

The Encounter Series Mysteries

Las Vegas, Nevada

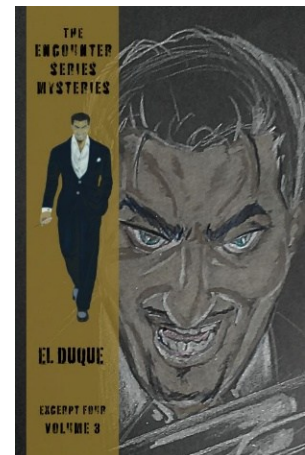
IT WAS DIMLY LIT, the small room just off the Las Vegas strip. The entire place smelled of mold like it needed to be aired out. On both sides of the room were two doors – between each door a metal console table. On top of the table, a statue of the Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh King Ramses. Above the console table, a picture on the wall displaying a middle-aged woman dressed in a black pants suit flanked, on both sides, by two unusually large coyotes.

Known as lethal cold-blooded killers, deadly trackers, and relentless hunters of anything moving or breathing, the two men suddenly found themselves nervous. They couldn't imagine in their line of work the thought of – suddenly being nervous.

Not these two.

Killing without prejudice is what they do.

Yet, time had not been good for the two men. Along with Langley Air Force Base, Lieutenant General Roger Benson, they sold their soul to a futuristic villain who, in 2019, had come back in time on a mission of destruction.



They quickly found themselves members of the dark side – in too deep. They could not go back to a normal life.

Not now!

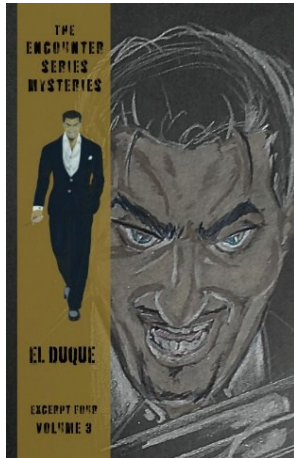
Not ever!

Eyes wide open, their heads on a swivel, the two men moved cautiously toward the center of the room, one in the lead, the other a step behind and to left. They didn't know what was behind each door but in their minds, whatever was waiting for them, it couldn't be good. They wanted to split up but dismissed that notion quickly when suddenly, without warning, a sound emerged from the door on the left. In alert mode now, they approached with extreme caution. The blond one inched closer, leaning forward, his eyes darting back and forth – listening at the door. No sound

came from within. They looked at each other but didn't speak. They backed off, stood to one side, then another sound, this time, from the door on the right.

Footsteps this time.

The doorknob began to turn slowly. The blond one gestured with his chin to his partner. They moved slowly – step by step, inch by inch, toward the door on the right. It opened slightly. The



blond one gave the door a quick push.

Bad move!

Immediately...the door slammed shut forcing both men to unsnap their holster – hands on their weapons. They looked from one to the other, checking their options, plotting their next move.

From behind – a rumbling noise.

"Shit!" The blond one blurted.

"It's a trap!" The bald one snapped.

The room went pitch black!

They backed off – took defensive positions. They drew their weapons, and when they whirled around, they saw nothing but darkness.

Suddenly both doors opened, a man emerged from the door on the right dressed in black. Staring straight ahead they couldn't tell if he was armed or not. He was tall...extremely tall. Before they could react, the man began to run toward them at full speed!

He leaped into the air!

An explosion erupted!

The bald one turned to look!

"Chu thought I forgit chu'...huh!" A voice speaking broken English barked. *I never forget wat chu do!*

It was the Puerto Rican Hit Man, Carrillo El Duque Sanchez bolting through the door on the right! He rushed toward them, firing his .45 until the clip was empty!

From out of nowhere, the two coyotes sprang forward in attack mode – growling, snarling their razor-sharp teeth and claws ready to strike a crushing death blow. Startled, the bald one wasn't going down without a fight.

He pulled his .38!

He had every intention of firing the weapon, that is, until one of the coyotes stood on its hind legs – taking on the form of an unusually tall female. Its two front legs suddenly became arms. Without warning, and before the bald one could react, he felt himself being pushed, from behind, into his unsuspecting partner who went sprawling out of control...eventually ricocheting off the middle-aged woman who slammed him violently into the metal console table.

Ready to finish them, El Duque reloaded, cocked the .45!

He pulled the trigger! “I no forgit!” He barked. “I never forgit wat chu do to my beloved Storora Conchita Gonzalez!” *I kill everybody!* He breathed. “Da big lady an’ ‘er two dogs too!”

He took aim!

It was too late.

The middle-aged woman, the coyotes, and the two men had disappeared.

Seconds later the statue on the metal console table suddenly came to life! Its eyes that were once closed snapped open – began to move side-to-side. In panic mode, the blond one put his hand on his gun! Then...as quickly as the statues transformation caught their attention, its eyes suddenly closed shut.

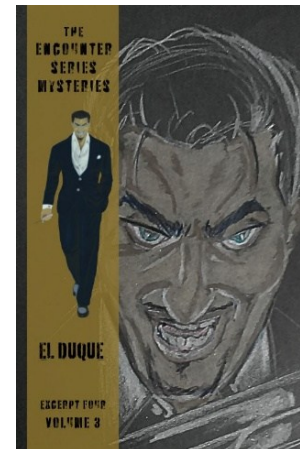
Then movement from within the room!

Another man!

He, too, was tall, well groomed, brown skin. He looked *kept*, this man – someone who lived a well-supported, lavish lifestyle. He had no obvious connection to El Duque. Yet, Kareem Abdul Ali was in the room now. The mere fact that he was in Las Vegas, Nevada – had, possibly, stumbled upon their location by accident was something El Duque hadn’t counted on.

Still, Ali was aware of something that El Duque hadn’t thought of...he knew the two men that previously tangled with El Duque. Yet, unbeknownst to El Duque, Ali was dealing with his own problems. Visions of the supernatural – feelings of being pursued by people that exist but do not exist still occupied Ali’s thoughts.

El Duque continued to weigh and measure Ali, but he wasn’t anyone El Duque was looking for – nor was he someone he was out to get even with – to eliminate. The rogue FBI agents Smalls and Stone were on his mind – the *Bain* of his existence. But now...Ali was suddenly another player in his game of retribution.

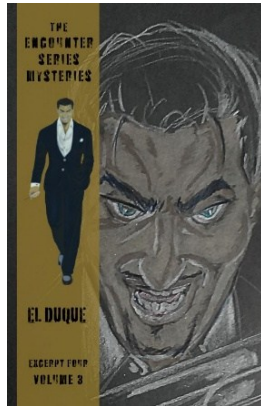


And he wanted to know why.

El Duque took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He backed off this time to the center of the room. Before he could blink, he was shoved from behind sending him crashing into the console table.

Smalls and Stone were back!

They had somehow managed to recover from their encounter with the middle-aged woman and



the coyotes. As El Duque bounced off the console table, Smalls was delivering a right cross aimed at his face. Trying to avoid the sucker punch, El Duque slipped recovering just in time to block the punch with his gun hand sending the .45 flying across the room.

Suddenly, a shadow moved over El Duque!

Off balance, he staggered to his feet in time to see Stone positioning himself to deliver a crushing blow. El Duque quickly countered – reach for and pulled out one of two signature weapons – a pearl handled ice pick!

Stone threw up both hands along with Stone they quickly came to their senses and backed off – hauled ass.