

## Chapter Five

*“Darrel, I just don’t see where the work went,”* Wendy said as she looked over the van he spent a week on tearing down and building back up. Darrel smiled and said, *“damn right you don’t see it. You don’t see all the carbon fiber replacing the steel or the steel reinforced front end. You can’t see how I added the side door or all the secret storage pockets for guns and ammo.”* He demonstrated the Kevlar and carbon fiber pullup window armor and the hydraulic doors. From behind the van, Sally asked, *“what’s with the stick figure family?”* Owen said, *“well that helps it fit in with the other soccer moms.”* Wendy walked around to see a stick figure with a bow in its head spinning on a pole in a sort of dance while other stick figures tossed dollar signs at the dancer. Sally asked, *“Pole dancing?”* Darrel sighed and said, *“just like mom.”* Sally shook her head saying, *“there is just something wrong with you Darrel.”*

Wendy, Scott, Jill, and Owen drove the van over to Sam’s shop parking it about a block away. Sam owned the block and the buildings around his shop. He had secret passages going between the buildings and a claustrophobic tunnel that no one liked. They met up at an old convenient store that closed after the owner died defending twenty-three dollars from a robber with a nickel plated 32. Sam gave them the keys to a storage locker as well as the locations of a few other places where he hid some ordinance. He said, *“I’m taking some time off to go to Mexico and meet with some of my suppliers. It will take some time, and I won’t be able to help with your project.”* He turned to Owen and said, *“you might want to move your trailer or find somewhere to stay for a while.”* Wendy said, *“if he wants he could stay with us for as long as he needs.”* Jill mumbled, *“or until he dies of exhaustion.”*

Wendy sat at her desk looking over what they knew and what they thought was happening. She looked out the window that overlooked the common room at her friends both old and knew and wondered if they were all done with the project. The dealers were changing their habits, the feds were moving in, and she was losing friends. It made her think about the ranch and her crew back then. They had just finished the compound and were stringing lights from trailer to trailer when David had asked Wendy if she wanted to join them. He said, *“I think you*

*would make a good leader for one of the groups.”* They had set up for four teams with one dealing with only those that sell to schools. Something about the type of people that would sell hard drugs to children helped Wendy decide to join. She looked over the sites and being the first person on the ranch she chose her site and trailer. Next to her was a woman going by the name of Cathy. She took the name from a comic strip, but she was nothing like that Cathy. She was thin with long blonde slightly curly hair that reminded Wendy of Sara Conner from the movie *The Terminator*. Wendy didn't know what she felt about this woman and her attraction to her.

By the end of the day she had five people in her group counting herself. A man going by Fred with a pencil-thin mustache and a bad combover, an over tanned, ripped woman calling herself Arnie, Cathy and a man from Vietnam calling himself Duke. Unlike the other teams, Wendy's team was going to remain small and focus on just those that sell near schools and to children. That night they planned a bonfire to introduce everyone. David had said how they need to see each other as a family for this project to work. Wendy watched as David spoke while trying not to look at Cathy. She had miscarried his child a few months earlier. He had moved on to another woman and hadn't spoken to her about anything. He even sent someone to speak to her about what the nurse's station needed. It was the loss of the baby and how David handled it that led Cathy to want to take part in a team rather than spend any time on the ranch near David.

Duke was born in Vietnam and fled the country in 1975 with his family when the southern government collapsed. His real name was Bao. They moved to California and opened a Vietnam, French and Polynesian fusion restaurant. It was ahead of the fusion trend and was popular with the locals. Bao worked in the restaurant while his brother Wayne took up with a local gang. Bao got married to a woman named Daisy, and they had a child they named Duke to honor Bao's father and his love of John Wayne. When Duke was fifteen his uncle Wayne told him, he had to work for him or die. A month later and Duke was in Jail for the first but not last time. He would go back a few times until a fight in jail cost him his life. The night of the funeral, Bao went to his brother and told him he was responsible for Duke and he would pay. For his trouble, Wayne beat Bao nearly to death than while he lay there Wayne went to Bao's house and

raped Daisey. The death of her son along with the subsequent attack led to her suicide While Wayne got five years for the attack and no time for his part in his nephew's death.

Fred was born Thaddeus Stevens, but most people called him Thad. From an early age, Thad was into statistics and numbers. He was fond of saying that his preschool class voted him future accountant of the year. After four years of college, he was a certified public accountant working for a firm in Los Angeles. He worked sixteen hours a day, six days a week with no time for a life or something like it. One of their clients ran a business that didn't seem to make sense to Thad. He soon came to understand that his firm was laundering money for a dealer. A week later and he had the FBI investigating his firm, a month after that a fire burned the firm down killing everyone Thad knew or cared about. With the guilty smoldering, Thad found himself facing charges of money laundering from the evidence he provided.

Most people would have said Arnie took the name for the actor and bodybuilder. Angie grew up on Venice Beach watching the surfers and weightlifters. Her favorite thing was to watch the bodybuilders work out. She dreamed of a day she could work on a look that would turn heads and open doors. Her mother was a well-known nutritionist, and her father was known as the surfing doc. Arnold Davis worked as an emergency room doctor at night and a surfer by day. Arnie would say he was a surfer that worked as a doctor to pay the bills. He helped people on the beach with medical needs even though it could have hurt his license. Angie's mother Samantha was tone and fit. Sam became a nutritionist to help with her workout. Both she and Arnie practically lived on the beach, so it only made sense that their daughter would be there. Angie worked out and ate right. She soon found she was garnering attention from all the right people and building a physique that will win awards. Arnie was helping someone on the beach when he was stabbed to death for the drugs in his bag. Sam said she could never go back to the place that her husband died, so she and Angie moved to Napa where Angie met a man named David. She took the name of her father to honor a person that did something good even though it might have been against the law.

Thad stared into the fire then back to his identification. Before anyone could say anything, he tossed it into the fire saying, *“Thad is dead, call me Fred.”* The others looked at his burning past then they did the same. Without warning, Arnie took off her shirt and tossed it in. She then did the same with her Shorts. Wendy looked down at her clothes and did the same at first except she didn’t stop with her outerwear. She took off her bra then panties letting them burn. From across the fire, she could see Cathy staring at her. Cathy got up and did the same, and soon the rest of the group was naked and dancing around the fire. Cathy and Wendy met as they danced. Wendy didn’t know she was going to do it until she pulled in Cathy and kissed her. They found their way into Wendy’s trailer. They kissed each other, and they did things that they didn’t know they were going to do. Cathy looked out and saw Duke and Arnie making love out in the open by the fire while Thad now calling himself Fred lay staring up at the night’s sky. Cathy said, *“I’m going to do something that might seem different, please just go with it.”*

Fred lay there naked staring up at the sky thinking about his life and just how much he didn’t miss any of it. The fire was dying, and he could see Duke and Arnie as they continued to have sex. He thought about how he would have bet big that Arnie would have gone with the two women rather than Duke. He also thought about how easy it was to call him Duke. The naked Cathy came over and laid down next to him staring at the stars. She said, *“now this is a nice view.”* Fred said, *“yeah, it makes me wonder why I stayed so long in that city.”* Cathy rolled over onto her side and put her hand on his chest. She whispered into his ear, *“this view is nice, but I can show you something better if you are open to the possibilities.”* Her hand slid down his chest, across his surprisingly defined abs and down to his groin. She kissed him then took hold of his taught erection, then she got to her feet and said as quietly as possible, *“come and see.”* About five minutes after Cathy came back to the trailer, Fred was at the door. He was still naked and erect. Wendy looked at Fred then at Cathy. He slid into the bed between the two women. Cathy leaned over him and took Wendy by the chin. She gently pulled Wendy over until they met in the middle between the two and over Fred. Cathy looked down at him. Fred said, *“this is the best day of my life.”*

Jack Hester didn't understand he was an addict. It started when he broke his arm playing football. The doctors gave him painkillers that made him feel good until they took them away. Jack's arm healed, but he found himself daydreaming about the feeling the pills gave him. That was when he met Darren. Outside of the practice field, Darren met with his clients selling whatever they needed. His clients were like Jack, all of them were under the age of fourteen. While Darren liked selling to kids like Jack he preferred his female clients. A thirteen-year-old with an Adderall addiction will do anything for a fix. Jack was fourteen and desperate for his fix. He had some money just not enough for what Darren wanted. One day he had watched as Darren had a girl in his class take off her clothes then Darren had his way with her for the drug she eventually overdosed on.

*"yeah Darren, how's it going,"* Jack said as he approached him. Darren looked back at Jack and said, *"now that depends on if you want something and can pay for it."* Jack looked over at a van standing on a corner with heavily tinted windows. Darren shook his head then said, *"no lettuce no cabbage."* Jack asked, *"aw come on man, there has to be something I can do."* Darren said, *"I have this guy that likes a certain kind of fun, and if you gave him a little attention then I can see giving you what you want."* Darren took Jack to his car, and the two left the school grounds not seeing the van follow them. Two court-ordered miles away Darren drove into the driveway of a man named Dennis who was on court-ordered house arrest. He paid Darren for his kind of vice. Darren whispered to Jack, *"just let this guy do what he going to do, and you will find yourself with as much product as you will ever need."* Darren knew that when this guy was done, he wouldn't need to give the boy any drugs, just a shallow grave.

Wendy waited for them to go inside when she ordered Fred and Arnie to go around to the back. Cathy placed some spikes underneath Darren's car just in case he got out, then she joined the rest at the door. Darren came out the door as they approached. He had a small bag and a smirk on his face. That smirk faded as he saw the gun in Wendy's hand. She had what was their standard 22-automatic with a suppressor. Cathy and Duke had baseball bats. The gun froze him in place, and the baseball bats knocked him down. Cathy struck him in the gut then Duke struck him over the head. They quickly duct taped him from head to toe then they put him in the van.

The bag had rolls of cash and a few flash drives with addresses attached to them. Wendy called out on the radio to the others asking, *“are you ready to go, over.”* Arnie called back, *“Arnie angry want kick ass, over.”* Wendy thought her Hulk impression was just too good. Wendy called back, *“Arnie smash, over and out.”*

Instead of smashing, Arnie just opened the door to what was the kitchen. Inside she and Fred found enough child size snacks to feed several soccer teams. This included a refrigerator packed with pizza rolls, juice boxes and bottles of wine coolers and vodka. Arnie found a hidden door ajar. She sent Fred around to open the front door as she went inside where she found the man’s closed-circuit surveillance system as well as enough child porn to keep a pervert happy for many years. She shut the system off and erased them entering his house. She then pulled the hard drives to make sure someone couldn’t retrieve their images. Before setting the bomb, she saw a man in a bedroom. He was naked from the waist down with a whip in his hand and his prick in the other. Another camera was on the boy. He was completely naked and showing signs of lash marks on his back.

Darren woke up taped to a chair. He was naked and taped with his legs spread apart. A light came on overhead, and soon he realized he wasn’t alone. The light was on a string and swinging back and forth. As the arc of the light swung away, he could see three women of varying degrees of hotness going from soccer mom to tan goddess. Despite his predicament, he started to grow hard. The soccer mom came over and put her foot on his genitals pushing down slightly then pushing harder. Wendy said, *“scream all you want, no one will hear you.”* Arnie said, *“I expected something bigger from a guy who would do what you do.”* Darren asked, *“what is this?”* Wendy said, *“you have one chance and two choices. One, give us the names of the children you sold to that guy or two.”* Wendy showed him her gun. Darren said, *“I can give you whatever you want on him. I could help you take care of him and.”* Wendy put her finger up to her lips in a shushing fashion. She pulled out a jar with something in it. She said, *“don’t worry about him.”* Darren looked at the jar and saw a man’s genitals floating in some sort of liquid.

Arnie carried Darren into the house as Cathy saw to Jack's wounds. Wendy told him, *"you didn't see us, and you don't know what happened here."* He nodded. Cathy said, *"you need help. That man was going to kill you, and you just walked right into it."* Jack just nodded. Wendy said, *"we have friends everywhere, and we will know if you say anything. If I ever see you again, I will kill you."* Jack looked up and asked, *"what should I say about my back?"* Cathy said, *"you escaped from the house and got away before it happened."* Jack asked, *"what happened?"* Fred said, *"don't worry about it, just tell your family about your drug habit and get better."*

Arnie pulled out a small box and pushed a button setting off the bombs they placed in the house. As per their training, they placed the explosives to mirror a gas leak. Arnie made sure that there was enough evidence to show what the man was doing. She looked at the remote and said, *"that should have felt better."* Fred said, *"yeah I know what you mean. I don't see how we are any better than that man or the dealer."* Duke said, *"I don't know what you two are talking about. That was one of the best days of my life."* Wendy watched the road listening to them talk thinking about Peter and what she thought he might have thought about what she did. Cathy whispered into her ear, *"I think we did more good today than we could have ever done within the system."* Wendy said, *"I just wish we could have helped more than we killed."*

It was two days after their first strike, and the group was having a difficult time finding a target they could all agree on. Wendy went to the training grounds and watched another team train. This team had two children on it. A boy named Colin that was going by the name Max and a blonde-haired girl named Alice. She looked like Julia Stiles from the movie 10 Things I Hate About You with the long straight blonde hair and stern expression. Wendy knew that Alice lost both her parents to drugs with her father dying on the day she came to the ranch, but there was just something off when it came to this girl. Alice was going through the handgun training and was doing it with no expression on her face. A woman named Ruth was watching Alice saying, *"she's good at hiding her feelings, but I know she will need someone to watch over her."* Ruth looked like a stereotypical librarian with her hair tied tight against her head, but she was a good shot and exceptional hand-to-hand fighter. The type of woman David liked to send out into the field, the kind people looked past.

Wendy came back to their campsite to find the others arguing about a new target. Duke went to David, and they came up with a plan to go after the man that killed his son. He was a dealer and a gang member, he was also Duke's brother. Cathy asked, "*and what if someone recognizes you?*" Duke said, "*the only one that should be able to recognize me will be dead and for the rest who gives a fuck.*" Wendy asked, "*I know what he took from you, but do you really think you can kill your own brother?*" Duke said, "*I've wanted to do that ever since I lost my boy.*" Wendy looked at Cathy then nodded. Cathy looked at the others as if she was hoping someone would speak up, and when she found herself alone in the argument, she just put her hands up and gave in. The five sat down and worked on the plan with Duke taking the lead. Wendy said, "*because this is your call you will have to pull the trigger.*"

His name was Gia, but to his followers, he was áo dài because of the traditional white suit he wore. He was the right hand of Wayne who was going by the name trùm which meant boss. Together they ran their unnamed little gang with a style that was their own and little tolerance for outsiders. Wayne had a routine that was easy to follow. He would tour each of his business fronts every day for the money count and deal with anyone not making enough to pay their fee for membership. That morning he found out that one of his fronts was making a profit. A nail salon ran by his current girlfriend was in the black and making the kind of money that could bring unwanted attention to his operation. After leaving the shop, he sent Gia back to burn the place down. Gia took one of their most ruthless killers with him, a man known as bóng which meant shadow.

Wayne watched for the flames and the sounds of fire trucks, but by midnight nothing was happening. He knew it wasn't like Gia to disappoint. He looked down at the young white girl going down on him and told her, "*do better or no fix.*" He spoke English with no accent but chose to use a broken English pattern to give the illusion he was from the old country. The door opened, and Duke walked in with a trash bag over his shoulder. Wayne said, "*this is no place for your.*" He stopped when he recognized his brother. Duke said, "*I thought you should have this*

*back brother.*” Wayne opened the bag to see the blood-soaked white suit that belonged to Gia and the hands of the one called *bóng*. Wayne looked back to his brother to see the gun in his hand. As he sat there staring at the gun, a younger man was forced in by Fred and Wendy. Fred said, *“this guy was watching from the outside.”* The man looked at Wayne then back to Duke and said, *“father.”* Without a word, Duke raised and leveled his gun firing at this man hitting him in the head. Wayne started to laugh when Duke turned the gun on him and fired. Wayne fell over choking on his own blood dying laughing. Fred looked at Duke and asked, *“father?”*

On the way back to the ranch no one spoke after Duke explained what they saw. He said how that was what was left of his son after his brother turned him. He said, *“my boy died in jail. That cold-blooded child killer was no son of mine.”* They had done their best to make it look like one killed the other but then died from sustained wounds. In a small town near the ranch, Duke said he wasn’t going back. He had finished what he set out to do. The others pulled their money together and gave him around twelve hundred dollars and a bus ticket to New Orleans where he had some family. It was left unsaid, but he knew not to try and come back. He used them to seek revenge on his own brother and son turning their mission into an act of revenge. When they got back, David pitched a fit on them letting him just go. Wendy made a mental note on how he kept saying, *“he got away.”* It was always if not said out loud that anyone could leave at any time.

Later that day both Arnie and Fred said they couldn’t go on with the mission. Arnie didn’t like what she was becoming with every kill and Fred thought that he was just being used. After some back and forth talking, David talked them into going to the part of the ranch where the missions were planned out. The older people as well as the ones that couldn’t fight lived separate from the active groups, so they could plan without knowing the people they would send into harm’s way. David had said that to keep the groups separate they would have no contact, *“so if you go over there you don’t come back.”* That night Fred joined Wendy and Cathy one last time. It was something he never thought he would ever experience, two women at the same time both focused on him and each other. He had said it was both pleasurable and uncomfortable at the same time. Cathy asked Arnie if she wanted to join them, but she said, *“I just don’t go that way.”*

Wendy pulled a picture from a drawer and looked at it. She didn't think about them that much anymore but now looking at the picture she was missing her friends. It was a group picture of her, Cathy, Duke, Fred, and Arnie took just before their first mission. Cathy came into the office and saw what Wendy was looking at. She said, "*babe, some memories don't deserve your time.*" Wendy said, "*yes, but some people do.*" Cathy looked at Arnie and remembered the blonde woman then she remembered seeing her nailed to a cross covered in dry blood and burned from the sun. She remembered finding Fred in a cabin. He had just died making him the last living thing on this side of the ranch. He had recorded what happened and how it was David and his bodyguards that did it. How David had stopped talking to the group until one day he came back and killed everyone in his path. Cathy dropped a tear into the glass frame. She tried to wipe it away until she realized that in the distance in the picture she could see David. Cathy put the picture down and walked out of the office.

Wendy picked up a landline phone and dialed a number she knew by heart. The phone rang for three rings then, "*Hello?*" Wendy didn't say anything back. The voice on the other side said, "*Hello Wendy, it's been a while since you called I was starting to think you stopped.*" Wendy took in a breath then said, "*I don't think we are there, yet I just thought that just maybe you could use some time away from my drama.*" The voice said, "*so you are thinking about it then or is it just because its that time of year?*" Wendy looked at the calendar on the wall. It said it was March except it was April and not 2015. Wendy said, "*I had one of the members kill a woman and bury her in the desert. Her son was killed in a ricochet when we used a 50-cal to stop a truck.*" The voice asked, "*why did you do that?*" Wendy said, "*because she was going to talk about what and who she saw. One of my friends killed himself when he saw what he had done, what I ordered him to do.*" The voice asked, "*when you went after Darren did you question what you did?*" Wendy said, "*Jack I didn't know what to think. Also, just like before.*" The voice interrupted her saying, "*yes I know you'll kill me.*"

Wendy walked out of her office and went to find Darrel. She told him to get a van ready for a quick trip. She said, *“we need to keep an eye on the feds and not stop taking the fight to the dealers.”* Darrel asked, *“just how do we do that?”* She said, *“we’re going to work for the cable company.”* Out in the yard, they had a truck they bought from a local cable television supplier when they dropped their in-house service and went all independent contractors for their service. In the truck, they could be unseen in plain sight with the prominent logos on the sides and the fact that most people didn’t know that the cable company did away with their service techs. Wendy planned to place cameras on the places where the feds were working as well as well know areas for drugs. Darrel said, *“we can trace the movements of the feds and plan our raids to happen when they are miles away as well as keep track on where their investigation is.”* Wendy said, *“yes I know that was my plan. You really don’t need to explain it to me.”*

Darrel went out to get the van which hadn’t been used for about a month only to find Jill and Scott inside in the back. Jill was on top in the reverse cowgirl position. Jill jumped when the door opened kneeing Scott in the genitals. Darrel didn’t react to the two in the back. He popped the hood and attached a jump starter to the battery. He then said into the open door, *“I am taking this into the shop as soon as I can get it started so you will need to do whatever you are doing and finish now.”* Jill leaned out as she fought with her bra asking, *“what’s the plan?”* Darrel said, *“your plan should include maybe some pants, or I don’t know underwear.”* Darrel slipped behind the wheel and checked the mirror. The two were just about dressed. He turned the key, and the van started. He got out and detached the jump starter and got back into the van moving it into the shop without any warning. On the way in he said, *“these vehicles are not here for you two to fuck in, they are here for our missions. Both of you have private rooms so use them.”*

A ladder went up a pole just outside of the police station where the ATF and FBI were encamped. The local law knew about the defunct van, but with their connections to what Wendy and her team did, they just kept it to themselves. By the end of the night, they had twenty cameras up and around town as well as a connection to the police station’s surveillance cameras courtesy of their local sheriff. Percy Macintosh was elected to clean up the streets, and after a few years of things getting worse, he came across Wendy and her operation. Like Wendy, Percy

was from the ranch, and he knew that as he would put it, “*sometimes you have to break the law to bring about justice.*” He stopped short of helping them, but he did sway investigations away from the group. He did make sure that the camera in his office was disabled just in case he needed to do something about the group in the future.

Scott tied in the camera feeds into the computer system set up at the compound. He then ran the feeds to the televisions in the common room. At first, people watched the feds with a feeling that they would be caught at any moment, but soon they started to speculate on just what they were seeing. That speculation became a drinking game. Every time a fed poured a cup of coffee was a shot, every time someone said the name Sam or unsub as in unknown subject was a shot. Three hours into the feed and almost everyone was drunk with Wendy being the only sober person. She didn't like that feeling of being out of control that drinking gave her. On in a corner, Jill and Scott seemed to forget they weren't alone and started to make out. Gary and Zoey were back from their time away. They came back from Las Vegas with matching wedding bands and a story on how they went to be alone and came back married. They were also acting like they were alone. Darrel had long since passed out with a bottle of Wild Turkey in his lap. Cathy was asleep next to Wendy on a couch with Owen's head on Cathy's lap. Wendy watched as one of the feds unrolled blueprints to what looked like a gas station with a large warehouse. She looked at the others then back to the screen wondering if the feds knew about them and were they planning on coming after them soon.