

# **Exposed: A Sheriff Ted Kline Adventure Short Story**

**(With the same characters you have come to love in the Ted Kline Adventure Novels)**

**By Tim White**



The hot breeze was roasting the life out of every living thing on this late afternoon, although summer was still months away. The third day of record heat was making its mark in the west Texas region, and this April would be one for the record books. Terrell County has had some rough hot summers before, but

seldom did they begin in the month known for its cooling showers.

Sheriff Ted Kline disconnected the phone call. He released a slow sigh, put the phone into its pouch on his left hip and started the sheriff's cruiser he was driving today. He looked over to his passenger, knowing his stoutly built Native American deputy was waiting to hear the status of their situation.

“Sheriff Rau says the suspect is driving a red pickup coming from Fort Stockton. He believes it's a late model Ford, and the perp may be armed and dangerous.”

“Do we want to stop him or tail him, Sheriff?” Deputy James Barefoot asked.

“I prefer to stop him if it's safe, but as usual, public safety rules the day,” said the youngest sheriff Terrell County, Texas, ever had.

Kline wondered if Barefoot was going through the same emotions he was. Since he was first called on this case by the Pecos County Sheriff, Dave Rau, his anger started building. Any man who would expose

himself to children needed to be removed from society, evaluated, rehabilitated, if possible, or punished. Children were supposed to be protected from creeps like this fellow, Monroe Patterson.

“Can we put a bullet up his back door?” asked the excited voice from the back seat.

Kline smiled and looked into his mirror, seeing the other deputy sitting behind him. Seymour Packer was his newest, and smallest, and oldest deputy on his staff. The 64 year old deputy was wide-eyed at the moment, ready for action. Kline felt added pressure to lead with calmness, by example, not certain how a hyped up Packer would respond.

“You OK, Packer?” he asked.

“Good to go, sir,” Packer said, his voice a little higher than normal.

“Red,” Barefoot announced with his eyes fixed far ahead on the highway as he strained to identify the next vehicle approaching from the west. “Sedan,” he announced with a sigh, the energy temporarily escaping him.

“How could you tell that was a sedan so quickly?” Kline asked the Choctaw Native American.

“The shape of the windshield and the grill, sir,” Barefoot answered, never taking his eyes off the road.

Kline shook his head in amazement. He had 20-20 vision, according to the doctor in Fort Stockton that he didn’t exactly trust. Barefoot, who was the same age as Kline, in his early thirties, could see a flea on the tail of an escaping possum, it seemed.

Three more vehicles passed by, two white cars and a black pickup. Kline hoped the perp hadn’t turned off on one of the many county dirt roads and gone into hiding before he reached Sanderson. From what he heard, the perp may have known that his vehicle had been identified by neighbors of the Fort Stockton day care center.

“Red,” Barefoot said. “Pickup. Ford.”

Kline looked at the next incoming vehicle still more than a mile away. Yes, it was red, but he couldn’t tell if it was a pickup, much less a Ford.

The driver of the pickup slowed as he approached the Sanderson city limits. Kline slipped his cruiser into gear and began to slowly move forward to meet it.

“We’ve been made,” he announced as he watched the red Ford turn right on a side road. “Son of a flatlander! He’s going to make us chase him.”

Except for a small giggle from the back seat, the two deputies sat in silence as they watched the pickup half a mile away speeding west on Arroyo Road.

“The dude doesn’t know the streets here,” Packer offered from the rear of the car. “That’s a dead-end street. We got him!”

“There could be possible hostages down that road,” Kline said. “It ain’t over until it’s over.”

Kline closed the distance to the intersection as quickly as he could, but not as quickly as he wanted. He made a fast left turn onto the gravel road, spraying small rocks and dust into the ditch.

“Barefoot, you keep checking the houses to the right. Packer, you, the left. I’ll look down the road to see if I can see him up ahead.”

“Stop,” Packer shouted almost immediately. “The light blue house!”

Kline looked to the left at the ranch-styled house with struggling pecan trees and junipers in the yard showing the effects of the dry, hot climate in Sanderson. He saw no truck.

“Did you see the red pickup?” Kline asked.

“No, sir. Just tracks and settlin’ dust,” Packer answered. “Somebody has just pulled off the driveway and around the house to the back yard.”

As Kline slid the cruiser to a stop, Barefoot was the first out and was racing up the driveway. Kline and Packer followed, yards behind him. Barefoot pulled his Glock as he ran to the side of the house. He stopped at the rear corner and carefully peeked around.

Barefoot stepped around the corner into the back yard, gun lowering as he saw the individual on the back steps.

“Relax, ma’am,” he said loudly. “Sheriff’s department.” He holstered his gun.

A frightened dark-haired woman dropped her purse and screamed.

Kline ran around the corner, also surprised to see the woman and startling her even more.

“This truck’s a Dodge Ram,” Barefoot announced as Packer joined them. “Ma’am, sorry about the confusion, but did you see another red truck as you were pulling off the road?”

“Yeah!” she answered wide-eyed at the three officers, two with guns in their hands. “Some kind of red truck went down the road past here, driving real fast.”

Without another word, the three officers dashed back to the police car. Kline had it rolling before seatbelts were fastened. After a winding half-mile through ten foot high mesquite and juniper trees and an array of houses from every decade from the last 70 years, the little road came to an end beside an arroyo. Barefoot jumped from the slowing car and

began searching the sand for tracks leading off the road.

“Here!” he shouted. “He’s driving up the creek bed.”

Kline and Packer exited the vehicle and joined him. Kline’s mind was spinning. This was going to be harder than he hoped.

“Barefoot, are the truck’s tire tracks easily distinguished from those of our patrol car?”

“Yes, sir. Mud or snow tires, and they’re making deep tracks.”

“OK, Pack and I will take the car and try to search down the arroyo quickly. You track it by foot and call us if you discover he turned off into the desert. This guy is not getting away.”

Kline and Packer boarded the cruiser and Kline drove quickly down into the creek bed, struggling in places of deep sand.

“Let’s go get him, Cowboy,” Packer said.

“Don’t call me that, Pack. Only Kat calls me Cowboy.”

“Sorry, sir,” Packer said with a mischievous smile. “I knew I heard it somewhere.”

Kline smiled at the small, mischievous deputy. Packer was always trying to pick at him about something. *Score one for Barney Fife*, he thought.

At first it was easy to see the truck tracks clearly in the sand from the car and the two made good time. However, as the arroyo became rockier, Kline had to slow his advance.

“See anything?” he asked Packer.

“No, sir. There’s too many rocks here.”

Kline stopped the car and got out to look for the truck tracks on foot. Packer joined, staying on the right side of the creek. They had gone no more than 300 yards, but hadn’t seen tracks for the last 200.

The sounds of gun fire jerked their attention away from their task.

“Barefoot must have found something,” Kline yelled looking back down the arroyo. “Let’s go!”

Both men ran to the cruiser and Kline did a spinning turn-around and raced back up the arroyo.

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Barefoot had followed the tire tracks for a hundred yards and discovered the place where they turned out of the arroyo into the flat desert. He pulled out his SAT phone to call Kline to reunite the team in the right direction when he heard and felt the gun shot. At first, a buzzing sound went past his head accompanied by the report of a rifle. Then a little puff of wind brushed his right ear. Forgetting about his phone, he hit the ground, digging for his side weapon.

He heard three more shots, enough to determine their direction. He raised his head but he could not see the shooter which typically meant that the shooter couldn’t see him on the floor of the arroyo.

Barefoot climbed the shallow bank of the creek hoping to get his eyes on the perp. After a moment, he

heard the sheriff's cruiser racing back towards him. He motioned with his left hand repeatedly, palm downward, hoping to signal for Kline to stop. The sheriff and deputy were driving into the danger zone. His signaling was too late. He heard three shots. He watched the sheriff's car zigzag and come to a stop. Four more shots rang out, followed by the "ding" of the bullets hitting the left front fender of the car.

He wanted to call for help, but his SAT phone was gone. He had unwittingly tossed it when he dove for cover. He had to do something since Kline and Packer were sitting ducks. He rose up quickly and spotted the shooter. The perp was behind a big rock about 150 yards away, using the stone as a support for his rifle. Barefoot emptied his pistol and reloaded another magazine to take more shots.

He aimed his Glock and fired off four more shots at the perp. He was rewarded by the sound of bullets slamming into the rock and ricocheting away with a whistling sizzle. The perp ducked down behind the rock, quickly reloaded, and took four shots in the direction of Barefoot. This gave Kline and Packer time

to dive out of the car and dash to the embankment of the arroyo for cover.

Packer was quickly on his phone to call for backup. Kline rose up slightly and took three shots in the direction of the shooter. He noticed the perp was already out of sight. A dust cloud and the sound of a truck racing away told him all he needed to know.

“He’s going to get away,” Kline shouted.  
“Barefoot, can you see the truck to disable it?”

Without a word, the deputy stood and began firing in the direction of the truck, but the red Ford never became visible.

“No,” Barefoot shouted. “He just disappeared.”

Kline stood and saw the plume of dust rising above the desert floor.

“This is going to make a lot of paperwork when we report our gun discharges,” Packer quipped.

Barefoot came running to Kline’s location. “Did anybody get hurt?” he asked.

“No, I think we’re all good,” Kline answered.

“Where did he go?” Barefoot asked, straining his eyes to the south, seeing nothing but flat desert, occasional mesquite and spruce trees, and lots of rocks.

“The Finger Canyons start out there and extend to the Rio Grande,” Kline said. “They’re sunken canyons, below ground level. That’s where I love to hike, but it’s no place to hunt a suspect.”

“Help’s coming,” Packer said. “Maybe ten or fifteen minutes out.”

Without a word, Barefoot started trotting towards the Finger Canyons.

“Be careful, Johnny,” Kline yelled to him. “This guy’s obviously crazy.”



In seven minutes, Deputies Paul Kestler and Cindy Yong pulled up in different squad cars. Barefoot had gone after the truck on foot and was determined to track it down. Two Pecos County deputies were on their way and were about 10 minutes out, Kline reported.

“You want one of us to catch up with Barefoot?” Kestler asked.

“No, now that you’re here, I want to go myself,” Kline answered. “Send one of the Pecos boys when they get here. This guy is armed and dangerous. The rest of you figure out where he is headed and try to get there before he does. Intersect the Rio Grande from each direction and follow it up to where these canyons come together.”

Without another word, Kline started into a trot following Barefoot’s tracks and those of the truck’s tires.

“Sheriff,” Packer shouted. “Can I go with you?”

“Yes,” shouted Kline over his shoulder. “You’re probably the only one of us that can catch up with Barefoot.”

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Kat McRae Kline waddled from the living room into the kitchen of the Kline’s house north of Sanderson. She poured herself another cup of decaf coffee and sat at the dining room table. She fished out

her phone from her house coat and pulled up a GPS tracker program.

There were some things Kat loved about being pregnant. First, it was her and Ted's child, their first of several, they hoped, the product of a greater love than she had ever known. It also carried with it many experiences she knew she would treasure as her first pregnancy the rest of her life. There were feelings she had never imagined and so many things that seemed routine before the pregnancy took on a deeper meaning.

However, there were things she could have done without. First, she was uncomfortable. Being healthy and fit from her former FBI training helped. She couldn't imagine any woman going into a pregnancy not in tip-top condition. It was hard enough when you were in shape.

Particularly uncomfortable was her right side. She had been shot there the previous year and scar tissue had developed. It was a constant pain and pulling sensation, but the doctor said it should not affect her ability to carry the child.

Next, she found herself emotional about things that shouldn't have bothered her. One thing she hated was being away from her husband. He had a job to do and sometimes that job became dangerous. That bothered her now more than ever.

She had settled for being able to track him on her phone and computer, and she was now looking up his location.

As the tracking screen came up, it showed that her husband was in the middle of nowhere, moving south into the desert at about four miles per hour.

Kat got that uneasy feeling about Ted and danger. She said a prayer. This was the hard part; letting it go into God's hands.



Monroe Patterson was desperate. He didn't understand the urges that drove him. He never tried to control them because they brought him so much pleasure. And he had been very careful up until today.

Why had society rejected the idea of "child love?" It was natural in many earlier cultures, but

making it taboo was what hurt the children the most, he reasoned. People hated what he did and he knew if they found out, he was subject to an angry mob. He had to sneak round and settle for far less than what he truly craved.

However, today things had fallen apart in his life. He had exposed himself to some children playing outside of a day care center and one of them ran for help. He had planned for this and was prepared to get away quickly, but things worked against him. On his way to his truck, he dropped his keys. As he ran, they hit the pavement and slid under his vehicle. When he was fishing for them while laying his short, squatty body prone on the street, his suspenders got caught on something under the truck and he was momentarily stuck.

He thrashed on the pavement like a snake with a crushed head for more than a minute. By the time he had fetched his keys and freed himself, there were people in the neighborhood watching, taking notice of the children screaming and pointing him out. A tall black man in a suit was running his way. The neighbors

were memorizing his face and his truck, and that meant trouble. Some had their cell phones out and were capturing video of him for a permanent record. Soon, there were sounds of sirens in the air and the police were coming.

After jumping into his pickup truck, he pulled out his rifle and extended it out the window. It had the desired effect. The big man and frightened neighbors scurried for cover, mostly indoors. He fired a shot into the air to increase the fear and then sped off down the road.

Patterson had taken the backroads and alleys to the hospital parking lot and pulled between a larger pickup truck and a service panel van. After shutting his truck down, he slumped down in the seat and hid. After a few minutes the sirens faded away and he headed out of town. Now Fort Stockton was too small for him.

He took Texas 385 to Marathon and turned east on I-90 towards Sanderson. He knew he was being hunted and the net was growing faster than he could travel. He strained his eyes looking both in the

rearview mirror and the road ahead to spot any law enforcement vehicle as early as he could. As he approached Sanderson, he could see far enough ahead to identify a police black-and-white cruiser. Fortunately for him, it had an old fashion light bar on top that was easy to identify. He turned off on the first road he came to.

Just as was his luck on this day, the road came to an end at an arroyo. Fortunately his Ford had four-wheel drive. He turned into the arroyo, looking for a place to disappear. He turned south after more than one hundred yards into the desert. After a few moments, he was startled by the ditches that appeared as scars in the barren land. He noticed one grew quickly in width and depth. He pulled down into it, grabbed his rifle, and decided to check if anyone had followed him. He jumped out of his truck and ran up the bank of the ditch to a rock for cover.

Soon, the police cruiser stopped on the end of the road. A deputy exited from the front passenger's side. The cruiser pulled into the arroyo and raced eastward. He saw the head and shoulders of the big,

stout deputy walking along arroyo following his tracks. He had to slow him down.

Patterson didn't want to shoot an officer. He didn't want to shoot anyone. He really didn't even want to shoot towards anyone, but he had to do something to improve his odds of escaping.

He fired several shots and the deputy ducked down for cover. *That ought to buy me some time*, he thought. He preparing to fire a few more times for effect when he noticed the police cruiser racing back up the arroyo.

Without thinking, he aimed at the sheriff's car and fired several shots. The deputy on foot shot several times at him and hit surprisingly close to him. He swung his rifle around and fired at the first officer. By then the other officers had exited from the car and scrambled for cover. It was time to leave. He rolled back into the deep ditch and started running to his truck. He had to get away.

Just as Kline had said, the Finger Canyons started out as runoff ditches in the desert floor. Barefoot saw that the tracks of the truck led down into the one that quickly became deeper. The bottom was sand and stone, and the tracks were initially easy to follow.

He jumped down into the ditch and continued to run, his eyes fixed on the distance in case the perp decided to shoot at him again.

The Choctaw didn't know what his chances were. He was chasing an escaping truck by foot. He had never been in this part of Terrell County. However, he understood canyons and knew that once you drove into one, the places to get out became very limited. Most small canyons, or micro-canyons, were not totally negotiable in a vehicle. If that was the case, the odds of success switched to the chaser, not the runner.

Barefoot was surprised at how quickly the sandy bottom was becoming rock as he traveled south. Soon he was running on rock. The sides of the ditch were

mostly rock, at first about eight feet high but quickly became twelve feet and higher.

There were several inlets to the canyon, but none were negotiable for a truck. Several had tiny streams of water, and the dry canyon became one with a small stream.

The rock bottom was easier to run upon, but left fewer places to pick up the tire tracks. However, where else could a truck go? The addition of a creek and the narrow spots in the canyon allowed Barefoot to see evidence that the truck had passed this way.

Barefoot was a regular runner, but running through the sand earlier had robbed him of too much energy. He had to stop and rest a bit. He slowed and bent over, hands on his hips, and sucked in the warm air.

After a minute, he squatted beside the creek and cupped a hand of water. He drank it, enjoying the cooling in his mouth and parched throat. He had been an officer in Northwest New Mexico, and there he had learned the standard rules of drinking ground water in the field. In the mountains it was safer than in the flat

lands. It was cleaner if it hadn't drained from crop fields which could have been sprayed with fertilizers and pesticides.

But there was a time when you had to disregard all the rules, and this was one of them. He had not prepared for a desert chase so he carried no canteen. Water was a matter of life and death, so the health risks took second place to his need for moisture.

He found a rock to sit comfortably upon and gave himself two more minutes of rest. After getting another drink, he started his trot again.

Kline had accepted that Deputy Seymour Packer couldn't compete with the other younger deputies in the overall fitness and self-defense program he developed because of his small size, but no one had foreseen that he could outrun all of them. He loved running and had competed in the Boston Marathon five times.

Kline was a fairly good runner himself, but it bothered him that the diminutive deputy passed him

on the way to the drainage ditch. At first, he considered increasing his pace, but he knew he had to pick a pace he could sustain for a long period of time. He thought about stopping and allowing the two deputies to handle this, but he couldn't allow two of his men to run into danger alone if he could eventually catch up to make sure they were safe.

Barefoot had about a ten minute head start on him and Packer. He knew he could not match his two deputies during the run even if they had started together. He was determined to get there before the serious action started.

He saw Packer jump down into the drainage ditch that became part of the Finger Canyons. This was a place he was familiar with from his many hiking trips around the county. He decided to stay out of the ditch, hoping a straight short-cut on the desert floor would be enough to make up lots of time as his deputies ran down the winding canyon.

His phone vibrated. He fished it out of its pouch on his left hip in a run then decided to stop to answer it. He saw on the screen that it was his wife calling.

“Kat,” he panted. “I don’t have much time. We’re chasing a perp.”

“I saw that you were running into the desert,” she said. “Do you need any help?”

Kline gasped for more air. “No, Barefoot and Packer are ahead of me.”

Kat laughed. “The only two guys who can outrun you.” She became serious. “Is the guy dangerous?”

Kline winced. He hated to tell his pregnant wife he was placing himself in danger. She didn’t handle things like that very well these days with a child coming.

“Just a creep who exposed himself to children in Fort Stockton,” he answered, hoping this wasn’t too much of a lie. He hated to mislead Kat, but he also had to protect her as much as he could. Basically, he reasoned, he was withholding information from his wife for her good.

“Well, be careful,” Kat said hesitantly. “Does the guy run fast?”

“I don’t know,” Kline confessed. “He’s in a truck and we’re on foot.”

“What?” Kat laughed. “Only you would chase a truck on foot. You, Barefoot and Packer, that is.”

“He drove into the Finger Canyons,” Kline explained between breaths. “A truck won’t get far down there and a police cruiser wouldn’t have made it at all.”



The sun was dipping behind the canyon walls as Barefoot located the red Ford, bottomed out on a big boulder. When he saw it, he ducked behind a bend in the canyon wall, now more than twenty feet high. He breathed deeply as quietly as he could and watched the truck for movement.

After a few minutes, he suspected that the perp was not in the truck or unable to get out. He scanned the area as best he could in the fading light. He was afraid that the perp had hidden away from the truck to take a shot at anyone who approached it. He decided

he would first try to stealthily circle it in order to find Patterson.

He began creeping along the jagged wall of the micro-canyon, trying to stay as hidden as possible. His nerves were on edge. He expecting to hear, or worse, feel, a shot at any time. The floor of the canyon was more than thirty feet wide and there was plenty of cover from the fallen boulders scattered along the canyon floor at this location. Not knowing where this guy was hiding filled him with uncertainty.

After he passed the truck and covered forty more feet, Barefoot saw or heard no activity. He stepped back to the truck to investigate, a little more relaxed. He had his weapon pulled, hoping the perp was hiding in the cab or the bed of the truck. That would make it much easier.

He first checked the bed. It was logs and sticks from tree trimming and lawn care and also littered with beer cans. He looked into the cab and it, too, was empty. The perp must have started out on foot, he reasoned.

Barefoot looked and found a footprint in the mud near the driver's door. He got down on all fours and looked under the truck. After he stood back up, he opened the truck door and sat down in the passenger's seat. He took out his flashlight and began to inspect the interior. There was blood on the top of the steering wheel. Other than that, there was no useful evidence. He pulled his phone and called Kline.

"Kline, here, Barefoot," the answer came from the sheriff, obviously out of breath. "What's up?"

"Sheriff, I found the truck. He's on foot now, but it's getting dark fast."

"Is the truck drivable?" Kline asked, hoping it would provide them transportation out of the canyon.

"I don't think so, sir. He bottomed out on a rock and the drive shaft is badly bent."

Kline sighed. "Give me your coordinates and I will see how quickly I can get to you. Have you seen Packer?"

"No, sir" Barefoot answered. "Did you send him?"

“He volunteered,” Kline answered. “Those coordinates?”

Barefoot hit a button on his phone and read the coordinates from the screen.

“I see you,” Kline said. “I’ll get there in about five minutes.”

“How can you see me?” Barefoot asked.

“I’m above you looking down from above the canyon. You’re about 150 yards ahead of me. It will take me five or ten minutes to climb down. I’ll see you then. Keep an eye out for Pack.”

“How far back is he?” Barefoot asked.

“I don’t know, but I’ll shine a flashlight back that way and see if I can locate him.”

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Packer was running at a steady pace but was having a hard time negotiating the rocks as the darkness began to envelope the canyon. He saw a flash and stopped. He saw it again. He recognized it as

a flashlight searching towards him. He dove behind a rock and fished out his phone.

“Kline, here, Packer. Barefoot’s up ahead at the truck.”

“Sheriff, I was running down the canyon and someone shined a flashlight at me. I think I found him. He’s out of the canyon.”

“No, Pack,” Kline said. “That was me. I’m about two hundred yards ahead of you but above the canyon.”

Packer stood and dusted himself off.

Kline continued. “Barefoot is with the truck less than 400 yards ahead of you. I’m heading down. I’ll see you when we meet up at the truck.”

“Yes, sir,” Packer said and put away his phone. He started into his jog again, this time knowing where he was going.

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It took Kline longer to come down the rough trail into the canyon floor than he expected. When he

arrived, he found that Barefoot had built a fire and Packer was sitting on a rock against the canyon wall.

“I think it’s a little warm for a fire,” Kline said.

“We’re probably going to have to spend the night here and the fire is to cook something to eat,” Barefoot answered. “It will also keep unwelcomed critters away.”

Packer laughed. “Eat what? Why don’t we just order a pizza?”

“City boys,” Barefoot mumbled as he began walking further south. “I’m going to the grocery store. I’ll be back in less than an hour.”

“I guess we’re spending the night here,” Kline said to Packer with a smile.

“Good,” said Packer. “I’m not sure I could go much further today anyway.”

“Hey!” echoed a shout from the north up the canyon.

“Oh, man!” Kline said, looking that way. “I forgot about the Pecos deputy.” He reached for his

flashlight attached to his belt and shined it towards the voice.

Five minutes later, a Pecos County deputy could be seen making his way to the small fire.

“Sheriff Kline?” the deputy asked as he approached.

“Right here,” Kline responded.

“I’m Mike Wallace from Pecos,” said the winded deputy. He collapsed by the fire and lay back on the ground, trying to catch up on his air.

“I’m Dep Packer,” Kline’s deputy said.

“We have another deputy wandering around for something to eat,” Kline said. “I’m hoping for anything above crow on the food chain.”

Packer laughed. Wallace smiled in the dark.

“Status?” Wallace asked.

“As you can see, the perp disabled his vehicle and continued on foot,” Kline said, pointing to the truck straddling the creek. “We’ll continue our search early tomorrow. I have deputies intercepting the Rio

Grande, which is another couple of miles down this canyon. They'll hit it east and west of here and we'll squeeze down on him."

"Why stop over night?" asked the young black-haired deputy from Pecos County. Wallace was in his late twenties and just slightly overweight at for his 5'10" frame.

"We would have to search with flashlights," Kline answered. "He's shot at us before and that would give him too big of an advantage. Plus, it would be too easy to miss evidence of where he left the canyon. He can't get far tonight."

"Copy," conceded Wallace.

"You're ex-military," Kline guessed.

"Yes, sir," Wallace answered. "First Battalion 3rd Marine Regiment."

"Wow, from Hawaii to Fort Stockton," Kline said.

"Yes, sir. From Hawaii to back home."

The three flinched when they heard a shot in the distance. Wallace sat up and pulled his gun.

“Steady, marine,” Kline said. “That’s our other deputy shopping for something to roast on this fire.”

“How do you know the perp didn’t shoot at your deputy?” Wallace asked as he sat up.

“It was a pistol shot, not a rifle,” Kline answered.

“I hope he don’t bring back no skunk,” Packer said.



Twenty-five minutes later, Barefoot came walking back to the campfire carrying some kind of meat.

“Hope you like pork,” he said as he approached the three. He stopped when he saw the Pecos deputy. “Kline, you didn’t tell me you invited someone for dinner.”

“Johnny, this is Deputy Mike Wallace from Pecos County,” Kline explained. “Sheriff Rau sent us an ex-marine.”

“Hey, Wallace, I’m Johnny Barefoot.”

“Nice to meet you, Barefoot, but tell us about the pork.”

“I saw a herd of wild hogs drinking in the stream and picked out a little one,” Barefoot explained. “When I shot, they all took off, except this one. He dropped like a rock. I bled him and cut off his hams. Packer, that’s his rear quarters.”

“I know what hams are, Barefoot,” Packer said with a laugh. “Great job! For a young guy, anyway.”

Kline held the hams while Barefoot set up a stand to roast the meat. Selecting some branches from the back of the truck, he had it set up and the hams cooking in a few minutes. The smell began to make mouths water.

After everyone ate, drank from the creek and washed their messy hands, Kline suggested everyone find a comfortable place to sleep. He wanted an early start.

“So this is Finger Canyon?” Barefoot asked when everyone had settled down.

“Not officially,” Kline answered. “It reminds me of some small canyons around Lake Stillhouse Hollow I used to hike around. I called them Finger Canyons. When I found this place a year ago, I just started calling it that. It sounds better than ‘unnamed micro-canyon’ like is says on the county maps.”

“Micro-canyon,” Packer repeated. “It’s like micro-surgery. It’s not a big deal until it’s a big deal.”

Everyone laughed.

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At five o’clock in the morning, Kline was waking up Packer. Barefoot and Wallace were already sitting up.

“What’s for breakfast?” Packer asked.

Barefoot fished into his flank pocket.

“Elk jerky,” he answered. “And breath mints,” he added as he examined the contents of his pocket.

“Wild pork and elk jerky,” Packer said as he took a small strip of jerky from Barefoot. “Momma would have never believed this.”

Everyone munched on the only remaining food they had.

“You take elk jerky around with you wherever you go?” Packer asked Barefoot.

“Every day,” Barefoot said. “That’s why I’m 195 pounds of solid muscle and you’re skin and bones.”

Everyone laughed.

Packer finished his laugh with a crooked smile.

“I’ll race you back out of here after we catch this guy.”

“No thanks,” Barefoot said.

“What are the marching orders, Sheriff?”  
Wallace asked.

“Reports are this guy is not athletic or in shape, maybe early forties, so we should be able to gain on him quickly,” Kline said. “If he kept going over night, he ran into my other deputies, who camped out there like we did, but with no pork,” he chuckled.

“More than likely, he found a place to hunker down over night. This canyon is really tough to

negotiate after dark on a moonless night,” Kline added. “If he left the canyon into the desert, we’ll eventually find him dead. There’s no place to go from here.

“I’ll go up top and pursue from above the canyon until I get to the Rio Grande. You guys advance together, slowly, but be careful. This guy doesn’t want to be caught. He has a rifle and we don’t know how much ammo he has.”



Four minutes later, Barefoot stopped the other two deputies.

“This is where I shot the wild hog,” he said. “As I expected, the other hogs came back and ate the rest of it.”

“Seriously?” Packer asked. “Hogs will eat their own?”

“Hogs are omnivores, and wild hogs are scavengers,” Barefoot answered. “They eat anything and everything. Even their own family members.”

“Gag!” Packer said. “No wonder some people consider pigs unclean.”

Barefoot and Wallace laughed.

“It’s yet to be seen if they’ll stoop low enough to eat a pervert,” Barefoot said.

∞

Kline knew climbing out of the canyon would give the others a head start on him, but he could make that up. When he was on the desert floor, he began to trot at a good pace. He slowed at places where the perp could have climbed out to look for shoeprints. There were none that he could see.

Twenty minutes later, he was climbing down the rock ledge into the Rio Grande Canyon. Trying to remain under the available cover, he moved to the Finger Canyon entrance. He cautiously moved toward his deputies. They had to be close. The perp had to be somewhere between them

He ducked and dove for cover when he heard rifle fire. He heard two more shots, but determined he was not under attack.

He pulled out his phone and called Barefoot.

“What’s happening,” he whispered after the deputy answered.

“He has us pinned down,” Barefoot said. “No one’s hit. Yet!”

“I’ll be coming up behind him,” Kline cautioned. “If you return fire, be careful. I want to go home tonight.”

Kline moved quietly behind the available cover along the rugged canyon wall. He could tell the shooter was close to him. He approached a bend in the canyon wall and peeped around it. There was Patterson, 25 yards away aiming over a rock at his deputies.

Kline stepped around the ridge with his Glock trained on the shooter’s temple.

“Patterson, drop the gun and give yourself up!” Kline barked.

Patterson didn’t move. Kline noticed that his nose was injured as Barefoot had predicted.

“Officer, I haven’t hit one of you and I missed on purpose,” Patterson said sobbing. “I have your man in my sights and if you don’t let me climb out of here right now, I will shoot unless you kill me first. But I ain’t going to go to prison.”

“Sheesh, another idiot!” Kline said.

“What?” Patterson asked. That was not the reaction he expected.

“You were caught exposing yourself to children. That’s a fine and two years probation. And you want to die over that?”

“Are you serious?” Patterson asked.

“At best, it’s a thousand dollars. Less than the cost of your funeral, for sure.”

There was silence as Patterson considered the information.

“OK, officer, I’m going to put down the rifle,” Patterson said as he laid the gun to the side. “Now what?”

Kline holstered his pistol and reached for the hand cuffs hanging from the back of his belt. He almost didn't see Patterson lunge at him and he never saw him draw a hunting knife. He barely avoided it plunging into his chest.

Kline stepped to his right to regain his balance but stepped on a small river rock. His ankle gave way. He fell roughly to the canyon floor. Patterson came at him again with his knife. The perp dove onto Kline, pinning his legs, slashing at his neck.

Kline blocked the deadly slash and tried to grab Patterson's attacking arm. The perp was stronger than he looked. Patterson pulled and twisted his arm away. He tried to plunge the knife into Kline's stomach. Kline tried to roll away, but Patterson was sitting on his thighs. He was able to knock the lunge off target but it sliced into his side.

Kline automatically reverted to his training. First, try to disarm. If that's not possible, disable the attacker. He sat up and drove his fist into the perp's already injured nose with all of his weight.

Patterson dropped the knife and rolled off of Kline's legs, holding his crushed nose as blood gushed through his fingers. Kline rolled up and drew his pistol.

"I got him!" he shouted to the deputies. To Patterson, he growled, "If you dare move, I'll give you another nostril."



Kat met her husband at Dr. Patrick Smythe's office. Kline trusted the veterinarian with simple medical procedures more than any medical doctor he ever met. All he needed was fifteen stitches just above his left hip.

"How did this guy cut you?" Smythe asked.

"He dropped his gun, and when I went after my cuffs, he attacked me with a hunting knife," Kline said dryly. "It was a stupid, rookie mistake on my part."

Smythe laughed. "I was afraid that Choctaw deputy of yours tried to field dress you."

Kline laughed. Kat scowled at the vet. She didn't see the humor in this.

“Doc, you ought to be ashamed of yourself,” she scolded.

“You know what they say,” Kline said. “You ought to see the other guy. I never saw a nose bleed like that.”

“I’ve seen some of your ‘other guys’ you’ve handled,” Smyth laughed. “You just need to stay further out of their reach, young man.”

“I agree,” Kline said somberly.

“Kat, I have never seen you more beautiful,” Smythe said. “Pregnancy makes you glow like a 500 watt lightbulb.”

“Thanks, Dr. Smythe,” Kat said with a crooked smile. “I feel more like a three watt.”

∞

Patterson was very quiet on his ride back to Fort Stockton in the back of Deputy Mike Wallace’s cruiser. He had a small towel pressed against his nose and the more he thought, the madder he got.

When Wallace pulled off US Highway 285 into the sheriff's parking lot, Patterson's nose had stopped bleeding but was still aching.

"I'm getting even with that Terrell County sheriff," he said at last. "I'll be back."

"I doubt it," Wallace answered, looking at the passenger through his rearview mirror. "Not unless he comes to visit you in prison."

"Wait! He told me I would pay a fine and be on probation."

Wallace thought a moment as he picked a parking space close to the entrance of the building.

"I'm sure he was only talking about the penalty for fleeing from an officer. Sexual exposure to a child carries a sentence of up to six months per incident and \$2,000 fine. There were 27 children in the playground that saw you. Let's see. That could be, what, almost 14 years behind bars? \$54,000 fine?"

"He also didn't mention that your home computer has been searched and they found child

pornography. Judges and juries don't like that stuff. Neither do other prisoners, by the way.

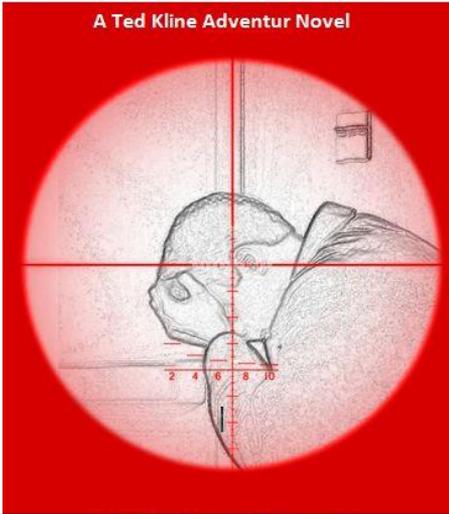
“Plus, there is reckless driving, firing at a peace officer, avoiding capture, and who knows what Sheriff Rau will add. Oh, and you stabbed an officer. Dude, you will be carried out of Huntsville in a coffin. Didn't Kline call you an idiot?”

“What of it?” Patterson said sullenly.

“That's the nicest think he could have called you.”

# Rotten Politics

A Ted Kline Adventure Novel



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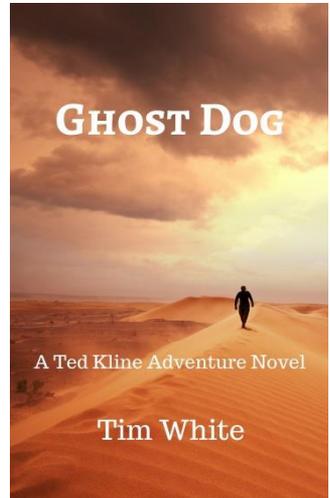
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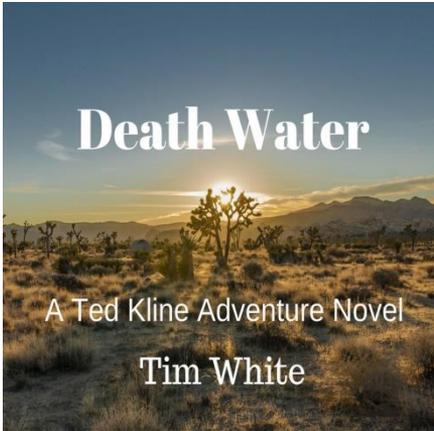
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