



Wendy's War

Average All-American Killer Girl, Book Three

Michael Collins
LAKEMORON.COM

Chapter One

An old GMC box truck ran across the desert with its lights off despite it being 1 am. The engine was running hot, and the cargo hold was boiling. Wendy was watching the truck as it made its way from Mexico to the United States. She looked through an infrared camera seeing the engine, driver, and passenger then what must be six to nine people in the box. Wendy said to George, *“those guys are going to burn that engine up.”* George asked, *“are they coyotes or mules?”* Wendy looked back to the truck box. In the center was a dark pile of something. Wendy replied, *“I don’t know for sure, maybe both.”* She tapped George on the head and pointed to his ears as she put on her headphones. She said, *“range three hundred yards with a ten mile an hour wind from the southwest.”* George took aim as he thumbed the safety off. He asked, *“what if I miss or the shot passes through to the box?”* Wendy said, *“range two eighty and don’t miss. As for the box. Collateral damage. Now fire.”* George fired two rounds from his fifty caliber Barret rifle. The first round hit center mass in the chest of the driver giving the passenger just a second to scream just before his head was struck with the supersonic round.

The truck came to a stop up against a boulder. George shot another round into the engine just to make sure it was stopped. The rest of the team moved in to find a cab covered in blood and gore. What all George saw was the hole that went from the cab to the box. Jack knocked on the back of the truck and said in Spanish, *“hey in there we are heavily armed and have no trouble in shooting into this truck.”* They could hear crying inside. Then someone inside said in Spanish, *“we are locked inside here, please open the door.”* Jack said, *“stand in the back with your arms up or die.”* Wendy watched them using the infrared camera as they stood up and raised their hands. Many of the forms inside were small. She said, *“oh god, open the doors now.”* When the doors opened a heat wave nearly knocked everyone over. An old hunched over man came forward. He looked like he was about eighty with a scruffy, unkempt beard and a Mariners baseball cap on. Behind him were two women and seven children ranging from fourteen to five. The final person was a woman carrying the body of a young boy of maybe four with a piece of shrapnel buried deep in his chest. A chunk of the cab when the round passed through ended his life in a second. Wendy looked at the face of this boy and thought about a boy named Peter way back in the day.

On April 25th, 1981 Peter Wendel James was born in a small town in Arizona named Hope. His parents were April and Jesse James. His father liked to tell people he was named for the outlaw despite being named for his maternal grandmother. Peter's mother worked in the town's re-creation of the old west and his father was an auto mechanic. April played the character of Joleen Warren in her later days as the sheriff. The job was crap and as far from real acting as someone standing on a street corner reading lines from a script hidden in flowers could be, but she loved it. Peter liked watching her perform. He also liked how a simple change in clothing could turn one person into a completely different person. When he was old enough, he tried out for a part in the reenactment as one of the Warren Brothers John or Edward, but despite being the actual son of the woman playing the mother, he wasn't chosen. The night he was told his father Jesse said, "*good, just maybe you will wake up and find something a boy should want to do.*"

What his father said to him was nothing new. Peter always felt like he just didn't fit in. While the other boys were playing football or basketball, he wanted to read or hang around a girl named Tracy his best friend in the world. From an early age, Tracy was known for her long blonde hair. By the age of ten, it was past her ass on the way to her knees. It became so long that the school told her parents they would expel her if it weren't cut to at least her lower back. Her mother cut it just a little lower than what was required then braided it to the required length. The principle was happy as all the female teachers snickered knowing the truth but not caring. Tracy and Peter were side-by-side from the age of eight on. They would play board games, talk about television and sometimes just sit and watch the road as cars passed by.

By thirteen they both started to see each other in a different light. From the age of ten, Peter was constantly reinventing himself. He changed his look like people changed their everyday clothes. At thirteen he was in a preppy look with polo shirts, chino slacks, and dockers. Tracy liked this look and told him so every chance she got so he wouldn't change. The night before their first day back to school she leaned in and kissed him. It was on the cheek but not

sisterly. Tracy thought about Peter's middle name Wendel and how much she liked it. She wished she could have been named Wendy and he was just Wendel. Peter was having a hard time seeing her like he did before the kiss. Tracy was his best friend, but now what he saw was a girl. He thought about how she looked in her favorite pink dress, her overalls with the tight red shirt underneath. He liked her smell, the touch of her lips and the way she closed her eyes when she kissed him. That night he had his first of what would be many dreams about her doing things not very childlike.

Time moved on, and things went back to normal between the two. Tracy waited for Peter to make a move, but he didn't know how. Over that time Tracy began to think that she just moved too soon. Thirteen became fourteen then fifteen. Tracy became to see and feel what other boys were like. The school hallways became a nasty groping nightmare. Either the boys said things that would embarrass a sailor, or they would just play grab ass. All the boys except for Peter. They were both about to turn sixteen, and neither had a boy or girlfriend. Tracy decided Peter would be her boyfriend now all she had to do was tell him. That night as they studied together Tracy asked, "*hey Peter would you like to do something other than study? How about me?*" She winced when she realized she didn't say "with me or go out." Peter was always trying to hide his bulge in his pants. As she tried to find a way to correct herself, she finally noticed. Tracy slid over and kissed him again. As she did her hand went down to the bulge. She thought about all the guys that touched her ass or went to touch her chest. She wondered if this was how the boys felt when they did something so invasive.

That night started a routine of studying the books then each other. The quick kiss on the cheek became long open-mouthed kisses. For once she didn't mind a boy touching her as she didn't mind touching him. They kept it above the clothes for the first few months. One night in a heavy session of kissing and petting Tracy said, "*I want to see it.*" She said it with her hand on his groin. Peter stood up and started to unbuckle his belt, but then he slowed down. Tracy decided to take in on herself and unbuttoned then unzipped his jeans and let them fall to the floor. Peter said, "*Tracy I just don't know.*" Tracy interrupted him by pulling his boxers down saying, "*I do know.*" She saw them in the movies, and in the magazines, her mother keeps out in

the open for anyone to see but seeing his penis in person made it real. That night she did something she saw in one of those movies her father had hidden in his closet. She didn't understand why the women in those movies liked it so much she felt it was borderline gross and when he nearly came inside her mouth she decided to maybe not try that again. When she told her mother about it, her mother said, "*well, that is something you do for him, not for you.*" Her mother never told her not to do it or anything else as long as she was safe.

A few days later and Peter was face first in her lap taking directions helping Tracy feel something she never felt before. As she lay there trying not to knock her knees together or arch her back, she remembered what her mother said and understood the meaning. She thought about that boy she first met all those years ago and how they got to this moment right now with his tongue going to places only her sponge and gynecologist went. Peter, unlike Tracy, loved what he was doing. How she reacted to his touch, her taste, and smell. Most of all her smell. She used a body powder and spray that was something between a rose and honeysuckle. She reached a point where she didn't care anymore about taking it slow. She fought to get a condom from the hiding spot in the head of her bed and threw it at Peter. That night they had what most would call their first time. It wouldn't be their last.

Their senior year was rapidly approaching with every sign on it being their best year together. Peter's mother April finished her usual performance on the steps of what was the old courthouse when a stranger came up to her and told her she would be perfect for a movie she was making about the events in Hope. April had seen this person in the audience and recognized the award-winning independent director Janet High from the many interviews she gave. Janet said, "*I think this story with someone like yourself who embodies this strong independent woman would make for a hell of a film.*" A few days later and April was on her way to Vancouver, Canada to meet with producers. Peter wasn't all that surprised to see just how easy his parents separated. To anyone who knew them, they were more like two people rather than a couple. They had a routine rather than a relationship. On Wednesday's they went to the same restaurant, on Friday's they ordered the same pizza and on Saturday they had the same missionary position sex. After the meeting, April was offered a job as both an actress in the movie and as a

consultant. To consult she would have to move to California for the next six months to help with the script.

Peter thought that he would miss his mom until he was told he was going with her. April didn't want to be alone in a city the size of Los Angeles and his father Jesse wasn't going with her. He said he couldn't take time off, but really, he didn't want to leave the woman he was seeing on the side. Peter didn't want to leave Tracy. They were together for nine years and were a couple for nearly two, but he didn't want to disappoint his mother and her dreams of becoming a movie actress. The day April and Peter left he and Tracy kissed and said how they would call every day and how no state border could separate them. About a week after April left Jesse moved in with Jennifer, the woman he was sleeping with when he was supposed to be bowling or playing golf. A month after that April was served with divorce papers. She wasn't that surprised.

School started, and Peter found himself in a strange environment. He went from a class of ninety-one to a class size of nearly a thousand. To fit in he dropped the preppy look for jeans, a series of tee-shirts with old company logos and a pair of converse all-stars. The first couple of months were rough, but he soon found a rhythm to the madness as well as a few friends. He and Tracy went from talking every day on the phone to every other day to weeks without hearing from her. Peter found a job after school, so he could buy a car and drive back to Hope. He even contemplated leaving his mother alone and moving back permanently. April's script on Joleen Warren died a slow death, but it was replaced with a drama about bad relationships in a small town. After some tweaks, the script was greenlit, and April found herself in front of a camera for the first time. She hired Peter to act as an assistant, and he was happy to leave the world of fast food behind.

Back in Hope, Tracy had made some girlfriends, and they all wanted her to date someone new. The more they worked on her, the more she thought about how she never dated anyone other than Peter. She wasn't sure if she missed him or the familiarity of having someone she could count on and be with. She started to question if she even loved him or not. With prom

coming around Tracy decided to take the chance and accept the first offer she would receive. That offer came that very day. Derik Green was a power forward for the team. He also was well liked by all Tracy's new friends. Derik was a foot taller and to Tracy he was handsome. He was the star on a team that was one and six with no real prospects for anything, but to the school, he was a god walking among mortals so when he asked Tracy out her friends nearly answered for her. The night of the prom she was in a pink strapless dress staring at the phone wondering if this was a mistake, was she betraying Peter. The night went off without a hitch. He picked her up, they danced, and at the end of the night, he kissed her at the door. She was amazed how good his kiss felt and just how easily she forgot about Peter.

Tracy and Derik's next date was dinner and The Matrix. As Tracy watched the movie, she felt just a little off. The movie would go in and out of focus. At some point, she passed out. When she came around, she was in the back of Derik's truck. Her jeans were on the bed next to her, and he was on top of her pumping hard. She still felt drugged, and she didn't know how she got back to the truck or why this asshole thought that this was all right. Tracy tried to fight him off but whatever he gave her was making her sluggish. Derik was able to fend her off while never breaking his rhythm. Tracy felt around for something until her hand hit something cold and hard. She grabbed the tire iron and swung it as hard as she could in an action that would change her life forever.

The tire iron struck him across the head cracking his skull. A jet of blood sprayed the top of the truck bed cover as his eyes rolled back into his head. Tracy got out of the truck bed and walked home leaving her purse, shoes, and pants behind. She walked the five miles to her home and climbed into the hottest shower she could make. As she showered, the police moved in from the crime scene to her home. With evidence and a warrant, the police arrested Tracy pulling her right out of the shower. They handcuffed her and started to take her out naked when her mother intervened trying to put a blanket over her. The police relented and let her put on a long coat. Handcuffed in the back in a coat that was open in the front the police put her in a car and off to the station. There she was tested for evidence then locked in a room after they took her coat. She

sat in the cold room completely naked with more than a few police officers watching her through a window. After that two hours, she was formally charged and given something to put on.

Peter watched what was happening to Tracy in the local paper his father would send him. The paper downplayed her treatment or the events of that night and spent pages on who Derik was and why his death was her fault. When the trial started, Tracy was painted as loose and a predator on young men. Her new friends were on the stand saying how Tracy wanted to date Derik. How she worked hard to fit in with them and get her way to Derik. She watched as her mother while trying to defend her was forced into talking about her early sexual experiences with Peter. When he read that, Peter got in his mother's car and drove back to Hope where he was arrested at the town line and locked away until the end of the day and the court case. Three hours later and Tracy was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter, and a month later she was sentenced to fifteen to twenty-five years in prison.

Wendy turned to George and told him to take the people to a local person they knew that would help them get settled and find a way to stay in the country. George couldn't take his eyes off the boy and the wound. The boy was dead, and he was alive. The mother started to take the body out into the desert away from the truck. Jack asked, "*where are you going?*" The woman replied, "*I want to take my son back to Mexico where he was safe.*" Jack looked at Wendy who nodded then gave him the keys to her jeep. Jack went over and took the body from the woman, and soon they were off in the jeep on the way to the border. Wendy watched the jeep drive away when a shot went off. She turned to see George on the ground twitching with a hole in his lower jaw and the top of his head gone. They carried him off and buried him in the place they had for their fallen brethren. There were more people there than Wendy was comfortable with.

Chapter Two

Wendy and Scott approached what to a passerby would be considered an old abandoned warehouse. Scott was nineteen years old with curly blonde hair and a face scarred with acne. As they drove Wendy had her hand in his lap slowly rubbing his inner thigh. Scott took his hand off the wheel and went to her left breast, but Wendy took hold of it and put it back on the wheel. Wendy said, *“come to our room tonight, and we will see if this goes anywhere.”* Scott put his foot down as the jeep sped up. Wendy said, *“I said tonight.”* She pointed to an abandoned school bus and said, *“pull in next to that.”* He did as he was told, and she told him to follow her. The bus was nearly gutted with just a few seats in the front. She pushed him to the back then turned him around working on his pants. He finished the job dropping his pants and boxers as Wendy pulled her slacks and panties off. She pushed him down and got on top. Even now it was an unusual feeling for her. She rode him hard, and he came quickly. She said, *“as far as you are concerned that didn’t happen.”*

Scott looked down at Wendy’s shirt and saw drops of blood from George. When he came to the warehouse, it was George that showed him around and helped him find his place. He was now dead, and Scott was underneath the woman that started it all. He then realized he didn’t have a condom on. He started to panic when Wendy said, *“there is no way you could get me pregnant.”* Wendy got up and put her panties on then she put on his boxers. She said, *“make sure to come tonight if you want them back.”* Scott wasn’t happy with the idea of going commando, but the idea of two hot bisexual women sounded great. As he put his pants on, he found a picture of a woman with short blonde hair. On the back of the photo was a name and date. Wendy, free from the big house June 2002.

On her first day in prison, Tracy was brought into a room, stripped, searched then given her clothes, a blanket, and toiletries. Unlike every movie she had ever seen she could dress and was treated like a person. Because of the nature of her trial, she was put into protective custody. She would find out later that the person put in charge of her wing knew about the trial and thought she got a raw deal. She also found out that protective custody was solitary confinement.

Twenty-three hours a day in a small room with nothing but her thoughts and a book. The first book was John Grissom's *The Client*, then Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. As time passed, she found herself just staring at the walls wondering if this was all that was left of her life. She started to write about her thoughts in a diary. In that diary, she used the name Wendy in a nod to her younger self and her desire to have Peter's middle name. She spelled out everything she could remember from that night and the trial.

A month later the guards were doing their usual search of her cell. When she came back, she found her books and notes were gone. The next day Tracy was transferred to the general population. She was put in a cell with two other women. That night was the first night of many she spent being beaten and abused. One of the women put her hand down on her chest then whispered into her ear, "*when we are done you'll wish you let him finish.*" The next day Tracy was in the shower when her new cellmates met up with her with bars of soap in socks. They broke a couple of ribs and violated her with a plunger so violently she required a total hysterectomy. Tracy lay in her bed thinking about how she could never have her own children because she defended herself. She thought about Peter and how she had told him not to come and see her. She said to herself, "*Tracy is dead.*"

Several months later and she was moved back to protective custody. She slept in silence for the first time since she was taken into that hell. A month later and she was brought to the warden who told her she read the notes and asked around. She said, "*I am so sorry about what happened to you. His family somehow paid some inmates and a guard to take care of you.*" A month after that and she met with a Lawyer named George Franks. He was with a group that was seeking justice for wrongfully jail women. George told her that he had evidence that would exonerate her. The police of her small town were caught hiding evidence and intimidating witnesses. In her case, she should have been saved from jail by vomit. A man tired of all the drunks from a local bar started to videotape his front yard and collecting samples for testing. One sample was caught as well as the video was on a pantsless Tracy vomiting in his yard. In that vomit was traces of the date rape drug Rophenol. George said, "*the man came to the court and told them, but he was told you confessed to the crime and he was turned away.*" He then

produced a thick file of papers saying, *“I have other complaints and victims of Derik. All of them are willing to testify on how he drugged and raped them. They will also talk about how his family threatened them into submission.”* George closed his files and told her that the hardest part of all this was just the amount of cases being brought out because of the criminal activity. He said, *“Tracy, there are so many cases that getting heard might be hard.”* She looked him in the face and said, *“Tracy is dead. Call me Wendy or nothing, and as for being heard.”* She tapped on his camera and said, *“pictures are worth a thousand words.”* She did her best to show him the scars from the hysterectomy saying, *“he raped me, but they killed me.”*

Two years after being jailed she was freed. Her lawyer was talking about suing and seeking true justice, but to Tracy, it was all just words. The money wouldn't give her back what they took. A week later she settled with the city and with two-hundred thousand dollars she left Hope, Arizona for someplace that wouldn't remember her or what they did to her. She found a small gas station in need of a new owner in a dusty part of nowhere near El Paso on the New Mexico side. There was a nearby town of maybe three hundred people, and her property had a bunch of old buildings from when this place was a connecting point between Mexico and The United States. Before he left George took her picture and later wrote on the back, *“Wendy, free from the big house June 2002.”*

Wendy took the photo and put it back in her jacket pocket. She and Scott got back in the Jeep and drove to the yard near the warehouse. Wendy looked to the sky as the sun was starting to come up in the east. They passed through an inner chamber and into what has become their home. The warehouse was subdivided into several rooms around an open chamber. In that central hall was a community gathering place with couches, tables and chairs and a pass-through to a kitchen. Cathy came up to Wendy and kissed her. Wendy hugged her just a little too tight. Cathy said, *“so things went that well.”* She then smelled Wendy and said, *“smells like someone is coming to see us tonight.”* Wendy said, *“let's go back to our room and see if you can guess.”* Cathy kissed her again and said, *“as long as it isn't George. Something about getting screwed by a lawyer just doesn't sound good.”*

Wendy and Cathy lay naked in bed together while Scott slept on a couch nearby. Cathy said, *“I’m sorry about George. He was a good man.”* Wendy said, *“he didn’t belong here. I can see that now. He just didn’t have it in him to do what we are doing.”* Wendy had her hand on Cathy’s stomach rubbing it slowly in circles. Cathy asked, *“are you trying to make me purr?”* Wendy brought her hand up to Cathy’s face and said, *“if I wanted you to purr I wouldn’t rub you there.”* Cathy gestured her head to Scott asking, *“he was fun, but just maybe a little young for us?”* Wendy looked at Scott on the couch. He was naked and looking way too young for what the three just did with only his aggressive pubic hair betraying his age. Wendy said, *“there aren’t that many of us that would join us in our fun, and you have to have your fun when the opportunity arises.”*

“yes, but can we continue to trust this information? They didn’t tell us about the people being sent with the drugs,” Jack said as he thumped a paper on the table. The meeting was on both a high from the win and a low with the death of the boy and George. Jose said, *“we are here for this kind of crap, and we also helped those people who were being used by those assholes.”* Wendy said, *“I gave the green light on firing after seeing the heat signatures of the people in the box, and I would do it again. We are at war and in war people die, children die. It wasn’t planned nor was this kid a target, but those drugs would have killed many more than just one.”* A tall African-American woman with slightly graying temples stood up and asked, *“how many children are necessary for it to matter?”* The room went silent. Cathy said, *“Sally that’s not fair. We planned out this raid as well as most others away from populated areas.”* Sally said, *“not all of them were clean.”* Wendy stood up and said, *“if you don’t think you could do it any more than walk away, but with any risk, there will be casualties.”*

Wendy broke down one of her Wilson Combat 1911 and started to clean it. As she did it, Sally watched her. She finally said to Wendy, *“it’s not like I was saying you don’t care I was just saying we need to do better to protect the people caught in the crossfire.”* Wendy kept cleaning her gun with Sally just standing there waiting for her to respond. She finally looked up at her and

said, *“we don’t target the innocent, and we do everything to mitigate collateral damage. If you can see a better way, then say something don’t just stand by and complain about the outcome.”* Sally looked at the gun on the table saying, *“I don’t want to end up like George.”* Wendy said, *“I didn’t see that coming. I let what I saw stopped me from seeing just how much he was affected by the shot.”* Sally looked over at Gina and her two children playing a board game. She said, *“I wonder what that woman did when she got to the border.”* Wendy looked back at the woman and her two children and didn’t say a thing even though she knew what happened.

The building sat by itself out in the desert with no real purpose. A truck pulled up, and six men got out and went inside. Sally said, *“the B.O. must be terrible in there.”* Jack pointed to a spinning vent on top of the building. A small dark-haired man standing next to Sally named Gary said, *“that is way too big for such a small building. It must be how they are ventilating the tunnel.”* Wendy knew that if they were using ventilation, then they must have people in the tunnel. Wendy looked through the infrared camera at the heat signatures as they faded into the ground. She said, *“the hole must be bigger than we thought. I think they are using this as a way across the border, not just a way to smuggle drugs.”* She looked to Jack who then nodded. She said, *“we need to take the tunnel and close it from the middle not just on our end. It’s the only way we can be sure we don’t kill any innocents.”*

With George dead, Gary became the best sniper, so Wendy left him with the truck. He would get on top along with a woman named Zoey to watch for any movement. The men had left someone in their truck to stand guard, but he was asleep in the front passenger seat. Wendy thought about just how stupid that was when she put a round through the window and his head using her suppressed AR 15. The gun was illegally too short without the tax stamp but so was what they were doing. She then set a bomb on the truck just in case any of them got out. Sally and Juan walked around the building looking for traps and security, but they found nothing. The building was little more than a large portable shed made from tin. The last tunnel they found was just big enough for a toddler size train to go through to bring drugs in. Zoey gave the all clear. Sally pulled the door and Wendy went to the right while Juan went to the left. They both nearly fell into the hole. It was nearly the entire floor of the shed.

Where the shed was cheap and rickety, the tunnel was well built. The sides of the opening were cinder block with a rot iron spiral staircase going down at least twenty feet. The stairs were lined with led lights with what had to be the best-lit tunnel Wendy had ever seen. They knew that this must be a focal point for the cartel. In a way, they are not only smuggling drugs but a way they are controlling them. Juan said, “*shit.*” The sound echoed down the opening as they backed away. A man came out of the tunnel and looked up. He then went back to what must be his position. Wendy figured that the tunnel must be set up so any sound would channel down it as a warning. With such a setup, even a suppressed rifle would sound an alarm. This first guy would have to die as quietly as possible. Sally put her rifle down and pulled her blade. She carried a karambit claw knife that when held correctly, curves from the hand down creating a talon-like hook. Sally was deadly with the blade and could do it without a sound. She took her shoes off and went down the stairs in her socks, so she wouldn’t make a sound. At the bottom, she froze when the man came back into the opening. He went right past her, looked up then went back to the opening. He stopped within a foot of her finally seeing her. She didn’t wait. With an upwards thrust she slit him from gut to throat. As he went to grab his stomach, she buried the blade in his throat. Instead of a noise, he gurgled blood. His hands pulled back from his gut and up to his throat. As he did his guts came pouring out. Sally pulled his head back and nearly decapitated him with the blade letting his body down to the ground as easy as possible.

The tunnel was concrete with lights on top and along the side at the bottom. The whole thing was painted white with a gray floor. Wendy thought that it must have taken them months to build this. She pulled Jack over to her and whispered, “*get black betty.*” Jack went back up then came back with a backpack. Inside the pack was ten pounds of plastic explosives, a pound so steel balls, a fuse, and timer. They planned to line the ceiling of the tunnel with explosives then roll the steel balls down the tunnel. With luck, the balls would act as shrapnel or as shot down a very large shotgun barrel. With Jack and Wendy walking point, Sally used a portable ultrasound to find the weakest points in the tunnel. When they found one, they placed a charge. Sally would later say how the tunnel was all show. She said, “*it was a fresh coat of whitewash on a rotten fence.*”

A mile in and all the charges were set. They quietly made their way up and out into the night. Wendy called to see if the coast was clear, but she got no response. She called again, and Gary finally answered, “*saying no movement or nothing.*” Sally pulled her binoculars out then started to laugh. She said, “*I think I know why he didn’t answer.*” They made their way back to the truck. At first, nothing seemed wrong then Wendy saw it. Zoey was wearing a tee-shirt with “I’m with Stupid” on the front only now it was inside out. Wendy said, “*so let me get this right. You two were out here playing grab ass instead of watching.*” She held up the remote and triggered the explosives. The tin shack shot straight up into the air and came down in pieces. At first, nothing else happened, then a line formed along where the tunnel would be as it broke apart and collapsed. Wendy told Gary and Zoey that she didn’t care what or who they did on their own time but when on a mission they had to act professionally. On the way back to the warehouse, Wendy called a man they had in the local law and told him about the tunnel. The next day the FBI, DEA, ICE and almost every other lettered law enforcement agency were there talking to the press and taking credit for the find.

Chapter Three

Cathy was waiting with a bottle of sparkling wine and glasses. She decided to take a chance that everything went as planned and they would all come home safe. She watched as they parked the truck and slowly made their way to the warehouse. Everyone was there, but their mood didn't seem well. At the door, she came eye to eye with Wendy who smiled and said, "*you won't believe what we found.*" The others started to laugh. Wendy leaned in and kissed Cathy. The others partied the rest of the night as Cathy and Wendy went to their room and celebrated in their own way. Sally went looking for some more wine when she found Gary and Zoey in the storage room going at it like two high schoolers after prom. Sally said, "*Jesus Christ you two have two rooms you could be doing this in, but we have only one pantry.*" She reached over the two and grabbed a bottle of Sky Blue Vodka.

Cathy and Wendy sat in a large tub filled with water and bubbles. Wendy poured two glasses of a top-shelf tequila called Casamigos Blanco. Cathy asked, "*are you trying to get me drunk so you can have your way with me?*" Wendy smiled and handed her a glass. She then said, "*I would rather have you the way you want to be had.*" Cathy moved over to Wendy after downing the tequila in one go. Wendy said, "*keep drinking like that, and we won't be having anything anyway.*" Cathy turned around and leaned into Wendy's lap, leaned back and brought her arms around her. She said, "*tell me a story.*" Wendy asked, "*what, are you five?*" Cathy stroked Wendy's arms then said, "*I am a little drunk, and I want to hear about Peter.*" Wendy lost her smile and said, "*are you sure? It's not a happy story.*" Cathy said, "*the best ones are rarely happy.*"

Tracy sat in her shop watching the people go back and forth wondering where they are going and why she is just standing still. About a month after she took ownership of the gas station she was robbed at gunpoint. The man had a nickel plated 32 and a shake that had to be from withdrawal. He ended up costing her over four hundred dollars with twenty-seven going to the robber and the rest going to the gun she bought. She didn't know anything about guns so when she bought a Hi-Point 380 semi-automatic she thought a gun was just a gun. She practiced

with the gun in the large warehouse on her property. After three magazines the gun started to not feed. Then the trigger locked back and wouldn't reset. She took the gun back to the dealer where he said that Hi-Point had the best warranty for a reason. She left with a Smith and Wesson model-66 chambered in 357-magnum. It wasn't her first gun, nor would it be her last. As she worked on her draw and aim, she started to wonder about Peter.

She hadn't seen him since he left for California. So much had happened that she didn't see herself as the same girl he knew when they were a thing. He tried to see her when she was on trial, but when she went to prison, her priorities changed. Now she finds herself out in the desert alone and wondering if she made a mistake. One night after a long day of nothing, Tracy found herself watching April James in a television series where she played a Doctor in a crumbling hospital in Hawaii called Island Malpractice. The show was crap, but it hit all the usual clichés that would make it something people would watch. In the credits, she saw Peter's name listed as an extra. After making sure that someone would be there to operate her station, she gassed up her car and left for California.

After some calls to people she knew and to Peter's father Jesse, she found where Peter was living. She pulled into a parking spot near Peter's apartment and watched for him. What she saw was a man that was nothing like the boy she knew. He was impossibly skinny and seemed like he was sick. Tracy sat in her car and wondered if she should stay and talk to him or just go. As she sat not knowing what to do Peter saw her. His face lit up then went dark in a matter of seconds. Then the next shock as Peter turned and kissed a guy standing next to him then he started to walk to her. With every step the words, "*this was a mistake echoed in her ears.*" When he got to the bumper, she got out so he wouldn't get in. With a tee-shirt on that said, "*Drugs Kill*" she could see the track marks on his arms. He leaned in and hugged her. She could feel all his ribs and a smell that was one-part body odor and one-part feces.

They went to a diner near his apartment where he told her about him and his mother. After he returned from trying to go to the court to help Tracy, his mother had him arrested for

grand theft auto then fired him from his job as her assistant. He spent three months in lockup awaiting trial when his mother dropped the charges, and he was released. While in jail he was assaulted by a guy who broke every bone in his hands. It was in jail that he first found addiction to pain medication. His mother hired him back after his hands healed and he was working in an industry that made anything possible. He told Tracy how they even made it possible for people to think of his mother as a doctor while she snorted Heroin. Peter went from being her assistant to her supplier. From there he started to sell on the streets. Peter said, *“they say don’t sell your own poison but with all mom was buying it was just too easy to used and sell.”* Peter had racked up a large debt with a local dealer, and he found himself needing to pay this man back without letting his mother know.

“That was when it first started. This dealer called Yicki-Tang said I could pay off my debt with a little work on the street. It started by blowing him, and soon I found myself working on my knees,” Peter said this without looking at her. Tracy asked, *“that man back there, the one you kissed, was that him?”* Peter looked down and said, *“no that’s moms new dealer. You could say I am how she is paying for her fix now.”* Tracy looked at her purse and the gun she illegally brought with her. She asked Peter, *“would you like to leave this behind?”* Peter took in a breath and said, *“I don’t see how I can. I still owe a lot, and then there is mom and well.”* She stared at the tracks on his arms. Tracy said, *“come with me. I live in the middle of nowhere where they couldn’t possibly find you.”* Peter told her he would think about it. She said, *“change isn’t easy, but anything has to be better than the hell you are in now.”*

At the hotel, Tracy laid out what she had on her. That was when she realized her gun was gone. Peter stole her gun. Tracy called the dealer that sold her the gun. He told her that he sold her the gun illegally because of the robbery and there was nothing that could be traced to her. He also said, *“go back to what you know about him. Trace what he told you and you will find him, but it was me I would just leave him to whatever he has planned.”* Tracy broke into Peter’s apartment and found a note his mother wrote about going to Napa for a movie shoot, and he should send her vitamins there. The address was ripped off but using a pencil she was able to bring out the address by shading in the page underneath the one he took. It became clear to her

that Peter meant to kill his mother. She drove from there straight to Napa. With a fifty-dollar door pass, she found her way on the set. April looked bad. In the four years, she aged twenty. Somehow the people around her didn't seem to notice or they didn't care. Just for a second April and Tracy made eye contact. Then the people parted, and Peter came up to his mother with the gun. He said to her, *"sorry mom but you'll need to pay for your fix yourself."* Peter put the gun to his head and pulled the trigger. He managed to get three rounds off before he dropped leaving April covered in her son's blood.

Tracy slipped away from the mayhem and found herself in a bar. She ordered a shot of tequila and said, *"just keep them coming."* The bartender gave her a strange look, but he did as she asked. In the mirror, she could see that she had blood on her. She vaguely remembered going to Peter and seeing the grin on his lifeless face and the look on April's face. Not for the loss of her son but the embarrassment of what happened and the loss of her drug connection. A voice on her left said, *"it looks like you had a hell of a day."* Tracy looked to her left and saw a man that looked like a lawyer or preacher. Tracy said, *"there has to be a way to kill every dealer on the planet."* She took a shot and looked at the man expecting him to seem shocked. Instead, he said, *"I hear you just don't look to the police."* Tracy told this man her story about how she was jailed and what she thought about the law and justice. He put out his hand and said, *"my name is David Warren, and I have a little group I am putting together to deal with this problem. If you are interested, then give me a call."* He gave her a card. Cathy asked, *"is that the same David?"* Wendy said, *"not tonight, one mistake at a time."*

Sam stared out his door at the black van that has been parked across the street from his shop for the last two days. He thought that they should just stencil FBI or ATF on the side. He thought how they couldn't tie him to the ranch or any of the militias working the border so now they will just sit on his shop and watch until either he does something illegal or they find a new target. The gun shop in town was the legal side with a separate place for his less than legal side business. Sam once told a man that, *"the second amendment says we have the right to bear arms not we have the right to bare what the government allows us to. Rights with limits are not rights, they are privileges, and they can be taken away. I provide people with freedom and the ability to*

express that freedom with firepower.” That man turned out to be a narcissistic serial killer who used those guns to kill drug dealers then his own people but all he did was provide the hammer not pull the trigger.

Time was coming close to the meeting with Wendy and the delivery. Somehow Sam had to ditch the feds and make it to the meeting place, but first, he would have to go and get the merchandise. He had a new 50-caliber armor piercing tracing incendiary round that was built for the desert. He also had some mines and a rocket launcher. Wendy didn’t care about the fireworks, but she did like the fancy rounds. A rusted out 1986 Ford Escort pulled up to the shop, and two stereotypical bikers got out and walked in. One of them came up to the counter and said, *“Wendy sent us to distract the pigs outside.”* The biker that spoke was named Jimmy, and we were no biker, in fact, he was an accountant, and his tattoos were just painted on. The other guy was Henry James, and like Jimmy, he was no biker just a lawyer for the city. They had a script, and they wanted to follow it.

“Hey Sam, you got what we need” Jimmy read out loud, so the feds could hear. Sam said, *“yeah these will make a mess out of anyone you go after.”* Henry made a jerking motion with his hand then said, *“are they full auto with a high capacity.”* This went back and forth until they laid enough innuendo to make the agents think they were about to have the bust of a lifetime. The two fake bikers came out with six rifle size cases and duffle bags big enough to carry out world war three. Just for a second, the driver thought about staying or going after what would be the biggest bust in their careers. On the way down the road, they called in backup saying they were on the chase of a heavily armed biker gang with machine guns. Jimmy looked back at the van that was just a little too close for someone trying to secretly follow them. The Escort pulled in to what looked like a set from a Mad Max movie with some expensive cars parked outside. An hour later and the FBI raided the Southwest Paintball Society arresting a Judge, chief of police and a state senator. They also confiscated fifteen fully automatic paintball guns. All of them fully legal.

Wendy fired a round down range. The 50-caliber was easy to trace as it shot through the armor and set a bale of hay on fire. Wendy said, "*Sam you don't disappoint.*" Sam smiled and said, "*I'm pleased to aim.*" For a moment Wendy thought about the boy and his mother. She thought about what a round would have done in the box of that truck. As if he could read her mind Sam said, "*I wouldn't use this on a soft target. Maybe something like a truck engine.*" Wendy found her smile again and said, "*I wonder how the FBI took to the arresting of a Federal judge or state senator.*" They packed the truck and Wendy was on her way to a place they kept some of the more illegal items while Sam drove by the big bust. The agent driving the van saw him as he passed, and he just knew that he was up to something.

David Warren sat just outside in his car near a dive bar in a small town in Nevada. He had twenty-five thousand dollars in a bag. He watched as the ATF raided the bar where he was supposed to buy some guns for a project he was putting together. David was a grief counselor in the Napa area of California where most of his clientele have in some way been afflicted by the drug trade. The one takeaway from all his work was just how much money these dealers were making as well as their ability to kill at will. Something about taking a life just made David hard. He thought that it was the strongest form of power. But to do that he would need firepower that couldn't be traced to him. A few nights before contacting the people the ATF were arresting he had a client kill his dealer using a 22-automatic. David acted as his alibi for the shooting for the price of the gun. He sat there thinking about his options when he remembered this woman he met about a month ago. She had said how she bought a gun illegally and just maybe this Wendy could help him.

The police car was just outside of Wendy's gas station. David could see one of them holding what looked to be an AK-47. He figured that Wendy was going down, but then they gave it back to her and left. When they were long gone, David went inside to the counter. Tracy was going by Wendy full time, and she recognized him at once. David asked, "*the cops are letting you keep an AK-47 for protection?*" Wendy pulled out the rifle and said, "*well this is actually an AK-74, and yes one of them sold it to me for next to nothing. They took it off a migrant worker crossing the desert. They have been selling me the guns they take from the*

people they don't want to be jammed up by a weapons charge." David told her about the façade plan he had for dealing justice to dealers and how he needed a style of gun. One that would be easily concealed, as silent as possible and quickly dropped when required. He didn't tell her that his plan was a way to make money while getting others to kill for him making his clients his weapons. Wendy gave him every 22-automatic she had as well as a couple of 308 rifles.

Wendy had David stay with her that night so that in the morning they could go over and talk to Sam. David told her that he had one client named Allen that had a ranch that would work well for his project. It was going to be a camp for wayward children, but no one wanted to send their kids to a camp run by a tech guy. He also said how this Allen was bankrolling the operation. That night in Wendy's one-bedroom house David slept on a pullout couch. About one in the morning Wendy came out of her room wearing nothing but a nearly see-through robe and climbed on top of David. Wendy was alone for much of her time and David was handsome in his own way. Much of that was in his charisma. Wendy felt this magnetic pull right from the start. She opened her robe as she straddled him. David looked up at her and said, "*I don't want you to feel used.*" Wendy said, "*I don't think you see just who is using who.*" She sat back and started to slide up and down in his lap. She came back down and kissed him. David said, "*I don't think this is a good idea.*" Wendy reached down and pulled his boxers off. She said, "*then just stop thinking.*" She slid down onto him and soon whatever reservations he had were gone, and all that was left was a primal connection between two people.

The next day they met up with Sam at his gun shop. Sam liked to dress in desert khakis that gave him the look of a military man with just a little too much padding. When he first met David, he ran a search to make sure he wasn't with the government. Sam knew a few people with the feds who would tell him if someone was undercover or not even if that was top secret. David told him his plan to deal justice to the dealers and Sam was on board. Sam suggested that they shift their focus to the border and stopping the drugs before they get to the streets. David said, "*one step at a time, first I want to clean our streets.*" Sam said he would track down the guns he wanted as well as the suppressors and ammunition. Finally, he gave David the number of a former marine named Greg who was looking for a cause to fight for. Sam said, "*think soldier of*

conscience rather than fortune.” David asked, “so this ex-marine would help us?” Sam said, “first its former marine there are no ex-marines. Remember that when you meet him, or you will get your ass kicked by a sixty-year-old and yes as long as you give him a mission he will fulfill it.”

That night David slept in Wendy’s bed. They lay entwined with each other staring up at the wide-open skylight in her bedroom. Wendy said, *“I could come with you and help sell this project to the former marine.”* When she said former, she put an emphasis on the word former. David said, *“I think I need to do this on my own, but I have this kid that I watch over named Colin. His parents brutalized him for their business. His scars sell the project.”* David didn’t want to tell her that she was older than what he liked and not blonde enough. Wendy didn’t like the idea that this man wanted to use this boy as a prop, but she also understood how the world works and that you do what you must to win. She leaned in and kissed him saying, *“well how about one for the road.”* She ran her hand down to him and worked on him until he was ready for another go. They spent the rest of the night with each other on and off until it was time for David to go. As soon as he was gone Wendy realized that what she felt was loneliness rather than any kind of attraction. She decided to find someone to spend her life with or at the very least more than one night.

Wendy went to a storage room in the main building behind the only lock in the complex. Inside was all the stuff she had from the ranch as well as her life as Tracy. She opened a box and found her AK-74 a cop sold her back in the day. She sat down and stripped the rifle down to clean and oil it. The weapon was all kinds of illegal, from the length of the barrel to the fact that it was full-auto she wasn’t supposed to have the gun. But there was a lot of things she wasn’t supposed to have or do. She put the rifle in a hard side case along with four magazines and left the storage room. The rifle was a reminder of past mistakes and new beginnings. She took the case to her office in the warehouse and mounted it on the wall. Underneath it she put a picture from the ranch of herself, Cathy, Cindy, Scott, Bill, Nancy, April, June, Ruth, Allen, Alice and Max.

Wendy sat down and called Sam, but he said, “*don't call right now*” then he hung up. She knew that the ATF was watching him, and they didn't like the little trick with the paintballs. Sam had said that when the press found out about the raid on a paintball facility, they would force them to stand down and look for a new target out of sight of the press. This should mean that they should step down from operations until the heat is off, but their last raid gave them a lead on a stash house for the drugs being sent through the tunnel. If they wait, it could be cleared out, so there was no option. As George was fond of saying, “*time to drop some bodies.*” Scott was outside with Sally loading a van for a quick assault. The van was padded with Kevlar and equipped with run-flat tires and a reinforced front end to work as a battering ram.

When they first made plans for this type of raid they investigated armor such as flack jackets or the standard body armor with ballistic plates. In the trials, they found that the more armor they wore, the slower they were. A lightning strike would need speed, and that speed would act as a sort of protection by striking without warning. The first time they used this idea was on a barn being used as a staging ground for distribution of a drug commonly called bath salts. They put the van through the barn from one side to the other and they followed it. The van managed to strike a table filled with the drug clouding the air and finding the men left on their feet. They were in and out in fifteen minutes with a burning barn in their wake. They found that they needed to have a second chase vehicle for a second team to strike behind and keep the fight going on two fronts. Sally was fond of saying they, “*divided and conquered.*”

Five men stood outside the building with an assortment of weapons from AK-47s to a lever-action Henry. Soldados del Diablo was on the alert after they lost their livelihood with the tunnel. It made them a force in the drug trade and its loss would make them a target. Their leadership was convinced that it was a rival gang with their own plans for a tunnel or worse. One of the guards saw what looked like an old Toyota minivan with a ram of sort on the front. It was the last thing he ever saw. A round went through his hat into his head and back out. He didn't see the flash nor did the other four men outside as they got their very own matching head wounds.

Sally was behind the wheel with Wendy on the infrared camera trying to read what was on the other side. Wendy said, “*aim for the side wall.*” The door is reinforced steel, but the walls were a thin wood.

The van plowed through the wall striking then tossing two people across the room. The side doors opened, and they struck at the men taking them in just a few seconds. The team checked for information and anything useful. As they checked the floor shifted. Wendy said, “*clear the building and evac to the staging area.*” Wendy got behind the wheel of the van and put it into gear. The floor shifted again, and the van slipped halfway into what must be a basement. Wendy saw she had no chance to retrieve the van, so she pulled the pin on the long shot. An explosive package made just for such an occasion. The bomb was laced with thermite to make the fire as hot as possible. She walked through the newly made hole to see her crew left without her. Part of their protocols was that their cell phones are kept in the chase car so no one can lose one on the job. Off to one side, Wendy saw a motorcycle. One of the head shot guards was next to it. She took his keys, a colt-1911 and his customized hog.

About two miles away from the hit Wendy saw a blinking light on the motorcycle. She quickly stopped and ran from the bike just before it exploded. She figured that the bike must have some sort of proximity sensor that if he ever got two miles away without deactivating it, the bike would explode killing the rider. Wendy said out loud, “*what a shame, that was a nice bike.*” She looked to the rising sun knowing that it would be very hot very soon and she had a long walk without any water. She made it about five miles down the road when she recognized where she was and that they had a stash nearby. On the side of a road that no one drives anymore was an old gas station. Inside it was a bunker with armaments and other supplies including a beacon and air conditioning assuming the solar cells kept the batteries charged. Inside the service station, she went for the car lift. Raising it opened the door to the bunker. Inside she found water, MREs, and enough ammo to restart a good war. She also found a bottle of Tequila. The bottle made her think about Maria.

Wendy ordered another shot of Tequila from the bar. It had been about a month since David left with Sam and their plans to buy guns. She had been going from bar to bar looking for love in all the wrong places. She decided that this would be her last bar for a while. Her search for a hole filler was turning up lots of guys but no men. She wanted a real man, not a dude. This bar seemed like every other bar in the area with a mix of Texas and Mexico that didn't seem to jive. Most of the patrons were militia fresh from the border with a few locals who seemed to be hoping they could just get their poison and go. Behind the bar was a raven-haired beauty with an olive complexion. Her looks were upsetting the militiamen, so they spent their social time taunting her. None of this was new for Maria, she had to deal with this crap ever since she and her parents came from Warez Mexico when she was five. They came legally and became citizens the legal way, but to these guys, none of that mattered.

As if something was released in the air the locals all left leaving just the militia and Wendy in the bar. One of the men, a particularly loud one came over to Maria. She had stepped away from the bar to clean a table when he cornered her up against a wall. He whispered into her ear, *"so you think you can come to my country and just take. I think I should be able to take from you."* He then bashed her head against the wall as he pulled her shirt down revealing her chest. The bartender was her father. He went for a gun but was stopped by two men who started to beat him. The man said, *"first me then my crew. Welcome to America."* From his left side, he heard a racking slide of a gun. He turned to see Wendy with a colt-1911 in her hand. He turned back to Maria and said, *"you don't have the balls to shoot me, bitch."* Wendy said, *"I don't have balls at all asshole."* She let off a round that just kissed the bridge of his nose and struck the wall near they guys beating on Maria's father. He let go of her and went for his face as his eyes started to water from the injury. The man turned to his buddies and started to say get her when he realized he was all alone with his friends running away. Maria kneed him in the crotch as her father brought down a bat on the back of his head.

The next morning, Wendy was in this woman's bed. She wanted to tell her she wasn't gay it was just all that happened that made that night what it was. She wanted to tell her that, but she somehow felt at peace with this woman. She still liked men, and she didn't think that would

ever change, but now she found she liked whatever that was last night. Maria stirred in bed. There was something Wendy liked in just how unguarded this woman was. She was nearly gang-raped by people who hated her for her looks, but it didn't seem to phase her. Maria rolled over and kissed her. She was somehow even more beautiful in the morning than that night. Wendy got up and told Maria she had to go. Maria asked, "*so was that your first time with a woman?*" Wendy didn't answer, but her silence screamed "*yes.*" Maria said, "*you know where I work and if this is something you would like to explore then come back.*"

Wendy put the bottle of tequila down. Her thoughts of Maria opened an old wound that had somehow healed with time. She knew that some wounds didn't really heal they just closed and waited for the right time to burst. It was too early to start drinking, and she wasn't hungry enough to eat a Meals Ready to Eat or MRE. About noon the beacon turned from red to green signaling that someone was waiting for her. Wendy looked out and saw one of their jeeps with Cathy behind the wheel. She had her Sara Conner look from the last scene of the first Terminator with the aviator sunglasses and bandana around her head. All that was missing was the dog and bun in the oven. Wendy shut the bunker down and went for the Jeep. Inside Cathy said, "*we need to work that exit better.*" Wendy said, "*no, that worked. I just need to not and try and save the van next time.*"

Chapter Four

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

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

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

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

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

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

what was going on. Two hours later Cathy was in a paper gown in a hospital being told that she lost the baby and would most likely never have another one. David stayed back at the ranch, but Wendy stayed with her, holding her hand helping her through those tough few weeks. It wouldn't be for months before they were a couple and even longer before they would have the relationship they share now. It would take both women coming to an understanding of who they were and what they wanted out of life.

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

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

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

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

Two men in a hunting blind watched as the women killed and dressed the hogs. One of them said, "*that was our kill. That bitch shot our hogs.*" He looked at the other guy who watched as the blood dripped from Jill's face onto her white tank top. The first man said, "*Jimmy, I think*

we need to go over there and take what's ours." Jimmy looked back at the small girl size woman with blood dripping down onto her chest and said, *"Lenny, what I want I know I'll have to take and it isn't no dead pig."* The two smiled as they slipped into their Jeep and made their way to the van and what they wanted. Wendy saw them first as they drove over without their lights on. She did a check on her 1911 on her hip and a 12-gauge mounted on the inside of the van. Wendy said, *"head's up, someone is coming without any lights on."* Sally asked, *"maybe it's Hardy coming out for the hogs?"* Wendy said, *"no it's a jeep, and he would know better than to come out here with no lights."*

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

Lenny took aim at Sally as a shot rang out. The round struck Lenny in the face in a downward motion busting his head showering the Jeep and Jimmy in blood and teeth. Jimmy pulled a comically large Colt Python as he looked up in just enough time to see Jill with a

shotgun firing a deer slug into his left eye bursting his head like a melon. Sally looked at Wendy then they both looked up at Jill who was just standing there out of the opening on the top of the van with the shotgun barrel still smoking. About ten minutes later the rancher pulled up. After they told him what happened, he told them to take the Jeep to the edge of the property. He said, *“there have been more than a few people killed by illegals crossing the border. Set it on fire just to sell the bit.”* Sally wanted to leave the bodies for the pigs, but Wendy and Jill wanted them buried and gone. Sally turned to Jill and said, *“I think you might just be ready.”*

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

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

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

Owen was picking up a new shipment of what Sam called freedom fries at a local ranch. The fully-automatic AR-15s came from a source in South America where the Government was selling them to nations that would turn around and sell them for a profit. Some of the guns they bought over the years even came from the ATF and Homeland Security. To protect his investment as well as his kin, Sam asked Wendy to help. For his part, Owen had a hard time working with Wendy without staring at her. When she first came to town, he would watch her from afar. Owen was driving his truck with Wendy in the back and Jill in the front. Wendy said, *“you can either stare at my tits or at the road, but if you choose the former then let me drive.”* Owen sat up and turned back to the road. Wendy unbuttoned a button on her shirt then smiled as Jill just shook her head.

Owen pulled into a driveway out in the middle of nowhere then stopped. Jill asked, *“what do you think?”* Owen said, *“something’s wrong. There should have been someone at the gate.”*

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

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

Wendy looked over at Cathy and said, *“we might need to stop our operations for a little bit.”* Cathy was laying with one leg across Owen while she played with his pubic hair. Owen just laid there with a smile on his face that seemed like it was carved in. Cathy asked, *“what about Sam?”* Owen said, *“Uncle Sam said that if this pickup failed that he would take a break from his*

calling and let the feds run their course.” Owen laughed then said, “Uncle Sam.” Wendy asked, “run their course?” Owen replied, “yes, he left nothing for them to find or trace back to him, so he thinks that in a few months with nothing new they would have to leave or face hurting their records.” Cathy said, “they are spending a lot of money for little return.” Owen said, “just to be safe. He told me to tell you to stay away just in case they are following his customers.”

Chapter Five

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Hester didn't understand he was an addict. It started when he broke his arm playing football. The doctors gave him painkillers that made him feel good until they took them away. Jack's arm healed, but he found himself daydreaming about the feeling the pills gave him. That

was when he met Darren. Outside of the practice field, Darren met with his clients selling whatever they needed. His clients were like Jack, all of them were under the age of fourteen. While Darren liked selling to kids like Jack he preferred his female clients. A thirteen-year-old with an Adderall addiction will do anything for a fix. Jack was fourteen and desperate for his fix. He had some money just not enough for what Darren wanted. One day he had watched as Darren had a girl in his class take off her clothes then Darren had his way with her for the drug she eventually overdosed on.

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

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

angry want kick ass, over.” Wendy thought her Hulk impression was just too good. Wendy called back, “Arnie smash, over and out.”

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

Darren woke up taped to a chair. He was naked and taped with his legs spread apart. A light came on overhead, and soon he realized he wasn’t alone. The light was on a string and swinging back and forth. As the arc of the light swung away, he could see three women of varying degrees of hotness going from soccer mom to tan goddess. Despite his predicament, he started to grow hard. The soccer mom came over and put her foot on his genitals pushing down slightly then pushing harder. Wendy said, *“scream all you want, no one will hear you.”* Arnie said, *“I expected something bigger from a guy who would do what you do.”* Darren asked, *“what is this?”* Wendy said, *“you have two chances to live through this. One, give us the names of the children you sold to that guy or two, take this spike. If you survive, we won’t touch you.”* Darren said, *“I can give you whatever you want on him. I could help you take care of him and.”* Wendy put her finger up to her lips in a shushing fashion. She pulled out a jar with something in it. She said, *“don’t worry about him.”* Darren looked at the jar and saw a man’s genitals floating in some sort of liquid. Darren eventually said he would take the spike knowing he could survive a hit of heroin. After he took the shot, Wendy smiled. Arnie asked, *“was that a good idea?”* Wendy said, *“I don’t know, but I can tell you that it wasn’t heroin. Let’s just say they sell stuff to deal with rats.”*

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

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

Angie grew up on Venice Beach watching the surfers and weightlifters. Her favorite thing was to watch the bodybuilders work out. She dreamed of a day she could work on a look that would turn heads and open doors. Her mother was a well-known nutritionist, and her father was known as the surfing doc. Arnold Davis worked as an emergency room doctor at night and a surfer by day. Arnie would say he was a surfer that worked as a doctor to pay the bills. He helped people on the beach with medical needs even though it could have hurt his license. Angie's mother Samantha was tone and fit. Sam became a nutritionist to help with her workout. Both she and Arnie practically lived on the beach, so it only made sense that their daughter would be there. Angie worked out and ate right. She soon found she was garnering attention from all the right people and building a physique that will win awards. Arnie was helping someone on the

beach when he was stabbed to death for the drugs in his bag. Sam said she could never go back to the place that her husband died, so she and Angie moved to Napa where Angie met a man named David. She took the name of her father to honor a person that did something good even though it might have been against the law.

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

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

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

Wayne watched for the flames and the sounds of fire trucks, but by midnight nothing was happening. He knew it wasn't like Gia to disappoint. He looked down at the young white girl going down on him and told her, "*do better or no fix.*" He spoke English with no accent but chose to use a broken English pattern to give the illusion he was from the old country. The door opened, and Duke walked in with a trash bag over his shoulder. Wayne said, "*this is no place for your.*" He stopped when he recognized his brother. Duke said, "*I thought you should have this back brother.*" Wayne opened the bag to see the blood-soaked white suit that belonged to Gia and the hands of the one called bóng. Wayne looked back to his brother to see the gun in his hand. As he sat there staring at the gun, a younger man was forced in by Wendy and Fred. Fred said, "*this guy was watching from the outside.*" The man looked at Wayne then back to Duke and said, "*father.*" Without a word, Duke raised and leveled his gun firing at this man hitting him in the head. Wayne started to laugh when Duke turned the gun on him and fired. Wayne fell over laughing while choking on his blood dying laughing. Fred looked at Duke and asked, "*father?*"

On the way back to the ranch no one spoke after Duke explained what they saw. He said how that was what was left of his son after his brother turned him. He said, "*my boy died in jail. That cold-blooded child killer was no son of mine.*" They had done their best to make it look like one killed the other but then died from sustained wounds. In a small town near the ranch, Duke said he wasn't going back. He had finished what he set out to do. The others pulled their money

together and gave him around twelve hundred dollars and a bus ticket to New Orleans where he had some family. It was left unsaid, but he knew not to try and come back. He used them to seek revenge on his own brother and son turning their mission into an act of revenge. When they got back, David pitched a fit on them letting him just go. Wendy made a mental note on how he kept saying, “*he got away.*” It was always if not said out loud that anyone could leave at any time.

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

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

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

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

Darrel went out to get the van which hadn’t been used for about a month only to find Jill and Scott inside in the back. Jill was on top in the reverse cowgirl position. Jill jumped when the

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

A ladder went up a pole just outside of the police station where the ATF and FBI were working out of. The local law knew about the defunct van, but with their connections to what Wendy and her team did, they just kept it to themselves. By the end of the night, they had twenty cameras up and around town as well as a connection to the police station's surveillance cameras courtesy of their local sheriff. Percy Macintosh was elected to clean up the streets, and after a few years of things getting worse, he came across Wendy and her operation. Like Wendy, Percy was from the ranch, and he knew that as he would put it, *"sometimes you have to break the law to bring about justice."* He stopped short of helping them, but he did sway investigations away from the group. He did make sure that the camera in his office was disabled just in case he needed to do something about the group in the future.

Scott tied in the camera feeds into the computer system setup at the compound. He then ran the feeds to the televisions in the common room. At first, people watched the feds with a feeling that they would be caught at any moment, but soon they started to speculate on just what they were seeing. That speculation became a drinking game. Every time a fed poured a cup of coffee was a shot, every time someone said the name Sam or unsub as in unknown subject was a shot. Three hours into the feed and almost everyone was drunk with Wendy being the only sober person. She didn't like that feeling of being out of control that drinking gave her. On in a corner, Jill and Scott seemed to forget they weren't alone and started to make out. Gary and Zoey were back from their time away. They came back from Las Vegas with matching wedding bands and a

story on how they went to be alone and came back married. They were also acting like they were alone. Darrel had long since passed out with a bottle of Wild Turkey in his lap. Cathy was asleep next to Wendy on a couch with Owen's head in Cathy's lap. Wendy watched as one of the feds unrolled blueprints to what looked like a gas station with a large warehouse. She looked at the others then back to the screen wondering if the feds knew about them and were they planning on coming after them soon.