

The Average All-American Killer Girl

Book Two

DEALING JUSTICE

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By Michael Lewis Collins

I want to thank everyone that came to my site and read this work. This story was two years in the making with an ending that I copied in other stories. I hope this was an enjoyable story and you come back for more.

Prelude

His name was Calvin, but they call him C-note on his block. He was a dealer. On his street, he controls the drugs and who sells them. Anyone selling on his street must pay the man. A teen girl once tried to sell a little marijuana from the stoop of her house. C-Note caught her. He and his gang took turns raping her, but they didn't kill her. She just wished they had. A week later she committed suicide. The Police keep their distance. Calvin knows how to insulate himself from the legalities of his lifestyle leaving the police to bust children giving the police with a bad image in the neighborhood.

C-Note spends his days in a folding chair with a cooler filled with his favorite beverage making any time Miller time. As he sits there, a car pulls up, and a young Chinese looking girl leans out of the car and asks, "*Hey are we anywhere near ninth street.*" She is in a red tank top that is form fitting showing every curve. C-Note likes them young and loves them Asian. He gets up and walks over to the car. He is in a pair of baggie jeans with a multi-colored vest and a fitted LA Raiders hat. He thought he could turn this into something special for everyone. The driver is a blonde white chick. C-Note doesn't care for white girls, but some of his boys do. Then he remembers these stories about a white girl and an Asian driving around shooting dealers and stops halfway to the car. Then a snap. Then two more. His head suddenly hurts. He feels wetness on his head. Drawing his hand back he finds blood then he falls to the ground. The last thing he sees is one of his boys taking his bag of cash and cooler of Millers.

Alice and Ying pull away. Another successful hit. Since they went back to dealing justice to the dealers, they hit about ten of

them. Most didn't see it coming. Some beg for their lives while some try and fight for it. They all end up as gray matter on the sidewalk. The women are so focused on their target that they don't see the man in the gray sedan following them taking pictures. Somebody knows what they are doing.

Chapter One

Ted cut a loaf of sourdough bread into neat and even slices. After cutting he laid them in a row ready for the peanut butter and hot pepper jelly. That will have to wait for the bacon. Ted is a tall skinny, gawky twenty-two-year-old with sandy blonde hair and a pockmarked face from acne. About three years ago Ted came in for a job interview. He was looking to bust tables or something but, the cook had quit that day, and no one was willing to try. Ted was willing to try anything once, so he volunteered. The owner said over the phone, “*kid just try and do what you can do, and we will see what we see.*” Ted thought that could have been a little clearer, but at least for now he had a job. They say the best way to learn how to swim is to jump into the water. Ted thought that was bull shit and that was the best way to drown. That can also be said for cooking. Before that day, Ted had never even cracked an egg. The first time he went to cook one he cracked one and a dozen others on the floor. Then he cooked his first egg with about half the shell sprinkled in. The waitress was a woman named Flo. She is in her seventies with a snow-white beehive. Fortunately, she knew how to make coffee which was the only thing coming out of the kitchen. Ted even burnt the toast. When all hope seemed lost, and Flo was about to close the diner for the day, that is when Max and April walked in. Jeff could remember saying under his breath, “*please don’t order.*”

Max is tall with black curly hair, and Alice is a knockout with long blonde hair and fair, freckled skin. Ted couldn’t hear what they said. Flo said something to the couple. Max said something about “*with help.*” Then he got up and walked toward the kitchen. Flo said, “*knock yourself out, but I think it’s a lost cause.*” That was three years ago. Max showed him how to do the basics from cracking eggs on a flat top and not the floor to how to use the fancy toaster. That day Alice and Max bought the Diner and Ted had a

job. About a year later Ted was the morning cook. He could keep up with as many orders as came in.

The diner's business was picking up as did the city when a Kia auto plant was built just across the border in California. In that time, he got to know Max, Alice and a young Chinese girl that lived with them name Ying. She is now fifteen and working part-time in the diner busting tables and occasionally some dishes. Max is his best friend, but he can't say he knows him. Ted also met their friend Ruth and her adopted children, Jeff and Susan. Jeff had some accident that cost him his tongue. He can't or won't speak. His sister Susan was almost blind due to having parents that sucked. They made the drug meth in their house with no ventilation or protection for their four-year-old daughter. He hoped that whatever jail they were in that they were being violated every minute. Ted does not know what happened.

Every weekday Ruth and the kids would come to the diner and eat breakfast. Ted remembers calling Ruth's daughter Sue once. She screamed, "MY NAME IS SUSAN." Then she kicked him in the knee. Jeff mostly drinks smoothies, while Susan will only eat her sandwich. One day she just refused to eat. Ted made her an Elvis, A fried peanut butter, banana and bacon sandwich. She didn't like how sweet it was so Jeff made it without the banana on sourdough bread, and with this hot pepper jelly, the old owner kept around. She loved it so much they added it to the menu. The *Don't call me Sue* sandwich isn't for everyone but some like it. About a year and a half after Ruth moved to town Susan started to have seizures. It was about that time she had her first stroke. A stroke at age six. Then a few days ago Susan Died. The funeral was today. Ruth is a 4th-grade teacher in town. In the last three years, she has become well loved by many in the community. She is tall and thin

with graying brown hair tied up close to her head. As the city grew, Ruth became an advocate for drug counseling. She told Susan's story to the city council and help to make drug education a priority. She was dating a guy named Brian who was one of the new city councilmen. There is talk they will make a new position on the council for her.

The bacon is done, so it was time to build the sandwiches. Max walks into the diner and greets Ted. He came to check in on everything and help. In all the time Ted has known Max he could not remember seeing him in a suit. Today he has a black suit with a thin black tie and a red armband. Red was Susan's favorite color. To be fair, it was the only color she could see clearly. On the counter waiting for Max was a box. In the box was an old doll. Susan dropped it at the diner the day she rushed to the hospital. The day she died. Ruth wanted her to buried with the doll. Susan carried that doll with her everywhere she went.

Alice spent her day with Ruth at her house. She helped Jeff get ready for the funeral. Alice was going to drive them to the funeral home until Ruth remembered her driving. She said, "*one funeral today is enough.*" A guy once cut Alice off in traffic. She nearly forced him off the road. Road rage Alice. At the funeral home, Ruth took some time to say goodbye to Susan. When Max arrived, they gave her the doll back. The three talked about things in the past and just how they got to where they are now. They talked about Bill and Nancy. Everyone they lost because of David Warren.

Four years ago, they all met in a group therapy being held by a man named David Warren. He used their combined grief to convince them to act. He would go on saying, "*the justice system*

failed us, so we needed to act.” He trained them to work together and kill drug dealers. They were good at it. They killed many dealers. During that time, they found and rescued Ying from sex traffickers. They also rescued Jeff and Sue from their parents. Sue was nearly poisoned to death. Jeff had repeatedly been raped by a man who could give his parents what they needed to make meth. They broke his jaw in several places and cut his tongue out so he wouldn’t talk back. They also lost so many friends. Bill and Nancy to a gang. Allen and Bonnie killed in Mexico. Christy and all the people who helped plan what they did were dead. David killed them all in hopes to cover his tracks and escape. David embezzled all of Allen’s money and fled the country. No one had heard from him since.

After the wake, Alice went with Ruth and Jeff to their house. Max and Ying went home. Max changed into his running clothes and went for a run. He likes to run and does so every chance he can. Alice and Ruth shared a bottle of blackberry wine as the sunset. They drank straight from the bottle. That night Max woke up to find himself in a small, dank room. He was naked from the waist down with blood and fecal matter stained on his legs. His jaw was sore, and tongue was gone. He was tied to a table face down. A large figure came in. It walked over to him said something he didn’t understand then proceeded to sodomize him. He knew this was just a dream. This was Jeff’s life before they found him. Jeff wrote this account down for a therapist who was trying to help him. Max read it, and the image was stuck in his mind even overshadowing how he and the others killed Jeff’s parents. Max had used a breaching round from a shotgun on Jeff’s mothers face. The result was her face bursting apart. Some nights he dreamt of this and others he was in a red kimono and was forced to do horrible things as Ying. A few nights he saw the faces of all the men he and Alice killed. Running helped with the dreams. So, he ran as much as he could.

A few days later Max was out for a run and Alice was at her sewing machine. Three years ago, she found her mother's sewing machine in storage. She brought it out and had it professionally cleaned and tuned. After three years, she became competent with it. New curtains, a dress for Sue then Ying. That morning she was mending a pair of pants Ying ripped in Taekwondo. She is a brown belt on her way to a black but only if she can control her temper. That is when the phone rang. The school phone number comes up on her display. She thinks to herself, "*ok what has she done now?*"

Ying has a colorful history. Officially she was the first student in the school when they chartered it back three years ago. Since then she has been suspended twice for fighting and expelled once for kicking a teacher in the groin. The expulsion was rescinded when the teacher refused to press charges then fled the district. It turned out he was one of Ying's old Johns. At the age of eight Ying had been used as a sex worker. Really, she was raped for money. This teacher had once paid to have sex with a nine-year-old. Alice has a friend quietly looking for this guy. She has a 22 long with his name on it.

Alice answered the phone. The woman on the line said, "*Alice, ok she did it again.*" Alice said, "*kicking or biting?*" She replied, "*Neither she told the gym teacher to go F herself,*" Alice said she was on her way. On the way, she thought about every incident and how they may be better with Ying being homeschooled. These incidents were raising too many questions they can't answer. Max walked in all sweaty from the run as Alice was walking out. Max asked, "*where to?*" Alice just looked at him and said, "*take a guess.*"

Max left for the diner while Alice went to the school. Outside of the principal's office, she found Ying. She was sitting there holding an ice bag to her face. Seeing Alice, she lowered the bag to show a large hand size welt. For a second Alice thought about the 22-automatic, she had hidden in her car. Principal Thompson tried to downplay the slap and up-sell Ying's defiant tone, but nothing could downplay the visual evidence. Alice said, "*I was prepared to take her out of school for good, but now I think the rest of the students should see just what they will receive if they speak out of turn.*" By the end of the meeting, the gym teacher was out. Ying wore the welt on her face like a badge of honor.

At dinner that night Max told them about Ted and his girlfriend. When they hired Ted, he had spoken of how Sara had broken his heart. He left Phoenix to get away from the memories. About a month ago she called unexpectedly. She wanted a new start and was looking for work. He told her she could find some here in New Kent. Sara's father was in construction. From an early age, she could work with heavy machinery. Before she left, she had a job with the city on road construction. What she needed was a place to stay. Max said, "*Ted we sold you the trailer so what you do with it is up to you.*" Ted said he wanted to put a smaller trailer next to his so she could use his, and he could be close to the diner. Max said to Alice, "*so I told him as long as it doesn't interfere with the diner and she's off the property as soon as she can, then go for it.*" Alice said, "*why not live together?*" Max just shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "*who knows.*"

The next day Max came to the diner early to hear a commotion inside. Flo found out about Sara moving to town and

into Ted's trailer. Where Max and Ted had become friends, Ted and Flo had become more like family. Flo remembered how devastated Ted was when he first arrived. She was almost like a mother to him helping him put his life in order. Now the heartbreaker was back.

Flo was born Florence Moselle of Boston Massachusetts about seventy-eight years ago. At the age of seventeen, she left her father's house and moved to Las Vegas. Back in Boston, her looks could turn heads with her long blonde hair and very long legs. She found work as a dancer in a chorus line and danced for fifteen years. When the chorus went topless, she decided she had enough. She had the body for it, just not the will. She left town with a guy she was dating that wanted to open a diner in a sleepy little town on the border. Thomas and Flo lived together for about ten years as he built then operated his Diner in New Kent. They never discussed marriage or children. Then Thomas died of heart failure. He left the diner to Flo who sold it to a guy named Mel. She wanted to go back to Las Vegas, but Mel asked her to stay and train a new waitress. She said she would and ended up staying for nearly thirty-seven years. For the last ten years, she would retire, go to Las Vegas, then return broke and back to work. Mel lasted for about twenty years before cancer took him. He used to tell customers that the old show *Alice* was about him and Flo even though Flo refused to use the catchphrase. She had more of a sexual agreement with Mel rather than a relationship. Nothing got personal even as they got physical. With the new owner Frankie Lawson, she was just an employee. Flo was convinced that Frankie was as she said, "*plays for the other team.*"

Ted knew that when Flo was using her Boston accent, it was just better to let her have her say. Ted knew he had very little ground to stand on. She said she dumped him because he wasn't

marriage material. Now she was back. He had a picture of them at their prom. They made an interesting pair. Him around 6' 7" to her about 5' 3" in heels. Flo had said on seeing the picture, "*maybe their kids would be normal sized?*"

Chapter Two

Alice and Ying went to Las Vegas for a Taekwondo competition. Ying was nearly ready to earn her black belt. Her teacher felt these competitions would help her prepare. At first, Ying didn't want to do it. She wasn't happy with the idea of being in the spotlight. Four years after escaping from being a sex worker she didn't want to be recognized. But really, she was bought like livestock and raped for money. To add to this fear, she needed to wear red again. As a sex slave, her owners forced her to wear a red Japanese kimono despite her being Chinese. The kimono was tight and confining. When Ying was rescued, she burned it and never wanted anything red again. But she needed something to wear under her uniform worn for her studies. She wanted something from Under Armor. All she could find that fit her was a woman's red tank top. She liked how it felt and fit. During the competition, one of the competitors inadvertently struck Ying in the face. Before the ref could call the foul, Ying struck. She dropped the Taekwondo and went into Krav-Maga. She had been training in Krav Mega for nearly four years and was adept at it. She dropped the helpless boy and was about to land a blow down below as Alice pulled her off. Ying was disqualified and told she had to leave. On the way out, a man followed them.

Alice went outside to get the car. Ying knew the drive home would be a little tense both with what happened and with Alice's driving. When Alice was out of sight, the man came up behind Ying and struck her with a pocketed blackjack. Her lights went out as he carried her into an alley. She quickly woke up to find herself tied to a fence with her arms up in the air and her ass on a stack of wooden pallets. Her legs were tied down and apart. The man had opened her robe and was feeling her breasts. She started to scream. He said, *"scream all you want no one can hear you here little Ying."* Her

worst nightmare had come true. One of the Johns had found her. She suddenly recognized him and his nasty breath. He said to her, *“first I’m going to have some fun then I get rid of the evidence just like I should have back then.”*

He pulled out a knife and went to cut off her clothes. A tap sound echoed in the alley. Then another and another. The John felt a tug on his shoulder and side as each tap sounded. He looked down to see blood. Then he felt the pain. He listed to the side then fell. Alice picked up his knife and freed Ying. She tried to help her tie her robe back up. Ying pushed her aside and dropped the white top exposing the red tank top. Then she grabbed the knife from Alice and stabbed the John in the chest then genitals. As she stabbed him, she twisted the knife like she was taught. He screamed. Ying said to him, *“scream all you want no one can hear you.”* Alice then shot the man in the head twice. Once in the eye than just above the eyebrow.

In the car Ying changed into a pair of shorts. The Under-Armor tank top also had blood on it, but it wasn’t as noticeable. About ten minutes into the trip Ying realized they weren’t heading home. An old fear came to her. One she had ever since Alice and Max had rescued her from her own private hell. The idea that they didn’t want her. Alice said, *“that was awesome.”* Ying was dumbstruck. Alice was kind of happy about killing that man. She somehow got off on it. They drove around Las Vegas in circles as Alice’s adrenalin slowly wore off. Then they saw a drug dealer. Ying looked to Alice who first looked at her then the dealer. Ying said, *“let’s do this.”*

Jackson was a small-time pusher near a casino that only junkies go to. He liked dealing in Heroin but also ecstasy to college

or high school students. From a distance, he looked like a college student handing out pamphlets or coupons. But Alice spent some time watching dealers and she can spot one from a distance. He was about 5'11' with brown hair cut short with a baby goatee. Wearing blue jeans with a New York Mets shirt under a white hoodie. Ying slipped into the back and checked the gun. Alice keeps an illegal 22/45 with a suppressor hidden in a special compartment in the back of the passenger seat. The same gun used to kill the John. To be safe Ying changed the magazine with one that was fully loaded.

They slowly rolled toward Jackson. He saw them coming and looked around. Alice brought her car to a stop next to him. He went to lean on the car when he saw the two women inside. He immediately felt like this could be something special like in a magazine or on his favorite porn site. He said, "*ladies what are we looking for tonight.*" He realized he could see the tops of the blonde's breasts down her shirt. He went to stare at the young Asian girl in the back when he felt something under his chin. Something cold and metal. Alice then shot and kept shooting until his body fell backward.

They drove off and out of town not speeding or breaking any traffic laws. Alice remembered being told she would need to blend in with the crowd. The best way not to blend is to break a law that could get them pulled over. Somewhere outside of Las Vegas, she stopped, and they changed their clothes. They both had blood on them from different men. Alice stopped at a roadside stand. She couldn't find her blackberry wine, but she did find a little homemade agave moonshine. The man running the stand didn't ask if she could handle the stuff. He could see the real Alice in her eyes and knew better. The two took a couple of shots before driving

home. As the sun started to set and the liquor did its thing she wondered what it all meant.

Alice and Ying pulled into the driveway. The house was mostly dark with just a porch light on and the flicker of a television. Alice looked at the light and wondered if she should tell Max what just happened. She wondered if he would take this as a sign that they need to go back to work or as a onetime event that should be ignored. They never promised each other to stop. It was just implied that the last time was the last time. That old voice that told her she was a killer was once again saying she was on the right track. She felt alive again with purpose and vitality. Her day-to-day mundane life was pushed aside for a calling that felt truer than anything before. Not even with David did she feel that this was just so right. She also realized she couldn't tell Max or she would then have to choose. What she felt was right or him.

They went into the house. Ying went up the stairs to her room. Alice joined Max in the living room. He was in basketball shorts and a tank top on the couch with his feet propped up on the coffee table. Alice pushed her thoughts aside and climbed into his lap facing him. She straddled him with her arms on his shoulders and started to slide back and forth in his lap. He dropped his legs from the coffee table then looked up at her. With a simple move, she pulled off her shirt. Then unclasped her bra. As she moved back and forth, she could feel him grow hard. Max looked toward the stairs in a "*we are not alone*" look. She answered his look by reaching down and freeing him from the shorts. With a dexterity of a gymnast, she pulled her panties aside and mounted Max. The two moved back and forth at first hesitant than less restrained. Their motion started to rock the couch until it was banging against the wall. As Max came,

he stretched his back out deepening his penetration of her. She fell forward on to him.

Alice got up and went to the fridge and opened a bottle of blackberry wine. She drank straight from the bottle. Max came up behind her and cupped his hands around her breasts from behind as he drew her in. A little wine escaped the bottle and dribbled down her chest. He kissed her neck then her shoulder. From upstairs, they could hear Ying's muffled techno music. They decided to take the opportunity of the loud music to have another go. With bottle in hand, the two went into their room. Shortly after they went into the room, the walls started to shake. Ying just tried to ignore the noise and the ghosts of past Johns that visited her in her dreams.

The next day Alice woke up and looked around. The side lamps were broken, and the digital clock was off the side table. Somehow even the pictures on the walls seemed crooked. In the bathroom, she could see Max brushing his teeth. It was unusual to see him before he went for a run. He had on a tee shirt and a pair of boxers. Alice grabbed a robe off a chair and walked into the bathroom. She said, "*no run today?*" He looked at her and replied, "*no, I think I got all the exercise I needed last night.*" She touched him on his side, and he recoiled a little. She looked him over and said, "*are you ok?*" In answer, he lifted his shirt. He had the beginnings of some bad bruising and fingernail marks. Some of which had been bleeding. The new marks contrasted with the old scars. Max saw the look on her face. He said, "*it's nothing. Don't worry about it.*" Alice went to her knees grabbing his boxers and pulled them down. Then she took him into her mouth. Max reacted as if lightning had struck him. She started to move her head back and forth. Max looked down and said, "*please no teeth.*"

She stopped and looked up saying, “*sorry I never had.*” He interrupted her by pulling her up. He was a little more forceful than he intended landed on the counter. Max opened her robe then kissed her. As he kissed her, he entered her. Max picked her up and carried her to the bed while still inside her. She wrapped her legs around him. He brought her to the bed, and the two were off to the races again. As they made love, Max realized that this was the first time in their relationship he was on top. Yes, she did start this, but he was driving the bus. He started to thrust with a little more vigor. The bed quaked with their passions. Alice started to moan. As they both came, the room fell silent. From outside of their room they could hear a voice, “*hey if you two are done I need a lift.*” Max said to the door, “*you can hear us?*” Ying on the other side of the door said, “*the whole neighborhood could hear you. These walls are paper thin, and pictures were falling off the walls last night. I thought it was an earthquake.*” Max’s face turned red. Alice said, “*we need to get her a car.*” Ying countered, “*I need a license first.*” Alice looked down and saw there was no condom. Just like last night. She knew this couldn’t keep happening. Eventually, they would hit bingo.

Eve was on a winning streak. She had her sisters sign their rights away to the company for what was chump change. She leveraged this new power and took control of the company. About two years ago her mother had a stroke. She left the day-to-day running of the company to her daughters. This really meant she left the running of the company to Eve. Now all she had to do was find a way to take back the rest from her niece. Her mother had written in her will that her granddaughter would receive fifty percent of the company. By now that would mean she would go from a simple waitress to being worth billions. That was Eve’s billions. She made them as the acting CFO. Her husband Mick was the CEO, but he

was a moron. She made the company, and she was going to keep it. She had one loophole. The will said Jennifer Martin, not Alice. Jennifer was a runaway missing for four years. Alice was a killer. With that Alice couldn't make a claim on the estate unless she came out as Jennifer. She would not be able to explain why the name change and answer for her crimes.

She needed to speak to that girl and let her know she will have no presence in the company. Two years ago, her mother gave her and the boy a house in one of the most profitable developments. Of course, it was profitable because of the corners they cut. As far as Eve was concerned that girl had received all she deserves. If she can become her mother's legal guardian, she could just rewrite the will to her liking or just transfer all assets to her holding company. But today she will speak with the girl. Her plane will land, and an hour after that she will be in front of Alice with papers in hand and a drive that no little girl could match.

Alice started the laundry washing the sheets from last night. She had no idea her aunt was coming. It had been about two years since any of her mother's family had spoken to her. Her grandmother had a stroke and her aunt Eve had built a wall around her keeping everyone out. The last thing Eve said to her was, "*you had your time now go back to the hole you crawled out of.*" Alice had no time for their idiotic drama. At the time, from what she could tell they seemed more interested in money than family. Eve spoke of the family like a corporation. Today she had a video conference with a writer.

Three years ago, she and Max went to a storage locker holding all her parent's belongings. Inside she found her mother's

old sewing machine and boxes of notes. In among these notes was two incomplete books. Her mother was a romance novelist. She had a small but dedicated following up until her death. About a year later Alice found a person online professing her love for her mother's writing. Harriet Burg was an accomplished screenwriter with many made-for-tv movies to her name. Alice found Harriet's agent and contacted her about the notes. Alice asked Harriet if she would be interested in finishing these novels. Harriet nearly blew Alice's eardrum out screaming with delight over the idea. She drove from Savana Georgia to New Kent right after the call. Harriet was maybe 5' tall in a matching brown skirt and jacket over a white shirt. She had brown hair and a cut that made her look like Velma from Scooby Doo. She said that it was no accident that she likes to cosplay as Velma. This included a furry version that Alice tried to forget about after seeing the picture. They made a deal and just like that her mother was writing again. This meeting was to discuss the notes and ideas Harriet wanted to do even though Alice said she could do with it what she wanted.

The conference started. Harriet was in her full Velma attire from the fake glasses to the sweater dress. Alice was just happy she wasn't in the furry costume. About ten minutes into the talk the doorbell rang. Alice excused herself for a moment. She opened the door and Eve stormed into the room almost pushing Alice aside. She spun around and came up to Alice. Eve was at least a foot and a half taller than Alice and was trying to look menacing. Alice knew several ways to dismantle this woman without breaking a sweat. Eve said, *"I have papers that say you don't own this house we do. If you want the house or to protect your secrets, you need to sign this and forget about my family."* Alice looked just beyond her at her computer screen then back. Eve said, *"look you little bitch I am Beacon. I built it not that drunk. You aren't going to get a cent from me."*

Alice had no idea what she was talking about all she knew was that Harriet was recording the conversation. Alice said, *“I have no idea what you are on about. We have a deed registered with the state saying we own this house. As for anything else.”* A voice from the computer interrupted her, *“don’t say another word.”* Eve spun around and saw what looked like a Velma from Scooby Doo screen saver. Only it was speaking to her. Harriet said, *“why would this person come here to say any of this. Rich people send lawyers.”* Alice said to Harriet, *“please send me a copy of this and really do whatever you want with the notes. I am sure my mother would have approved.”* The screen went black then back to the desktop. Suddenly Eve realized she came to threaten a woman who has killed people. Alice said, *“true power is the power over life and death. Now, do you want me to show you power?”* Eve walked to the door. She spun around to say something back but realized it was pointless. She just finished burning that bridge. She left the house and was on her plane within an hour. The flight back was less than a feeling of winning. Alice finished her laundry then called Max to tell him about the encounter.

On the flight home, Eve thought about her last conversation with her father. He was angry about how Eve had canceled a project he had in place for years. Eve said to him, *“as long as there is a Democratic party you will never drill in the Alaskan Arctic wildlife refuge. You are wasting my money on a stupid pipedream.”* The pain in his chest grew. He grew angry. He said, *“what do you mean by your money. This is my company.”* With that, he fell back into his seat. His heart was racing. He grabbed his phone. Eve took it. She said, *“well that took longer than they said.”* He looked at her with anger than realization. She said, *“it will look like a heart attack. I paid a lot of people to make sure it would look that way.”* She

walked over to him as he tried to grab for her. She brushed off his hands and leaned in and said, *“I am Beacon. I always have been you were just a bad caretaker, and we will all be better without you.”* She figured if she could beat her father she could find a way to take care of this scary little girl. She was also a murderer.

Chapter Three

Rachel did her usual workout before a class. She and her husband Isaak own and operate a school for the study of Krav-Maga. An Israeli form of self-defense. Rachel was born in Israel. Her parents were Israeli officers in the defense force. They taught her how to defend herself from an early age. At 5' 2" she needed to fight for herself. She met and married an expat from Russia named Isaak. Together they decided to move to America. Isaak was a former soldier in the Russian Army. At first, they wanted to open a deli somewhere in the northwest like Seattle or Portland. After a year they abandoned their dream to find something different. That is when they met David Warren.

He needed someone to help with security on his ranch and perhaps to train some people in self-defense. As they worked with him, they learned of his plans and wanted to help. The two designed a plan of training and diet that would turn an average person into a killing machine. They introduced David to Greg a former American soldier looking for work. With his help, they built David an army. One day Rachel was out for a run when she found a man crucified along the road. He was dead and baking in the sun. She followed the road to the other side of the ranch where she found the other camp filled with dead bodies. That night Rachel and Isaak Fled the ranch and never looked back. They moved to Las Vegas and opened a school for self-defense. She didn't want to call it a dojo because it would be based on her Israeli heritage. After a year they were successful and looked to expand.

Rachel was expecting a private lesson with a casino owner. People like this want to learn in private and will pay for the experience. As she stretched, she started to wonder where Isaak

was. He was never late. She opened a bottle of water and took a drink. It was then when she realized the bottle's seal was broken before she opened it. She dropped the bottle and water went everywhere. The room went out of focus, and she dropped to the floor. Just as she passed out, she saw a form come up from the basement. She woke up to find David standing in front of her. She was handcuffed to a wall by her hands and feet. From what she could tell they were still in her school in the basement. She said, *"you won't get away with this."* David said, *"I called and canceled all of your classes for the next two days, so I have time."* He stepped aside then said, *"and I don't think Isaak will interfere."* On the wall, across from Rachel was her husband, Isaak. He was nailed to a makeshift cross hung upside-down. From what she could tell he was still alive. Isaak was nailed to the wood in several places. He had nails in his eyes and through his tongue which was holding the tongue out of his mouth. She screamed. David walked up to her. He grabbed a nail and hammer and drove it into her arm. He looked at her and said, *"one."*

Ying was done with school for the day. Alice picked her up, and they drove away. Ying soon realized they weren't driving home. On the console between them was a book. She recognized it as the book Sequoia kept. A journal of customers that paid to rape her. Sequoia was a mother figure to her, but really, she was her pimp. Alice said, *"I think I found how to decipher the names in it."* Ying knew that this was a hunting trip. One she wanted ever since she was made to wear that red Kimono. Outside of a simple suburban home, they found their man. Ying knew him immediately. He was one of the first. He would tell her that she was pretty when he did things to her that were ugly. This John had a family, with three young girls. The girls looked about the same age Ying was when he paid to rape her. His sickening stares at the girls enraged Ying. Alice had packed a dress she made for Ying in the back. Ying

changed into it even though She hated the dress. It was red with thin straps and an open back. The dress accentuated her curves turning a cute young girl into a woman. The first time she put the dress on she felt like she was in a costume. The effect was hard to miss.

Dug Frances was in his backyard watering his grass. Yes, there was a watering ban but so what. As he stood there, he dreamed of the three step-daughters in his house. He wanted to teach them how to be women. He had already made his first move on the older one. Helping her dress in a special dress, he had made for her. He pretended like it was nothing as he touched her in every wrong place. He knew from experience he would eventually have what he wants. As he stood there fantasizing about the girls, a young Asian woman in a red dress walked up to his fence. Dug snapped out of his dream as the woman approached. She was hard to miss in what looked like a formal dress for something like prom. He stopped his illegal watering and walked over to the fence. He said, *“is there anything I can help you with tonight miss.”* He squinted his eyes. Somehow, she seemed familiar. The woman said to him, *“maybe you would recognize me from this angle.”* She turned around showing her bare back then she lifted her dress. Underneath she was nude. His heart raced. He thought to himself, *“what was this.”* Then like a slap in the face, he recognized her. It was that little girl. As she spun back around he without thinking grabbed her by the arms and almost impaled her on the fence. He said to her, *“whatever you want just forget about it. That was the past. I paid you for it, and now you need to go, or I’ll make you pay.”* He ripped her dress as he let her go. The top fell exposing her breasts. Instead of trying to pull the dress up she just pointed to a car behind her. A blonde woman with a gun pointed at him was walking up. He said, *“don’t make me laugh little.”* The woman with the gun interrupted him by shooting him in the genitals. He doubled over impaling himself in the neck with the fence. With what had to be a reflex action he jerked back

up ripping his own throat out. He fell backward watering his grass with his blood.

David said, “*fifty.*” He had driven fifty nails into Rachel. She was still alive but just barely. Isaak was dead and drained of all his blood that his heart could pump out. David looked at her and said, “*I didn’t think you would make it this long. I’m out of nails.*” He looked back to Isaak and said, “*I guess I’ll have to use the nails from him.*” He walked over to Isaak and tried to pull a nail out. He knew that it would be just too much work for so little reward. David turned back to Rachel and grabbed her by the top of her head then he pulled her off the wall. When he pulled her off the nails went through her ripping any arteries on the way out. A minute later and she was dead.

Ruth was in full party planning mode. The Oscars were on in about eight hours, and everything must be perfect. This will be her second Oscar party but the first with such an unusual connection. Most of the people there won’t know the connection they just want to see the show and eat. She spent days researching the best recipes for appetizers and drinks. Each snack and drink were connected to a movie nominated with the most for the runaway hit *Ike, the Story of the Camp of Death*. It was the story of a man named Richard “Ike” Drake and his cult that worshiped death. Another movie based on the same story was called *Summer Death Camp*, but it had trouble in casting and tone.

The movie follows Ike and his brother Mike into the desert with some followers as they kidnaped and murder tourists and runaways they find on the highway. In the advertising, it claims to be based on true events, but Ruth could tell you that nothing about it

was true. Ike and Mike were bodyguards hired by David to act like thugs. They did whatever David wanted no matter what. So, when everyone in the camp was killed, they did help. When David started crucifying people, they also helped. Ike barely had a fifth-grade education and spoke very little. Ruth would say to Alice, *“The idea that he or his brother set up the ranch and did what they say is idiotic. The man wore slip-on shoes so he wouldn’t have to tie them.”*

While this fascinated Ruth, it infuriated David. He was upset that no one would know the truth. He had set it up so he could get away. While he succeeded, he didn’t count on the anonymity of being anonymous. David wanted to be famous for what he did while being free from what he did. Over the last three years, his anger grew over these two getting his glory. About a year ago he hired a man to ghostwrite his life story. David and his writer a man named Ralph discussed the story in detail. David gave him everything including names and pictures. In the end, Ralph delivered a book that David felt was Nobel worthy. Ralph said they would have a hard time publishing it with the public thinking the story in the news was the truth. After the movies, his book **Dealing Justice** was shelved. Worse it was labeled as fiction. David had already started to work a plan for revenge and a little glory. In time, he would be remembered as a master of death. Famous and glorious.

David wanted first to get rid of all the people who worked for him. He had already killed Rachel and her husband. Next, he would have to go after the people who gathered his information. In his time before everything fell apart, David had hired a couple of surveillance specialists to track people they would target. One of them eventually joined in. Bill was killed in a raid on a drug house. Shot in the head right in front of his wife, Nancy. She was raped

then stabbed to death. This leaves the two brothers who would do the work but not join the cause. Juan and Thomas. They run a company called Juan and Two. David knew it would be tricky getting to them. But it would also be epic. David watched the Oscars as his anger grew. The movie about Ike and Mike won every category it was nominated in.

Tina met up with Ying and suggested they study tonight for their finals. In many ways, Tina was Ying's opposite. Where Ying liked to be in the background, Tina was all upfront and loud. She was nearly 6' tall with long brunette hair and an olive skin complexion. She was in every extracurricular activity while Ying was in nothing. After the slapping incident, Tina was assigned to help Ying blend into the school better. On their first day, Tina showed her the best place to smoke and where the janitor hid his liquor. The two bonded over sips of nasty peach brandy. In that time, she learned a lot about Tina. She had lost her virginity to a man twice her age in the back of a car on a bet. Tina learned about some of Ying's past. She learned about how her family basically sold her to a couple that then actually sold her into the sex trade. How she was eight when the first John raped her. Ying even told her about her dreams. These faceless men all in white. She tries to run from them, but they are too fast. They tower over her holding her down. One with nasty breath. Another with a body odor that would choke a skunk. All of them naked with no hair or faces. Two of them held her down as the others take turns raping her in a never-ending cycle until she wakes up.

That night they studied for hours. Eventually, Tina's mother suggested Ying stay over. She called Alice who said it was alright if she was comfortable with it. Tina had twin beds in her room. Ying took the bed close to the bathroom while Tina slept near the

window. That night the faceless men came to Ying in her dreams. She tossed and turned trying to flee. She woke to find Tina in the bed with her holding her still. Tina told Ying to sit up and turn away from her. She lifted Ying's shirt off her. Then she took her shirt off. She told Ying to lay down. Tina then lay behind her with her arms wrapped around her holding her tight but not too tight. Ying felt all warm and safe. Eventually, Ying fell asleep and for once didn't have the dream. She dreamt of flying. She would fly for a while then fall a little, then fly again. She woke up in the embrace of this half-naked girl who knew way too much. Ying marveled at the sleeping girls full yet still undeveloped breasts. She looked down at hers in what Alice calls an athletic body. Ying got dressed and walked the three blocks back home.

At school Ying saw Tina. It had been a couple of days since that night. Ying wasn't sure if she could face her after she had snuck out like that but here she was. If not now, then when? She went up to her and said they need to talk. Tina suggested they talk during their free period after lunch. They met in a room just off the auditorium. At first, the two girls sat about ten feet apart not saying a thing. The awkwardness of the meeting along with the intimacy of that night was a weight on Ying's chest. She never felt like this before. She said to Tina, "*I'm not sure what this is or.*" She stumbled and stuttered trying to find words that didn't seem alien to her. Tina slid over to Ying and in a bold and assertive move kissed her. Ying lost the need to find those lost words. She kissed Tina back. She wasn't big on kissing. Most of the Johns didn't want their fantasy to kiss them. This was something new and different. The two went back and forth kissing and touching taking the encounter from a G rating to a PG 13 before the bell rang.

Alice woke up late. She must be in town in an hour to file the paperwork for the reseriving of the Diner's parking lot if they are going to be on schedule. Max was at the diner using an asphalt patch for the mysterious holes that formed over the last couple of days. She said she would deal with the paperwork. Ying wasn't up yet either. She went to Ying's room and opened the door. Lying on the bed, she saw the two girls Ying and Tina naked and intertwined. Suddenly she had flashbacks to her childhood and a long-lost friend. His name was Mark. He was her first love except he didn't love her that way. He came out to her, and she helped him hide his sexuality from his mother. Now staring at the two girls, she wondered if Ying was hiding from her.

Alice gently closed the door and said to it, "*Ying we need to go.*" She heard a scramble on the other side. Ying answered, "*ok I'll be right down.*" Alice said, "*if you want more time just have Tina drive you if that's alright with her.*" The house went silent then a small voice came through the door. It was Tina. She asked, "*You won't tell my mom, will you?*" Alice said, "*Not even if they had a gun to my head. Your life is your business. You have a right to live it as you see fit.*" With that Alice didn't stay for an answer she left to go downtown. While in town she found out that many of the city's parking lots were having this problem. The construction company all of them used was using cheap materials and billing them for higher priced ones. Not to her surprise, it was Beacon construction.

With the paper's filed Alice went to the Diner and worked a shift. All day Ted looked lost. He wasn't paying attention to the orders and burnt at least one order of chicken. As the crowd thinned out, Alice went to speak with him. She wished Max was back, but he was at the bank arranging the funds to do the parking lot. Ted said to her, "*you're a woman right what do you think I should do?*"

Alice wasn't sure what to do with that question. She said, *"well yes I am a woman, and I think you should do the right thing."* She whispered to herself, *"whatever the fuck that is."* He looked at her with resolve and said, *"your right I'm asking her to marry me tonight."* She tilted her head to the side and asked, *"what?"* Ted told her that Sara was pregnant. He wanted to *"do right by her and the kid."* Sara was his long-time girlfriend from back in Phoenix. She dumped him because she felt he wasn't someone you marry. Later she moved to town to try and make a better life for herself and make it up to Ted. Alice felt that Ted was a good man who deserved to be happy. She told Ted to wait until tomorrow. The Diner will be closed for work on the parking lot, and he could have the whole thing there. She said, *"fix a fancy dinner. Make it special, so she won't feel it was out of some sort of old fashion duty."* Alice went into the office and came out with a box. Inside it was her mother's wedding ring. Ted started to protest, but Alice said, *"we keep things in the family."*

After dinner, Alice told Ying she could tell her anything, and she should feel free to explore who she is here. This was her house too. Ying wasn't sure if this was genuine or was Alice just worried that complications would interfere with them killing dealers. She knew that Alice was a hard person to read. She could be all sweet and kind while being cruel and ruthless at the same time. Max was surprised she gave Ted her mother's ring. He didn't even think she liked Ted. Alice saw Ted as someone she could have been if things hadn't happened the way they did. A little goofy but at his core, he was a good guy. The kind you want in your life. Before she went to bed, Alice went online and emailed Mark.

Chapter Four

Frank Walker was the all-American guy next door. The ideal Frank Capra every man. As is with most people it was all just a facade. Outwardly he was all together, but inside he died a long time ago. It started with a little pot in college to feel good. Frank liked to feel good so, a little pot became a little more. Then the pot was laced with other drugs such as Acid. Within three years Frank had moved on to cocaine. With the cocaine came the need for cash. Most everyday all-Americans such as Frank find that drugs become a third life. The first is the one you show to others. The second is the life you imagine you are living. The third is the one you hide.

No one starts out to be the villain of their own story. It's why so many seek out someone or thing they can lay the blame on for any failures in their lives. Frank became creative with his blaming and hiding. No one in the insurance office where he worked knew about the drugs he takes or the ones he sells. Frank uses cocaine and sells heroin. A dealer once told him, "*never sell your type of poison.*" Frank knew that a drug conviction would end his first life. He needed a way to make money and buy his drug without any connections. As an insurance agent, he sees many of people's personal tragedies. One was a fire that gutted a large colonial house with a wraparound porch. On the outside, the house was still in one piece, but on the inside, it was down to the studs. The family was home and inside for the fire. With the estate in limbo, Frank knew that the house would go unused for years and with a little creativity, he could turn it into a gold mine.

A year later and his pet project was up and running. In some places, this would be called a shooting gallery because it was a place to shoot-up heroin. Frank made a deal with a local supplier

that for ten percent of the profits and supply of cocaine they could use the house however they see fit. Soon his ten percent was gone replaced by more cocaine. He had his drug and never had to explain the money. People die inside the house almost every day, but it was hard for Frank to see these as people. He would say, *“junkies come and go. We will always find new ones to replace the ones that stop being customers.”*

One day a woman came to him at his office and wanted to talk about the house causing Frank to panic. His secret life was inside that house. As it turned out the woman calling herself Sequoia was just looking for a place to run her business. She was a pimp with a small stable of girls ages from seventeen to a little girl named Ying at the age of nine. Soon Frank made a deal with Sequoia. She could peddle flesh from the house if he was paid. Frank was now making money on the rape of the young. To cement the deal, Sequoia gave Frank a girl for the evening.

In his house, Frank planned for the event. He cooked dinner. He bought a very good bottle of wine. Somehow, he turned this thing from payment into a date. He didn't consider that all the girls were under the age of eighteen and he was thirty-five. Soon Sequoia showed up with his date. Then he saw her and was disappointed. He would have rather taken Sequoia in payment than the nine-year-old. He had no great love for children. He could barely stand being in the same room with them. But she was here, and he wanted to get what was his. Like so many before him and after he became one of Ying's Johns.

Frank was on fire. He just closed a deal that would almost double the company's portfolio. It had been about four years since

he lost his shooting gallery. He knew he couldn't do that again, so he discreetly went to rehab and came back a drug-free Frank and stayed that way for about two years. He eventually relapsed. He then found a new dealer. His cocaine-filled nights helped him seal deals with people who also had a taste for the white powder. Frank even found a way to write the drug off as a business expense. After a DUI about a year ago, Frank turned to a ride-share program to get around. That night he called for a lift.

The car pulled up. Behind the wheel was a young blonde woman. He could tell the girl was into the whole service. She was wearing a chauffeur's getup. A short black skirt, a white shirt under a black jacket. She even had the hat. Frank thought she was hot in the short skirt showing off her long legs. He even thought about asking if she and not the car was the ride. In the back, Frank found a bottle of water. A very expensive bottle. The type of water from an arctic glacier. Without thinking he opened it and downed half the bottle. Being a leech, even if just in his head was thirsty work.

He woke up naked tied to a chain-link fence. His arms were up over his head, and his legs were spread with his ass against the fence. He hung there all out and exposed. He had a ball gag in his mouth making it difficult to speak. As he looked up, he saw the blonde. She was standing about ten feet away with a gun. Near her was a young familiar looking Asian teenager. He then realized who she was and started to fight against the restraints. Ying walked up to Frank and smiled. Then she kned him in the crotch. The pain was immediate and immersive as he reeled from the blow.

He wanted to tell her he was sorry, it was the drugs, the money, and even Sequoia to blame not him. Ying turned her back

on Frank then turned back around. She had a surgical scalpel. Frank knew he was about to be cut low. Ying grabbed him by the genitals and pulled them forward. In a primitive part of Frank's brain, the autonomous reaction to being touched caused him to grow a little hard. He knew this would only make it easier to cut off, but he couldn't help it, but Ying hesitated. She wanted to punish him, but she also didn't want to do this. He was a monster making money from her innocents. What would this act make her? He had to die there was no question of that. Ying took the blade and slit the artery in his leg near the groin which started to gush blood. Frank struggled to free himself. That is when the blonde raised the gun and fired. On the way, home Ying didn't say much. Alice said she was proud of her and her need not for vengeance but justice. It didn't feel like justice to Ying. Frank needed to be ruined not just killed. The loss of his pride, money, and vision of his life would have been a better punishment. Ying said, "*I let him off way too light. The next one will lose his nuts.*"

That night Ying went from dinner straight to her room. A distant sound of music could be heard from the second floor. Max and Alice cleaned up the dinner dishes. As Max washed the dishes before he loaded the dishwasher, Alice wiped down the table and stove. They liked to keep a clean house. When Alice finished her chores, she came up to Max and wrapped her arms around him from behind hugging him. Then she slowly moved down to his jeans. She undid his belt then the zipper and his pants fell to the floor. Max looked around to see if they were alone. Alice stood back then pulled Max's shirt up and off. Max stepped out of his jeans and turned around and kissed her deeply. He moved his hands to her sides then down pulling her in as he did until they were touching face to face. Intertwined they moved from the kitchen to the living room.

Alice nearly fell back onto the coffee table. She came down on her but on the table coming eye level with Max's boxers. She pulled him in and pulled the boxers down. She took him in her hand then kissed him. She then started to go down on him. Max stiffened and said, "*teeth.*" Alice stopped and backed off a little. Max went to his knees and gently pushed Alice onto her back. He pulled off her slacks then her panties. With his fingers, he rubbed her at first then lightly blew onto her. A stiff shock ran up her spine as he went down on her. She put her legs up then on his shoulders. As he continued, she started to move her pelvis up and down until she had enough. Alice moved back into a seated position and pushed Max back. She mounted him, and the two made love on the floor. While this was happening, Ying was upstairs on Skype with her friend Tina listening to the events in the living room.

Juan was to meet a new client at six am near downtown. The time of day was a little odd but not that odd for it to seem suspicious. They met with many clients off the books in places they wouldn't normally go. People like the cloak and dagger approach to hiring a private security service. They seem to think they are hiring James Bond rather than just a guy with a camera. Some of their clients are corporations wanting specialized surveillance on their competition as well as their own employees. A bad employee could do anything. The same is true of a good employee. Knowing what they do when not at work can be the difference between scandal or worse. Keeping the competition from poaching valuable employees saves time and money. So, Juan and his brother spent much of their time following people taking pictures. Where Juan like the cat and mouse approach, Thomas liked to use tracking devices and automated cameras for these jobs. By keeping a distance, they could avoid prosecution for stalking.

A car pulled up to Juan. It was a black Escalade with tinted windows. Juan thought, *“ok this is either a rich white guy or a rapper.”* The Passenger door opened then the headlights flashed. Juan shook his head when he walked up to the car. As he did, he felt for the gun in its holster on his hip. The gun was illegal, but he could make it seem legal. His private eye credentials made him look official. He went to the open door and found the back empty. A partition between the driver and the back opened, and the driver said, *“I am to take you to my employer.”* The voice sounded familiar, but Juan was used to this kind of bull shit. The door closed and locked. The car was closed off and stuffy. Within seconds Juan felt dizzy then he passed out.

Juan woke up to find himself tied to a chair. Hanging from a rope next to him was his panic button. The device was on and active. From behind him, he heard a voice. David said, *“if he’s as good as I remember Thomas will be here soon.”* Juan knew who it was immediately. After the fallout at the ranch, he and his brother tried to separate themselves from the whole thing. David Warren and his actions were erased from their records. But now here he was. Juan said, *“what do you want?”* David countered, *“I want your brother to find us so we can begin.”* David stepped out of Juan’s eye line then came back with a cart. The cart had a laptop on it with the screen on. It showed the outside of a warehouse.

Thomas was following a cheating wife when one of his trackers came online. He was notified by a message on his phone. The tracker was the one his brother carried a panic button. Thomas stopped taking pictures of the cheating wife going down on a shop owner in an alley and went to find Juan. The tracker led him to a

warehouse. Just outside was a sign and a metal detector wand on a rope. The sign said, *“scan yourself then come inside. Bring a gun, and your brother is dead.”* Thomas went back to his car and disarmed locking his Glock 19 in a box. As he did this, he slipped a ceramic knife in his boot. He went back to the door. Using the metal detector wand, he swept himself showing no weapons. A voice over an intercom said, *“good I needed to know if you had body armor.”* Seconds later gunfire ripped through the door striking Thomas. The shot was grouped in the chest and effectively ended his life.

Juan watched this on the laptop. His brother had no warning, no chance. He also knew he was next. David said, *“a man with nothing to lose has nothing to hold him back.”* David walked out of Juan’s eye line. On the laptop, he watched David drag the body in front of him. Juan squirmed trying to free himself. David reached down and pulled the knife from Thomas’s boot. He felt the weight. David said, *“nice knife, what is it plastic? Maybe ceramic?”* Juan didn’t answer him. David said, *“if you aren’t going to talk then what good are you?”* David took the knife and plunged it into Juan’s stomach. He stuck the blade in deep. With a kick, he forced the knife in all the way. David said to Juan, *“when I am done you two will look like a vengeful victim of your stalking took care of you.”* Juan watched in dismay as David cut his brothers genitals off then jammed them into his brother’s mouth. David turned to Juan and said, *“next.”*

Chapter Five

Life had gone back to normal for Alice. Her routine of work at the diner and projects at home had her busy. She and Max were like the couples she remembered from television shows past with mundane lives. Ying was on her way to passing her classes and moving up to the next grade level. Her love affair with the girl Tina was helping her cope with her past. Alice thought just maybe they should stop trying to find the other Johns or hunting for dealers. It would be difficult to leave it all behind, but just maybe it would be for the best. She would miss the hunt and the sexual energy she felt after the kill. She loved Max, but the kill made her love him even more. Somehow she knew that it wasn't her love for him it was just power. The power over life and death. The power of dominance. It may be why they almost seemed to struggle to see who would be on top.

Alice went over the pages of the ledger until she found a name she knew. It was the teacher that had paid to sleep with Ying all those years ago. She found his name in the book with a special mark indicating he offered to buy her. With a search on the internet, Alice found the teacher. She knew this was long overdue. She also knew it would be harder to stop if they went after him. Mr. Grater was found of little girls. He had many entries in the ledger. Alice then found out he was a teacher at a fancy all-girls prep school. A quick search found that there was an alarming rate of missing runaway girls in the area. The kind of girls that this man liked.

It came at last. Bill Grader ordered a special toy from a catalog on the dark web. An extra small sex swing. He would use it with the girls he brought home. He liked his life, and he liked the girls. The younger, the better. If he kept his activities away from the

school, he could do as he saw fit. No connections to him or his special kind of kink. He had spent the daydreaming of all the girls in his class tied up in such a swing. Either tonight or tomorrow he would have a fresh one in his playroom ready to have fun. He planned to search the shelters and streets that night. The room was specially insulated for sound. It also had a tub with a special drain for dissolving things for disposal. As Bill daydreamed, he felt a strange feeling come over him. It was a taser.

He woke up tied to his new toy naked, with a ball gag in his mouth. In front of him were Ying and Alice. They both had guns. Ying said, “*Hello John.*” Then she shot him. The shot glanced off his knee and into his stomach. Bill screamed in pain. Alice said something he couldn’t hear over his own screams. He knew his screams were in vain. No one would be able to hear him. Alice looked around the room. She found a secret panel with a camera and hard drive. The hard drive had the videos this man took of him raping and murdering runaway girls and destroying the bodies. Alice looked back at him. He saw the killer in her eyes and knew he was at the end. Even then with all hope lost he grew hard as the videos played remembering his past glories. Ying said, “*maybe we should just take his playthings away.*” Ying grabbed him by the genitals and using a knife made a long slit down the shaft of his penis which gushed blood from the open wound. He screamed again. She had butterflyed his penis. They let him sit and bleed for about an hour until they just couldn’t take the screaming anymore. Alice shot him in the head just between the eyes. Using his own tools, they dismantled the evidence and flushed that man right down the drain. Alice took the hard drive with the videos and mailed it to a local newspaper. About a week later a manhunt was on for Bill Grater, but he would never be found.

Alice knew they would not make it back in time for her post kill fuck session. She really wanted to have a little something. For a second, she thought about just taking things into her own hands, but soon she realized she wanted Max. As Alice drove home, her driving deteriorated. She was about forty miles an hour over the speed limit when they were pulled over. Somehow, she talked her way out of the ticket. Alice would say it was her low-cut top that saved them from the ticket, but Ying knew that it was her stare. She scared the state trooper away. Ying called Max and told him to stay up until they got home. Alice's driving was iffy on her best days, but now she was over the top.

Alice and Ying pulled into the driveway around 6 am. Ying was tired and wanted to go to bed. She didn't have any classes that day so she could sleep in. Max met the two at the door. It was obvious he had fallen asleep while waiting. Ying walked by him on the way up the stairs. She turned around and said, "*watch out she's in a mood.*" Max didn't understand. He turned around to see her running to him. She jumped up into his arms with her force knocking him over. The two toppled onto the floor. As they did, she started to kiss him all over. They worked with greedy hands stripping each other of their clothes as they forgot about everything around them. Alice came up for air and saw the open door. On the sidewalk was their eighty-year-old neighbor Henry. He was just slack-jawed staring at them. She got up and went to the door. As she closed it, she said, "*sorry about that Henry.*" She did nothing to cover herself as she did this. From the outside, she could hear him say, "*no need to apologize, I like a good show in the morning.*"

Ruth woke up next to Brian. He was still here, still with her. They started a relationship about three years ago when she moved to town. He owned the only gas station in town and served as a city

councilman. Both Susan and Jeff liked him, and he liked them. As the city grew so did his business. Brian went from one station to seven gas stations in and around town. After Susan died, Brian moved in with Ruth. They don't talk about marriage or about a future or kids. They live like a married couple in all but name and paperwork. Brian stirred in bed. Ruth looked over at him. She wondered if she was just lucky or he was unlucky. She reached down beneath the sheets. He woke to Ruth stroking him. Brian liked this kind of wake-up call. He kissed her. She slid over onto him. Ruth slept in an old-fashioned nightgown. She liked the ease of wear while Brian liked the ease of access. Ruth pulled up and lifted off her gown. She began shifting her hips up and down as they made love in the early hours of the day. They did it as quietly as possible so they wouldn't wake up Jeff. They didn't know that Jeff had already woken up and was out of the house. He wanted to give them some time to themselves. As he walked around, he found himself by his sister's grave. He sat by the headstone and thought about Susan.

Most people thought Susan was a burden. Nearly blind, most people would think she would need help to get around. They didn't know Susan and how she was an instigator. On her first day in preschool, she had all the girls doing as she said. There was something special about how she could encourage behavior both good and bad. Her favorite thing to do was sing. She would sing out loud at any time of the day. Mostly Beatles songs. She didn't know much of the lyrics so she would make them up. One day she had her entire class singing Hey Jude. But not knowing the words they sang Hay, You. "*Hay you don't let the team down, you were made to eat a bell pepper.*" Jeff could think of these times and smile. These memories helped with the reflection on past with pain and heartache. He also thought about Jenny, a girl in his class that kissed him yesterday. He also liked that.

Ted was busy cooking. His most current trainee was late again. Ted was on the fence about firing him, but in a way, he was ready to do it. Ted wanted time to have a life, and it wouldn't happen if he were constantly training people who couldn't come to work on time. As Ted cooked, he thought about last night. Sara called him over for a booty call. She met him in the lobby of the apartment building she was now living in. She was in a robe and nothing else. She told him if he wanted any sex he would have to strip at once. In the lobby, Ted took off his shirt, shoes, and jeans. She took his clothes from him and said, "*you aren't done yet.*" Sara opened her robe to expose a breast then closed it. Ted dropped his boxers and handed them to her. The two went to the elevator. It opened, and Flo Came out. She looked at the couple then directly down to Ted's penis. She said, "*ok, you are a big boy.*" As the door closed, they could here Flo say, "*I can see why she came back.*" Sara and Ted looked at each other then started to laugh. They made it up to her apartment then as far as her living room. Her couch was their favorite place to make love. She would be on top because of the height difference. If not, he couldn't see her face. He was 6'7" she was 5' 3" in heels. That night as they lay together she offered him a key and said he should move in. As ted cooked, he looked at the key hanging from a chain around his neck near his heart.

David watched them on his television. He paid good money to have cameras placed in their homes. The money was worth it. The cameras collected hours of information as well as raw, unscripted sex. He watched as Alice and Max made love in the living room than in their bedroom. He watched as Ying and some other girl made love. He couldn't keep himself from touching himself as he watched. He also watched while Ruth and some guy had sex. He thought that Ruth was hot under all that spinster

costuming. He wanted to use this to his advantage. Watching them, he thought about his plan.

Upstairs away from Alice and Max Ying and Tina lay in her bed. They looked out a window on the day as the sun rose. Ying wasn't sure what made her happier finding Mr. Grater or finding Tina waiting for her when she came home. She wanted Tina to be in her life, so she decided to tell her everything. Tina already knew about her past. Her days in the brothel. How Max and Alice rescued her by killing her captors. About the ranch and David. What she didn't know is how she and Alice were killing her past Johns and random drug dealers. Tina stood near the door staring at Ying. She didn't know what to say or do. Ying handed her a case with a 22-caliber handgun. The weight of the pistol made her stories seem more real than they did when Ying told her behind closed doors. She thought about what she saw the night before. Tina asked, "*does Max know?*" Ying said, "*no and it's not our place to tell him.*" Ying walked over and showed her that the gun was empty. She then showed her how to load it and aim. Ying asked, "*if you want we could find a place and I could show you how to shoot.*" Tina asked, "*what's to know? You point and pull right?*" Ying shook her head saying, "*no there is way more than that. A gun is a responsibility that can't be taken lightly.*" Ying came up behind Tina to show her how to eject the magazine and clear the chamber. With her arms around her, Tina turned around and kissed Ying. Tina pushed her up against the wall taking the gun away from her and placing it on a table. They stared into each other's eyes and soon were back doing what they came here to do.

Later that day Tina and Ying were in an abandoned ranch. Ying brought her 22 and a couple of other guns. The ranch was far enough away from people that no one would hear the gunfire. Ying

made sure to bring a couple of suppressors just in case. Ying screwed the suppressor onto the 22 and loaded the gun without chambering a round. She showed Tina how to hold the gun. She said, *“never point the gun at someone unless you mean to kill them.”* Tina wasn’t used to seeing this side of Ying, all business and serious. She came up behind Tina and helped her rack the slide then thumbed the safety off. Tina took aim as Ying opened her shirt and wrapped her arms around her midsection. Ying whispered, *“put the red dot on the target and pull the trigger don’t squeeze.”* The gun fired, and the bottle shattered into pieces. Ying whispered again, *“you can breathe now.”* Tina looked at the gun then down at Ying’s arms. She asked, *“what’s it like to shoot someone?”* Ying squeezed her just a little tighter and said, *“at first it felt empowering but now it feels like I am giving up some part of myself with every shot.”*

That night Alice and Ying sat in their car staring at a man on a street corner. To anyone walking by he just seemed like a homeless. People would randomly stop and give him money. To anyone not paying attention they wouldn’t see that those people would then go to another homeless man and take something. Together they sold drugs. Neither of them was actually homeless. The man with the money was an addict while the other man had a gambling problem. Together they fed each other’s habits. During the day they shared an apartment away from their selling grounds. Jack Gamble or “Jackie G” and Fredrick Hass or “Freddie H” were top sellers of Heroin and Meth. Jackie G also had another bad addiction that put him on the path of Sequoia and Ying.

Six years ago, Sequoia was having trouble with her supplier. The DEA was making it difficult to buy her favorite herb. She needed a new supplier. That was when Jackie G came in. He wanted something young and was willing to pay for it in cash or

product. He came with a sample that Sequoia found to be the best pot she ever had. In payment, she gave him his choice of any girl or boy in her stable. He had picked out a fourteen-year-old boy when he saw a young Chinese girl in a red kimono. She had a lost, hopeless look on her face. He took her into a back room and did things to her she would never forget or forgive. Of all the Johns he was the worst. Some days he would beat her before and after he raped her. He had bruised and broken her ribs. The red kimono hid the injuries. One day Jackie G watched as the brothel burned down. He would eventually find a place to get what he wanted, but he never forgot his favorite plaything.

Ying thought she had enough of this justice until Alice found him. She thought about how many girls he must have hurt since his time with her. The feel of his greasy hands on her skin. The sound of him beating on her when he couldn't get it up. How Sequoia would sometimes watch him beat her as she smoked her payment. She didn't know the other guy, but guilt by association was a bitch. Alice could tell that this one meant something more to her than any other target. She said to Ying, "*ok this is your call.*" Ying said, "*I think all we will have to do is walk up to him and let him see me.*" She said that it had been more than four years, but a monster never forgets his pray. Alice said, "*yes but we need both.*" Ying thought about it for a moment. Then she pulled out a piece of paper and drew a symbol on it. She said, "*go and make a buy. When you pay him to give him this and let nature do the rest.*" Alice ripped the paper and folded the image in a fifty. She walked over and gave Jackie G the cash. He nodded to Freddie H. When she went to get the drug, Jackie opened the fifty and saw a symbol Sequoia used as a sign she wanted a hit. Jackie nodded to Alice, and the two men followed her down the alley.

Freddie H pushed Alice up against her car. As he did, he felt her up saying he was searching for a wire. Jackie G then hit her in the stomach and asked, “*how do you know this bitch?*” Ying said, “*I gave that to her Jackie. Just like old times.*” He turned to see Ying in a short pair of shorts and a red top that hugged every curve. Jackie G said, “*well, well, well you have grown up little girl.*” He turned to Freddie and said, “*it's my favorite punching bag.*” Freddie looked down to Alice just in time to see the gun in her hand go off. She put three rounds into his head. Then she pointed it at Jackie G. He backed away saying, “*oh fuck, oh fuck, please don't shoot. Please don't shoot.*” Alice said, “*I think by the time she is done with you Jackie, you will wish I had.*” Ying pulled a taser and shot him into submission. Then she used a little homemade ether to put him out.

He woke up naked and strapped to a table. Ying had stripped down to her bra and panties. He didn't understand what was going on. He looked over to see that the blonde was completely naked. Part of him thought that he might not only survive but have a little fun. He didn't know that they did this so they wouldn't get blood on their clothing. His hopes ended as they put on the kind of suits that were used for decontaminating schools from led and asbestos. Ying got on top of him and whispered, “*did you miss me, baby.*” She slid back and took hold of him. He started to cry. She locked her knees to him. Then using all her strength and training, she focused on his ribs and broke each one. He bucked and screamed against the gag. His bladder then bowels gave way. The smell filled the room and nearly blinded the two girls.

Ying got off him and looked at the harsh yellow stain on her suit. She looked down at her hands. For a second, she thought about just ending it. Then she remembered how he had said, “*one day I*

will cut all the good parts out of you when you are not good to me anymore.” Without hesitating, Ying took the skinning knife and cut his testicles and penis off. His scream hit a new high. She said, *“this was never any good to anyone.”* Using the knife, she cut them up into three chunks and flushed them down the toilet. She watched his face as she did this. When the toilet finished, he went silent. He tried to bite through the gag but broke his teeth instead. Blood came from his mouth. Ying said, *“we are almost done.”* Ying picked up a bat and swung down. She systematically broke his hands, fingers and all. He didn’t scream or even move. Ying turned to Alice. She was watching all this from the other side of the room. Ying said, *“ok I am done.”* Alice opened a bottle of 151-proof vodka and poured it over Jackie G. Then she propped the bottle where his genitals once were. Ying and Alice drove away from the abandoned house as it caught fire with Jackie G at its epicenter.

Chapter Six

Today was Max's birthday. He would have been twenty if he was still Colin, but Max was turning twenty-four. He had no plans for the day. He started it just like any other with a run then a shower. While out running Alice and Ying started their day early. Ying was in early detention for kicking a boy in the genitals after he called her Japanese. Alice was a volunteer for the early morning punishment. The school tried to have Alice there for such things because most of the teachers were afraid of Ying although some of the teachers were afraid of Alice even if they didn't know why. At the diner, the breakfast crowd was dying down. Ted was teaching the new cook a man also named Ted how to do an order. Flo called the new guy Ted two or Ted the sequel. It didn't matter after a week the new Ted would quit, and a replacement would be hired.

Max was in his office when an odd feeling came across him. He looked out into the diner and saw them. His parents were sitting at the counter. He hadn't seen either of them since they were arrested. His parents were con artists and wannabe drug dealers. The last thing he had heard was that his mom was turning on his dad for a reduced sentence. They should have been in prison. Somehow, they ended up here in the diner. For a second, he thought about the Glock 17 in the safe. He wasn't sure what would happen if he killed these people in the diner but at least he would be rid of them. Max unlocked the safe and pulled out the gun. He tucked it into the back of his pants.

Colin Sr. and Mariam Drexler met and lived most of their lives in Oakland California. They made their livings on lies and theft. Colin had his personality while Mariam had her looks. She could con a man out of his pants while he sat next to his wife. Colin

slept with and stole from many different women looking for something he didn't have. When Mariam got pregnant, she wanted to abort it. Colin talked her into keeping the baby as a prop in their act. As a prop, Colin Jr wasn't a very good one. He just wouldn't cry. Mariam looked down at her post-baby body and fumed over how the kid ruined her life. That is when she realized what she had to do. First with a lit cigarette then with a knife, she would cut and burn the baby so when she needed him to cry she would just push on one of the fresh wounds. By the time the act would no longer work Colin had scars across his back and chest that would be there for the rest of his life. After that, he was to do their grunt work. Eventually, they tried to get into the drug trade. They figured that Junior could act as a carrier. If caught, then so what. Maybe a little jail time would harden the boy. Colin Sr. was no genius. His first deal was with an undercover police officer. He had bought a large shipment of heroin coming up from Mexico. They were both facing long drug sentences with the DEA stepping in to prosecute.

Max walked up to the counter. Colin Sr looked up and saw his son. He said, *“well what do you know. If he weren't here standing before us, I wouldn't have imagined seeing him again.”* His mother first looked shocked then a little disgusted. She said, *“I hoped I would never see him again at all. I never recovered from his birth.”* Max adjusted the gun in his belt. In a reflection from the stainless steel, his father could see the gun. He looked a little nervous. His mother didn't see the gun. She went on to say, *“when we were told about this place I wanted to come here and burn it down to teach you a lesson.”* Max looked at her and said, *“what lesson would that be?”* She said, *“you don't rat on the family.”* Max had no idea what to do with that. He just wanted them out of the diner and away from his town. He said, *“I don't know what you are talking about.”* His mother interrupted him saying, *“don't bother we know you called the cops on us. David told us. He also told us*

where we could find you.” Max looked at his father. Colin Sr knew they were on the edge of something final and said, *“we will go, but we will be back for what is ours.”* He told Max that David gave them the money he left at the ranch and they were there to collect it. They got up and walked to the door. Flo started to say they didn’t pay their bill. Max said, *“let them go.”* Max called Alice and told her what just happened. Alice wanted to find them and use a baseball bat to explain why they had to go. Max said, *“they aren’t the real problem. David is back.”* The line went silent. Then Alice said, *“ok I’ll call Ruth, and we will talk about this tonight.”* Max knew that if David was behind his parents showing up when he was up to something. Just what Max didn’t know.

Ruth sat on her porch and watched Jeff sitting on a swing surrounded by girls. Jeff was the strongest person she knew. He came from a setting of abject misery that would have broken anyone else. He brought a new meaning to the adage strong and silent. He refused even to try and speak. As a baby, his parents cut his tongue out to shut him up. In the process, they broke his jaw in a couple of places. The Jaw hadn’t healed properly, and he needed several surgeries to correct it. He also suffered injuries done to him by being repeatedly raped by a man who paid for the opportunity with chemicals his parents needed to make meth. He came out of it on the other side a determined and strong young man. As his jaw healed, he started to look like a young Brad Pitt. This became something the girls in his class noticed. He eventually found himself being followed around by a gaggle of fawning girls. Ruth thought they might like the idea he won’t speak. When one of the girls went to kiss him, Ruth had enough of it and went to stop it before anything got started when her phone rang.

They met at Ruth's house, so she could watch Jeff and his groupies. They discussed what they could do with Max's parents and David. Alice wanted to do the baseball bat thing with the parents. Ruth made a mental note to talk to her about her aggression. As they talked Ruth's phone rang and she answered it. The caller said she should put it on speaker so everyone could hear. David said, "*well first let me say happy birthday Colin. I mean Max. I hoped you enjoyed the gift I sent you. Nothing says happy birthday like family.*" They just looked stunned at the phone. David continued, "*I already settled my score with Rachel and Isaak. Let's just say there will be no more lessons from them. But don't worry I still have plenty to teach you.*"

After taking Ying to school, Alice sat at her sewing machine and started to work on her latest project. Every fourth of July they closed the diner and had a cookout. The cookout was free to the community. They rented tents including one capable of being airconditioned. This year Alice wanted to make real tablecloths for the serving tables. They needed to be fitted to the table with straight sides with one side open to allow access to the stuff being stored underneath. The fourth of July cookout had become a city-wide event with many others contributing to it. Alice's phone dinged with a message on Twitter. It was from Mark her first boyfriend back when she was still Jennifer. He said they were going to be in Las Vegas and would love to see her. On his Facebook page, Alice found out he was in a relationship with a guy named Phil, and they were adopting a little girl soon. She had a hard time seeing the boy she knew as someone's father. Before he left Napa, he was just so lost. His mother had disowned him, and he was off to live with a father and sister he barely knew.

She tweeted back and eventually called him making plans to get together. She had his phone number for years but didn't know how to explain her life. She would only use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to talk to him. This way she could speak in generalities. They shared stories and pictures and talked about getting together when they could. She said that when he had a confirmed date, they would plan a time. The time got away from Alice as she sewed and thought about those days when she was Jennifer. Just outside she heard Ying and Tina talking. The two girls spent a lot of time together. Tina makes Ying feel like she was just like any other girl without a past of victimization. Yes, they did things that a real mother would stop. In these times, she thought about Mark and how he had to hide his feelings from his mother. How she broke his wrist when he finally found the courage to come out. Alice put the sewing away and waited for Ying to come in. If Tina was with her, she would make something for them to eat. If alone then a trip to Las Vegas. Alice didn't have a target in mind she just wanted to do a little hunting.

Three hours later they found themselves near the strip. Alice started looking for signs of dealers. Ying was in the back changing into her bait clothes. After the dress was ripped by a John, they moved to simpler attire for Ying. A pair of short shorts and a red Under-Armor tank top that was form fitting. Alice wore a medium length skirt and a spaghetti strap top with a plunging neckline that made it possible to see the tops of her breasts. She called this her *"come look at my rack shirt."* Max was working at the Diner that night so they would have hours to do what they wanted. They followed a man working a corner. He was tall, maybe six-foot-six with a mess of red hair underneath a cowboy hat. To her trained eye, Alice could see him slyly dealing meth to the passersby. He played his guitar as people put money in a jar as they passed by. Ginger Cowboy shook the hand of anyone giving money to the jar. In his

hand would be the drug. The move was so quick that to a passerby he was just a street musician. His customers knew how to buy from him and did so. He wasn't a bad performer just a terrible human being.

They pulled the car up to a stop and waited for him to finish the day. He stopped playing and collected his things. They left their car and followed him down the street. As they walked a couple of men propositioned them for a little something. Ying flipped them off, and they went back to the chase. Eventually, he ducked into an alley, and they followed him into it. About one hundred feet in he stopped and stood his ground after seeing he was being followed. He said, *"this isn't how I do business. Now go away and see me in the morning."* The girls came into the light. He went from being annoyed to being interested. He thought, "maybe this could be a good night for a three-way." He lowered his case behind him up against the wall. The girls went to either side of him. He was taller than them by about a foot and could see down the shirt of the blonde. He wasn't that interested in the kid, but the blonde was just his type. The blonde moved her hand from his chest down to his abs and lower. While she did this, the young Chinese looking girl brought his hand down to her backside. He thought, *"ok I guess I can tap that."* He then felt something metal against his throat. Ying backed away as Alice shot him in the neck. Even though the shot was from a 22, it almost decapitated him. He fell to the ground with the fall finished the job leaving his head attached to his body by the flesh. Ten minutes later they were on the road back home with the guitar and the money. They jammed the drugs in his mouth.

They made it back by 9 pm. Tina was waiting for her on the porch. Ying had forgotten they made plans for that night. Alice told her it was her fault they were so late. Tina wasn't used to an adult

apologizing to her. She ended up apologizing back. The three ladies ordered pizza from a new place in the area. They settled in for a night of movies and slices. When Max got home, he joined them in the pizza and movies. The two girls lay on the loveseat with Ying in Tina's arms as Tina gently stroked Ying's chest from underneath her shirt. She did this thinking it wasn't noticeable, but nothing goes on in Alice's presence without her seeing. Alice at first was lying beside Max with her arm around him. As she watched the girls and the movie she slowly moved her hand down to Max's shorts. He was in his usual basketball shorts and a tank top. The shorts were baggy at the legs. Alice has used this to her advantage in the past to slide her hand up to him for a feel. She started to do this now with the girls in the room. She slowly pulled up the shorts revealing more leg. Ying noticed this happening. She turned to Tina and said, "*we should go upstairs.*" Tina looked at Alice somehow missing what she was doing and only thinking about the adult in the room. Alice said, "*you two have fun.*" The innuendo hung in the air.

That is when Tina saw just how much of Max's leg was showing. She could see the beginnings of his pubic hair. Ying knew that Alice was up to something, so she told Tina they should start for the stairs. Alice said to the girls, "*one more thing.*" She then pulled his shorts over exposing his genitals to the girls. Max acted quickly to cover back up, but they still saw much. Tina gasped while Ying just shook her head and took Tina by the hand. The two went up the stairs while a red-faced Max and laughing Alice started to argue. Tina looked back down the stairs and saw Alice on top of Max both naked as they swayed back and forth. Tina and Ying went into Ying's room and spent the evening exploring what it meant to be with each other.

Ted shut down the diner as Max, and a man named Victor set up some tents in the parking lot. The grills were prepped the night before and four portable bathrooms were delivered. One large tent was set up with a portable air conditioner, so people could get out of the heat. As they set up, Flo arrived to help. She didn't have to work on these days, but she wanted to give back to a community that has been her home for many years. Max introduced Victor to Flo saying, "*Victor is an old friend and someone I trust with my life.*" Flo felt that his introduction was a little weird, but she was smitten with this man. He was a tall man with black hair graying at his temples. A Russian George Clooney. Flo liked them tall. She felt a spark between them. Victor was in his late forties while Flo was in her seventies. The rest of the day Victor and Flo were inseparable. Ted tried to void out the mental image of these two going at it that he had started to imagine.

By eleven o'clock the Diner was jumping with people. Everyone contributed to the day. That small-town feel Ted found when he moved here was still alive and well. Soon the police would shut the Main Street down for pedestrian traffic. All the stores would open to allow people to escape the heat. By three the cookout was going strong. Ted knew that Max and Alice would take a hit on this day of around ten thousand dollars. But it just didn't matter to them. Today everyone was family. At seven o'clock the bars would reopen and offer reduced prices on drinks. All this was a ramp up to the fireworks that night. Kia has paid for the fireworks every year ever since they built a plant nearby. The fireworks would shine brightly against the open sky. The plant helped build the city into what it is today both good and bad. Ted felt it was good that the immigrant company would contribute to the local society helping it become a part of it. Ted also felt like he should point out that fireworks are Chinese, not Korean but nothings perfect.

Ted's fiancé Sara was there in the tent they set up in the parking lot. She was starting to show. Sara wanted to wait until she had the baby before they got married. Ted didn't care; he had her and their future. He had everything he wanted. Max and Alice made him a partner in the diner. They also helped him buy a house so he and Sara could start their new lives together. Sara was already calling herself Sara Allen-Drake. This made Ted very happy. He was on top of the world seeing a future that was bright. As he looked up a pair of headlights came on. It was a van bouncing up and down. Ted approached the van and knocked on it. From the inside, he could hear whispering. Ted asked, "*is everything alright?*" After a little more silence, he heard a voice, "*everything is just fine.*" It was Victor. Then another voice, "*it had better be more than just fine.*" It was Flo. Ted then realized what the bouncing was. Then the visualization of the forty-something Victor and the seventy-something Flo naked and going at it came to him. Ted backed away from the Van and said, "*sorry never mind um I mean ok.*" Ted backed away from the van. As he did the bouncing started again. Ted thought how needed a drink and maybe a hit to the head. Something to help him get rid of the visual.

A few weeks after their first reunion, Max's parents came back to the diner. Flo saw them and refused to seat them. She said to Max, "*these people didn't pay the last time why should we think they will pay now.*" Max did something he never wanted to do again. He said, "*they are my parents.*" Flo looked at him then back to his parents. She slapped him on his shoulder and said, "apple." Then she walked to the other side of the diner and yelled, "*tree. Do you get me?*" Max thought to himself, "*no Flo this apple fell pretty close to that tree.*" It was clear she wouldn't seat them. Max looked at these people and decided he didn't want them here either. He led

them out and told them that they weren't welcome. His mother said, *"I wouldn't eat in such a greasy spoon if you paid me."* Colin Sr. said, *"speaking of paying me. We want what's ours."* He told Max they wanted a Million dollars, or they would go to the police. Max told them he didn't have anywhere near that. He could maybe come up with three-hundred thousand. Sr. gave him a cheap disposable phone and told him to have the money when he called.

Alice followed Max to the meeting point. She watched as Max gave his parents the money they collected from their savings and a loan against the diner. They and Ruth also took out a loan on their house to gather more money. Max's father said, *"it's a good down payment, but I expect to see more, or some people will be reading all about what you and your little whore did."* His mother said, *"where is your white trash whore anyway. I bet she is off giving blowjobs for tips?"* Max looked at them then said, *"this is it. That is all we have there is no more."* His father countered, *"no son you don't understand there will never be enough. You will be paying us forever."* Max left. As he sat in his car, he thought about the Glock 17 from the diner. He brought it with him just in case they said that it would never be over. But he couldn't do it. His days of killing people were behind him. They would just have to find another way.

As Max drove off Colin Sr. and Mariam counted the money. It was more money than they ever had at one time. Close to Four hundred thousand dollars. They also knew that they would see more soon, or junior would see a jail cell. Mariam wanted to drain them dry then turn them in. She said, *"let him and his bitch die in jail."* They gathered the money and drove to their motel room. They could afford to pay the bill but of course, paying for anything was against their beliefs. They would sneak out at night and make their way to

Las Vegas. They stopped at a roadside stand and bought a bottle of cheap liquor. Some sort of homemade stuff that tasted like tequila. A young Chinese girl sold them the liquor. Half a bottle in they were both passed out.

Mariam woke up tied to a chair in a dimly lit room. It smelled like decay and mold. Behind her was her husband Colin. They were tied to chairs back to back. Off in a dark part of the room, she could hear a thumping sound. Alice walked into the light thumping a baseball bat in her hand. Mariam realized that they were in trouble. She looked to her right and left but no Colin or Max. She looked at the girl that married her son and said, *“I don’t know what you heard. I had nothing to do with it. Colin was the one. He did it,”* from behind her Colin thumped his head against hers. Alice said, *“go on say what you need to say. It doesn’t matter. After tonight you are out of the picture for good.”* Colin Sr. said, *“we’ll leave right now and never look back. You can have the money back just spare us.”* Mariam struggled against the ropes. She said, *“no way that is my money and I will never go away.”* Alice said, *“you want to bet on that?”*

Alice walked around to Colin. She touched the bat to his cheek. Then pulled it back and swung it with some force. The bat made an audible snap and crunch as she broke his jaw and sent some of his teeth flying. Mariam screamed. Blood poured from Colin’s mouth as he started to gag on the blood. Alice thought the Walking Dead had it wrong. Killing with a bat was hard. Hard on the hands. Mariam started to beg for her life. She wanted to try and make it up to her son as her dying husband fought for his last breaths. She blamed the drugs, Colin Sr, men in general and her education for why she was who she was. Alice just wanted it to be over. She dropped the bat. Mariam thought for a second; she could

live through this. She thought about how she would come back and finish them off. Kill them all.

Then all her hopes were dashed when she saw the gun. Behind her, she heard the second to the last thing she would ever hear. Her husband's last breath. The last thing was the gunfire. Alice emptied the magazine from her Glock 19 into them. Ying wanted no part of the killing. It felt wrong to her to kill Max's parents like this. They put the bodies in a hole Ying dug. They tossed some gas-soaked towels into the pit among with seven forty-pound bags of charcoal. They set the fire and waited for the coals to stop flaming and turn white and glowing. As they turned they covered the hole with dirt and left as Alice said, "*let the pigs cook.*"

Chapter Seven

Ying and Alice drove home with the cash in the back of the car. Neither of them was speaking. They needed to find a way to get the money back to Ruth and the bank. No one would believe Max's parents gave the money back. Max or Ruth would wonder how they got the money. Ying finally said, *"we need to tell Ruth so that she can get her money back. It's not right to hide it from her."* Alice pulled over and looked at Ying. She wanted to say something, but she knew that Ying was right. Ruth was a good person who didn't need their problems. But Alice wanted to protect their project. As Alice looked off to the road, Ying wondered if they were going back home or had Alice snapped. Was there a bag of charcoal and a hole in her future? Alice finally said, *"I think we need to tell a story with just enough truth to protect Ruth as well as ourselves."* Ying said, *"these people were criminals, right? I would imagine that they crossed other criminals. I have an idea."*

Max pulled away as his parents stood on the side of the road counting the money. Alice and Ying watched from a distance as they thought about how to approach them. Then a car pulls up. Behind it was another car with its headlights off. Colin Sr. and Mariam ran for their car and took off. Colin Sr. tossed the cash into the dark. He was most likely thinking he was coming back. The three vehicles drove off. Ying picked up the bag from the road then they followed the other cars as they made their way out into the desert. The cars caught up with Max's parents. Alice and Ying pulled over and watched as six men pulled them out of their car. They searched it then they started to beat on Max's parents. Alice said how they couldn't hear them, but she heard the gunfire. The men dumped them into a hole and set them on fire.

Ruth looked at Alice than to Ying. She asked, “*and they didn’t see you?*” Alice said, “*no I don’t think so. No one followed us.*” Ying looked over at Victor. He was staying with Ruth while he was in town. He just sat there quietly listening. Alice said, “*there is a whole lot more money here than what they took. I think it’s closer to five-hundred thousand.*” Alice had taken the cash they took from the dealers and Johns and added it to the bag. She thought that it just might pay off the debt. Alice then said, “*I think you should take the cash. It should more than pay off your loan.*” Ruth looked at the cash then back to Alice. She said, “*no you two losing the restaurant won’t help anyone. We split the cash and pay everything off.*” Alice said, “*I can’t tell Max I followed him. I don’t know why I did it but, well I just can’t tell him.*” Victor spoke up. When he did everyone jumped a little like they forgot he was there. He said, “*I can tell him I followed him as a backup. I saw what you saw.*”

They split the money and Alice and Ying were off. Ruth looked at the cash then back to Victor. She asked, “*do you believe any of that shit she was just saying?*” Victor said, “*yes about as much as I believe in the earth being flat and the moon made of stinky cheese.*” Victor sat down at the table. He asked, “*so what do you think happened out there?*” Ruth said, “*I don’t want to know. My worse fear is that she involved Ying in it. I thought that I should have offered her a room with me when I moved here.*” She looked out at Jeff as he sat in a chair pretending to read as he listened to what was said. She wondered what Jeff would have done if he had the chance to deal with his parents or the pharmacist that spent years raping him. Victor said, “*it’s better just to let it go.*” Ruth said, “*Victor if you break out into song then I will kill you.*”

Max sat next to Alice thinking about his parents. The money was in a bag in front of him. He turned to Alice and asked,

“and it wasn’t Victor that did it?” Alice said, *“Victor wasn’t ever really a killer. I think he was happy when he could leave that all behind.”* Something struck Max weird about how she said that. He started to wonder if Alice had something to do with it. He looked to Ying who was staring out the window. Max said to himself that Alice would never take Ying into something like that. She was one good thing they did while murdering all those people. Ying got up and went upstairs. She called Tina, and the two talked about nothing special for the rest of the night. Max said how they should give the money to Ruth. Alice told him that they already took what she needed to pay off the loan. She said how they had more money than what he gave them. It didn’t sound like his parents to keep more than five-thousand on them before they went to Las Vegas or something. Max said, *“I want to go and see where they are. Maybe it will feel real when I see them.”* Alice said, *“no it’s a crime scene, and we can’t answer too many of the questions that would come up.”*

“Yeah, I was driving down the road, and this smell of cooking pork just came across the road. I just had to find it. That was when I found the pit, but that wasn’t pork. It tasted bad.” The reporter took the microphone away from the old man and looked at the camera. She said, *“gruesome discovery found along the side of the road. Two people were found buried in a pit with burning charcoal in what resembles a cooking style used in Hawaii for cooking whole pigs.”* The man spits then he asked, *“that was people meat. I ate people?”* The reporter said, *“the two have not identified yet, but authorities are hopeful that they will find whoever did this horrible crime.”* The man said, *“hey lady, should I give the cops the meat I took in my cooler?”* Alice turned the television off. From behind her, Max asked, *“I wonder if he was eating mom or dad?”* Alice looked at him as he fried sausage in a pan. Max said, *“it had to be my dad because mom was just too bitter.”*

Max went to the Diner while Alice and Ying went shopping in Las Vegas. Ying knew that this was just code for hunting. Ying decided she wanted to talk about what was happening. She asked, “*do you think they could connect us to them?*” Alice said, “*no I don’t see how. What we are doing has no connection to them.*” Ying thought about how Max’s parents became “them.” Alice pulled over and looked at Ying. It was clear that she wasn’t comfortable. Alice said, “*just maybe we should put a hold on what we are doing. Dealing justice to the dealers and Johns while necessary can’t be all that we are. Maybe we can let it go.*” Ying said, “*this is just a crazy idea. Just maybe we could go shopping.*” Alice looked out at the strip and asked, “*are there any shops around here?*”

An hour later and they found themselves in a department store trying on dresses. Alice was never the go shopping kind of girl, and Ying just wanted whatever she saw people were wearing on You-Tube. Alice put on a dress in what should have been her size only to find it tight. She started to feel sick, and she just wanted to get out of this store. She changed back into her clothes and waited for Ying. Alice sat down and stared at the curtain. Ying came out in a simple white and blue checkered sundress. Alice thought how Ying looked her age. How Ying was nearly the age, she was when she started all this killing. Alice joined Ying up by the mirrors. When she got up, her stomach jumped and turned. Alice just made it to a trash can before she lost her lunch. Ying asked, “*are you ok?*” Alice said, “*bingo.*”

They left the store and went to a restaurant near the strip. Alice and Ying sat in silence as they ate until Ying asked, “*you’re pregnant?*” Alice nodded then she said, “*I haven’t been to a doctor*

yet, but the seven pregnancy tests I took all say the same thing.” Ying looked down at her sandwich then looked back at Alice and asked, “you took seven pregnancy tests?” Alice took a bite of her eggs then she said, “the first two didn’t seem real. Then the next two were a different brand that I wasn’t sure about and the last three I bought in a pack of three.” Ying asked, “does Max know?” Alice’s face turned dark with a look that was less than pleasant. She said, “no and I don’t want him to know until I can accept this is happening.” The two finished their meal and left. Outside in the car Ying said, “we should see a doctor while we are here. One of those clinics that helps women.” Alice said, “I am not there, and I am thinking of keeping it.” Ying shifted in her seat and said, “I wasn’t saying that. There are plenty of things you should be doing to help with the pregnancy.”

The clinic ran the usual tests and confirmed what the seven at home tests said. A doctor in the clinic said she had a sixteen-year-old patient that once use a twelve pack of tests before coming in. She said, *“she later told me that she went home and used four more tests just to be sure. Then she told her boyfriend and parents.”* The doctor then asked Alice just how old she was. She said, *“you are not twenty-four years old.”* Alice said, *“I just turned twenty not that long ago. It’s a long story that I can’t go into.”* The doctor just raised her hands and said how she didn’t need to know everything just those things that are a part of her pregnancy. Alice said, *“somehow this whole thing feels real now.”* The doctor smiled and said, *“oh just wait. This is going to feel real when you gain the weight and all the other real complications.”*

Outside the clinic, Alice and Ying looked through the information the doctor gave her as well as the prenatal vitamins. As they went through the bag, a man pulled up to the clinic with what

looked like a very young girl. He got out of the car and went around to the other side. He opened the door and pulled the girl out. He said to her, “*do it, or I’ll take care of it myself.*” The girl went to the clinic, and the guy pulled into the parking lot. Something about this man seemed familiar to Ying. Alice and Ying sat there and watched this man as he opened a bottle of Mad Dog and took a drink. As they watched him, a memory came to Ying. The smell of cheap wine and a man that said he would take care of it himself. That was when she remembered this man. He was one of the Johns that paid to rape her when she was first starting out. He had raped a ten-year-old girl. As he did it, he had poured his wine on her trying to get it in her mouth.

The girl came out with a paper and got into the car. The man started to scream at her, and they saw him strike the girl across the face. He then struck her again with a closed fist. The man started the car and drove off. Alice looked at Ying then back to the car as it pulled away. Ying slid into the back and checked the guns. They followed the guy out into the desert. All the while the girl didn’t seem to move. He pulled off onto a dirt road and kept driving. About three miles down the road the man stopped the car. Alice stopped just out of the man’s sight. Ying and Alice got out and walked over to watch what he was doing. The man was digging a hole. As he dug, the girls went around to see inside the car. The girl wasn’t moving, and there was blood in a nostril and coming from an ear. Ying checked for a pulse. The girl was alive but in trouble. The man dug a hole four-foot-deep and four-foot across. He finished digging and looked at the car. Leaning against it was an Asian teenage girl. From behind him, he heard Alice say, “*thanks for all the hard work asshole.*” He spun just in time to see the gun buck and fire as Alice shot him in the face four times. They finished the job by filling the hole back up.

Fifteen minutes later they found a hospital and took the girl inside. Alice told them that they found the girl on the side of the road. They spoke to the police and told them the same lie. Then so they knew that this girl might be pregnant they made sure the authorities saw the paper. She had gone in for an abortion and was told they would do it, but she had to come back in three days. Alice thought about how this man was going to murder her over a three-day wait for an abortion. Alice and Ying found a way to leave and drove home. On the way, home Ying said, “*we have to finish this. We need to find the worst of the worst and make them pay.*” Alice put her hand on her stomach and said, “*if we do this then you have to help me keep this from Max.*”

Ying and Alice pulled into their driveway and went inside the house. Victor sat in a van on the next block watching the house using some cameras he placed. He planned to wait until they went inside and place a GPS on the car. He and Ruth decided to follow Alice to see if they were up to anything dangerous. After the last meeting and what he and Ruth thought was a bull shit story, they decided to look for any patterns. There they found a pattern of missing dealers as well as suspicious deaths. Many of the people killed were proven to be pedophiles. One man had a strong connection to Ying’s past. He was an insurance agent that controlled the estate of a family that once owned the house where she was in the sex trade. Victor started to think that just maybe Alice and Ying were killing these men in some act of vengeance. Victor suspected what Alice and Ying were up too, but he didn’t tell Ruth. Part of him wanted concrete proof while another part wanted in on what they were doing.

Max was still at the diner, and the house was empty. Ying went upstairs and called Tina while Alice went into a room she used for her sewing. The room was next to hers and Max's bedroom making it the best place for the nursery. She went into the room and looked around. As she did, she imagined a new paint color and child-size furniture. There was a room over the garage she could use for her sewing after it was renovated. She pictured colors on the wall as well as different names. Natalie if it was a girl with a green and yellow paint scheme. Her mother's favorite colors. Blue with glow in the dark stars for the name Max as in Max Junior. Somehow using a name, he chose over the name given to him by those people felt right. She watched as colors changed from blue to pink to orange and purple. Alice wondered if this was what it felt like to be on drugs, one-part euphoria, one-part fear, and one-part regret.

Ted and Max were finishing up with the dinner rush. Natalie's Diner was always busy, but from four pm to eight pm the diner had a line going out the door and into the parking lot. The latest trainee was doing well and was going to take over at ten o'clock and cook all by himself. Ted was going to stay in the trailer that night just in case something went wrong. He didn't like leaving Sara alone, but the idea that the new guy might burn down the diner was enough to keep him there. A woman sat down at the counter. She was pretty and seemed familiar to Ted. He went to take her order, and soon her name came to him. "*Wendy what can we make for you tonight,*" Ted asked as he turned her coffee cup over. Wendy patted his hand and said, "*that's sweet, but you aren't my type.*" Ted looked at her then said, "*well if you mean I am not the type of guy who can take your order then I think you're wrong.*" Wendy smiled and said how she was supposed to meet Ruth here tonight. Ted told her that Ruth called and was running late. He said, "*let me get you something while you wait.*" Wendy asked, "*could it be something stronger than coffee?*" While the new cook was making Wendy a

milkshake, Ted went to the kitchen and came back with a tumbler glass, hot pepper jelly and a bottle of vodka. He said, *“this was something the last owner would drink to stay awake.”* He took a spoonful of the jelly and put the spoon in the glass. He then added a shot of vodka and stirred it until it came together. Ted said, *“the idea is to get the jelly loose enough to drink and coat the throat. He called it a Napalm because it sticks and burns.”*

Ruth came into the diner and Wendy joined her. Ruth asked, *“why is your face so red?”* Wendy took another drink from her second milkshake. She said, *“five shots of Napalm.”* Ruth looked at the counter at ted and asked, *“Ted really?”* He just put his arms up in a “she asked for it” gesture. Wendy said, *“lets cut to the chase. I drove sixteen hours to get here, and I don’t want to waste time dancing around what was so important.”* Ruth thought to herself, *“god cliché much.”* Ruth said, *“as you know I moved here around three years ago with Alice an Max, and together we built a good life for our children and us.”* Wendy just stared icy death at Ruth. Feeling her on the verge of saying get on with it Ruth said, *“I think Alice is back killing drug dealers. Also, David is back.”* Wendy flinched when Ruth said the name, David. Ruth asked, *“you don’t seem surprised to hear she was killing again?”* Wendy answered, *“because I never stopped. I moved to the border so that I can kill the people bringing the crap into the country.”* Ruth told her what David had said as well as what he has done already. Wendy said, *“it would be the biggest mistake of his life ever to come looking for me in my house.”*

The next morning Ying was back in school, and Alice was looking through the ledger trying to find more names. Sequoia didn’t keep all the names just the ones that paid extra for as she put it *“something special.”* On one page she found a note on a guy that

tried to take Ying and drop her off at a shelter. What Allen didn't know was that the shelter was run by a guy that was also a client of Sequoia. Alice thought about just how wrong she was about Allen. She also thought about how his last act got two of her best friends killed. He was on watch as Bill and Nancy went into a drug house. He slipped and hit the horn causing the gang inside to wake up and find Bill and Nancy and kill them. Bill and Nancy were like substitute parents for her and grandparents for Ying. Alice sat at her desk and went through the ledger when her phone rang. Harriet Burg wanted to know if she had a little time to talk. The last thing Alice wanted was to talk about her mother, but she knew that if she didn't talk to her now, Harriet would just show up unannounced.

Harriet said, *“after that woman stormed into your house and threatened you I put my law degree to some use and made some calls to find out why she is so upset.”* Alice pictured Harriet in her Velma costume in a courtroom saying, *“jinkies your honor.”* Then the image of Harriet in the Velma furry costume with the tail and cat ears came to her mind. Harriet told Alice that her grandmother had changed her will giving her fifty percent of the company when she dies. She said, *“if this Eve woman takes the company public your possible shares could be worth as much as three billion dollars. As it stands now the company's net worth is in the billions with much of it in physical assets.”* Alice never wanted anything from her mother's family, but the idea of sticking it to her aunt was just too good. Harriet asked, *“what is this all about and why do you have two names?”* Alice said, *“if you can live with a secret and are willing to write a truth as fiction then come to New Kent next month and I will tell you everything. Just be warned that my story isn't an easy one and your life could be in danger for knowing it.”* After a brief pause, Harriet asked, *“jinkies why can't I just come down now?”*

Chapter Eight

Ruth called Alice to see if she was busy. Alice told her she and Ying were going to see a doctor about an infection. She turned her phone off and started the car. Alice and Ying drove to a small town in California. Alice drove while Ying changed from her school clothes into her shorts and red top. It was a hunting trip, and she needed to be in her hunting gear. The ledger led them to a man actually named John. At first, Ying didn't remember him. She didn't know their names just their faces and smells, but when she saw him, she couldn't remember him. He looked like a generic every man. Someone you would find on a site that sells clip art for the internet. He was in his fifties with graying black hair underneath a brown flat-cap. He had on brown slacks, a white button-down untucked shirt and an orangish-brown vest under a tan jacket. He looked like an old man in a hipster costume. Ying said, "*I can't be sure at this distance.*"

John sat on a park bench that faced an elementary school. To anyone passing by, he was maybe a parent waiting for a child, and he was. Most people didn't know what John Drue did to his foster daughters. They saw a man that took in girls that needed homes. Mostly they were of Chinese descent with no known relatives. They would come and go from his house. In reality, he acted as a middleman for the sex trade. The girls would come and stay with him for a while so that they could acclimate to America. In payment, they paid him a little cash and the rest he took in trade. Ever since he had his way with this young Chinese girl about six years ago, he had a taste for them. Those that couldn't take what he did find themselves either in sweatshops or a more likely a scenario that involved a hammer to the head and a shallow grave.

Ying walked by the man. He didn't seem to pay her any attention at first. Then he seemed to come to life. He sprung up and approached Ying saying, "*well hello there. Did Yang send you?*" Although she didn't know who that was, Ying said, "*yes as long as you approve.*" He looked around to see they were alone then he looked her up and down. He came up from behind her and reached around to her chest. He said as he felt her up, "*well you are a little older than my usual, but something just feels familiar about you.*" Ying felt like she needed a shower, a gun and not in that order. She said, "*well just maybe you will find me age appropriate out of my clothes?*" They walked across the park to an apartment building that looked over the same park and the school. Alice followed them. She thought how this man had the situational awareness of a toddler.

They made their way up to his apartment. Just as the door closed, he had his hands all over her. She felt his erection push up against her as he started to undress her. Ying said, "*go undress, and I will join you.*" He countered, "*no I want you to undress me.*" Ying looked at the door, and she said, "*ok as long as we do it in your bedroom.*" He walked up and kissed her. He tasted like licorice and clove cigarettes. With the taste, she finally remembered this man. He had offered Sequoia five-hundred dollars for her and when she said no he took his anger out on her. John walked into the room and Ying went to follow him when she heard movement on his doorknob. Someone was picking the lock. Ying walked in to find his room was all red. From the bedspread to the padded walls it was all crushed red velvet.

John slipped out of his shoes and put his arms out. Ying pulled his jacket off then he helped with the vest. She unbuttoned his shirt slowly so Alice would have time to pick the lock. With the shirt off she unbuckled the belt and unzipped the zipper. The man

was wearing skinny jeans, so she had a little trouble slipping them off. Underneath he had on what looked like a red silk pair of girl's pajama bottoms. She slipped them off him. Ying asked, "*may I go and get a cloth and water to bath, you master?*" The word master made the man grow hard almost immediately. Ying tried to hide how revolting he was to her. He said, "*yes but make it quick my girls will be coming soon. They are bringing me two new girls for a week of fun and education.*" Ying left the room to find Alice just outside with two suppressed 22-automatics. Ying said, "*we have to wait here after we take care of him. The people that sold me are coming.*"

Ying came in naked with a bucket and a sponge. John said, "*well just maybe you are a perfect age.*" From the hallway, he heard Alice say, "*why, didn't you like her when she was ten?*" Alice walked in naked with her arm behind her. He looked at her then back to Ying. John started to smile when he realized who she was. He said, "*I have been trying to replace you for years, and now here you are my little Ying.*" He then pointed at Alice and asked, "*but who are you?*" Alice asked, "*do you really want to know?*" Ying laughed. John furrowed his brow and asked, "*who are you?*" Ying sang, "*who, who, who, who, I really want to know.*" Alice pulled her arm and the gun from behind her and said, "*I am the one that killed Sequoia and freed Ying.*" He looked to Ying. She also had a gun. He asked, "*but why are you naked?*" Alice said, "*so we don't get your blood on our clothes master.*" Ying put a bullet to the right of his genitals. The round bounced off the bone and came out the other side. He went to scream when Alice emptied her magazine into his face. He fell back onto the bed. Alice looked around and said, "*I can't get over this room. It's like an Elvis version of hell.*"

Just outside a van pulled up. Four Chinese men got out with two young girls. They were visibly beaten. They came into the apartment to find Alice standing there waiting for them. One of them asked, “*where is John?*” Alice said, “*oh John hooked up with an old fling and was busy, but I can finish this for him.*” He looked Alice up and down and said something in Chinese. The other men laughed. The man walked over to Alice. He felt her up then pushed her into the couch. He said, “*I think I’ll have a little white girl then we will wait for him to finish.*” From the other room, Ying said, “*come on in.*” Two of the men went into the room and met with Ying and her 22-automatic. A suppressor isn’t as silent as in the movies. The man by Alice and the last man heard the shots. Alice knew he would push her into the couch, so she put her gun there. The man turned to her as she pulled her gun and fired.

The two girls stood there hugging each other waiting for the white woman to shoot them. Instead, Alice told them to go out and run to the school on the other side of the park. She said, “*and you didn’t see either of us. Or I will find you.*” The two girls dropped the crappy wood sandals and ran down and out of the apartment. Alice and Ying slipped out to their car. When the first of the police found the apartment, they were halfway home. The next day the papers would read how a sex slave ring ended in a gun battle and deaths. John kept records much like Sequoia helping the authorities locate many of the other girls they sold. For the first couple of hours, John Drue was a hero until his connection was released. When it was, he went from hero to monster in seconds. Victor traced the GPS bug from Kent to the location where all this took place. Then he found the connection between the men and Ying. While he did this, the authorities raided businesses up and down the coast freeing people sold as slaves.

Alice went to Vegas to meet with her one-time boyfriend Max and his new family. Over the last few months, they contacted each other through email, Facebook and on the phone. Alice wasn't sure just how much of her story he should know. He knew about Max and Ying as well as the life they built in New Kent, but they never talked about the time between him leaving and her reemergence with a call to his father. In that call, Alice had learned that she was supposed to go and live with Mark's father Sam in Phoenix if anything happened to her father. Her life would have been very different if it had not been for David. Just maybe she wouldn't have killed all those people. She also thought about all the people they helped including Ying. She knew that the what if questions eventually led to nowhere and it was just best to accept what was.

She saw him in the restaurant with an African-American man about the same age. His name was Phil. They had a baby with them as well as a toddler. Both children looked Asian. While she could see the boy in this man, she couldn't see how he got to this man from the lost boy that moved to live with his father all those years ago. Mark introduced her to Phil as Jennifer. Alice wasn't used to that name, and she almost corrected him. Neither man fits the stereotype of the television gay guy. She wasn't sure what she expected, but this wasn't it. They did the usual talk about work and family. Max was working as a contributor to an online newspaper and Phil owned a food truck that sells a Chinese/Mexican fusion cuisine call Canton Taco. Their two children were from the Canton region of China. Both were girls born to families that didn't want them. The toddler's name was Sally, and the six-month-old was named Susan.

Somehow the conversation came back to Mark's mother. Kimberly had moved back east after she lost custody of Mark. She broke his wrist after he came out to her. She couldn't deal with her son being gay, or her daughter named Jenn married to a Mexican-American man. Mark said, *"one day mom called out of nowhere. She said that she looked around her small apartment and came to understand she could either hold on to her outdated morals or try and make it right."* She eventually moved to San Francisco near where Mark and Phil live and is active in their lives. She was also in the life of Jenn, Jose, and their children. Mark said, *"it won't ever go back to the way it was, but that's a good thing. I don't ever remember seeing her so happy. She is even dating some guy named Mike she met going to college in Kent."*

Phil said how it was nice to put a face to the name when he got up and took the kids away. Something felt off about how he left. Mark said, *"we have this friend that ghostwrites people's autobiographies. He was approached by a man named David Warren about a year ago."* Alice tried to hide her anger in hearing that name, but Mark knew her too well. He went on, *"this man told him a story on how he set up that camp in Arizona. How they used it to kill drug dealers."* Mark pulled out a book from his bag. He said, *"this is a galley version of the book. As of right now, no one is interested in it. Most say it's in poor taste to take responsibility for what happened when everyone already knew what really happened."* The book was titled *Dealing Justice, The David Warren Story*. Mark said, *"this and the thumb drive attached are the only copies except for the one this Warren guy has. If I were you, I would get rid of it and deal with this man. We built a life that I must protect, and I think you want to protect your life. as much as I owe you and love you, I don't ever want to hear from you again."* Mark got up and left. He left the book and thumb drive behind.

Alice sat in her car and read the book from cover to cover. Most of it was bullshit with David taking credit for saving Ying as well as Jeff and Susan. He claimed to adopt them and assigned her and Ruth as nannies. It glossed over how he tried to have them sent to the other camp where he was secretly killing people. He did write how he lied about his not so dead wife to gain the trust of his living weapons. That was how he saw them as living weapons with him being a Manson like figure. He wrote how he had planned to take Jennifer that night when they found her father overdosing on heroin. He was calling rape “take” and trying to make it sound consensual even as he wrote how he wanted her to fight back. When he got temporary custody of her, he decided to see if he could turn her into a killer. He also wrote how after he grew bored with it all how he set up his teams by changing their tactics then calling the drug dealers and warning them about the drive-byes. Alice looked to the street. She drove home before reading the book and was on a street corner near downtown. On that corner was a guy some people call C-note.

Brian Houseman sat at his desk and reviewed what he just learned. He was having his usual day reading both city reports as well as sales reports. He had an office on Main street that worked for his business and his work on city council. It might be a conflict of interest, but since he took the job to benefit his business, he didn't care. A man came in and wanted to speak with him. He had a book and a DVD for him to see. Brian wasn't that busy, and this could be a voter. Mayor Houseman sounded good to him. He looked at a picture he had on his desk of Ruth, Jeff and Sue and asked it, “*wish me luck.*” He told his secretary to let the man in. They shook hands, and David sat down across from Brian and said, “*the city is in crisis.*”

David told him that he had some evidence of a criminal nature involving some prominent citizens. Brian thought about the blackmail possibilities and asked, “*who are you talking about?*” David said, “*I think you should look over the file and watch the DVD. I love this town so I will weight to release this to the press.*” Brian said, “*let me take care of this. I will make sure these people will pay.*” David smiled and looked away. He said, “*pay. I think many people are going to pay. Dealing Justice to the guilty isn’t easy.*” Something about this man seemed wrong to him. Brian asked, “*I am sorry what is your name?*” David said, “*my name is David Warren. I was a drug counselor in Napa California. I had an at-risk camp in Arizona. When you see Ruth tell her, I said hi.*” David got up and walked out without another word.

Brian turned his television off and pulled the DVD out of the machine. He stared at it as if he could still see what was on it. He loved Ruth and her children. When Susan died, he felt like he lost his own daughter. Now here was a video of Ruth murdering people. It also showed her in that occult camp in Arizona. He thought about the movies and wondered if any of the crazy people on it were supposed to be her. He had his business as well as his aspirations for office. There was a time that Ruth would have been a part of that. Ruth was well respected within the community. Now he thought how he should just maybe move out and detach himself from her before she goes to jail. Just maybe it would be best if Ruth had an accident. Two living criminals would overshadow a dead one.

Ying and Tina cut their last class and met in an unused classroom. Makeup sex in their favorite venue made it even more

special. As a trusted student mentor Tina knew all the right spots to be alone. Her mother was starting to suspect something was different. How she never dates and spends all her time with this Chinese girl. They were having a harder time spending time together. Tina also didn't react well to the news that Ying and Alice were still killing people. Ying had mind-altering news. The people that sold her as a child into the sex slave industry were now either in jail or the ground. That included the man that named her Ying. His name or his code name was Yang. Tina found that Ying was a different person with this news. Like a weight was lifted and she was free to do whatever she wanted. And what she wanted was Tina.

The two girls dressed and blended with the other students as they ended the day and left. They exchanged their bras to be close to each other with Tina wearing a bra too small for her and Ying virtually braless. Ying saw Alice in the parking lot. She was in her car with the motor running. Ying knew this wasn't good. Tina came up behind her and said, *"I wasn't thinking about my mom. We need to change back before I go home, or I will have to explain why I am wearing your bra."* Alice said, *"just do it in the back while I drive you home."* Tina asked, "do what?" Alice said, *"its pretty obvious that you two have each other's over the shoulder boulder holders on and if you don't want your mother to know then jump in."* Tina's car was in the shop with brake problems so it wouldn't look odd that she was getting a ride and her mom would still be at work. They got in the back and exchanged their bras. The maneuver was easier for Ying. While they did this, they also took the time to make out again. Tina kept her eye on Alice the whole time.

They dropped off Tina, and Ying turned to Alice and asked, *"so what's up?"* Alice looked to the book on the front passenger seat

and said, “*later, we need to clean house.*” Alice drove to a part of town the police never went. The growth of the police force in New Kent couldn’t keep up with the population. A few controversial arrests left a bad taste in the mouths of the public when it came to the police in these neighborhoods. This left neighborhoods open to gang takeover. One block was under the control of a man named Calvin, but the people called him C-note. Alice wondered how she could let this man work in her backyard while dealing justice in other states. C-note sat in his folding chair drinking beer and supervising his drug trade. As Alice and Ying sat watching him, Victor watched from a distance. Victor was following Alice ever since the park and the Chinese gang. Alice said, “*unless we find that last guy from the ledger lets make this one the last one.*” When she didn’t get an answer, she turned to the back only to see Ying changing into her hunting gear.

Ying pulled the 22-automatic out of the hidden compartment in the back of the passenger seat and checked it. Then she changed into her hunting clothes. She did her hair up in pigtails. Alice thought she looked a little deranged, but she knew that this man wouldn’t be looking at her head. Alice already had on her “*look at my tits shirt.*” Alice turned the corner and came to a stop near C-note. He was in a multi-colored vest, baggie jeans, and an LA Raiders hat. He looked like a drug dealer from the eighties or nineties. Ying leaned out and asked him for directions. He got up and started to walk to the car. Alice aimed and fired placing the shot in the R of the Raiders. The man stopped but didn’t drop, so she put two more in his head with the last shot knocking the hat off. C-Note stopped and checked his head. A few seconds later he dropped to the ground like something invisible let him go. Alice drove off while Ying watched what the kids did. They took C-Notes money and the cooler of beer leaving the man to die on the corner.

Alice and Ying drove home to find Max there. He was just getting home from the diner. Alice looked at him, but she didn't have that same sexual energy after the kill she had before. She thought how different this one felt. Max went inside, and they joined him. Alice left the book in the car. It was something they would deal with tomorrow. Ruth would want to know, and just maybe they could call a few of the others. The book was a blueprint for jailing everyone that made it out of the ranch. She went to Max and hugged him. Alice looked back to the car and said, "*there is something I must show you. Mark gave it to me, and it's not good.*" Alice knew it was better to deal with a problem head-on rather than put it off. She gave him the book and told him how she got it. As Max listened, the book started to feel heavier to him. He said, "*I want to read it, but we also need to let Ruth know.*" Alice said, "*you go and find a place to read while I call Ruth and tell her to get over here.*" Max didn't read it as much as he skimmed the book looking for his and Alice's names. They both came up a lot.

Ruth got into her car after a strange cryptic call from Alice. She wondered if Alice was ready to tell her and Max about all the killing she and Ying were doing. She went to turn the engine over, but it wouldn't start. She checked the engine and found a wire going from the starter down and underneath the car. Whoever did it had disconnected the starter in the process. Underneath the car she found a place where someone had cut a hole in her gas tank and duct taped a blasting cap. With no battery power, the improvised bomb wouldn't have worked. Ruth went with her motorcycle instead and left the car for another day. Like many people in town, Ruth had a street legal dirt bike that she used as often as she could. Brian watched her pull out and ride away. He looked at the car and

wondered what he did wrong. Ruth left a note saying not to try and start her car that she would explain later.

Chapter Nine

Eve was summoned to her mother's house. She was worried the old girl died before she could get the power of attorney that would allow her to take the company completely over. She was already the acting president of the company with her husband in his grave. It was a very convenient heart attack. She tricked her sisters into signing away their rights to the company. All that was left was to become her mother's guardian then cut her blonde bitch niece out of the will. Her mother thinks she is giving Jennifer fifty percent. Eve killed to take control of the company, so killing to keep it would be easy.

Inside she found her sister Mary sitting next to their mother smiling like a cat that just caught a mouse. Her mother, however, was not smiling. She asked about the papers taking the voting rights away from her sisters. How she used company money to pay them off. The word embezzlement was used. Eve looked at her sister then back to her mother. She said, *"I built this company. I killed my husband and father for it."* She then realized she just admitted to murder. Her mother didn't look surprised at all. She said, *"I am the sole owner of this company. I and I alone decide who runs it and it isn't you."* She pointed to a dresser by the door and said, *"you can keep the money you stole from me, and there is a check for ten million dollars. If you leave now and never come back, I will not call the police."* Eve turned as Mary gasped. Their mother had a revolver in her hand. She said, *"I never want to see you again. Not kicking your narrow ass was the biggest mistake I ever made. Letting you run wild hurting people was on your father and me."*

By that evening Eve found herself on a commercial plane out of town. She was on her way to the Caymans then someplace

where she could rebuild her life away from the company and the authorities. It seemed that everything she owned was bought with company money and in the company's name. From her houses to her cars she had nothing but the check and several bank accounts totaling about fifty million dollars. The first thing their mother did was change her will to cut Eve out and change the name from Jennifer to Alice so one day she will be worth Billions. She then hired an outside firm to take the company public. Just like Eve wanted to do.

Later that day Jennifer Beacon spoke with her granddaughter Alice on the phone. She apologized for everything and said Eve was out of the picture. Alice said she should forgive her. She said, "*family shouldn't give up on each other.*" Her grandmother and namesake Jennifer didn't tell her about the will. They talked about the diner, Max, and Ying. Then Alice told her about the baby. About how she was going to be a great-grandmother. She told her she would like to move to their small town and spend her remaining days with her family. A family that does not see her as dollar signs. She said she would have a house built and move there as soon as she could. Alice suggested she hire a different construction company than the one Eve used. Jennifer said, "*it's my company, so they better get it right.*"

At an outside diner, in San Diego Ying and Alice found the last of the *Johns* from the book. He dressed as a police officer, but the two women know this is all an act. He uses the uniform to pick up young boys and girls off the street. The runaways no one will miss. His actual job in sanitation was less rewarding, but it gives him the time to hunt. He spends his nights collecting trash from commercial facilities. Like some pedophiles, he doesn't care about gender; he wants power and control. When he's done, he likes to

dispose of the remains at work. The dogs at the yard have learned to like the taste of children. Alice spent some time following him so she could learn his routine.

They followed him from the diner to a highway underpass where he went looking for a child in his favorite range from eight to twelve. Not finding any they went to a park near the water known for underage prostitution and drugs. There he found a young boy and girl. He was eight maybe nine, and she was no more than six. They looked like brother and sister. Alice couldn't hear what they were saying, but somehow, he lured the children to his van. At the van, he used a taser on the boy. As the boy fell, the man grabbed the girl and tossed her into the van. There was a thud as she hit the inside wall. Alice almost jumped out of the car, but Ying stopped her. She wanted to have time with him where he likes to do his dirty business.

They followed him to an abandoned warehouse about twenty miles outside of town. He picked up the lifeless bodies of the children and carried them into the warehouse. Inside he dropped the girl in a dog crate and locked it. Alice and Ying climbed a ladder on the side of the warehouse and looked in. He put the boy on a metal table tied up and face down. The man pulled up a rolling tray with surgical instruments on it as well as a large knife. He will have his fun then kill them both. Alice and Ying climbed down into the warehouse and snuck up on the man. As Ying moved in the man saw her reflection in a stainless-steel panel. He spun around while drawing a handgun tucked in a hidden holster and fired. He let off three rounds before Alice shot. She hit him in the face and forehead.

Two of his shots went wild but the third hit Ying in the shoulder. Ying fell to the ground. Alice went to Ying and checked the wound. She couldn't find an exit. Finding a box of gauze, she stuffed them in the wound. After that she freed the children then she picked up Ying and carried her to the car. Alice told the children to, *“get in the car or not, we are leaving here now.”* Alice called Ruth and told her what just happened. Ruth said, *“let Victor help you.”* Out of nowhere a gray sedan pulled to a stop and Victor got out and ran to the women with a medical kit. He helped Alice redress the wound. Victor said to Alice, *“we need to get her some help now. I called an old friend here in town. He is waiting nearby just in case something went wrong.”* Alice looked confused, she somehow felt out of the loop. She went to ask Victor how he and Ruth knew but Victor interrupted her, *“here is the address go now, and we will talk later.”* Alice slipped behind the wheel and programmed her phone to the address. Victor went into the warehouse. Inside he found the body. Using a medical probe, he dug out the slugs then polished the brass from Alice's 22-automatic.

Alice pulled into a deserted parking lot of a veterinary clinic. A sign on the door said they were closed. By a side door, Alice saw a familiar face. When they had first rescued Ying, they had gone back to the ranch and met a doctor named Dave. He waved to Alice. She picked up Ying and carried her inside with the kids following her. He placed her on an operating table used for animal surgeries and checked the wound. *“I don't have time to talk this out we need to do this now.”* Using a pair of scissors, he cut off Ying's shirt then bra. He cleaned the wound then gave her a shot for the pain and to reduce any infections. Using a portable ultrasound, he found the slug. He said, *“The round split into three pieces. We need to get them out.”* He looked up at Alice and said, *“go to the door and keep an eye out for a red Kia Soul.”* She started to talk when he again interrupted her, *“I called someone to help with anesthesia*

because we will need her to be immobile for this.” Without a word, Alice went to the door. About three minutes later a red Kia Soul with a white tiger print decal on the sides pulled in. A woman in a pair of brightly colored scrubs got out of the car. The scrubs were a fluorescent green with little white and blue flowers. She glared at Alice as she came inside. Dave said, “Alice this is my wife, Gina. She’s a surgical nurse at a children’s hospital. She also knows the whole story.”

Alice watched as they sedated then intubated Ying. From there they closed the door on the operating room and told Alice to, “*watch the kids.*” She walked over to the kids. The little girl was asleep on a bench while the boy watched her walk over. Alice sat down on a chair across from him and asked, “*what’s your name?*” He looked at her but seemed to look through her at the door. *Alice said, “Kid stay, go it’s up to you but understand staying is the best option for you and her.”* An hour went by before he spoke. He said his name was Tim and the girl’s name was Debbie. Tim said, “*she’s not my sister.*” He explained that one day a car pulled up in the alley he was staying. A man got out and opened a back door. He unstrapped her from a car seat then told her to stay until he comes back. A month later and he never returned. He said, “*I stayed with her, so no one would mess with her and see she ate and stuff.*” Tim showed her a cheap flip phone and said, “*I have a job as a lookout for a guy. If the cops show up, I hit the speed dial, and they know about it. The others know who I work for and leave us be.*”

The door opened, and Dave came out. He said, “*We did what we could for now. Only time can tell how it heals.*” Alice looked over at the kids and started to talk about finding the men they worked for. Dave said, “*you have to be fucking kidding me. Ying was shot. You had just one job, to protect her and what did you*

do.” Alice said, “she was shot in the shoulder and.” Dave interrupted her, “this is no movie or idiotic television show. That wound could still kill her with an infection or blood clot. She will need months of physical therapy and could still never regain the full use of her arm again. You need to sort out what’s important and end this thing you are doing.” He looked back to the room then back to Alice. He went on saying, “you did something amazing with her and the other kids, but here today you tossed all that out. You might as well of shot her yourself.”

A couple of hours later Dave and his wife said they would take the kids. Gina said to the kids, *“no more living on the streets.”* Tim looked over at Debbie then said, *“take her, but I got to stay my job.”* Dave said, *“your job is over. Just look at what just happened. What almost happened. You deserve to grow up safe and now here is your chance to do it.”* Dave gave Alice enough medicine for Ying and said he would come and see her in about a week where they could set something up to start her therapy. Then he added, *“you have to tell Max about this. Tell him everything.”*

Alice and Ying pulled into the driveway about 3 am. On the porch of the house was Victor and Ruth waiting for them. Ruth said, *“I figured you would tell Max about what the two of you were doing, so I thought I would help and fill in some of the gaps.”* They carried Ying inside the house. She was out cold from the painkillers. Victor carried her up to her room with Ruth behind him. Max looked shocked. He had no idea what was happening. When Ying was settled in her room, everyone met in the living room. Alice was still covered in Ying’s blood. She took out her 22/45 and put in on the coffee table. Max just stared at the gun as Alice explained what they did. The book, the first attack, and all the other dealers. Max couldn’t look at her. She said, *“we never said we would stop.”* Max

looked at her but said nothing. She understood her rationalization was flawed. They stopped because it was the right thing to do. They needed to take care of Ying. Her needs should have come first not this bloodlust. Then there was the baby.

Ruth did a double take. She said, “*baby?*” Max looked at her and said, “*yes, well I am assuming you are pregnant. I know how many days are in a month as well as all the empty boxes of pregnancy tests.*” They hadn’t told anyone yet. It was a surprise that both should have seen coming. Alice said, “*yes I am.*” Max said, “*I am not sure I know you at all.*” The room became tense. Victor tried to explain how all the people were the worst of the worst, and a couple of them were actual serial killers. Max said, “*and that justifies the lying. Her taking Ying into danger. She could have been killed then what.*” It’s in this moment of tension that the real Alice shows up. Not the little girl who seems to blend into the background, the stone-cold killer with little fear. She said, “*I know I was wrong, but it didn’t feel wrong. I was feeling lost in that house. I felt alive again doing something good.*” Max said, “*you locked yourself in this house. Not me. You chose to do nothing after the ranch.*” She said, “*I wonder if this is how my mother felt when she was contemplating suicide?*” With that, the tension in the room seemed to lift. Max went over and hugged her. He said, “*you don’t need to keep anything from me. We will never be your parents.*” Alice’s mother suffered from depression, her father ignored all the signs and just buried himself in work. Her mother died trying to buy enough drugs to kill herself. The night ended with Max alone in their room and Alice in Ying’s room watching her sleep wondering just what she was thinking.

Ruth slipped a copy of the book over to Wendy. She said, “*this is his end game. He’ll try and find someone to publish this*

until someone does. I think he will kill enough people to make someone take notice.” Wendy said, “I hope that bastard comes looking for me. I really do.” Ruth opened the book to near the end. It gave details on Wendy’s operations in New Mexico and Arizona. He named names from her new love to the twins she took in after their parents died. Ruth said, “he won’t come to you he’ll let the authorities take you down. When Victor was cleaning up after Alice, he found a message from David to that man. He let him know that Alice and Ying were going after him which means he knows what’s happening here.” Wendy shook her head saying, “I see that coward Victor isn’t here.” Ruth knew that something happened between them at some point. They were never really that friendly, but now they can’t be in the same place without a fight. Ruth said, “take the book and think about a plan to escape also reach out to anyone that could help find David.” Wendy took the book and got up. She said, “my escape plan involves an AR15 and a lot of dead people.”

Ted waited for Wendy to leave before he approached the table. He said to Ruth, *“wow she’s intense.”* Ruth dismissively said, *“no she just hides her feelings well.”* Ted sat down and asked, *“is everything alright? I haven’t seen Max for a few days, and our new bust girl quit.”* Ruth leaned in and said, *“I shouldn’t tell you this, but Ying was shot while in San Diego.”* Ted asked, *“holy shit is she ok? How are Max and Alice? Did they find the motherfucker that shot her? what happened?”* Ruth said, *“Ted don’t swear it doesn’t sound right coming from you. She is doing better, yes, the dumb ass that shot her was arrested, and they are ok. I am sure that Max will tell you, but he plans on taking some time off to see to Ying and the baby on the way.”* Ted got back up then sat back down. He seemed lost in his thoughts then he turned red and asked, *“baby?”* Ruth got up and went to the table where Jeff and his groupies were. They left the diner on the way to school. By the side of the road was a man changing a tire. As they past Ruth could just see the top of his head.

She thought somehow, he seemed familiar. She felt bad about not stopping but had she stopped she would have come face to face with David. He wanted to not be here on the side of the road. Exposed and vulnerable to being discovered. David wants to work his plan and bring his enemies down. To do this, he needed to keep on the down low.

Alice poured a short glass of Vodka and gave it to Harriet. She drank it like it was water then she spit it out. Harriet asked, *“how do people drink that shit?”* Alice said, *“not like that.”* Harriet looked back at the book like it could almost come to life and go after her. She asked, *“is any of that true?”* Alice said, *“some of it is while most of it he made up to make himself into a hero within his story.”* Harriet pulled the thumb drive close. She asked, *“you need me to do this as soon as possible?”* Alice said, *“and destroy that copy after you are done.”* Harriet smiled as she looked at the book. She liked the idea of secretly ghost rewriting an autobiography. Her face turned dark. She asked, *“just how bad was your mother’s drug addiction?”* Alice said, *“it wasn’t the drugs. Mom had a problem with depression. The drugs just masked the real problem.”* Harriet nodded then she asked, *“when this is all done maybe we could collaborate on a biography of her?”*

Ying was in the living room with a reclining loveseat. She sat there high on pain medication with her 22-automatic across her lap. Max agreed that she could hold on to it if it wasn’t chambered. By then Ying was adept at chambering a round and firing accurately. The drugs gave her dreams she couldn’t understand. In some the bullet hit Alice, and she ended up as this man’s victim. In others, she is in a strange land surrounded by people that seemed to be happy to see her. In that dream, everyone is so much bigger than her, and everyone was Chinese. She wasn’t sure if this was just her

imagination or a memory from before she was sent to America. Next to her was Tina. Ever since that shooting Tina has not left her side. To do so, she came out to her mother and father. Her mother was shocked, or she pretended to be, and her father said, *“yeah no kidding I knew that when I saw you and that Asian kid making out in the backyard.”*

David was on the phone with someone he hired to set his plan in motion in New Mexico. They were to shoot up a police station then leave evidence that would lead the police to Wendy and her operations. The man was having trouble recruiting people to go after Wendy. None of the people guarding the border against illegals wanted to go up against her and her little army. Most of the police seemed to be secretly working with her. The man said, *“we found some contacts with a Mexican Cartel that wouldn’t mind killing cops and this she-male. All I need is a copy of that book, and we can go.”* David said, *“don’t wait for me, just go. I don’t care if this is tied to me or not. I need her gone before my last act here in the U.S. is finished. I want a clean escape.”* David knew that every minute he was here, he was open to being caught or worse. He hung up the phone then closed the envelope and sealed it.

Ruth walked into her house and was struck from behind. She woke up tied down and in the trunk of a car. The car came to a stop, and she heard the driver get out and come around to the trunk. The person opened it, but she couldn’t see the face until Brian leaned in. She tried not to panic. She asked as cool as possible, *“what are you doing?”* Brian said, *“I know all about you and the others. All the murders you and they committed for that cult. I can’t let you ruin things for me.”* Over the last week or so Ruth noticed a change in him. She also knew that the blasting cap in the gas tank was too stupid to be David. Ruth worked a knife she kept on her belt

out and cut herself free. Brian said, *“that David guy will be here soon and with you gone I will raise Jeff. As a single father, I will be elected mayor easily.”* Ruth hid the fact she was now untied and asked, *“David is coming?”*

The sun started to set as they waited for David. It had been seven hours since they went into the desert. Ruth finally concluded that he wasn't coming, so she got out of the car. Her sudden movement startled Brian. She said, *“he isn't coming dumbass.”* Ruth drove her knee into Brian's crotch. As he bent over, she brought her fist down as hard as she could on the back of his head. He woke up behind the wheel of his car. He looked around to see his clothes in the backseat and a note taped to the dash. It said, *“keep your mouth shut, or I will show you why you shouldn't cross me.”*

Chapter Ten

The customer load was a little lite in the diner with just about eight customers. It had been about a week since Max or Alice had been around, luckily the new hire was working out. He was supposed to work that morning, but Ted liked days like this. The days were the customer flow went from five to fifty in minutes. It was a long way away from that first day when he cracked a dozen eggs on the floor. Flo disappeared from the diner about the same time Victor did. Ted tries not to think about what is happening in Victor's van when the van starts to rock, although it has become harder not to think about it. Victor was about thirty years younger than the seventy-something Flo. Ever since they met around that fourth of July cookout, they have been spending time together, much of it on her breaks in his van.

With such a lite crowd Ted could cover Flo and spend a little time away from the flattop and talking to Sara. She was about five-foot-three with curly chestnut hair and about one hundred pounds soaking wet. She looks about fifteen even though she is the same age as Ted. They knew each other from Phoenix where they went to school together. They dated on and off all through high school until one day she told him he wasn't marriage material. One day she just showed up, and they found themselves living together. They went and got married in Las Vegas but hadn't told anyone yet. They already lived like they were married, she was even using his name. It was like they needed a final push to commit or maybe a bump. That baby bump is their son. She works in the road services department for the city. In her current condition, they have her dispatching the other workers from job to job. She can't wait to get back to her backhoe and tear up some asphalt. She likes the demolition.

On her way out, Sara held the door open for a UPS driver carrying a yellow envelope and thick metal clipboard. The driver came up to Ted and asked for a Jennifer or Colin. Ted said, “*sorry no one by those names works here.*” The man then said, “*you may know them as Alice and Max. I have a message for them.*” Ted said, “*do I need to sign for it?*” The driver replied, “*no, no the envelope is for the police I have a different message for them.*” With that David pops open the clipboard and draws a small black automatic with a suppressor. Without a word, David shot Ted in the head. Ted went to the floor with his last thoughts being on his son he would never see. A woman screams. David looks around at the customers. All of them are looking down and away from the gunman. David says, “*it’s ok to look, folks, it really doesn’t matter anyway.*” He then opened fire on the customers starting with the ones closest to the door.

Outside of the diner Victor’s van was no longer rocking. They lay there naked with their clothes in piles around them sweating from the morning’s activities. Flo heard the gunshots first. After fifteen years as a showgirl in Las Vegas, she knew the sound of gunfire even when suppressed. They both looked out of the van. They saw the gunman walkout tossing the weapon on the ground then getting in his car and driving away. It was a Ford Focus with a rental sticker on the windshield. Victor said quietly, “*David.*” They dressed and got out of the van. Flo walked around to the back door while Victor went to the front. Without thinking about it, he scooped up the gun using a rag so he wouldn’t leave fingerprints. Inside they found the carnage. They found seven people dead including a mother and her three-year-old daughter. Flo found Ted behind the counter. In the past three-plus years, Ted had become like a son to her. He was about to be a father, and now he was just gone.

Victor called Max then the police. Before the police arrived, Victor picked up the envelope. Outside he put the envelope in his van and dropped the gun into the basin of an old port-a-poddy behind Ted's Trailer. He would retrieve it later so he could trace it back to David. Flo walked out of the diner. She told Victor she could never go in there again. By that evening, she was living with Victor and retired for the last time. Victor told Max where he could find the envelope and gun then he drove Flo to his house in Las Angeles. On the way, he explained as much as he could about David and the ranch. The police questioned Max when he arrived. They initially tried to stop him from going in until he explained that, "*I need to shut everything down or there could be a fire.*" Inside he found Ted. Max shut the diner down and posted a sign in the driveway *Closed until further notice*. It had an unsettling finality to it.

Max went home to Alice and Ying who was recuperating from the gunshot wound she received a week ago. Before leaving Victor gave him the envelope. Sitting at their dining room table Max and Alice opened the envelope. Inside was a computer printed copy of David's book, A DVD, and some pictures. The pictures were the most disturbing. They were of several of the women from the ranch. Most of them were naked. Some were a bright green as if taken from a night vision camera. One was of Alice dressed only in a pair of panties frozen in time. Two were of the six-year-old Sue one in the bath another just before getting dressed. Then they played the DVD. It was more footage of the ranch. Some of the people having sex including Max and Alice. Then the real shocker. Footage of them shooting the drug dealer known as *Gray Dog*. There was enough evidence to convict every one of premeditated murder. He

had added a note that he found a new publisher who was going to print this and distribute it to the world. The note ended with *I WIN*.

Just outside of town David was in a hotel room watching the news. He opened a bottle of champagne and drank straight from the bottle. He was waiting for the revelation and arrest of what was left of his followers. He thought how he taught them a good lesson. Only he can be a winner. The news went on and no mention of the book or DVD. He eventually realized someone must have found the package and intercepted it. He said to himself, “*well this just will not due.*” He looked over at a collection of guns he bought in the last three weeks.

As he stared at the guns. A pane of glass broke behind him. Then the room was filled with automatic fire. David ducked and rolled to the floor. Two men with AK47s came in. David went for the Colt 1911 under the bed and shot them both. Looking at them he realized who it was. He told a well-known gang where they could find the people killing their dealers. This led to the deaths of four of the members from his ranch including two women named April and June. He also thought that they had killed a man named Victor. This was three years ago. Just maybe they figured out he was the leader of that group. He knew he had to go now. He would have to wait for his revenge after the book was published.

Sitting outside of the hotel was Wendy. She had told the gang where David was hoping they would do what she said she wouldn't. She followed David to the airport then paid some money to the person at the counter to find where he was going. His clean getaway to Mexico wasn't as clean as he thought. Wendy offered to go to Mexico and “*take care of things,*” but Ruth had other plans,

besides she had her own mess back home to take care of. Ruth gazed at the pictures of Susan naked just from the bath. She didn't just want him dead. She wanted to kill him. Wendy gave Ruth some papers David left behind. On the plane, David made a call to a person that would enact the last part of his plan. David knew that Max and Alice would find a way to escape the law. He wanted to kill them, but more importantly, he wanted them dead.

After she spoke with an old friend, Ruth smiled. She then opened her laptop and watched a video from last year. Susan's class put on a talent show. Some juggled, others danced, and Susan sang. She was on stage with her friends behind her. Susan had a group of friends that did everything she said. Her teacher at the time called them her followers, and it just stuck. The curtain opened and on stage was Susan and six other girls. She was in a pink dress with ruffles. They sang the Beatles song Hey Jude and this time got the words right. About halfway through the song, Susan started to get into it. By the end, she was almost screaming the Paul McCartney part of the song while the other girls sang the chorus. Ruth just missed her daughter.

Max went to the diner to make sure it was closed. He found that someone had set a eulogy with flowers and teddy bears at the door. They were there when the community started to bloom, and the diner had a special place in people's hearts. All Max could see was the place where his past killed his future. He didn't know if he could ever reopen the diner, but he also started to understand that it needed to be reopened for the community. As he went to leave a car pulled into the parking lot. It was Sara and her father. He had come to town that night after seeing the news about Ted. Sara asked if she could pick up Ted's stuff. Max said, "*you don't want to go in there right now. Let us clean it up. Don't let it be the last thing you*

remember about Ted.” Sara put her hand on her belly and said, “*no he will be what I remember of Ted.*” Max looked to the diner then back to Sara and said, “*Ted was a partner in the diner, and as his wife, that part is now yours, so I am asking you do you want us to reopen?*” Sara seemed surprised at the mention of the marriage. Max said, “*the man had a terrible poker face.*”

Two men in a box truck watched Max from across the street. One of them suggested they follow the pregnant girl. The first one said, “*no we’re here for a job and not fun.*” The second man said, “*yes but the man said we should have as much fun as we want with the girls.*” The first man just grinned. The first man picked up his phone and tried to call David, but there was no answer. Then he called the other team. He asked, “*this is Jacob, is the woman still there?*” The person on the other side of the call said, “*yes, she hasn’t left that room she uses for sewing for about ten hours now. The one named Ruth just left with the kid.*” Jacob said, “*I want you to follow the woman. Have James stay and watch the house and Jesse if they see you I will kill you.*” Jacob disconnected the call and said, “*Joel, I don’t think this bitch-boy is anything to worry about. let’s go and find a little fun before tonight.*” Max noticed a truck across from the diner with the name Six J’s Moving on the side.

Jacob and Joel drove around looking for what they thought of as fun. A young couple preferably newlyweds. Joel wanted to find the pregnant girl and cut the kid out just to see what would happen. Jacob said, “*when we finish this job we will find you another pregnant one to play with all you want brother.*” Joel replied, “*it will be glorious brother.*” Max followed them on his dirt bike as they were hunting. As he followed them he noticed how they

were following young couples, then he remembered a story in the news about a possible serial killer that kidnapped and killed young couples. He wondered why they were outside of the diner and why are they here in town. He started to call the house when he realized that they may have someone there. The truck had the name Six J's on it. If he left them, they could hurt someone else, if he stays he could lose his family. Max called Ruth and told her what he saw and that he was going home. Ruth said, *"no, stay on them. I'll call Ying and let her know what's going on."*

Ying turned her phone off then looked down at Tina. She was asleep beside her, and now she was in danger. She figured if these people are watching them they might notice her going to the sewing room. She picked up her phone then she wondered if they are listening. She didn't say anything on the phone that would raise alarms but how could she tell Alice without letting them know that they know about them. Tina whispered, *"let me go and tell her."* Ying looked to Tina who was laying there next to her only pretending to be asleep. Tina said, *"if they are from that David guy they might not see me as anything as an inconvenience or just another girl to kill."* Ying said, *"when you go into that room stay there. The walls are lined with Kevlar, and the doors are steel. A panic room for that day when David arrives."*

A lite knock at the door and Tina came into the sewing room. She had never been in this room before, and she found it claustrophobic. The windows were closed off with the light on the outside being just a facade. Alice was sewing a pink and white sling for Ying. Alice's mood seemed to change as Tina came in. Tina found herself being afraid of Alice. Like she expected Alice to attack her as she entered. Alice looked up at her and smiled a smile that was in no way warm. She asked, *"problem?"* Instead of

answering Tina handed her the phone with the Text messaging opened and showing a warning. Alice got up and went to a bookcase. She grabbed a side of the bookcase and pulled it out to show it was a secret door with a room behind it. Inside the hidden room was an arsenal. She grabbed a Glock-19 and screwed on a suppressor. She then grabbed a 22-automatic and tucked it in her belt in the back and a lever-action 45/70. Alice had Tina grab a bag and fill it with magazines for the two handguns and a box of rounds for the rifle. With the bag on her shoulder, she told Tina to, “*stay in here.*” Alice closed the door and went to war.

Alice loaded the rounds in the rifle as she went down the stairs. Using a thermal imaging camera, James thought he saw a large shape. He turned to a camera facing the stairs and saw the rifle. James picked up his phone and went to call Jacob when he felt something cold and hard up against his ear just before Ruth blew his face off. She hoped that no one notices that Jeff was driving her car with a pile of clothes in a Ruth shape. Jeff turned the car back to Alice’s house. As he pulled into the driveway, he hit Alice’s car. Ruth watched this and just shook her head. She knew that it was her fault and she would have to pay for that. She also had to fight the urge to run out to the car and see if he was all right. The one that followed the car got off his motorbike and went for the truck getting a bullet in the head for his troubles. Ruth and Jeff pushed the second man into the truck.

Jacob and Joel trolled around until they found a young couple leaving the newly built Wendy’s near the other side of town from the diner. Max knew them from the diner. Jim and Jessica Grimes were both around twenty-years-old and newly married. They moved to town for jobs at the Kia plant where they met. Jim was from Iowa, and she was from Hell, Michigan. Max watched as

they moved their van close to the couple. He knew he couldn't let this happen even if it blows up in his face. Max turned his lights off and then the engine. The van came to a stop near the couple. From the driver's side of the van Jacob asked the couple, "*hey kids, is there a diner near here?*" Jim started to give directions when he remembered it was closed. Just then the side door opened, and Joel came out. He struck Jim in the chest with a taser then he grabbed Jessica. Max came up with a skinning knife. He pushed Joel aside cutting him under the arm then across the throat. The sharp knife cut deep and severed the man's jugular. Jacob let off the brake and got out of the van as it started to roll away leaving his gun behind. He charged Max as he reached for the gun he thought was on his belt. Halfway to Max Jacob felt the taser strike him. Jim had got out of the van with the taser and came up behind him. Jacob hit the ground twitching. Jim took the knife away from Max and told him, "*go we'll take care of this trash.*" Jessica hugged Max and thanked him. Max looked down at this man then he said to the couple, "*make it hurt.*"

Max got on his phone and called Alice. She told him about the two in the truck as well as her car. Max said, "*the two I was following are also down, that just leaves two more.*" After a long silence, Alice asked, "*did you take care of them?*" Max said, "*I'll explain when I see you. For now, let's just say we don't know our neighbors like we thought.*" A van passed by the truck just outside of Max and Alice's house. It had the Six J logo without the words. Behind the wheel and in the shotgun-seat was the last of the brothers, Joe and Jack. They were the youngest of the brothers, but they were also the bloodiest. Together the two racked up a body count that would rival Ted Bundy. Max pulled up as they turned the corner. From around the corner, they saw flashing lights and heard gunfire. Max, Alice, and Ruth ran for the cacophony of conflicting

sounds and images to see three police cars and the van off to the side filled with holes.

About halfway to the police Max remembered he was covered in blood, but it was already too late. One of the officers walked up to Max and took his hand. He said, “*we saw what you did for Jim and Jessie, and we are just glad to have such good people living here.*” Another officer said, “*I think we found the guys that shot up your diner. Just look at the arsenal here.*” The first officer said, “*I think we’ll make sure it is them for the reports. Also, I think the death of that guy named C-note, yes I think they did that too.*” At first, Max didn’t recognize him, but then he realized the first officer, the one in charge was Sam one of Sara’s brothers. Sam said, “*we take care of our own.*” Max asked, “*what about the guy I left with Jim and Jessie?*” Sam just smiled and said, “*I have no idea who you are talking about, and neither do you, Colin.*”

Chapter Eleven

A week later and the diner was professionally cleaned and ready to go. Max found himself staring at the spot where Ted died. During the downtime, Max paid the wait staff and the new cook. In his limited time as a business owner he came to understand that when you find good people, you do whatever is physically sound to keep them. Pay people what they are worth. Most of them were coming back, and the one holdout sent a check repaying Max for the pay she was sent after the diner closed. He had hoped that Alice would take part in the reopening, but the morning sickness was catching up to her with a vengeance. Ying was still recovering from the gunshot. Tina volunteered to help, but Max didn't want volunteers. He told her that he would hire her for however long she wanted if she got her parent's permission first. He spent an hour showing her how to bust tables while Ying and Alice told her how to take orders. The diner was officially reopening the next day, but Max wanted Tina to see what it could be like, so he went and found enough people to fill the diner and let the chaos ensue.

By the end of the four hours, Max knew Tina would do well. She told him that it wasn't that much more difficult than running a school play. She said, "*you make sure everyone is in dress, on their marks, and on the same page. Then you make sure that all the changes are handled as well as the sound and lighting. It's just organized chaos.*" They thanked everyone that came, cleaned up and set up for the morning rush. The original menu had a dish named The Ted which was a dozen scrambled eggs in honor of his first day as a cook. The New Ted was a ham and swiss sandwich with apricot and hot pepper jelly. Something Ted would eat when he had the time. The renovations and cleanup were expensive, and Max wasn't sure that he could stay open if the day were a bust. Their

safety net was gone, and all that was left was to succeed or fail on the strength of the diner and the community.

That night Max and Alice met with Gail and Harry Glick, Tina's parents. It was something both awkward and somehow natural. Max and Sam met the Glick's at the Wendy's for dinner. Harry worked as an auditor for the city while Gail ran her own cleaning service. The meeting was just a little tense until Harry said, "*so how long has your girl ben taking advantage of our baby?*" A pause for a second or two then Harry smirked and fought the urge to laugh. Gail said to Harry, "*damn it Harry that was my line.*" They told Max and Alice that they always suspected Tina was gay. She never dated or even talked about boys. Gail said, "*we can't make her something she's not nor would we want too.*" Alice gave them a truncated version of Ying's past omitting all the killing. They left that night with plans to do more in the future. While their parents met Tina and Ying watched from the living room using a dash camera mounted on Alice's car. Tina said, "*I don't know if all the laughing and smiling is a good thing or not?*"

Across the street from the Wendy's was a gas station with a closed and for sale sign on it. This was one of three that abruptly closed after Brian Houseman left town. He was handling the sale from Florida. The closing was harsh for commuters and lovers of burnt coffee, but most people knew that they would reopen soon. Few people knew why he left and the ones that did hoped he would return so they could have a heart to heart talk with him. Well, really a shovel to head talk near an open grave. Ruth found herself alone again, but she didn't feel that way. She knew that soon she could put her past behind her and move on. Besides she had a new problem to worry about. The night before she found Jeff with his hand up a girl's shirt copping a feel. Then this morning she found a bra in his

room. Jeff had this group of girls that followed him around. Now they were doing more than following.

Jeff sat next to his sister's grave telling her about what was happening without saying a word. He told Susan how he had a girlfriend. The other day she was changing into a swimsuit in his room while he waited outside. In her rush, she dropped her bra, and Jeff was sure Ruth found it. He planned on telling her what really happened, but not that day. The look on her face was just too good. Jeff thought how she seemed to be seeing him as a man and not just Jeff. He knew she would believe him. When he and Susan moved in with Ruth, they made a pledge to tell her the truth no matter how painful it would be. There were many times that the truth was painful, but ultimately it was better to be open and honest. He thought about that as he held back a big truth from her. A week ago, Jeff emailed Wendy and told her about Brian. He suggested that someone should go and see if he was alright. That he wasn't eaten by an alligator or something. Wendy emailed back how accidents happen all the time, and you never know what could be around the corner.

That evening after the dinner meeting, Max and Alice sat on their porch and stared at the house being built across the street. Alice said, "*I guess my grandmother just can't go small even when she's downsizing.*" The house's foundation was poured. When finished, it would take up an entire block easily being the biggest house in town. Jennifer Beacon hired every available contractor in the three-state area to work on her house and fix all the mistakes her daughter Eve made. Eve cut corners and built the cheapest homes at an inflated cost, but now that Jennifer was better she wanted to rebuild her company's reputation before it went public. She also wanted to be in her new house before her great-granddaughter was

born. The last thing they ever heard from Eve was an email she sent just before she closed the account. Jennifer reached out to try and mend their relationship, but Eve wrote, “*I bought a bottle of champagne for that glorious day you finally die. Don’t keep me waiting.*” Jennifer often wondered if her return to health had anything to do with Eve being ousted as CEO. She did, after all, kill her father and husband. Alice got up and said to Max, “*I have a long morning of vomiting, and you have an even longer morning ahead.*” Max got up and followed her in, then he turned the porch light off.

A warm breeze blew across the water from the gulf. At a resort on the gulf side in Mexico, a man was swimming in the warm water of the pool. He was wearing a tiny orange speedo too small for modesty. One of the female attendants said to another that, “*it’s so small you can tell if he’s circumcised.*” David doesn’t care. He is on top of his world. Master of his domain. He beat everyone. While he swims at this resort safe back in America, his suckers are being arrested or buried. Thinking back, he wished he could have found a way to tap that fresh piece of ass Alice or even Ying. He has the pictures and video, but nothing beats physical contact. He has some connections here in Mexico to find a little strange. Maybe tonight he’ll ask for a young blonde and Asian for a threesome. David finds he likes them younger than he thought he would. The night before last he paid a little extra for a sixteen-year-old who wouldn’t complain about being slapped around having his way several ways.

David wished he could see their faces as it all unfolds. He said to himself, “*by now the dumbass blondie and the chink are dead. A month from now that bitch Ruth and the others will be in jail.*” He knows with the publishing of his book he won’t be able to go home again. With all of Allen’s money, he can live how he wants anywhere. He thought maybe they will bring back the death penalty

for them in California. When he left the copies of the book for the police, it broke the agreement with his publisher and the writer. Going behind their back could bring trouble. He said, “*so what. Let’s just see the little fag find me.*” David slipped out of the pool and grabbed his towel while looking around. The resort seemed empty today. Just a couple of guys working on a gate. He walked over to some lounge chairs and stretched out. He spread his legs to the sides of the lounge making his manhood a little more prominent. He likes to think how the ladies love to see the whole package.

His thoughts turn to the little girl named Sue. He used to have daydreams about beating her to death with a hammer just too see what happens. He would think about sodomizing the kid named Jeff with a baseball bat then beating him to death with it. Before leaving his ranch, he had developed a taste for killing. Taking people to the other side of the ranch was his favorite thing. He would say to Ike or was it, Mike, “*True power is the power to take a life.*” In that time, he crucified more than a few of them.

A waitress walked over to him with a drink and a package. The drink is his usual breakfast, a hurricane. Without looking at the waitress he took and opened the package. Just behind the waitress, a young white boy jumps into the pool. The package contains a copy of his book. Fresh off the presses and ready to break hearts and bust heads. He looks at the title on the cover. He thinks, “*something is wrong. The title is different.*” Before he could postulate the thought, the waitress spoke, “*not what you expected is it, David.*” David looked up at her. She wasn’t a part of the resort staff. She was a tall white woman with long graying brown hair that seemed to have small curls from years of being tied tight around her head. With her hair down, Ruth seemed years younger than with it up. The transformation was from spinster to runway model. Behind her, the

boy in the pool climbed out and walked up. Jeff was stern-faced and just on the cusp of being handsome. David while staring at Ruth's chest barely covered in a tiny black bikini top said, "*Hello Ruth. Are we fleeing from prosecution?*" Ruth said, "*David, look at the book.*" The title that was supposed to be *Dealing Justice*. The name on this copy was *The Big Book of Bullshit*. The author was *I'ma Screwed*.

David looked back up at her to see a flat black automatic with a suppressor. Before he could say a word, Ruth shot him in the shoulder. Then she shot him in the left knee. "*Don't worry, the staff here was happy to ignore what is about to happen. I showed them the pictures you sent Alice and suggested you liked the girls real young. I had to talk them out of killing you right there and then.*" She told him how the naked pictures of Susan he had sent helped. She said, "*after seeing them and I told them about my Susan. They wanted to cut your balls off and stuff them in your mouth. That might still happen.*" She said they were going to dispose of the body for her. David slowly reached for his phone. Ruth shot him in his hand as he just started to touch the phone. The shot also hit the phone. Ruth said, "*We aren't done yet.*"

She told him how his plan to kill Alice and Ying failed. They were alive and well. As for his book. She asked him, "*what is the name of your publisher?*" He looked up at her with rage and pain but said nothing. She answered for him, "*Aramis publishing.*" She continued, "*Aramis was one of the people from the ranch. I can't believe you didn't see that.*" Ruth then shot him in the other knee. "*Think back, Aramis was one of the ones you crucified out in the desert.*" David looked stunned. Ruth went on, "*you're represented with the publisher is a woman named Tracy. She is a longtime friend of Wendy. You know Wendy, she was on Aramis's team.*" She told him how Wendy and Tracy set this whole thing up with the

fake publisher and how Alice hired a ghostwriter to rework his crap into something that would find a home on any fiction shelf in any library.

Ruth shot him in the foot severing three toes including his big toe. The gun locked back empty. David smiled and looked up at her saying, *“stupid bitch you wasted your ammo on nonlethal hits, and I know you don’t have the stomach to try and beat me to death.”* Ruth said, *“you are right I don’t want to dirty my hands.”* Ruth waved her hand up in the air. Jeff was smiling as he walked over and handed her two more magazines. Ruth dropped the spent magazine and slapped a new one in its place. She then reengaged the action slamming it forward. She said, *“as we speak Victor is upstairs in your room moving all your money.”* She shook her head and spoke in a pitting tone, *“really David, keeping a book with the passcodes to your accounts in a shaving kit in your room.”* She shook her head again then said, *“we’re going to split it up with about seven million among us and the rest going to drug and crime prevention charities.”* Then she took the other magazine and removed two rounds. She held them up in front of David and said, *“just in case I lose count. So, you can have a final shot to the head. Both heads.”*

Epilogue

Max pulled into the driveway after leaving their new office near downtown. In the deal to buy the closed gas stations, Max and Alice also got Brian's old office. The sale took some time and was complicated when Brian disappeared. But a year later they had the ownership of the gas stations as well as a successful diner in town. They used the money that was recovered from David just before his demise. The reopening was a success and led to Max being able to hire two additional cooks and spend more time with Alice and their new daughter they named Susan. His wife's aunt Mary was helping him with the business. When Alice's grandmother took the company public she made somewhere around four billion dollars, then she divested from the company making more in the sale of her stock. She gave each of her daughters a billion dollars. That is each of her living daughters. About a month after their last communication Jennifer was told by the authorities in Columbia that her daughter Eve was killed in a small village near the border. They couldn't prove it, but it looked like she was trying to buy into the cocaine business and found a shallow grave instead. Neither Max nor Alice knew that in her will, Jennifer left Alice the bulk of her estate worth over two billion dollars.

Ruth had a free period with her new students in an art class. She used this time to have a face-to-face meeting with a new teacher. Doug was a fifth-grade teacher and a good kisser. They met in a closet and had a long discussion about the location of her top and the length of his penis. Both were late getting back to their classes. They would meet up after school for yet another quickie before going home and making love in the bed they now share. After school, Jeff met up with Jenna, a girl he has seen for about a year. With Ruth acting like a horny schoolgirl stereotype Jeff was free to be with Jenna by themselves. After being caught touching

one another, they had slowed down to something more age appropriate. Jeff didn't mind he would sign that he had his whole life ahead of him to do all those things and more. Tina and Ying lay in bed reading the papers giving them early admission to Oberlin College in Ohio. Alice's mom went there, and her family still owned an old Victorian where Natalie and Nathan, Alice's parents spent their first days as man and wife together. It was also where they shacked up before getting married.

After some discussions, Harriet released the book David wrote, and she rewrote under its original title of Dealing Justice. It would be her first book under her name, and it made her a literary star. She was in talks to option the rights to a studio looking to make it into a movie or maybe a series for HBO or Netflix. They also wanted Harriet to appear at as many book signings as possible. The public seemed to love her irreverent style and Velma cosplay lifestyle. Much to Alice's dismay, she said in an interview how her next book would be a biography of the romance author Natalie Beacon and her battle with depression. Alice would talk about it when she came to town about a month later, but she had to remember that she once said something about doing what Harriet announced. But that would be later, now Alice had her own problem. After a dozen tests, she had to understand that she was pregnant again. Her doctor told her that it was common for people to have another pregnancy within the first nine months after birth. As a girl, she grew up pretty much by herself. Now she had this ever-growing family. After finding the baker's dozens of pregnancy tests, Ying confronted Alice who told her. She also told her she was afraid her children would end up being just like her. Ying said, "*if they are half as good as you then you have nothing to worry about.*" Ying looked at Sue in her bassinet and said, "*I just feel sorry for the first guy that comes to this door looking to take her out on a date.*"

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