

The Night the Hounds Howled

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Domino Series:

Similar But Not the Same

Saga One - 2422

Deflection A Race Against Time

Saga Two - 2407 A.D.

CrossRoads A Moment of Decision

Saga Three - 2424 A.D.

Found-The Lost Ones

Saga Four - 2426 A.D.

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For more insights to how this story progressed, see my blog at: [My Blog](#).

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Frank's Hounds

The super moon rose over the Arizona landscape of sandy floors and creosote shrubs. The silver torch broadcast its brilliance across the clear black sky as a lone gray wolf padded along the grooved desert road. A mouse ran across the path but the canine wasn't fast enough as it dived down into one of the underground holes under a dead tree branch. His patience kept him going. Another rodent would venture out and he could have his meal for tonight.

He stopped. An odor, hanging in the still air drifted about his nostrils. He'd smelled the raunchy metallic kiss of death before. Maybe it was a deer hit by one of man's machines, or one of those hideous pigs that roam his territory, he pondered. The stench was too strong for the smaller prairie dogs. He loped on until he arrived upon a stand of palo verde trees and paused again. Looking down the dry draw of rivulets past, laid a white body shining in the moonlight. He began his ritual howl.

Hound dogs of various sizes, which lived close by on a small farm, took up the chant. Navajo residents near Tuba City, Arizona were used to the wolves howling at night, but this night all of the dogs across the valley joined in the chorus.

"Frank? Your dogs are howling again. Wake up. Are you deaf?" Sunflower asked, pushing on her husband.

“Go back to sleep, woman. They’ll quit in time,” he said and rolled away from her.

“Frank!”

“Okay, okay.”

He swung his thick legs over the edge of the bed and grabbed his robe against the January night. This time of the year, temperatures can drop to freezing. Frank slipped his feet into his leather boots, collected his revolver from a low cabinet in the living room, and scuffled outside on the porch in case there were intruders lurking about.

Making his way without need of the yard light under the Moon’s glow, he stopped at the dog pen.

“Shut up you fools!” he yelled.

His hounds whimpered for a moment. But as soon as they heard the wolves howling in the distance, they took up the mantra again. He fired his gun into the air. The sharp crack from the revolver surprised the dogs which quieted back into several whining tones.

Just then Frank could hear the soft rumbling of a vehicle driving across the desert toward his home.

“Frank, what’s happening out here?” Sunflower asked from the porch. She had her heavy yellow flowered robe wrapped around her with the matching cotton tie.

He didn’t answer her but listened as the sound carried through the light breeze. The vehicle sounded like an air car with heavy thrusters. He knew who it was.

“Get dressed, woman, or go back to bed. I think Alex is paying us a visit,” he said over his shoulder.

The front screen door slammed. Sunflower had gone back inside their house.

The desert dust, reflecting off the Moon's rays, raised high off the road until the 2426 Solar Vanguard hovered, and then lowered upon its descending road wheels. The vehicle rolled to a stop in front of Frank and a gush of air from the hydraulics hissed out.

The cab door swung open and his friend Alex Blackhawk climbed out of the air car. He wore his heavy Tucson Police jacket to block the cold wind of this high desert.

"Hey, Frank, I didn't expect to see you up this early in the AM," Alex said, removing his leather gloves.

"You neither. What brings you out this time of night?"

"Missing person from Tuba. So what got you up? Not my car I hope."

"Naw, just those dang dogs howling at some crazy wolf. Can you come in for a cup of coffee? I'm freezin' out here."

"Well, maybe one cup. I could use your to help. You know this area better than me," Alex suggested, walking with his friend toward the home.

"Okay. I'd better make the coffee or Sunflower might get sore with me."

They walked back to the trailer home built on permanent foundation with an enclosed porch. They passed by the large white gas tank, Frank and Sunflower use for their heat and cooking. The men could hear the hounds starting up their howling again.

Frank entered through the doorway first and both of them were surprised to see Sunflower filling the percolator to make coffee. Her padded robe wrapped

around her stout frame as she scuffed the tiled floor with her leather slippers.

"You didn't have to," Frank said to her.

"I might as well, I know you, Frank Wolf, you'll be wanting to go with Alex. He's not here for his health at this hour. Here," she said setting two cups of coffee on the table.

"And besides, I'll never get back to sleep until you both leave," she continued.

"Thanks, Sunflower," Alex said and took a sip of the hot liquid.

"Is Jan up as well?" Frank asked, taking a chair. Alex sat down across the table covered with the plastic flowered tablecloth.

"Probably not. I haven't been home yet," Alex replied. "Say, Sunflower, do you have a snack I can pawn off of you?"

"Didn't you have dinner?" she asked.

"No, I was about to come home when I got the call around nine. That's another reason I came over here," he said turning to his friend. "I need to borrow your hounds. Maybe they can find this woman with her scent."

"Sure. When and where did she go missing?" Frank asked.

"She was last seen at the convenience store on Main Street when she left her shift at 9:00 p.m. Her husband said she never came home. The sheriff called me and I just got back from Tucson."

"Here, have a muffin," Sunflower offered after she pulled one out one from the small storage box she keeps on the counter.

"Thanks," Alex said, choosing one on the plate.

"How about one for me too?" Frank asked.

"Get those hounds to quiet down and you can have two," she replied.

"Deal," he said picking one up to eat and pocketing the other.

After slicing one across the middle, he spread a dollop of butter on the confection. He gulped the morsel and washed it down with the hot coffee.

"It will just take a minute to get dressed. Better take my truck if we are hauling those dogs," Frank said, rising from his chair.

Alex watched his friend enter their bedroom while he headed for the door.

"Call Jan for me, will you, Sunflower?" He asked.

"Okay, just make sure Frank don't get hurt."

"I will," he replied, opening the door as soon as he saw Frank come out of the bedroom.

"Bye, honey," Frank said and followed Alex back out into the moon lit yard.

Between Frank's home and the dog pen sat his old pickup truck that long since lost its hydraulic power to rise into the air. The paint had started to flake off the metal frame, but the truck could navigate over the rough roads the desert had to offer. Frank had installed a raised chicken wire fencing around the truck bed railing to prevent the dogs from jumping out whenever they felt like it.

Alex followed Frank over to the dog fence gate and as soon as his friend unlatched the clasp, the five hound dogs came running out and jumped into the back of

the truck bed. They all barked at once, as they do when they know they are going on a hunt. Only this time it wasn't for javelinas. The barking and howling went on until Frank shut the back gate on the pickup. Alex retrieved a sample bag from his car and climbed into the passenger seat of his friend's truck

"Who we lookin' for? White or tribal?" Frank asked.

"Do you remember Naomi Evans who worked at the convenience store on Main?" Alex asked.

"I don't go there much, the last name sounds familiar," Frank said, putting the old truck in manual gear.

"She's Henry Evans granddaughter. She left her shift last night at nine. Her father said she didn't come home."

"Maybe she stopped at the Old Rooster Bar," Frank suggested as he drove out of his yard.

"Don't think so. Everyone says she's not a party girl and her father always expects her home by nine thirty. Turn here," Alex said, pointing to the dirt road that veered to their right.

Frank turned a swift left off the highway.

"What's the sample?"

"This is her neck scarf. She left in the office closet and her co-worker gave it to me."

"Why this way?"

"Sheriff and his officers are taking the other sections of the desert. We already searched the town. And when the wolves howl more than usual at night, I figure your dogs would be as well. We'll see if they find anything," Alex said, leaning right when the truck made the sudden turn.

"I'll stop over here and we can see if you hear anything," Frank said, slowing to a standstill on the graveled road.

A wolf howled in the distance. Upon hearing the animal's call, Frank's dogs took up the chant.

Frank drove on. The howling rose in intensity between the wolves and dogs.

"I'll let them out here. Better have your sample ready before they jump out of the truck," Frank advised.

"Will do," Alex said as he grabbed the plastic container.

Alex opened his sample bag while his friend made sure each dog got a good sniff from Naomi's scarf. Frank had the dogs trained to wait by the car until he gave the go-ahead signal. They were whining and squirming, anticipating the chase. Once all the dogs were sitting by the wheel well of the truck, Frank raised his hand.

"Go!" he shouted.

The hounds took off barking and yelping across the desert plain.

Frank and Alex did their best to keep up. As long as they could hear the dogs and their commotion, they knew which way to turn. It wasn't long before the hounds entered the dry streambed. Frank gave another signal, a whistle he uses and the dogs stopped in their tracks.

When the men caught up with the hounds, they were whining and hanging their tongues out.

Frank grabbed the collar of the lead dog and strung a thin chain through the other dog's collar, giving the end loop to Alex.

"Lead them slowly. I'll see where this one wants to go," Frank said.

"Frank I'm amazed how well trained these hounds are," Alex said, walking through the sandy soil with the leashed dogs.

"Yeah, after you had Ralph trained, I'd thought I would work on these when they was pups."

They had flashlights, but didn't have to use them in the bright glow of the Moon. All of a sudden, the lead hound in Frank's hand jerked away and ran down the draw. The men and the other dogs gave chase.

"Frank, don't let your dog get too close if it is a body," Alex called.

Frank whistled again and the hound slowed down until he could grab his dog's collar.

"Stay!" he commanded. "Alex, you go ahead. I see something lying down over there."

Alex handed over the four leashed dogs to his friend and walked closer to a white cloth waving in the light breeze. As soon as he was within ten feet, he called back to Frank.

"Take your hounds back to the truck. I have something here."

"Okay, you stay there," he called and began pulling on the dog's collars to get them to come with him.

"Is there call service out here?" Alex shouted.

"Some, I think there's a tower over on that mountain, Frank yelled back and began walking the excited hounds back to his truck.

He could have used Alex's help loading the dogs but he gave them the command and the hand signal to

jump into the back of the pickup. They weren't happy and continued to bark and howl.

Alex pulled out his phone and could read two slashes of power received.

"Good enough."

He first called the Sheriff.

"Hi, Dave? Yeah he's here. We're out on quadrant five in the Lame Duck Draw. Yeah, Frank's dogs found it and he took them back to his truck. Oh, maybe an hour from town. Where are you now? Oh good. I'll stay here until you can meet me. You want to call forensics or should I? Okay, thanks," Alex said and hung the phone off.

The Moon had just begun its slide behind the mountains before the morning sun lighten the eastern sky. Alex noted the time of four in the morning.

Frank drove back to where they had first entered the ditch and waited for Alex to return. He didn't want his pickup to ruin any crucial prints that might be nearby on the ground.

Off in the distance, he could hear sirens echoing throughout the valley and soon they came to a stop behind Frank's truck.

The sheriff climbed out of his car and walked ahead to check out the pickup.

"Alex here?" Dave asked.

"He's up there waitin' for you," Frank answered.

He watched the sheriff walk on ahead until he met up with Detective Blackhawk.

Frank could just make out Sheriff Dave shaking Alex's hand and walking to the edge of the draw to look down at the body.

"Is this it?" he asked.

"Yup. I see the forensic car coming."

When the vehicle stopped in front of Frank's truck, a man exited the white van and Frank showed him where the other men stood.

The forensic doctor walked ahead and stopped to talk to Alex and Sheriff Dave.

"I guess you can tell Frank it's okay to come over here," the medic said.

Alex and Sheriff Dave began walking back to Frank's truck while the doctor stayed by the white sheeted mound. When they came up to their friend's side door, Frank stuck his head out.

"Well, Frank, it's bad but I think you better see this," Sheriff Dave said.

"Why? Seen one body, seen them all."

"Well, we just want your opinion since she may be from the tribe," Alex said.

"Oh, all right if you think this is really important."

"Oh, we do," replied the sheriff.

Frank climbed down from the height of his pickup cab and followed Alex and Dave into the draw under the dawning light of morning.

At first Frank could see a white cloth covering a mound in the center of the draw. Just in front of the white sheet flapping in the wind stood a large clear wrapped package of meat.

"I don't think you need me for this," Frank said stopping in his tracks.

"It's okay, just a few feet further," Alex urged.

Frank took a few more steps when the forensic medic flipped up the sheet.

Frank braced himself for something grotesque but after he saw what was under the cloth he burst out laughing.

Everyone shouted, "Happy Birthday, Frank" and began whooping and howling with broad grins across their faces. There in front of them were four cases of beer and packages of steaks.

"You guys really had me going there. I guess I forgot what today was. Usually Sunflower reminds me," Frank said.

"Yeah, I had Jan call her yesterday to let her know and not say anything. The beer and steaks are yours but we'd appreciate it if you would invite us over for a barbeque this weekend," Alex said.

"Sure, Saturday okay?" he asked.

Everyone cheered and patted him on the back.

"So the Naomi in your story is okay?" Frank asked.

"As far as I know. We made that story up so you'd believe it. And since wolves howl every other night, we figured this was the best time," Alex said. "We'll help you load your truck."

After they hauled the beer to the back of Frank's pickup, they climbed into the cab and turned the vehicle around to follow the sheriff and medic back onto the main highway.

"You really had me goin' there old friend," Frank said, turning right as the other two cars turned left

toward Tuba City. "Say what did my dog's smell if it wasn't for a person?"

"I rubbed a steak on it. Oh, just a minute. I have a call coming in," Alex said when his comphone beeped. "Yeah? Okay, I'll be there as soon as I can."

"For real this time?"

"Yeah. I'll allow you to go over the speed limit."

About the Author

A. Nation travels the west with her husband. I decided to write in a futuristic fashion creating an interesting adventure stories that have a moral realization. . Whether from prejudice, political crime, retribution, or enslavement, the sagas shall continue.



For more insights to how this story progressed, see my blog at: [My Blog](#).

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