

Deliver us

From

Evil

Sidney Sistrunk

Deliver Us From Evil!

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By The Same Author

"On to the Unknown"

Non-fiction

"Travels with Artsy and Twinkle Toes on the A.T."

By Twinkle Toes

(The Appalachian Trail hiking name of the author)

Acknowledgement

This book is dedicated to my wife, Mina A. Swan, who is my most vocal critic and most loyal supporter in reading, criticizing, amending, correcting, changing, modifying, and even *suggesting* alternatives to the dialogue.

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**BAM - BAM - BAM – Crack - Crack — KaBOW -BAM – POW - POW - - -
Crack - - - Silence!**

‘What the hell is going on out there? It sounds like a royal gun battle. Is anyone shooting at me? Why? What’s going on? Here I am trying to take a little nap off the highway and it sounds like I got into the middle of a war. I’m not going to move. I don’t consider myself a coward, but I’m sure not stupid. Let me just stay quiet for a while and see what’s going to happen.’

After all of the gunfire, it was now deathly quiet. All birds stopped singing and all outside sounds were gone. ‘I listened for a while and finally, some of the outside sounds started coming back. Some birds starting singing and others chimed in. I stayed quiet and did not move from the front seat of my car. Usually, I wake up fairly slowly but that gunfire woke me up mighty fast. Where did it come from? And the question still not answered was **why?** Were they shooting at each other? Were they just making noise for noise sake? I’m going to stay here until they move away. Perhaps they do not know that I’m here and I sure am not going to advertise the fact. I have not heard that kind of shooting since I was in the Army and then it was always one kind of sound. Those noises sounded like they came from three or four different kinds of pistols as they did sound like pistols.’

‘This gives me some time to just think! I don’t think that I have any enemies. Well, maybe a few would like to rough me up a bit but not kill me. Well, whoever is out there was not gunning for me as I was a perfect target asleep in my car.’

‘I had left central Florida and am on my way to Louisiana to try to get a job on the Gulf oil rigs. I don’t know anything about oil drilling, but I understand that the pay is good and I can run, repair, and maintain any kind of engine from gas, diesel, or electric. I may not be college material but I sure have a knack for engines. Hopefully, someone will recognize my skills and be able to use them.’

‘It’s rather quiet out there now with no more sounds from the guns. I’ll surely miss my old girlfriend though. She would have been a basket case with all of the shooting. She was a super lady but we had different ideas and goals in life. We talked about marriage but the subject of children blew us apart. She wanted them and I wanted nothing to do with the squalling, squealing, demanding, and utterly useless little brats. It was O.K. for others to have kids but I wanted and

demanded my freedom so that we could travel and enjoy life without having to worry about those little hanger-on's. I'll miss Susie. I do already. Now, why couldn't she just be content with enjoying life without having a flock of kids to spoil it? She was smart, darned good looking, sexy as they come, had a good paying job that she liked, but wanted kids to tie her down with just me paying all of the bills. Darn it!

'I think that I can go outside now and try to find out what's happened. I'll be as quiet as possible and hope that it's enough.'

Quietly opening the car door and not shutting it, Mike slowly got out of the car. Keeping his head down, he slowly crept toward where he thought the shooting had come from. After about a hundred yards he could make out several cars up ahead by the edge of the little side road that he came in on. 'I don't see any movement at all. What's going on here?' Still keeping quiet, he crept on and tried to make no sounds. He could not keep perfectly quiet but he put his feet down as softly as he could. Keeping as low as he could he was finally able to get close enough to the cars that he could see the area. The cars appeared fairly new or at least most of them did. There was a Cadillac, a Buick, a late model Toyota, and an older Ford panel truck. Looking closely he was able to see some bodies on the ground and they were not moving.

Finally standing up, he could see six men sprawled on the ground and they all sure looked to be dead. They were all nicely dressed and seemed to be in the age range of 30 to 40. There was no movement from any of them, and all were covered in blood. Five of the figures had pistols either in their hands or on the ground nearby. 'It looks like they killed each other for some reason or other. I think the best thing for me to do is get my rear end out of here and notify the state police. This is no place for me to hang around.' Getting closer to the men on the ground, it was apparent to him that all were dead. Not wanting to touch anything, he did not even attempt to see if any of the men had a pulse. He could tell that they were dead indeed.

As he stood up to leave, he thought that he heard something that sounded like whimpering. Quietly moving slowly toward where the sound came from, he definitely knew that someone was alive. 'Is someone injured and needs help? Perhaps I can take him to the hospital as that would be the least I can do. I don't believe that he would shoot me if I am trying to help.' Moving closer to the sound, he was convinced that it came from the back of a panel truck. Moving to the rear of the truck. He tapped gently on the rear door, he called out softly, "Is anyone in there needing help?" The whimpering stopped and he was rewarded with silence. Again, he called but a bit louder this time. "Are you alright? Let me know if I can help." Again, he received silence in return. "I'm going to open the door now."

He slowly opened the rear door of the truck and peered inside. It was dark in the truck and at first he could not see anything. There seemed to be boxes, newspapers and various sandwich wrappers and other debris in the floor of the truck. Then, in the rear amongst the newspapers he vividly saw a pistol pointing at him. Jumping back, he called out, "Don't shoot, I'm here to help you." Slowly looking back in, he kept talking and tried to see who was holding the pistol. He held up his hands up to show that he was not armed. As his eyes adjusted to the dimness in the back of the truck, he was surprised to see that the pistol was held by a very young girl who was not whimpering, was not smiling, and appeared dead serious about using her weapon.

"If you are hurt, please let me help you. I can take you to a hospital." Keeping his hands up and trying to smile, he was certain that the smile, if it could be called that, was probably a grimace and he was more than a little concerned about the pistol still pointing at him. Slowly, the pistol was lowered and he could see that the young girl could not have been more than about 10 or 11 and was equally scared. She was shaking and that didn't help the situation until she laid the pistol down. Then, she was quietly crying.

"Hello there. Are you hurt? Is there anyone else alive or hurt? I'm a friend and can help you. What is your name?" There was no answer and the sobbing gradually decreased. "Please, tell me what happened here if you know. My name is Mike and I can take you to a hospital if you're hurt." Then, he heard the whimpering again and it did not come from the little girl. It came from further back in the van. He started to crawl into the van but the girl quickly picked up the pistol and aimed it again.

"Wait, wait, I mean no harm and I can get help. Who is back there and is he or she hurt? Please let me help." Finally, the young girl allowed him to enter so that he could crawl to the back of the van. It was rather cluttered in the rear with more trash laying around. There he found a young boy hiding under a pile of rags and newspapers, shaking and still whimpering. Probably no older than 6 or 7, the boy seemed to be in a state of shock. Looking him over, he saw no signs of injuries so he gently tried to pick him up and gave him a small hug. He got a hug in return. The hug that he got seemed to be a desperate one as the boy clung to him. Talking to him quietly, Mike gently laid him back down and asked him for his name." He got nothing from the boy and the girl still had not talked to him. "Come on now, I gave you *my* name so tell me who you are." He still received no names or any signs of recognition, just silent stares.

Looking at their faces, he realized that they may be from the Caribbean and spoke something other than English. Not being fluent in

anything other than English, Mike tried, "hablo English?" That got a response!

"No, no, no much English. I understand some but no speak much good." Then the girl starting speaking what was probably Spanish but Mike could not understand any of what she was saying.

Finally, he held up his hands and pointing to his ears he remarked. "Sorry but no understand, no Espanole." Motioning with his hands, he continued, "Can you stand? Pushing his hands upward, he repeated, "Can you stand?" She seemed to understand this and slowly got to her feet. She was a tiny lass and seemed to be dressed comfortably in jeans and a T-shirt. All of her clothes fit well and seemed clean and well cared for. With long black hair and long eyelashes, it was apparent that in a few years she would be a very beautiful girl that would draw attention from the young men in her area. She then helped the little boy to stand and Mike could see that there were no visible wounds on either. The boy was equally dressed well and clean, well almost clean. Hiding in the back of the van got him a bit dirty.

"We have a mess outside but we have to go out. Stay with me and we'll go to the police to report this and try to find your family." As soon as the work 'police' came out, the girl was very visibly agitated.

"No, no, no policia." Gripping Mikes hand, she pulled him down to her eye level and repeated, "*No policia, no, no!*"

Mike kneeled down and tried to reason with her. "We have to go to the police because of what happened here. The police are nice people and will take good care of you two." Again, he got the emphatic "Nos!" Then, putting his finger to his chest, he stated, "I'm Mike" and then pointing to the girl, he asked, "Your name?" After repeating this procedure a couple of times, she seemed to understand.

"Me Maria" and pointing to the little boy, she stated "El is Juan." Then she spoke something else that Mike could not understand.

"Well, we have to go to the police and report this"

"*No, no, no policia!*" Then the girl started sobbing and pleading with frantic 'nos'. "No policia. No, no, no!"

Mike really did not know what to do. He knew that the scene had to be reported but the appealing 'nos' gave him some thought. Taking his cell phone out, he indicated that he would phone the police and this seemed to placate the young girl. "First, let's get out of here. Being around all of these dead bodies makes me uncomfortable. Come back to my car with me and we'll get out of here. We won't go to the police now. O.K, no policia but come. O.K?"

When Maria and Juan came into the clearing where all of the dead men lay, they both clutched their faces and started sobbing deeply and almost silently. Mike had a hard time trying to be sympathetic.

Obviously, they did not know what had transpired in the clearing. They must have been in the van when all of the shooting had occurred.

Mike gently took both of their hands and tried to lead them away from the scene. At first they went with him, but Maria pulled her hand away and went back to stand beside one of the figures.

Then Maria looked down to one of the dead men on the ground. It took a few moments for the reality of the event to sink into her awareness. She looked up to Mike and pointed down, "Me papa" and the tears then flowed. Mike tried to console her but the sobbing continued. Bending down, he took the wallet from the back pocket of her papa and handed it to Maria. Juan just stood and continued his whimpering. Looking down at their dead papa, the sightless eyes were just staring up into the sky. Mike knelt and gently closed the eyes of their father. 'I know that it does not make any difference to anyone, but he seems to be more at peace this way.' Assuming that the children were Catholic, he then made the sign of the cross over their papa's body. Maria then did the same thing.

Then a thought came to Mike. 'I can't let there be any evidence of my being here. I left some fingerprints on the van and I cannot take a chance. I don't want anyone to know that I was here. With all of these dead bodies around, the police would never stop questioning me.' Then he took his handkerchief out and wiped down everything that he even *thought* that he may have touched. 'This place gives me the creeps. Let me out of here!'

Mike was urging them to follow him but Maria went back to one of the cars. "Come, come, we have to get out of here. There may be more of these people around and I don't want to be here if they come. Maria, please *come!*" 'Now, I truly wish that I had taken some Spanish classes in high school when I had the chance.' "Maria, what do you have there?" She came out of the car dragging a suitcase in each hand. "What do you have there, your clothes? We'll bring them along as they'll surely be needed wherever I'll be taking you two."

Taking one of the suitcases, Mike was surprised at the weight of it. "What do you have in here – rocks? Let me take both of them so we can get to my car faster. With the two suitcases, equally heavy, Mike led the way to his car. Both Maria and Juan followed with no hesitation although Juan held on to Mike's pants leg.

The forest was awake now with birds singing, crickets chirping with even some squirrels barking at each other as if nothing serious had happened in their area. Mike could not help but notice the sound the wind made as it went through the pine needles. 'That sure is a welcome sound. The wind going through tree leaves always makes a welcome sound, but going through the pine needles is a sound all by

itself. It can really lull one to sleep, but it'll just have to wait til another time.'

Back at his car, Mike got the suitcases in his trunk and had a problem trying to get seat belts on the two children. 'I know that the youngest is required to be in a booster seat, but I just don't have one handy and that's the least of my concerns. He first tried to get one in the front seat and one in the rear but they both wanted to be together and neither wanted to be in the rear. The lack of the language ability to communicate also posed a problem. Finally, he had both children in the front seat with the one seat belt going around the two of them. 'The safety brigade would not approve but at this point, I could care less. I want us out of here.'

On his phone, he was able to get his GPS coordinates and wrote them down so that when he called to the police, he could give them the exact location of the scene. He did not know why Maria was so adamant about not going to the police but he could take care of that by phoning and then try to find some place to take the children. He knew that he could not take care of them and did not even want to try. That would be someone else's responsibility and the sooner the better. It was already past 5 o'clock and most places will be closed for new visitors, so Mike decided to wait for the next day to find some place to drop off the children. 'They have surely had enough ugliness for one day so I can wait a day and maybe Maria will be less paranoid tomorrow. Maybe she has had some bad experiences with police or coming from a criminal family, they are all afraid of the police. Maybe she will be a bit calmer tomorrow. What the heck, I can put up with them for one more day.'

Driving out of the narrow road, Mike was still uneasy as if he half expected some more of the killers to be coming into the road. He was not fully comfortable until his car was back on the highway and he was driving quickly away. Both children were very quiet although they were no longer crying. Considering that they had just lost their 'papa' it would be expected. Losing a parent is one thing but to be present when they were shot dead was another. It would take some time for the reality of the event to sink in.

"How about some supper?" asked Mike. Getting no reply, he realized that they did not understand what he was saying. 'This is going to take some getting used to' he thought. 'Well, it's supper time and I'll just pretend that they are ready for some food. No matter where they came from, there was surely a hamburger place there and all kids like hamburgers so, somewhere up ahead there must be one that we can visit.' Driving through the next small town, sure enough a fast food diner came into view. "Hey kids, how about some hamburgers for supper?"

At the name 'hamburgers', both children seemed to perk up. They were not smiling but they at least seemed to be interested. Mike was uncomfortable about taking the children inside so he drove into the drive-through and ordered for them all. All kids seemed to like burgers and fries so he ordered three sets for all. Root beers were usually liked by all children so he ordered that for all of them. After the order came, he drove off and was looking for a roadside park or some place that he could pull over and share the food without drawing attention to himself and his inability to communicate with the children.

In a short time, he found a local park complete with a playground and parking facilities. He continued talking to the children even though he realized that they could not understand him. He wanted to make some friendly sounds so the children would be more comfortable. Silence from him would just encourage them to think about their circumstances and dilemma so he just talked and talked. Seeing a picnic table he got the children unbuckled and led them to the table.

After sitting down, Mike started to get his cell phone out and hesitated. 'They could trace this call to me and I surely do not want that. This call can wait until I can get to a public phone. They are sure rarer now than in the past but perhaps I can find one somewhere.'

Seeing a small deli next to the park, Mike indicated to the children that he wanted them to stay and he went into the shop. Putting a \$5 bill on the counter, he asked to use the phone for a local call. The money got the request approved and a call to 911 was soon made. Mike waited until he was out of hearing range of anyone who may be listening. After all, this call had to be private with no outsiders listening in. If anyone heard what he was going to say, there would be all kinds of questions asked and Mike did not want any unanswered questions floating around. He quickly dialed 911 and had a very short wait before his call was answered. When the call was answered, he spoke quickly and stated that he did not want to be interrupted. He gave the GPS coordinates, repeated them, and stated that the police would find six men dead, that he knew nothing of the circumstances of their deaths, did not know who they were, or why they were killed. Not waiting for a response and not wishing to answer any questions, Mike quickly hung up. Thanking the deli attendant, Mike left the shop.

Going back to the children, Mike smiled and said, "Well, I hope you like your burgers because that is all that we have". Getting them settled with their meals with plenty of ketchup, the kids did not wait for a formal invitation. They momentarily bypassed their more pressing problem and heartily ate. With apple pie for desert, there was even a smile from Juan. With no others around them, they were able to more

or less enjoy their meal but Mike continued to talk to them. And kept pointing to himself and repeating “amigo!”

Maria then tugged at his sleeve and whispered “Senor, I speak English a little. I understand more. Me mama no like ingles. Me papa - me papa - - uh - - uh - - he no speak much. O.K?”

“O.K. Maria, I understand, but if you live in this country, you will have to speak English. I’m sure that you will learn fast.”

“Well, I was planning on just sleeping in my car, but I sure can’t do that now. Somewhere up ahead, we should be able to find a motel that I can afford. We are not in a hurry so we can take our time in looking.” In a surprisingly short time, a motel appeared that seemed to fit Mike’s budget. It was nowhere near to a 3 or 4 star motel but seemed to be small and quiet. “Let us try this one and I can just hope that it fits our needs. I’ll help you with your suitcases as they *are* heavy. I believe that you packed for a long, long vacation.”

Checking in, Mike got a room with two double beds with the intention that the children would be sleeping together. Going to their room, Mike indicated to the children that one of the beds was for both of them and neither made a fuss about it. “I don’t know about you two, but I need a shower. I hadn’t planned on taking one, but since it is available, I could use it. Do either of you want a shower or a bath? You both appear fairly clean. O.K. while I shower, you can get ready for bed. I am assuming that you have pajamas in your suitcases so get them on.” Knowing that they did not understand him, Mike could only hope that they would be getting ready for bed while he showered. The warm water felt good and presently, Mike was refreshed, clean, and looked forward to a nights’ sleep. With all that he had gone through during the day, he also knew that sleep would not come easily.

After getting his pajamas on, Mike went back to the children. “O.K. who’s next? Any takers for a shower? There is no bathtub so a shower will have to do it.” He then demonstrated washing while whistling for them to get the idea. For all of his efforts, they either did not get the idea or were just not interested. “Alright then, it’s bed time for all of us. There is a larger town up the road, and there I am sure that we will find some place that will take you in.” Not understanding him, they were both silent.

“I can’t tell which suitcase is whose so we’ll get one opened and one of you, at least, will have their pajamas. Then we will get the other opened and the next will have his or her pajamas. Lifting the nearest suitcase, Mike tossed it on a bed and proceeded to open it. **“What the hell!”** Mike yelled! There was obviously no pajamas in the case.

Mike was staring at a case seemingly full of hundred dollar bills. “What is this, where are your clothes, what is going on here?” Looking at Maria, he again asked, “What is this?” She did not reply but

sheepishly looked down toward her feet. "Is the other case like this one? Where are your clothes?" Not understanding him, they were both silent. He then put the other case on the bed, opened it, and again was staring at a case full of hundred dollar bills. In addition to the money each case contained a pistol. "These don't need to be in here. For the time being, I'm going to put one of them in my suitcase and the other in the glove compartment of the car. And kids, don't touch." He then made a motion to the pistols and repeated no, no, no.

Maria replied, "No, no, no!" She understood.

"Maria, do you know what we have done? This looks like a drug deal gone bad and someone or some organization will be looking for this cash. Our lives will not be worth a plugged nickel. We will just have to turn this over to the police and let them handle it"

"No, no, no policia. No policia. No, no!"

"Well, we can't do anything tonight but tomorrow, we'll have to go to the police. I'm sorry, but that is just the way that it has to be. Let's try to get some sleep. Tomorrow will come soon enough but I feel that none of us will be able to get much sleep tonight. Without any pajamas, you two will have to sleep in your underwear as there is nothing else available. I have a couple of large t-shirts available and you can get into them. They'll be mighty big for you but they will cover you up and should be quite warm. Here, let me help you undress and get you into these things." With a little more encouragement, Mike had the children undressed and into his t-shirts.

Mike tried to comfort them and assured them that he would not let harm come to them. "I know that you have had a horrible day with all other killings and seeing your own father killed but that is all history now and there is nothing that any of us can do to change things. Let us try to get some rest and hopefully some sleep. Tomorrow, I will get you to a safe place out of harm's way. I don't have an answer to all of your needs, but I will not fail you."

In the meantime, Mike was curious as to just how old the children were. Taking his digital watch out, he had Maria look at the date. "See, does it say 8/14/14 or is it 14/8/14?" She didn't seem to understand, so he pointed to one date and then to the other and held his hands up in a questioning position.

"Oh", she got the idea and pointed to the 14/8/14 date.

Pointing to himself, Mike wrote 13/9/88 and then pointed to Maria with a questioning look. She got the idea and wrote 4/3/04 and pointing to Juan, she wrote 20/6/08.

"Good, that's taken care of. That makes you ten and Juan six years old."

"Me diez y Juan seis."

"You are ten and Juan is six!"

“Me diez y Juan seis.”

“O.K. you are diez and Juan is seis. I think that I’ve just had my first Spanish lesson. Now, all I have to do is remember it.”

Tucking each of them in, Mike got into his bed and laid there wide awake. ‘What have I gotten myself into?’ He thought. ‘I don’t even like kids and now I am saddled with two of them. Regardless of Maria’s wishes, I believe that the police will be the best bet to dump them and to get rid of this cash. Of course, the police will want to know why I waited so long to bring the children in. What can I tell them? Well gee, the little girl did not want me to come to you. That should get a laugh out of them. They could probably use a good laugh in their otherwise dull day. Who will take care of the children? It’s sure not my responsibility and I feel certain that some organization will be able to take care of them and get them back to their real family, where ever it may be. Let me repeat, Mike, *it’s not your responsibility!* O.K. Mike, count sheep, count your blessings, count anything but try to get some rest.’

Still thinking, he continued, ‘Susie was a swell lady but she wanted children and I could not handle that wish. I’ll probably never find anyone else like her and she was attractive, never complaining, had a good job herself, and really deserved someone better than me. I certainly hope that she finds someone who can appreciate her. What did she call me, self-centered? Perhaps she was correct. I do seem to think of myself first. Is that wrong? If I don’t think of myself first, who else is going to? A bunch of demanding kids sure won’t. Hey, what is this? Someone is getting into bed with me.’

Turning over, Mike quickly found out that Juan was snuggled up to him. ‘O.K. he can stay here tonight. The poor little guy has had enough dumped on him today. If I can give him a bit of security, it will not hurt me this one night.’ Staying as immobile as he could, Mike soon found himself asleep. He was awakened several hours later by Maria going to the bathroom. When she came back to bed, Mike got up and, wordlessly, tucked her back into her bed. No words were said but she took one of his hands and gave it a squeeze. The rest of the night passed quietly.

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