

The following 3 pages are excerpts taken from the Novel 3Aces, by Richard Ide

The child's black hair hung straight down, her skin tone almond. Like Dawn's, her chiseled features were going to break a lot of hearts some day.

"It's a boy. And his name is Boots."

"Can I hold him?"

The child looked critically at the cat. "Boots is scared of strangers, aren't you, Boots?" She kissed the cat on the black patch covering his forehead. "Maybe Boots will let you hold him later." The little girl moved to her grandmother. "Is dinner ready yet, Gramma?"

Mrs. Morrison smoothed the child's hair and put the cat on the floor. "Come to the kitchen and help me serve, sweetheart." They disappeared into the pantryway.

Dawn attempted to hide her disappointment by towing Abner around the downstairs. It struck Abner that if you took too deep a breath, the rugs, painted portraits, and antique sideboard might just rise and fall in a heap of dust. In the library Dawn handed him a silver-framed photograph, the resemblance to Dawn's daughter obvious: proud, flinty, Lisa's grandfather might have been chairman of the once powerful Pennsylvania Railroad.

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"Jerry, why buy a cow, when all we have to do is milk it? We have only to let things take their natural course. You take Groff's key account list from Fay and prepare to handle that business."

"Suck the good stuff out from under Groff?"

"Simply do not interfere with the natural flow of events. It won't be long before Groff destroys himself. We'll be prepared."

"So we set up to handle Groff's key accounts..."

Stohner nodded curtly and rose. "And once the cream is skimmed, you cast the skimmed milk aside." Stohner slipped the folded spreadsheets into his silken suit jacket and pushed out through the glass door.

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More excerpts taken from 3Aces, by Richard Ide

Between studying in the bunk at night for her “written” and driving all day—with time out to practice backing and parallel parking four inches off the curb—Dawn was frazzled. Abner knew it. He also knew she could pass that Pennsylvania Commercial Test right now. But she missed Pip. The dog had been ravenous, steadily losing weight, so they’d left him with Kenny to be wormed. Abner’s gaze drifted over the outer bridge railing and down—to the white caps scudding in over the waters of the Narrows... *feeling light-headed—half thrill, half terror—stepping off the extended tail gate of the C-130 Blackbird in full combat gear, oxygen mask piercing the night blackness...free falling in formation with his recon buddies through the thin, frozen air at 19,000 feet toward the steaming Laotian forest, wind tearing at their gear...airfoil chutes popping at two thousand feet, crashing through three layers of jungle canopy to the ground...*

“Abner, are you all right?”

He yanked his hands from the dash. “Huh? Sure.”

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“Keep away, hand—wind’s got me! This is one set a’ wiggle wagons ain’t gonna make it to Hardin.”

Piles of swirling snow sifted like snakes over the road. An explosion of icy crystals and truck lights flashed by on their right, coming to rest at a crazy cant.

“See that? One’s off to your right in the ditch!”

Abner kept an even tone. “I saw it.”

“Black ice under this snow, driver. Oh, God, I’m gonna lose it!”

“You’re not losin’ anything, Greene. You’re doin’ a fine job. Go slow as you need to hold the road, I’ll keep my distance.”

Dawn nervously lit a cigarette. “Abner, he’s absolutely panicked! I can’t see a thing out there—and listen to that wind!”

“Greene better hold it, or he’ll suck us into the ditch right behind him.”

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The duping of the Indian was the last straw! Dawn seized a handful of discards and melded them into a miniature deck, giving them a hurried shuffle. The curious pushed in closer, shoving Abner farther back in the crowd.

Reaching for the pot, gut jiggling with laughter, Tracker took a swipe at the cards in Dawn's hand and missed. "Here—whattaya think you're doin'? It ain't your deal yet."

She quickly began placing cards facedown on the table—turning each card faceup after correctly naming it: "An ace...a five...queen...jack...a deuce..."

The surrounding drivers were stunned: "How the hell's she doin' that?" "Can't see 'em, but she's callin' every damn one of 'em right!" It was instantly clear to everyone—they'd been fleeced.

As if propelled by a coiled spring, the Crow leapt atop the table, deer knife gleaming in one hand. Tracker came to his feet—hands jerking back—barely avoiding the flash of the Chief's blade as it thunked into the table, spearing the pot money.

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He instructed the pilots to crest the mountain and skim its west side along a broken line of cliffs about halfway down; two close passes and the accompanying cobras drew no fire. In a line behind him, Hyon, Kenny, Kleng, and Thu—every man bearing eighty pounds of gear—jumped six feet off the left skid of their hovering slick onto a protruding ledge of red rock and melted into the mountainside scrub.

The whomp of chopper blades faded in the hot midday air. Only the faint snarl of twin pusher-puller engines remained—Covey circling high above like a mother hawk; its pilot and Covey Rider awaiting an all-clear from Abner.

On the ground the howl of Monkeys, the song of birds and insects once again resumed. Grasping Kenny's handset, Abner whispered to Covey, "Team okay."

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