ten, this is thirty one eleven, how's it going, you apprehend her yet?" the policeman in the front seat called to the other officer.

"Nothing, thirty one eleven, I've lost her in the woods, break, break, Airdrop One, do you see the motorcycle?" the pursuit patrolman asked.

"Negative, I followed her into the woods but she never came out. She's in there some place. I'm at max reserve fuel. I've got to refuel and by the time I get back it'll be dark, so I'm calling it a night. Good luck, guys, Airdrop One out," the Highway patrolman in the aircraft reported.

"Thirty one eleven, I'm coming back to your location, I'll be there in ten minutes," the pursuit car radioed.

"Thirty one ten, roger, I'll be here with the accomplice," the officer in the front seat radioed.

"Hey, I'm not an accomplice," Jack said.

The patrolman in front did not answer but said into the microphone, "HQ, this is thirty one eleven, do we have anything hot involving a motorcycle and a man named Jack Daggett and a woman?"

After a few moments the radio reported, "Thirty one eleven, standby."

After a minute the radio said, "Thirty one eleven, HQ, there is an all points bulletin for a missing person named Jack Daggett. Your instructions are to hold for questioning. Acknowledge," the radio said.

"This is thirty one eleven, I'll hold him. My partner should be here soon and we'll both return to HQ. Out," the officer said into his microphone.

"So, Mr. Jack Daggett, who are you, anyway?" the patrolmen turned and asked congenially.

"Want to hear a story?" Jack asked.

"Sure, I've got ten minutes to kill; you sure it's OK to talk without a lawyer present?" the patrolman asked.

"Yes, no lawyer needed for this one, just knowledge of the English language, and I know you know English because we've been talking in it," Jack said.

"There was once a Bishop in South Africa," Jack started, "who liked to go to the ballet. This Bishop Tutu wanted to start up a ballet class for his Sunday School members. So he ordered the women's ballet garment, a tutu, from the ballet clothing company."

"At the ballet clothing company, a warehouse manager was giving orders to the driver of his delivery truck. The manager said, "OK, driver, I'm going to give you two things to do. If you're not sure about them, ask for clarification. Here they are."

"One. Deliver a couple of tutus by the old Ballet House."

"You want me to deliver a couple of outfits to the Ballet House?" the driver asked.

"Yes, deliver a couple of tutus over to the Ballet House," the manager repeated. "Now here's your second order."

"Two. Two tutus to Tutu, too."

"Two tutus to Tutu, too?"

"Two tutus to Tutu, too."

The End," said Jack.

The policeman was silent and then said, "I've got one for you, three three three three," and laughed.

Jack was silent in the back seat looking out at the road.

A few minutes later the other patrol car arrived. The officer got out of his car and into the one with Jack.

"What's going on?" the second policeman leaned over the seat and asked Jack.

"Nothing, am I charged with a crime?" Jack asked.

"Yeah, violating the laws of California, specifically speeding, driving without a license or registration and being the accomplice of a fleeing suspect. The big question, sir, if you are telling the truth about being abducted, is why did you jump on the back of that moving cycle."

"Were you trying to escape?" he asked. "From who? And if anyone got kidnapped, it was her, and she's running from you, not us. You might be the kidnapper," the patrolman said. "I think we have enough to keep you in the back seat locked up, don't you?" the second patrolman asked nobody in particular.

Jack looked off into the distance as the sun began to approach the peaks of the mountains. There was about a hour of daylight left before dusk. He listened closely.

"Hey, what's that," the first patrolman said and pointed at the other empty police vehicle which was slowly starting to move away on the level road.

The patrolman on the passenger side jumped out and ran after his car. He caught up with it a hundred yards away and opened the door and jumped inside. The car came to a stop. After a few moments the car turned around and came back to where Jack and the first patrolman were sitting watching. The car had pulled up and stopped but there was no one sitting in the driver position.

The first patrolman quickly got out of his car and went over to his partner's. He stuck his head into the open window of the driver's side and suddenly went limp. He struggled but again went limp. He jerked and then stayed quiet. The door opened and Catherine pushed the first and then the second patrolman out and down to the ground. She had used plastic strips to tie the hands and feet of the slightly asphyxiated patrolmen. She then got the keys from the patrolman and let Jack out and uncuffed him.

"The cops will be unsteady for a while but they'll be all right except for their pride," Catherine said. "Are you OK?"

"My ankle hurts like someone is grinding sandpaper into it, but I can ride behind you. How'd you do that," Jack asked.

"It's called a modified choke hold. It cuts off oxygen to the brain and the person collapses or cooperates. You learned quick and cooperated; these guys didn't. The police use it all the time and now got it used on themselves."

They carefully got on the motorcycle and rode off with Catherine controlling the machine and Jack hanging on behind her.

[To Chapter Seven](#)

[Contents](#)

