

Chapter Four

Scott drove a van he bought from a salvage yard into the shop. It was an old Toyota Previa that Scott and Darrel planned on stripping down and turning into the next breaching van with a reinforced frontend and Kevlar side panels. The van had only one side that opened so they will retrofit the other side to open. Both sides will have hydraulic arms that will force the doors open quickly. Darrel grumbled as he worked on the new van. He spent a lot of time on the first one only to watch its aftermath on the news. The local news was calling it a gang war. They were interviewing people from outside of the community who would say how terrified they were with all the fighting and guns. They had interviewed a few locals who were happy to see the drug house go. Sally said how the locals didn't meet the media's narrative. Scott said, *"yeah, it's hard to do an anti-gun interview with a grandmother while she is holding her AR15 on her hip with a Colt 1911 on the other."*

Wendy called it a day earlier than her usual with all the nonsense with the news and Darrel's bitching pushing her near her breaking point. About an hour later Cathy joined her with her phone. Wendy hated having a cell phone in the bedroom, but she could see something was going on with Cathy and the phone. Cathy slipped out of her jeans and top then put on a sheer slip she liked to sleep in and joined Wendy in bed. With a flick and a swish, she brought up a picture on her phone of a newborn infant. Cathy said, *"guess who just had another baby?"* Wendy asked, *"Alice?"* Cathy nodded and said, *"a little boy they are naming Edward Allen for a guy that worked for them and well Allen."* Wendy stared at the picture of this wrinkled little mess wondering how they all survived the ranch and made it to this point. Wendy asked, *"did you ever wonder what it would have been like if what happened didn't happen?"* Cathy said, *"you can say miscarriage I'm not some frail little butterfly or something."* Wendy said, *"no but you didn't answer me either."* Cathy turned back to the picture and the road not taken.

Cathy was a practicing nurse and friend of a friend of David. She was a much-needed necessity on the ranch with so many people building with so little experience in construction. Like so many of the women on the ranch, she had slept with David. The first few nights on the

ranch she had shared a small popup trailer with David, and after the third night, they were together. Cathy didn't want a relationship with David, she wasn't even sure if she liked him. The idea of being tied down to one person just didn't sound like anything she would ever want. David eventually brought this younger woman named Cindy to the ranch, and David and Cindy moved into the completed main compound together. The idea of David with the tween made Cathy sick to her stomach. She knew that Cindy wasn't a tween, but she still didn't like the visual. Her sick feeling would return each day, and as a nurse, Cathy started to understand what it meant. She had one friend she could tell about it named Wendy.

Wendy asked, "*so what does this mean for you and the father?*" Cathy stared at the blue test and said, "*I'm not sure how to tell him or how he'll react. I don't even know if I want him to be the father.*" Wendy first squinted at Cathy's response then she realized just who the father was. She said, "*there are options.*" Cathy said, "*not for me. I wasn't supposed to be able to have a baby. Giving it up now would be like giving up my one and only chance to be a mother.*" Wendy nodded then said, "*when I was in prison I was assaulted, and that assault cost me my ability to have children. I can understand how you feel, but if you keep it, you will need to tell him or leave.*" Cathy knew about Wendy going to prison, but she hadn't heard about the rest. As if she could read her mind Wendy said, "*that was another life a long time ago.*" Cathy came up behind Wendy and put her arms around her. The feeling was warm and somehow right to Wendy. Like this was something she was looking for ever since she lost her old life as Tracy in that cell.

A week later and nothing was said to anyone about the baby. Cathy was having a hard day with the numerous cuts, scrapes and hammers to the thumb people were suffering. She was feeling rundown and on edge. She looked out at the newest project to see David with his shirt off digging a firepit. She said to herself, "*he should be told.*" Next to him was this woman named Wendy. There was this rumor that she and David had something for a little bit before he took up with her. Cathy didn't know that it was while they were together. As she stared out the landscape seemed to shift than she went to her knees. She tried to get back up, but her legs felt like they were weighed down. Then she saw the blood. Wendy came in to see what was going on. Two

hours later, Cathy was in a paper gown in a hospital being told that she lost the baby and would most likely never have another one. They didn't tell her at the time that someone gave her a drug that caused the miscarriage. David stayed back at the ranch, but Wendy stayed with her, holding her hand helping her through those tough few weeks. It wouldn't be for months before they were a couple and even longer before they would have the relationship they share now. It would take both women coming to an understanding of who they were and what they wanted out of life. After the events at the ranch, Cathy found a note written by David to Cindy asking her to buy the drug used to cause her miscarriage when she was in Mexico.

The next day Darrel and Scott had the van stripped down and had new plans for the project. Darrel's attitude seemed to change as they looked through their plans. Wendy thought about asking if they had slept at all. She eventually said, "*don't forget this needs to be expendable.*" Darrel said, "*when we are done you won't have to abandon it.*" Wendy just rolled her eyes at him and said, "*just make sure not to leave any evidence inside.*" She left the two boys to play with their new toy and went to the armory. Inside she found Sally and a new girl named Jill as they went over the basic weapons used on the job. Jill ran away from a mother and stepfather who abused her from the age of ten until she left at sixteen. From there she went street to street finding as much harm as good. She found a trucker who would take care of her as long as she did things for him. When she finally had enough, he kicked her out at a gas station in the middle of nowhere owned by a woman named Wendy.

The round flew past the target and down the range eventually burying itself in a mound. Sally just stared at the untouched target wondering how Jill could have missed with every shot while Jill was just happy she didn't hit herself in the face with the recoil again. Wendy said, "*just maybe we should have you train with a different caliber for now. Maybe a 9mm or a 380?*" Jill looked down at the colt 1911 in her hand and asked, "*you mean there are different kinds?*" Cathy pulled her nickel plated Chiappa Rhino 20DS chambered in 357-magnum. She showed Jill how to hold it and work the hammer so she could shoot it in a single action. By the end of the day, they had her with a Smith & Wesson model 360 running 38+p rounds. She also was working

with an FN Five-seven pistol, but they told her that they were having a hard time getting the ammunition.

The next day Jill was on the top of a van with an air rifle. An Airforce Texan SS chambered in .458-caliber with a suppressor and a secondary air tank with a compressor built into the van. The van was built for hunting wild pigs in Texas with a removable top panel revealing two shooter's perches with air hookups for the rifles. The longer Jill worked on her groupings from one-hundred to four-hundred yards the closer her groupings came. At a hundred yards she was stacking the shots on top of each other. Sally said to her, *"yes, but hitting a flat target isn't the same as hitting a living breathing thing."* Jill stopped smiling then asked, *"so you don't think I can do it? Then why are we doing any of this? Why am I here?"* From outside the van Wendy said, *"you don't know what you can do until you try. We are taking this van out for a hunt in Texas, and you are going. The best way to know if you can do it is to try, either way, you are always welcome in our home."*

Jill took aim at her target. She adjusted for wind and the light coming from the setting sun. He shifted but did not see her and the van. With a final breath out, she fired hitting him in the head just above the eye. Jill quickly worked the bolt and fired at the second target next to the first. The round struck dead center in the left eye and as he and the other fell the remaining hogs ran for cover. Jill worked the bolt again and fired hitting a third in the back of the head. The three women with permission of a local rancher were on their hunt for most of the day when they found a spot that seemed the best for their trial. With the final shot, Wendy drove the van over to the hogs. They had little time between being able to use their kills or let them rot. Sally showed Jill how to field dress an animal as Wendy called the rancher. He said that he would finish butchering any hogs under one-hundred and ninety pounds. They would split the meat between him and a homeless shelter near the station. Sally dipped her hand in the blood and smeared it down Jill's face.

Two men in a hunting blind watched as the women killed and dressed the hogs. One of them said, *“that was our kill. That bitch shot our hogs.”* He looked at the other guy who watched as the blood dripped from Jill’s face onto her white tank top. The first man said, *“Jimmy, I think we need to go over there and take what’s ours.”* Jimmy looked back at the small girl size woman with blood dripping down onto her chest and said, *“Lenny, what I want I know I’ll have to take and it isn’t no dead pig.”* The two smiled as they slipped into their Jeep and made their way to the van and what they wanted. Wendy saw them first as they drove over without their lights on. She did a check on her 1911 on her hip and a 12-gauge mounted on the inside of the van. Wendy said, *“head’s up, someone is coming without any lights on.”* Sally asked, *“maybe it’s Hardy coming out for the hogs?”* Wendy said, *“no it’s a jeep, and he would know better than to come out here with no lights.”*

The Jeep came to a stop, and the man named Jimmy got out. He had a lever action 45/70 on his shoulder and a 50-caliber desert eagle on his hip. He reminded Jill of the David Spade character Joe Dirt if he had gained about forty pounds in a beer gut. Lenny turned on the Jeep’s lights flooding the three women and the fresh kills. Lenny looked like a tourist would if he thought you would need to dress like a cowboy to hunt in Texas. A plaid shirt with a star and the words Lone Star underneath, chemically faded jeans with a Texas-shaped belt buckle, bright red boots and a bright orange Stetson with a star on the side. Jimmy asked, *“what the fuck do you think you are doing hunting on our land bitches?”* Lenny just said, *“yeah bitches.”* Sally turned to Wendy then back to Jimmy and said, *“this isn’t your land motherfucker, and we have the permission of the real owner to be here.”* Jimmy said, *“shut the fuck up coon, we aren’t talking to you so shut your welfare black ass mouth up.”* Sally dropped her cool and started to walk over to Jimmy saying, *“just who the fuck do you think you are you inbred redneck sister-fucker.”* Jill slipped back away from the action as Wendy stepped forward with her hand on her holstered gun. Lenny stepped forward with a 308 deer rifle up but not pointing at anyone. Lenny said, *“now let’s just take a step back, this doesn’t need to go any further we just want what is ours.”* Jimmy said, *“fuck that you heard how this nigger.”* Lenny interrupted him saying, *“drop it dipshit.”* Sally said, *“say it again boy, I dare you.”*

Lenny took aim at Sally as a shot rang out. The round struck Lenny in the face in a downward motion busting his head showering the Jeep and Jimmy in blood and teeth. Jimmy pulled a comically large Colt Python as he looked up in just enough time to see Jill with a shotgun firing a deer slug into his left eye bursting his head like a melon. Sally looked at Wendy then they both looked up at Jill who was just standing there out of the opening on the top of the van with the shotgun barrel still smoking. About ten minutes later the rancher pulled up. After they told him what happened, he told them to take the Jeep to the edge of the property. He said, *“there have been more than a few people killed by illegals crossing the border. Set it on fire just to sell the bit.”* Sally wanted to leave the bodies for the pigs, but Wendy and Jill wanted them buried and gone. Sally turned to Jill and said, *“I think you might just be ready.”*

Back at the ranch Jill found Scott and nearly tackled him. She kissed him, and he kissed back. She did this in front of everyone in the common room. Cathy looked to Wendy who shrugged her shoulders in a *“whatever”* gesture that meant they would need a new boy toy from now on. About the time Jill started to unbutton Scott’s pants Wendy suggested they move into one of their rooms. Jill pulled Scott into her room and moved her hand down to his inner thigh then back up to the belt. Scott knew her past, so he knew not to try and force himself on her, or she just might push away and something about this new attitude in her he didn’t want to lose. In the morning he woke up and went back to work on the van but all he could think about was her.

Wendy looked through her reports. A couple of years ago Wendy came into some money from an old friend, and she used some of that money as well as contacts from a man named Ivan to hire a network of private investigators and police to track the drug trade. Over the last four years, she learned that many in local governments wanted results rather than interference. There is a real sense of mistrust of the federal government so allowing them to dictate the war on drugs didn’t sit well and gave her an in with them. Her agreement with them all started with the locals and their willingness to sell her guns they took off people crossing the border. Wendy pulled the reports from the last week then she laid them next to the new ones as Sally walked in. Sally asked, *“so anything new?”* Wendy pointed at the five thick folders from last week then the new folder about half as thick. She said, *“either the feds are cutting back on paperwork, or they might*

just be freezing the locals out.” Wendy pulled a file out of last weeks reports and said, “I think that Sam is in more trouble than we thought.”

Sam looked out at what was now three black vans. Sam said on the phone, *“they aren’t even trying to hide. All that is missing is FBI surveillance on the side.”* His lawyer said, *“what do you expect you made them look like fools in the public eye and with all this Russia crap they need a win.”* The FBI was investigating a Russian connection between the election of the current president and the illegal hacking of a rival. With an attack on the presidency, many were looking for a case they could make a name for themselves to protect their jobs. In the southwest, this meant either border defense, the war on drugs or guns. Sam had a surveillance team follow a fake biker gang to what was a trap filled with important people and paintball guns. That team was now in Ohio guarding an empty building just in case the FBI might need it someday. Sam knew that this new team wouldn’t let that happen again. He also knew why his background checks and internet was slowed to the point of being like the speed of the old dial-up he used back when he first opened.

His nineteen-year-old nephew Owen was working for a rancher mending fences as a day job, but at night he worked for him. He was a high school football star, and with the ranch work, he still had that lean muscular body and the auburn hair Sam claimed he had once. Sam had to leave the illegal side to Owen so he could let the feds watch him. Owen was picking up a new shipment of what Sam called freedom fries at a local ranch. The fully-automatic AR-15s came from a source in South America where the Government was selling them to nations that would turn around and sell them for a profit. Some of the guns they bought over the years even came from the ATF and Homeland Security. To protect his investment as well as his kin, Sam asked Wendy to help. For his part, Owen had a hard time working with Wendy without staring at her. When she first came to town, he would watch her from afar. Owen was driving his truck with Wendy in the back and Jill in the front. Wendy said, *“you can either stare at my tits or at the road, but if you choose the former then let me drive.”* Owen sat up and turned back to the road. Wendy unbuttoned a button on her shirt then smiled as Jill just shook her head.

Owen pulled into a driveway out in the middle of nowhere then stopped. Jill asked, *“what do you think?”* Owen said, *“something’s wrong. There should have been someone at the gate.”* Wendy took out her night vision goggles and checked out the ranch. She said, *“I see eight men in what looks like tactical gear with M4s and.”* She stopped talking when Owen said, *“let me guess FBI patches.”* Wendy said, *“no ATF.”* Owen backed away slowly without turning on the lights. He took the night vision goggles and drove for about three miles using them before turning the lights back on. Wendy came up behind him putting her arms around his seat saying, *“dam, you have some good instincts boy.”* Owen said, *“I am not a boy.”* Jill looked down at Wendy’s ever creeping hand as it made its way to Owen’s crotch. She asked, *“maybe I should drive?”* Owen pulled over and got in the back. He called a prepaid cell phone his uncle owned telling him that the buy was a bust in many ways. As he spoke, Wendy was going down on him as Jill drove back to the compound trying not to look back. A few hours later Owen found himself in bed with Wendy and a woman he barely knew named Cathy. The night was something out of one of the pornos he watched online.

Jill told Scott about the bust then how Wendy went down on this boy in the back of the truck. The two lay in bed together staring at the ceiling. She knew about Scott and Wendy but was still surprised when he told her about his first time with Wendy in the school bus then the nights with both Wendy and Cathy. Scott told her how the new van would be the best work he and Darrel ever did with enough features that they will be able to do anything. Jill just said, *“the others don’t care about things they care about people so don’t be disappointed if they don’t see it the way you and he does.”* Scott said, *“I only care what you think.”* Jill moved in closer than said, *“I think about you, and that’s what was important to me.”* Scott asked, *“have you ever thought about just going, I mean leaving all this behind and making life away from the violence?”* Jill replied, *“here I feel like I am more than just that abused little girl left on the side of the road. Here I matter.”* Scott said, *“you matter to me no matter where you are or what you are doing and that won’t ever change.”*

Wendy looked over at Cathy and said, *“we might need to stop our operations for a little bit.”* Cathy was laying with one leg across Owen while she played with his pubic hair. Owen just laid there with a smile on his face that seemed like it was carved in. Cathy asked, *“what about Sam?”* Owen said, *“Uncle Sam said that if this pickup failed that he would take a break from his calling and let the feds run their course.”* Owen laughed then said, *“Uncle Sam.”* Wendy asked, *“run their course?”* Owen replied, *“yes, he left nothing for them to find or trace back to him, so he thinks that in a few months with nothing new they would have to leave or face hurting their records.”* Cathy said, *“they are spending a lot of money for little return.”* Owen said, *“just to be safe. He told me to tell you to stay away just in case they’re following his customers.”*