



Alias

Corey Sutton

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ALIAS COREY SUTTON

Fiction

By

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Dedicated with Love to all my siblings, my parents, my wife, my children and to all my extended family. Special thanks to my Dad for his rich stories and to Gayle for her pinpoint comments and edits.

Chapter One

DARKNESS LAY OVER the inside of the bus like a shroud. Outside, the clear evening sky glowed from the light of a thousand stars and a bright full moon. A dim light below the tinted windshield came from the instrument panel and cast a small light over the driver and the front entry. Few seats were occupied. Of the twelve passengers only one seemed fully awake. The others, leaning back or curled up in their seats, were asleep or resting quietly. An occasional groan or cough could be heard as the bus rolled through the quiet countryside. A tiny baby stirred somewhere in the stillness, and then whimpered, but was quickly soothed by a mother's soft voice. Quietness settled over the inside of the bus and its passengers once again, and they rolled on down the road for another hour before streetlights began to appear along the freeway on both sides and an off ramp took shape not far ahead. It was early May, but darkness still came in early evening. Summer seemed a long way off.

The bus roared through the small town, turning and rocking along narrow streets with little traffic. At a stoplight, a blond woman in a red Porsche convertible with black leather seats pulled alongside

the bus and stopped. She was wearing white shorts, a flimsy yellow blouse and appeared to be cold in the thin night air. When the light turned green, the bus pulled away slowly, but the Porsche barreled it's way down the street and quickly went out of sight. A little while later, the bus made a slow turn and came to an abrupt stop alongside a small terminal somewhere inside the town limits.

The driver turned on the inside lights, then shifted in his seat to face his passengers. "Twenty minute layover for on going passengers," he announced in a deep, scratchy voice, and then he turned to face the door. He opened the door but remained in his seat while he turned and looked toward the back of the bus again. One passenger stood up.

Corey Sutton stood and picked up his backpack. He looked around the seat for a second then stepped into the aisle and began making his way toward the front. It had been a long ride and he was tired from the constant sitting.

Slowly, he tramped down the aisle, grabbing each seat back with one hand to balance himself as he went. He still felt the movement of the bus. He'd been traveling for two days with layovers and sleeping in his seat when he could.

He stepped to the ground and stopped as a blast of hot exhaust fumes went up his nose and the roar of the big diesel filled his ears. He made an ungodly face, clamped his hands over his ears, held his breath and ran to the terminal directly in front of him. The name FAIRFIELD over the door caught his eye as he stepped inside. He stopped just inside the doorway to look around and his gaze took in several patrons sitting on a row of stools in front of a long counter, behind which two waitresses moved quickly to fill food and drink orders. A dozen other patrons lounged on benches across from the counter. Three kids played over by the refreshment center making a lot of noise. A lone man poked coins into a slot on a cigarette machine that sat against the wall alongside the water fountain on the far side. Corey's eyes caught all this in a matter of seconds.

The foul odors of burnt food, kitchen grease and smoke were everywhere, hitting him in the face like a hot wave. He blinked twice and peered across the smoke filled room at the clock on the wall above the water fountain. It was nine fifteen.

He whirled around and went back outside, stopping under the high metal roof for a second to get a breath of fresh air. A little May breeze, coming down the street, shook the metal baggage sign that

hung in front of a side door off to his right, and the sign rattled against the metal roof under which he stood while he took in a deep breath, then another. The air was cool and fresh.

“What a town!” he murmured, under his breath.

He watched as the driver, on the outside of the bus now, took two battered suitcases from the luggage hole on the side. He set them on the ground and dropped the luggage compartment door with a loud bang. He latched the door and straightened.

Corey moved over close to the driver. “Thanks,” he said, as he leaned over and picked up the two suitcases. He walked to the front of the bus and on to the street where he set the suitcases on the sidewalk at his feet. He casually raised his head and surveyed the night—the empty street, the quietness, the small town atmosphere, so unlike the city of Chicago that he had been used to all of his life. It seemed so quiet, almost deathly quiet, he thought. He couldn’t get over the hush that seemed to hang in the air all around him.

He looked around hoping to see a taxicab somewhere along the street.

If anyone should look his way they would notice that Corey was a handsome young man wearing a pair of faded jeans, a long-

sleeved black T-shirt with the word COWBOYS in white letters under a silver star across the back, and a pair of low-cut, black boots, polished to a high shine. A lightweight windbreaker that was blue in color was pushed through the handle of one suitcase at his feet. He stamped his feet and stretched his muscles to get the circulation going. His butt was tired from all the sitting, but he did not let it bother him. He was in a cheerful mood—anxious was more like it.

He didn't see a taxi anywhere.

As he stood a little way up from the corner looking around, he detected a heightened awareness amid the quietness of the small town. A frown creased his uneasy features when his gaze settled on the city police car with a gold stripe down the side parked at the corner a short distance down the street from where he stood. The motor was not running and two uniformed police officers sat inside talking and looking around. Looking at him, he thought. It was obvious they were talking about him as they steadily threw casual glances his way. But maybe it was his imagination. After his experiences of the past few days and weeks, there were plenty reasons for him to be edgy. Ignoring both the car and the policemen inside, he looked up, then down the street, but still didn't see a taxi.

Corey had no idea how far it was to the nearest hotel or even if the town had a hotel, and he was not about to start walking. He'd have to wait for a cab. He had not planned the time of his arrival and thus, had no other choice at the moment. One would surely come by before too long, he thought, as he stood on the edge of the sidewalk.

He turned to watch a bunch of young people, three or four boys and two girls, come out of a Taco Bell just up the street and start in his direction. They were laughing and talking as they ambled along, taking up the entire sidewalk. They stopped to light cigarettes just before they got to him. Corey was not nervous and anyway he was a couple inches taller than the biggest of them. As they passed, one of them said quietly but distinctly, "wanna buy some blow, wanna buy some crack?" Corey shook his head but didn't say anything or look at the guy. He kept watching the police car and the two cops inside. The cops watched the kids as they went noisily down the street. The kids were a half-block away when the cop on the passenger side swung his head back around to look at Corey again. After another moment or two, the cop opened the door and stepped out, watching Corey all the time.

Corey tensed up inside, expecting trouble.

The cop just stood beside the car, under the street light, door open, inside light on. He looked as if he was around forty, tall and muscular. He was clean-shaven, had dark hair, and didn't wear glasses.

The driver's door opened and the other cop stepped out, walked around, and stopped beside his partner. The driver was young, looked as if he was in his mid-to-late twenties. He was tall too, and had a cap on his head, making him look even taller. Corey couldn't tell the color of his hair. He wasn't wearing glasses.

They both had a gun strapped around their middle, holstered on the right side, and a Billy club hung from the other side. They looked as if they were getting ready to strike out on a mission.

Corey knew he was in trouble as he watched them start toward him. He waited, trying to look unconcerned. As the cops approached him, he thought about the newspaper articles inside his suitcase and an alarm bell started ringing in the back of his mind. Don't panic, he told himself. Stay cool, Corey.

The younger cop turned and came up beside Corey and stopped. He stopped on Corey's left, the suitcases between them, and then he toed the small suitcase, knocking it against the big one,

causing both to fall over against Corey's leg. "What'cha got there, boy?" he asked, watching Corey's face.

Corey leaned down and set the suitcases upright. Stay cool, Corey. On his way back up, he said: "Clothes and stuff."

"Got any dope?" the cop asked.

"No, sir," Corey responded, quickly.

The older cop walked by the young cop and stepped down to the street and stood close to the curb, then turned to watch Corey, his face blank.

"Mind if we take a look?" the younger cop asked.

"Not at all, if you think that's necessary," Corey answered. He didn't have any dope, but the newspaper articles might draw suspicion, for Christ's sake. He sidestepped two steps. "Go ahead, look."

The other cop said: "Hey, Dave, he looks all right. Just a kid. Let's go." He seemed uncomfortable, and a little irritated at his partner.

Dave threw a glance at his partner. "Maybe we ought to check him out, Tim. Can't be too cautious, these days." He turned and looked over his shoulder toward the bus still sitting under the metal

roof alongside the terminal, and then he turned to stare at Corey again. He stepped over close. Too close, Corey thought. The strong smell of aftershave floated against Corey's nostrils.

The cop made a motion toward the bus with his head. "You just get off that bus?"

"Yes, Sir," Corey answered quickly, and moved away a step. Give him room.

"You from around here?" the cop asked.

"No, Sir. Just came in from Chicago," Corey answered, looking the cop straight in the eyes. About my size, Corey thought. A punch to the stomach and a left-and-right to the head. One for the money, two for the show. The cop would go down like a poll-axed steer.

Corey watched as Tim stepped up on the curb and moved over beside his partner. "Come on, Dave," he said rather sternly. "The kid's not doing anything. Let's get out of here. We're due to report in."

Just then, luck intervened. The police car's radio came to life. Both cops froze, listening. Corey could not make out the jumble of words and number codes, even though the passenger side door was