

PROFESSOR K: THE FINAL QUEST

An action-packed historical medical mystery

Jack Rogan Mysteries Book 4

Gabriel Farago

This book is brought to you by Bear & King Publishing.

Publishing & Marketing Consultant: Lama Jabr

Website: <https://xanapublishingandmarketing.com>

Sydney, Australia

First published 2018 © Gabriel Farago

The right of Gabriel Farago to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the *Copyright Amendment (Moral Rights) Act 2000*.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* (for example, fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review) no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Just outside Florence: 7 June

Belmonte held up his hand to silence his spellbound audience like a conductor about to begin a performance, paused for effect, and then turned around to face Tristan standing behind him. ‘Remember what I told you,’ he whispered. ‘His gun isn’t loaded. Only yours will be; when I decide. Now go and play your part, and don’t disappoint me ...’ Nazir stood on the other side of the altar, glassy-eyed like a zombie and pumped full of drugs. Belmonte knew he would do exactly as he had been told.

Ars Moriendi needed a loser; everyone was expecting it and all the betting depended on it. Someone had to die, but it couldn’t be Tristan. The kidnapping strategy needed him; alive. To ensure that Tristan remained unharmed and survived the evening, Belmonte had come up with an ingenious way to rig the game.

He had two identical .357 magnum Colt Python revolvers. One was loaded, the other – which he kept concealed in a pocket inside his cloak – wasn’t. After going through the ritual with the bullets, loading the gun and the drama of spinning the drum for effect, Belmonte would exchange the guns as he turned around to face the combatants. This was quite easy-to-do and wouldn’t be noticed in the heat of the moment when everyone was filled with excitement and anticipation. It was a simple, but effective trick that not only made sure Tristan wouldn’t be the one to be killed, but would have a significant impact on the betting, as Belmonte controlled the outcome and could decide when it was time to hand the fully loaded gun to Tristan for the kill.

Belmonte turned around again and held up the loaded gun for all to see. ‘Remember, ladies and gentlemen, we start with one bullet. I give you ten to one if the gun goes off. One bullet in a drum of six. These are good odds. Please place your bets. Call out your number and the amount you would like to wager. We will begin with number one. Your bet, please.’

Haddad knew it was almost time. He couldn’t risk waiting much longer. He had to make his move before the first round of the potentially fatal exchange began.

Haddad turned to Cesaria. ‘Ready?’ he whispered.

‘Yes.’

Haddad waited until number two had placed a bet and it was his turn. ‘*Now!*’ he said and pressed the button on his radio transmitter, which sent the prearranged signal to Conti. Then he reached for his throat, stood up and began to tear furiously at his collar. Crying out and gasping for air, he ripped the mask off his face and began to stagger about before collapsing on the

ground.

Cesaria jumped up and knelt down beside him. ‘Heart attack!’ she shouted. ‘Help, someone!’

‘CPR,’ said someone in the first row. ‘He needs CPR!’

Shit! It’s the prince, thought Belmonte, as he watched Cesaria pump Haddad’s chest and apply CPR. Everyone stood up as well and gathered around Haddad and Cesaria, forming a morbid circle of curiosity. Belmonte realised *Ars Moriendi* was over and he had to move quickly into damage control. But how? Calling an ambulance was out of the question. He had to somehow get the prince to a hospital without one.

Belmonte was desperately looking around the chapel to find one of his men, when he heard the roar of an approaching helicopter. As the chapel had no roof and was open to the sky, the noise was deafening. Suddenly, a bright searchlight illuminated the inside of the chapel as the helicopter hovered above and a voice called out through a loudspeaker: ‘*Stay where you are and put your hands up.*’

Belmonte realised at once what was happening and knew he had to get away; fast. He turned around and headed for the gap in the wall. As he rushed past Tristan standing at the altar, Tristan tackled him from behind and put his arm around his neck. ‘You are not going anywhere!’ he shouted as they both fell to the ground. Belmonte reacted quickly. He rolled to his side, trying to shake off his assailant, but Tristan wouldn’t let go. Belmonte still had the gun in his hand and realised that time was running out. He raised his hand, pressed the gun against Tristan’s chest and pulled the trigger. As he pushed Tristan away with both hands he dropped the gun. Moments later, desperate and covered in blood, he ran through a gap in the wall and disappeared into the dark.

When Cesaria heard the gunshot, she stood up and pulled out her gun. Shouting, ‘Police! Stand back!’ she ran towards the altar. Haddad got up as well and hurried after her just as the commandos stormed into the chapel with Grimaldi following close behind.

As soon as Haddad saw Tristan lying on the ground – convulsing and bleeding profusely out of a large chest wound – he knew instantly the injury was life-threatening. He pulled out his radio and called Conti.

The fattoria raid had gone off like clockwork. The commandos had entered from three sides at once. The surprised guards had been drinking, and offered no resistance. The place was secured within minutes without a shot being fired.

‘How bad is he?’ asked Conti.

‘Bad.’

‘I’ll call an ambulance.’

‘No time.’ said Haddad.

‘Jesus! Wait! There’s some kind of mobile surgery truck in one of the sheds here. Amena was locked inside it.’

‘*Amena is with you?*’ asked Haddad, surprised.

‘Yes.’

‘Where are you?’

‘Close.’

‘How close?’

‘Very. Minutes ...’

‘This could work! Amena has treated more gunshot wounds than an entire college of surgeons combined. If anyone can keep him alive, she can.’

‘Get him over here! Find Grimaldi, he knows the way. Hurry!’

‘Done! What about Lorenza?’

‘Still searching. This is a rabbit warren ...’

‘Say a prayer.’

‘I will.’

‘Me too.’

The police car turned into the long driveway leading to the fattoria and pulled up in front of the big barn. The barn doors were wide open and the inside was lit up with lights so bright, they were blinding like a landing site of an alien spaceship. Jack and Conti hurried over to the car and opened the back door. Haddad sat in the back, holding Tristan. He was pressing a towel against the large chest wound, trying desperately to stem the flow of blood. Cesaria sat next to him, cradling Tristan’s head in her lap.

Wearing a surgical gown, face mask and gloves, Amena ran out of the barn and helped Jack lift Tristan out of the car. ‘Careful,’ she said, and looked at Haddad. ‘You do turn up in unexpected ways,’ she said. ‘Good to see you; Fabio told me. You can assist me; there’s no one else. I’m sure you’ve seen more of this than I ... Come, I’ll tell you what to do. Quickly!’

Haddad, Jack and Amena carried Tristan into the barn and then up the ramp and placed him on the narrow operating table inside the semi-trailer.

‘I’ll take it from here,’ said Amena. ‘Naguib, scrub your hands, put on the gown over there and the gloves. Essential supplies and equipment are missing here. We have to make do with

what we have and improvise until the ambulance gets here.'

A police officer walked up to Conti. 'We found something, sir,' he said. 'In the cellar ... You should come.' Conti looked at Jack, concern on his face. Things were going from bad to worse. 'You stay here,' he said, and hurried after the officer. Jack nodded without taking his eyes off the operating table.

'Let's have a look,' said Amena, slowly peeling away the blood-soaked towel. She always felt a pang of dread every time she was faced with a situation like this. The next few seconds would reveal if the patient had a chance, or not. Life and death, hanging in the balance. Haddad too, realised what was happening and was watching intently as Amena put aside the towel and began to gently probe the deep wound. Jack held his breath, Haddad did too.

After a moment that seemed an eternity, Amena straightened up. 'He's one lucky young man,' she said. 'Somehow, the bullet missed the vital organs and main arteries and went cleanly through his side, leaving a huge exit wound; right here. What kind of bullet was this? Judging from the size of the wound, it could have killed an elephant.'

'Point 357 magnum,' said Haddad, 'fired point-blank.'

'Ouch! A little to the right and he would have been killed instantly. The main problem we have now is catastrophic blood loss. We have to stem the flow.'

For the next fifteen minutes, Amena worked feverishly to limit the blood loss and stabilise her patient until the ambulance team arrived. It was all about skill, improvisation, hope and luck. Especially luck.

'Stay with me,' she said, pressing the wound and blood vessels together with her fingers. Then a smile lit up her face as she heard the distant siren of the approaching ambulance. *Not long now*, she thought. *The guys will have everything we need.*

The ambulance raced through the open barn door and came to a sudden halt behind the semi-trailer. Two paramedics jumped out and looked around. Amena was shouting instructions from inside. One of the paramedics opened the back of the ambulance and climbed inside to get some equipment. The other ran up the ramp with his kit.

During the next twenty minutes it was touch and go. After that, the drugs kicked in and the crisis appeared to be over, for now. 'He's young and a fighter,' said Amena, and stepped back. 'He'll live.'

'I haven't seen anything like this, ever,' said one of the paramedics, shaking his head in disbelief. He looked at Amena with amazement. 'I don't know how you did it,' he said.

'Never mind,' said Amena, a hesitant smile creasing the corners of her mouth. She pointed to the operating table behind her. 'Lucky we had all this,' she said. 'Couldn't have done it

without it. Let's get him to a proper hospital, give him some blood and sew him up. I'm coming with you.'

'Me too,' said Haddad, and took off his blood-splattered gown.

Jack walked over to Amena and embraced her, tears in his eyes.

'Thank you,' he said, overcome with emotion. 'You are one very special human being.'

'From what I've heard from Dr Rosen, you're not too bad yourself,' replied Amena, and hurried to the ambulance.

**** End of Chapter Excerpt ****

Get Your Copy of Professor K: The Final Quest Now!

[Buy from the Author](#) | [Amazon Kindle](#)

Here's what you'll get when you buy your book directly from the author:

- Instant Access to download the book in Mobi, ePub and PDF, whether you read on Kindle, Nook, Kobo, your tablet or phone.
- All books purchased directly from the author are backed by a 100% 60 Days Money Back Guarantee. If you aren't hooked from the beginning, you get your money back, and you can keep the book too! It doesn't get any better than that; right?

