

Chapter Fifteen

A voice came over the water, *get down on your knees and put your hands on your head.*" The boat moved closer to Jorge with several men on deck with weapons trained on him. His call for help was answered by the U.S. Coast Guard. He dumped all the drugs and was several miles away from the body. All he had to do was convince the Americans he was out on this boat then the owner fell in and drown. The back of the boat had damage from there exit from the port, but that was in Mexico, and this boat was one of many on the ocean. The Coast Guard boarded and handcuffed him as they searched the boat. A lieutenant helped Jorge to his feet then sat him down and asked him in Spanish, *"who are you and why are you on this boat."* Before he could answer a seaman came up from the hold with the P90 as well as a brick of heroin. The lieutenant said, *"don't say a word."*

Gary pulled his truck into the driveway. Zoey looked at the house then back to him and asked, *"where are we?"* Gary handed her a set of keys and said, *"this is what I've been doing the last couple of weeks."* Zoey looked at the keys. Gary said, *"I wanted us to have a place that was ours away from the others. I did the basics, but there is still a lot of work that we can do together and make it ours."* Zoey asked, *"you bought a house and didn't tell me?"* Gary lost his smile, *"I got the house in an auction for fourteen-thousand, and I put about that much into the work I did so far."* Zoey looked down at the keys then back to the house. Gary said, *"when it's just us we're good, but when we're around the others we become something else... .. I just don't know how to explain it."* Zoey asked, *"just how long have you been planning this?"* After a couple of long seconds, Gary said, *"at first this was just going to be a quick flip, but then I had this dream, and I somehow knew we needed to have something that was just ours."* Zoey looked back to the house, and in the back, she saw a swing slowly being pushed by the wind. She said, *"tell me about your dream."*

Gary smiled and looked down at his hands, *"it started with the house. When I bought the house, it was windowless and dark. As I watched the windows went in, then stucco covered the block. The yard turned green, and the roof straightened out and was fixed. In the door, I saw*

you. In the back, I saw a child on the swing. A little boy going back and forth. He stopped and yelled daddy.” Zoey looked at her stomach. She turned to Gary then back to the house. She could see the stucco and a large low roof. She could also see a large red door. She asked him, “boy, what if it was a girl?”

Gary cocked his head to the left then asked, “*what?*” Zoey took his hand and put it on her stomach and said, “*there’s something I need to tell you, but I don’t want you to think this was a trap or something.*” Gary looked at his hand on her then he asked, “*are you hungry or I don’t know..... what?*” Zoey let go of his hand and said, “*no dumbass I’m pregnant.*” Gary just stared at her. Zoey stared into his eyes and asked, “*did you hear me, I’m pregnant..... with your child..... come on say something..... speak goddammit.*” Gary timidly said, “*let’s go into the house and see what room would make a good nursery.*” Zoey angrily asked, “*what do you think about what I just said?*” Gary smiled and said, “*there are so many things running through my mind that I don’t know where to start, but the biggest thing right now is just one word.....Daddy.*”

Cathy turned off the television and asked, “*should we really be spying on them?*” Wendy turned the television back on and said, “*how can we not? I mean we have more than just a little part in all this, and I just want to see what happens next.*” Cathy took back the remote and changed the view back to the motel where the dealer they were following was staying. Parked nearby the motel was one of the dark gray sedans. Cathy said, “*we have bigger problems than the Zoey Gary drama.*” Gina leaned out of her chair and said, “*this is boring, go back to Zoey and Gary.*” Cathy turned to Gina and asked, “*how would you feel if we broadcasted you and Jack together without your knowledge?*” Gina smiled and said, “*if you don’t want that then I would suggest staying out of the files on the server labeled GJB.*” Cathy turned to Wendy and said, “*what do you say, later on, tonight?*” Wendy closed her Laptop and said, “*I already made a copy so yeah later tonight.*” Cathy switched back to the motel view just in time to see a man in a dark suit putting their camera in a bag with the word “evidence” spelled out in red. Wendy turned on her laptop again and started a program that would wipe all the information off the other cameras. Gina asked, “*what does this mean?*”

Part Two

The open sign turned on as Owen unlocked the door and Ana stood by the register. Sam was in Las Vegas for the week doing some gambling and as he put it, “whatever.” His trip was really a show of confidence on the two as well as a test run for the eventual takeover. Sam knew that if he were there, he would be the boss, but Owen and Ana needed to take charge if he was ever going to retire. Their first customer was a man looking for ammunition for a lever-action 45-70 government. A new shipment destined for Wendy just came in, and the man left with two boxes along with a cleaning kit and a campsite cooking set. The camping gear was Ana’s idea, and so far, the new inventory was bringing in new customers that wouldn’t have come in. A man in a dark suit wearing sunglasses walked in and over to the counter. In a blunt, gruff authoritarian voice he said, *“don’t speak just listen. I know everything, and if all of you want to stay out of prison, you’ll give this to the woman calling herself Wendy.”* He handed Ana a large envelope and left without another word. Ana handed it to Owen and asked, *“what did he mean by calls herself..... Isn’t that her name?”*

Inside the envelope, Wendy found a series of eight by ten pictures of everyone in their family from Jill behind the wheel of the truck following the redneck dealer to Gina driving away from the man she just shot in the head. The envelope also contained the arrest report for Tracy Douglas along with the paperwork spelling out her conviction and imprisonment. Attached to the last paper was a copy of an obituary for Diana Reese Douglas. When she was arrested, her parents all but abandoned her, and after leaving jail, she never went to see them. There was also a school photo of both her with her long braided hair and Peter. A paper attached to the arrest report said, *“we know who you are and what you’ve been up to. Stop now, and we will let you go but if you don’t stop just know we have enough to put you and the others in prison for the rest of your lives.”* Just below this was four words, *“your war is over.”* Ana asked, *“what does this mean?”* Owen moved the pictures around until he found one of him and Ana on a beach in Mexico. He said, *“I think big brother is watching and taking notes.”* Wendy pulled out the picture of Peter and said, *“maybe it’s time we buried our dead, and let the past go.”*

A few days later Wendy sat in her truck watching a house she hadn't seen since she was hauled away in handcuffs and a blanket. Her parent's house was smaller than she remembered and a little worse for wear with her father's prize lawn now brown. The front door opened, and a man came out. Her first thought was her father sold the house to this dumpy little man, but soon she recognized her father in this new form. His clean-shaven almost GQ model ready look was replaced by a gray stubble and thinning hairline. He had gained weight and was dressed in brown shorts and a dirty t-shirt. Her father carried a bag of trash and an empty box once filled with cans of beer to a trash can. In the driveway was an old Honda CR-V and her mother's Dodge Caravan. The van was faded by the sun with all four tires flat. Wendy stared at the van until she realized he was staring at her. Her first thought was to start the car and run, but her second thought was to get out and talk.

She got out and walked over to him. She straightened out and looked down at what he was wearing. As she got closer, she saw him change from this old man to her father then back. He opened the gate and stepped out. They came within three feet of each other. Her father said, *"I wasn't sure you would ever come back..... I thought I would never see you again."* Wendy replied, *"I didn't know what I would..... what I could..... I didn't know if there was any reason to come back."* He stepped closer, but Wendy backed a little away. He said, *"you always had a home here..... we were both ashamed of how we acted when you went away, but I know both your mother and I wanted to..... I am just so very sorry for..... could you ever forgive us?"* Wendy started to shake her head, but then in the corner of her eye, she saw the ghost of Peter as a small child sitting on her porch in the way he did when he was waiting for her to come out and play. He was nodding. Wendy came closer to her father and said, *"that was so long ago that I just don't care anymore about any of it, but you are still my papa, and I can't see hating you."*

Together they walked around her old neighborhood as her father talked about all the people they knew and how much had changed. Derik's family lost most of their properties in the market crash of 2008 and were now living in a duplex on the other side of town. His mother was

convicted of perjury and spent four weeks in jail. His father was working as a janitor at the high school. Peter's mother was working as a tour guide in the town's reenactment of the old west. Her acting career died with her son and the press exposing her drugs and how she used Peter. He said, "*at first the press would come to town and harass her as she walked the tourists around but eventually, they left, and she became just another guide.*" As they walked down the block one of the girls that helped with her conviction passed by but didn't recognize her. They walked into a diner her and her family would go to every Sunday after church and sat down in the same booth they would sit in back in the day. The waitress recognized her father. She walked over and said in an almost angry tone, "*why John you brought a date, how nice.*" He said, "*Nancy this is my daughter Tracy.*" Nancy looked at Wendy and smiled. She sat next to John and said, "*I heard so much about you but what he said didn't do you any justice you are just so beautiful.*"

A few hours later, Wendy was back on the road with a promise from her father and his fiancé to come and see her business as well as meet Cathy. John had said he was happy she found someone to live her life with and was also happy that he would have grandchildren. Wendy left thinking how while they could always come to her, she would never go back there again. Walking around town brought back too many bad memories, and she wanted to leave all that in the past. The town of Hope had moved on and so should she. She made it back to the compound just as the sun was coming up. The morning air was crisp with a hint of something sweet in the air. Wendy felt good for the first time in years. She felt at peace and happiness that she never found in all the killing. She needed some sleep, but she also had to be at the building site by noon. Jill was out front changing the gas prices, and Gina was cleaning the windows. Wendy walked past them and went into the common room to the kitchen where she found Cathy frying bacon. She kissed Cathy on the back of the neck and whispered, "*I have so much to tell you.*" Cathy turned and kissed her on the lips. She said, "*you can tell me after you get some sleep.*"

Part Three

A large slab of granite was set as a front counter by six workers as Juan Cassio watched giving directions on placement. He made sure to be a part of every aspect of the build as well as the daily operations. Today he was starting the hiring process by hiring someone to run the sanitation and nutrition services. When he finds the right people together, they would hire the staff and start training. He had an office, but he found he could run everything from his phone and tablet allowing him to be on his feet and everywhere. Today was also a special one with the inspector giving them the occupancy permit turning the building site to a proper building. The woman named Gina was going to come to the site, and Juan's goal was to talk her into taking the Job of room services which is a mix of maid and janitorial services. She had experience as well as a connection to Wendy. For her part, Wendy said she would come over and help him talk her into the job. Today was also the day they would reveal the name of the clinic.

Cathy turned the radio off. A reporter was talking about the arrest of a suspect in the school shooting as well as the church bombing. The FBI took custody of the unnamed man from the Coast Guard and were taking him to an undisclosed location. The car went silent. About ten minutes away from the clinic Cathy said, *"I knew we should have just shot the bastard. I mean what if he talks."* Wendy said, *"whatever is going to happen is going to happen and would most likely happen wither we killed him or not. Secrets don't stay secret forever."* Gina leaned forward from the back and said, *"he killed children in a church and a school. we should have skinned him and left him in the desert to die slow."* Cathy asked, *"so what happened to your husband?"* Gina smiled and replied, *"I don't think I should say."*

Jorge was escorted into a room equipped with several cameras and a one-way mirror. He was uncuffed then cuffed to a bar on the table. There were three chairs by the table, but none of them were on his side, and the handcuff was inflexible so he couldn't reach one or sit on the table comfortably. A man in a wrinkled cheap light gray suit came into the room and pushed a chair over to Jorge. He asked, *"did you say anything to the feds?"* Jorge didn't know this man, but he didn't look like a government official. Jorge said in Spanish, *"I didn't say a word."* The man said, *"from what I know they have a video of you setting the bomb at the gas station as well as nine people who remember seeing you at the church and at the school. They also have*

fingerprints. Right now, they have enough to stick the needle in your arm, but they think you weren't working alone and if you can name names then just maybe we can cut a deal." Jorge smiled and said, *"I have plenty of names. There is a whole terrorist camp right in New Mexico led by this woman, and with immunity, I will help your government take them down."*

The man in the suit said, *"yeah I thought you might say something like that."* The man pulled out a needle and injected the contents into Jorge's arm. He said, *"it will look like you had a stroke while in custody. In a few days, you will be dead."* Jorge struggled against the cuff screaming at the cameras and the glass. The man said, *"don't bother, the other room is empty, and the cameras are off, after all, I'm your lawyer, and we have the right to privacy."* Jorge asked, *"who are you?"* the man said, *"it doesn't matter. I work for a man that saved your sister from you."* Jimmy sat down and watched Jorge start to shake then sputter as the drug burned through his mind. About ten minutes later he called for a guard. Two days later Jorge was dead.

In gold across the top of the wall over the door was a sign, *"The Peter Wendel James Rehabilitation Clinic."* Wendy had spoken to Alice, and together they decided to change the name to remember Peter and how he needed help, but none came in time. None of them knew at the time that Jorge was in a room slowly twitching to death. When the clinic opened Gina came to work there along with Jill until she went off to college in the same town with Jeff. Gina and Jack would eventually sputter out with Jack moving out of the state to Montana where he found work on a ranch. Gina grew close to Juan, and eventually, they moved in together merging the two families together in every way except marriage.

Sam retired to Florida where he lived another six years before he died from lung cancer. He lived long enough to see Owen and Ana's first and second child. They took over the gun shop turning it into a thriving business. On the birth of their first child, Ana's father called then came up from Mexico. By their third child, he was a part of their family and a regular on every holiday. He even in time stopped calling Owen, *"that white devil."* When their first child was born Owen hired Gary to help manage the store so they could enjoy being a family and not let

work get in the way. Zoey had a little boy they named Zacarias but would call Zac. She and Gary were married just days before he was born, but it would be another year before they moved into the house. In the years after giving birth to Zac and another child they named Amy, Zoey went back to school and earned a degree in the law and eventually passed the bar. She opened a private practice in town and earned a reputation for being fair and winning.

One day Darrel was working on a truck when he heard a sound from another room. He got up and found Scott and Sally naked in a chair as they made love. Scott was around twenty years younger than Sally, but none of that mattered to them. They moved in together and remained that way. No children or attachments other than the desire for one another and their love. Darrel was on a call one day to pick up a car along the side of the road when he was struck and killed by a drunk driver. At his funeral, they met his ex-wife and all six of his children. She had stripped him of his right as a parent and was ashamed for how she cost their children the ability to see their father. Wendy had said to Cathy, "*too little too late.*" Instead of a hearse, they used the hot-pink and white van. He was buried in a coffin with racing stripes and the hood emblem from a Ford Mustang. The next day, Sally and Scott moved away eventually ending up in Southern California where they opened an auto restoration shop using the lessons Darrel gave them about cars and life.

Cathy had twin girls they named Georgia and Tracy. When Zoey and Gary moved into their new house, Cathy told Wendy it was time they did the same so together they found a place and moved into a house closer to the elementary. Two years later, a woman came looking for George, but she wouldn't say why until she saw the green-eyed blonde haired girls and knew they were his daughters as well as the half-sisters to her own six-year-old son named George. Like Wendy, she was someone George help free from jail. Her name was Danica, and together with Cathy, Wendy, and their three children and Wendy's father and stepmother, they formed a small family. Wendy vowed to never be alone again, and she never was.

Epilogue

Two months after the clinic opened

An old box truck raced across the desert in the dark. The headlights were off. Wendy watched the truck using night vision goggles. Jill was next to her using the infrared camera. She said, *“there running that truck awful hot. They keep it going like that they will burn the engine up.”* Wendy said, *“give me the camera and take aim I want you ready when I give the order.”* Wendy checked the truck using the infrared camera counting at least nine bodies including the two in front. Wendy said, *“let them get close then fire.”* Jill smiled as she went down and aimed at the cab of the truck. She asked, *“I should keep out of their eyes, right?”* Wendy replied, *“use the red dot to aim and try not to blind them.”* The truck turned to the northwest heading toward the place where Jill and Wendy were. Wendy said, *“fire.”* Jill pulled the trigger, and a rapid pulse of light came out of the specialized signal light. The truck flashed its headlights on then off as it slowed down. Jill and Wendy went to their waiting Jeep and met with the truck.

The driver got out and asked, *“are you two our escorts?”* Wendy said, *“you could say that.”* Jill pulled a Glock 19 with a suppressor and shot the two men in the head. Wendy said to the two dead men, *“enjoy hell.”* Another Jeep came around with Scott and Sally. Darrel got out of the back with a shovel. Wendy went to the back and opened the box. Inside were seven adults and three children. In her best broken Spanish, she said, *“welcome to America.... please enjoy the water.”* Sally and Jill passed out bottles of water. One of the men from the back of the truck asked, *“what happened to the coyotes?”* Wendy said in English, *“they were selling you to a gang that would have forced you to pay for your trip across the border.”* The man asked, *“and what do you want?”* Wendy smiled and said, *“I want to stop those people that use others for profit or fun. I want out of here before the government shows up.”* The man asked, *“who are you?”* Wendy smiled. Sally said, *“we are no one, and you never met us.”*