

*So...*

*What About Love?*

*Dan Arrow*



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*May love lead you,  
and guide you,  
to where mind,  
body,  
and soul long to be.*

## *One*

David D. Thornton sits, wondering why he's allowed himself to step back into an industry he has such intense disdain for. Working to protect clients you wouldn't normally tolerate was an acceptable way of earning a living at one time. But now, if it weren't for the money, he wouldn't be wasting his time trying to train drivers of dignitaries and high dollar celebrities how to survive a deadly assault.

Dignitary protection gigs weren't too bad, but fussy celebs with some big gumba for muscle attached at the hip, touting a loaded weapon, was too much to stomach. Blockheads claiming to be somebody's bodyguard. David had to leap Hollywood politics way too much in order to get a client some real protection. He had a reputation, often jesting, "I'll have to snuff the bodyguard in order to get any real work done." There are few left like him, willing to place his life on the line for the sake of the profession—not just the all mighty dollar.

These days, David finds his career as a high school social studies teacher just as challenging as his glory days as a

protection specialist. Sounds funny, but dealing with today's teens can be just as volatile and unpredictable. The down side is teaching pays pennies on the dollar for all the work to be done. So, to support a trip to Jerusalem over spring break, he's moonlighting again in his past lucrative career. He might even be able to extend the trip to swing over to Greece if his patience holds out for just a few more weeks of tactical instruction.

David doesn't hold back when he's instructing a driver. He begins with a standard disclosure, "In order to immobilize the vehicle, an assassin will kill you. Any questions?" Usually not, just an awkward *deadly* silence.

Like a drill sergeant, David barks...

"Accelerate!

Faster! Faster!!!

Hit the brake!

The brake you knucklehead!

We're cornered!

Back out!

Quick! Quicker!!!

Bullets are bouncing off the hood!

What are you gonna do, just sit here?

Move the wheel you slug!

Punch it!!!

Come on, man. Get the lead out!

The *Principal's* not out of danger yet!

Turn here!

Hard! Harder!!!

Your tail's swingin' out!

Turn into the skid! Turn into it!!!”

The sleek black stretch comes to rest facing the direction it just came from—not anywhere near acceptable.

**“We’re dead.”**

“You’d better listen up to every word that comes out of my mouth if you want a meager chance of survival. Let’s do it until you **can** get it right!” Harsh? Not really, considering the messy results of a potential mistake in a real ambush, but this isn’t instructing high school students and he’s not worried about being well-liked. Although, you can see why the youth at his inner city school like him. They get the real deal. Someone who’s been around the track a few times. Someone, not afraid to lay it out for their benefit before they go back to the reality of their sorted home lives.

Enthusiastic, confident, and self-controlled all in one package. A mixed bag, but still up for an occasional challenge to spice up his single life. Once married to who he often proclaims as “the most awesome woman in the universe,” now he’s a widower with two grown children, still wearing a band around his finger to disclose the fact he’s not quite ready to put himself back on the market. Also, a reminder to him that marriage was a good thing and that he isn’t quite sure he’s done with the idea—yet. There could be another, right? Someone like Jen, who loved him exactly like he wanted to be loved . . . free and easy, without much difficulty. Like they were supposed to be together—forever.

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The slight gray in his short combed-back brown hair goes well with his caramel colored eyes. For having been through so much in life, they still sparkle if you take a chance to look

deep. Silver rimmed professor's type glasses and a herringbone tweed overcoat give him a studious appearance with a pleasant demeanor, an unassuming kind of character—a writer.

Underneath the conservative look is a 5' 9" tri-athlete full of endurance. His smile is warm and genuine these days and lets everyone know how thankful he is to simply be alive to see another day. If you knew his story you'd discover he's almost been dead several more times than he cares to count. Anything else of those memories has been left in a country where he'd been detailed to snatch and grab Americans from embassy's coming under attack. Night Stalker's Never Die! Hoorah!

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Later that evening, David retires to his study where shelves are crammed airtight with every kind of leadership book and religious doctrine known to mankind. Even an assortment of romance novels known to womankind to get a hint of what the other side might be interested in. A self-taught student of psychology, theology and every kind of *ology* one can think of, David has currently put all the daily reading on hold in order to place finishing touches on his latest novel. Seven others before this one and he still has yet to see any one of them crawl onto the Best Seller list. His writing pushes his audience to take an introspective look, which can become

heavy and uncomfortable for most that are still stuck in working through their problems in life. Probably why the dip in sales after a short initial run on most of his published material. He's gone through three traditional publishers so far and has had to take a different tactic with this latest book in order to generate interest, publishing it himself.

David prefers to do his writing the old fashioned way. Just a handful of sharpened pencils and a couple of steno pads on an architects slanted drawing table. A swing-out lamp for late night encounters with his thoughts. He shackles himself to an old high back leather office chair he picked up at a garage sale years ago, supporting the many hours of intense labor he spends in a writer's trance. He's had his "lucky chair" from the beginning of his writing adventure and will be hard pressed to send it to the junkyard when it's time for chair heaven.

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David's latest work has caused a tremendous amount of sleepless nights. He's forged a relationship with the newspaper guy who shows up around 4:30 every morning and takes a few minutes out of his route to talk. It gives David a much-needed break to peel his carcass from the leather and step outside for an early morning breath of fresh air, stretching all the stiff and aching bones which have come to haunt him after many duty injuries. But, he's grateful he still has all his fingers and toes.

Walking out a few minutes before the paper arrives with one cup of smokin' hot Joe in each hand, he looks up to marvel at the clarity of the stars. He stops on the Big Dipper, reminding him God has poured his grace and mercy upon him. How else could he have survived all the things he now writes about. Reality Fiction.

After his morning meeting, David spends another hour toiling over a chapter and finds some rest right before daybreak on a velvety orange retro couch in the living area. Ah, the memorable seventies. Or, was it the sixties? Too long ago to even care.

## ***Two***

I've accomplished a bunch for a tough and often times unrefined girl out of the projects. Anyway, that's the story I tell. There've been a few of us who made it to the top, rags to riches, but even then many more went to the wayside trying to stay afloat after they *miraculously* hit the big time.

Since I was a little girl, I've always dreamed of what it would be like to be a movie star.

Now that I've made it, I could never have imagined how much of me would be under the microscope of scrutiny. Thank God for parents who grew a strong work ethic into me. I probably wouldn't be standing here if it weren't for them. Still, I thought I'd be in total control of everything once I hit the top, able to turn off the nonsense anytime I felt like it. Truth is, the *bigger* you become the less you're able to move. Once you've made the "A-List" it seems freedom is only an idea you used to think about. You can never own this business, 'cause it has its hooks in you 'til it's used you up and spit you out in due time.

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Blasts of lightning crack from a sea of cameras. Reminds me of Christmas. I can barely make out the silhouettes of trench coats and fedoras through the haze of testosterone jammed into this tightly packed room.

Paparazzi? Maybe some, but it's still a time where the full madness of the term hasn't been realized. Hollywood still hides behind the shiny facade of its glamour reputation, sucking in the naive and using them up for every good attribute they possess. Digging up dirt for the purpose of selling it off to a tabloid is becoming a full-time occupation for vermin who make their way on the back of another's misfortune. Soon, there will come a day when integrity will be worth only as much as you can pay for it.

It's been my night. Taking possession of my very first Oscar! Not just any Oscar, but Best Actress. I already have a shelf full of Grammy's for all of my outstanding music accomplishments for a decade in the industry, but this one takes me over the top as a well-rounded entertainer.

Breaking through into film is by far the most difficult. Even though dance and music took a lot of physical work, the movie industry tapped the rest of my soul. Movie politics are some of the ugliest I've ever seen. No doubt because of the larger purse to get a block buster on the books. Nine flops just to get to the mega millions. *Hell of an average.* And then, the

stress of being included in the flops just to squeeze a paycheck. Can't be good for the reputation.

Closer to 40 than 30, I'm at my peak and gonna enjoy riding the top like it's my last night on planet earth. Everyone knows it's the beginning of the end for me. Camera shudders are dropping like machine gun fire right in the middle of a heated battle. Little zaps of electricity flying through the air, charging the room with excitement, which sends adrenaline rushing even faster through my veins. It thrills me like no other emotion, and before I can calm down I'm engulfed again with yet another barrage of hail fire directed straight at me. *Bring it on!* The closet super hero I am can repel all their bullets with breasts of steel. *No plastic yet, just a ton of exercise to keep them perky.*

My hair and makeup people have been all over me like bees on honey, competing at perfecting my look just for this very moment. Shannon is in the lead after having perfectly plucked and arched my eyebrows, and meticulously placed eyeliner. Nose made up so the major flaw in it is less obvious. *I really need to get that fixed.* Lips like stained glass, heavy and out front, to bolster attention. Like armor, increasing the intimidation factor. *Just a little botox, not much. Kiss this boys!*

Reporters assume my gown is out of my own clothing line, but tonight I chose to appear gracious and don a gift from another designing competitor. Just in case I end up in some worse-dressed line up after the awards, I can blame the

mistake on someone else and it won't create a dip in sales for my particular brand. I still think this classy low cut deep-V exposing my shoulders and entire back will pop. Hope nothing falls out. Every time it happens, it causes such a stir! But, you can't beat the publicity. The thick waistband doubles as a girdle, and makes me appear even thinner. That can never hurt, especially after the handful of chocolate strawberries I wolfed down in the limo to calm my nerves before the show. The gold pleated chiffon brings out my Caribbean tan from last week's little getaway. No spray-on tans for this girl. Besides, it gives me an excuse to bask in the sun naked and do absolutely nothing for an hour. *Heavenly.*

Ka Cheek! Ka Cheek! Ka Cheek!

Finally, the last of the shudder fire is heard before the standard inquisition begins. Every hand in the room is raised in anticipation of a nibble, but the only ones who ever get a bite are the big time news people. Like taxi cab drivers vying for position to capture a fare, the ones on the lower rung would kill for the opportunity to grab up a big interview. It's all part of the media mania.

Smile for the camera and just laugh off any negative bull doggie tossed my way. That's *Mega Star Power* baby! The ability to turn an awkward situation into a glamour moment. Everybody can admire that, right!

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## ***About the Author***



Much of my life experience is relived in the character of David D. Thornton. In this novel, I take on the challenge of creating a female character hardened by the use-you-up industry she is very much a part of creating, turning her into someone worthy of true love. My concentration wasn't spent on trying to develop the male half, but to recreate the mentality of many of the women I served while driving limousine in the Beverly/Hollywood arena. "Me" was easy to write! Connect on Facebook at Dan Arrow.