Massacre at Sheep Pass

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I remember it well. It was a bright sunshiny morning, not uncommon for Saudi Arabia. There was a bit of a nip in the air and a slight haze in the hills as the sun began to bake the barren landscape. Fall in the land of the sand can be quite chilly.

As we sped down the road with the chrome crate (an airstream) in tow, Willie and I were debating on whether or not to turn the heat on. “Hey, Willie, do these trucks have heaters?” “Durned if I know,” replied Willie. “Willie, why don’t you blow the dust off them controls and look for a heat button.” Willie found a button with an H on it and pushed it. A cloud of warm dust immediately filled the cab—cough, wheez, gag. I had to roll the windows down so we could breath again.

“Thanks, Willie, now will you do me one more favor? Look behind us and see if Mohi is following.” Mohi Khair, a Sudanese interpreter and all-around man Friday, was driving the probe truck behind us. On any given day, Mohi could be anywhere from 10 feet to a light-year behind us. The road had narrowed somewhat, and we didn’t want to loose Mohi, so we checked on him quite often.

“Yes, he’s back there, and he’s even gaining on us,” said Willie. “Does it look like he’s awake?” “I think so,” Willie answered. “His eyes are open and his knuckles are white.” That was a good sign.

By now the road had become quite twisty, and the landscape was dotted with rocky ridges and bedouin camps. “Willie, what’s that up ahead on the road?” “Looks like a gosh-durn bedouin herding his sheep across the road,” said Willie. “We better slow down and go around them.”

I hit the binders and whipped the rig around the sheep, thinking at the time about Mohi. Had he seen the sheep?

I looked in the rearview mirror just in time to see a cloud of dust and hair explode into the atmosphere. Mohi had not seen the sheep. The truck hit the sheep directly in its mid-section. It was a clean kill.

I pulled the rig over to the side of the road. I had a sick feeling in my stomach. “Willie, check your wallet. It looks like we are going to do some investing in sheep futures, and the market is up right now.”

Willie and I got out of the truck and began walking back to the bedouin who was mourning the death of his sheep. As we walked, we plotted our strategy. “Let’s pay him whatever he wants and get out of here.”

Mohi reached the bedouin first. As we approached, there was Mohi with one foot on the beast like a proud hunter on an African safari. Then we heard a long burst of Arabic verbage from the old bedouin directed at Mohi. It sounded like “You Sudanese slayer. You killed my child, my beautiful child.”

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