

W. E. B. GRIFFIN

FINAL JUSTICE

A Badge of Honor Novel



JOVE BOOKS, NEW YORK

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IN FOND MEMORY OF

Sergeant Zebulon V. Casey Internal Affairs Division Police Department, the City of
Philadelphia, Retired

“There came a time when there were assignments that had to be done right, and they would seek Zeb out. These assignments included police shootings, civil-rights violations, and he tracked down fugitives all over the country. He was not your average cop. He was very, very professional.”

—HOWARD LEBOSKY

DEPUTY SOLICITOR OF PHILADELPHIA

ONE

[ONE]

It was Sunday night, and at quarter after eleven the Roy Rogers restaurant at South Broad and Snyder Streets in South Philadelphia was just about full.

Amal al Zaid, who was five feet seven inches tall and weighed 145 pounds, and who had spent sixteen of his twenty-one years as Dwayne Alexander Finston before converting to Islam, was mopping a spill from the floor just outside the kitchen door when he glanced at the clock mounted high on the wall near the front entrance to the restaurant.

The first thing he thought was that he had forty-five minutes to go on his shift, and then he would be free to ride his bicycle home to the apartment he shared with his mother, two brothers, and a sister in the Tasker Homes Project a few blocks away, grab a quick shower, and then go by the mosque to see what was happening.

The second thing he thought was, *Those two is bad news.*

Amal al Zaid had seen two young men enter the restaurant. Both were in their early twenties. One was of average height and build, and the other short and overweight. Both of them stopped, one at a time, just inside the door, and looked around the restaurant, and then at each other, and then nodded.

The average-looking one slid into a banquette near the door. The sort-of-fat one, who had something wrapped in a newspaper sticking out of his jacket pocket, walked all the way through the restaurant toward where Amal al Zaid was mopping the floor by the kitchen door. Amal al Zaid then pushed the right door to the kitchen open, and held it open while he pushed his mop bucket on wheels through it.

After a moment, Amal al Zaid peered carefully through the small window in the kitchen door. He saw that the short fat guy had taken a seat in the last banquette on the left, with his back to the kitchen wall. And he saw the short fat guy pull whatever he had wrapped in newspaper from his pocket, and lay it on the banquette seat. And then Amal al Zaid saw what it was: a short-barreled revolver.

“Holy shit,” Zaid said, barely audibly, and turned and looked around the kitchen.

The kitchen supervisor, Maria Manuela Fernandez, a thirty-five-year-old in immaculate kitchen whites, who carried 144 pounds on her five-foot-three frame, was a few steps away, examining the latest serving trays to come out of the dishwasher.

Zaid went to her, touched her arm, and when she turned to him, said, “Manuela, I think we’re getting stuck up.”

Mrs. Fernandez’s eyebrows rose.

“There’s a fat guy with a gun in the last booth,” Zaid said, pointing at the wall, “and there’s another guy—they came in together—in the first booth on the right by the front

door.”

Mrs. Fernandez walked quickly and looked through the window in the door, then went to a wall-mounted telephone near the door and dialed 911.

Mrs. Fernandez’s call was answered on the second ring by Miss Eloise T. Regis in the radio room of the Philadelphia police department, on the second floor of the Police Administration Building at Eighth and Race Streets in downtown Philadelphia.

The Police Administration Building is universally known in Philadelphia as “The Roundhouse,” because the building has virtually no straight walls—exterior or interior—or corridors. Even the interiors of the elevators are curved.

Within the radio room are rows of civilian employees who, under the supervision of a few sworn police officers, sit at telephone and radio consoles receiving calls from the public and from police vehicles on the job, and relaying official orders to police vehicles.

There are twenty-two police districts in Philadelphia, and six divisions of detectives. There is also the Special Operations Division, which includes the Highway Patrol—despite its name, far more of an elite force than one concerned with highway traffic—and the Special Investigations Unit.

The Traffic and Accident Divisions actually have the primary responsibility for the public’s safety on the highways and streets of Philadelphia. Their tools include a fleet of radio-equipped tow trucks and other special vehicles. The Juvenile Division is charged with dealing with crimes committed against—or by—juveniles.

Additionally, there are special-purpose units, such as the K-9 Unit, the Marine Unit, the Airport Unit, and the Vice, Narcotics, Organized Crime, and Dignitary Protection Units—and others.

Each district, division, and special unit has its own complement of radio-equipped police vehicles of all sorts.

And on top of this, of course, is the communications network necessary to maintain round-the-clock instantaneous contact with the vehicles of the senior command hierarchy of the police department, the commissioner and his staff, the deputy commissioners and their staffs, the chief inspectors and their staffs, and a plethora of other senior police officers.

With hundreds of police and support vehicles on the job at any one time, it was necessary to develop, both by careful planning and by trial and error, a system permitting instant contact with the right vehicle at the right time.

The police commissioner—or the commanding officer of the Marine Unit—is not really interested in learning instantly about every automobile accident in Philadelphia, nor is a request from the Airport Police for a paddy wagon to haul off three drunks from their bailiwick of much interest to a detective investigating a burglary in Chestnut Hill.

Philadelphia is broken down, for police department purposes, into eight geographical divisions and the Park Division. Each division is headed by an inspector, and contains from two to four districts, each commanded by a captain. Generally, each

division has its own radio frequency, but in some divisions, really busy districts—the Twenty-fifth District in the East Division, for example—have their own separate frequencies. Detectives' cars and those assigned to other investigative units (Narcotics, Intelligence, Organized Crime, et cetera) have radios operating on the "H-Band." All police car radios can be switched to an all-purpose emergency and utility frequency called the "J-Band." Special Operations Division has its own, the "S-Band."

For example, a police officer in the Sixteenth District would routinely have his radio switch set to F-1, which would permit him to communicate with his (the West) division. Switching to F-2 would put him on the universal J-Band. A car assigned to South Philadelphia with his switch set to F-1 would be in contact with the South Division. A detective operating anywhere with his switch set to F-1 would be on the Detective's H-Band, but he too, by switching to F-2, would be on the J-Band.

Senior police officers have more sophisticated radios, and are able to communicate with other senior police brass, the detective frequency, or on the frequency of some other service in which they have a personal interest. Ordinary police cars are required to communicate through the dispatcher, and forbidden to talk car-to-car. Car-to-car communication is authorized on the J-, H-, and S-Bands.

"Communications discipline" is strictly enforced. Otherwise, there would be communications chaos.

There is provision, however, for a radio room dispatcher— simply by throwing the appropriate switch—to send a radio message simultaneously to every radio-equipped police vehicle, from a police boat making its way against the current of the Delaware River through the hundreds of police cars on patrol to the commissioner's and mayor's cars.

This most often happens when an operator takes a call in which the calling party says, "Officer needs assistance. Shots fired."

Not every call to 911 requesting police assistance is legitimate. Philadelphia has its fair share of lunatics—some say more than its fair share—who like to involve the cops in any number of things having nothing whatever to do with maintaining the peace and tranquillity within the City of Brotherly Love. And Philadelphia's youth, having watched cop movies on television to learn the cant, dial 911 ten or twelve times every day to report a murder, a body, a robbery, a car accident, anything that will cause a flock of police cars, lights flashing and sirens screaming, to descend on a particular street corner and liven up an otherwise dull period of the day.

The people who answer the telephones didn't come to work yesterday, however—Miss Eloise T. Regis, for example, had been on the job for more than twenty years—and usually they *know*, from the timbre of the caller's voice, or the assurance with which the caller raises the alarm, that *this* particular call is legitimate.

When Miss Regis answered the call from an excited Latino-sounding lady reporting a robbery in progress at the Roy Rogers at Broad and Snyder, she had *known* the call was genuine.

At 11:21, a call went out from Police Radio.

"Possible armed robbery in progress, Roy Rogers restaurant, Broad and Snyder.

Unknown civilian by phone.”

Officer Kenneth J. Charlton, of the First District, then patrolling the area, responded, “One seven. In on the Roy Rogers.”

As Mrs. Fernandez was speaking excitedly with Miss Regis, there was the sound of a shot, and some unintelligible shouts.

The door to the kitchen burst open, and the fat guy with the gun came through it. He saw Mrs. Fernandez on the telephone, and when she saw him, she dropped the handset and moved away from the telephone, placing her back against the wall near the telephone.

The fat guy went to the handset dangling from the wall phone, put it to his ear, listened a moment—just long enough to be able to determine with whom Mrs. Fernandez was speaking—then grabbed the coiled expansion cord and ripped it free from the telephone.

Then he looked at Mrs. Fernandez and said, “You fucking bitch!” and raised his revolver to arm’s length and fired at her. The bullet struck her just below her left ear and exited her skull just above her right ear.

Her convulsing body slid down the wall until her knees were fully bent, and then it fell forward onto the floor.

The fat guy then brandished his revolver at the other kitchen workers. There were six: three men and three women. The fat guy had not seen Amal al Zaid when he had shoved the kitchen door open. He had done so with such force that it went past the spring stop, causing it to remain in the open position at a right angle to the doorway. Amal al Zaid was behind it, his back pressed against the wall, literally paralyzed by fear.

“In the fucking cooler, motherfuckers!” the fat guy said, waving his revolver and gesturing toward the walk-in refrigerator.

When the kitchen staff—stumbling in their haste, one of the women moaning in terror as she held both hands to her mouth—had gone inside the walk-in refrigerator, the fat guy walked quickly toward it, closed the door, and looked around the kitchen.

Holy Christ! Amal al Zaid thought. *That crazy nigger’s going to see me!*

The fat guy found what he wanted—a wooden-handled sharpening steel—on a worktable right behind him, picked it up, and jammed it in the loops intended for a padlock in the refrigerator door. Then he turned and started for the kitchen door.

In the logical presumption that he would be seen by the guy who’d just shot Manuela, Amal al Zaid lost control of his bladder, and momentarily forgot that he was no longer a Christian.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name . . .

The fat guy looked to the left as he made his way across the kitchen, paused briefly to look down at the body of the goddamn bitch who had called the motherfucking cops, and then went through the open kitchen door into the dining area.

Amal al Zaid finally found the courage to look through the narrow crack between

the door and the doorjamb, and saw that the fat guy was working his way through the dining room, collecting wallets and coin purses and watches and rings from the customers.

The other sonofabitch was at the cashier's station by the front door, taking the paper money from the cash register.

The fat guy finished robbing the four people at the banquette he was working, then walked toward the front of the restaurant.

"Let's get the fuck out of here," the fat guy said.

"Fuck, fuck, *fucking* fuck, it's a fucking cop!" the guy at the register said, gesturing through the window.

He squatted down behind the cash register. The fat guy slid into the banquette nearest to him on the right.

At 11:26, Officer Charlton entered the restaurant, holding his service pistol at his side. He glanced at the cashier's station, saw the man crouching behind it, and took a half-dozen steps around the cashier's station.

The guy at the cash register suddenly stood up, lunged at Officer Charlton, and wrapped his arms around him, preventing Officer Charlton from raising his pistol to fire it.

The fat guy jumped from the banquette, ran to them, shoved the muzzle of his pistol under Charlton's "bulletproof" vest, and fired.

Officer Charlton stiffened, then went limp and fell to the floor. The guy who had been behind the cash register then stepped over Charlton's body. Then he turned and fired twice at the body. Then he ran out of the restaurant onto South Broad Street after the fat guy.

After a moment, Amal al Zaid pushed himself off the wall and ran to the employees' locker room.

Shit! Oh, fuck, I pissed in my pants!

In the employees' locker room, he opened his locker and took his cellular telephone from his jacket, punched in 911, and when the voice said, "Police Radio?" he blurted: "This is the Roy Rogers restaurant at Broad and Snyder. Two black guys just shot the kitchen lady and a cop who walked in while they was robbing us."

This call too, coincidentally, was answered by Miss Regis. And again her experience told her the call was legitimate.

"Sergeant!" she called, raising her voice just to get his attention, not to ask his permission. Then she threw the appropriate switch.

Three fast, short beeps, signifying an emergency message, were broadcast to every police radio in Philadelphia.

Miss Regis pressed the switch activating her microphone.

"Assist the officer, Broad and Snyder, inside the Roy Rogers, report of an officer shot. Assist the officer, Broad and Snyder, inside the Roy Rogers, report of an officer shot. This is a civilian by phone, we have officers responding to a previous call of a

possible armed robbery at that location.”

[TWO]

The second vehicle to reach the Roy Rogers restaurant at South Broad and Snyder Streets in response to the first “possible armed robbery in progress” call over the F-Band was a new Buick Rendezvous CXL Sport Utility Vehicle, on the roof of which were three antennas capable of listening to police radio frequencies. A fourth antenna was mounted on the rear window, and just before getting close to Snyder Street, the driver of the car switched off a flashing blue light with a magnetic base that he had put on the roof after hearing the call.

The driver, however, was not a sworn police officer of the Philadelphia police department, and—as had often been pointed out to him—using the flashing blue light on the roof to speed one’s way through traffic was in violation of at least four laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, ranging from violation of Paragraph 4912 of the Criminal Code of Pennsylvania—impersonation of a public official, such as a police officer—to violation of Paragraph 6504 of the Criminal Code—setting up a nuisance in public.

The Rendezvous itself, and all the expensive radios and scanners, were the property of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, with whom the driver, Michael J. “Mickey” O’Hara, a wiry, curly-haired man in his late thirties, was professionally associated. The magnetic base flashing blue light was the property of the Philadelphia police department, having been removed by Mr. O’Hara from a wrecked and burned unmarked car, rendering him liable to charges of having violated one or more of Paragraphs 3921, 3924, and 3925 of the Criminal Code, which deal with the unlawful taking of property.

Mr. O’Hara’s association with the *Bulletin* went back twenty-one years, to his sixteenth year, when he was hired as a copyboy, shortly after having been expelled from West Catholic High School. Monsignor Dooley had caught Mickey with a pocketful of Francesco “Frankie the Gut” Guttermo’s numbers slips, and when Mickey had refused to name his accomplice in that illegal and immoral enterprise, the monsignor had given him the boot.

Mickey had immediately found a home in journalism, and had become a reporter—the *Bulletin* said “staff writer”—before he was old enough to vote. As he had risen in the *Bulletin* city room hierarchy, his remuneration had naturally increased. He had been perfectly happy with his relationship with the *Bulletin* and the compensation he was given until his childhood friend, Casimir Bolinski, had brought the subject up.

“Face it, Mickey, those bastards are screwing you,” Casimir had said when passing through Philadelphia to visit his parents.

It was more than an idle observation; it was a professional one. Because Mickey had refused to name him as his fellow numbers runner, Casimir, already known as “The Bull,” had graduated from West Catholic High, gone on to Notre Dame on a football scholarship, and from Notre Dame to the Green Bay Packers.

There, while his Packers teammates had spent their off seasons in various nonproductive if pleasant pursuits, Casimir had studied the law. He hadn't wanted to, if the truth be known, but Mrs. Antoinette Bolinski, who weighed approximately one third as much as her husband, was a woman of great determination, and The Bull knew better than to argue with her.

To his surprise, Casimir liked the study of law, and immediately showed a flair for the business aspects of the profession. The day after the Packers—in an emotional ceremony—retired The Bull's jersey, Casimir J. Bolinski, *D. Juris*, announced the opening of his law offices, in which he intended to deal with the relationships between professional athletes and their employers. He started, rather naturally, by representing professional football players, but as word spread throughout the world of sports about how successful The Bull had been in securing pay far beyond the expectations of the players, professionals from baseball, basketball, and even a number of jockeys—the crème de la crème, so to speak, of the world of sports—began to beat a path to his door.

"The way it is, Mickey," Casimir had explained, "is when I first quit the game, the guys would come to see me and say 'How they hanging, Bull? What's this bullshit about you being a lawyer?' and now they come in, shaved and all dressed up in suits, and say, 'Thank you very much for seeing me, Dr. Bolinski.'"

Antoinette Bolinski had been thrilled to find out that *D. Juris* stood for "Doctor of Law," and that she was thus entitled to refer to Casimir as "my husband, Dr. Bolinski." She immediately began to do so. The phrase had a really classy ring to it, and if the other lawyers didn't want to use the title, screw them.

As once the fabled defense of the Detroit Lions had crumpled before The Charging Bull in that never-to-be-forgotten 32-zilch game, the assembled legal counsel of the *Bulletin* gave way before Dr. Bolinski's persuasive arguments that the few extra dollars they were going to have to spend on Mickey were nothing compared to the dollars they would lose in lost circulation if Mickey moved over to the *Inquirer* or the *Daily News*.

"Jesus, you're dumb, Mickey," Casimir had said later. "You've got the fucking Pulitzer, for Christ's sake. You should have known that's worth a whole lot of dead presidents' pictures."

As a result of the negotiations by Dr. Bolinski on behalf of Mr. O'Hara with the *Bulletin*, Mr. O'Hara's compensation was quadrupled, and it was agreed that the *Bulletin* would provide Mr. O'Hara with a private office and an automobile of Mr. O'Hara's choice, equipped as Mr. O'Hara wished; and that he would be reimbursed for all expenses incurred in his professional work, it being clearly understood this would involve a substantial amount of business entertainment.

With one exception, however—Mickey was the sole supporter of his widowed mother, and had been having a really hard time paying her tab at the Cobbs Creek Nursing Center & Retirement Home—his new affluence didn't change his life much.

After toying with the suggestion of Dr. Bolinski that he have the *Bulletin* buy him either a Mercedes or a Cadillac, Mickey had chosen the Buick Rendezvous. A Caddie,

or a Kraut-mobile, he reasoned, would piss off most of the people with whom he worked. By that he meant the police officers. It was said—with more than a little justification—that Mickey knew more cops by their first names than anyone else, and that more cops knew Mickey by sight than they did the police commissioner.

Mickey knew that most—certainly not all—of Philly’s cops liked him, and he attributed this to both reciprocation—he liked most cops—and to the fact that he spelled their names right, got the facts right, and never betrayed a confidence.

As he did most nights, Mickey O’Hara had been cruising the city in the Rendezvous when one of the scanners had caught the “possible armed robbery” call. He was then five blocks south of the Roy Rogers on South Broad Street.

“Possible, my ass,” he had said, aloud, then put the gum-ball machine on the roof, glanced in the rearview mirror, and made an illegal U-turn on Broad Street.

When he reached the Roy Rogers, he saw there was a blue-and -white, door open, parked on Snyder, which told him the cops had just arrived, and the possible robbery in progress was probably still in progress, because the cop wouldn’t have left his car door open if he hadn’t been in a hell of a hurry.

He double-parked on Snyder, beside the police car, grabbed his digital camera from the passenger seat, and quickly got out of the Rendezvous. Two black guys were coming out of the restaurant in a hurry. In a reflex action, Mickey put the digital camera to his eye and snapped a picture.

The short fat black guy saw him, raised his arm, and took a shot at Mickey with a short-barreled revolver. He missed, but Mickey, as a prudent measure, dropped to the ground beside the Rendezvous. When he looked up, both of the doers were hauling ass down Snyder Street.

Mickey got to his feet, ran quickly to the Roy Rogers, and went inside.

Just inside the door there was a cop on the floor, facedown, in a spreading pool of blood.

Mickey snapped that picture, and then as he was waiting for the camera to recycle, to take a second shot, realized he knew the dead cop. He was Kenny Charlton of the First District.

Sonofabitch! Kenny was a good guy, seventeen, eighteen years on the job. His wife works for the UGI. They have a couple of kids.

The green light in the camera came on, and he took another picture.

He was about to step around the body when he sensed motion behind him and looked over his shoulder.

A very large black man, in the peculiar uniform of the Highway Patrol, had entered the restaurant, pistol drawn. Another highway patrolman was on his heels.

“I think the doers just ran down Snyder,” Mickey said, pointing. “Two black guys, one short and fat . . . two black guys.”

Sergeant Wilson Carter turned to the highway patrolman behind him. “Get out a flash,” he ordered.

The second highway patrolman—Mickey knew the face but couldn't come up with a name—left the restaurant quickly.

Sergeant Carter looked down at the body of Officer Charlton, dropped to his knees, felt his carotid artery, and shook his head.

“Jesus, Mickey, what happened?” he asked.

“I got here just before you did,” O’Hara said, shrugging in a helpless gesture.

There were now the sounds of approaching sirens, at least two, probably three, maybe more.

“They shot somebody in the kitchen, too,” one of the restaurant patrons called out.

Sergeant Carter looked around to see who had called out, and when he did, one of the patrons, a very tall, very thin, hawk-featured black man, stood up and pointed to the kitchen.

Sergeant Carter headed for the rear of the restaurant. Mickey followed him, holding the digital camera in his hand, concealing it as well as he could.

Carter pushed open the door and went in the kitchen. Mickey caught it before it closed and followed him in.

There was a body of a chubby woman, some kind of Latina, on the floor, her head distorted and lying in a pool of blood.

“Jesus Christ!” Sergeant Carter said.

“One of them came in the kitchen,” a young black guy in kitchen whites said. “Manuela was calling the cops. He shot her.”

“They all gone?” Carter asked.

“There was just the two of them,” the young black guy said. “They’re gone.”

“You get a good look at him? Them?”

The young black guy nodded.

Carter went back into the dining room.

Mickey didn't follow him. He took a picture of the young black guy, then held up his finger, signaling him not to go anywhere, and then took two pictures, different angles, of the body on the floor.

Then he slipped the digital camera into his pocket.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Amal al Zaid.”

“You want to spell that for me?” Mickey asked, and wrote it down, and then asked where he lived.

Then he asked Amal al Zaid what had happened, and had just about finished writing that down when three other police officers entered the kitchen—a lieutenant, a detective, and a uniform.

Lieutenant Stanley J. Wrigley was acquainted with Mr. O’Hara.

“Jesus Christ, Mickey, how did you get in here?” he asked.