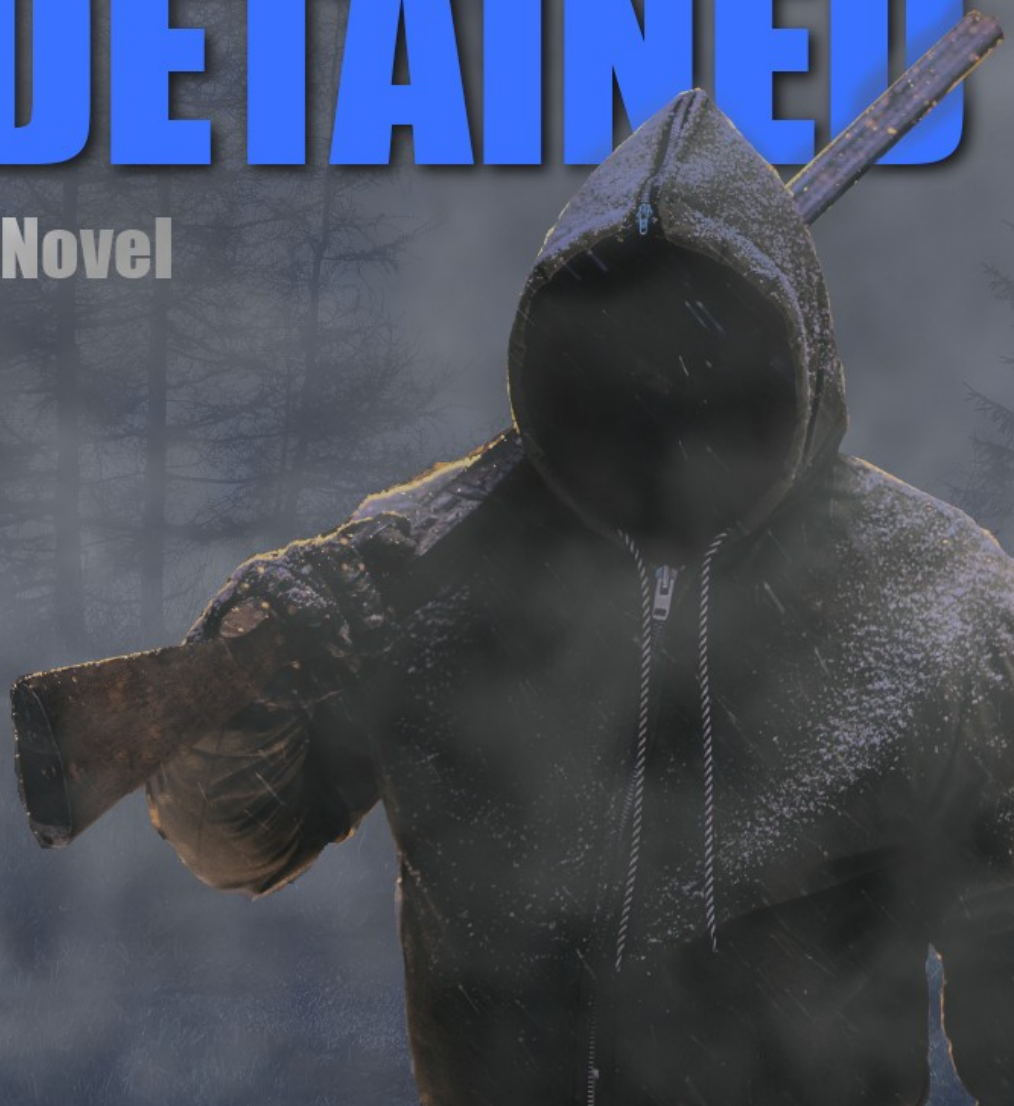


JEFF SOMERS

DETAINED

A Novel



DETAINED

Chapter 12

by Jeff Somers

12. Mike

McCoy laughed. “Are you fucking *kidding*?”

Mike shook his head. The whiskey had been a mistake; he’d been shaky and at first the alcohol had felt good, calming him down. But now he felt fuzzy, and he wanted to be sharp. “We don’t have a choice. Listen—it’s not certain, but there is a *chance* that this ends with executions, right? No matter how remote, if there’s a chance of that, we have to defend ourselves. Even if it’s just 1%.”

McCoy leaned back, taking another hit from the bottle. Mike wanted to say something, to suggest he stay sober, but hesitated: He didn’t know these people. “Maybe,” McCoy said. “You got a point.”

“Damn right he has a point,” Eastman said fiercely, surprising Mike. He’d taken Eastman to be an academic, a milquetoast. He didn’t expect him to see reality so quickly, or be so supportive. It remained to be seen if the retired teacher was going to be able to back it up with action, but Mike was encouraged. He had a feeling he was going to need everyone at their best.

He took a deep breath, because that led him to his next thought. He looked from McCoy to Eastman to Candace. “We need to get Haggan out of the back.”

“What?” McCoy said, grinning. “You think that won’t be noticed?”

“Ah, let him stew back there,” Eastman said. “Jimmy Haggen’s all right, but he’s a troublemaker. Always complaining, always telling us how we’re supposed to be living. But he just wants to hide in the woods, to be left alone. Believe me, I tried to organize him a bunch of times. He’s no goddamn use to anyone.”

Mike shook his head. He was impressed with Haggen. The man was a little crazy, but he’d fought well, and he’d taken cues and picked up on things quickly. Mike had his doubts about McCoy and Eastman, but he thought he could rely on Candace—and Haggen, so he wanted him. “Haggen’s reliable. I think maybe he just hasn’t had the chance to show you what he’s got yet. Let’s think about how we could break him out without setting off any alarms.”

McCoy made a face. Eastman rolled his eyes.

Candace looked right at him. “They’ve got him in the back? With the kegs?”

Mike nodded. He fought off a smile; he liked this woman. She was smart, she was up for anything, and she was capable. He was impressed with how she’d handled herself getting online—there’d been no hesitation when he and Haggen had set to it. She hadn’t been shocked or tentative, she’d gone to work.

“We can get back there through the crawlspace. There’s a trap door behind the bar.”

“Dumb idea,” McCoy said. “They got Jim under guard, right?”

Mike thought back. Then he leaned up out of his seat and looked around, checking all the soldiers. “Yeah. One of the soldiers—Warner. Dark skin, bad attitude. He’s not here, so I think he’s still guarding Haggen.”

McCoy shrugged. “There you go. Fucking suicide to even try.”

Mike nodded. This was confirming what he thought: Haggen was

reliable. McCoy and Eastman weren't. That made it even more vital to get Haggen loose.

"Even if you got him free," Eastman said, "it would just cause trouble. There'd be a *reaction*."

"Not if we leave Warner back there," Candace said. "Tied up, gagged. They'll assume he's still guarding Jimmy."

Mike shook his head. "No, this is a military unit. There will be scheduled check-ins, relief."

Candace shrugged. "We'd have a window, then. We'd have some time. First we need to know the schedule, right? They have to walk right past us here to get back there. We watch, we make a note. We know how long we'd have. Then we time it: We bring him out, we know exactly how long we have until he's noticed."

"And do what?" Eastman asked. "He's not *Superman*, guys. Okay, Mr. Malloy says Jimmy's useful, reliable, whatever. And okay—we have a deficit in terms of manpower, we could use a warm body. But say we have an hour—say we could get Jim loose and we'd have an hour until they noticed? We need to have a plan in place *before* we spring him. We need to know *exactly* what we plan to do, or it won't mean anything."

Mike nodded. "You're right."

"So let's make a plan," Candace said. She looked at Mike. "You said take control—how do we do that?"

Mike looked at her, then at McCoy, Eastman, and back to her. "We take the guns."

McCoy laughed out loud. When he spoke his words had the slightest slur to them. "Sure! Of course, it's easy. First we cut Jimmy loose but make sure they don't notice, because having *Jimmy Haggen* on our side makes all the damn difference. Then the *five* of us take on,

what, a dozen armed, trained soldiers with no weapons?”

Mike shook his head, feeling his heart rate climbing. He knew this was reluctance dressed up as objection—McCoy just wanted to get drunk and hope for the best, and any suggestion that they take action, take risks he was going to meet with all the reasons it was a bad idea. And the worst of it was, Mike knew it *was* a bad idea, for exactly the reasons McCoy had just outlined. But he couldn't do nothing. He'd spent too much of his life doing nothing, and now he'd spent a year or more doing nothing in a different way, doing nothing by trying to do *everything* all at once. “Don't play that—”

Candace interrupted. “We have weapons,” she said.

They all turned to look at her. She blushed, and Mike thought it made her look lovely.

“Jack, your hunting gear is in the back, too,” she said, looking from face to face.

McCoy frowned. “It's a crossbow, kid.”

She nodded. “And a survival knife,” she said. “And the bow's an auto-cocker, and you've taken down some *huge* Moose with that thing.”

“All right,” McCoy said looking around to make sure none of the soldiers were close enough to hear them. “But it's still just one weapon.”

Mike was thinking quickly. “An auto cocker means you can reload in what, a few seconds? Without having to plant the thing for the pull. If we can get you into the right position, you could do some real damage.”

McCoy stared at him. “Some *damage*? You're talking about *killing* people.”

Mike shook his head. “You know how to shoot. You can go for

injury instead of killshots.”

“And when they start returning fire? When Hammond gives the order to just kill us all? Burn the place down?”

“And what, you want to just sit here and *hope for the best*?” Mike demanded, feeling his pulse pound. “Look, we have the element of surprise. I go down the trap, get the drop on the guard back there, and if nothing else we suddenly have an advantage they’re unaware of. It’s better than sitting here drinking liquor and waiting for someone else to decide if I’m going to live or die.”

Eastman was looking down at his hands. “I tend to agree, Jack.”

“Me too,” Candace said. “Better to do *something* than nothing.”

McCoy took another slug from the bottle, eyes on the soldiers around them. “All right. Why you?”

Mike shrugged. “It’s my idea, first of all. Wouldn’t be right to make someone else take the risk. And I know how to fight. No offense, but you and Mr. Eastman here are a little older and out of shape.”

Glen smiled. “And that’s being *kind*,” he said.

“I don’t suppose once I’m in the crawlspace there’s a way outside?”

Candace shook her head. “It’s literally a crawlspace, maybe three feet high. Its dirty and filled with spiderwebs and pipes and electrical. It’s dark—but it’s a clean shot straight back to the other trap, which will bring you up behind the freezer in the back. Between that and the shelves and kegs you have a good chance of getting up and out without being seen by the guard.”

Mike nodded. “All right. Jack, you stay behind the bar. *Stop drinking*. We need you as sober as possible. I’ll make my way back there and take care of Jimmy, and take the guard’s sidearm. Then I’ll head back, and switch places with you—you head back there through

the crawlspace. The hallway entrance is your best position—no one behind you except Hammond, you'll have visual command of the whole bar. Glen, Candace, when Jack heads back you get behind the bar—casual, move slowly, like you're making yourselves a drink—so you'll have cover.”

“What if Hammond comes at me?”

“Jimmy will have your back,” Mike said. “And I'll be up here with the sidearm. They look like Beretta M9A3s, which means a minimum ten-round magazine, but maybe fifteen rounds. Either way I'm familiar with the basic M9 design and I think I can be pretty accurate with it.”

Candace smiled slightly. “Let me guess: You spent a few months paying someone to teach you about guns.”

Mike nodded, returning her ghostly smile. “I'm no expert, but I'm an okay shot.”

She looked around. “Okay. Me and Glen will be on distraction duty. Anyone looks like they plan on heading back there, we'll do our best to stop them. We ready?”

They all looked at each other. McCoy picked up the cap of his bottle and deliberately screwed it back into place. “Okay,” he said. “Ready.”