**The Saint of Enchiladaville**

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**The Saint of Enchiladaville**

**Prologue: The Southern Border**

The International border separating the United States of America and the Republic of Mexico is 2,013 miles long. On the U. S. side, east to west it stretches from Brownsville, Texas to San Diego, California. Above it are the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Below it are the states of *Tamaulipas*, *Nuevo Leon*, *Choahuila*, *Chihuahua*, *Sonora*, and *Baja*. None of this is particularly important. What is important is that people from south of the border want to be north of the border. They will go to great sacrifices to achieve this even if illegally, which it usually is.

What is now known as the American Southwest was first explored in the 1530’s by the Spanish, leading to the establishment of New Spain and later a part of Mexico. The mission of the Spanish explorers was to search for gold and introduce the Native Americans to Christianity. Some in the United States believe that citizens of Mexico, as descendants of the original Spanish explorers, are entitled to access to the U. S. as if it is their original homeland. However, they fail to consider the original inhabitants, the American Indians, that occupied these lands and their mistreatment at the hands of the Spanish during their conquest.

The need for a border between the United States and Mexico resulted from a conflict of cultures as the southwest became more inhabited by Anglo-Americans. Without an enforced southern border, the immeasurable number of socio-economic, financial, political, and cultural differences between the U. S. and Mexico could severely alter the American way of life that our forefathers strived to achieve. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ended the U. S.-Mexican War and established the Rio Grande as the border separating Texas from Mexico. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 completed the location of the border west from El Paso, Texas to San Diego, California.

The 11,000 Border Patrol agents are the front-line defense against the onslaught of illegal immigrants crossing from the south to the north. Even with the latest in surveillance and detection equipment, protecting the border against illegal entry is a daunting task when there are 272 illegal immigrants attempting to enter for every single Border Patrol agent.

Our Border Patrol agents and all law-enforcement professionals charged with protecting our borders do an outstanding job, but their achievements are taken for granted, and most Americans have no idea of the difficult and dangerous conditions in which they operate. But they are human beings too. They face the same personal issues and emotional pressures as the rest of us. Occasionally, emotions skew the decision-making process resulting in unanticipated results.

Pat Brennan, as the Sector Chief charged with managing the flow of illegal immigrants into the U.S. from the southern border into southern New Mexico, oversaw a staff of border patrol agents, a fleet of vehicles, and an armory of weapons to achieve his mission. He was a solid, reliable agent and manager of the Lordsburg Sector. He was well-liked by his staff, and he was known through the agency for his soft demeanor but hard results.

Brennan had encountered illegals hundreds of times and always treated them respectfully but enforced the law by apprehending them and taking them into custody to be returned to their native country. But an encounter with an injured, young, pregnant Mexican woman alone in the desert unleashes his compassion for the less fortunate, makes him question his mission, and diverts his life in a new, unanticipated direction.

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**Chapter 1: Face-to-Face**

**(Present Time)**

In English, Pat asked the gringo stranger that had just taken a seat at the bar, “What can I get you?”

The stranger replied, “What kinds of American beer do you have?”

“We’ve got Budweiser and Coors Light and a nice selection of Mexican beers.”

“How about a Coors Light, please.”

Pat reached into the beer box behind the bar, pulled out a bottle of Coors Light, and set it on the bar in front of the stranger. “Here ya go. A cold silver bullet for you. Need a glass?”

“Sure, and if you have any green olives, could you drop a couple in the glass, please?”

“You got it,” Pat replied as he grabbed a beer glass, speared a couple of green olives from the jar, and dropped them in the glass that he set in front of the stranger.

Pat went on about his bar chores and went over to check on the men at the back table and then returned to the bar. Being free for a moment, Pat inquired of the stranger, “So, what brings you to *Piedras Rojas*?”

“Oh, just passing through,” the stranger lied. “Thought I would stop and relax a bit. Have a beer at a local establishment.”

“Well, welcome. Where’re you headed?” Pat asked.

“Nowhere in particular. I had business in *Chihuahua*. I am headed back to the states, but I am in no hurry. Thought I would look around while I am down here. Do you live here?”

“Yes, I do,” Pat replied.

“So, what brought you here, anyway. This isn’t really an American tourist stop, is it?”

Pat’s response was measured. No reason to explain such a complicated series of events that led to his living in *Piedras Rojas*. “Oh, it’s a long story that’s not worth revisiting. Let’s just say I’m living here and liking it. Good people here. Slow-paced lifestyle. It is a nice break from the pace in the U.S.”

“Interesting,” the stranger responded. “By the way, my name is James McNally,” the stranger added extending his hand toward Pat.

Pat extended his own hand, and the two shook hands. “My name is Pat. Get you another beer?”

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“Sure, thanks,” the stranger said as he drained what was left in his glass.

As Pat was retrieving another beer for the stranger, one of the men in the back loudly requested another round of beers. “Saint, bring us another round, will ya?”

“Be right there,” Pat responded.

The stranger had poured his new beer into his glass and was watching the white, foamy head dissipate as Pat took two more beers to the men at the back table. Pat returned to the bar with two empty beer bottles and dropped them in the trash can.

“They call you Saint?” the stranger asked Pat after taking a drink of his fresh beer.

“Yeah, that’s what they call me here.”

“That’s an interesting nickname. How did that come about? Were you a minister or priest or something before?” the stranger inquired.

“No, it’s just a name that I picked up once that seemed to stick. No one down here calls me Pat. Most don’t even know my name is Pat. They just call me Saint.”

The stranger quieted down for a few minutes and quietly worked on his beer while Pat move from the bar to the kitchen and back through the bar checking on the other patrons. When the stranger spoke again, what he said hit Pat as if he had been slugged full force in the chest. “The real reason I am down here is that I am looking at guy, probably about your age, that was with the Border Patrol just north of the border in New Mexico. He resigned and no one knows for sure where he went, but there is a rumor that he came down this way.”

Pat didn’t look up from organizing the beer box behind the bar, and he didn’t respond to the stranger’s confession. Oh crap, who is this guy? Pat thought.

“Do you know anyone like that around here?” the stranger continued.

“No, I haven’t heard of anyone like that around here,” Pat lied as he turned around to face the bar. The stranger continued to sip on his glass of beer, not responding to Pat’s response. But the silence was too awkward for Pat, so he added “Why you looking for this fella anyway?”

“Oh, he went a little beyond his job description in handling a deportation issue. It involved a young woman originally from *Piedras Rojas*. A pretty girl that had to have her left leg amputated. Her name is Teresa Morales. Know anyone like that around here?”

Pat’s mind was racing. Who is this guy? Where is this discussion going? “I don’t think I know of her” he lied again.

The stranger finished off his second beer and set his empty glass on the bar. This time Pat didn’t ask the stranger if he wanted another beer. He just wanted the stranger to go away.

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“I’ll have another beer when you get a chance” said the stranger as he stood up. “Where ‘s the pisser, anyway?” he asked.

“Off the little hallway in the back corner over there” Pat said pointing. The stranger began walking that way.

Now, Pat had a few seconds to regain his composure. His first thought was where is this conversation going? His next thought was how is this conversation going to end? I think he knows that I am the one his is looking for, Pat thought. Pat was working himself into a tizzy. Settle down, Pat, he told himself. Act normal. What are you doing? Relax. This guy can’t do anything to me, he told himself.

As the stranger exited the hallway where the bathrooms were and headed back to his place at the bar, Pat set a fresh bottle of beer at his place. The stranger poured the new beer into his empty glass and took a slow drink. He then set the glass on the bar and looked directly at Pat.

Their eyes met, Pat behind the bar and the stranger not five feet away directly on the opposite of the bar. But Pat’s anxiety of who the stranger was and what he represented had passed, and Pat regained his composure. Pat was ready for the stranger’s next words and knew what they would be. “The guy I am looking for is named Pat Brennan. You look like him, you appear to be the same age as Pat Brennan, and is it just a coincidence that your name is Pat?” he asked rhetorically.

Pat didn’t flinch, and he didn’t drop his gaze from the eyes of the stranger.

The stranger blinked first. He reached for his beer and tipped it back, the golden refreshment sliding down his throat which suddenly had become very dry. He finished his beer, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and then leaned to his left so he could access his wallet in his right, back pocket. He opened the wallet and laid it on the bar next to is beer glass. Attached to the left inside flap was a gold-colored badge that Pat couldn’t help but see. The stranger then picked up the wallet and removed a $10 bill and laid it on the bar.

“You look like the guy I am looking for. Are you Pat Brennan?”

“What if I am?” Pat answered.

“Well then, you are the one I have been hunting for the past few weeks.”

“When you find this Pat Brennan, what are your intentions?”

“I am going to ask the Mexican government to place him in my custody and extradite him to the United States for trial for violations committed while an agent for the U. S. government. Providing false documents, aiding and abetting an undocumented person to establish residency

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in the United States and other charges. He needs to be punished for his wrong-doings and serve as an example of what can happen if one violates the law.”

Pat listened intently but didn’t respond.

“You know,” the FBI agent continued, “It will be very easy to confirm your identity, that you are Pat Brennan. Photo documentation and fingerprint matches are as good as done” he said as he carefully slid the beer bottle with Pat’s fingerprints off the bar and into his lap.

“So? What proof do you have that Pat Brennan even committed the crimes you allege he is guilty of?” Pat felt weird referring to himself in the third person.

“Oh, we have plenty of witness statements and corroborating evidence against you.” The agent was now closing in and showing his certainty that he had found for whom he had been searching.

Pat said nothing for a few seconds as he contemplated the agent’s remarks. The agent stared at Pat as if expecting a confession to the charges. “So, what is your next step?” Pat finally asked.

“The depends on you, Chief Brennan. You can voluntarily come with me back to the U.S., or first thing in the morning I will have a warrant for your arrest issued by the Mexican government. They will take you into custody and turn you over to me for extradition and your return to the U.S. And don’t think of running. I will find you wherever you go. Either way, you will be returned to the United States.”

Pat was quiet. No immediate response was given. When he did answer the agent’s threat, he simply said “I am in no hurry to leave *Piedras Rojas*. I like it here. I think I will just stay awhile.”

The agent gathered his wallet and the beer bottle with Pat’s fingerprints. As he turned to go, he said “if that’s the way you want to play it, fine. I will see you tomorrow, Chief Brennan. You might want to pack up your belongings tonight.” And he headed for the door.

“Hey,” Pat semi-shouted, “do you want your change?”

Without looking back, McNally responded, “Keep it. Consider it your last tip. Courtesy of FBI Special Agent James McNally.”

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**Chapter 2: Under a Moonlit Sky**

**(7 Months Earlier)**

The high-pressure system that hung over the boot heel of New Mexico for the past week continued to exert its influence on the area in the form of unrelenting high day-time temperatures. Coupled with the extremely low relative humidity common to the desert and the creosotebush fragrance in the air, breathing through one’s nose slightly seared the nostrils.

The convective thunderheads that normally begin to build early in the afternoon, resulting in local high intensity, short duration cloudbursts, had failed to materialize all week. Instead, the sky was unusually pale blue, bright and clear, except for a touch of haze, the result of dust in the air. No dark, brooding clouds were building in the west as is common on many mid-summer afternoons.

In the afternoon heat of the day, little moves in the desert. Occasionally, the rattle of a grasshopper taking flight, or the screech of a hawk overhead can be heard, but most living things remain quiet and still in the stifling heat. Animals burrow under, nest up, or find what shade is available to wait for cooling air temperatures as dusk approaches. Even plants remain still, closing their stomata to protect against unnecessary loss of valuable water through evapo-transpiration. It is the time of day, and the time of year, for which the *siesta* was created, and all living things in the desert participate in it.

It was early afternoon. The distinctive green Chevy Blazer with the U. S. Border Patrol decals on the side of the front doors exited off west-bound I-10 on to NM Highway 338 and headed south. This two-lane black-top skirted along the eastern foot of the Peloncillo Mountains. Lordsburg Sector Chief Pat Brennan continued south through Cotton City and Animas until reaching a ranch access road at the sign that read “Managed by the Bureau of Land Management.” There he turned southwest off the asphalt surface on to a dirt road that proceeded toward the mountains. The soil was fine sand over a caliche hard pan and the road was smooth and fairly straight as it moved through the sand dunes with sprawling mesquite bushes perched on their crowns. Soon the mesquite dunes played out and the road became gravelly as it passed across the desert grassland, a rolling shelf of short, desert grasses intermixed with tarbush and creosotebush. At the one-mile mark, the road passed through a barbed-wire fence over a weathered metal cattle guard and entered private land owned by Bud Pierce, owner and operator of the Ax Handle Ranch as a thin, white metal sign with black block letters on a wooden cedar post proclaimed. A “No Trespassing” sign with numerous bullet holes in it hung on the fence near the cattle guard. Continuing on, the road moved out of grassland and into the desert shrubland as it approached the foothills of the Peloncillos. As the road passed by an old, dilapidated sheep shearing barn, it swung to the right and above the southern wall of the Macho Canyon Draw with scattered juniper, pinon pine, and Mexican oak

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but Apache plume, rabbitbrush, and sumac lining the main channel of the dry water course below.

About a quarter of a mile farther, the road slipped off the south rim of the draw, crossed the dry riverbed, and climbed up onto a flat shelf on the north rim of the draw. Here, with views of the foothills, was located the Ax Handle Ranch headquarters comprised of a modest rock house, wooden barn, corrals, and windmill and water storage tank and livestock drinking tubs. This was the home of Bud and Martha Pierce, owners’- operators of the ranch.

Lordsburg Border Patrol Sector Chief Pat Brennan pulled the green Blazer to a stop in front of the ranch house. He removed his aviator dark glasses and unlocked his seat belt. The digital clock on the dashboard read 2:09 PM. He climbed out of the Blazer and walked up the primitive rock path to the front door. He knocked on the beat-up screened door. It was answered by Martha Pierce, Bud’s wife. “Hi Pat, come in” and turned back toward the house interior. “Bud, Pat Brennan’s here.” Then, turning back to Pat while still holding the door open for him, she asked Pat if she could get him a glass of iced tea or water or something.

Pat wiped the soles of his boots on the metal mat on the front porch as a courtesy since no mud had been around in weeks, and taking off his cap, stepped past Martha and into the house. “Thanks, Martha. A glass of cold water sounds real good.”

“Sit down there at the table, and I’ll get it for you.” Martha opened the cabinet over the sink and pulled out a drinking glass. She filled it from the kitchen faucet and carried it over to where Pat was sitting at the kitchen table.

“Bud, are you coming? Pat’s here.”

“I know, I know” Bud replied as he sauntered into the kitchen from the back of the house. Pat stood up and extended his hand toward Bud. “How’s it going, Chief? The Mexican catching business been good lately?”

“Fine, Bud. And you?”

“Only complaints are the regular ones---too hot and no rain and I’m too old.” Bud moved toward the sink to get himself a glass of water and then joined Pat and Martha at the kitchen table.

“Have you seen many passing through?” Pat asked.

“Oh, occasionally I’ll see some, but no steady stream and no large numbers. I think this mountain country is too tough to get through, ‘specially in this heat. Maybe, they figure they are better off on the desert where it’s flatter. But then that’s where you guys can run em down and catch ‘em when they sneak in on their own.”

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“Yeah, I think we get most of them on the desert between here and Las Cruces unless they are using a coyote to transport them, and then it gets a little dicey. It’s a game of cat and mouse. We know they are coming, just don’t know when and where.”

“It is a tough deal for these Mexicans, Pat. I don’t blame ‘em for wantin’ to get up here and find work and provide a better life for their families. Hell, I would try it too if I was them. We humans have needs and desires for ourselves and our families, and America offers more for them than their native Mexico. So, I feel for them, but we can’t just open the doors and let everyone that wants to come here come here because probably most want to come here. So, you have a thankless but important job, Pat. And maybe you feel sort of bad about returning the women and specially the little kids. You wouldn’t be a good human if you didn’t. It’s a sad situation for them, I reckon.”

“Sure, Bud, there is real sadness involved in the whole situation---sad for the conditions from which they want to escape, sad about the agony of trying to sneak in, and then the sad little faces of children and the women when their plans are interrupted. I think they are pretty people and the sadness on their faces really shows through. It is not a good feeling and, frankly, getting worse. I must be getting soft in my old age.”

“Well, you ain’t very old from where I’m a looking, but I know one’s ideas and feelings change over time. Hell, there was a time out here when I’d shoot any buck deer anytime of the year to help put meat on the table. But now I can’t bring myself to kill such a beautiful animal. And it pains me that some of my neighbors lease out their ranch to Texans to come in and trophy hunt some old moss-back just for his rack. Sure, they pay good money, but it just don’t seem right to me killing God’s creatures just cause they got big horns.

“But gettin’ back to them Mexican, they worked for me, and for my daddy, and my granddaddy before him. They were almost like family, but they knew their place. All us ranchers would neighbor up and bring our Mexicans and gather and brand and wean our calves, cull our open cows and ship ‘em off. We was like a big ole’ family all workin’ together. Those days are gone, though. Ranching has changed, and not just because the Mexicans aren’t working with us no more. It just ain’t like it used to be. My granddaddy took his 160 acre homestead and developed it into this modest 23 section ranch. And it took the help of family, neighbors, and Mexicans.”

Pat just sat still and listened to Bud espouse his wisdom, which was much different from the point of view in which he was typically immersed at his headquarters. He had been an agent for going on eighteen years and his feeling about his profession was gradually changing. It was a job that had to be done. American operates best for all when following the rule of law. Pat felt strongly about that, but sometimes questioned whether this type of law enforcement, the type he aspired to work in, was really for him. He was starting to think not.

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“They are good people and hard workers” Bud continued. “I always had a “wetback” working for me until the explosion of Mexicans flooding our border trying to get in, and you guys lowered the boom on us ranchers and such for hiring them. One was with me over twenty years. He would work all year for me, living in a little room I built down in feed room, and he would have me wire most of his earnings to his family back in Mexico. He would go home for about a month in the summer to spend with his people, and then just suddenly reappear to work again. He was polite and gentle and did all that I asked and some stuff on his own. When things heated up for the “wets,” he went home and never returned. I think about Manuel often and wonder what ever happened to him. That’s been six or seven years since he left.”

Pat sensed that Bud had come to the end of expressing his philosophy on the whole matter and seemed to have moved into pensive reflection.

“Bud, they are overwhelming us. 3,000 a day are getting in illegally. We’ve got to slow the flow until some other plan can be implemented. But I know where you are coming from.”

“Pat, I go to bed real early, but I saw that Jay Leno Show awhile back and one of his jokes was that they polled the Mexicans and found that 40% of them said they wanted to come to the United States. The other 60% is already here! Maybe he ain’t that far off the mark. They just keep a comin’and comin’and comin.’

Martha had been out back feeding the chickens and doctoring a few sick calves. She entered the kitchen from the back door, went over to the kitchen cabinet to retrieve a glass, and then filled it with water from the faucet. She then joined the two men at the table.

“What you fellas discussing so intently?”

“Oh, we been discussing the world’s problems and possible solutions.” Bud replied.

“Bud, you can’t even solve the coyote problem around here so how you gonna solve a real- world problem” Martha said with a grin. “Just funnin’ with ya, honey.”

“So, Pat, are you part Mexican? You have dark features and you’re good at speaking Spanish. Are you of Mexican descent somewhere in your family?” Martha inquired taking sip of her water.

“Maybe, but if so, it is from way back in ancient history. My brothers are more fair skinned than I am, as was my dad. But his dad, my granddad, was dark. My Brennan ancestors came from County Donegal in the northwest of Ireland to America in the late 1700’s. Not far from there in about 1600 the Spanish Armada encountered a terrible storm and was destroyed. Most died, but some Spanish survivors made it to shore and ended up staying in Ireland, mixing with the population. As I understand it, their descendants are referred to as “black” Irish because of their dark features. I guess we normally associate the Irish look with red hair and fair skin, but there are a number of Irish lads and lasses with dark features.”

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“That’s a helluva story there, Ranger Rick,” Bud said smiling. “So you’s an immigrant just like the Mexicans you are huntin’. Kind of ironic, ain’t it? Guess we’s all immigrants one how or another.”

“Yeah, right Bud. What is a native American anyway? We are all from somewhere else. Even our Apaches and Navajos supposedly migrated from Siberia over to what is now Alaska and down to our region around 15,000 years ago.”

“So, our native Americans is immigrants too? Hope they got their papers to prove they’s legal” said Bud grinning. “You got all kinds of wizardry in that head of yours. You’re too smart to be chasin’ Mexicans. Hell, you ought to go be a professor or something.”

“Yeah, right Bud,” replied Pat as he scooted his chair back and got up. “I better get to work. I’m not going to catch any illegals sitting at the table, although I have enjoyed the visit and a nice break. Bud, what I wanted to ask you, though, would it be okay if I set up surveillance on a high point in the Rock Spring pasture this afternoon? I might even spend the night watching for some moving in. It’ll also give me a chance to slow down and think a spell. I need a break from the office work and paper pushing. Government stuff. I’ve been running pretty hard the past few weeks,” Pat said as he carried his water glass to the sink. Bud and Martha scooted their chairs back and stood up too.

“So, the boss man wants to do some field work, huh? When was the last time you did an all-night surveillance by yourself? Thought you guys always partnered-up.”

“We do try to watch each other’s back, but I need to refresh my field skills by myself. This way I can focus on the job and what’s required without someone around to distract me or for me to bullshit with all night. Besides, I need a little time alone. So, you don’t mind me setting up out there, Bud?”

“Hell, you know you don’t got to ask my permission. But it’s nice ya did. That’s fine by me. Under the full moon, they might try moving in the desert without a flashlight, but probably not in the foothills or mountains because of the difficulty of the terrain.”

“Maybe you’re right, but if they are to tackle the terrain without flashlights, this is the night to try it.”

“Have at it, Chief.”

“Oh, Pat,” Martha said as she moved to the kitchen counter, “I baked a pound cake this morning. Here, take a piece with you” said Martha as she sliced a big piece off and placed it in a plastic baggie and handed it to Pat.

“That’s mighty nice of you, Martha. Thanks.” Pat turned to shake hands with Bud, “Thanks again, Bud. I’ll let you know if I spot anything.”

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“Call ahead next time and I’ll fix you a home cooked meal. And, Pat, you are always welcome to come go to church with us sometime. We’ve got a few pretty single women there that would be happy to meet a nice young man such as yourself.”

“Get your nose out of his business, Martha. That ain’t got nothin’to do with chasing down Mexicans,” said Bud.

“Bud, even grown men can use a little advice occasionally. Just because you seem allergic to advice, it doesn’t mean other men are. Maybe Pat appreciates it.”

“Thanks for the offer, Martha. That’s very nice of you. We’ll see.”

“You have to make time for yourself. As they say in the real world, get a life. You seem to be stressed out a bit. Time to unwind and reboot.”

Bud just rolled his eyes behind Martha’s back. She never told him that he needed time off.

“I know, and you’re right. Really, thanks for your concern for me, Martha” Pat replied with a smile. Then putting on his cap, Pat turned to shake Bud’s hand one last time and turned for the door. He opened the door and stepped out into the hot afternoon sun, slipped on his aviator sunglasses, and started down the primitive rock path to his Blazer.

Bud followed Pat out the door. “I’ll get the gates for ya.”

“Thanks.”

Pat climbed in the Blazer, started it up, and pulled slowly toward the heavy iron gate at the south end of the corral. Bud opened it and Pat pulled through and on across the lot to the other iron gate on the north side and the dirt road that led into the pasture. He stopped, climbed out to open the gate as Bud was walking up from closing the first gate.

“I got ‘er” said Bud.

“Thanks, Bud” as Pat climbed back into the Blazer. Then leaning out the driver’s side window said “Bud, one more thing. Do you think what I do for a living is a respectable profession?”

“Pat, why you asking a question like that? Sure, what you do is respectable, and you are good at it. You are a respectable man. Someone has to do what you do. You are enforcing laws.”

“I know. Maybe I am starting to tire of hunting down other people. Partly it is frustration because it’s as if there is no end to them continuing to come into our country. But part of it is feeling sorry for many of them who have such wonderful dreams dashed by me and my counterparts. Like you said, I would be trying to get into the U. S. too if I were in their shoes.”

“Pat, you are a good guy and not doing anything to be ashamed of. Now get going and get set up for your surveillance.”

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“Thanks Bud. I appreciate your take on things. See you later,” he said as he took his foot off the brake and started rolling forward. He pulled through the gate following the road leading into the pasture. He then veered off onto a two-track road leading to the west and the base of the mountains. The country would get rough and would be slow going before he reached his destination. Cattle were gathered by horseback in this country. Vehicles were used mostly to haul feed and salt or to work on a broken windmill, pipeline, fence repairs and water-gaps. One thing was sure: wherever Pat chose to set up his surveillance, he would be alone with plenty of time to think things over.

Pat followed the road up and around, in and out of arroyos, and into the foothills, gaining elevation as he went. He had his window down in the Blazer so he could take in the fragrances of the desert along with a little dust he was kicking up. The little primitive road was paralleling the Macho Canyon Draw along the north bank except where it swung away to cross small arroyos that fed into the main draw from the foothills above. About 100 yards below the mouth of the Macho Canyon, a section of the draw with shear rock walls, the little road angled down and into and across the draw where it started back south along the base of the foothills. Rather than follow the little road further south, Pat left the road and drove in the bottom of the sandy draw up toward the mouth of the canyon. The Blazer continued up the bottom of the draw to a point below the canyon walls of Macho Canyon. There, Pat stopped his vehicle and turned off the motor. He got out and stood looking up the draw toward the canyon walls. He remained motionless for a few minutes and took in the beauty of the canyon, a site that only a few knew of but many would have enjoyed viewing if they had access to it. It was awe inspiring. God’s handiwork in full display.

The banks of the draw supported a composition of skunkbush sumac, Apache-plume, and rubber rabbitbrush. The hillsides were now dotted with one-seed juniper and pinon pines. As the elevation increased, the trees became more prevalent. The north-facing slopes were predominately pinon, and the drier south-facing slopes were predominately juniper and mountain mahogany. Ponderosa pine dominated the highest elevations of the mountains and occurred in some of the cold air drainages down below. It was beautiful, wild country.

Pat went to the back of the Blazer and opened the tailgate. He then began to gather the gear needed to set up his surveillance post. He got his lunch box, water bottles, battery-powered lantern, binoculars with night vision, a deflated air mattress, and a tarp. He jammed this stuff into a large, camouflaged backpack and tied his bedroll beneath it. His firearm was holstered on his side. Pat closed the tailgate, pushed the lock button on his door, and closed it. With the backpack in place, he was ready to do some climbing to find a suitable observation site.

The first stage of the climb was the most difficult. From his truck’s location in the bottom of the draw, Pat had to scale about 80 feet of steep slope to get above the canyon wall. It was steep and rocky, and his footing was tenuous with each step. He would step and slide back. He

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grabbed at rocks and shrubs to maintain his position on the steep hillside. Up he went, panting and sweating. At the top, Pat stopped, unloaded the backpack, and bent over at the waist to regain his breath. He then stood above the south canyon wall and scanned down into the canyon, and his eyes followed it in a westerly direction from where it headed out on the mountainside. Scanning the landscape up and to the south, he determined his line of travel and started out again.

Within an hour of reaching the top of the canyon, Pat found a suitable spot to establish his observation post. It was a flat sandstone surface among the oakbrush and juniper about 50 yards above the livestock water storage tank and drinking tub in the pasture. A large, sprawling pinon pine would block the sun in the west and provide shade. Here he would be able to observe anyone passing by during the night needing water. He dropped his pack and canteen. On the two-way radio, he called Sector Control to request radio silence while in observation mode. He reported that he was on the Ax Handle Ranch in the Rock Springs Pasture just above the water storage. He could call out, but no one could call in.

Pat opened his pack and removed the tarp. He spread it out over a flat site.

Then he removed the air mattress and, after removing its stopper, began to blow into the valve stem to inflate it. He had to stop after every few breaths, but eventually the mattress was inflated. With the air mattress positioned on the tarp to protect it against puncture, Pat unbuckled his gun belt and wrapped the belt around the holstered handgun and placed it to the side of the mattress. He removed the binoculars and the flashlight from the backpack and set them beside the pistol.

Pat next removed his lunchbox. He moved to a large rock nearby and sat on it, opening the lunchbox to retrieve a ham sandwich. He removed it from its baggie and quickly took a couple of big bites off the corner of the sandwich. He preferred mayonnaise to mustard but dressed it with mustard for fear that the mayonnaise might spoil. His mother had always warned him about mayonnaise spoilage.

He opened the bag of chips and chewed some into the mix. After his meal, Pat took some Oreos from their package. He loved Oreos and ate them as he had as a kid. He would pull the cookies apart and, using his front teeth and tongue, would scrape the creamy filling into his mouth before eating each cookie. This was the only way to eat an Oreo. After a final swig of water from the canteen, Pat closed the lunchbox and put it and the canteen on the ground.

He unlaced and took off his boots to let them air out and to massage his feet for a few minutes. Replacing his boots and lacing them tight, he moved to the air mattress and got settled in. It wasn’t likely that some Mexicans would try sneaking in in broad daylight, but one never knew for sure. He had to be ready for anything.

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He lay down on the air mattress on his stomach. Propped up on his elbows with binoculars in hand, Pat brought them to his eyes. Slowly, he scanned the landscape below him, intently focusing on details below. He swept right to left, up and down. If something was out there, he would see it. In the distance, he could see a couple dust devils dancing across the desert floor, and off to the south he saw about a dozen buzzards circling high over something of interest below them. He saw no sign of human movement.

The desert was settling down for the evening. Diurnal critters were slowing their activities as dusk came over the land. Soon the nocturnal critters would get active. The cooing of the white-winged dove dominated the desert sounds. That and the breeze through the trees, brush, and grass were about the only sounds Pat heard besides his own breathing.

The mountain shadows now engulfed the whole landscape and there was no more sunshine. Pat set the binoculars aside and moved to get his bedroll, spreading it out over the air mattress. Once the sun set in the desert, the temperatures could drop dramatically, even in summer. Pat poured some water from the canteen into his hand and splashed his face. He felt refreshed and the evaporation of the water from his face and neck cooled him off.

Pat lay back down on the bedroll on top of the air mattress. This time, he lay flat on his back and stared into the darkening sky. In his mind, Pat revisited the happenings of what had been a nice day. But it wasn’t long before the full moon began its climb above the eastern horizon and joined with the stars to create a view of the galaxy, the universe, and something so immense that it could not be comprehended. Away from the light pollution of any town or city, the twinkling lights in the sky were everywhere Pat looked. Pat was filled with wonderment and the obvious incomprehension of God’s existence and infinity, no beginning and no end, and light-years, and the existence of life here and elsewhere. Eventually, Pat’s thoughts would turn to just what was his purpose in such an immense, incomprehensible void. And this led to the question that perplexed him the most lately: What is the purpose of life---his life? He had plenty of time to be dead, but not that much time to be alive. He needed to make the most of it. It was during such contemplation that Pat left consciousness and entered a deep sleep as he lay on his back on his air mattress under the celestial eyes of a million stars.

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**Chapter 3: Goathead**

During the Civil War, the need for beef to feed the solders from both sides led to the growth of cattle herds in the West. After the Civil War, ex-soldiers, mostly Confederate, migrated West looking for a new start. Some became cowboys working for the expanding cattle ranches. What would become the town of Goathead in New Mexico Territory started as a resting area for the cowboys of large cattle drives that passed close by while headed to the railhead at Magdalena about 60 miles away. With the establishment of the first saloon, the genesis of what would become the town of Goathead began. Before long, merchants, a blacksmith and livery, a bank, a medical doctor, two churches, and more saloons sprung up. The population demanded sustenance and the opportunity to sin.

The implementation of the Homestead Acts drew more would-be citizens to the area to settle and make improvements on government lands that they could claim as their own. Unfortunately, what little areas offered water in the form of springs or seeps were already claimed which left only the rangelands that weren’t suitable for crop production. Some of the ambitious homesteaders tried breaking out the prairie to plant edible beans, sweet corn, cotton, wheat, and various vegetables. But these endeavors eventually failed because of Mother Nature did not cooperate by providing the necessary precipitation to grow dryland crops. These grasslands had evolved to sustain the sporadic grazing pressure exerted by the great herds of migrating bison, pronghorn, and elk.

From the growing citizenry, the forefathers of what would become the town of Goathead stepped up and formed the local government, wrote the town charter, implemented necessary services, such as law enforcement and judicial services, schools, a planning department to oversee an orderly growth of their new town, and a taxation bureau.

The population increased gradually, and a nice little town developed. Although Goathead offered its citizens all the services they needed, the town wasn’t destined for rapid growth because it existed and evolved with the ranching community and agricultural related services. Little else in the way of commerce appeared, and due to a lack of resources such as water and oil and gas, a lack of scenic beauty to draw tourists, and no railroad or major highway artery passing through, there was little to draw an increase in the population. Unlike the towns along the Rio Grande, which were established long ago by Spanish explorers and Catholic priests that accompanied them, Goathead was much newer and lacked the historical and cultural pedigree of those ancient towns.

Pat’s great grandfather, John Wade Brennan, had moved west from central Texas in search of a new beginning. He died when Pat was an infant and Pat had no recollection of him. But Pat could only imagine the great sacrifice and hardship it must have taken to give up all one knew and move west by wagon into an unsettled land. Death was a very real possibility. It was very similar to what the Mexican’s go through sneaking into lands with which they are not familiar

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and the hardships to be encountered all along the way including the watchful eyes of the agents of the Border Patrol.

John Wade came to the area to homestead and start a new life. He had been an Indian fighter in Texas, had fought in the Spanish American War, had been a sodbuster and a cowpoke, and even taught school in Texas. But now he had the opportunity to set roots in a new place with his young wife and two young children. He filed a claim on a section of land and was required to make certain improvements and live on the land for a part of each year for five years before he could “prove up” on his claim and take title to it, which he did. He got a full-time position teaching school and worked his homestead whenever he could and full-time during the summers when he was on vacation from teaching. But rather than parlay his 640 acres into a larger spread capable of supporting a profitable herd of cattle, John Wade sold it off to another neighbor wanting to put together a profitable spread for himself. John continued to teach school until his death.

One of John Wade’s sons, Joseph Paul, stayed in Goathead and became a business owner while his other two children left for El Paso and other opportunities. Then, one of Joseph Paul’s children, Billy Paul, remained in Goathead and became a good citizen there while his older sister migrated to Albuquerque. It was James Patrick Brennan, Billy Paul’s first of four children, that grew up in Goathead, then went to the state university, graduated in law enforcement, and then applied to become an agent with the U. S. Border Patrol.

By Pat’s junior high school age, Goathead had grown into a stable town of about 8,000 souls. Like almost every other town, on the highest hill that could be seen by the town population, the first letter of the town name would be formed by rocks and painted white. In Goathead, the big “G” was repainted every year by the freshman high school class as an initiation.

Other than with the workforce of the federal prison not far from town, there was little in the way of population shifts. It was, for the most part, a stable middle class town with a small wealthy class made up of doctors, lawyers, business owners, and the descendant owners of the largest ranches that were established in the Goathead area.

While growing up in Goathead, Pat had been a well-mannered boy, as were his three siblings, and well-behaved for the most part, except for pranks and other mischievous behavior common of teenage boys. By junior high school, Pat was hanging out with fellow neighborhood boys that attended the same school and had the same interests and were of similar ages. They all had English racer style bicycles which ranged from old style to the latest new 10-speeds with recurved handlebars and Italian or French names. Pat had bought his bike, an older Schwinn 3-speed and known for being the fastest bike in the neighborhood, from a high school brother of a friend that was trying to earn money to buy a car. The front and rear fenders had been removed and more comfortable padded seat had been added. After all, the bicycle was their

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primary mode of getting around, whether to school or to baseball practice or to the Plains Movie Theater downtown.

Years later in retrospect, Pat realized that those junior high days were the best of his life. Life was pretty simple: no car payments or car repairs, no girlfriends and all the complications that relationship creates, and no credit cards and bills to entice one’s urge to buy now, pay later, which would ruin many individuals and relationships. Just make good grades in school, do household chores as expected, work part-time and in the summers to make enough money with which to function, put a little in saving for the purchase of a car someday, and try not to strike out when at bat. Very few worries, really.

Life as a high-school student would become much more complicated, confounded by more responsibilities, cars, girlfriends, jealousy of others with cars and girlfriends, financial wants and needs, temptations, and emotional and physical changes that played a major role in almost every thought one had about any and everything.

“Pat, let’s go drag Main tonight and see what’s going on.” one of his friends would say. It might be Scotty, or it might be George or any member of the guys he hung around with. Tonight, it was Beanie calling. His name was Benny Freeney, but his friends called him Beanie Freeney.

Pat had known Benny as long as he could remember, and Pat was one of his young friends that anointed him with the name Beanie. It originated from Benny’s love for beans when he was in the first grade if not before. He loved beans---all beans. Pinto beans, garbanzo beans, navy beans, kidney beans, red beans, black beans, great northern beans, lima beans, Boston baked beans, refried beans, and green beans. Of course, his favorite snack was jellybeans. Thus, it was only a matter of time before his name morphed into Beanie Freeney. His friends used the entire name when addressing him or talking with others about him. It wasn’t “hey Beanie.” It was “hey, Beanie Freeney.” Or if talking about him, it would be “did you hear that Beanie Freeney hit two home runs last night?” Benny loved being Beanie Freeney.

“What, you don’t have a date tonight? Is Beanie Freeney losing his touch with the women?”

“Naw, I’m giving them a much-needed rest.” I’d rather hang with the guys tonight.”

“You driving?”

“I’m hoping Flake can drive so we will have plenty of room in case we get lucky and pick up some girls. I’m trying to track him down. There’s not room enough in my pickup and sure no room in your piece of shit Volkswagen.”

“Hey, hey, don’t demean my piece of shit Volkswagen. It gets me where I need to go and does all I need to do” replied Pat.

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“Whatever. So, plan on someone coming by to get you about seven o’clock.”

“Sounds good.”

At 7:12 a horn honked out front. Pat had been sitting at the kitchen counter talking with his mom and dad and little sister when one of his little brothers yelled “Pat, looks like some guy’s out front for you.”

“Where are you going and who with?” asked his dad. His dad, being a good, concerned parent, wanted to know who he was hanging out with and the plans for the evening although there were seldom any plans unless one was going to a movie or neighborhood dance on someone’s back porch. Usually, it was just dragging Main Street, honking and waving at all the other kids who also had nothing better to do than drag Main. It was a typical of a small-town summer night or school time Friday or Saturday night, unless of course one had a date.

“Beanie Freeney, Flake, and I are just going to drag Main awhile.” That meant a constant back and forth from the A&W on south Main to Greer’s Drive-In on north Main.

“What time will you be home?” asked Pat’s mother.

“Not sure but shouldn’t be too late.”

“You be home by 11:00. There’s no reason to be out any later, and besides, nothing good happens that late at night” Pat’s dad would say.

Invariably, his mother would add “and don’t do anything your dad wouldn’t do.” Pat could only guess at what that meant.

Acknowledging their conditions for his going out, Pat turned and headed for the front door. He had been offered the same precautionary advice from his parents hundreds of times and appreciated that they still wanted to provide direction in his life and what he did on his own time. Some other kids thought Pat’s parents were way too strict and vowed that they wouldn’t put up with such treatment and move away and get their own place. That was just big talk. All the kids loved Pat’s mom and dad because they were so interested and caring and set boundaries. And without saying as much, some of his friends even wished that their own parents paid more attention to where they were going, with whom, and to do what.

“Jesus, Pat, let’s go,” Flake kiddingly jousted from the driver’s side window.

Pat climbed in the back seat of the crew cab Chevrolet and clicked his seat belt.

“Boys, it might be a good night tonight, Beanie supposed. The girls’ softball team won their game this afternoon and they qualified for state. A little birdie told me some would be out tonight celebrating and looking for excitement.”

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“What kind of excitement?” asked Pat.

“Flake offered his perspective on the matter by saying “Probably looking for someone with some warm hands and cold beer.”

“We don’t have either one” Pat replied.

“How many nights have we come out dragging Main with those same optimistic predictions only to go home early with nothing more to show for our efforts than an empty gas tank?”

“With all the times we have tried and struck out, you’d think we’d get lucky once in a while” said Flake, who was like Pat when it came to girls in that he grew especially timid around them and couldn’t find the small talk required to initiate a conversation much less a meaningful one. So, when Pat and most of his buddies went out dragging main, they knew nothing much would develop except a lot of singing along to the pop songs on KOMA radio out of Oklahoma City and waving and honking at the same people back and forth all night long,

One thing different about this night dragging Main was that Beanie Freeney was with them. Beanie didn’t often go out with the guys because he was usually on a date with one of the “big three” as they were referred to by the boys at school. This moniker referenced that these three senior girls intimidated the boys and were almost unapproachable by most boys because of their status around school---cheerleaders, queens, most popular, Miss Personality, and whatever other titles and awards were to be had. Usually, one of the “big three” would be the winner of whatever title was at stake.

None of the “big three” were stuck-up or thought they were better than any of the others, but they were selective with whom they hung out. The unapproachable aspect, according to the boys in school, was primarily due to their looks. Janice was a brunette, Claire was a redhead, and Debbie was a blonde, and they were all beautiful. They had different personalities and looks, but they had two things in common: all were beautiful, and all were stacked. Their movie-star faces drew attention, but it was their chests that were sources of wonderment by the boys at the high school, and maybe by less endowed girls at the school.

If an ordinary boy student approached any of the “big three” for a conversation, usually incoherent babble flowed forth. It was sort of like stage fright. A boy with intentions of starting up a conversation would practice his opening over and over, but when the time came to act, it didn’t come out as practiced but came out as almost unintelligible gibberish. But Beanie Freeney was different. He was the youngest of four children, the others being sisters. Thus, he was used to girls and not intimidated by them. He was full of self-confidence because of his athletic prowess. Although just a sophomore, he was the starting quarterback of the varsity football team, shooting guard on the varsity basketball team, and star of the track team in both running and field events. He was the athletic star of the Goathead High School Plainsmen, and no one else was even close. He was Mr. Sophomore Popularity and president of

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the sophomore class and voted most likely to succeed. He did not feel inferior to any other students, regardless of class, including the senior boys or most beautiful and popular girls, and there was no fear in conversing with them or asking them out on a date, which he did often.

Once one of the senior boys came across Beanie in the library and told him in so many words to leave the senior girls to the senior boys and leave them alone, to which Beanie replied, “Eat shit.” The astonished senior boy was taken so aback that all he could come back with was “meet you after school, punk. We’ll see who eats shit.” This meant that immediately following the school’s final bell, the two combatants were to meet in the side yard of the mortuary across from the school, the regular venue for settling such challenges.

Word spread among the sophomore class like wildfire that Beanie Freeney was going to meet Clarence Norris after school for some fisticuffs. Clarence Norris whose nickname was *Oso*, meaning bear in Spanish, because of his size, dark beard, and was presumed to be tough, although no one ever remembered seeing him fight. *Oso* was on the fringe of the popular students. He played football and socialized with some of the athletes but took a lot of industrial arts classes and worked on cars in his spare time. Dragging main wasn’t one of his regular activities.

The seniors were giddy at the thought that finally someone was going to knock Beanie Freeney back to the subordinate class to which he belonged. Many upper classmen thought Beanie was too big for his britches and would like to see him put back in his place.

All afternoon, the students were anxiously watching the time in anticipation of the 3:27 dismissal bell. When finally the bell did ring, *Oso* and probably 30 of his senior classmates headed for the mortuary lawn. Beanie waited outside the front school door for a few minutes waiting for some of the other sophomores to gather up, but he was also allowing the seniors to get all settled before he showed up. Looking across the street at the mortuary side yard, Beanie could see Clarence standing out front of the other seniors that had formed a semi-circle behind him.

“Time to go” said Beanie to no one in particular as he started off toward the gathering across the street with eight of his sophomore classmates lagging behind. Once the seniors saw Beanie and the sophomore procession headed toward them, they started chirping little words of encouragement to Clarence. “Come on, *Oso*, kick his ass” or “You got him, man or “Teach that little prick a lesson, *Oso.* One senior said out loud that “I’m surprised this pussy is going to show up for an ass-kicking---his own!”

The seniors were working themselves into a frenzy as Beanie Freeney approached with only seconds away from sure defeat. *Oso* was bouncing up and down on his toes and stretching his shoulders to get loosed up, jabbing at the air like he had seen professional fighters on TV do in

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the ring before the bout. He looked tough and looked ready, ready to put that pesky sophomore back in his place.

Beanie’s pace quickened as he drew closer to the assembly of seniors. There was no hesitation, and instead he strode right into the semi-circle of seniors to where *Oso* was standing waiting for his adversary. No stare down, no challenging words of bravado. Just a big ferocious right hand to *Oso*’s mouth and nose. The shit-eating grin *Oso* had been wearing was instantly replaced with an explosion of snot, saliva, blood, and teeth. *Oso’s* arms went slack to his side, his legs buckled out from under him, his eyes rolled back in his head, and he dropped like a sack of flour backwards into a heap on the ground, groaning and slowly grabbing his broken face with both hands. Beanie Freeney then scanned the assemblage of seniors, glaring at each one as if daring one and all to come forward.

“Are we done here?” Beanie asked the senior gathering. No one spoke and most were so intimidated by Beanie’s stare that they timidly looked at their feet or the ground or anything but Beanie’s glaring face. Nothing else was said, so after a few more seconds, Beanie just started walking forward toward the mob of seniors, who opened a lane through which he passed, all in stunned silence, off the mortuary lawn, and on to the sidewalk that led to his home nine blocks away.

It had been unknown how Beanie Freeney could handle himself in a fight until that day when he made it clear that he could handle himself just fine. He never said he couldn’t fight. He just never had occasion to display it. Beanie Freeney had established himself as a lover and a fighter. He was never challenged again for anything he did, including dating the best of the senior girls.

By his senior year, Pat was a starter on the varsity football team and ran the 880 and mile medley on the track team. He was an above-average athlete but not good enough to take it to the next level and knew it and didn’t expect more. What he liked most by team sports was the comradery with other members of the team, the coaches and the instructions they gave, and the good feeling he got representing Goathead High School in athletic competitions. He was very popular with almost all the students. Despite being timid around girls, Pat did date some, but he preferred to spend time with his buddies or doing family things like bird hunting with his granddad or deer hunting with his dad and brothers every October.

Upon graduation, Pat attended the state university and graduated with honors with a degree in law enforcement. Whereas Pat’s younger sister and brothers would all become successful in more professional endeavors, such as nursing, geology, accounting, Pat was interested in pursuing a career dealing with community improvement at some level. While awaiting acceptance into the Border Patrol service, Pat substitute taught middle and high school and really liked it and thought that he might pursue a career in education should law enforcement not work out. But after a lengthy application process, various interviews, and extensive

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background checks, Pat received a letter stating that he had been accepted into the agency contingent on successful completion of all required training courses and achieve required satisfactory evaluations while serving a six-month probationary period.

First stop: Del Rio, Texas, home of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Southern Training Facility. For those candidates that indicated throughout the selection process their interest in serving along the southern border, which Pat had done, they were officially indoctrinated here and then put through a rigorous eight month school that included comprehensive courses in Speaking Spanish, American Law, Mexican Law, firearms training, self-defense training, and an offensive driving course with an emphasis on physical fitness throughout the program It was a brutal program to complete with an average of 77% of those to begin the school washing out prior to the completion of all courses and graduation. Of the 189 persons that were qualified and were accepted into the program, only 43 satisfactorily completed all the required courses and graduated. Pat finished number one in his class.

Pat took each course very seriously and even found them interesting, which meant that he absorbed much of the material needed to successfully complete the course work, but more importantly, to retain the knowledge and skills necessary to serve as an effective Border Patrol Agent.

Because of high standing among the candidates, Pat was considered for several high- profile openings in the agency. The graduates were dispersed all across the southern region, mostly in cities either along the border or nearby such as San Diego, Tucson, and El Paso or near lesser- known towns such as El Centro, CA, Lordsburg, NM, Sanderson, TX, and Laredo, TX. Pat and a few other high finishers were assigned to large interior cities to where illegals had been successful in reaching and melding into the population and were now difficult to locate and extract. These locations also had a population of other illegals that would aid new inhabitants in the form of housing, fake documents, and employment. These cities included Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, and San Antonio. Pat accepted and was assigned to a position in Denver, where he began what would become an exemplary career with the agency.

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**Chapter 4: *Piedras Rojas***

*Ciudad Juarez* is the largest city bordering the United States. With its neighbor to the north, El Paso, Texas, the population of the combined cities is estimated at 2.3 million inhabitants. Where one city ends and the other begins can be determined by its proximity to the Rio Grande, which separates these two cities as well as both countries. But the river isn’t the only line of demarcation. Driving I-10 along the border, one immediately notices the differences between El Paso and *Juarez*. The distinction is overwhelming. The squalor seen by day and the dimness of the lights seen by night make it apparent to the observer that they are looking across the Rio Grande at a city in a third-world country. How can there be such a disparity between the two? And how is it that prosperity exists north of the river, and nothing more than squalor and poverty exists only a few yards to the south?

Teresa Ochoa Morales lived in *Juarez*. She was one of the millions of Mexicans yearning to trade-in poverty in exchange for a life with proper shelter, proper food, proper clothing, and a well-paying job to support proper living conditions. But, like most of her fellow countrymen, as much as she might want to at least try to sneak across the border to America for the opportunity of a better life, she didn’t have the courage to try under such perilous conditions with remote odds of success.

Teresa was not from *Juarez*. She was from a small town in the Mexican state of *Chihuahua* called *Piedras Rojas*, which was south of *Juarez* and north of *Chihuahua*. The area around *Chihuahua* and the little towns that served as satellites thereof were largely engaged in mining and agriculture. Most of the farms had been owned by Mexicans. But now, most of the small native-owned farms were in the hands of large corporate farms that had displaced the Mexican farmers by buying out their farmland based on inflated property taxes that the farmers couldn’t pay or by acquiring their water rights through unscrupulous dealings with politicians and government officials greedy enough to sell out their own people for under-the-table payments. The many farms owned by members of the Mormon Church that arrived in the 1870s were unscathed by such unscrupulous dealings since they had the power of the Mormon Church to protect their interests. However, the average Mexican farmer had no such protector, not their church and not even their own government to which they paid taxes.

Luis Ochoa Morales had farmed 20 acres that had been his part of a farm his father had established, but upon his death the farm was divided up among all seven siblings with each one getting 20 acres. Luis couldn’t afford to purchase any of the others’ acreage in order to put together a decent-sized farm. While his siblings were selling their 20 acres and the irrigation water rights to others, Luis tried to make a go of his 20 acre plot by planting edible crops such as sweet corn, edible beans, tomatoes, chiles, lettuce, and grass hay to sustain a few goats and a milk cow. And when his six children were around to help irrigate and weed the crops or milk the cow or fetch the chicken eggs, all went well. But as the children grew and went off to find

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their own destinies, more of the workload was left to Luis to do, which he eventually couldn’t do while also working full-time as a farm hand at one of the Mormon farms for his primary livelihood.

Mrs. Morales died soon after giving birth to their sixth and youngest child, Teresa. By then, the oldest daughter, Guadalupe, was 16 years old and helping raise her younger siblings. But after her mother’s death, Guadalupe served as a surrogate mother for her younger siblings, cooking, sewing, cleaning, mothering them and getting them ready for the day and ready for bed. This was no transition from child to adult for Guadalupe. She quit school to help her mother take care of the family at 15 and assumed the role full-time the next year after her mother’s death.

Guadalupe’s siblings included brother Diego, 13; brother Roberto, 11; brother Jemez, 8; sister Rosalinda, 5; and Teresa, 1. The three boys helped their father around the farm before and after school while still at home, but Diego moved to *Guaymus* to work in the deep-sea fishing industry at 16 and Roberto became an agricultural equipment mechanic trainee in *Hermosillo* at 15. Jemez stayed in school and continued to help his father with chores around the farm until he reached 18 when he finished school and was hired by one of the Mormon farms to become an irrigation technician.

By now Guadalupe was in her mid-20s and needed to get out on her own. Her job of raising the kids had been successful but difficult on Guadalupe. She had acquired few friends and little in the way of social skills since she had remained in the home those 10 busy years. So, Mr. Morales agreed to take her to the bus station and pay for a one-way ticket to almost any Mexican destination of her choosing.

Guadalupe decided to go to one of the coastal resort cities in hopes of landing a service position which she felt well-suited for after her 10 years of serving as a surrogate mother On the appointed day, Mr. Morales, Rosalinda, Teresa, and Guadalupe drove to the bus station for the sad departure of the oldest child and big sister in search of a new life. There were hugs and kisses and tears of sadness for her leaving, but tears of joy for great expectations of her new independence.

Mr. Morales was now 46, Rosalinda was now 15, and Teresa was now 11. The following year, Mr. Morales received an offer to sell his farm to the Mormon farmer for who he worked. He was offered a good price, the use of a four-room adobe house on the Mormon’s farm, and would retain his position as a farm hand. It was a Godsend---a nice nest egg for his future and a place to live and a place to earn a living. So, what of the Morales family that was left at home relocated down the road to the big farm.

Rosalinda was still going to school and working part-time in a market. Teresa was still going to school and helping her father with household chores. But as the years went by, Rosalinda, who

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had finished school, was working in a local bar while living at home and was content with remaining in *Piedras Rojas.* Teresa, on the other hand, was growing tired of school and itching to get out of *Piedras Rojas* and begin her adult life and see what the rest of the world had to offer.

Mr. Morales had been a good husband, father, and employee since working for the Mormons. He was an honorable man and followed his orders without hesitation. A devout Roman Catholic, he placed all his faith in Jesus, Joseph, and Mary. They watched over him and took care of him and his family, wherever they were in the world. He was sure of it.

But the hard work had taken its toll on his body. He had a stooped appearance and weathered face and had lost most of his thick, black hair. But that was only cosmetic compared with what was beginning to happen to his mind: He was in the early stages of dementia. He was becoming increasingly forgetful about recent events, although memories of his youth and early adulthood remained clear. He was also becoming more and more eccentric. He found an old medal he believed was given to his great grandfather by the great General Pancho Villa when his great grandfather had served in the Revolutionary forces. Mr. Morales began pinning the medal to his chest each and every day as a salute to Pancho. Fellow farm hands at the Mormon farm would tease him in a loving way with no malicious intent. “*Ai cabron, who you and Pancho going to attack today”* they would ask. They began referring to him as “*Generalisimo Morales”* and they would pop to attention and salute him. Mr. Morales would return their gesture with a salute of his own as he began to believe he had been and still was General Morales. Perception became reality in his mind.

Mr. Morales’ physical and mental conditions slowly deteriorated to where he was unable to perform the farm hand work needed at the Mormon farm any longer. Finally, the *patron* forced Mr. Morales to retire by firing him as a farm hand. In addition to the meager government assistance he would receive, he had the money from the sale of his little farm that he had stowed away and hadn’t touched. He would have to move out of the Mormon’s adobe wetback shack, but he would find another similar house that he could afford to rent. Rosalinda and Teresa helped him find just the right place and just at the right price.

After Teresa graduated from high school, which was not a common occurrence in *Piedras Rojas* or most of the small villages in Mexico, she decided she wanted to move to the big city of *Juarez*. What she intended to do in *Juarez* wasn’t yet known. She had developed into a very pretty girl with a bubbly personality, and now that she was educated and had a diploma, she felt as if she would be a good candidate for any number of types of positions because she could learn new skills and transfer her established skills to a new job.

Her mother’s family was from *Juarez*, and she had visited them a few times although she was young at the time. She just remembered how big of a city *Juarez* was. Teresa would wait until

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the time was right before making the move. In the meantime, she would work locally in the bar where Rosalinda worked, and save her *pesos* to finance her move.

Mr. Morales’ mental condition continued to worsen. Old tales he had heard from his grandfather about his father’s time soldiering in the revolution with Pancho Villa were now starting to seem like memories of happenings he had experienced himself. He began to believe he participated in events three generations ago and was proud of his service to the cause. He began wearing an old gun belt with a derelict pistol incapable of firing bullets, which he didn’t have anyway, holstered at his side. But he was harmless and was known and loved by the locals so that no one did more than some harmless teasing.

Mr. Morales, or “*Generalismo* Morales” as he became known, was a popular character in the same vain as “Whistling Sergio,” a local that rode his bike all over town, and when someone would whistle at him, he would jump from his moving bike and grab whatever rocks he could find and start slinging them at the perpetrator of the whistle. The older kids thought it great fun to whistle at Sergio and watch his performance ejecting himself from his moving bike, but once they realized that Sergio had a strong arm and was surprisingly accurate with his rock throwing, they began to lose interest in him. The legend of “Whistling Sergio” would only grow after he was gone as would the legend of “*Generalismo* Morales” years later.

Finally, the time came when Teresa was ready to spread her wings and move away from her father and sister and the comfort zone of *Piedras Rojas.* She was excited and terrified about the unknown that lay ahead, but what was the worst thing that could happen? She wouldn’t like it and could move back to the sanctity of her hometown. But she wasn’t leaving for *Juarez* with any negative thoughts. She would make it work.

Rosalinda took Mr. Morales by one arm, and Teresa took the other arm and the two girls assisted Mr. Morales out of the house, across the grassless yard, and to the old Chevy pickup that was parked in the front dirt yard. Teresa opened the passenger door and the girls helped lift him in. Teresa helped Mr. Morales scoot across to the middle position on the bench seat and buckled the seat belt around him while Rosalinda went back to the house to gather Teresa’s one large suitcase and put it in the bed of the pickup. Teresa got in on the passenger’s side, and when Rosalinda returned, she went around to the driver’s side, got in, and started the pickup.

“Where we going” Mr. Morales asked.

Rosalinda looked across at Teresa and saw the beginnings of tears as Rosalinda answered “don’t you remember that we are taking Teresa to the bus station today. She is going to *Juarez* for a while.”

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“What for?”

Teresa wiped her eyes and learned over so she could look eye-to-eye with her father. “I am going to *Juarez* to find a job, a good job so you will be proud of me.”

With confusion on his face, Mr. Morales said “will you be back tonight for supper?”

No, Papa, I will be gone for a while because sometimes it takes a long time to find a good job.” She held her father’s weathered hands in hers. I will come back for a visit as soon as I find a good job.”

“Where will you eat?”

“She will eat in *Juarez* when she gets there” Rosalinda answered for Teresa, who was choked up. “By the way, Papa, where did you get that shirt? I don’t recognize it.”

“Don’t know. Mama maybe gave it to me for Christmas.” Mrs. Morales passed away 16 years ago, but sometimes he thought she was still around but must be mad at him because she never comes to visit him anymore.

Rosalina then remarked “I know why I didn’t recognize it---it’s inside out!”

Rosalinda and Teresa both chuckled at that as their moods lightened and they momentarily forgot about the sadness surrounding the purpose of the trip to the bus station.

“It’s okay” was all Mr. Morales had to say.

Reaching the little bus station, which was housed in the same building as a little local café, Rosalinda pulled into the dirt parking lot and parked. All three unloaded out of the pickup with Rosalinda gathering Teresa’s suitcase from the pickup bed, and Teresa assisting an unsteady Mr. Morales as he slowly moved along from the pickup toward the bus station door, hunched over and shuffling his feet as he went.

Once inside the bus station, Teresa guided her father toward the passenger seating area and sat him down. “Papa, stay here while I go help Rosalinda.”

“What is Rosalinda doing?”

“She’s checking me and my suitcase in for my bus trip.”

“Where you going?”

“Remember, I’m going to *Juarez*.”

“What for?”

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“Just wait here, Papa. We will be right back.” Teresa joined Rosalinda at the bus counter, where she paid for her one-way ticket to *Juarez.*

“It is open seating, *seniorita* “the lady behind the counter said as she handed to Teresa her ticket and luggage claim check. “Once the bus arrives, we will allow the arriving passengers to depart the bus for a quick break. We then will make a boarding announcement when time to board the bus. The bus is just arriving, so we will be boarding in about 10 minutes.”

“Thank you” Teresa responded, and then turned to rejoin her sister and father in the seating area.

They sat mostly in silence, the two sisters deep in thought and Mr. Morales gently rocking back and forth as he stared peacefully at the floor. Teresa held his hands gently in hers.

“Bus 724 for *El Sueco* and *Juarez* is ready for boarding” came the announcement from the loud -speaker. All those seated began to rise. Passengers were gathering up their belongings for the trip and hugging loved ones that were staying behind.

“Well, little sister, take care of yourself” Rosalinda said as she reached for Teresa to hug her.

Teresa, tears welling up in her eyes again replied “I will, my sister. Take care of yourself and take care of Papa. I will send word to you where I am and how to get in touch with me. I love you and will miss you.”

Teresa then turned to her father and gently wrapped her arms around him. She squeezed the fragile man firmly but not too tight. “Papa, I love you and will miss you. I will be back soon to see you and will pray for you every day.”

Mr. Morales responded in a quiet voice “where you going?” He couldn’t comprehend that he was losing his youngest child, the last of the six precious gifts left to him by his dearly departed companion and wife.

The flood gates opened as Teresa began sobbing uncontrollably, weeping at a sadness she had never experienced before. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Teresa, struggling to form the words replied “take care of yourself, Papa. I love you” and gently kissed him on his forehead. Struggling to contain her emotions and regain her normal breathing pattern, she turned toward the door that exited to the bus. At the door, she dared to turn around and wave at the two of them one last time. They returned the gesture, and then she was gone, up into the bus, all alone with sadness as her companion. Rosalinda and Mr. Morales stood staring blankly at the door through which Teresa had exited, then Rosalinda gripped Mr. Morales under his right arm to support him as they turned toward the station exit and shuffled out the door and toward the pickup.

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Rosalinda had remained stoic for her father’s sake. It might have been too much for him to have both of his daughter’s emotional wrecks at the same time. “Papa, there is one thing you need to do.”

“What?”

“Zip up your pants. I’m not going to do it for you.” Rosalinda said gently smiling and trying to lighten the mood.

On the bus, Teresa sat in the front row behind the driver. She really wanted to avoid meaningless conversation with others that she didn’t know or want to know. In almost unbearable sadness, Teresa sat alone with only her thoughts to keep her company. She thought of her family members and times together with them. She thought of the love her father had for her and she for him. He had raised her, provided for her, loved her, and yet she might not see him again. And she thought of the mother that brought her into this world but left it before Teresa got to know her.

Teresa’s mind was racing, a blur of memories and thoughts. But soon the monotonous sound of the bus tires on the roadway coupled with the exhaustion created by the emotional events of the morning began to slow down Teresa’s thought processes slower and slower until she was overtaken with a deep sleep.

She had told her father that she would seek out her mother’s relatives and their assistance about where to look for good jobs. But upon her arrival and after a weak, week-long search, Teresa decided to do it all on her own. Not sure how to even look for a job in such as large, unknown city, and not even sure what kind of job she could find or what kind of work she could do, she landed a job working as a hostess at one of the high-brow restaurants near the Santa Fe Street Bridge, one of the major arteries for tourists’ foot traffic into *Juarez* from El Paso. She liked meeting people and enjoyed the work. She was conscientious in her work and pleasant to be around and was soon promoted to the wait staff where she could make a decent wage, especially when attending to Americans that tipped well. She was a hit as a waitress and became popular among the gringos from north of the border that frequented *Juarez* on weekends. She was naturally pretty, as many Mexican girls are. With makeup and stylish hair, she appeared older than her age.

It wasn’t uncommon for the men to make advances toward her because of her looks and personality, but also because many assumed she was a prostitute too, like the ones along the bar awaiting a willing client. She liked the attention they paid her and liked joking and flirting with them. As she continued to blossom into a beautiful woman, Teresa was also developing her social and communication skills.

Teresa became friendly with many of the young prostitutes that worked the bars and lounges along the border. They would tell her that she should go into prostitution because she was so

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beautiful and so good with others and that she could do very well in earnings. Some did very well monetarily and said that she would too. Teresa would just laugh it off. But listening to the girls talking about their experiences and their clients, Teresa began to take an interest in their work and lifestyles. She found their stories of their experiences to be sometimes exciting, sometimes humorous, and usually erotic. Most of the professional girls seemed to enjoy what they did and how well they did it. Making a living lying on one’s back might be lucrative, especially when the soldiers from Fort Bliss got their paychecks and poured across the border from some bi-weekly fun.

After about two years of serving as a waitress and serious contemplation of prostitution, Teresa was very close to giving it a try. Her own sexual experiences had been minimal, mostly just making out and getting felt up by a few of the local boys from school. She had never gone all the way while in *Piedras Rojas,* although many of her friends had done it with a boy. It didn’t happen to her until she was working in *Juarez* and became friendly with several male workmates.

When she first gave herself away, she thought she was in love and thought that going all the way was how to keep him. But for him, it was just another conquest, her first time but just another notch in the gun handle for him. He knew he didn’t need to tie up the rest of his life with one woman so quickly.

The others were either the same way, or just not the boys she wanted to spend the rest of her life with, but sex seemed to be part of an evening out with a nice boy. Teresa liked the kissing, the cuddling, the rubbing against each other, the sweat and slime, and the ecstasy that only screwing can sometimes erupt into. It was all new to her and she liked it.

Prostitution was legal in *Juarez* and was closely monitored by the health department with regular mandatory exams for contagions and crabs. A career in prostitution definitely ran counter to her Catholic upbringing and faith, but she was able to compartmentalize activities associated with such a career. She enjoyed the glamour and could make good money, but she would have to reconcile not confessing her sins to her priest and the fear of damnation. She had to make a living now. She could worry about damnation later.

The *Gato* Club was the sort of joint sought after by male college students and soldiers from nearby Fort Bliss in addition to young business types wanting to show their out-of-town counterparts or customers a good time. Some came to drink cheap drinks and ogle at the pretty Mexican girls. Some came with intention of getting a piece of ass. The way they figured, it was cheaper to pay for a piece of ass with a prostitute than to take a local girl out, wine and dine her costing more money with no guarantee of getting any.

The *Gato* Club offered a nice selection of pretty girls and was a high-class joint for Juarez. It was not a strip club. It was a legitimate restaurant and bar during the day. However, other

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than ham sandwiches on a roll for a quarter, there was no food service after 9:00 PM when the *Gato* Club offered only liquor and girls for sale. It had a reputation across the border on the American side as having the nicest prostitutes in Juarez. They cost a little more, but they were classy and fun to fuck around with. It was at the *Gato* Club that Teresa began the next stage of her life. Teresa Morales, prostitute.

She was timid at first, unsure of herself and the ways of this new trade. But being a nice person that was vivacious and flirty, it didn’t take long for her timidity to evaporate. She watched the more experienced girls to learn tricks of the trade. Although not astute in business, Teresa soon concluded that she could be successful at prostitution but would need to acquire skills in marketing, salesmanship, negotiations, competition, and consummation of the deal. She would also have to be a good, fun fuck.

The men would come and go from the *Gato* Club. But once they were seated and had ordered and gotten their drinks, the girls would move in. The girls were up around the bar visiting with each other or, if lucky, sitting with a prospective customer or already in the back room plying her trade. Among the ladies was sort of a pecking, or maybe fucking order was a more appropriate term, they followed to move in on the men in the booths, tables, and at the bar. These girls would flirt around with the men hoping to interest them in going to the back room.

“I sit with you? You buy me drink?” a girl would ask a patron.

Men unaccustomed to the procedure might be intimidated or just too speechless to accept the offer to sit, visit, and drink. Those would decline and just continue drinking and not be bothered again. In some cases, after a few drinks, a man might loosen up and gather up his courage and call to one of the women he seemed particularly interested in to come over and have a drink with him. The negotiations would soon begin in earnest.

“How much?” one would ask.

“You special. For you, twenty dollar.”

“Ahh, that’s too much”

“You don’t think me pretty?”

“Yes, you are very pretty, but I don’t have twenty dollars.”

“You American. You have twenty dollar. Okay, nineteen dollar just for you.”

“Fifteen dollars” the mark would counter.

“No, no. I go backroom eighteen dollar because me like you.”

“Seventeen dollars and we can go to the back room.”

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“Okay, you pay me now. Seventeen dollar. You come with me.”

To the back of the bar behind the curtains they would go. The girl would leave her mark with a “nurse” that would squeeze his penis and inspect the genitals for telltale signs of disease or infection. “You give me quarter American” the nurse would demand in order to pay for her services. Once cleared by the nurse, he would be directed to one of the little rooms with a bed, mirrored walls, mirrored ceiling, and a small wash sink in the corner. He would undress and lay on the bed until the girl arrived. Nervous men left their socks on. The girl would pay the bartender the pimp fee of half of the take and keep the rest for herself. Then she would go to the preparation room for primping before going into the room to join her client.

A good prostitute would be fun, entertaining, exotic, and erotic. Prostitutes knew that most of their clients were nervous about the whole situation, so they would do their best to make the man feel at ease so he could enjoy the experience. It might not last long but it should be a memorable experience. This for that. *Quid pro quo*. Sex in exchange for money. A business deal. And a good, fun fuck.

Teresa was good at it. She was fun and flirty. She asked about the men, what they did for a living in America, were the girls in America pretty, chitchat. The men enjoyed her and oftentimes requested her services. Teresa usually recognized a repeat customer and made a big deal about his coming back again. She would make him feel as special as she could and that he deserved special attention.

She was doing fine financially. She was paying her bills, was frugal, and was able to start saving a little money. She rented a small room at a weekly rate at a rundown hotel a block behind the club where many other working girls lived. When she wasn’t working, it was her retreat where she enjoyed her privacy, reading and listening to music. She might even occasionally go out with some of the other girls if they weren’t working. She liked her work and continued to be one of the most popular girls in the joint.

She also was trying to learn as much English as she could. She would listen closely to the Americans, and she would try her best to use words and phrases and sentences that she had heard. Teresa became fairly proficient in carrying on a respectable conversation even if under less than respectable circumstances.

Teresa maintained a sense of classiness and did her best to maintain this persona in and out of her business dealings.

“How much for a blow job?”

“No sucky, just fucky.”

“Ahh, come on, I’ll pay you good money for a blow job.”

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“No sucky. You wanna fucky? Twenty dollar.”

Birth control is another indiscretion according to the church. But to a prostitute, it is a mandatory tool of the trade. Although birth control measures rarely fail, inexplicably it failed for Teresa. She discovered that she was pregnant. Because she had few relationships with men outside her work, the impregnator had to have been one of her clients. No way to know which one, however, but it didn’t matter anyway. Now Teresa had to consider her options: Abortion was the easiest and quickest solution; Give birth and give the baby up for adoption; Give birth and keep and raise the child. The last option would be the most disruptive to a prostitute. One would have to suspend earning money through sexual favors before and after the delivery. Would one raise a child in this environment and pay for someone to keep the baby while she worked? Not likely.

Others that got knocked-up usually got an abortion. Almost none saw the pregnancy all the way through. If they did, however, most of the time they would keep the child but had a mother or other family member that would keep and raise the baby while the girl was working. This was not available to Teresa since she had no living mother and no family in *Juarez*. Thoughtful consideration was necessary to resolve this life-changing event, but she would take all the time necessary to arrive at a solution.

It never entered Teresa’s mind to abort the fetus. She had disobeyed many church teachings but destroying a human life would not be one of them. But late term pregnancy would mean a loss of livelihood. When her pregnancy would become obvious, she would have to suspend her work and lose much needed income and her livelihood. Then, upon her return to work, childcare would be too expensive. Thoughtful consideration was necessary to resolve this life-changing event.

Teresa continued to ply her trade at The *Gato* Club and told nobody there or any of her other friends of her situation. But she became increasingly aware that her priorities in life were shifting. Her self-interests became secondary to those of the child she was carrying. Maternal instincts developed that she did not know she had. She was now in her 19th year.

Teresa had dealings with Americans almost daily. She knew how they were. They had money. They had a good time. They weren’t concerned about the requirements of survival such as food, water, clothing, and shelter. Teresa had never really given serious thought about escaping to the United States. She was Mexican. Mexico was her country and the country of her forefathers. But she started considering opportunities she would like for a child if she were to have it. They weren’t available in Mexico. She would be a single mother without a husband, struggling to get by her entire life. However, there might be opportunities in the United States if she could get there. And if she could get there in time to deliver her baby, the child would automatically be an American citizen. And his father, whoever he was, was an American too, so

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that would mean her baby would be half American and half Mexican. That would be worth the price of admission, which wouldn’t come cheap.

The more Teresa thought of her options, the clearer it became. She would give birth to the child and raise it and love it and take care of it, preferably in the United States. Now she had to formulate a plan of attack on getting across the border.

Teresa couldn’t afford the cost of a coyote to smuggle her in. The $3,000-5,000 could better be spent on necessities once she got in on her own. She asked questions of locals, she read the paper daily to understand the difficulty of sneaking into the United States and the mistakes others made trying to do so. She concluded that entering the United States from *Juarez* was virtually impossible. Green Suburbans everywhere. Too many border agents. Too many dogs. The Rio Grande with steep, concrete sides. Too many barbed-wire fences. Too many others trying to get in. Mass confusion. Occasionally, one might make it. But this was no way for a pregnant girl to sneak in successfully.

She would have to devise a better plan. Think outside the box. Her chances would be better if she tried crossing somewhere obscure, and that meant somewhere too difficult for most to try. A single person might make it in undetected. The chances were still not good. It was still a long shot. She knew it. But she had to try for the sake of her child. She was now in her fifth month, her pregnancy obvious on her thin frame.

After considering all options available in making such an attempt, Teresa decided to attempt an entry somewhere beneath the boot heel of New Mexico. She closed out her account at the *banco*. She quit her job at The *Gato* Club, paid out her room rent, and packed a few clothes in her frayed suitcase. She would leave all other belongings behind with friends. She paid for a bus ticket from *Juarez* to *Palomas*. She was soon on her way west along the northern frontier just south of the border she intended to cross.

*Palomas*, Mexico is across the border from the American town of Columbus, New Mexico. Columbus is a town of historical note. It was here on March 9, 1916, four years after New Mexico’s statehood, that Mexican revolutionary, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, invaded the United States, killing eighteen American citizens. Troops under the command of General “Black Jack” Pershing, dispatched by President Woodrow Wilson, unsuccessfully pursued Villa deep into Mexico. The attack on Columbus was the first time a foreign military force has invaded the 48 contiguous states.

At *Palomas*, Teresa concluded her bus trip. Here she would gather supplies needed for the assault on the United States border. She bought some well-made hiking boots, dark green tee-shirts, a pair of dark green nylon parachute pants with zip-off leggings, and a dark-colored windbreaker. She bought packages of dried meat and fruit, flour tortillas, water bottles, matches, a Mag-light and a Leatherman Tool. She also purchased a black backpack.

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In addition to the food stuffs she brought, edibles from native plants would supplement her diet. Sweet tasting screwbeans from *tornillo* and prickleypear cactus fruits would provide additional nutrition and reduce the weight of her pack. In the higher country, pinon nuts would provide excellent sustenance.

Just as Teresa was about to check out of the market and pay for her supplies, she noticed a shelf with some cheap toys on display. The one that caught her eye was a cheap Raggedy Ann doll with painted eyes, nose, and mouth and two red pigtails sticking out of the side of its head. Regardless of the gender her baby would be, this doll would be its first toy, bought in her native country of Mexico. She paid for it along with the other goods and stuffed them into the new backpack she had purchased. She strung her belt through the Leatherman Tool and buckled it. She then discarded her old suitcase.

Through the local market, Teresa was able to arrange transport to the west toward *Aqua Fria*. One of their local suppliers that also delivered produce to *Aqua Fria* and *Nogales* agreed to take Teresa to her drop point under the boot heel of New Mexico. Mr. Trujillo was not usually involved in the transport of humans, but he understood Teresa’s strong will, her situation, and why she would risk it. He would never try it but agreed to drop her off along the way for no fee.

They departed *Palomas* at 4:30 in the afternoon and it took about another hour and a half to reach a drop point along the south end of the Peloncillo Mountains. It was a remote area but not one that the *coyotes* frequented with their human cargo due to the difficult terrain. It would be impossible to move a group of illegals consisting of men, woman, and children through this area on foot and keep them all together. But it just might work for a strong-willed individual determined to raise her youngster in the country of opportunity.

Mr. Trujillo slowed his Chevy delivery van to a stop. “*Muchas gracias*,” Teresa said as she leaned over and hugged Mr. Trujillo’s neck. She then gathered her belongings, opened the van door, and stepped out. Mr. Trujillo had seven children of his own and wasn’t oblivious to one’s determination to improve one’s life. He was taken aback that such a pretty girl that appeared so unprepared to be dropped off in such a desolate, hostile place was asking to be dropped off in such a desolate, hostile place.

*“Senorita, le gusta los platanos?”* Mr. Trujillo asked as he reached back behind his seat to pull out a small, plastic bag containing four bananas. *“Muy bueno”* she said as she reached in to retrieve the sack of bananas. Although she had just met Mr. Trujillo, he was a Mexican like herself and meant only the best for her. “B*uena suerte,”*he said as he dropped the three-speed van into first gear, and took off in a small cloud of dust with his waving hand high in the air out of the driver-side window. Off into the setting sun he went. So far, everything was proceeding according to plan, and so far, luck was with her.

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Teresa gathered her gear and moved into a nearby arroyo. There was a large desert willow with its fragrant pink blossoms and shade for cover. She moved her gear to the trunk of the tree and lay down beneath it. She would get some rest and wait until darkness before making her move north across the border. It was going to be a clear, moonlit night, good for separating herself from the border. She would prepare for her crossing attempt after the sun dropped behind the mountains.

With the heat, tension, and fatigue taking their toll, Teresa was soon asleep. She remained so until the cooing of white-winged dove awakened her at dusk. That signaled time to awake and prepare to cross the border.

She took a drink of water from one of her bottles and replaced the cap. Then she began repacking what gear she had removed from the backpack after she removed her windshirt, hiking boots, a bottle of water, and some foodstuffs. The sun had set behind the Peloncillo Mountains resulting in a noticeable loss of daylight and a noticeable cooling of the air temperature. She worked with what remaining daylight was available to get squared away for her move across the border.

After she had completed changing out her tennis shoes for her hiking boots and slipping into her black windshirt, Teresa sat down in the sand and leaning against the tree, she opened her bottle of water and took a sip. After a few more leisurely sips of water, she reached for a banana, peeled it back, and took a bite. Teresa chewed slowly deep in thought but thinking of nothing in particular other than her upcoming assault on the border.

Once Teresa’s bottle of water was empty and the banana completely eaten, she rolled over on her knees, dug a hole in the sand, and put the banana peel and plastic water bottle in the hole and covered them. She stood up and stretched, reaching her hands as high in the air as she could. She then lifted the backpack up and swung it around on to her back and cinched the straps so they were tight. Teresa turned south and took a long, sweeping gaze of Mexico through the fading daylight. It was one last look before leaving her home country.

Now turning around to the north, Teresa took a couple of deep breaths and stepped out toward the border, a barbed wire fence only yards away. It was almost dark now, but she didn’t want to use the flashlight for fear of detection. Her eyes had adjusted to the dim light, but she couldn’t make out much detail now, only generally make out objects, such as rocks and bushes, as she moved through the night toward the border fence.

When she reached the fence, Teresa swung the backpack from her back and over the top wire to the American side and set it on the ground. Then just before she dropped to the ground to slide under the bottom wire, Teresa spoke to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and then crossed herself.

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**Chapter 5: The Encounter**

Once Teresa was on the American side of the border and had secured her backpack on her back, she nervously began moving away from the border as quickly as her limited night vision would allow. Anxiety enveloped her, and she felt as if she was being pursued, that they were watching her and would be closing in on her, that she was about to be caught. Of course, it was all her imagination and there was not another soul within miles of her.

As her apprehension subsided, she fell into a marching pace moving across the desert floor by the light provided by the rising full moon accompanied by a zillion stars to light the way. The sandy surface made for some difficult walking, but the brush density was light, and she moved quickly around and through the interspaces. If and when the authorities arrived at her entry point, they would be looking for tracks and be good at following them. At the outset, she decided that she would leave her tracks in favor of moving as quickly as possible away from the border. But once away from the border, she broke off some creosote branches and took the time to sweep away her tracks for 50 yards of so. She then veered toward the west and quickened her movement toward the rocky terrain of the foothills. Although it was now dark, the moonlight lit the way somewhat and one could make out the imposing outline of the high mountains against the horizon. The going would be slower and more difficult now going uphill in rocky terrain but tracking her wouldn’t be as easy.

Looking back for headlights that might mean searchers had been mobilized, she saw none. She continued moving as rapidly as she could. The steepness of the climb was increasing, and her breathing became labored. Puffing and panting, she continued up into the rocks only stopping occasionally, hands on her hips and bending at the waist to catch her breath.

In El Paso, the Southern Border Patrol Monitoring Center received an electronic alert that movement had been detected along the border just east of the south end of Peloncillo Mountains. Sgt. Scott Warner had seen the blip on his screen and called the Shift Commander, Lt. Oliver Jones, to the control desk to assist in analyzing what he had seen.

“Lieutenant, a blip just occurred in the NM southwest sector just east of the Peloncillo Mountains. What do you think, sir?”

“Could be someone crossing over. Was it just a blip as if one person? Maybe just a coyote set if off.”

“Just a blip, sir. Even if an illegal, it couldn’t have been more than a single suspect.”

“Scott, keep your eye on it, and watch for more movement. Even if it is just a single coming over, I think we can find him after daylight. I’ll go ahead and try to contact Chief Pat Brennan on his radio. Maybe he has someone in that sector. If not, he can check it out in the morning. If it is someone, they won’t get far during the night in that terrain.”

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“Roger that, sir. I’ll keep watching and alert you if I see any more activity.”

“Okay, Scott.”

Lt. Jones went to the main radio and called for Chief Brennan. He heard a recorded message that Pat was out of radio contact but ironically was on a surveillance mission in the very sector where the activity had been detected.

Lt. Jones returned to Sgt. Warner’s location. “Scott, I think Brennan is already in the sector on a surveillance mission, but he is on radio silence. Let’s just hope that if it’s an illegal, Pat will spot him. Otherwise, we’ll alert the acting Sector Chief after sunup to mobilize some others to take a look.”

“Sounds good, sir.”

Under a full moon in the rocky terrain, the shadows can make each step uncertain. With no headlights in view, Teresa began to slow down and became even more cautious where she stepped. She didn’t need a yucca spear puncture or pricklypear spines stuck in her ankles or legs. She moved more slowly up the mountain side to the northwest, maneuvering around the boulders and brush that became more prevalent.

Teresa wanted to get as far away from the border as quickly as she could so kept moving with only short breaks to regain her breath, rest her burning leg muscles, and sip some water. Then she would resume her journey.

After a couple of hours of climbing the side of the mountain, Teresa felt like she was high enough in the foothills to remain undetected and rest throughout the daylight hours in a much cooler place than the desert floor. Teresa slowed to a stop. She lifted her right leg up on to a rock and hunched over at the waist with both hands on her hips as she labored for a breath. From this position, Teresa turned her head looking downhill to the right and scanned the desert below. Still no headlights. So far, so good. Teresa felt a sigh of relief and a sense of encouragement that she just might pull this off for her and her baby.

She dropped her backpack and removed a water bottle. Teresa sat on the rock that had been supporting her and unscrewed the water bottle lid and drank several large gulps to quench her thirst. She dug around in her backpack until she found a candy bar, which she ate quickly, followed by more water. After Teresa’s thirst had been quenched and she had gotten her breath back, she just sat a few more minutes staring into the darkness that enveloped the desert below. She then stood, strapped the backpack on, and began her journey to the north and parallel to the mountain peaks. It was still slow and difficult terrain to navigate. Although she wasn’t going uphill any longer, her footing was unstable because of the steep slope from left to right and the loose soil in which it was difficult to maintain solid footing. One misstep could end badly----broken bones, yucca punctures, or worse.

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Through the night and into the early morning darkness Teresa continued in a northwesterly direction by the light of the moon. Maybe she had avoided detection, at least so far. But, she had much more ground to cover. She couldn’t slow down until daylight when she would find a place to take refuge from the sight of others and the heat that was to come.

During the heat of the day, the great serpent had retreated to the shade under a ledge in the rock outcropping. But as the shadows grew longer and the temperature began to cool in the later afternoon, the snake ventured out in search of prey. Maybe a kangaroo rat or a gray rock squirrel or cottontail rabbit. It slithered slowly forward, around large rocks and other impediments, flicking its tongue as a means of detecting the scent of potential food. It would stop, slowly coil, and remain motionless while its senses gathered external stimuli to be processed by the primitive brain. Then it would slither out of its coiled position and continue its hunt for unsuspecting prey.

The snake was an old timer. It had many buttons on its coon tail. It was at least six feet in length and of thick girth with large black diamonds on its back. The western diamondback rattlesnake had never encountered a human but had encountered large animals, such as mule deer, javelinas, porcupines, and even cattle. When the snake encountered animals too large to serve as edible prey, it would become defensive, coiling up and shaking its rattles into a buzzing sound to make its presence known. It would strike defensively when threatened no matter how large the would-be enemy.

When searching for edible prey, however, the snake was the aggressor and on the offensive. Rattlesnakes have poor vision, but their other senses are acute. Through their bodies, they are able to detect ground tremors caused by the movement of even small animals. The snake continually flicked its tongue to pick up the scent of the prey, and once the prey was within striking distance, the snake detected the heat given off by warm-blooded animals through the loreal pit, the sophisticated organ located on the face of the snake and unique to pit vipers. As if guided by an unseen beam from the snake to its prey, with lightning speed the snake would strike its target before it realized what had happened. The venom that was injected into the prey by way of the two fangs would paralyze its prey as the snake moved onto the it, spreading its jaws to engulf and swallow it.

In the early morning darkness, the snake was coiled and lying in wait for unsuspecting prey. Although the air temperature had cooled, the soil and rocks on the surface of the ground were still warm, plenty warm for the snake to remain active.

It was about 4:30 in the morning, and Teresa had been hiking in difficult terrain for at least eight hours. Her exhaustion had dulled her senses from what they were when she was fresh at the beginning of her journey. Teresa was stumbling more and losing her footing more, sliding sideways in the loose soil, losing her balance, and grabbing at rocks or brush stems to prevent from sliding down the steep hill. The more she travelled, the more exhausted she became. She

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wasn’t as alert as she was earlier in the journey. She had slowed and began thinking about the kind of place she might find to hole up during the daylight hours soon to come. But now, with the moon set behind the mountains and sunrise more than an hour away, it was the darkest time of the nighttime.

The serpent felt ground tremors up through its body. Slight at first but strengthening. Its brain processed that something large had been detected and it was coming toward the snake. Whatever it was, it was too heavy and too large to be edible prey. The snake got into protective mode. It retracted its heavy body into an even tighter coil with its triangular head perched on top of its coiled body facing toward the oncoming threat. It was ready to strike.

As Teresa unknowingly was almost on the snake, the loreal pit detected the heat from Teresa’s body. Its tail began shaking at an incredible speed shaking the rattles and giving off the terrifying and unmistakable buzzing sound of a rattlesnake.

The very instant Teresa was alerted by the snake’s buzzing, a shot of adrenaline was fired from her adrenal glands into her blood system and then throughout her body. Her brain immediately triggered the response to flee, but the panic that accompanied this response didn’t direct her in which direction to go to avoid the danger. Where was the snake? It sounded close but no way to see it in the darkness. Where was the buzzing coming from?

In a split second, the snake struck. It fired forward from its coiled position hitting Teresa above the left knee from its hillside position. In the same split second, Teresa felt the snake’s powerful strike and reacted with a loud shriek. She knew instantly and exactly what had hit her leg and that she was in immediate danger from the strike.

She fell sideways away from the snake, her feet slipping, trying to keep her balance as she began sliding down hill away from the encounter. The snake’s rattling became irregular as it too began to retreat from the site of the attack. *“Oh, help me God!”* Teresa screamed as she stabilized her sliding and came to rest against a large rock. Her mind was racing with terror, not just from the attack but the immediate recognition that she was in real trouble.

Pat was beginning to arouse from having dozed off while on surveillance of the area with his night-vision binoculars. He was sitting on the ground and leaning against a boulder facing downhill to the east. He must have dozed off. The last thing he remembered was scanning both the desert below and the hills around him with his night-vision binoculars, which he had been doing since 9:00 PM after he awoke from a preparatory nap. It was about 4:30 in the morning and the darkest time of the night. It was about an hour before some sunlight would appear on the eastern horizon.

What was that? He heard a noise. Kind of like a scream, a person’s scream. He didn’t move. He sat as still as he could, listening intently for the sound again. Had he been dreaming, or did he really hear something? He sat perfectly still, listening intently. The only sounds he heard

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now were his breathing and the rustling of the leaves and grass in the gentle breeze. Maybe it had been the wailing of a coyote. But maybe not.

Again, another wail only louder and in English this time. “Help me!” It sounded like a woman’s voice. But where was it coming from? Pat stood up and brought the night vision lenses to his eyes.

Teresa’s mind was racing. Her concentration on her mission had been shattered, and she was in full panic mode. What do I do now? Where am I? I need medical help, but from where and from whom? Will my baby be okay? Will I be okay? *“God help me!”* she screamed at the top of her lungs.

Pat heard Teresa’s plea loud and clear. It sounded as if it was coming from below and to the south of his location. Somebody was in serious trouble, and he had to help her as quickly as possible.

Teresa was trying her best to block out emotional responses of fear and panic and think rationally about what to do. Settle down and think what to do, she thought to herself. What were her options, she thought? Return to Mexico or continue north in hopes of finding a ranch and someone that could help her? She knew which way to get back to Mexico, but she also knew how far she was away from the border and how long it had taken to get this far. She wouldn’t survive returning to Mexico. She would die first. She would have to find help here in America---and very soon.

What had first felt like a tingling sensation in her lower left thigh now became a dull pain in her thigh and a throbbing pain down into her knee and lower leg. The toxic venom was now in her blood stream and beginning to transport to other parts of her body. She had to calm down in order to keep her pulse rate down and slow the movement of her circulating blood.

Teresa also knew she needed to do some sort of first aid on herself and quickly. In the darkness, she felt around in her backpack and found her flashlight, another water bottle and a roll of toilet paper. While standing, Teresa pulled her outer pants down below her knees and shined the light on the snake bite. The two distinct puncture wounds were marked by a mere drop of blood but were surrounded by yellow and blue coloration and swelling in the tissue around them. Teresa unscrewed the water bottle cap and poured some water onto a big pad of toilet paper and cleaned the bite. While she had the water bottle out, she took a few gulps to refresh her dry mouth.

She set the bottle down and dug round in her backpack looking for something to wrap around her leg for a tourniquet. Finding nothing, she pulled the tie string from the waist of her pants and quickly tied it above the bite with medium pressure. Teresa shined he light around her position to make sure she hadn’t dropped something from her backpack. Finding nothing, Teresa repositioned the backpack on her back and started off in an easterly direction downhill

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toward the desert floor below. She just hoped she could find help, even if from an American *federale.*

Pat took a drink of water from his canteen and placed it back into its holster and strapped it around his waist. He strapped on his gunbelt, gabbed his night-vision glasses and binoculars, and zipped up his jacket. It was still dark, but along the far eastern horizon, an orange line appeared meaning that sunrise near.

He stepped away from his campsite leaving the bedding and foodstuffs as they were. About 30 feet from his campsite, the light from his flashlight fell upon a large boulder on which he could scale to the top. He did, stood up, placed his hands on either side of his mouth and yelled “Do you need help?”

He waited a half a minute and again yelled “Do you need help?”

Teresa was slowly and carefully moving down the steep, rocky, and brushy slope when she thought she heard someone call out. She stopped completely and concentrated totally on another shout if it were to come. Again, she heard the call and this time she made out the words “need help.” She didn’t know if that meant that a male somewhere up and to the north needed help or was offering help, but it didn’t matter. What did matter was another human was within reach of her.

“Help me!” Teresa yelled in her best English as loud as she could. “Help me!”

Pat, on top of the boulder and listening intently for another plea for help, heard Teresa’s stress call distinctly. He was able to locate the approximate location of the pleas for help. He headed in that direction as carefully but as quickly as he could. “I’m coming” he yelled as loud as he could.

Teresa had heard Pat’s response that he was on his way. Her left leg was more painful now and the throbbing was in her calf and down into her ankle now. She felt swelling around and behind her left knee making it hard to walk. Her toes on her left foot were tingling and painful with the weight of each step. She felt her body cooling down and she started getting chilled. She stopped and removed her backpack and sat down leaning against her backpack for support. With the last bit of energy she could muster, Teresa yelled out “Here.” There was nothing more she could do. She would have to wait to be found.

Orange light from the impending sunrise was spreading across the landscape and eating up the darkness. Pat turned off his flashlight but kept moving as rapidly as he could down the steep slope, sometimes stumbling and sliding but kept his balance and didn’t fall. He would call out to Teresa “Where are you?” but kept moving, not stopping for a response which didn’t come anyway. Between each step forward, Pat would watch where he was stepping and then look out across the terrain below him, his eyes searching quickly for the girl.

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Pat stopped and brought the field glasses up to his eyes. He had to be getting close, he thought. There she is! Pat thought to himself as his eyes detected something black, perhaps a windbreaker that was reflecting the sunrise’s light and making it more noticeable. Pat figured it was about 100 yards away, down and to the right from his direction of travel. As he studied what he assumed was the girl, he couldn’t detect any movement. “Hello!” Pat hollered at the black object. No response. “Can you hear me down there?” No response. Pat hurried as fast as he could to get to her.

As he approached and was within 10 yards of her, Pat identified the person as a young woman resting against a backpack and apparently asleep. But addressing her as he approached more closely, she still didn’t respond, and he knew she was in some serious trouble. She appeared to be unconscious rather than asleep.

Pat set his flashlight down and removed his jacket. He placed the back of his right hand up against Teresa’s neck below her jaw to feel her pulse. Pat found it to be faint and slow. What had happened to her? He thought. There were no apparent signs of an injury. He then began to carefully unzip Teresa’s jacket. Reaching the end of the zipper, Pat opened the jacket and began to slip it off Teresa’s shoulders one at a time. He then reached around behind Teresa’s back and pulled the jacket free from around her. He then began to feel around her neck, shoulders, rib cage, back, and chest. Pat was unable to detect any injury. He ran his fingers through Teresa’s hair and parted it in several places so he could inspect her scalp for a head injury. Nothing.

Pat then carefully leaned Teresa forward and away from the backpack. He reached around behind her with the other hand and slid the backpack out to the side so her could lay her head on it. Then he rearranged her body position so that she was laying prone on her back but perpendicular to the slope and level on the ground. With her head no longer elevated, she might regain consciousness if he could increase the blood supply to her brain.

Pat reached into his backpack to retrieve a bottle of water. After unscrewing the lid, he poured some water in his left hand and gently splashed Teresa’s face. No reaction. He poured a little water from the bottle on to both sides of her neck. Still nothing. He then splashed Teresa’s face again and almost immediately he heard her softly groan and twitch her eyelids.

Pat leaned down close to Teresa’s ear and softly said “You are safe now. I am here to help you. You are going to be alright.”

Teresa opened her eyes and just stared at Pat’s face, it being obvious that she didn’t know who he was or where she was. Pat continued speaking to Teresa, but she seemed to be unable to comprehend his words or form words of her own.

“I am Pat Brennan. I am with the Border Patrol, but I am here to help you, not get you in trouble. Try to relax and tell me what happened and where you hurt.”

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Teresa just continued to stare into Pat’s face for a few seconds, then tears formed in her eyes and with one blink, they began to run down her cheeks.

“Where do you hurt?”

“*Cascabelle”* she replied tearfully, barely able to speak.

“A rattlesnake? Did you get bit by a snake? Where? Show me.”

“*Si senor”* and Teresa tried to adjust her position but was too weak to move. She touched her left hand to her left knee so she could touch the location of the snake bite. “*Senor,* here.”

“May I take a look” he said as he began to unzip the left legging and roll it up. He kept rolling it up and as he did, he saw that her entire lower leg was turning a putrid yellow, blue, with some black streaking. He then saw the two puncture marks left by the snake. The tourniquet Teresa had fashioned out of her pants waist string had done a good job of slowing the movement of the toxin up her leg.

Pat touched Teresa’s leg in a few places, and Teresa grimaced in pain when he did. The stretching of the tissue as it swells is the cause of the pain, which is exacerbated when touched or moved. Pat knew there wasn’t much he could do to improve Teresa’s condition except get her to a medical professional as soon as possible. But how?

Pat poured some water from his canteen over Teresa’s left leg. Even the weight of the water made her grimace, but it might sooth the pain at least temporarily. Then Teresa dropped a bombshell on Pat. In her broken English, she asked “My baby?”

“Baby, what baby? Where is your baby?” he asked, concerned that she had a small child with her when she got bit, but did she have it with her somewhere or did she leave it somewhere?

Teresa extended her left arm to her belly and touched it with her fingers. “Here” was her only response.

“You are pregnant” stating what was now the obvious. Without asking permission, Pat slowly raised her shirt so that he could observe the state of her pregnancy.

“How many months?” Pat asked her.

Teresa half lifted her left hand from her belly with all five fingers spread.

“Five months, yes?”

Teresa only nodded.

Now it was critical to get this girl help to save her life and limbs but also the child within. What the hell was he going to do? Whatever it was, it better be fast.

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Pat removed his two-way radio from his belt and turned the frequency knob to where he was able to call out on Rancher Radio, and Bud’s number specifically.

“Ax Handle, this is Brennan, over. Ax Handle, come in, over. We have an emergency, over.”

Pat released the talk button and awaited a response. One came back almost immediately.

“Pat, this is Martha. What emergency you got, over?”

It being Pat’s turn to respond, depressed the talk button again. “A young woman with a severe snake bite. Five months pregnant. Is Bud handy, over?”

Bud had been outside doing something, but had entered the house and heard the radio communication between Martha and Pat. “Let me have it” he said as he reached for the radio in Martha’s hand.

“What you got, Pat, over.”

“Young female Mexican with bad snake bite, five months pregnant, in the Rock Spring Pasture. Needs medical attention real fast, over.”

“Okay, I can drive out to meet you. Where should I go, over.”

“I will try to get her to the east fence at the watergap below the water storage. It is going to take me at least an hour. Call for an ambulance to meet you at the asphalt and lead them in to the watergap, over.”

“Got it, Pat. Stay in touch. Out.”

“Thanks, Bud. See you soon. Brennan out.”

While Pat began quickly preparing for the strenuous hike by shedding anything unneeded that would lighten the load, such as jackets, foodstuffs, water bottles, and equipment from Teresa’s backpack. Bud had Martha call the hospital in Lordsburg to request an ambulance to the location at the ranch that she described in detail. It would take about 45 minutes for the ambulance to make the trip and then more time for Bud to lead them to the rendezvous place. If all went well, Pat and the girl would be at the watergap when the ambulance arrived to take her to the Lordsburg hospital.

Pat knew he wouldn’t be able to carry the girl in his arms all that way in such difficult terrain. He wouldn’t be able to see where he was stepping, and he knew he wasn’t strong enough to carry her for long without a break. So Pat squatted down for Teresa to climb on to his back. He had helped her get in a standing position against a large boulder with her backpack on her back. He then backed into her and reached back with both hands to get a hold of her. He leaned

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forward and gently pulled Teresa toward his back and upon it. Pat shifted from side to side to get Teresa in a good carrying position on his back.

“Here we go” Pat said softly as he took his first step downhill with Teresa on his back. Teresa groggily moaned but said nothing.

The loose, rocky soil made for unstable footing as he moved down the foothills toward the fence line below that separated the desert pasture from the foothills. He stopped about every hundred yards to get his breath and reset. He would occasionally ask Teresa if she was doing alright but got no response other than an occasional moan. Her soft groans were increasing in frequency indicating the pain was probably increasing. All Pat could do was feel bad for her plight and keep on going to the watergap in the fence.

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**Chapter 6: The Rescue**

Pat had made good progress. It had been difficult, and he was give-out, but although he had stumbled several times, he had maintained his balance and not fallen. But Teresa was in obvious pain and terribly uncomfortable. Once they reached the watergap, Pat and Teresa were both relieved. It was now about 7:12 AM.

The ambulance had just reached Bud’s location at the end of the asphalt, and it was following Bud on the dirt ranch road southwest to the west pasture fence line and rendezvous with Pat and the girl. They should be there within 20 minutes.

Pat and Teresa had very little conversation on the hike out of the foothills to the watergap. Pat was short of breath during the hike, and Teresa was only semi-conscious. But once they arrived at the rendezvous location, Teresa became more conscious and aware of what Pat had just done for her, his empathy for her condition, and his sacrifice to save her. Tears began to slide down her face.

“Just relax and don’t worry about anything. The ambulance is coming to take you to the hospital so you can get well, and the doctors will take care of your baby too” Pat offered in Spanish.

“You my savior, *senor* Pat. You my saint.” A sweet smile crossed her face “you Saint Patrick to me. Bless you St. Patrick.” And she hugged him firmly with the appreciation for having saved her from that evil snake and the hopeful conviction that he would not return her to Mexico. She may have assumed too much of St. Patrick.

It was now after 7:00 AM and the Sector Office in Lordsburg was changing shifts. With Chief Brennan gone on his overnight surveillance stakeout, Assistant Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth had responsibility for operations within the sector. She would stay through the shift change and remain acting supervisor until Chief Brennan either arrived to relieve her or called in with other instructions. There had been no word from Chief since he went on radio silence last night about 8:45 PM. The sun had been up now for several hours, but there had been no word from the Chief.

When the new shift arrived, Assistant Chief Hollingsworth reminded all that Chief Brennan had been on an overnighter but should be calling in soon to report what his surveillance had detected, if anything. Elizabeth made the assignments to the new shift, and once word came in from Chief Brennan, she would notify everyone if some changes had to be made. Otherwise, go stop the illegals.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth had joined the agency in the Northern Section, which had responsibility for the United States’ northern border with Canada. She was a graduate of small liberal arts college in western Pennsylvania and majored in Political Science and Public Policy. She had no

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structured law enforcement training until, after graduation, she applied for and was accepted into the Border Patrol Training Program.

Good women candidates were always in demand for professional positions in most agencies of the federal government. In the Border Patrol, there were so few women agents in the field that those who persevered and received acceptable annual evaluations had excellent opportunities to advance into supervisory positions.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth certainly fit this career path. She had moved up rapidly and was considered by other field agents that knew her to be a rising star, headed for high-ranking positions. She wasn’t exceptional, and her men counterparts even thought she was lacking in common sense, but she knew the agency regulations inside and out and most administrative agency policies and wasn’t afraid to call “foul” on another agent if out-of-line even the slightest. Needless to say, she wasn’t the most liked field agent by her peers.

When Elizabeth was transferred to the Lordsburg Sector as Assistant Chief, she had only been with the agency for four years. The other agents in the sector office in Bellingham, Washington from which she transferred were glad to see her go. They felt like she would do almost anything to continue her climb of the agency’s career ladder, even at the expense of others. She was too ambitious, they thought.

By 7:30 AM, Chief Brennan still had not checked-in and remained on radio silence to where he was not receiving radio transmissions. Assistant Chief Hollingsworth was starting to get a little agitated at the Chief for not checking-in, partly because she was concerned for him, partly because she wanted to go off-duty and go home, and partly because she thought he wasn’t following agency guidelines by not reporting-in on a timely basis.

Bud, with Martha in the cab of the pickup with the ambulance close behind, arrived at the watergap on the fence line at 7:34 AM. Bud immediately climbed out of the pickup, the trailing dust from both vehicles swirling in a cloud around him as he rushed up the fence line to where Pat was on the opposite side of the fence.

“Bud, can you help me lift her over the fence?”

“No problem” as Bud bent over at the fence to come through to the west side

Pat put his foot on one of the barbed-wire strands to push it down and lifted the strand above it for Bud to crouch through. “How’s she doing, buddy,” Bud asked Pat as they both bent over and placed their arms under Teresa’s body so they could lift her up and over into the waiting arms of the two medical attendants.

“Not good, Bud. It is a bad bite and it’s been several hours since the strike.”

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“Well, we called Dr. Williams and told him about the predicament the Mexican girl was in. He knows snake bites and is the one I would want to treat me if had a rattlesnake bite me. He knows what has to be done to save a person’s life. Hardy Wells lost a leg to Dr. William’s saw, but he lived. Anyway, he said he would be there when the ambulance arrived because he has to make his morning rounds at the hospital anyway.”

After Teresa was in the possession of the medical attendants, Pat and Bud assisted each other slip through the wire fence. Then Pat rushed to catch up with the attendants telling them, “The snake bite is on her lower left thigh above the knee. She has a self-applied tourniquet above the bite on her left leg. We will be right behind you.”

Once Teresa was on the gurney inside the ambulance, one attendant got in the driver’s seat while the other was attending to Teresa in back as the ambulance slowly turned around to return on the road on which it came. With a pair of scissors, he cut away her left pant leg at her upper thigh. The leg was swollen to almost double its diameter below the tourniquet, and it was discolored. He checked her temperature, her blood pressure, and other vitals and began her on an IV for hydration. The girl was only semi-conscious, eyes closed and breathing shallowly.

Pat was in the passenger’s seat in Bud’s pickup as Martha had relocated to the back seat of the four-door pickup. After the ambulance got turned around and started out toward the trip to the hospital, Bud dropped his pickup in first gear, let out the clutch, and the pickup lurched forward after the ambulance.

“How are you doing, Pat?” Martha asked.

“Worn out, concerned for the girl---you know. I will fill both of you in on the events that transpired, but first I better check in with the office and break radio silence.

“Brennan to Sector Control, over.” A few seconds passed.

“This is Sector Control, over. What’s your location, Chief?”

Pat explained to the radio operator where they were and that they were on their way to the Lordsburg Hospital with a female suspect suffering from a severe rattlesnake bite. The time was 7:38 AM.

Elizabeth had decided that if Brennan had not reported in by 7:45 AM, she would assign another agent to review the Chief’s filed surveillance plan for this operation and go to the surveillance site at the Ax Handle Ranch to make sure Chief Brennan had not been harmed and try to locate him. However, at 7:38 AM, Pat Brennan called-in to report that he had intercepted a suspect, a young Mexican woman that was suffering from a severe rattlesnake bite and he was accompanying her to the Lordsburg Hospital by ambulance with an estimated ETA of 8:20 AM. The Assistant Chief intended to be at the hospital upon the ambulance’s arrival.

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“Sorry to bother you two about this,” Pat said as Bud’s pickup bounced along in the cloud of dust created by the ambulance.

Almost simultaneously Martha and Bud replied that they were happy to help, that this was no bother, and what else can they do to help.

“So Pat, what happens to the girl now?” Bud asked.

“First thing we‘ve got to do is save the girl’s life, which might not be easy. And what is even worse is that she is about five months pregnant.”

“Oh no” Martha replied with real concern in her voice. Quietly, Martha bowed her head and began praying silently.

“I don’t know a lot about her because I was breathing so hard carrying her out that I had difficulty talking to her. And she wasn’t up for carrying on a conversation either. She was barely conscious anyway. But she did say her name was Teresa Morales, and she was from a town down toward Chihuahua called *Piedras Rojas.*”

“I didn’t see her well. How old of a girl is she?” Martha asked.

“Nineteen. Pretty girl but tough.”

Once the pickup left the dirt road and jumped upon the asphalt of Highway 338 to Lordsburg, the three occupants in the pickup became quiet as each one was overcome by their own reflective moods. The quietness in the cab was drowned out by the whir of the tires on the asphalt and the wind whistling through the driver’s side window. Bud was concentrating on staying up with the ambulance. Martha was worrying about Teresa and her baby. Pat was thinking that it was a good thing that he had been on surveillance last night but really concerned for the girl, her baby, and her immediate future.

Bud broke the silence with “I hate those damn rattlesnakes. I see them most every day, but steer clear of them. I know they are good for eatin’ rats and mice and such, so I don’t kill them. But they scare me. They have hit my boots, but luckily not over the top to where they bit my leg. But ole’ Willard Smith got hit on the hand while fiddlin’ around with his livestock trailer and damn near lost it. It swelled up to the size of a boxing glove and turned yellow and green and blue and black and purple. It might have been pretty if it hadn’t been a hand.” Pat and Martha said nothing.

They were making good time drafting behind the ambulance with its siren and emergency lights flashing. They would be there soon, but would it be soon enough?

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The ambulance had notified the hospital that they would be arriving with a snake bite victim and all the details pertinent to the injury, and to have emergency personnel ready for immediate treatment upon arrival.

Teresa had left the state of semi-unconsciousness, thanks to the IV in her arm, and she was more awake now but groggy.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“You are in an ambulance, and we are taking you to the hospital because you were bitten by a rattlesnake. Do you remember that?” the attendant asked.

“*Si.* My baby okay? St. Patrick save me and my baby.”

The attendant had listened to the baby in her stomach and reported to the hospital that its vitals sounded weak. Teresa’s vitals sounded acceptable, but the concern wasn’t for Teresa’s survival but for the survival of the baby and Teresa’s left leg. It didn’t look good.

“Your baby is fine, and you are going to be just fine too. Try and relax, and we will be there soon.”

“Thank you, *senor”* she said, but then under her breath with her eyes closed, she said “Mary, Mother of God, please save my baby.”

The ambulance, sirens blaring and lights flashing, followed by Bud’s red Ford pickup, came screaming up the driveway to the emergency room door located at the terminal end of the south wing of the Bootheel Regional Hospital. The large red neon sign on the awning read \_MERGENCY. The first E was burned out and silent.

Even before the ambulance came to a complete stop, a rush of activity began. Out from behind the double sliding door came two men and one woman, all dressed in white coats. The ambulance driver was out of the driver’s seat and opening the rear doors to access the patient. The attendant was monitoring Teresa’s vital signs and preparing her to be transferred to the hospital gurney. Pat came rushing up followed closely by Bud and Martha. Elizabeth Hollingsworth, who had been sitting in her agency Blazer in the visitor’s parking lot, also joined the congregation. Pat saw her walk up and gave her a nod of his head to acknowledge her presence and to indicate that he was too busy to come visit right now.

One of the men in white said to no one in particular “I’m Dr. Warren, emergency room doctor on duty. This is the girl with the snake bite, I presume?”

Pat came forward and answered the question, addressing the doctor with “I’m Chief Brennan of the Lordsburg Sector Office and was the one that found her. Her name is Teresa Morales, by

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the way. She was bitten on the left leg above the knee. She has drifted in and out of consciousness.”

“The bite must have occurred close to 4:30 this morning, because that’s about when I heard what sounded like a yell or scream which turned out to be Teresa” Pat continued. “She had the good sense to use that string as a tourniquet.”

After Teresa’s transfer to the hospital gurney, she sat up a little, enough to see Pat in the crowd that had gathered. She was able to catch his eye, which brought a thin grin to her lips. Although she was a stranger in a strange place surrounded by strangers, just seeing Pat, St. Patrick her savior, gave her comfort and put her mind at ease.

After visiting with Dr. Warren, Pat slipped through those attending to Teresa so he could speak to her before they took her into the emergency room, which they were about to do.

“How are you, Teresa? Still in pain?”

“A little” she replied.

“The doctors are taking you in now to make you well. You and the baby will be fine. I will be here for you, okay?”

Teresa replied with a nod and a reserved smile. Pat got some encouragement from Teresa’s response, observing what appeared to be an increased awareness and acceptance of the situation she was now in.

“Take her to Room C” Dr. Warren advised the orderly and nurse that were gurney-side for Teresa. “We are all set up in Room C. Let’s go people.”

The small crowd stepped away from the gurney to allow it unobstructed access to the doors to the emergency wing. As the gurney was pushed through the doors, Pat, Martha, Elizabeth, and the ambulance attendant followed it down the hall to Room C but lingered in the hallway outside the room. Bud drove his pickup to the parking lot to clear the emergency driveway but joined his group shortly after parking.

“Is Dr. Williams going to assist” Martha inquired of the staff in Room C working on removing Teresa clothes and getting her into a hospital gown.

“Dr. Williams is in the building and has been notified of the girl’s arrival. Dr. Williams will be the attending physician on her case and will be assisting here in the emergency ward.”

With that, the small contingent moved on down the hallway to the visitor’s seating area.

In the visitor’s lounge, Pat was finally able to catch up with Elizabeth.

“Sounds like you had a busy night, Chief” Elizabeth inquired.

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“Well, actually it was uneventful all night until this morning early when I heard the girl cry out. Then it got interesting.”

“When we didn’t hear from you first thing this morning, we got concerned. I was going to send out Johnson to look for you at the surveillance spot outlined in your mission plan, but then you broke radio silence and called in.”

“Well, as you can imagine, I had my hands full literally trying to get Teresa to safety, which was an arduous task to say the least. I just didn’t have time to break radio silence until we got her on her way to the hospital, and that’s when I called in.”

“I understand. Good job of finding the suspect and apprehending her, sir. Who would you like for me to assign to watch duty?”

“Oh, I don’t think we need to worry about her escaping from the hospital and going on the lam, do you?” Pat asked rhetorically. She is a lone wolf with no companions. No one is complicit with her in this mission. She is all alone. And, I hate to say it but her medical condition isn’t conducive to resuming travel on foot. Once she has recuperated, she is bound for Mexico.

“Okay, sir. What can I do for you now?”

“Assign someone to serve as acting chief while you go take a shower, get some sleep, and eat or whatever you need to do. Take as long as you need. I have to catch a ride back to the ranch with Bud and Martha and gather up all my gear and collect whatever Teresa left behind in our hurry to drop weight and get her to medical treatment. It will probably be 4:00-4:30 before I can gather the gear, retrieve the Blazer, and return to the office. I am on open radio, so call if you need anything. And thanks for your good work.”

“Thank you, sir” Elizabeth replied as she and Pat stood up from the chairs. They shook hands and Elizabeth turned for the hall and the exit. Pat then walked over to where Bud and Martha were sitting.

“Any word?”

“Nothing yet. They did call Dr. Williams over the loud-speaker to Emergency Room C, so I guess they are getting close to some in-depth examination or confirmation of what they think” said Martha somewhat concerned.

“Bud, once we know a little more about Teresa’s condition, are you planning on going back to the ranch? I need to get my Blazer and gather up the rest of my stuff. Just whenever works for me” Pat said hoping it would be sooner rather than later.

“Yeah, after we get an update on her condition, I reckon we should head on back.”

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Just about that time, Dr. Williams shuffled in, and all stood to greet him. He was wearing his trademark short-sleeve dress shirt with a clip-on tie and his stethoscope tucked into his front pocket. At 78, Dr. Williams was still actively practicing medicine, although he didn’t perform surgeries or deliver babies anymore. There were doctors that specialized in those areas now.

Dr. Joe Williams had served on the surgical staff at a prominent hospital in Texas before deciding to leave for the opportunity to open his own private practice. In looking for a place that needed medical services as well as a place he thought he and his young family would like. Lordsburg entered his consideration when the hospital received a letter inquiring about the availability of any staff doctor interested in relocating and starting his own private practice. The town needed more and better medical services at the time. After much thought and a long drive to Lordsburg from Texas to check it out, he and Mrs. Williams returned home, packed up their belongings, and made the move. It was where he started his practice, where they raised their two daughters, and where they became integral members of the community. They never regretted the decision to relocate.

Dr. Williams always carried his black medical bag with him whether making his rounds at the hospital or making house calls. It was always in the trunk of his Ford Galaxy, available whenever it was needed. He was available seven days a week, and many patients would call him at home at night or weekends, describe their illness or injury and be told to come by his house to be examined. He would instruct them to come to the side door where the porch light would lead the way

Dr. Williams never got into golf. He said that he couldn’t think up enough bullshit to talk about during a whole round. Instead, he loved to bird hunt---dove and quail and pheasant too, although the pheasant season in New Mexico was only for two days and the bag limit was only two a day. Since there were no rivers nearby and little cropland for the birds, pheasant weren’t that plentiful anyway.

His tastes were simple. In addition to bird hunting, he liked to tie his own flies and fly fish for trout and was good at it. He liked to manually mow his own yard until he got too old to do so. And he loved to shell pecans on Sundays while watching the Dallas Cowboys on the television set. But practicing medicine and helping people get well was his real passion. He was a physician Socrates would be happy with.

Bud spoke first as he extended his hand. “Hell Joe. How ya been? The doctorin’ business keepin’ ya busy?”

“Yes, it is, Bud. There is no shortage of sick people” he said with a sly grin. Then turning to Martha, he said “Good morning, Martha. Nice to see two of my favorite people. Everybody fine, I hope?”

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“Doctor, we are doing fine, probably better than the little Mexican girl that got bit by the snake is doing. Have you seen her yet? By the way” Martha interrupted turning toward Pat “this is Chief Brennan of the Border Patrol.” And then back to Dr. Williams, “He’s the one that found the girl up in our Rock Springs Pasture and brought her in.”

“Nice to meet you, sir” Pat said, extending his hand to Dr. Williams. “I’ve heard a lot about you.

“Nice to meet you as well, Chief.”

“So, Joe, can ya tell us anything ‘bout the girl’s condition?”

“She’s going to survive, and I think her baby will survive to birth, but don’t know what, if any, defects the baby will have from the venom getting into its system. But Teresa has some dead or severely damaged tissue in her leg. I’m going in now to probe deeper and see what we can save and what we can’t. She has been moved to the surgical wing upstairs so we can get to work on her immediately after our consult. So, I better go, but we will get word to you when we have concluded what must be done.”

“Oh, dear Lord!” Martha exclaimed. “Let’s all pray together for this girl” Martha said as she reached out to Bud, Dr. Williams, and Pat to all hold hands and pray.

“You all pray, but I’ve got work to do” said Dr. Williams as he turned to go to the stairwell and up to the second floor for surgery.

Dr. Williams’ departure didn’t deter Martha from leading a prayer.

“Our dearest Heavenly Father, if it be your will, please see Teresa through this difficult time. Save her life and the life of her baby. They are such delicate gifts from you to us that we need them as our inspiration. Please do not take them from us, dear Lord. Amen.”

All raised their heads and let go of the other’s hands.

“I don’t suppose we can do anythin’ else now. Shall we go?” Bud asked the other two.

“Might as well” said Pat.

They all turned toward the hall and out the exit door leading to the visitor’s parking lot where Bud had parked.

Pat climbed into the backseat for the ride back to the ranch. “Martha, sit up front with Bud. I am absolutely worn out and may doze a little bit on the way if you don’t mind.”

“Have at it, Chief. It has been a real stressful day and not going to get much better for a while, I reckon.”

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Martha was emotionally drained and didn’t say much. She and Bud had limited conversations as far as Pat could tell, but he was deep in his thoughts everything from Teresa’s plight to what was the meaning of life and his role in it.

Pat had felt awkward in the visitor’s lounge when Martha called for a prayer and holding hands in a public setting. He was still thinking about it. Pat had a different approach to religion. He didn’t feel at all comfortable expressing his faith in public for all to see, and even in the Bible somewhere he remembered it saying to pray in private so as not to appear like the hypocrites. He believed in the power of self-prayer, that it made one stronger and more confident to meet the reason for the prayer. He wasn’t a big believer in the effectiveness of praying for others.

Pat believed in God, the creator of all things that put his creation into motion. Kind of the watchmaker theory. God wouldn’t intervene to change an outcome from what was destined to happen. He felt that God could probably intervene, but he either chose not to or stayed away altogether when he saw how badly people treated each other. God wasn’t dead, but He had thrown in the towel. Too bad Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest wasn’t working as well within the human population as it was in the great wildlife herds of the African plain.

Pat was raised in a Protestant church, but his predecessors had been of the Catholic faith. Although he attended church very little anymore, he found the subject of religion fascinating and read a good bit about the history of Christianity through the ages and of the different Protestant denominations, their beliefs, and how they differed from one another. He remained totally confused as to how God’s word could be interpreted in so many different ways that the result was the splitting of established congregations and the formation of whole new churches. Which one was the true church spreading the true word, and how could he be sure? The Protestants, in his opinion, were arrogant in their belief that they understood the scriptures correctly and saved by the grace of God. Catholics believed that one was saved by works and that one had to reach out to God through a church intermediary and ultimately the Pope in Rome. That didn’t seem to make since to Pat. Christianity would be okay if it weren’t for the Christians.

As Bud slowed the pickup down, he exited the asphalt and veered on to the dirt road leading to his headquarters. All in the pickup were snapped back to the present time and place and away from wherever they had been in their thoughts.

“Kids, we’re home.” Bud said as he slowed the pickup and downshifted. “Pat, how bout I drop Martha at the house and then I will get you as close to your camp site as I can, at least to the water storage.”

“Thanks, Bud. That will be helpful. That way I can go gather up Teresa’s stuff and then go break my camp down. It’s going to be a long day since I’ve got a lot of agency forms to

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complete about today’s incident. The Bureau is going to be out some serious money on Teresa’s hospital and doctor’s care.”

“I reckon they can afford it.”

Bud slowly crawled up the rocky, winding road to the water storage in the Rock Spring Pasture. He could probably make it in 2-wheel drive but dropped it into 4-wheel just to be sure.

“Here ya go, Chief. Curbside service” as Bud braked to a stop below the water storage.

Pat opened the passenger-side door then extended his right hand to Bud. “I really appreciate all you and Martha did for us today. We couldn’t have rescued her without you two. Maybe I’ll see you when I come back through your corral on the way out. If not, thanks again.

“I reckon ya’ll sleep good tonight and be ready to hit the hay. But, as ya sort through today’s happenings through that brain of yours, remember that ya did the ultimate good deed today---saved a fellow human’s life.”

“Assuming she lives through it, I must give you and Martha credit as well, my friend. Take care.” And Pat closed the pickup door, gave a little wave goodbye, and started hiking to find the spot where he first saw Teresa.

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**Chapter 7: Deliverance**

While Bud, Martha, and Pat were returning to the Ax Handle, Teresa’s surgery was beginning. It was now mid-morning. Dr. Williams was assisting, but one of the bright young surgeons on contract with the hospital was performing the surgery. There was an obstetrician monitoring the baby’s vitals and health. Much of the muscle and other tissue around and below the knee of the left leg were severely necrotic from the snake’s venom. This tissue had to be removed since it could never become viable again.

The doctors were trying their best to save Teresa’s left leg, but after all the probing and deep tissue sampling, they concluded that there was just too much deterioration to save it. Therefore, the final decision was made to amputate the leg just above the knee. The tourniquet that Teresa put above the knee had been successful in slowing the dispersion of the toxins further up the leg and to more vital body parts. But still, the young surgeon began to saw off Teresa’s left leg.

Meanwhile, the baby was showing signs of weakness, which could result in premature delivery, low birth weight, but hopefully nothing more. IVs directly into the placenta were expected to slow the digression and stabilize the baby’s condition.

Following her surgery, Teresa was taken to the recovery room where her condition would be monitored until she awoke from the anesthesia. As she began to arouse and regain consciousness, one of the attending nurses called for Dr. Williams to the recovery room. He had dropped by only 15 minutes ago to see if she had regained consciousness, which she had not. Now he needed to be there when she awakened to sooth her and console her and advise her of what had to be done to save her life and that of her baby’s. He would also need a Spanish interpreter.

Dr. Williams was lying on the fake red leather couch in the doctors’ lounge in the hospital smoking his pipe when heard the page for his presence at the surgical recovery room. He sat up and swung his legs around so they touched the floor. He tamped out the burning tobacco in his pipe and then knocked it out of his pipe by banging it gently on the metal trash can. He then headed for the surgical floor.

When he arrived, Teresa was just coming to but still groggy. Her eye lids were flickering as if about to open, and she was showing signs or restlessness. The attending nurse checked her vitals and the IV in her arm and then applied a cool, damp cloth to Teresa’s face and forehead while speaking to her in a soothing tone that all would be fine and that she would get well.

Dr. Williams was bed side observing Teresa’s responses to the nurse’s words and was monitoring her awareness level. He was loved by all his patients even though he was right-to-the point and gruff but caring for his patients couldn’t be disguised despite his gruff bedside manner. Dr. Williams could be tender when the situation called for tenderness., and this

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situation required a great amount of tenderness which he would not have to fake. He felt bad for what Teresa had gone through.

As Teresa became alert enough to comprehend what Dr. Williams was going to tell her, through the interpreter, he would explain to Teresa what they had done to save her life as well as her prognosis and that of her baby.

Teresa was now fully awake. The nurse fluffed her pillows and raised the bed so she could better converse with the doctor and the interpreter. Dr. Williams pulled the desk chair over to the edge of Teresa’s bed and reached for her nearest hand, her right. Waiting a second or two to gather his opening words and looking sheepishly into Teresa’s eyes not knowing how she would respond to the sad news he was about to tell her, he began:

“My dear, I am Doctor Williams. You are in the hospital in Lordsburg, New Mexico of the United States. You were brought here by ambulance after being found by Chief Pat Brennan of the Border Patrol.”

Teresa perked up at the sound of Pat’s name. “St. Patrick?” she asked with a twinkle in her eye.

“Yes, that’s right. St. Patrick found you in the foothills. You had been bitten by a rattlesnake, and a large one at that, and you were almost unconscious. You most certainly would have died had Chief Brennan not found you.”

“St. Patrick saved me and my baby!” Teresa responded with more of an affirmation than a question.

Dr. Williams diverted his eyes away from Teresa and shuffled in his chair as he took a brief pause before continuing. “You were very sick, and your baby was in danger too. We managed to stabilize your baby’s condition for now, but your baby may need more medical treatment after it is born, but it appears to be doing fine now.”

“The snake bite was on your left leg. The snake’s poison did a lot of damage to the leg and foot. We were unable to save your leg” he said with a pause and readjustment in his chair, firming his grip on Teresa’s hands and leaning closer to her in order to establish good eye contact “and we had to remove your leg to save your life and the life of your baby.”

After those words were spoken, Teresa paused as if trying to understand what the doctor had just told her. They did what to me? she thought. Then she slowly moved her left hand down her side to her thigh. Then she continued to slowly move her fingers down along her thigh to where her knee should have been. She gently felt the stump and traced around the bottom of it and up the other side with her fingers. It wasn’t painful. In fact, it was numb. And she was numb when she realized that her knee and lower leg wasn’t there and would never be there again. She didn’t tear up because she was startled. Not sad really, just in disbelief.

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Then she turned her attention to her abdomen and the baby inside. Stroking it, she cooed “Mama loves you, little one. Mama loves you. Mama will take care of you.” And she began to tear up but not because of sadness but rather because of happiness that her baby would soon become a reality. She was momentarily free of concerns and worries about her missing a leg and her baby.

Following her recovery from surgery and her visit with Dr. Williams, Teresa was moved into a double room in the patient wing that she would share with an older Anglo woman recovering from surgery to repair a broken hip. A white plastic curtain that hung from a track on the ceiling is what separated the two patients from each other in room 218.

After Pat had hiked all over the foothills between what had been Teresa’s location and his own location, he managed to get back down into the draw where he had left his Blazer. It was now past mid-afternoon He was so tired that he just threw everything in the back of the Blazer without organization. He would separate what was Teresa’s from what was his after he got to town. What had already been a long day wasn’t near over.

He had to get back to the office and fill out reports and other government-required paperwork about where and what the results were from his surveillance work, information about the apprehension of the illegal alien, paperwork to authorize medical services be rendered to Teresa, and paperwork to authorize payment from the government budget for medical services rendered Teresa. And then he had to attend to Sector administrative business which could not be delegated to others.

As Pat was driving toward town from the ranch, he called the hospital to check Teresa’s status. He was told only that she was out of surgery---from what type of surgery he wasn’t told---and no visitors were allowed except for family members. He figured he was the closest thing she had to family but didn’t want to push the issue over the phone. He would stop by the hospital once in town to learn all he could about what procedures the doctors had performed, her current condition, her prognosis for recovery, and when she might be able to be returned to Mexico, all information he would need to complete the reports.

Pat had called the office a couple of times, once while in the foothills in the Rock Spring Pasture and once while returning to Lordsburg. Assistant Chief Hollingsworth had issued the daily orders and assignments to the agents and then gone home for a few hours of rest and relaxation. Pat left word with the radio dispatcher that he was going by the hospital for an update on the suspect he had apprehended and should be there by 4:30 PM or so. He would then come to the office.

Pat pulled the Blazer into a parking space near the hospital entrance and turned off the motor. He sat in the Blazer for a few seconds before opening the door to get out. He wasn’t sure if he was prepared for what he was about to learn of Teresa’s condition and that of her baby from

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the medical staff. He tried to be optimistic, but negative thoughts and negative questions kept creeping in, like did the baby survive, or if it did, is it fully developed and of good health? Will Teresa survive and, if so, to what extent was the damage caused by the snakebite?

His guess was that she wouldn’t be able to travel back to Mexico for maybe a week or so, so there was no real hurry to add her name to the manifest list of illegals being returned to Mexico. He would wait to process Teresa out of the country until after being released by the American doctors, and then she would be fingerprinted, photographed, and documented as guilty of illegal entry into the U. S. and deemed a criminal according to U. S. Law then placed on a bus to be joined by other detainees being held in Deming, Hatch, and Las Cruces for deportation to Mexico by way of El Paso and *Juarez.*

After closing the driver’s side door to the Blazer, Pat went around to the back of the Blazer and lifted the tailgate. He reached in and sorted through his and Teresa’s items he had gathered from the foothill sites. He wasn’t sure exactly what he was looking for, but he wanted to take her an item with which she was familiar and might make her more at ease, or maybe bring some cheer to her in this terrible situation and in this strange place.

In rummaging through her backpack, he came across a small stuffed Raggedy Ann Doll with freckles and red hair tied in two pigtails. No doubt one of her friends in Mexico gave it to her to give to her baby when it was born, hopefully in the United States. That was exactly the kind of thing for which he was looking. It almost brought him to tears thinking about the happiness Teresa would feel being in touch with the doll---or the sadness it would represent if the baby didn’t survive. He better get inside to find out what had transpired.

Pat locked up the Blazer and headed from the parking lot toward the two automatic sliding glass doors that made up the front door to the hospital. From there he continued down the main hallway to the information desk just past the hospital gift shop.

At the information desk, Pat introduced himself as the Border Patrol Sector Chief and needed a status update on the procedures afforded Teresa thus far and her current condition and prognosis for recovery. Teresa fell under the jurisdiction of the Border Patrol and the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service because she hadn’t provided proof of citizenship in the U. S. On the other hand, however, when admitted, she was virtually unconscious and unable to provide anything requested of her.

“Chief, I’ve got her file right here” the attendant replied. “I had a feeling she was the one you were checking on” she said as she handed the file to Pat. “On the inside of the front cover of the file is the Journal of Events with the time and the services administered to the girl since she had been here.”

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“Thank you” Pat replied as he took the file from her and slowly opened it. He remained standing at the desk while he carefully reviewed its contents but slid over to allow for others that might come to the information desk.

After reading through the timeline as recorded in the Journal of Events, Pat requested that he have a copy of it. The attendant acknowledged that he could, and she reached out for Pat to hand it to her for copying. After the copy was made, she handed it and the file back to Pat, who resumed his review of the file.

He was apprehensive as he reopened the file and began to read the doctor’s reports of procedures performed and their results. If there had been a tragic ending to the baby or Teresa, it would be recorded here. Although not as tragic as it could have been, the file reflected the condition of Teresa’s leg and the decision to remove it. It also reflected that the child she was carrying, although weak, had remained in stable condition since arriving. However, there were notations by the obstetrician that a premature birth could occur, and some birth defects were remotely possible if that occurred.

After reviewing the file on Miss Ochoa, Pat empathized with Teresa and tried to imagine the extent of the uncertainty, the fear, the loneliness, and the home sickness she must be feeling. It would be too much for some to deal with. How could she deal with being returned to Mexico in a now handicapped condition and expecting a child that might also be born with some level of incompleteness and have no money and have no job, and what of family and friends? Pat didn’t oftentimes try to place himself in the shoes of those he apprehended for the very reason that he was experiencing in this case: The sadness almost too intense to bear. He couldn’t remember a case in which he had been involved that dealt with this level of sorrow.

Pat closed the file and handed it back to the attendant. She took the file from him and remarked “so sad. Maybe that Raggedy Ann doll will cheer her up a bit.”

“Let’s hope so” Pat replied. Pat nodded an affirmation to her assessment but offered no words other than, after a short pause, “what is her room number, please?”

“Of course, sir. She is in Room 218. Second floor. Up the escalator and to the left” she replied. And then after a brief pause, she added “Good luck to you, sir.” She could detect the sadness on Pat’s face.

“Thank you for your help.”

Pat then turned and headed for the escalator to the second floor and room 218. He was anxious to see Teresa but apprehensive about her emotional state and how his conversation with her would go.

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As he walked down the hall on the second floor, Pat counted off the even numbered rooms as he went along. 206, 208, 210, custodian’s closet, waiting area with vending machines, 212, 214, 216, and finally 218. The door was pulled to but not closed. Pat slowly pushed open the door and peaked in. The broken hip patient was in the first bed and first half of the room and appeared to be asleep. Teresa was in the bed on the other side of the curtain.

Pat quietly passed by the sleeping roommate and around the end of the curtain to where Teresa was asleep in her bed, tubes coming out of her arms, and her left leg in a suspension belt a foot above the bed to keep the tender nub free from contact with the bed. Pat went around the end of the bed and found a chair. He quietly slid the chair closer to Teresa’s bed so that he was positioned close to her head. That way he could speak quietly to her when she awoke without disturbing her roommate.

Pat sat still looking at her face and taking in her position in the bed. He had noticed when he first found her that Teresa was a pretty, young woman, but now in the clean white sheets and gown, he was struck by just how beautiful she was. Then looking at her suspended leg, he was struck by her vulnerability to the desert and mountains she had tried to maneuver. She was tough and determined, but the imposing terrain and its inhabitants had defeated her.

After about 15 minutes of sitting quietly and watching her and thinking about what she had suffered and what the future had in store for her, Teresa began to stir. Pat placed the doll on her shoulder nearest to him and leaned forward and whispered “Teresa, this is Pat. Can you hear me?” He repeated it a couple of times and noticed her eyelids flicking as if about to awaken. When finally she broke sleep’s spell, she half-opened her eyes and turned her head toward Pat. For a second or two, she just stared unknowingly at him, but then her eyes brightened, and a gentle smile came across her face as she recognized the man that had rescued her. Now she was fully awake with a full smile as she saw the Raggedy Ann doll on her shoulder. She reached across her chest with her left hand to grab the doll and bring it up to her face.

“You bring my baby’s doll and you come to see me” she said in Spanish. “You are Saint Patrick to me. I owe you my life and the life of my baby. God sent you to me. You are my savior. You are Saint Patrick.”

Pat was appreciative of Teresa’s words but humbled by them.

“Yes, I came to see you and see how you are doing. I am sorry about your leg, but I think you will be fine and that your baby is healthy and doing well. I am happy to see you doing so well.”

“That’s nice. Thank you, my Saint Patrick.”

“I went back to where I found you and retrieved the rest of your belongings. I have them in my vehicle and will bring them to you next time, okay?”

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“Yes. Thank you. You are very nice to me.”

“Teresa, where is the father of your baby? I don’t mean to be nosey, but should we try to contact him to tell him of your accident and that the baby is fine?”

Teresa shifted her gaze from Pat to the doll that she began to massage in her hands and said sheepishly “I am a whore to make money. My baby’s father I don’t know.” She began to tear up because of the embarrassment she felt admitting to her saint that she was a prostitute. What would he think of me now, she thought, and was saddened by what she assumed would be his answer.

Pat reached over and cupped his hands over Teresa’s hands and the doll she was holding. Then, moving his face closer to her so he was gazing into his eyes, he said “Don’t be embarrassed. You had to make a living to support yourself. It was one of the first professions. It is okay,” he said with a weak smile.

“But God no love me now. He punish me with the snake.”

“No, no. Don’t think that at all. You are one of God’s lovely creatures that he will always love. He is proud of you for loving Him and trying to make a better life for yourself and your baby.”

Pat handed Teresa a tissue from the box on the bedside table so she could dry the tears from her eyes. “You are my saint to me” Teresa responded with a weak smile of true appreciation for Pat’s reassuring words.

Once Teresa was feeling better about herself, Pat visited with her more about her life and her thoughts and circumstances surrounding her illegal entry into the United States. He was impressed with her composure given all that she had been through. She was badly injured, in a foreign land with no one with which she was familiar, and now a detainee with the eventual deportation to Mexico. Her short time in the United States had not been a happy experience. Thinking of all that she had been through, Pat was moved by her condition but impressed with her stoicism.

When it came time for Pat to leave, Teresa tearfully said goodbye and almost felt as sad as when she told her father goodbye just before boarding the bus in *Piedras Rojas.* Pat had literally saved her life, and he was the only friend she had in this strange land.

For the medical treatment administered to her and her baby, she was thankful. She was thankful to be alive. And, most of all, she was thankful for her savior, Saint Patrick. Her prayers would include him. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Saint Patrick.

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**Chapter 8: The Plan**

Pat returned to his office and began the task of completing all the documentation associated with Teresa’s apprehension, the medical procedures and hospitalization details, and estimated date of deportation. As he worked through the details and having to relive the events that unfolded from the time he located her until the information he had gathered at the hospital and from Teresa herself, Pat’s emotions remained strained. In only 36 hours, Pat and Teresa’s life had intertwined like no other suspect he had ever dealt with.

It was almost unbearable for Pat to think of Teresa being deported back to Mexico with a missing leg and then having to have her baby delivered there. What kind of future could she possibly expect being a cripple with employment opportunities already limited? Would she still be able to make a living as a prostitute? As a one-legged prostitute? It might be that the only way for her to avoid poverty for her and her child would be to meet a nice established gentleman, marry well, and live happily ever after. What were the chances of some good luck, *buena suerte*, coming Teresa’s way? Lord knows she had already had more than her share of bad luck and should be entitled to something good to happen.

Pat realized that he was exhausted, and like most other people when they are exhausted, rational thought isn’t always available when decisions are to be made. He was thinking that he just couldn’t be party to returning Teresa to Mexico. But maybe he wasn’t thinking clearly. Certainly, he took an oath as a member of the law enforcement community to uphold the laws of the land and apprehend others for not doing the same. If he did something to prevent Teresa’s return, it would be unlawful, he would be subject to dismissal from his position and from the agency all together. He would be subject to arrest and face criminal charges. That would be the end to a nice career he had going for himself, tag him as a criminal, and possibly prevent him from obtaining professional work ever again. Would it be worth it? Would it be worth it to destroy his professional career in order to give just one other person a reasonable opportunity to live a life without the burden of poverty? It just might, but he better sleep on it and make no decisions until he could think straight again. He needed a clear mind before further considering what he would do.

The next morning, Pat awoke at his regular time of 5:30 AM. He completed most of his paperwork last night at the office and was late getting home and getting to bed. Although a short night, Pat had been so exhausted both physically and emotionally that he had slept soundly. He felt rested as he began his day, and his mind was clear.

Pat was at the office at his usual time to dismiss the night shift and pass out the assignments for the day shift. Assistant Sector Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth had overseen the night shift, and Pat had seen her briefly last night when he was working on the paperwork, but really hadn’t visited about much other than to ask each other how it’s going, and anything needing urgent

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attention. There hadn’t been much out of the ordinary to report other than Pat’s apprehension and hospitalization of Teresa Morales, which was a topic of conversation.

With the day shift assuming the responsibilities, Elizabeth would complete her shift report incorporating each agents’ report into it. After she had completed her paperwork and was ready to go off duty and go home, she entered Pat’s office interested in the details of Teresa’s condition and status of her being deported.

“Good morning, Chief. Were you able to get some rest last night?”

“Morning, Elizabeth. Yeah, I slept well and feel well rested considering the short night that it was. Have a seat” Pat said as he gestured toward a chair.

“Thanks, Chief. I can’t stay long, just checking on the status of your detainee. It was close call for her, I mean surviving the snake bite and length of time it took you to get her medical attention. How’s she doing?”

“She is surviving, but the doctors had to remove much of her left leg to save her. Still, it is good news that she is going to make it, and so far, so good for her baby.”

“Chief, you saved the girl’s life. It is fortunate for her that you were in the vicinity and got her emergency medical assistance. Great work on your part.”

“Well, thanks for that. I am glad I was around to find her and get her to safety.”

“What’s the anticipated time frame for her deportation, do you have any idea?”

“No. Haven’t talked to the doctor about a release date, but I will. I don’t think the agency will grant her as much convalescence time that a regular patient would receive, and I have no idea what therapy services the Mexican government will provide her, if any, and if she will even be able to get a prosthesis. I will request that she at least be provided crutches that she can take with her. But then, services provided for her baby’s delivery and post-delivery care by the Mexican authorities is an unknown. She may be on the hook for services she can’t afford and therefore unavailable to her.”

“Has the girl expressed these concerns to you?” Elizabeth asked.

“Not in so many words, but I could tell the concerns are there” Pat answered.

“Chief, all of the illegals show concern because of having their dreams dashed upon their capture. I imagine that the Mexican government will provide her with adequate services so she can get on with her life---as a Mexican citizen.”

“Their socialized medicine will definitely be better than nothing, but I just don’t know about the quality of the care she will receive.”

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“Sounds like you are the one that is concerned” Elizabeth said with some inquiry in her statement.”

“Yes, I admit that I am concerned for the girl. I don’t think I would be a member in good standing of the human race if I wasn’t concerned about her. She has been through a lot.”

Pat hadn’t meant to insinuate that Elizabeth wasn’t a caring person, but he could tell from the tone in her voice that any compassion she might have for Teresa was masked by her official agency rules and regulations demeanor.

“I’d better go, Chief. See you this evening” she said scooting the chair back to stand and leave the office.

Pat put in a call to Martha and Bud Pierce to give them a status report about Teresa. Bud was out on the ranch checking the waters, but Pat filled Martha in on all the details that he could recount. Martha, being a mother herself, couldn’t help being overcome with emotion. She wanted to assist the girl in any way that she could and wanted Pat to keep her and Bud apprised of her recovery.

Pat finished his official duties for the day while doing his best to keep thoughts of Teresa out of his mind other than to wonder how she was recovering. His day was uneventful, and when it came for the day shift to check out and Elizabeth resumed the supervisory duties for the night shift, there wasn’t anything urgent on which she was to follow up.

“What’s the latest on the snakebite victim?” She asked.

“I didn’t hear anything, and I didn’t call the hospital. But I think I will go by there on the way home.”

“Have a good evening, Chief” Elizabeth said as she turned to go to the duty desk and begin with the assignments for the evening shift.

“Call if you need anything” Pat responded and turned back to his desk to straighten it up before leaving. He then turned off his office lights and exited the office for his Border Patrol Blazer that he took home every night in case he was called out on official business. As Sector Chief, Pat was on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week unless on official leave.

Once at the hospital, Pat went up the escalator to the second-floor nurses’ station. There were several attending nurses on duty. Speaking to no one in particular, he introduced himself and asked how Miss Morales in room 218 was doing. He was told that physically she was showing signs of improving and her vitals were good, but they had noticed her increasing despondency. They told him that Dr. Williams was concerned about her continued improvement if hopelessness set in. Pat took notice of what they had told him, thanked them for their time and the information, and then turned to go to Teresa’s room.

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When he reached her room, Pat quietly slipped past Teresa’s room partner in the first bed and went around the corner of the curtain. Teresa had her eyes closed and wasn’t moving other than the slow rising and falling of her chest as she breathed. She had the Raggedy Ann doll in the crook of her right arm up against her right side.

“Teresa” Pat whispered to her as he leaned closer to her right ear.

Teresa’s eyes immediately opened, and she turned her head toward Pat. “My St. Patrick, you come save me?” she asked with a thin smile. “You come see me. Thank you.”

Pat and Teresa conversed for a while about how she was feeling and about the good health of her baby, but when the conversation moved to the topic of her future plans once she was returned to Mexico, tears formed in her eyes and, looking pleadingly directly into Pat’s eyes, she implored him not to make her go back. She had nothing to go back to and she feared for herself and her baby. How could she possibly survive there now?

Pat did his best to reassure her that all would work out well, that it looked gloomy now, but she would find her way in her native country, and that her native people wouldn’t abandon her and her baby in time of need. And, how about her family? Did she have someone to turn to for help getting settled and starting her life over? However, Pat wasn’t convincing enough to improve Teresa’s mood. She begged him not to leave as the tears began to flow softly down her cheeks. For Pat, concluding this visit and leaving her was heart wrenching.

Pat was thinking clearly as, while driving home from the hospital, he began to formulate a plan. He quickly arrived at the basis of the plan, but he would need to fill in the details before he would be able to implement it.

Basically, his plan was to personally drive Teresa to the Immigration and Naturalization Service Office in El Paso for her to surrender to the authorities. He would get the dates that the detainee bus was to carry suspects from Lordsburg to Deming to Las Cruces and then on to El Paso for processing out of the country and accompany the bus or buses not in his regular Blazer but in a sedan from the motor pool. He would get her checked in on the Lordsburg manifest list with the stipulation that he would deliver her to El Paso himself rather than have her ride the bus due to her recent surgery and the recurring pain associated with it. Once in El Paso at the office, he would personally escort Teresa through the processing center and get all of her deportation papers completed and checked off the list as having been processed out of the country. But before she would be turned over to the Mexican authorities at their receiving station, he would escort her back out the American-side gate and back to his vehicle. He assumed that the Mexican authorities receiving deportees would be lax in their duties since they weren’t as consumed with getting their people back as the United States was with getting rid of them. He would then get off the premises and pull off on a secluded side street and place Teresa in the trunk until he cleared the Border Patrol stop on I-10 west of Las Cruces. He would

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then pull off onto a ranch road exit and transfer her to the back seat so she could lie down for the rest of the trip to Lordsburg.

Upon arrival in Lordsburg, he would get her situated in his guest bedroom and then return the sedan to the motor pool. He would plan on working in the Sector Office the following day, but then take leave until the following mid-week so he could get Teresa relocated somewhere safe where she wouldn’t be discovered and apprehended. He had a good idea where that might be.

It was the next day when Pat began adding the details to his plan for Teresa. After Assistant Chief Hollingsworth had dismissed the night shift and she went off duty and the day shift agents had their assignments and were in the field, Pat informed the duty desk attendant that he had to go out to the Ax Handle Ranch to gather up the final details regarding the apprehension of the Morales girl.

Pat then placed a call to the Ax Handle by way of Rancher Radio.

“Hello, Martha, this is Pat Brennan.”

“Hi, Pat. Everything okay there with Teresa?”

“Yes, she is improving daily, getting stronger, and the baby seems to be progressing.

“That’s good to hear.”

“Is Bud around today?”

“Yeah, he’s out in the corral doctoring some calves. If you can wait a minute, I’ll call him to the phone for you.”

“Oh, don’t bother him, but, if it would be okay, I would like to visit with the two of you later this morning. I have something on my mind that I would like to discuss with the two of you.”

“Oh, no problem. What time shall I tell Bud to watch for you?”

“I should be there by 10:00 AM.”

“What’s this about, Pat?”

“I would rather not talk about it on the phone, if you don’t mind, Martha.”

“Well, alright. We will watch for you about ten. Will you be able to stay for lunch, Pat?”

“That’s very kind. I’m not sure. I will have to see what else I have going on. I’ll see you then, and we can talk more. Thanks, Martha.” Pat said as he replaced the office phone in its cradle.

Pat exited the office for the motor pool yard and proceeded to his Blazer, fired it up, and pulled through the gate onto the street and headed for the ranch.

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As Pat approached the Ax Handle headquarters, he could see Bud was out front under the hood of the old bobtail truck with a 500-gallon water tank strapped on the bed for hauling water to the drinking tubs.

Pat pulled up beside the old truck and stepped out of the Blazer. Bud came out from under the hood of the truck just in time to catch a face load of dust stirred up by Pat’s arrival.

“Sorry about that, Bud” Pat said apologizing for the dust.

“Hell, no problem. Every man ought ta get a dustin’ ever now and then. Ya know, ya can’t live on a ranch and stay clean fer long” Bud said as he wiped his greasy hands on the red work cloth he was holding and then reached out to shake Pat’s hand.

“Good to see you again, stranger” Pat smiled. He then turned toward the front door of the house from which Martha was exiting. “Hi, Martha.”

“Hello Pat. Nice to see you again.”

“Yeah, long time, no see. So, what do we owe the honor of yer presence, Chief?” Bud asked.

“I would like to bounce an idea off of you and Martha if you have the time to visit a few minutes” Pat replied.

“Wanna go in a sit a spell while we talk” Bud asked, “or stand out here a leanin’ on the hood of this fine water truck?’

“It is sort of nice out here under these Chinese elm trees, so let’s just talk here. It won’t take long.” Martha had already started for the door to the kitchen and shortly she returned with a pitcher of water and some red Solo cups with ice. She set the stuff on the hood and began pouring up cups of water and handing them to Pat then Bud and then the last one for herself.

Pat began. “I have really been upset about Teresa’s plight, not just all the bad things that have happened to her since sneaking across the border but what is going to happen to her when she is returned to Mexico---with one leg and a soon-to-be newborn, no job, no family, and maybe no good luck. I just won’t be able to live with myself if I am party to her return to Mexico in her condition knowing that there was another option that I can provide her.”

“What other option are you talking about? Martha asked. Bud was just listening, watching, and sipping on his water.

“I know I can trust you two with what I’m thinking, and actually I am going to need your help. When Teresa has been released from the hospital and is ready to be officially deported, I plan to transport her personally to the border, but then smuggler her back into the United States. I then plan to drive her somewhere safe from extradition, some where she can get her feet on the ground.”

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“You mean get her foot on the ground” Bud wise cracked with a smart-ass smile.

“Oh, Bud, that’s terrible” Martha offered.

Pat grinned and nodded as an acknowledgement to Bud’s wisecrack. “Funny. But you know what I mean. Help her get started with a new life with her new handicap in a new country and soon with a new baby. And, when thinking of places she might be able to start out, perhaps as a maid or a nanny or girl Friday, maybe for your daughter-in-law at your son’s ranch in Arizona, what’s it called?”

“The Cross Timbers Ranch. It’s just outside Springerville.”

“What do you think? Would you mind checking with them to see if they would take her in for a while? I don’t think there is much, if any, Border Patrol pressure there. They pretty much leave the isolated ranchers alone, and some still have a Mexican working for them. Anyway, if they could put her up for a while until I can figure out something else, or somewhere else, I sure would appreciate it. Now, please only consider this request if you are comfortable with providing assistance to an illegal alien and understanding the penalty for doing so if found out.”

Bud and Martha had been quiet and attentive to Pat’s words and their implications. “Pat, are you telling me that you would risk losing your job, and even worse if found out?” Martha asked. “I know what a sad case this is and how you want it to end well for her, but are you willing to give it all up for one Mexican girl?”

Bud added “what’s the deal, *amigo*, ya in love with the girl or something?”

“No, Bud, that’s not it at all. I just feel so sorry for her that I just can’t bring myself to be the one to ruin her life, and I think that that’s the way it will turn out if she is returned. I wouldn’t blame you if you declined to assist me in this, and I don’t want to ruin a good friendship over this idea of mine.”

“Well, let us think on it a spell and call Christopher to see if he would agree to take her in” Bud responded.

“That’s fair enough,” said Pat. Let me know what you decide. I’ve got o get all of this worked out pretty soon. I imagine I have a few days, maybe a week yet before she is released from the hospital, but when she is, I have to be ready to implement a plan.”

Martha chimed in “Pat, I hope you know what you are doing. This just doesn’t sound like something you would be involved. I am not being judgmental because I see the passion you have for making a better future for the girl. I am willing to help if Bud is, but we still need to talk, think, and call Christopher to see if he feels comfortable with being a part of it.”

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“Pat” Bud added “I’m leaning toward helping ya out for the sake of the girl, but we’ll call ya tomorrow. Of fine character you are. You were successful as an agent and successful as a Chief. I suspect you’ll be successful making this deal happen. But then what? Will ya stay here as chief or try to go into another career? Sounds like you are tired of hunting people.”

“Honestly Bud, I really haven’t considered the downside. But if I fail in this mission, she fails too. And that would be the waste of a young life. It wouldn’t be fair. Oh, I know, life isn’t fair, but everyone, I mean everyone, needs a good break to make a success of their life. I hope I can provide Teresa with the break she needs and deserves.

One thing, my friend: You can’t guarantee what’ll happen. You can’t play God.”

“Bud, I am not playing God. I’m playing judge and jury.

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**Chapter 9: Finishing Touches**

“Hello” the male voice at the other end of the line answered.

“Hi, honey” Martha began. “How are you and how is the family?”

“Hi, Mom. Yep, everyone is just fine. Staying busy with ranch work, that’s for sure. Sally and the kids are in town probably at Wal-Mart.”

“How are you and Dad doing?” Christopher asked. “Is it as dry there as it is here?”

“Oh, it is really dry. Your father is hauling water and feeding constantly. One of these days the thunderstorms will start up. It better hurry though because the grass is still in summer dormancy due to the hot temperatures and lack of rain. The winter weeds are long gone and there isn’t anything green for the cows to eat.”

“Since we are in the mountains, we had some good snows this past winter so had good soil moisture, but it has all but played out now. We need rain probably as bad as you all do. So, what’s up? Just calling about the weather or are you bored and need to talk?”

“Well, actually there is a reason I am calling in the middle of the week. Is this a good time to talk?”

Now Christopher’s interest had been piqued and he was anxious to hear what his mother wanted to talk about. “Yeah Mom, now is as good as any time to talk. What’s up?”

Martha proceeded to relate to Christopher the entire story of what happened from the time Pat found the girl until the present including a detailed explanation of Teresa’s condition and Pat’s plan to keep from deporting her. Christopher never interrupted his mother’s tale of woe other than to mutter an occasional “yeah” so his mother would know he was listening. As he listened intently to his mother’s words, he began to think Wow, this is crazy. How did Mom and Dad get involved in something like this anyway?

After listening to his mother’s words and the inflections in her voice that indicated the feelings she had for the girl’s situation, Christopher said “Wow Mom, that is quite a story and kind of sad. And the solution that your friend the Chief has proposed is a risky one for him. He must be totally committed to see this through to the conclusion. Why would he risk so much over one illegal Mexican girl?”

“I have a feeling he is no longer comfortable in the people hunting business, and this case involving the girl is such an awful situation for him, and he can’t let go. Regardless of what happens to him, he feels obligated to see this plan though to the end. Pat is very dedicated to his cause, but I think his cause has shifted now. Anyway, what do you think about taking the

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girl on as a housekeeper and baby-sitter. That would allow you and Sally some time together without the kids. Maybe even a date night once in a while.”

“Now that’s a nice thought. Go out for dinner and a movie without the kids.”

“And maybe clean house and help cook and do the dishes and do the ironing and whatever help Sally could use. And nanny the kids and free Sally up so she could go back to training cutting horses. Bet she would like that.”

“Oh, she would love that. Okay, I will share the story and the implications with her and get back to you. I am not afraid of housing an illegal alien here on the ranch, but I am going to have to trust your judgment as to whether she is trustworthy and conscientious. That would definitely make it more a possibility for Sally to accept her.”

“Honey, I obviously don’t know her all that well, but the Border Patrol man has gotten to know her quite well and wouldn’t be pushing this plan if he thought she was less than honest and reliable. Besides, if she failed to live up to the standards you set for her, she would know that you have her deported. That alone should be enough of a threat for her to keep your standards.”

“Yeah, you are right about that. Now, how well does she get around on one leg---or perhaps I should say how well will she get around missing one leg? Does she know how to use crutches and how mobile can she be once she is fully healed up and functioning?”

“You know I don’t know the answer to that. Probably no one knows the answer to that question. She is definitely a determined girl, and I would expect that determination to play a huge role in her becoming as mobile as she can be. That’s my guess anyway.”

“Ok. Good answers. And my guess is that you wouldn’t have called us about taking her in if you had any concerns at all. But if the government were to figure out that she wasn’t deported after all, do you think they would suspect you guys of being involved somehow? Is this that important to you to risk it?”

“You know us, we have a soft heart for the disadvantaged and have never held any animosity toward the Mexicans trying to get in. True, we’ve never done anything to aid them in their mission, but this young woman needs something good to happen to her, and to her baby when it comes. Your father and I think it is worth the small risk that we face.”

“Good enough” Christopher responded. “Let me talk to Sally and we’ll call you back with our decision. Okay?”

“Thanks, Christopher. Let us know what you guys think of this crazy idea.”

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After a few more bits of small talk were exchanged, they both hung up their phones. Now Christopher needed to talk to Sally. As far as he was concerned, he would give the girl a chance and enough time to prove that she could be an asset. He too wanted her to succeed.

Christopher visited with Sally about the proposition of having Teresa come live with them and help with the domestic chores, whatever needed doing. Sally was excited about the idea. She could use the help and would enjoy having another adult, albeit a young adult, to visit with. She could work to improve her own conversational Spanish as well. So, Christopher called his parents to inform them that they were willing to take Teresa in. Martha then called Pat to tell him that arrangements had been made.

“Chief Brennan” Pat answered the incoming call on his office phone.

“Pat, this is Martha Pierce. I’ve got good news for you.”

Pat knew what Martha meant, and he felt a bit of a lift in his mood. Pat was glad that Martha had called him on his office land line rather than his cell phone or Rancher Radio so no one else could intercept the call. “Just one second, Martha” Pat responded before setting the phone receiver down on this desk and got up and closed his office door.

When back at his desk and in his chair, Pat picked up the phone again and spoke into the receiver. “Hello, Martha. So, you have some good news for me do you?” Pat said with a smile hoping this meant that Teresa would have a place to stay for a while.

“I sure do. Christopher and Sally not only agreed to let Teresa stay with them, but they are actually excited about it. So, once you have your plan timelines figured out, I will let them know when they might expect her arrival, okay?”

“I will let you know as soon as I know. I need to find out from the medical staff when she will be released. Then I can begin to solidify my plans and pick out dates to initiate them. So, I should be in touch within the next couple of days. And thanks, Martha.”

“You are welcome, Pat.”

After hanging up the phone, Pat got up from behind his desk and moved to his office door and opened it. He went into the radio room to see if any calls from the field agents or anyone else had come in or to see if everyone in the field had reported in or needed anything. All agents had checked in, so there was no situation needing immediate attention and no emergencies. The Border Patrol highway check station on I-10 had resulted in two DUIs and a drug bust, but the state police and county sheriffs were notified and were processing the suspects. In another reported incident, field agents spotted a suspected *coyote* headed north from the border in a dark-colored Chevy van at a high rate of speed. At what may have been the suspected pick-up point on the border, agents found an assortment of clothing and equipment that may have

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been left behind by illegals before they boarded the van for a run at freedom. So far, it was a pretty typical day, not like the day will be when Pat implements his plan to free Teresa.

The implementation of Pat’s plan depended on Teresa’s hospital release date which will be the same day that she will be transported to the border for deportation. The release date would be a collaboration of the hospital staff, Dr. Williams as attending physician, and a medical staffer at the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Regional Office which would push for a hospital discharge as soon as possible and with as little therapy as needed to get around and function without one leg.

Pat signed out of the office for an hour so he could return to the hospital to check on Teresa’s progress as well as get a feel for how much longer she would remain hospitalized. He had been trying to gauge her progress on each visit he made to see her. He thought she was progressing well physically, but he understood from the hospital staff that she still seemed morose and emotionally filled with gloom.

That is until he walked into her hospital room, and she saw him or sensed his presence if sleeping. When Pat was around, Saint Patrick as she continued to call him, she was attentive and even more cheerful than during his previous visit. After all, he was her savior.

When Pat entered her side of the room, Teresa was lying on her side with her back toward him. He couldn’t tell if she was asleep or awake until he came around the foot of the bed to the side she was facing. Her eyes were open. When she saw him, she rolled over on to her back, and with the widest smile he had yet seen from her, she said, “*Mi amigo,* Saint Patrick” and she extended her arms as if expecting an embrace. Reaching for her hands with his own, he grasped them firmly in his own and returned her smile with one of his own for he was indeed pleased that he could bring a little bit of pleasure to her situation.

“You look good, Teresa. How are you feeling today?”

“Getting better” she said as she threw her top sheet back to show her wrapped stump and wiggle it for him. She had a look of achievement on her face. “I practiced crutches today. It was good. I get around now.”

“That’s wonderful. Do you think you will be able to get around on the crutches in the real world away from the hospital?”

“Oh yes. I’m sure. Me show you.” She swung around toward the side of the bed where Pat was sitting to where she was sitting on the side of the bed. Pat stood up and scooted the chair back. He then handed her the crutches that were leaning against the wall.

“Watch me, Saint Patrick” she said as she stood on her good leg, slipped the crutches under her arms, and maneuvered herself around the end of the bed and out the door into the hallway.

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Pat followed her out of the room, but she was well down the hallway by then. She then wheeled around and quickly was back to the door of her room where Pat was standing, admiring her mobility.

“Very good, Teresa. I think you will be just fine out in the real world!” he exclaimed. “And when you have a baby, will you be able to get around with your baby? Did the nurses say anything about how to move about on crutches with a baby?”

“When baby is little, I use like a pouch in front like kangaroo has baby in pouch. Then I use the crutches always. It okay with me” she replied with satisfaction and pride. Pat could tell that she, at least for the time being, was feeling good about being able to get around despite her disability. It seemed that she wasn’t going to let a little thing like having only one leg disrupt her plans for the future of her and her baby. He was proud of her and now more than ever determined to help her to freedom in the United States.

As Pat and Teresa stood just outside her hospital room door, a staff therapist joined them.

“You did very well with your crutches, Teresa” she said. “Let’s go in your room and work on some more exercises that will make you even stronger. Hello, I’m Meaghan” she said as she put out her hand and shook hands with Pat.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Pat Brennan.”

“Oh, you must be the Saint Patrick that Teresa is always talking about.”

“I guess I am that guy” Pat replied shyly. Then turning toward Teresa, who was still standing on her good leg and the crutches, he said “Teresa, you are doing great.” She hopped over close enough to Pat to give him a big hug.

“He is my savior” she said to the therapist.

Teresa released Pat from the hug, and he said nice to meet you to the therapist and goodbye to both of them. He then headed down the hallway to the nurses’ station and showed his official credentials and requested Teresa’s chart or file to review the documentation regarding her anticipated release. He found doctor’s notes that Teresa was responding well to treatment for her amputation and since the therapist has been working with Teresa, she now realizes that she is not helpless, and her emotional state continues to improve.

Going further into Teresa’s file, Pat saw notes for a conversation between Dr. Williams and a government medical staff doctor indicating that the agency would allow only enough therapy to teach Teresa some exercises that she could do on her own to make herself functional on crutches. Her medical release would be based on the healing of the stump, not her need for more therapy. Evidently, the U. S. government felt that the Mexican government should

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continue the therapy work, or that Teresa could do it on her own. There were no notes indicating when her physical condition would allow her to be released. He would have to check with Dr. Williams for his opinion on the matter.

“This is Chief Brennan. How may I help you?”

“Chief, this is Dr. Williams returning your call. I assume it is about the Morales girl.”

“Yes, it is doctor. Thanks for returning my call. I was at the hospital earlier today and read in here chart that once her leg has healed satisfactorily, she will be ready for release from the hospital.

“Those are the instructions from your agency. Once her leg is well enough to be released, she will be.”

“Then doctor, what is your best guess as to when that would be?”

“She is progressing very nicely. Unless there is a setback of some kind, she should be ready to go in a day or two. According to your agency, her release is to coincide with the day other illegals are being deported back to Mexico. They didn’t tell me when that was to be, but I got the impression that it will happen soon and want Ms. Morales to be a part of that process. She should be ready for release in time for that deportation. I will have the hospital call you just as soon as I check her out one more time, and If good to go, I will give them the okay to release her, although she will have to stay at the hospital until the authorities pick her up for deportation.”

“I look forward to hearing from the hospital when she is released because I plan to pick her up and transport her myself to the deportation office at the border. That way she won’t experience the added stress of being on a crowded bus filled with other returnees.”

“I think that will sooth an otherwise uncomfortable experience for her. Good for you, Chief.”

“Thanks, Dr. Williams. I will look forward to the hospital’s call. Thanks too for all you did for Ms. Morales.”

“No problem. You are the one that saved her life by bringing her in. She is a lucky young woman in more ways than one. Take care, Chief.”

“Thank you, sir.”

Pat now knew that Teresa would be ready for discharge and pick up as early as tomorrow, but his guess was that the deportation buses would run on Thursday. He would arrange the

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transport trip to El Paso, and he would file his notice for one week’s leave time to begin immediately upon his return from El Paso. There wasn’t much time to get all of this arranged.

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**Chapter 10: Ready to Implement**

“Elizabeth, would you come see me in my office please?” Pat requested of Assistant Sector Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth over the phone intercom.

“Be right there, Chief” came the reply.

Pat was sitting behind his desk watching for Elizabeth to arrive. When she did, she gave a courtesy knock on the door jamb but continued into Pat’s office without a verbal invitation.

“Have a seat, Elizabeth.”

She sat down in a chair facing the Chief’s desk from the right side. She had brought a clip board with a yellow legal pad on it for taking notes. She was always well prepared. After she was settled in her chair with her pen ready to take notes of the conversation, Pat began.

“It looks like the Morales girl is ready for discharge from the hospital and will likely be able to be on the next deportation manifest, probably for this Thursday. I am staying in touch with the hospital and Dr. Williams just in case there are any changes in her condition that would result in anything different from that timeline.”

Elizabeth sat quietly paying close attention to what Pat was saying. She jotted down on her yellow pad “Morales deport Thursday” followed by a question mark.

“I will notify El Paso that it is likely she will be ready for release and deportation this week on whatever day they choose to run the buses. However, I will be asking for a procedural variance in order for me to transport her myself rather than travel on the bus with the other deportees. Given her condition of having had one leg amputated and being pregnant, and also considering her emotional state, I think it humane and proper that this is the way it should be handled.”

Pat had not asked Elizabeth for her opinion on this matter, but he anticipated a response from her. He was not disappointed.

“I understand where you are coming from, Chief, but doesn’t our jurisdiction end upon her release from medical care and the deportation officers then take custody of her. Isn’t their responsibility to handle the deportation details?”

“In an ordinary case, you are correct. We would be at the hospital to ensure the deportee was taken into custody by the deportation officers who would then take the case to conclusion, yes. But this is not an ordinary case because of the girl’s physical and mental condition. Therefore, I am applying for a variance in procedure to allow me to transport her myself.”

“If that’s the way you want it done, then…” Pat cut her off in mid-sentence.

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“That’s the way I want it done.”

Elizabeth continued “Okay, I get it, but why not assign one of our agents to transport her to El Paso so you can be available in the Sector in case more pressing issues arise?”

“Elizabeth, I would handle it that way except that I am emotionally involved. No, not involved. A better word would be connected---I am emotionally connected to this case because I found her, I brought her out of the wilderness for medical treatment, and I have monitored her condition throughout her hospitalization. I know we are to be impartial when dealing with the illegals, but I am a human, and I am concerned that she will never have much of a chance once back in Mexico. I doubt that she will receive any occupational therapy or have a chance at any meaningful job opportunity. The least I can do is show her a little dignity before she is dropped back into the Mexican population as a crippled, unwed soon-to-be mother with no job and no family. It seems that a little compassion is in order.”

“Yes, Sir. I understand, but…”

“Good. Now there is one more thing. I am going to take a few days of leave after this ordeal is over. So, once I return from El Paso, I will drop the vehicle back here at the office, wrap up any loose ends that need tending to, and then be on leave Friday through Wednesday of next week. I will check out the Dodge sedan to take to El Paso so that Ms. Morales has room to lie down during the trip if she wants to. Anyway, you will be acting Sector Chief while I am gone. Any questions about what needs to be done while I am gone?”

“No, Sir, none at this time. I’ll refer to the monthly planning schedule and post the daily assignments as usual. I am familiar with the procedures to follow in the event of unordinary happenings.”

“Well, if you encounter anything especially weird that you need help with, ask some of the veteran agents, or if you need me, call me on my cell. No problem.”

“Got it, Sir.”

“Alright then, thanks for your time, Elizabeth” Pat said as a way to tell her she was dismissed and could leave.

“Thanks, Sir” Elizabeth said as she arose from the chair, tucked the clipboard under her arm, and turned around and left Pat’s office.

Pat then went on-line to finalize adding Ms. Teresa Ochoa Morales to the manifest list of deportees to be transported from the southern New Mexico sectors to the out-processing center in El Paso but with the variance that Sector Chief Brennan would be personally

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transporting Ms. Morales and processing her out of the United States himself. He would receive a confirmation by email later in the day.

Pat then went into the Tactical Room. This was essentially a meeting room where the agents met to receive their assignments for the day and where tactical solutions for the accomplishment of a goal were hammered out by the appropriate agents and the Sector Chief. Off of this room was a large, secured equipment closet that contained all the gear any agent would need to achieve the mission at hand. There were weapons and ammunition, clothing, body armor, and all types of equipment from shovels to compasses and from first aid kits to binoculars.

Most agents were allowed to take their official vehicles home with them for easy accessibility in the event of an urgent call to duty or an emergency. However, there was a motor pool of specialty vehicles in the motor pool lot behind the Sector Office. Just outside the door to the equipment room was an official vehicle check-out board with the motor pool vehicles listed. Any member of the staff could check out the vehicle appropriate to his needs by writing his name in chalk on the corresponding line, date, and time of the vehicle check-out, expected date and time of return, and a brief discussion of the need for the vehicle. Adjacent to this board were hooks labeled with each vehicle and a unique number associated to each vehicle. On the hooks, keys were hung for the corresponding vehicle.

Pat went to the board and recorded the information required for the check-out and official use of the Dodge four-door sedan, which was to be used to transport Teresa and her belongings to the immigrant return processing center on Thursday. He left the keys on the hook, however, and would get them on Thursday morning just before the trip.

Pat needed to talk with Bud and Martha Pierce again to get the directions to the Cross Timbers Ranch in Arizona where Pat would be taking Teresa. He dare not talk by telephone or radio for fear that the conversation could be overheard by others. He wanted to visit with them in person, and he arranged to meet them at the Ax Handle later that afternoon.

Pat checked in with the operations team to ensure that nothing needing immediate attention was in the works. There was nothing. While there, he went over to the service board on the wall and put a chalk check mark on the line corresponding with his name under the column that said “Out.” In chalk, he added the time of 1730 for the 5:30 PM time he expected to return to the office. He then he went to the front desk receptionist and advised her he would be out in the field for the afternoon and to take messages for him. In the back lot, Pat got into his customary Blazer and headed off for the Ax Handle Ranch.

It was a hot afternoon with the temperature hovering around 104 degrees. The gentle breeze did nothing to cool things off. The temperatures in neighboring Arizona in the Phoenix metro area were

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usually much hotter, by as much as 10 degrees or more, because of the low elevations at which they were located. But at a mile above sea level, a hot day at the Ax Handle was cooler than what the Phoenix area could be.

Pat liked driving with his driver’s side window down, his arm resting on the windowsill. Even when it was warm and most everyone else would roll up their windows and turn on the air conditioning in their vehicles, Pat preferred to leave his down to enjoy the fresh air coming through the window. Today, however, he chose to keep his windows up in favor of the refreshing cool air from the Blazer’s air conditioning system.

The Blazer pulled up in front of the rock house at the Ax Handle headquarters. Pat opened the door and got out, the trailing dust from his vehicle swirling up and around him and the Blazer. The fine particles of dust stuck to the perspiration layer covering Pat’s forehead, neck, and brow making him feel gritty, like fine sandpaper. He would enjoy a refreshing cool shower this evening.

“Hello, Pat” Martha greeted as she opened the front screen door and walked out onto the porch. “Come in and have a cold glass of lemonade.”

“Oooo, that sounds mighty refreshing, Martha.”

Pat entered the front door to the house as Martha held it open for him. The Pierce’s house was not equipped with air conditioning, so they had a large fan on a stand turning slowly from side to side in the living room and a smaller fan on the kitchen counter aimed at the kitchen table. The fans kept the air moving and made it feel more comfortable than the 80 degrees inside would normally feel. About dusk, the temperatures would have dropped to acceptable levels and by the middle of the night a light blanket would be required for comfortable sleeping. Due to the rock construction of the house, the inside temperature would remain comfortably cool until around noon when the fans again were called on to help cool things off during the afternoon heat.

Pat took a long, thirst-quenching drink of his lemonade and then fought the urge to burp aloud in Martha’s presence. “That hits the spot” he said to Martha. “Thanks.”

“No problem. I thought that would hit the spot.”

“Bud at the sale barn?”

“Yes, he went to see how the cattle prices are trending now that so many are culling their herds due to the shortage of grass.”

“Thinking about culling some of your cows?”

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“We may have to sell some to reduce the grazing pressure on these dry pastures we’ve got. We will see how the prices are and then see what we need to do. We aren’t any worse off than other folks in this area. And we’ve seen droughts before, and we will see them again. So, how is your plan developing?”

“That’s why I am here, Martha, to give you an update on the plan and put on it the finishing touches. For example, my plan is to take Teresa to the processing center in El Paso, probably this Thursday, arriving there about 2:00 PM or so along with the transport bus from the southern sector that is scheduled to arrive about the same time. I then will finagle Teresa back across to the American side and back into my vehicle.”

“I’m with you so far” Martha said listening intently.

Assuming this all goes as planned, I will put her up at my house for the night and head for Springerville early Friday morning. Does Christopher know that it is Friday that I plan to arrive with Teresa at their place?”

“Yes, that’s right. He is expecting you guys and has made arrangements for Teresa to stay at their headquarters. I think they are excited and will be happy to have her. It will be a win-win for both parties, I think.”

“And, just to be sure I get to Christopher’s place without a hitch, if you could plot out on this map” Pat said as he pulled a folded-up Arizona Highways map from his left rear pants pocket “the best way to get to Christopher’s place, his telephone number, and any other information pertinent to a successful rendezvous, I would appreciate it.”

Martha reached out her hand to take the map from Pat. Pat handed her his pen, and she began to trace out the best route for Pat to take to get to the Cross Timbers Ranch. As she drew the route, she dictated the route that she was tracing for Pat to hear.

Once Martha had mapped out the route for Pat to take, she handed the map back to Pat.

“That should get you there, Pat.”

“All right then” Pat replied as he took the map from Martha and refolded it and put it into his back, left pocket. He then tipped his glass of lemonade all the way back to drain what was left in his mouth. He then captured what few melted ice cubes remained in the bottom of the glass, chewed them up, and swallowed them too. He scooted his chair back, stood up, and walked over to the sink to set his glass in it. He then started toward the front door with Martha close behind.

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“Thanks again, Martha. Teresa is ready to be released from medical care, and I think the deportation buses will run Thursday. So, if that’s the case, we will be leaving or Springerville early on Friday morning. I will call Christopher on Thursday night to confirm our arrival.”

“Good luck, Pat. You might need it.”

‘I’ll take all the good luck that I can get.”

He then walked out the front door toward his Blazer. He opened the door and climbed in. He grabbed his sunglasses off the dashboard, but they were too hot from the sun shining on them to put on just yet. He started the Blazer and backed out as far as he needed to turn around and head back to town. He moved the air condition blower to high hoping to expel all the hot air from the system and start the cooling off process.

It was Tuesday afternoon, and he better get his arrangements made and paperwork done tomorrow just in case Thursday was deportation day. He was starting to feel the pressure of the situation as the time to implement his plan was almost at hand. How exciting the next couple of days would be for Teresa but how nerve wracking it would be for him.

After he arrived back at the Sector Office, he checked his official email and messages and headed for home. He was totally exhausted. He needed for the first stage of this ordeal to end successfully so he could take a few days off and enjoy himself on the west coast somewhere like San Diego. That cold Arctic current off the coast would refresh and rejuvenate him. And it would give him time to think about what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.

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**Chapter 11: Implementation**

In anticipation of the big day, whenever it was to be, Pat had everything he needed packed and ready for the trip to Springerville to introduce Teresa to what would be her new home for a while. He then intended to continue west, maybe the cool pines near Flagstaff or down along the Colorado River near Blythe or all the way to the California coast. He had no real plans other than to just take a timeout for a few days.

From his contacts in the agency, he knew the deportation buses from his sector were preparing to run this coming Thursday. This was never public knowledge, not even to the deportees, so that no one or no group could plot a get-a-way scheme or kidnap a bus full of deportees, or worse. The deportees were only given 10-15 minutes to gather their belongings in preparation for the surprise trip. They were not allowed to communicate with their families of their imminent return. No, it was all done on the sly, but Pat knew and was ready to implement his plan.

Pat received a call from the Lordsburg Hospital that Miss Teresa Ochoa Morales was to be discharged directly to the custody of Sector Chief Brennan upon her release from the hospital at 10:30 in the morning. The hospital official requested that Pat arrive at least 15 minutes early to ensure that all paperwork was in order.

Pat now knew that there would be a confidential email to him at the office confirming this assignment with the details. He would check his email first thing in the morning at the office. It would state what he already knew. He was to retrieve Teresa from the hospital and personally transport her and her belongings to the deportation center in El Paso to coincide with the arrival of two buses carrying other detainees from across the sector. She would be processed for deportation along with the bus riders at the border.

Upon capture, each illegal alien is charged with unlawful entry into the United States. The agents are diligent in following the law on aspects of capture, search, handling, detention, and all procedures related therein. There are just too many on-going cases to allow for any mishandling that would bottleneck the process. Legal watch dog groups and those sympathetic to the plight of immigrants wanting citizenship in the United States kept the agents and legal staff on their toes about the necessity of following proper procedure.

Once in detention, unless some unusual circumstances warrant against it, deportation orders were initiated against each illegal person. While the documents were being reviewed and approved by the agency legal staff, the illegals were detained in a facility along with others of similar fate awaiting deportation. The detention usually was only a matter of a few days after which the buses transported the detainees to the deportation center along the border in El Paso. The deportation buses didn’t run on a set schedule. Instead, all departures were kept confidential until almost the last minute to make it more difficult to implement escape plans or implement plots to commandeer a bus or the entire convoy.

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The less time an illegal alien spends in the United States from capture to deportation, the less time there is for something to go wrong. In that short period of time, there are enough detainees to fill at least one bus with second bus on stand bye if needed. It is not unusual for both busses to be full or nearly full for the trip to El Paso. Some of the suspects have made the bus trip back to the border many times because of their multiple illegal entries and subsequent captures. These Mexicans keep trying over and over to get through.

Pat had completed the required paperwork regarding Teresa’s deportation and submitted it to the U. S. Customers Southern Border Office in El Paso for processing and approval. There the agency’s legal staff had reviewed the paperwork and approved it. In Teresa’s case, her name was now on the docket, and she would be remanded to the custody of Sector Chief Patrick Brennan in the morning upon discharge from the medical facility for direct delivery to El Paso-Juarez for deportation. Pat’s adrenaline began to pump. He was apprehensive but anxious to get on with it. “Let’s do this thing” he told himself out loud. There was no turning back now. He was committed, and it was time to execute his commitment.

Promptly at 10:15 AM on Thursday, Chief Brennan walked up to the hospital discharge desk, showed his identification and discharge orders. To the desk attendant, he stated that he was Chief Brennan of the Border Patrol here to pick up Teresa Ochoa Morales.

“Good morning, Chief. Just one moment, please” she said as she picked up her desk phone and dialed a number.

“Chief Brennan with the border Patrol is here” she said to whoever was on the other end of the line. “Yes, Ma’am” she said and hung up the phone. “Chief, the supervisor will be with you in just a moment.”

Before Pat could find a seat, he heard a female voice address him. “Chief, I am Ms. Welborn. I have here the discharge paperwork for Ms. Morales.” she said as she extended her hand, which Pat shook, and then opened a thick file and laid it on the countertop. “There are a few forms for you to sign.” One by one she pulled the forms from the folder, told Pat what the form was about, and where to sign.

“This one is acknowledging that the hospital is turning Ms. Morales over to you upon her discharge. Please sign here. And this one is the acknowledgement that payment for services rendered to Ms. Morales is the responsibility of your agency. Please sign here.” And so it went, until all the required forms had been signed.

“Chief, that does it. If you will have a seat, Ms. Morales will be wheeled in by the nursing staff on her floor. And she then will be in your care for deportation. Thank you, and good luck.”

“If you don’t mind, I think I will go up to Ms. Morales’ floor to see if I can assist her with her belongings.”

“The nursing staff will take care of all of that, but you may go up and escort them down if you like.”

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“Yes, that’s what I will do. Thank you” Pat replied as he touched the brim of his hat as he dipped his head as a sign of respect. He then turned and headed for the escalator to the second floor.

As she was wheeled out of her room with the Raggedy Ann doll in her lap followed by one nurse pushing her wheelchair and another carrying her backpack and a plastic sack with a few other belongings in it, Teresa saw Pat at the end of the hallway walking toward her. Teresa broke into a wide smile and waved excitedly to Pat. Pat smiled and offered a subdued wave back to Teresa. He stopped in the middle of the hallway and watched as Teresa and her entourage approached.

In Spanish, Teresa announced “My Saint Patrick has come to rescue me again.” Teresa’s words were addressed to the nurses, but she continued to look straight ahead at Pat.

“Teresa, you look well and happy. Ready to get out of this hospital?” Pat replied.

As they reached Pat, Teresa extended her hands to Pat, who clasped his hands around hers. “*Si, senor. Muchas gracias mi Santo.”*

“What can I carry or how can I help you,” Pat asked the nurses.

“We’ve got it under control, Chief, but thanks for asking” the nurse pushing the wheelchair replied. “Go ahead and get your vehicle and bring it up to the front door so we can help load her.”

“That sounds good” Pat responded. Then to Teresa he said, “I will see you downstairs, Teresa.” He turned back toward the escalator while Teresa’s entourage proceeded to the elevators.

Pat wheeled the official green Dodge sedan to the front door of the hospital and got out. He opened the passenger-side rear door and then stood facing the hospital doors. Shortly, they opened automatically, and Teresa was wheeled out to the sedan.

The nurse that had been pushing Teresa in the wheelchair explained to Pat how to assist Teresa stand up from the wheelchair and get into the car and visa-versa. It was mostly just a matter of positioning the wheelchair properly for Teresa to hold onto the top of the sedan door with her right hand and using her left hand to help lift herself out of the wheelchair and onto the edge of the sedan rear seat and then swing her lower body into the car. She tossed the Raggedy Ann doll into the back seat before she loaded herself into the car.

Once Teresa was in the car with her belongings, Pat closed the door. He then opened the trunk, folded up the wheelchair, and placed it in and closed the trunk lid.

“Let her do most of the work. Don’t caudle her too much. She will have to learn to get around on her own, especially when alone back in Mexico” said one of the nurses.

“What is the status of her baby” Pat asked.

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“The sonogram shows the baby is under-sized but appears to be developing normally. Brain activity appears normal too. We are hoping that the baby isn’t too premature to result in any serious issues. If not too premature, the baby should be just fine. We hope so. She is such a delightful young woman.”

“Thank you for all you have done for her” Pat replied as he reached out to shake the nurses’ hands one by one. “We have to get going now. Thanks again.”

The nurses remained outside the front doors of the hospital watching the green government vehicle pull away and out of the parking lot.

“That young lady sure does like that officer” said one of the nurses to the other.

“She sure does, and I think Chief Brennan sort of likes her too, don’t you think” the other nurse replied. “She’s a cutie alright.” They turned and went back into the hospital to resume their duties.

As Pat guided the Dodge off the hospital grounds and toward the interstate, he turned back around to Teresa and asked, “glad to be out of the hospital and headed for home?”

Teresa’s smile began to melt away as she realized that her attempt at living in the United States had failed with horrible results. “Glad to leave hospital but not to Mexico.” Now what, she thought. What am I going to do? How will I support myself and my baby? And I will miss Patrick, the saint that saved my life.

Pat’s voice shattered Teresa’s deep thought. “Teresa, I will be driving you to the border myself. I didn’t like the idea of you having to ride on the crowded deportation bus all the way to El Paso. After all that you have been through, I wanted you to be as comfortable as possible. Everything okay with you back there?”

“Thank you, Mr. Pat, but not back to Mexico. Me die!” Teresa offered in broken English, tears welling up in her eyes as sadness replaced her earlier happiness to be out of the hospital.

Pat looked at her through the rear-view mirror. He too became suddenly overcome with the emotion she was feeling. He could certainly lighten Teresa’s mood if he were to tell her of his plans, but he didn’t want to get her hopes up only to have it fail if something derailed his plans. Any number of things could go wrong. It was going to be risky, and he might not pull it off without being seen or otherwise found out. He didn’t want to tell her of freedom he had planned for her. He wanted her to experience it.

“Please, Teresa, don’t dwell on the negatives. Be happy that you survived the snake bite and that your baby will be delivered to you soon. You have much to be thankful for, my dear. You are a beautiful, strong young woman, and you will do well for yourself and your baby.” It hurt Pat to see her in such as state of sadness.

“You are my saint to me” Teresa replied to Pat’s face in the rear-view mirror with a weak smile breaking through her emotional grief.

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As Pat guided the sedan onto I-10 eastbound for El Paso, he turned on the AM radio to a Spanish-speaking station playing the polka-sounding traditional music of Mexico, with the accordion accompanying the guitars and trumpets. Pat wasn’t particularly fond of the music, but it was filled with the excitement and joy of a festival. It couldn’t hurt in helping to lighten the mood in the car.

On I-10 just south of Las Cruces, Pat saw the two buses up ahead travelling to the United States-Mexican border at El Paso and the deportation processing center there. The beautiful Organ Mountains were on their left paralleling the interstate. Teresa just stared out the window at the beauty of the rugged mountains and the desert leading up to them. The clarity of the day showed the Organs in their full majestic beauty. Teresa had never seen them and figured she would never see them again.

Pat pulled in behind the rear bus and followed along as part of the convoy. On the radio in the sedan, he announced his position to the dispatcher who would in turn radio the buses to advise them that the convoy was complete and to proceed on.

The convoy crossed into Texas and was soon entering the northwest edge of El Paso and still following I-10 to where it comes along adjacent to the Rio Grande and the squalor of the sprawling *Cuidad Juarez* just beyond. Teresa sat quietly watching out of her window at her home country on the other side of the river. She could see some children on the sandy bank of the south side of the river playing in its waters and swimming toward the U.S. side only to turn back under the watchful eyes of Border Patrol agents that were patrolling the top of the levy, kind of like “I dare you to cross the river.”

As the Organ Mountains melt into the landscape just north of the Texas border, the Franklin Mountains begin to rise and run into the city of El Paso with its highest peak looming over the city of El Paso at the southernmost tip of the range. Mexicans looking north across the Rio Grande clearly see the majestic peak rising above the city as if standing guard over El Paso and the border itself. It represents another country, one with opportunities and a more prosperous lifestyle than the one they live in Mexico. They thought, how could something be so close and yet be so unreachable?

The convoy continued on as the interstate left the river and was adjacent to Downtown El Paso. Here it began to slow in preparation to exit I-10 and proceed to the United States Customs Bureau Southern Deportation Center. Pat turned on the right turn signal and turned off the radio and followed the two buses in front of him.

Passing through a gate in the tall, chain link fence, the buses followed the signs to where they were to offload their human baggage. Pat, on the other hand, veered the Dodge to the right following the route for private automobiles. His timing was good. As he approached the guard box at the entrance to the center, Pat could see several buses backed up in line as the occupants of the bus at the head of the line were unboarding. Each person in custody had his hand bound in front of him with a black plastic zip lock tie. Most were in possession of a plastic sack or a backpack containing their belongings.

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Pat guided the green sedan to a stop at the guard box on his left side. He rolled down the window as the guard exited the box and came over to Pat’s car window.

“Good afternoon, sir” the guard offered.

“Sector Chief Brennan with an illegal scheduled for deportation” Pat said as he handed the guard his identification and copies of Teresa’s deportation papers. The guard took them and recorded the date, time, car license plate, and Pat’s ID information of the log on his clipboard as her walked around Pat’s vehicle giving it a look-over.

“Everything appears to be in order, sir. One moment, please sir” the guard said as he went into the guard box to match the information he had gotten from Pat with the schedule log on his computer.

The guard came back out and handed Pat at bright yellow plastic plaque with the number 37 on it for Pat to place on his dashboard, which Pat did. “Sir, you are good to proceed. Just go to Gate D ahead and one of the deportation officers will be with you shortly. The buses are processing through Gates A and B, so you will be able to process your illegal right through. I will call ahead so that one of the officers will process Ms. Morales at your gate. Will you need any assistance with her or her things, sir?”

“No officer, but thanks. I think I can handle it.”

Pat put the sedan in gear and slowly pulled away from the guard box and toward the parking area separated from the heavy gates leading into the chain-link deportation compound by the asphalt security lane. Rather than park directly across from Gate D where no other vehicles were parked, Pat pulled into the area across from Gates A and B where the buses and other vehicles were. He drove slowly looking for just the right space to serve his needs. He wanted to be parked among other vehicles but away from the many distinctive government vehicles. Finding just the right spot, Pat pulled in, put the sedan in park, and turned off the ignition.

Pat released his seat belt and then turned around in his seat so that he could face Teresa. She was sitting apprehensively holding the Raggedy Ann doll with sadness all over her face. He still had said nothing to her about what his plan. He knew what his mission was, but he just wasn’t exactly sure how it would all play out.

“Okay, Teresa. We are here. Ready to face the next phase of your life?” Pat said with a soft reassuring smile on his face. It was heartbreaking to him to think how she must feel believing that she was only minutes away from having her American dream shattered. “Everything is going to be alright.”

He opened the car door, got out, and went to the trunk to open it and extract the wheelchair from it. He then unfolded the wheelchair and slammed the trunk shut. He wheeled the chair to the rear passenger side and set the brake. Teresa opened the door from the inside and gave it a weak push. Pat caught it and opened it fully. Teresa scooted across the seat to the open door and swung her right leg around so that it was off the edge of the seat and out the door.

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Pat positioned the wheelchair as close as he could so that Teresa could lift herself up standing on her good leg while holding on to the top of the car door. She then made a little hop so that she was lined up with the chair and then eased into it. Pat then unlocked the wheelchair and pushed Teresa up and away from the door and reset the brake. He then went back to retrieve her backpack and close the door. He swung the backpack over his right shoulder using the right strap and walked up to the rear of the wheelchair. He unlocked it and began to push it slowly toward the gate. Teresa sat calmly in the wheelchair with the Raggedy Ann doll in her lap. On the inside, she was anything but calm.

As they approached the closed and locked gate that would allow entry through the heavy chain-link and into the deportation processing yard, they noticed there was no guard or officer yet there. Pat kept pushing Teresa toward the fence, and once they reached the fence, Pat looked east down the fence line and saw all the activity down where the buses had unloaded and knew the officers were busy processing those from the buses. But in a few minutes, Pat saw a young, uniformed officer heading their way along the inside of the fence from the bustling area of Gates A and B.

When he reached the gate, he opened it from the inside, the gate making a buzzing sound as the electronic lock released. He then stepped into the opening provided by the gate and stood there with clipboard in hand. “You Chief Brennan?”

“Yes officer. I have Ms. Morales here for deportation.”

“Yes sir. We got a call from the box that you were directed to Gate D. Sorry to make you wait, but we’ve had some rowdy ones at Gates A and B. They aren’t real keen on leaving our fair country for their own.”

“I know it is difficult to manage such a large number of angry people not interested in behaving or following orders. Their fear turned to anger well before they got here.”

“That’s a fact, sir,” said the young officer. “Okay, let’s get Ms. Morales cleared for processing so I can get back over there. We are expecting another two buses, and if we don’t get the ones that are here processed before the others arrive, we will have one hell of a bad day when it is all said and done. No shortage of illegals coming over.”

After again checking Pat’s identification and checking off the boxes on the paper on the clipboard, the young officer handed the clipboard to Pat. “Please sign here, sir. This is to acknowledge that you have turned your detainee over to the deportation officials for final processing and pass through to Mexico.”

Pat signed and was handed the original and a blue copy for his files. “You are authorized to escort Ms. Morales across the enclosure to the processing building where she will officially be released back into Mexico. Give the Mexican officer the original and you keep the copy for your files. They will take it from there.”

“Got it, officer” Pat said as he took both papers.

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Thank you, sir” and off he went back to the other gates.

Pat had entered the gateway with Teresa in her chair to sign the form on the clipboard. Now that he had the forms, he stood there looking around in all directions taking in the situation. If he proceeded over to the south side of the fenced enclosure to the Mexican officials, Teresa would be officially taken from him and returned to Mexico. So instead of pushing Teresa in her chair to the Mexican station, which was also extremely busy, Pat slowly backed out of Gate D pulling Teresa in her wheelchair with him. All the paperwork for processing Teresa out of the United States was in order and processed. As far as the Americans would know, Teresa Ochoa Morales had been returned to Mexico and was no longer in their custody. The Mexican side probably didn’t even know of a Teresa Ochoa Morales or that she was to be taken into custody by them.

Now, how to get her back to his vehicle without being seen in broad daylight? Could he park her somewhere close where she wouldn’t be seen while he went for the sedan? Pat’s mind was racing, and Teresa sat silently in her wheelchair not knowing what was going on.

Pat began pushing Teresa west on the sidewalk that paralleled the chain-link fence that served as the north side of the enclosure. He was afraid to turn around to see if anyone was pursuing them. About fifty yards west of Gate D, the fence turned south to serve as the west wall of the enclosure. Just beyond that was a small building that appeared to be an irrigation pump house or small power plant. If Pat could get Teresa to that point without being found out, he could park her there and go for the car. He assumed that security patrolled the area around the enclosure and the parking lot, and he needed to move as quickly as he could. He and Teresa needed luck on their side once again.

As they approached the building, Pat told Teresa in a low voice “I am not returning you to Mexico. I am going to take you some place where you can be safe and heal up and have your baby on American soil, but first we have to get away from the border.”

As Pat spoke, Teresa began to get emotional with a combination of happiness and thankfulness. A subdued smile born from a strong feeling of appreciation for what Pat was doing for her came on to her face. Tears welled up and quietly she spoke the words “*Aye, Chihuahua*, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, *muchas gracias, muchas gracias. Senor* Patrick is my savior. God bless my saint Patrick” she mumbled.

“I will leave you here while I go get the car” Pat was telling her as he maneuvered the wheelchair behind the building to lessen the possibility of being noticed. “Stay here. I’ll be right back.” Pat quickly scanned the surrounding situation and hurriedly took off to retrieve the vehicle.

Pat walked as rapidly as he could, without drawing attention to himself, toward his parked vehicle. Once in the vehicle, Pat backed out of the parking space and proceeded forward toward the lot’s exit and back by the guard box. He had rolled the window down when he first

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got in the car to release the pent-up heat inside. As he pulled up by the guard box, the guard, who was inside the guard box, came out to check Pat out of the secured area.

“Yes sir” the guard said to Pat as he approached the vehicle from the guard box. “Ready to return to New Mexico?”

“Yes officer, headed back to Lordsburg.”

“Well sir, I’ll get you on your way ASAP. Please pop open your trunk so I can check to be sure no illegal alien crawled in their while your vehicle was unattended.” The officer peered through the windows of Pat’s vehicle as he moved toward the trunk making sure no one was inside the back seat. He then raised the trunk, took a quick look, and then slammed it shut.

The guard came back by Pat’s open driver’s side window and said, “Alright sir, it looks good, and you are free to go.” On his clipboard, the officer recorded the time of Pat’s departure from the facility.

“Thanks, officer.”

“Be careful out there, sir” the guard replied with a tip of his cap.

Pat slipped the vehicle into drive and pulled slowly away from the guard box. In the incoming lane were two buses, probably bringing detainees from the Southeast Sector, approaching the guard box. This was the luck that Pat needed to extract Teresa from her location unnoticed. The activity at the guard box was about to become very hectic, which would give Pat a chance to get close to Teresa’s location unnoticed.

Pat slowly continued onto the exit road leading away from the guard box while thinking of a way to get back to the pump house building. He came upon a dirt road to the left that appeared to go in the general direction of Teresa’s location. As he turned on to it, he saw the sign that read “Authorized Vehicles Only Beyond This Point.” Pat turned the sedan onto this road.

He slowly followed the road as it swung left and to the south toward just west of the little building. He glanced to his left at the guard box about 100 yards away and could see the activity around the two buses parked there awaiting clearance to proceed to Gates A and B. Pat continued until he was adjacent to the little building with Teresa sitting in her wheelchair behind it.

Pat brought the car to a stop, put it in park but left the engine running as he went over to get Teresa.

“You okay?” He asked her as he grabbed a hold of the two grips and began pushing her across the unimproved turf toward his vehicle.

“*Muy bueno, senor Pat”* was all she said. Teresa was still confused about where she was being taken and how events of her freedom would unfold. Pat said nothing else as he pushed her toward the vehicle.

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Once there, he opened the trunk. “Teresa, you are going to have to get in here until I can get away from this place. You won’t be in there very long, and I will stop as soon as I can and put you up front. But I have to get out of here first.”

“*Si senor”* she said as she lifted herself from the wheelchair onto her good leg. Pat provided her support for her to maneuver to the lip of the trunk.

“Now watch your head” Pat said as he gently leaned Teresa back and into the trunk. She came to rest in a curled position on her right side.

“Okay, good. I will stop as soon as I feel it safe to get you out of there. It won’t be long” he said as he closed the trunk closed. He then folded up the wheelchair and placed it and Teresa’s backpack in the back seat of the car. He then got in behind the wheel.

“Teresa, can you hear me back there?”

“*Si senor.”*

“Good. Here we go.”

Pat looked in all directions to see if anyone was headed his way. He checked the rearview mirror and side mirrors as well but saw no one. He put the transmission in reverse and backed off the little dirt road, and then put the car in drive and pulled back onto the dirt road in the opposite direction to return the way he had come.

Pat drove a little faster now but tried to go slow enough so as not to kick up too much of a dust trail behind the car which could draw attention to him. At the guard box, Pat could see that only one bus remained parked there, the first one having obviously been cleared to proceed to the gates for the processing of its occupants. The guards were occupied with the processing of the bus occupants as Pat exited the grounds unnoticed.

Pat had the sedan back onto the asphalt road that returned to I-10 just a short way ahead. He took the west-bound ramp and entered I-10. He brought the vehicle up to speed as he merged with the I-10 traffic. Shortly, downtown El Paso came up on his left, and then I-10 came up beside the Rio Grande with Ciudad Juarez and Mexico just a few hundred yards to his left.

He wanted to get further away from the border before stopping to free Teresa from the trunk, but it was a typical hot, sunny day, and must be uncomfortable in the hot darkness of the trunk. Pat thought of a small neighborhood park he was aware of just north of the University of Texas-El Paso campus. He took the UTEP exit and navigated past the school, across Mesa Boulevard and into the quiet neighborhood in which the park was located. Once there, he drove around the park twice surveying for the best place to stop.

The old stately American elms provided abundant shade across the park and a surprising coolness when out of the direct sunlight. The park had no playground equipment since it was in a neighborhood of older bungalows mostly occupied by elderly residents that used the park for sitting or exercising their little dogs. No one was in the park and Pat saw no one in their yards

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across from the park. He eased the vehicle over next to the curb in the middle of the block and stopped.

“Teresa, are you okay?”

He could hear her changing position in the trunk. “*Si, senor, Pat.* Where are we now.”

“We are still in El Paso. I am going to open the trunk and let you ride up front the rest of the way. Get ready so that when I open the trunk, you can be ready to get out with my help.”

Pat got out of the sedan and went around to the passenger-side back seat and opened the door. He reached in to retrieve Teresa’s crutches that were on the floor of the back seat. He brought them around to the trunk, and then opened it with his free hand.

Teresa appeared, her eyes squinting due to the brightness. She quickly pushed herself up as Pat help lift her from the trunk in one quick, smooth move. In a matter of seconds, Teresa had been freed from the trunk and was on her crutches. The tee-shirt she was wearing was soaked with perspiration from the heat in the trunk and worry about the whole ordeal.

Pat directed Teresa to a concrete picnic table in the shade of the trees while he reached into the sedan to retrieve a canteen of water. Although no longer cold, the water was cool enough to refresh a thirsty soul. Teresa drank freely and some water missing her mouth dripped from her chin and ran down her neck refreshing her even more.

Pat took the canteen from Teresa when she had had enough. He didn’t even realize that he was thirsty until he put the lip of the canteen to his lips and began to drink. He too drank freely of the life-giving liquid until he felt refreshed. He then replaced the lid on the canteen and set it on the picnic table in front of them.

Pat then related to Teresa his plan for her. He told her of the opportunity for her to be a house maid and babysitter at a beautiful ranch headquarters in Arizona. It was there that she could regain her strength in preparation for giving birth. Arrangements would be made for a mid-wife to assist with the delivery of her baby at the ranch. Delivery of the baby at the Eastern Arizona Medical Center in Springerville would create questions and suspicions as well as cost a lot of money without medical insurance coverage. It was Pat’s intent to free Teresa from her anxiety about her future and that of her baby.

Teresa couldn’t believe what Pat had told her. She couldn’t contain her excitement. She was up on her leg and leaning over Pat and hugging him with all of her strength. “You save me again, my saint!”

Pat returned Teresa’s hug, but kept it shorter than he would have liked so they could get going. He stood up and broke free of Teresa’s embrace.

“You ready to continue on with our journey?” Pat asked as he picked up the canteen and slung it by its strap over his shoulder.

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“*Si senor*, I mean yes sir I am” she said with the widest grin Pat had ever seen. All of her teeth were showing.

“Yes. Good.”

They returned to the car. Pat opened the front passenger side door and took the crutches from Teresa. Standing on her right leg, she leaned toward the opening and placed her right hand on top of the door and her left hand on the roof of the sedan above the door opening. She then hopped once to where she was near enough to the edge of the seat to where she could rotate around and sit back onto the edge of the seat. She then swung her leg around to where she was now sitting in a forward position ready to ride.

Pat said nothing and really didn’t try to help her other than to hold her crutches for her while she worked her way into the sedan. Once Teresa was situated, Pat said “Watch your leg” as he closed her car door. He then opened the backseat door and slid the crutches onto the back seat. He closed the door and went around the car to the driver’s side. He got in and slipped the seat belt around himself.

“Teresa, you need to put your seat belt on” as he pointed toward the location of her belt. She slipped her belt around her chest and locked it as Pat watched. He then turned his gaze forward and to the mirrors as he started the car and pulled away from the curb.

On the way back to I-10, they passed by a small, tree-covered cemetery with old stately monuments and well-maintained grounds. Teresa watched the cemetery pass by and said, “That is a beautiful place to live when you die. Why do the dead ones get such a beautiful place to live in?”

“Where I am taking you to live is even more beautiful than this and full of life.”

“Thank you, my saint Pat.”

Pat reentered the west-bound traffic on I-10. Where I-10 turns north toward the New Mexico-Texas line, Pat exited the interstate and stopped at a convenience store along the frontage road. He helped Teresa out of the front seat and gave her the crutches so she could make her way inside to use the bathroom while he bought a couple of fountain drinks with ice. Pat opened the store door for Teresa. “I’ll meet you back at the car.”

Pat was standing beside the passenger side front door when Teresa came out of the store on her crutches. As she approached, Pat opened the car door for her. As before, once Teresa was situated to sit down in the front seat, Pat took the crutches and slipped them into the back seat. He had set the soft drinks on the roof of the car, and once Teresa was seated, he handed her one of the cups through the open car door window. She thanked him, and he went around the car and got in with his drink.

“We are going to my house in Lordsburg to spend the night, but to get there unnoticed by the authorities, I am going to have to take some back roads. There are two border patrol stops between here and Lordsburg if we take I-10. You would have to spend time in the trunk for us

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to get through those two stops. This way you can continue to ride up front.” What he didn’t say was that they were more than likely to encounter some other border patrol agents patrolling the desert between here and Lordsburg.

Pat got in and started the vehicle and returned to I-10 the way he had come. He entered the interstate headed north, but before he crossed the border with New Mexico, he exited I-10 and headed west. Past the fields of alfalfa, corn, and chiles and past orchards of pecans and apples he went as he followed the worn-out farm-to-market asphalt across the floodplain toward the west. It was a nice drive through some lovely pastural settings with cattle, sheep, and horses, workers irrigating or chopping weeds, or otherwise working the fields or livestock. They soon crossed over the Rio Grande and soon began climbing up the face of the escarpment that led to the mesa top above the Rio Grande valley. Now they were in mesquite and creosotebush in the heart of the *Chiuahuan* Desert. They followed the asphalt until it played out and became a gravel road through the desert and rangelands just above the Mexican border.

During the heat of the early afternoon, there was not much sign of life. Occasionally a jackrabbit would scamper across the road ahead of their car or a covey of scaled quail would flush up and fly low across the landscape to safety. The big soaring buteos and vultures could be seen high in the sky riding the thermals in search of food, but the only movement seemed to be the dust clouds kicked up by their car as they continued west across the desert.

Pat drove cautiously and at a moderate rate of speed so as not to catch the attention of other Border Patrol agents that might be around searching for illegal aliens. He didn’t want to draw any attention to themselves. If he saw anyone, he would just wave and keep going. As it turned out, he encountered no other agents but did pass a few ranchers. He just waved and kept going.

After almost three hours, Pat directed the vehicle to the north on another dirt road. This one was used pretty much by ranchers and hunters and was not well known nor well-traveled. This road led to Lordsburg.

Upon reaching Lordsburg, Pat drove directly to his house. He and Teresa hurriedly unloaded the wheelchair, crutches, and her backpack at the house. Pat showed Teresa the bathroom and the spare bedroom where she would sleep. He turned on the television for her to keep her company.

“Teresa, go ahead and make yourself at home. Take a shower and clean up and lay down and rest. I am sure you are worn out from the excitement of the day. I have to take the sedan back to the office and do a little paperwork, but I shouldn’t be gone too long. I will cook us supper when I get back. I can go by the store if you need anything.”

“Thank you for your kindness. I am so lucky to have you on my side.”

“No problem. Make yourself at home and I’ll see you soon.”

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Pat parked the sedan in the vehicle lot at the sector office and went inside. It was just after the shift change and there were several agents still hanging around getting ready to go on patrol. He spoke to all of them about how it was going and anything of interest for the day.

He was in his office when Elizabeth Hollingsworth gave a tap on the door and walked on in.

“Hey Chief, how did it go taking Ms. Morales to the deportation center?”

“It went well as can be expected, I guess.”

“How was she holding up, I mean being taken back to Mexico and all?”

“Well, she was pretty upset at having to go back, but then who wouldn’t be. Physically she is okay and probably strong enough to get back into a regular routine of work and surviving. But having a baby to take care of on top of work might be a challenge for her. But to have survived what she has been through, you know she is a tough woman and will make it.”

“I know you were attached to her and probably sorry to have to put her through that.”

“Hey, it’s part of what we have to do. It is what it is. Changing the subject, feel free to call my cell if anything comes up needing my attention. Otherwise, you are in charge and capable of handling anything that arises, I’m sure.”

“You will be back next Wednesday, is that correct.?”

“That’s my plan.”

Alright, well enjoy your time off and see you next week, Chief.”

“Thanks, Elizabeth. Take good care of things for me and see you then.”

Elizabeth turned and left Pat’s office. Pat completed the report he was working on and wrapped up a few loose ends before leaving. He locked his office door as he left to go home.

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**Chapter 12: Road Trip**

Pat unlocked the front door to his house and entered it. Teresa was on the couch in the den watching television.

“Did you get a shower?” Pat asked in English.

“Yes. Clean and happy” she replied.

“Good. I will start us some supper here in just a few minutes. Let me change first” he said as he walked into his bedroom to remove his gun belt and get into some shorts and a Coors Light tee shirt. He went into his bathroom to take a piss and then wash his face and neck with cold water. He dried off and then went back into the den.

“How about some good flat red beef enchiladas?”

“That be good” Teresa responded, a nice smile on her face. No enchiladas since Mexico. Long time.”

“Alright, that’s what we’ll have then” Pat said as he turned to go into the kitchen. “Anything I can get you like ice teas or a Coke or a beer?”

“A *cerveza,* er beer, okay?” Yes please?”

“You got it” Pat said as he went to the refrigerator and took out two cans of Coors Light. He opened then both and carried them into the den.

“Here you go” he said as he handed it to Teresa. “I don’t have any *Dos Equis* or *Modelo* or any Mexican beers. This is what I usually drink. “Do you have this brand in Mexico.”

“Oh yes, this one good for Americans. They drink much at bars in Juarez.” She took a sip of her Coors Light. “That good. My first time. I like.”

“Any beer would probably taste good to you right now.” Pat replied as he turned to go back into the kitchen.

Pat browned some hamburger meat and then drained off the grease into an old pickle jar he had. He then poured the cooked hamburger meat into a saucepan and then added two cans of Old El Paso medium hot red enchilada sauce to it and put it on low heat. He cut up some onion and tomatoes and added it to the pan. While the mixture was simmering, he pan-fried six corn tortillas one at a time, flipping them over quickly so as not to overcook them and serve them soft. He then cut up some lettuce and shredded some cheese.

“Teresa, so you want a fried egg on top of your enchiladas?” Pat called from the doorway. I am going to cook me one.”

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“Yes, please, for me fried with good yellow top.”

“Good. I’ll have it ready in just a minute.”

Once everything was done, Pat took two plates from the cupboard and built three layers of corn tortillas with enchilada mixture he had made on each plate. He slid a fried egg on to each enchilada, sprinkled cheese and lettuce on top of each one, and then placed each plate on the kitchen table. He got out two knives and forks and a couple of napkins and placed them in the middle of the table.

“Teresa, supper is served” Pat announced from the kitchen doorway.

Teresa picked up her crutches and, in about three moves, came gliding into the kitchen and took a chair.

“Good smell” Teresa said.

“I hope you like it” Pat replied. “What can I get you to drink” Pat asked as he opened the refrigerator to take out another Coors Light for himself.

“Water good.”

Pat pulled a glass from the cupboard and put some ice cubes in it and filled it with tap water and set it in front of Teresa.

Teresa bowed her head, said a brief silent blessing, and crossed herself. Pat noticed but said nothing. Teresa cut through the enchilada with the edge of her fork and put it in her mouth. “Mmmm, it good. You good enchilada cook. You are saint of enchilada too.”

“Glad you like it.”

As they were well into eating their meal, Pat began explaining to Teresa that in the morning they would be driving to a place in Arizona, the state to the west of New Mexico, where she would stay and live and work. She would live on a nice ranch and assist the young mother with child care, cleaning duties, perhaps some cooking, and perhaps some light ranch chores. She would be safe there and it would be a comfortable place to deliver and raise her baby. It would be her chance to practice living in America and speaking English and learning how to assimilate with Americans before expanding her area of residency someday.

As Pat talked with Teresa about what a fantastic opportunity she and her baby were to soon have, tears of appreciation, joy, and hope began streaming down her face. Despite the cheerful smile on her face reflecting the happiness Teresa was feeling inside, she couldn’t control the flow of tears. It was if she had turned on tiny little water faucets. The streams ran down her face, off her jaw, and on to her near empty plate.

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Pat scooted his chair back and retrieved some Kleenex tissues and handed them to Teresa. He said nothing. He just let her express what her emotions brought without a word or interference. As Teresa finally began to regain her composure, Pat reached across the table and softly put his hand on top of one of Teresa’s and in a serious tone said, “I hope you weren’t crying about the food I cooked us.” He smiled as a sign of an attempt at humor. Teresa broke into a good laugh.

Pat cleared the table, loaded the dishwasher, and put away the leftovers. Teresa excused herself to go to the bathroom. When Teresa returned to the den, Pat was seated in his leather recliner with an eye toward the television. He stood up as she approached.

“I know you must be tired, and I know that I sure am. We will need to leave about sunup tomorrow. I suggest we get some sleep now. I will wake you when I get up and we can eat breakfast and hit the road.”

Teresa walked her crutches closer to where Pat was standing so she could swing herself up close to him. She then gave him a tender kiss on the cheek followed by a strong, long affectionate hug. “You are a saint for me” she said in his ear. As Teresa relaxed her hug, Pat pulled back and stared directly in the eyes, her face only inches from his. With his eyes locked into her soft chocolate eyes, he saw beyond her beautiful face and crippled body and into her very soul and he knew who she was at the core, a good and decent young woman deserving of a chance to flourish and excel, and he knew he would be forever connected to her. It wasn’t superficial or lustful. It was real and a very natural attraction between two people that needed each other at this time in their lives.

Pat gently placed his hand on each side of Teresa’s face and tilted his face to align with hers and softly placed his lips on hers and kissed her as if he was transferring all he had to live for to her. It was deep and passionate and without premeditation. It was real and natural.

Pat pulled his lips from Teresa’s and revisited her soft eyes for a second before separating from her and saying “We better get some sleep. We have another busy day tomorrow.” He let his hand slip down and take Teresa’s hand for a gentle squeeze. “Sleep well, Teresa.”

Pat didn’t fully understand his feelings at this moment, but he knew that whatever the relationship with Teresa was, it had to remain pure. He admired her spunk and yet had empathy for her situation and what she had gone through the past few weeks. He felt a strong affection for her, but any lustful thoughts made him feel uncomfortable. He loved her and yet saw her as a beautiful China doll, fragile but with flaws.

Teresa stood a few seconds staring dreamily at Pat before stepping past him on her way to the guest bedroom and her sleeping quarters. She then prepared herself for bed while Pat piddled around in the front of the house closing the window blinds and locking up before retiring to his bedroom. So, the end of a very long and stressful day came to a very warm and satisfying

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conclusion for both parties involved. Satisfying, yes, but no conclusion. And then tomorrow begins.

It was totally dark when Pat woke up and his bedside clock showed 4:30. He never set an alarm because he had some unexplainable internal clock that woke him up at just the right time he wanted to awaken. The house was cool due to the extremely low humidity in the desert, or the air’s inability to retain heat with such little water vapor in it. He lay flat on his back under the covers for a few moments adjusting his eyes to the dark and listening to his own breathing. It was as if nothing else was stirring throughout the house other than the refrigerator icemaker and its regular cycle.

Pat threw the covers back and raised himself up and out of bed. He felt stiff from the long time in the car and the emotional stress from yesterday’s activities. He walked out of his room and down the hall to the guest room where Teresa was. He quietly turned the knob an opened the door. The night-stand light was on dim, but Pat immediately noticed that Teresa was sitting on the bed fully dressed and her backpack zipped and ready to go on the floor at her feet.

“Teresa, everything okay?”

“Yes, Saint Pat. We go now?”

“Soon. I need to take a shower and then I will cook us breakfast before we begin out trip. Come into the kitchen and have a cup of coffee while I get ready.” Pat waited until he saw Teresa stand and mount up on her crutches. He then turned and went into the den where he turned on the lamp on the end table by the couch, and then he went into the kitchen, turned on the light, and got the coffee maker going. Teresa had followed him into the kitchen and sat at the breakfast table.

“When you no longer hear the coffee dripping, grab a cup from the cupboard and help yourself. I’ll go shower and then cook us breakfast. Make yourself at home, Teresa” Pat said as he left the kitchen.

Pat showered and shaved and packed a large duffel bag for the trip. He had made no reservations anywhere but gave thought of going all the way to the west coast after he delivered Teresa to the Cross Timbers Ranch. It had been years since he had seen the ocean. New Mexico had plenty of sandy beaches, just no oceans to go with them. He figured he would be plenty warm wherever he was going, so he packed casually with mostly shorts and tee shirts and Hawaiian shirts.

Once he was packed, he carried his bag into the den and set it down. He smelled a familiar aroma coming from the kitchen and went in to see what was going on. He was surprised to see Teresa on one leg scrambling some eggs in a skillet in which she must have just fried bacon strips, which were laid out on paper towels on a kitchen plate.

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Pat quietly walked up behind Teresa and put his hands on her shoulders. She jumped and then laughed at herself for being caught off guard by Pat’s presence. “It smells and looks great, Teresa. You didn’t have to do this.”

“You help me. I want help you” she replied without looking up because she was stirring the eggs. “Please, you sit. We eat soon.”

Pat fixed himself a cup of coffee and set it on the table. He then went over and picked both plates of bacon and scrambled eggs Teresa had just taken up. He carried them over to the table and set them down. Teresa hopped over on her good leg and sat down at the table.

“Would you like some milk, Teresa? I’m going to get me some.”

“*La leche*---milk good, please.”

Pat poured up two small glasses of milk and set them down on the table. He then sat down to eat. Teresa again had bowed her head and said a silent blessing for the food, her health, and her overall good luck to have met this wonderful man who was doing so much to make her dream become a reality. She indeed had much for which to be thankful, and Pat was one of them.

After breakfast, Pat gathered up his bag, Teresa’s backpack, and he arranged an ice chest with water bottles and cans of sodas for the trip. He took all the stuff through the kitchen and out the door into the carport where his Ford Bronco was parked. He loaded the items into the back of the Bronco, got in it, and started the engine. He then went back into the kitchen, where Teresa was cleaning up after having loaded the dishwasher.

“Thanks for cooking breakfast and for cleaning up, Teresa. I think we are ready to take off. I just need to go to the bathroom right quick and then off we go on the next leg of your great adventure.”

Once they were in the Bronco, Pat backed out onto his street and put it in drive and headed away from his house. “I’ve got to make one quick stop” he said as he pulled into a 24-hour convenience store just around the corner from where he lived. It had a public phone hanging on the outside wall, and Pat pulled up and parked in front of it. “I’ll be right back” he said as he turned off the engine and got out and went to the phone.

Using his phone card, he called Rancher Radio and asked to be connected to the Ax Handle Ranch. He heard the familiar buzzing sound as the operator connected him to that exchange. “Hello” he heard Martha Pierce say.

“Martha, it’s Pat. How are you this early morning hour, over?”

“Cooking ole’ Bud his morning eggs like normal. Everything okay with you, over?”

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“Yep. Just calling to say that the plan is on schedule, and I will be delivering the package today as planned, over.”

“Roger that, Pat. I’ll pass along the information. You take care and talk soon. Ax Handle, out.”

“Out” is all Pat said and hung up the phone.

Pat, Bud, and Martha had devised some code language to use when talking on Rancher Radio because of its lack of security. It was the only way to communicate with Bud and Martha since they had no cell phones due to a lack of cell phone coverage in their neck of the woods.

Back in the Bronco, Pat pulled out onto the street, but rather than go out onto westbound I-10 toward the Arizona line where Border Patrol check stations and USDA check stations were located, he had planned to skirt north through the mountains along the New Mexico-Arizona border using forest service and BLM roads to get to the Cross Timbers Ranch. He had decided to follow these roads instead of the route that Martha had mapped out to avoid highways that might be patrolled. He fiqured it to be about 200 miles to the north, and then he would turn west on U. S. highway 60 to Springerville. He would then use Martha’s map to locate the ranch. Travel would not be as fast, but it would be more secure for his and Teresa’s sake.

The Bronco headed north out of Lordsburg on the highway toward Silver City, but he turned west off that highway a few miles north of town and headed for the White Mountains. There he would pick up the service roads he had mapped out that would take him to the north.

It was still dark outside and too early for any traffic on the road. Pat had the radio turned down low on a country western AM station. Soon the low radio and the hum of the tires on the asphalt highway weighed heavy on Teresa’s eyes, and she had trouble staying awake. There wasn’t much to look at yet anyway, so with Pat’s encouragement, she let herself go and was soon asleep leaning against the passenger door in the front seat.

Pat was glad to see Teresa get some more rest. The past three weeks had been very stressful for her, and she needed lots of rest to regain her health and support the formation of a new human being inside her. Teresa was close to three months pregnant when she learned of it, and it was about six weeks following her learning of her pregnancy that she had made her move under the wire and across the border. Add another three weeks of being apprehended and hospitalized, Teresa was now near her fifth month. She was now starting to show her pregnancy on her thin frame.

Pat didn’t know much about women’s pregnancies and women’s needs during their pregnancies. Neither did Teresa. Pat figured, however, that she should be under the care of a medical professional soon to monitor her progress and health. Once they got her settled in Arizona, arrangements would be made to accommodate her needs and those of her baby’s.

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Martha Pierce had really been the driving force behind the acceptance of Teresa moving in with her son and daughter-in-law at the Cross Timbers Ranch. Martha had felt such empathy for Teresa’s current condition and the tragic way in which her quest for freedom was cut short that she wanted to do all that she could to help Teresa reverse her apparent fate and succeed in her original mission. Martha had developed strong feelings for Teresa, almost as if she was her daughter, and would do what she could to ease Teresa’s pain and make her mission successful by way of the Cross Timbers Ranch and their willingness to take her in as one of their own.

Because of their early departure, Pat and Teresa should arrive at the ranch before noon.

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**Chapter 13: Suspicion**

A phone call came into the Lordsburg Sector Office from the deportation office in El Paso. The receptionist answered the call.

“Lordsburg Border Patrol Office, how may I help you?”

“Yes, this is officer Silva from the El Paso deportation office. Could I please speak to Chief Brennan?”

“I’m sorry sir, but Chief is out on leave until next Wednesday. Can anyone else assist you?”

“Perhaps so. Chief Brennan delivered one Teresa Ochoa Morales for deportation yesterday, Thursday, and we have the record of her delivery. However, the Mexican authorities, who made arrangements to receive her because of her special needs, claim they never physically received her. They provided a wheelchair and made arrangements for a therapist to meet with her about her handicap, but they haven’t seen her, or so they claim.”

“Officer, let me transfer your inquiry to Assistant Chief Hollingsworth. She will have access to our records, and perhaps she can shed some light on Ms. Morale’s delivery for deportation. Chief Brennan’s logbook should reflect the details you are looking for. Please hold, Officer Silva.”

The receptionist placed the call on hold and pushed the intercom button for Elizabeth’s office. When Elizabeth picked up the receptionist explained to her the nature of Officer Silva’s inquiry. Elizabeth listened to the receptionist’s summary of the inquiry and then pushed the blinking button to take Officer Silva’s call.

“This is Assistant Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth.”

Officer Silva introduced himself to Elizabeth and revisited the reason for his call. Elizabeth listened intently to what the officer was asking. She made notes of the conversation on a yellow legal pad.

“Officer Silva, obviously I wasn’t there and don’t know the procedure that was followed. Chief Brennan isn’t here, but I will be more than happy to review the file and Chief’s logbook to see what I can find for you. I’m sure there is a misunderstanding and there is a logical explanation for the mix up. May I review Chief Brenan’s notes and logs and call you later today? Will that work for you, officer?”

“That would be great, ma’am. We would like to clean up our paperwork and satisfy the Mexican officials that we followed the proper procedure.

“Yes, sir, I understand. I will give you a call later today. Goodbye.”

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“Thank you, ma’am. Talk soon.”

After Elizabeth hung up the phone, she organized the notes she had taken about Officer Silva’s call and then gathered her thoughts. She really didn’t know any more about Chief Brennan’s delivery of Ms. Morales other than what he told her. Now this wrinkle pops up. She thought to herself I hope there are no discrepancies here.

Elizabeth went into the records room and to the file cabinet where the daily logs recorded by each agent were kept. She found the folder titled “Chief Patrick Brennan.” She removed the entire folder and returned to her desk with it. She sat down and opened the file. The first document in the file was the log sheet of Chief Brennan’s activities for Thursday, July 26th which was yesterday. She followed the chief’s notations down the page. Chief’s trip was well detailed and explained. The time that he left the office, the time that he arrived at the hospital and who he talked with, the time he departed with Ms. Morales for El Paso, and the time of their arrived at the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Deportation Center. He even recorded the vehicle number and odometer readings at departure and arrival in El Paso.

He recorded the names of the officer at the guard box and at the U. S. side security gate and the times for both. He detailed how he took Ms. Morales into and across the secured transition zone to the Mexican side where he released her from custody and into the custody of the Mexican authorities and the time. One key component was missing: There was no name of a Mexican official directly involved in the custody transfer.

Stapled to the daily log were copies of Ms. Morale’s release from the hospital, the receipt that Chief Brennan received from the guard box officer which had the date and time stamp, and a receipt of acceptance by the officer at the United States deportation gate. There was no Mexican stamp on the receipt that Chief Brennan should have received when physically turning Ms. Morales over to the Mexican authorities.

Elizabeth reread the entire log and flipped deeper into the file looking for any other notes that Chief might have kept and put into the file. There were no other notes. Elizabeth closed the file and returned it to the file cabinet in the records room. She then returned to her desk and reviewed the events in her mind. Were the few pieces of missing key information just mistakes or omissions? Chief hadn’t gotten to be Sector Chief by mistakenly leaving out key pieces of information. In fact, he was very precise in following procedures and took great notes. Maybe she should give Chief a call to see if he could remember anything about his final minutes escorting Ms. Morales.

From the office land lines, Elizabeth called Pat’s cell phone number. It rang and rang with no pickup. It was mid-morning, and she knew Chief had been up for hours despite being on leave. He was very conscientious and would pick up the call if he knew of it. He must not have the phone with him or, if travelling, probably is in a “dead zone.” So, she left a message after she

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heard “You have reached the cell phone of Pat Brennan. Please leave a message so I can return your call. Have a good day,” and then the beep.

“Chief, this is Elizabeth Hollingsworth. Please call me at the office as soon as possible. There is something needing immediate attention. Thanks.”

Elizabeth hung up the phone and sat still in her chair deep in thought. She hoped Chief would return her call soon so she could clear up the final details for the Deportation Center. She had promised Officer Silva that she would return his call by the end of the day, but she wanted to have the information Officer Silva needed to clear up any misunderstandings. Until she heard back from the Chief, Elizabeth wouldn’t be able to offer Officer Silva any new information. So, while she waited for the Chief to return her call, she continued working on other projects needing attention.

Pat and Teresa were making good progress maneuvering through the White Mountains of eastern Arizona toward their final destination near Springerville. Teresa had slept well in the early part of the trip and now she was well-rested and perky and talkative. Pat used this opportunity to work with her on her English and to help her improve it. She was excited that her English was improving and enjoyed conversing in it. She wanted to be as fluent in English as Pat was in Spanish.

They were in an isolated area and on back roads and weren’t seeing much traffic. Most other vehicles they encountered were those of ranchers, miners, or government vehicles operated by U. S. Forest Service employees. Occasionally, there would be an out-of-state vehicle, probably operated by a tourist. Pat was enjoying the beautiful drive and the relaxed atmosphere just speaking to Teresa about nothing and everything. He hadn’t really expected to receive any calls on his cell phone but knew he would not be able to take any calls because of the lack of cell coverage in the mountains. Once they arrived in Springerville, he would check his phone for missed calls and return them. Right now, however, there was no way to receive calls or check any messages. He wasn’t expecting any anyway.

The Ford Bronco dropped down out of the mountains from the south on to highway 60. He turned west and headed for Springerville. The Cross Timbers Ranch was about 16 miles northwest of town. It was about 10:55 AM and they had made good time so far.

As they were approaching Springerville, Teresa expressed the need to stop so she could go to the bathroom. Pat had the same need. So, at the first convenience store with gas pumps, Pat pulled in. Pat slid the Bronco up next to one of the gas pumps and turned off the engine. He told Teresa to go inside to use the bathroom while he gassed up the vehicle. After relieving themselves and gassing up, they would grab something to eat before heading to the ranch.

Pat started filling up the Bronco while Teresa pulled out her crutches and headed inside to use the bathroom. When she finished her business and returned to the Bronco, Pat had gassed up

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the Bronco and checked under the hood and was cleaning the car windshield with the squeegee.

“Teresa, I’ve got to go to the bathroom and then check my phone for messages. You okay out here by yourself?”

“I stay here. Nice and cool day here.”

Pat smiled. Teresa had probably never been at this altitude, never been out of the desert and in the mountains before. “It is much cooler here than where you are from. Be right back.” He turned and headed for the store while Teresa remained outside the Bronco supported by her crutches enjoying the weather.

Once Pat had finished inside the store, he walked out toward the Bronco. He had pulled his cell phone from his pants pocket and noticed that he had one message. In checking, he saw that the message was from the Sector office number. As he approached the Bronco, he began listening to the message. At its conclusion, he pushed the number 4 button on the keypad to replay the message again listening carefully for the content of the message but also Elizabeth’s voice inflections trying to capture the mood of its meaning. He ended the message and turned the phone off. He stood still by the front passenger fender of the Bronco with the phone in his hand at his side. He began to digest the message and its meaning. He asked himself what the Deportation Center would be calling about. Everything had been handled properly, hadn’t it? What could they possibly need to know? He became aware of a sudden wave of perspiration beads across his forehead. And he became aware of Teresa’s voice “Pat okay? Something wrong?”

“No, everything is fine. I just need to call my office and then call the ranch to tell them we are in town and will be there soon. Go ahead and get in the car while I call the office.” He opened the passenger side door for Teresa. She maneuvered around the open door until she could pull herself up into the front seat. She then pulled her crutches in with her, and Pat closed the door. “Be right back” he said as he moved toward the front of the vehicle. He dialed the office number and waited for a response.

“Border Patrol, Lordsburg Sector Office. How may I help you?”

“Cindy, this is Pat Brennan. How are things going there today?”

“Oh, hi Chief. Things are fine here. No urgent issues to report.”

“Good for that. I need to speak to Assistant Chief Hollingsworth, please, if she is available.”

“I think she is in her office, Chief. Let me transfer your call.”

“Thanks, Cindy.”

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Pat heard the pause in the phone as he went on hold awaiting Elizabeth to pick up.

“Hi, Chief. Where are you calling from?”

“I am in Arizona on my way to the west coast. Sorry I didn’t pick up your message sooner. Cell coverage has been spotty and frankly I wasn’t looking for any incoming calls. So, what’s up?”

“You got my message that the Deportation Center called, right?”

“Yes. What are they in need of?”

Elizabeth had her notes of her conversation with the Deportation Center on her desk in front of her in case she needed to refer to them.

“According to one Officer Silva who called from the Center, the Mexican authorities were expecting to personally receive Ms. Morales but never saw her. According to them, they had a wheelchair ready to accept her back into her country, and they had made arrangements for physical therapy for her. It was as if she was to be treated as a celebrity or at least given special attention. So, the question becomes why did you not see this special reception for Ms. Morales and turn her over to them? I’m not asking the question, they are.”

“Well, I never saw any special party to receive anyone of the returning deportees, but then again is was pretty hectic with a couple of buses of deportees having arrived and being processed out of the U. S. and into Mexico. In fact, honestly no deportation guard escorted her through to the Mexican side because they were all busy with the many others that had arrived for processing. They checked her into the processing area, and I was the one that physically took her to the Mexican receiving station. I left her there with them for processing through their procedure, whatever that was.”

“Well, did you transfer Ms. Morales to any specific Mexican official, one whose name you can recall? That would sure help to clear up this matter.”

“No, I don’t remember the name of any one individual that received her. There were many there, so I kind of left her with them and departed back to the American side.”

“And you never saw any authorities with a wheelchair or any medical personnel there acting like they were to receive someone like Ms. Morales?”

“No, I sure didn’t. Now, Elizabeth, in all honesty I have never handled the deportation of an individual as was the case with Ms. Morales. In fact, when the guard at the American fence ushered me in and then left me to get her across the buffer zone to the Mexican station, I was surprised. I thought someone other than me would escort her across and turn her over to the receiving officials.”

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“I told Officer Silva that I would call him back today with an explanation or at least a clarification. What should I tell him, or would you rather call him back?”

“Elizabeth, I am on leave and unless you consider this an emergency, I would just as soon wait until I return to duty next week to explain again the series of events that day. Please go ahead and call the officer back and relate to him my version of what took place. I can’t explain why I never saw a receiving party with a wheelchair, but I didn’t, and I don’t know where she went when I left her with the Mexicans. Just tell them that, please, and if that doesn’t satisfy them, I will revisit the issue when I return to duty.”

“Roger that, sir. I will take care of it the best I can from here, sir. Sorry to have bothered you with this. Enjoy your leave.”

“Thank you, Elizabeth. See you next Wednesday or so. Take care of the place.”

“I will, sir. Thanks.”

Pat ended the call and slowly walked around the front of the Bronco to the driver side door, opened it, and got in. Teresa could tell that he had something on his mind, but she did not question him or say anything. Pat started the Bronco and pulled out onto the highway that led to downtown. He was preoccupied with the discussion he had just had with the Assistant Chief, but there wasn’t anything else he could say than what he had already said in words and on paper in his logbook and the daily log sheet.

Pat cleared his mind and returned to the business at hand, which was find some place to eat and put a call into the Cross Timers Ranch and tell Christopher they were close and would be there soon. He knew they were expected today, and that Bud and Martha had worked out the arrangement with them. In fact, he about half expected Bud and Martha to show up at the ranch themselves to see Teresa again and help her get adjusted to her new residence.

“Let’s find a place to eat” Pat said. “Hungry?” Pat asked Teresa.

“Yes” was her reply.

His mind was revisiting the events surrounding the planned delivery of Teresa to the Mexican authorities who were waiting to receiver her. Did he take her all the way to the Mexican side once inside the gate or did he turn around and go back out the gate immediately after he got in when the security officer left them to return to Gate A where the bus loads of deportees were being processed? He couldn’t remember the details because of the pressure of the situation. He did not remember speaking with any of the Mexican authorities. In fact, if they were waiting on Teresa to arrive, no wonder they have questions about whether she arrived or not. He couldn’t remember any specific Mexican officials because he never met any. He never made it all the way to the Mexican receiving station. If he had, he never would have been able to smuggle her back into the United States. Once the U. S. officer let him into the buffer zone

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though the secured U. S. gate and then left Teresa in Pat’s custody, Pat immediately returned through the gate with Teresa when the officer was too preoccupied with the bus passengers.

Pat brought his attention back to the present. “What kind of food would you like to eat, Teresa?”

“What you like good to me.”

Pat saw a Whataburger up ahead on the left and decided that was where they would eat. It was fast and delicious and would serve their needs. Besides, Pat loved Whataburger and couldn’t get them all that often. He hoped Teresa would like it too. He would find out soon enough.

He pulled in and parked. He got out of the Bronco and went around to assist Teresa, but she was already out the door and on the ground with her crutches and ready to go in and eat, which they did. It was a refreshing break from the stressful grind of the past two days. Pat got his favorite combo meal and Teresa ordered the same. Afterwards, Teresa expressed that she was a fan of Whataburger too. “Thank you, my Pat. How you say, hamburger good to eat.”

After they finished their lunch and were outside by the Bronco in the parking lot, Pat placed a call to the Cross Timbers Ranch at the number Martha had given him. On the second ring, it was answered by a female.

“Hello, this is Sally.”

“Hello, Sally. This is Pat Brennan, the Border Patrol guy that knows Bud and Martha Pierce. I think you were expecting my call?”

“Yes, Pat, Martha told Chris and me all about the situation you are in and your idea for us to help, which we are happy to do and excited to do what we can do to help. Are you getting close to Springerville?”

“Yes, in fact we are in town now and just finished eating lunch.”

Well Pat, you should have just come on out to the ranch for lunch. We can’t wait to meet you and Teresa. Are you coming right out?”

“Sally, I may stop by a grocery store to pick up a few things, and then we will head your way. Is there anything I can get for you while I am at the store?”

“No, I can’t think of anything we need. There is a Wal-Mart on Main Street. You will go right by it on the way. So, we will look for you within the hour or so?”

“That sounds about right. So, we will see you soon. Again, thanks for what you have offered to do for Teresa. She is a delightful young woman. You guys will love her.”

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“That’s what Martha told us. Great. So, get out here so we can meet our new house mate.”

“Okay, we’ll be there as soon as we can. Thanks, Sally.”

Back at the Lordsburg Sector Office, Elizabeth Hollingsworth was revisiting the series of events, as she understood them, dealing with Ms. Morales’ return to Mexico. The one thing that didn’t seem to add up was that Pat Brennan, as meticulous as he is with the details of reports and reporting, couldn’t sufficiently explain any interaction with Mexican authorities during the deportation process of Ms. Morales. That would have been at the conclusion of the deportation process, the turning over of Ms. Morales to the Mexican authorities at their gate. Elizabeth was surprised that the name of at least one Mexican official wasn’t in the report. To have in the report the name of the person he handed her off to would bring official closure to the whole Morales affair which should not have had any glitches---but evidently did.

Teresa was very thankful for the great turn of events of benefit to her and her baby. She was understandably anxious about her future with an American family she had not yet met, and equally anxious about a baby she had not yet had. As she thought about what was to come, she became more and more interested in her baby. The fact was that she had been so consumed with plans Chief Brennan had chosen for her that she hadn’t thought much about the baby and what it would mean to have one.

Her baby bump was more obvious now and she was envisioning what it would be like to have a baby. She had felt the baby move before, but now it was occurring more often, and that was exciting to her. Now she was feeling more like a mother-to-be and began thinking about the best for the two of them. How fortunate for her to have encountered Saint Patrick, who had changed her life immeasurably.

Pat pulled into the Wal-Mart parking lot and parked. “Teresa let’s go in and get you some toiletries and a few items you may need for your stay at the ranch”. Pat wasn’t that knowledgeable about women’s needs, so he escorted Teresa to that area of merchandise and let her start picking up items she thought might be necessary. Then they found the women’s clothing department, and Teresa picked out a couple of inexpensive pants and tops. When necessary to start wearing maternity clothes, Pat hoped that Sally would assist Teresa with those selections.

Once the items selected were in the shopping cart, Pat pushed it to the liquor section of the store. He bought a twelve pack of Coors Light in cans. He figured that with Christopher and Sally being Mormon, they wouldn’t have any beer around but as was typical with Mormons, it wouldn’t bother them if he drank beer while visiting.

Pat and Teresa returned to the Bronco following the brief shopping spree and loaded everything into the vehicle. Teresa then searched her backpack and pulled out the Raggedy

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Ann doll and would hold it with her in the front seat on the last leg of the trip to the ranch. She was thinking more and more about what it was going to be like to be a mother.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth figured she might as well place a call back to Officer Silva in El Paso to inform him that she was unable to provide him with any more information about the last- minute events involving Chief Brennan’s transfer of Teresa Morales to Mexican authorities. She had not gotten any important details of the transfer from Officer Brennan when she spoke with him, and she didn’t expect any further conversation with him about it until he returned from leave. This news wouldn’t be well received by the officials in El Paso and the Mexican authorities in Juarez.

“Hello, Officer Silva. This is Elizabeth Hollingsworth in the Lordsburg Sector Office.”

“Hello, Assistant Chief Hollingsworth. Were you able to ascertain any more information that would explain why the Mexicans don’t remember receiving Ms. Morales at their receiving station?”

“Officer, unfortunately I have no more information to offer you at this time. Although I was able to speak to Chief Brennan, he is on leave on his way to California and couldn’t provide any more details. He said that once he returned to duty, he would review his notes and see if he could arrive at some answers for you and the Mexican officials. Until then, there isn’t anything we can do at our end. Hopefully, the Mexicans authorities will be able to bring this episode to a conclusion.”

“Okay, ma’am, I will advise the Mexicans and check back with you and Chief Brennan next week after his return. Thank you for looking into to it.”

“Sorry I couldn’t have been more help. Talk next week, officer.”

The drive out to the ranch was a peaceful one. Pat was relieved to have implemented his plan so successfully and without any glitches. He was much more relaxed now and content with the results of his plan for Teresa. Teresa too was not as stressed as she had been since she crawled under the border fence to begin her journey more than a month ago. She felt that the entire ordeal had made her stronger and more determined than ever to give birth to and raise her baby in the United States. Thanks again to Saint Patrick.

The Bronco left the asphalt highway at the large archway constructed of massive ponderosa pine logs with the large hanging wrought iron sign that read “Cross Timbers Ranch.” A little farther down the gravel road were road signs that read “Private Property” and “No Trespassing.” Pat was now on an enormous cattle and sheep ranch put together by several generations of Runyans by piecing together private homesteads and grazing leases of Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service and Arizona State Lands.

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The Runyan name was well-known across the ranching community for their prosperous ranch and their involvement in the Arizona Cattle Growers and Arizona Wool Growers Associations. Some of Sally Runyan Pierce’s ancestors had been involved in local and state politics with her grandfather having served as Lt. Governor for two terms. The Cross Timbers Ranch was still owned and operated by the Runyans, but Christopher Pierce was now the ranch manager assisted by his wife Sally Runyan Pierce.

The main road to the headquarters of the Cross Timbers Ranch swung around the toe of a low hill covered with pinon pine and Rocky Mountain juniper. Into view along a lazy stream came a majestic log-constructed home that served as the Runyan’s home and ranch headquarters. The home resembled a mountain lodge with high log arches and wooden decks. Besides the great house, the compound consisted of the hay barn, the shearing barn, working corrals, the animal hospital pen, an equipment lot, two windmills pumping into a large water storage tank, and drinking tubs all surrounded by scattered ponderosa pines and quaking aspens. A couple of hundred yards up a small stream from the main compound were two modest houses that served as homes for the regular hands and their families. Also, there was a bunkhouse behind the hand’s houses for seasonal hands or shearing crews when they came in.

“Teresa, this is where you will be living, you and your baby. Beautiful, isn’t it?”

“How you say *muy bonita y muy grande*?”

“Very beautiful and very large. Yes, it is.”

Pat slowly approached the great home slowly so as not to stir up too much dust. There was a nice sliver Chevy Suburban parked in the circular drive near the front door, and there was a nice white Chevy pickup with livestock trailer hooked to it off to the side of the main drive. Pat surmised that Christopher Pierce had come in to welcome their new housemate.

Pat pulled in behind the silver Suburban and turned off the Bronco’s motor. He opened his door, but before he could exit the vehicle, the front door opened and out onto the front deck came who Pat assumed were Christopher and Sally Pierce and their two young daughters. They both came off the front deck and toward the Bronco.

“Welcome to the Cross Timbers. I am Christopher Pierce, and I am guessing you are Chief Brennan” Christopher said as he extended his hand to Pat with a wide grin.

“Yes, sir, I am Pat Brennan” Pat said as he shook Christopher’s hand. “And this is Teresa Ochoa Morales” Pat said turning to Teresa as she hopped on her crutches toward the two men.” Teresa had a subdued smile on her face being a bit timid in the situation, but her cheeks were rosey and she looked happy.

Sally stepped off the deck to join the gathering and with a beautiful smile on her own face, greeted both Teresa and Pat. “We’ve heard so much about you, Chief Brennan, and this is Ms.

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Morales that Martha and Bud have had so much to say about. Teresa was supported on her crutches as Sally came close to her and gave Teresa a heartfelt hug. “We are so happy to have you here with us, Teresa.”

“You very nice to me. Thank you.” Teresa said to Sally and to Christopher. “It pretty here.”

They went into the home, sat and visited for a brief spell, and then Sally showed Teresa around the house, where she would be living and working. Christopher and Pat continued to sit and visit about the details of Teresa’s status in the United States, her physical condition, and the anticipated childbirth.

“I don’t think she has been seen by an obstetrician at all, and I don’t know how well the baby is doing. After the snakebite, there was concern that the baby might be adversely affected in some way. I don’t know if that is the case or not, but she is showing her pregnancy now” Pat explained.

“Well, Sally would know more about Teresa’s needs relative to the birth of the baby, and I am sure she knows a doctor that can assess the situation. We have been prepared for Teresa’s arrival, and have found a competent mid-wife to handle the delivery here at the ranch. Obviously, the less Teresa is exposed to the community, the less the chance of the Border Patrol getting wind of her presence. We very seldom encounter the Border Patrol up in these parts, but we want to be as cautious as we can for her sake and for ours.”

“I appreciate you taking all the precautions possible. I have my neck stuck out so far on this deal that my head will get lopped off if Teresa were to be found out. It would be bad for the both of us.”

“Pat, I don’t think you have anything to worry about. Teresa is in good hands here and secure from being found out. Your secret is safe with us. We have a little skin in the game too, you know.”

“I know that. It is in all of our best interests that Teresa stays healthy, has a clean delivery, and remains under the radar.”

Sally and Teresa returned to the sitting room following Teresa’s tour of the house and the discussion with Sally about her duties and what was expected of her. All went well between Sally and Teresa. It appeared that all were happy with the arrangements and everything would work out as well as had been hoped for. All had been anxious and now all were relieved.

Pat retrieved his and Teresa’s things from the Bronco. He brought in their personal effects and the items they bought at Walmart. He then went back to the Bronco to retrieve the ice chest and the bag of ice he had bought. He set the ice chest on the front deck and went about placing each can of beer in the ice chest and then poured the ice cubes on and around them

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and closed the lid. He got thirsty just organizing the beer. When cold, a Coors Light would refresh him as well as help take the edge off. He could hardly wait to partake of one.

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**Chapter 14: New Home**

While Sally was helping Teresa organize what would be her room by hanging what few clothes she had and putting other things in the dresser drawers, Pat retrieved the cooler of beer and followed Christopher through the house to the back deck. He had been respectful enough to ask Christopher if having the beer in the house would be an issue before he brought it in. Christopher had no problem with having it around.

Pat reached in, pulled out a shiny, silver can, and popped the top. It wasn’t ice cold yet, but he was used to drinking beer even when it was semi-warm, or rodeo cold as he called it. He drank a long, refreshing swig and set the can down on the deck table at which he and Christopher were seated.

“That tastes mighty good” Pat said as he wiped his mouth with the back of his left hand. He had to strain to hold back a good burp that had developed.

“Just because I am good practicing Mormon doesn’t mean I don’t know just how refreshing a beer can taste after a long workday. I’ve had my share of beer all right. Partaking of any and everything restricted by the church is a sin, but the way I look at it is that it is a matter of how one partakes. Too much of anything can be detrimental. Many of the guys I ran with knew sin was inevitable anyway so why not have a few barley pops. That certainly didn’t seem as sinful and screwing some of the coeds that were willing to put out but wouldn’t drink beer. It seems that the degrees of those two sins aren’t even equal, but then I’m not God nor the president of the Church. What do I know? Oh, hell, give me one of those beers.”

Pat reached back into the ice chest to retrieve two more beers---one for Christopher and another one for himself. Pat had killed his first beer and both men opened their new cans.

“Here’s to you, Pat” Christopher said raising his beer can as a toast. Pat reciprocated the gesture and both men took swigs of their beers.

Sally and Teresa were getting along very well. Sally really took to Teresa, finding her sweet, humble, but driven to learn and know and do right by Sally and Christopher. Sally had in mind to have Teresa keep the house clean, do laundry, do some of the cooking, mostly at breakfast, and making packable lunches for Christopher and the cowboys when they would be out on the ranch and unable to get back in for lunch, which was most of the time. Most of all, Sally would be looking to Teresa to help with the kids when Sally had to run errands or when she and Christopher wanted a “date” night alone. Sally wanted to establish a deeper relationship with Teresa, more than just an employer-employee arrangement. She wanted to mentor Teresa about the American way of life and culture, ways to develop into an even more beautiful woman than she already was and give her the experience of raising children by working with her own children.

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In exchange for what she wanted for and from Teresa, Sally wanted to improve her own Spanish through some conversation time in Teresa’s native tongue. By the same token, Sally wanted to help Teresa become a better English speaker.

No notice was made of the fact that Teresa only had one good leg. Some things would be more challenging to perform than others for Teresa, but Teresa was very agile and had good balance and dexterity considering her handicap. In fact, Teresa didn’t seem to consider herself handicapped at all, and she wanted to participate fully in being a productive member of the Pierce household.

After a couple of more beers on the deck, Christopher and Pat went out to the Bronco to retrieve Pat’s duffle bag and take it into the guest room he would use for the night. Pat planned to spend one night at the Cross Timbers, and then turn Teresa over to the Pierce’s for development and safe keeping. He would then head west with no definite plans in mind other than get away from the pressures of work and life and find some enjoyment of checking out from the day-to-day grind, which had been exacerbated by the whole Teresa affair. If he knew of the growing suspicions that Elizabeth Hollingsworth had that Teresa was never delivered to Mexican authorities and whose current location was unknown, Pat would really be feeling the heat.

Back at the Sector Office in Lordsburg, Elizabeth was dealing with the day-to-day work as acting Sector Chief in Chief Brennan’s absence. But the “where is Teresa Morales” question took up residence in her mind and wouldn’t leave. She found it almost unfathomable that Chief Brennan would do anything that would violate the duties of his office and position. The consequences, if found out, would be severe. Surely, he wouldn’t be a part of a plan to allow Teresa to remain in the United States. Would he? No doubt that he was empathetic to her plight, but he wasn’t the emotional type and had never shown a hesitation to following the letter of the law when it came to the deportation of others.

Perhaps it wasn’t her place to investigate into what happened to Teresa or her whereabouts. If she and Officer Silva felt that something devious took place, they should report their suspicions and let the appropriate people investigate. She didn’t know what Officer Silva thought. Was he suspicious? Probably not. He just wanted to wrap-up his paperwork and appease the Mexican officials. He hadn’t indicated any suspicions to her during conversations with him.

The more she thought about it, the more she thought she should look deeper into Chief Brennan’s version of his actions and any devious intentions he may have had, if any. Perhaps she should visit with Teresa’s attendants at the hospital and the dismissal staff. But first she would start by a visit with Mr. and Mrs. Pierce at the Ax Handle Ranch.

Sally had helped Teresa get settled in at the Cross Timbers Ranch, her new home. Sally and Teresa were obviously fond of each other. Sally was treating Teresa as if she were a little sister,

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something she never had as she had been the youngest child in her family. Teresa, on the other hand, viewed Sally as a mentor and was looking forward to learning from her.

The glorious sunset came to an end and darkness was fast approaching the White Mountains of eastern Arizona. Pat had returned to the back deck of the ranch house sipping another “silver bullet” while Christopher watched over the four steaks and four ears of sweet corn wrapped in tin foil cooking over the charcoal fire he had prepared. The kids were playing in the backyard on their jungle gym. Soon, Sally and Teresa joined the men on the deck for a short visit before Sally had to boil the fresh asparagus she had gathered along the stream nearby. She then tossed a beautiful fresh green salad. Teresa came in and assisted setting the table and assisting Sally with the final touches of what would be a delicious supper.

Following a leisurely meal filled with good food and great conversation, the two women cleared the table and loaded the dish washer. The men retired to the den, warm with a log fire in the fireplace to knock off the nighttime chill and which added to the smell of timber logs and leather.

“Pat, what made you decide to assist Teresa escape the miseries she surely would face upon her return to Mexico? Aren’t you taking a huge risk with your career not to mention the criminal penalties you could face if found out?”

“For some time now, I have taken stock of my career of preventing illegal people from entering our country or trying to apprehend them if they managed to get in illegally. It is an admirable law enforcement job, and I am glad that I got into it as a career. But, as most people do as they grow more mature with age and experience, my ideas and beliefs have changed. For example, thinking about gays used to repulsed me, but now I don’t think anything about it. I guess since it isn’t hurting me, I don’t care. I still dislike the flaunting that some of them do like kissing in public or dressing outrageously and showing off in those parades you see on TV. But I have mellowed and don’t get agitated over insignificant things. I know we can’t allow open borders and just anyone of questionable character or unknown backgrounds be allowed to just walk in. Someone must enforce these laws. I guess I am just tired of being one of the enforcers.”

“I am Sector Chief in Lordsburg and enforcement is my mission. About the only change I can make and stay with the agency is to move into an administrative position if one were available. My mission would remain the same, but I would be involved in a different aspect of it.”

“Sounds like you are in need of a career change,” said Christopher.

“Yep, but I don’t know what I would do or where I would go to do it.”

“Could you transfer to another government agency like the forest service or BLM or something?”

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“I don’t have the skill set those agencies require for filling their professional positions. I have kicked around the idea of another law enforcement agency, say the state police or even a city cop, and I will look further into those possibilities. Right now, I am still concerned about being found out to have helped Teresa remain in the United States. If my involvement in this scheme ever came out, my law enforcement career would be over. And even worse, I would be convicted and probably incarcerated. Why did I do it? I was caught up in emotion, empathy for this young woman.”

“No doubt you have taken an enormous risk. In case of a worst-case scenario you just outlined, will it have been worth it?”

“I can’t answer that question now and hope I don’t have to.”

With the effects of the trip, the pressure he was still feeling, and the five beers that he drank, Pat was ready for bed. Teresa and Sally had joined the men on the deck, so Pat said his thanks again and excused himself and went to his guest room to go to bed. The cool night air would make for some good, rim sleep. Dreams were anticipated. He hoped they would be pleasant ones.

The next morning, Teresa under Sally’s guidance, prepared a nice breakfast of bacon, hash browns, and scrambled eggs. Teresa knew something about cooking, but not with such nice appliances and such fresh food stuffs to work with. The meals she was most accustomed to cooking under the tutelage of her mother and older sisters consisted mostly of tortillas, pinto beans, pork, fresh roasted green chiles, and eggs for breakfast. Learning to cook what Americans ate using the fancy appliances and quality food items was fun and not as difficult as she thought.

Pat showered and got dressed in shorts, a tee-shirt, and his tennis shoes. It would be hot travelling west across the deserts toward California. He returned his toiletries and dirty clothes to his duffle bag and put it in the Bronco. Then he went into the kitchen to see what was cooking.

“Good morning, Sally, Teresa. How’s everyone this morning?”

“Hello, Saint Pat” Teresa responded with a big smile. She looked very happy. “Sally is good teacher to cook” she said with pride for what she had prepared.

“Teresa already has the hang of cooking in a fancy kitchen, “Sally replied.

It looks good, Teresa. Good job. Sally, where’s Christopher?”

“He’s with the hands giving them their job assignments for the day. He should be back shortly for breakfast. Can I get you a glass of orange juice or apple juice? “

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“Why thank you. I’ll take a glass of apple juice please.”

“Coming right up” Sally said as she filled a juice glass with apple juice from a pitcher in the refrigerator and then handed it to Pat. “So, are you staying with us for a while or are you moving on today?”

“After breakfast, I will head out toward Phoenix and then on west toward the L. A. area and then on down to San Diego. I just need to get away and clear my head. It’s been a stressful couple of weeks.”

“I can imagine. Christopher told me of the pressure you are under. You don’t need to worry about Teresa now that she is here with us. We already love having her around. She will be a big help to Christopher, me, and the kids. They just love her. And we will make the proper arrangements for the delivery of her baby. I know I will be jealous of that baby and will want another one too!”

“I told Bud and Martha that I will cover the midwifery costs and anything else she needs. I guess she will need some baby clothes too.”

“We’ll worry about all that as the time approaches. I do want to get her an appointment with my doctor for a checkup for her and her baby. We will cover the cost. We will consider it a benefit of her employment. We will let you know of the results, but she certainly seems healthy to me.”

“She’s very resilient to have been through what she has been through and seems to show no signs of emotional distress. Even the loss of her leg hasn’t slowed her down. She pretty remarkable”

They heard the door to the kitchen from the garage open and in walked Christopher. “I smell a good breakfast. Good thing too ‘cause I’m a hungry *hombre* “He went over to Sally and kissed her on the cheek. “Morning, Teresa, Pat. How’s everyone this morning.?”

All replied in the affirmative. Then Sally instructed everyone to get seated at the table while she brought over the platters of food that she and Teresa had prepared. Everyone served themselves and ate the hearty meal after the blessing was said. There was the regular chit-chat until toward the end of the meal when Sally said “Christopher, Pat’s leaving today, and Teresa will be officially ours.”

“Pat, you are welcome to stay as long as you want. Mom and Dad are planning on coming tomorrow. They think the world of you and would love to see you.”

“I appreciate that, Christopher. I would love to see them. When I get back to Lordsburg, I’ll check in with them. They are great people and have been very helpful during this ordeal. Please give them my best. I suppose I should go on with my plans to go to the west coast and

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leave you good folks with Teresa.” Pat looked across the table at Teresa and saw a sign of sadness on her face. Teresa saw the same on Pat’s face.

After breakfast and a brief visit, Pat indicated it was time for him to go. He shook hands with Christopher and got a firm hug from Sally. He then turned to Teresa who was standing silently nearby. “Would you see me to my car, Teresa?” She nodded, and they turned toward the front door.

Outside by the Bronco, Pat said “I am very happy for you, Teresa. You are in a nice, safe place to live and to have and raise your baby. I will miss you very much. You are very special to me.”

Teresa had tears in her eyes as she listened to Pat’s words. She then moved close enough to Pat that she could put her head on his chest and hug him tenderly. He wrapped his arms around her thin frame and dropped his head down onto the top of hers. They embraced for several seconds, and they could feel the love that they had for each other being exchanged.

When Pat gently broke the embrace and looked directly into Teresa’s eyes, she could see that he had tears in his eyes too. They had a mutual love for each other, and the thought of this separation sadden them both, but it had to happen. She had to get on with her new life and he had to resolve his old one. Pat was almost old enough to be her father, but the age difference didn’t tarnish the feelings they had for each other. It did, however, weaken the possibility that they would end up together.

Pat kissed Teresa on the forehead and released her hands he had been holding. He turned and stepped off the front deck and climbed into the Bronco. Teresa remained in place on the deck and gently waved goodbye. The Bronco pulled slowly out of the circular drive and onto the road back to town. Teresa stood watching it drive slowly away, then wiped the tears from her eyes, and went back into the house. Another Chapter in Teresa’s life was beginning.

About that same time in Lordsburg, NM, Elizabeth Hollingsworth was placing a call to the Ax Handle Ranch by way of Rancher Radio. The operator put the call through and after a few buzzing rings, Elizabeth heard a female voice answer. “Ax Handle” the voice replied.

Elizabeth introduced herself as Chief Pat Brennan’s Assistant Chief and wanted to meet them in person to discuss what they might know about the Teresa Morales affair. Martha was a little taken aback by the call and what it might mean. Was there some suspicion about Teresa, or was this just some kind of administrative bullshit that Pat’s assistant was getting involved in while the Chief was on leave?

“Well, we are leaving for a short trip to Arizona in the morning and we will busy today wrapping up some chores before we go. Can we visit when we get back from Arizona in a few days?”

“Mrs. Pierce, would there be any way that you and your husband could give me a little time sometime today? I would really appreciate it if you could make time for me. It won’t take long.

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I just need to gather a few more details about Ms. Morales’ apprehension so we can close her deportation case.”

“But we didn’t have anything to do with her deportation” Martha responded.

“I know that, but because she was found on your ranch and you assisted with her medical care, I just need a few more details for the file.”

I suppose lunchtime will be as good as any. Bud will be in for lunch. We’ll feed you and visit with you then. Will that work for you?”

“Yes, it will, but I hate to interrupt your lunch.”

“Don’t worry about that, sweetie. It’s the only time we can spare today. Try to arrive about noon. Bud likes to eat at twelve o’clock.”

“Yes, ma’am. Thank you. I’ll see you then.”

As Pat was negotiating the highway through the forests above the Mogollon Rim in Arizona on his way to Phoenix, Elizabeth was on her way to the Ax Handle Ranch to talk to Bud and Martha Pierce and try to uncover more about Pat’s motives, if any, for Teresa to avoid deportation. On one hand, Elizabeth couldn’t believe that Pat would be involved in anything sinister. On the other hand, she knew how emotionally connected Pat was to Teresa’s plight. Elizabeth was now consumed with the discovery of the plan not to deport an illegal alien concocted by a government official involved in the case. If she could uncover and prove the existence of such a scheme, her work could advance her career and make her worthy of more powerful positions within the agency. It would be too bad about the carnage of Chief Pat Brennan. He had made his decision. Now, she was making hers.

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**Chapter 15: A New Route**

Pat’s trip through the mountains and down into the Sonoran Desert went well. There wasn’t much traffic to deal with until he got close to Phoenix. By then he had decided maybe he wouldn’t go all the way to the west coast after all. He gave thought to just hanging around Phoenix for a few days and relax by a hotel swimming pool during the day and go out and look around at night. But Phoenix sure was hot in the summer. He would miss out on the cool ocean breezes along the west coast if he stayed.

He was sad to leave Teresa behind, but leaving her with such fine people as the Pierces at their beautiful ranch was just perfect for her. She couldn’t be luckier and couldn’t have found such a wonderful opportunity anywhere else. He would give it a few days and then check in with the Pierces to see how she was doing and talk to her on their phone. Several times during his long drive to Phoenix, Pat thought that if only he had met Teresa when he was closer to her in age, things could be so different now.

The sadness of leaving Teresa had slipped away and was replaced with a general melancholy that brought on an introspective mood. He was not unhappy, but some happiness was missing. Maybe he should request a transfer to a different duty station to change things up. Maybe he had become stale in Lordsburg and just needed a change to put some excitement back into his life. Maybe he should heed Martha’s advice and meet a nice woman and get some romance into his life. Maybe he should find some other hobbies beside hunting which he no longer got excited about. The more he thought about his life and the direction it was going, the more he knew he had to make a change. He wanted to do something positive for others. No longer did he want to be the negative in other’s lives.

He did this reflection while driving toward Phoenix, and the time and the miles went by quickly without his realizing it. It was as if he was driving and navigating on automatic pilot. He realized how far he had travelled when the traffic between Payson and Scottsdale increased to the point that it brought him out his trance and put him in the here and now.

Because of the summer heat in Phoenix, tourism was off and hotel prices were very reasonable compared to the winter season rates when the snowbirds flocked in and the golf outings began in earnest. He drove through Scottsdale and on to Tempe, a university town with a lot of energy and plenty of bars and restaurants where he could shake the blue feelings away. He found a nice, mid-priced hotel and stopped to check in. He gave the registration clerk his credit card with no definite departure date. Now he was off plan and playing it by ear.

Elizabeth had visited with Bud and Martha Pierce over a meal of pot roast, potatoes, and pinto beans. The meal was delicious and the Pierce’s hospitable. But she was not able to uncover any substantial clues about what might have happened to Teresa during the deportation process. It was evident to her that they knew of no plan to free Teresa.

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Bud outlined how Pat had carried Teresa off the mountain after having been bitten by the rattlesnake, how he and Martha met them at the watergap, and took them to the Lordsburg hospital. They confirmed that Pat took a personal interest in Teresa’s medical condition and plight of being in an unfamiliar place in a foreign land. Elizabeth already knew of Chief’s compassionate feelings for the girl. However, they too had gotten involved in Teresa’s situation and expressed empathy for her situation. Wouldn’t most people behave that way?

The Pierce’s had nothing but glowing praise for the way Pat had handled the entire episode. If they were aware of something sinister, it never leaked out. So, based on the facts as the Pierce’s related them to Elizabeth, there was no cause for suspecting Pat of anything other than following proper procedure, and he did as much as humanly possible to rescue Teresa and get her into good hands. Pat and the Pierces made trips to see Teresa in the hospital and stay up on her current condition, but that shouldn’t have created any suspicion, should it?

As Elizabeth drove toward Lordsburg, the only thing now that made her suspicious of Pat, besides the Mexican authorities’ claim that they never took custody of Teresa, was his strong compassion for her situation and his attachment to her. Of course, as he told her himself, he had great empathy for her and sadness for what she had been through and the uphill battle she was in for upon her return to Mexico because of her handicap, being unskilled, and soon to be a single mother. Could his empathy for Teresa lead him to take some unlawful action to keep her in the United States while putting his career in jeopardy? The more she thought about it, knowing what a nice guy Pat was, she could see him being involved in some scheme to avoid her deportation. But could it be proven?

Once back in town, Elizabeth drove the official green Border Patrol Chevy Suburban directly to the hospital. She intended to locate some of the staff that might have witnessed Pat in Teresa’s company. How did he act toward her? How did she respond to him? Could feelings for one another exist---and were they observable?

Elizabeth parked and went into the front entrance of the hospital. The receptionist at the information desk asked how she could be of assistance. Elizabeth introduced herself and gave a sketchy reason for wanting to visit with any of the staff nurses that had attended to Ms. Teresa Morales. Elizabeth stated that she was on official business and would not, in her opinion, be asking anything of the staff that would violate doctor-patient confidentiality. She just needed some more information to complete and close the file on Ms. Morales.

The receptionist directed Elizabeth to have a seat in the lobby while she did some checking to see if she could locate someone for Elizabeth to talk with. The receptionist called up to the nurses’ station on the second floor and explained that a female Border Patrol officer wanted to speak to any of the nurses that had attended to Ms. Morales during her stay. After a few seconds of waiting, the receptionist was connected to one of the nurses that might be able to

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visit with the officer about Ms. Morales’ physical and emotional state while confined to the hospital.

“Chief Hollingsworth, nurse Trujillo will be down shortly once she sees to one of her patients” the receptionist reported.

“Thank you.”

It was about 10 minutes before nurse Trujillo walked up to the Information Desk and Elizabeth was pointed out by the receptionist. Nurse Trujillo moved toward where Elizabeth was sitting.

“Excuse me but I am Marjorie Trujillo. You have some questions regarding the Teresa Morales situation?”

“Yes, nurse. Thank you for making yourself available for a few minutes.”

“What is it I can do for you?”

“I am completing our file on Teresa Morales and would like to ask you some questions pertaining to her general mood upon her arrival, during her treatment, and at the time of her dismissal from the hospital, followed by her deportation to Mexico shortly thereafter. This is just standard procedure for cases as complicated as the one involving Ms. Morales. It is sort of like a customer service report would be in the retail industry.” Elizabeth was making up fake reasons for wanting to visit with Mrs. Trujillo and continue her own investigation.

“Alright. What do you need to know?”

“Did you spend considerable time with Ms. Morales while attending to her?”

“Yes, she was one of my patients when I was on duty.”

“How was your interaction with her?”

“I would say we had a strong caregiver-patient relationship. I found her to be very bright and a good patient in that she responded to treatment well. She was pretty dejected about her situation at first. Not so much the snake bite and the loss of her leg, but it was more about being caught and in custody and having to go back to Mexico.” Even so, she seemed intent on getting well as soon as possible.”

“Did she ever express regret for having come into the United States illegally?”

“I never heard her express any regret.”

“But she was upset about her inevitable return to Mexico, is that right?”

“Oh, yes. Like I said, she was very upset about the idea of having to go back. I would say depressed about it. I guess that is why she was such a good patient---she wanted to get as

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strong as possible before she went back so she could function again once she was back in Mexico.”

“Ms. Trujillo, you said at first Ms. Morales was upset about the idea of returning to Mexico. Does that mean that she wasn’t as upset about it toward the end of her stay here?”

“Yes, she seemed to be more accepting of the fact that she would be deported once she was dismissed. She wasn’t as agitated as she was when she first came in.”

“Why was that, do you think?”

“I guess she knew that being upset about it wouldn’t change anything and she sort of got over it. Also, she responded so well to physical therapy that just got more positive about her future.”

Elizabeth continued with this line of questioning attempting to understand the mood of one that understandably would be getting depressed about the prospect of deportation. From the way Mrs. Trujillo described Teresa, she became upbeat toward the end of her stay.

Then Elizabeth changed her line of questioning to concentrate on the relationship between Teresa and Chief Brennan whenever he came to visit her, whether on business or for personal reasons.

“Did you ever observe Teresa’s mood or behavior when Sector Chief Brennan came to visit her?”

“Oh yes, on several occasions I was present when the Chief came to check on how Ms. Morales was progressing. What a nice man he is.”

“Yes, he is a very nice man and a great boss. But please tell me about Teresa’s mood when Chief Brennan came around.”

“She was almost giddy whenever the Chief would show up. It was obvious to me that she adored him, or at least adored him for saving her life. She was always happy when he came and referred to him as Saint Patrick.”

“And what was Chief Brennan’s demeanor when he was with Ms. Morales?” Elizabeth continued.

“He seemed to totally enjoy his time with Ms. Morales. He would be business like at first, asking us about her treatment and progress, but then lighten up the longer he stayed. It would be hard for anyone not to enjoy being made over the way Ms. Morales made over the Chief. And he enjoyed the affection she showed him.”

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Elizabeth concluded her interview with another disclosure that her visit to gather information was just standard procedure, merely a follow-up report required to bring closure to the Morales file. She thanked Ms. Morales for her time and left for the office with a stronger belief that Chief Brennan may very well have executed a plan to smuggle Teresa Morales back into the U. S. before the Mexican authorities could take custody of her. Ms. Morales’ cheery mood and her lack of concern over being deported may have been signs that she was aware of a plan to avoid deportation.

Back at the office, it was time for the shift change with agents coming in and going out. Elizabeth had been gone most of the day with the trip to the Ax Handle Ranch and then to the hospital. She checked messages and visited with the agents whose shifts had just ended to see what was going on in the field. She concluded her duties for the day, checked out, and headed for her apartment. But she could not quit thinking about what she learned and thought about the disappearance of Teresa Morales.

Elizabeth was excited about what she thought she had uncovered and was forming a strong suspicion that Chief Pat Brennan was involved. Teresa couldn’t have just disappeared by herself. She had to have had help---inside help.

Pat was roaming around Mill Street in Tempe, Arizona taking in a few bars and mingling with the other patrons trying to clear his mind of negative thoughts. While out and about, he had managed to move Teresa to the back of his mind and all but forget about any suspicions the agency held about Teresa’s not being delivered to Mexican officials as he had reported. But upon return to his motel room and the excitement of the evening began to wear off, Pat became bothered by the recurring concerns that he might be found out. He wasn’t as fearful for himself as he was for Teresa. Then the memory of Teresa at his stay at the Cross Timbers returned to him: how pretty she looked, how happy she looked, how relaxed she looked, and how well she fit in with Christopher and Sally and the kids. And he thought about his closing moments with her and her obvious affection for him. He smiled thinking of these happy moments and looked forward to more of the same.

The next morning, Elizabeth was up early and arrived early at the office. She was still extremely excited about what she thought she had learned about the Morales affair. Now the problem was what to do with it. She couldn’t just start telling others about what her suspicions were on the matter because she really had no proof. Besides, Pat Brennan was a very popular and well thought-of person within the agency and in the law enforcement community as a whole. She should document her thoughts on paper, store them somewhere confidential, and keep her suspicions to herself. Maybe the best thing to do would be to confront Chief Brennan with her suspicions and see his reaction. The worst he could do would deny such a theory and think she was crazy and consider her a bitch, which he already did. Yep, that’s what she would do.

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On the same morning, Bud and Sally Pierce left the Ax Handle for Springerville. They were excited that they would be seeing Christopher and the family, but they also were anxious to see how Teresa was adjusting. They had no concerns. They felt that the addition of Teresa to the family would have only positive effects.

After the complimentary breakfast of cereal, toast, fruit, and coffee or tea, Pat went out to the motel pool with a copy of the newspaper to relax in the sun before it got sizzling hot. He was beginning to finally decompress and enjoy his free time. He was feeling relaxed for the first time in several months.

After scanning the newspaper, Pat climbed down into the pool for a short swim. He did a couple of laps in the small pool, and then pushed off the side and went underwater from one end to the other while holding his breath. Then he went to the seven-foot-deep end of the pool and bobbed up and down for a time. Bobbing always seemed to relax him, listening to his air bubbles as he pushed off the bottom and returned to the surface. He then leisurely swam over to the shallow end of the pool and sat on the bottom of the concrete steps for a few minutes. Pat then climbed out of the pool and went back over to his lounge chair. He dried himself off with the little while bath towel provided by the hotel and returned to his room to shower and change. He had no plans, but in such a vibrant city as Phoenix, Arizona, there was no shortage of things to do.

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**Chapter 16: Big Decision**

As much as Pat wanted to clear work-related issues from his mind and decompress as he had planned, the lingering questions about Teresa’s deportation continued to cast a black cloud over his ability to relax and have fun. And as much as he wanted to stay on leave and take a break from work and other issues, he just could not enjoy himself knowing that he would have to return and address the questions the deportation officials had. Only he could set the record right.

In Pat’s mind, Elizabeth Hollingsworth was only trying to resolve the questions surrounding Teresa’s deportation and get the answers for El Paso and *Juarez* so the case could be closed. He wasn’t aware of Elizabeth’s suspicions that he was directly, illegally, and unethically involved in a plot to allow Teresa to remain in the United States to have her baby and start a new life. And although there wasn’t enough evidence to prove such allegations, the more Elizabeth thought about the possibilities of where Teresa was, the more Elizabeth was convinced that Chief Brennan knew her whereabouts. Elizabeth was now consumed with proving that the chief was involved and having him punished sufficiently and replace him as Sector Chief. Her ambitions had always smoldered beneath her public persona, but they were now heating up the more convinced she was of Pat’s involvement.

As Pat wanted to clean up this matter and remove any doubt that he was involved, Elizabeth was now driven to strengthen the doubt that Pat had turned Teresa over to Mexican officials as he claimed. They were on a collision course that would be difficult to avoid. Pat started packing his personal items and clothes into his duffel bag for a return to Lordsburg to settle this matter. He didn’t know at the time that he would also be facing his accuser.

Pat carried his duffel bag out to his Bronco. Before he checked out, however, he placed a call to his office to speak with Elizabeth. His plan was to set up an appointment to meet with her away from the office and visit about the Morales affair “off the record.” He wasn’t sure what his tactic would be---whether to come clean about his involvement in her release or stick with his assertion that he personally released her to the Mexican authorities. It was against his character to be involved in a lie, but in his mind, his justification for sticking with his original story was to save his career and, more importantly, save Teresa’s life and the life of her baby.

Good morning, Lordsburg Sector Office of the Border Patrol. How may help you?”

“Hi, Cindy. It’s Pat Brennan. How are things there?”

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“Hi, Chief. Are you enjoying the beach?”

“I never made it all the way to the west coast. I’ve been hanging around the inland empire seeing the sights. Cindy, I need to speak with the Assistant Chief if she is available.”

“Sure thing, Chief. Just a moment.” He was placed on hold awaiting Elizabeth to pick up.

“This is Assistant Chief Hollingsworth. How may I help you?”

“Elizabeth, this is Chief Brennan.”

“Yes Chief, what can I do for you?”

“I will be returning to Lordsburg today and want to know if we could meet for supper

somewhere. I want to review where we stand on the Morales issue and figure out how to bring it to a close to the satisfaction of all parties.”

“You are cutting your vacation short because of the Morales questions?”

“Not entirely. I want to come on back to town and do some things around the house that I have been neglecting, and I figure that the few remaining days can be spent more productively than just travelling around like a lost gypsy.”

“Where should we meet and what time?”

“You pick it, and I’ll pay.”

“Would Arthur’s Brisket Barn work for you and your pocketbook?

“Oh sure. Good choice. How about 6:30?”

“Yes sir, that will work. Do I need to bring the file with me?”

“No, I don’t think that will be necessary. But do familiarize yourself with the questions being asked by the Mexicans and El Paso so I can formulate appropriate responses to both parties. Okay?”

“Yes sir, I understand. So, if that’s it, I’ll see you this evening.”

“Okay, good. I’ll see you about 6:30. Thanks, Elizabeth*. Adios*.”

“Bye, Chief.”

Pat was pleased with the way the conversation with Elizabeth went and was relieved that it seemed to go well. He felt a wave of optimism that everything just might work out okay. But still lingering in the back of his mind was the idea of leaving the agency and change career paths to something other than hunting down fellow human beings that were trying to improve their

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personal situations. Pat checked out of the hotel and drove toward I-10 East and the route back to Lordsburg.

Teresa continued to adjust to the American way of life on the ranch near Springerville. She understood what was expected of her in the way of household and childcare duties and enjoyed almost every minute of both. Also, she had accompanied Sally and the kids to Wal-Mart to do some shopping and she even got to ride with Christopher when he drove around the ranch checking the waters. The Pierce’s had accepted her into their family to which she now felt a part.

Sally made an appointment with an OBGYN to determine Teresa’s and her baby’s condition. Teresa was feeling fine, but she had never seen a doctor about either her condition or that of her baby’s. It was never mentioned by Teresa or Sally, but there existed concern about the baby’s health and the normal delivery of a normal baby. Also, the anticipated birth date needed to be narrowed down and midwifery services arranged.

Martha and Bud had enjoyed their brief time at the Cross Timbers Ranch as they always did. It was always enjoyable to spend time with Christopher, Sally, and the kids and share the love that existed between all of them. Also, it was always nice to enjoy cooler temperatures and see greener grass. But now they were back home at the Ax Handle, the place they deeply loved. No matter how much they enjoyed going somewhere else, they always enjoyed returning home.

Pat was making good time on his return to Lordsburg. His mood remained high because he felt an inner peace that he hadn’t felt in a while: He had pretty much decided to make a career change. He might try to transfer to another agency if his skill set matched with an open position, but that was unlikely to happen. Then he would have to search for a career outside the federal government. Possibilities could be law enforcement positions within the state or county or local levels, or perhaps he could use his law enforcement skills in the corporate world as a security specialist or investigator or something along those lines. The more he thought about it, the more that possibilities came to mind. There were all kinds of employers that could use his services, and they would be lucky to have him. They just didn’t know it yet. There were endless opportunities. His mind was racing about where to begin and what to apply for and how to apply and to whom to apply.

He could cash in his government savings and his retirement plan and leave time and sick leave and whatever else he had of value which would give him a nice little next egg to invest for retirement later or live on it for a while if he had to. If he accepted one of the endless possibilities of career changes, he would more than likely be required to move to a larger town or city, which he was not only open to but was excited about. A whole new life. A chance to reinvent himself. Excitement, new energy. His life could go in all sorts of directions and as far as he wanted. He had been so deep in thought that he was approaching Lordsburg before he

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realized it. He had plenty of time to go home, clean up, and meet Elizabeth at the restaurant on time.

Pat arrived at Arthur’s Brisket Barn about 6:00 PM. He knew he was early, but he would use the extra time to have a drink and decompress from the trip. He could relax a bit, but he had to gather his thoughts and convey to Elizabeth the chain of events surrounding the return of Teresa Morales to Mexico as they had transpired. He would have to lie about the part of turning her over to a Mexican official, but that shouldn’t be a problem.

“Hey, George” Pat said to the man behind the bar as he entered the lounge area of the Brisket Barn. Pat walked up and took a seat at the sparsely occupied bar.

“How are you, Chief?’ George responded. “What can I get you this evening?”

“Let me start off with a shot of tequila and then a Coors Light draught with an olive, please George.”

“Got it, Chief.”

Pat sat there alone with only his thoughts about how the conversation with Elizabeth would go. He was starting to get a little edgy now in anticipation of his meeting with her. The calmness he had felt early had dissipated, and he was now getting nervous. He felt like prey to Elizabeth’s predator. He was glad that he had arrived early at Arthur’s so he could have a drink and settle his nerves.

As he sat there sipping on his beer, his thoughts moved to Teresa and how she was getting along at the ranch and what was the status of the birth of the baby. He knew that Sally had scheduled an appointment for Teresa with her OBGYN, but he had not heard how that went. He needed to call Sally on her phone to find out, and then he could talk to Teresa. He missed her more than he thought he would.

“Hello, Chief” came Elizabeth’s voice as she approached his spot at the bar.

Pat, who had been deep in thought and unaware of the time, turned toward the voice and responded “Hi, Elizabeth. How have things been in the sector?”

“Oh, it’s been pretty quiet while you’ve been gone, but I am glad you wanted to meet and discuss this Morales deportment issue. We need to satisfy the Mexicans that she is indeed back in Mexico. Frankly, I don’t know why they are making a big deal out of whether she has been returned or not. I mean, it’s not like they don’t have plenty of others being deported to deal with.”

“Maybe it is a chance, they think, to catch the American’s making a mistake. We make such a big deal out of catching and returning all that we can and here may be is a time that we should

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have deported but failed. That’s not the case here because I turned her over to Mexican authorities and left her with them. But hey, let’s get a booth where we can discuss the status. What would you like to drink?”

“A glass of nice Merlot would be nice, thanks.”

“George, we are moving to a booth. Do I need to pay out for my bar tab, or can you put it on our supper bill?”

“I’ll carry it over to your meal tab. Anything else right now?”

“Yes, please. Let me have another Coors Light and a glass of Merlot for the lady.”

“I’ll bring them right over along with a couple of menus.”

“Thanks, George.”

Pat crawled off the bar stool and led Elizabeth to the back wall where the booths were located. “This one okay?”

“It’s fine.” Elizabeth responded as she slid into the booth. Pat slide in on the opposite side.

George arrived with the drinks and set them on the table. He then pulled the menus from under his right arm pit and gave Pat and Elizabeth each one. They thanked him, and he returned to his station behind the bar.

Other patrons were starting to arrive and were scattered across the restaurant. Pat and Elizabeth were in the secluded corner booth.

Elizabeth took a sip of her wine and set the glass back down. “Okay, Chief, somethings on your mind. What is it?”

“Okay, let’s discuss the status of the Teresa Morales deportation as far as the Mexicans are concerned. Do they still claim that she is unaccounted for, that they never took her into custody?”

“Yep, that is the stance they are taking. They say that no way could she have come through their station, where you said you delivered her, without being remembered. They still claim that they were aware of her impending arrival and had a wheelchair ready to assist her on the Mexican side. Did you check her in at their station? You wouldn’t have just left her in the transition zone expecting her to get to the Mexican station on her own, would you?”

“Of course not. I had her in her wheelchair and pushed her right up to the station gate to Mexico. I turned her over to some Mexican officials then left immediately. I had told her goodbye and didn’t want to drag it out any longer than necessary because I was already a little emotional about sending her back.”

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“Did you not receive any paperwork to verify that she had been received by Mexico?”

“No, I just turned over the documentation that I had to them. They didn’t give me any receipts or verification orders for having received her. And I didn’t see a wheelchair or anyone specifically waiting to receive Teresa. I think I would have noticed if a wheelchair was there.”

“Well, according to our agents in El Paso that deal with the Mexican deportation officials, they tell me that the Mexicans are insistent that she never was delivered to them.”

“So, in your opinion, how do we resolve this discrepancy, Elizabeth?”

“Chief, they think we know where she is and that she must still be in the U. S., perhaps in El Paso or perhaps somewhere else. Do you know anything about the possibility of Ms. Morales still being in the U. S?”

Pat was now on the verge of telling a bold-faced lie. Leading up to this moment, he felt he had been able to elude any suggestion that he may know differently about her whereabouts without lying. Before, he had just been misleading. Now, however, he was going to have to lie to keep this ruse alive.

“Elizabeth, I told you how I handled her deportation. I turned her over to them like I said before. Someone on their side must have been derelict in duty to miss her at the station.”

“Chief, I know you were emotionally attached to Ms. Morales. Perhaps not in a romantic way, but you were very attached to her and were impressed with her toughness and grit and you felt sorry for her condition and for her having to return to Mexico. And I am not accusing you of inappropriate actions, but I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that you had a plan not to return her to Mexico and that you implemented that plan and that she is somewhere in the U. S. right now. And you probably know where.”

Pat leaned toward Elizabeth across the table staring at her with squinting eyes as his anger rose.

“Is that right?”

“Yes, sir, that’s what I think. And although I haven’t been officially tasked with finding out the truth of her whereabouts, I am determined to solve this mystery”.

“And how are you going to go about that, Elizabeth?”

“Oh, I have some suspicions and a way to pursue them.” With that, Elizabeth drained her glass of wine and slid out of the booth. “Thanks for the glass of wine. I’ll see you at the office when you return from leave.” She turned and walked out of the restaurant to Pat’s amazement.

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Pat’s moods today had swung from upbeat to uncertain to shock at the accusation Elizabeth had just leveled against him. And, although she stated she wasn’t accusing him, that is exactly what she did. She made it clear that she suspected his involvement in a surreptitious plan that she was determined to uncover.

Pat finished his beer, got up from the booth, and carried his bottle and the two menus over to the bar. George came over from behind the bar. “What, not going to eat?”

“No, we had an abrupt ending to our meeting, so we won’t be eating after all. Give me another beer and a shot of tequila and close out my tab.”

“You got it” and went off to get Pat another round.

Pat slammed the shot and then sipped his beer in deep contemplation. Now what? This lady, Elizabeth, is gunning for me and isn’t going to stop until she accomplishes her goal. But why is she so determined? Does she want to be promoted to Sector Chief badly enough to bring me down. She is probably on the fast track to get a sector of her own soon anyway. Is Miss High Almighty that concerned about my possible indiscretion? Wow, what a bitch!

Obviously, Pat didn’t sleep well that night. But he had decided to stand by his story and put the burden of finding a more accurate version of the story on her. After all, it was he said- she said, or rather he said- the Mexicans said. But he sensed from her that she was determined to prove his story was a complete fabrication. How she planned to do it he didn’t know, but he would not underestimate her. He knew that this evening’s confrontation wasn’t the last.

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**Chapter 17: Another Patrick**

Teresa went into labor early one morning while Christopher, Sally, and the kids were still sound asleep. She wasn’t sure what to do other than yell to Sally from her bed in a calm but loud manner. She did not want it to come out like a scream.

“The baby is coming” Teresa yelled. Sally jumped out of bed and was by Teresa’s side almost instantly. Teresa’s suspicions were confirmed. Her water broke and her contractions were close enough together that the birth of Teresa’s baby could be imminent. While Christopher went to check on the kids, Sally put in a telephone call to the mid-wife that they had arranged to handle the birth. She had come out to the ranch for Teresa and Sally to meet her, review the doctor’s report of Teresa’s current health and that of the baby, and let Teresa get comfortable with her. The mid-wife answered the call and would be on her way immediately, probably arriving in 30 minutes or so. She gave Sally some instructions what to do to keep Teresa comfortable until she could arrive.

The Pierce kids were awakened by Teresa’s yell for help, but Christopher soothed them back to sleep. He then went into Teresa’s room and found Sally preparing Teresa.

“You got it under control, Sally?”

“I’m getting there.” Sally replied without looking up from what she was doing.

Christopher then turned his attention to Teresa. He bent over close to her face and said “Hang in there Teresa. It won’t be much longer.”

Teresa was doing her best to withstand the jolts of pain that accompanied her contractions. With a grimace on her face and her eyes squinted down, she replied “It hurts, but my baby will come soon.” A soft smile came upon her face but was quickly replaced by another grimace resulting from of another contraction. Her forehead was covered with beads of perspiration, which Sally dabbed with a moist towel.

“Let me know how I can help you, honey. I’m going to call Pat Brennan and let him know what’s going on” Christopher said as he left Teresa’s room. He went through the family room and out on to the back deck. Although still dark outside, the house lights shining through the windows shed enough light for Christopher to see. He dialed Pat’s cell phone number and paced back and forth on the deck awaiting Pat to answer.

“Hello” Pat answered as if he had been awakened

“Pat, this is Christopher Pierce. Sorry to call so early but it looks like Teresa’s baby is on the way.”

“Is she there at the ranch? How’s she feeling?”

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“Yeah, she’s here. Sally is getting her ready. She is having close contractions and the mid-wife is on the way to handle the delivery.”

“Oh, I wish I could be there. Please tell her I am thinking of her. Christopher, please keep me posted on her condition and that of the baby. I am concerned about them both.”

“Pat don’t worry. I think all will be just fine with Teresa and the baby, but I’ll keep you informed. Take it easy, Pat.”

“Thanks, Christopher.”

After the conversation with Christopher, Pat wished he could have been there with Teresa during another trying time in her recent life. She had been bombarded with a lot over the past couple of months. What a remarkable young woman she is, Pat thought to himself. He missed her more than ever now.

After the call to Pat, Christopher went back to Teresa’s room. Sally was in there sitting on the side of the bed tending to a cool, damp washcloth on Teresa’s face and forehead. Teresa’s eyes were closed, but she obviously wasn’t sleeping. Pat approached the bedside and leaned over toward Teresa’s ear.

“I just spoke with Pat and he wanted me to tell you that he wishes he were here with you.”

When the name Pat came out of Christopher’s mouth, Teresa’s opened her eyes, and another soft smile crossed her face.”

“I miss my Saint Patrick.” Teresa said before closing her eyes again.

Christopher stood up and said to Sally, “The mid-wife should be here any time now.”

“Yes” was Sally’s response.

“I’ll go watch for her.”

Christopher then left the room and went into the entry hall. He turned on the front porch lights and then opened the front door and went out on to the front deck. He could see faint redness in the eastern horizon, a sign that sunup was on its way. Pat looked to the south along the ranch road to town. He saw some headlights in the distance, probably a good five miles away, which had to be those of the mid-wife’s car. Let’s get this thing done, Christopher thought to himself.

After Christopher’s phone call, Pat got up, showered, and got dressed ready for the day. He was in the kitchen fixing his breakfast when he was struck by urge to be at the Cross Timbers Ranch for the delivery of Teresa’s child. He should be there, he thought to himself. He wasn’t sure how he considered Teresa---as a friend, as a daughter, or as one that he could be

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romantically involved with. But he did know that he missed her and had some love for her. He would miss birth of her child and he was sad about it.

It would be awkward in the office for both Pat and Elizabeth when the two encountered each other. Pat hated confrontations, which is what he considered his meeting with Elizabeth at the restaurant to have been, at least at its conclusion. For her part, Elizabeth was sorry that their meeting ended the way it had, and she blamed herself for it, but she now felt more motivated than ever to get to the truth of what really happened with the deportation of Teresa Morales. In fact, she was planning on expanding her investigation to her off-duty hours. She had to uncover some evidence, at least circumstantial if nothing more solid could be put together.

Pat went into the office earlier than normal since he had been awakened so early by Christopher’s call. He began by reviewing the assignment schedule of the agents currently in the field and soon to end their shift at 7:00 AM. This is the crew directly supervised by Elizabeth as Assistant Sector Chief. Since he hadn’t encountered her yet this morning, he assumed that she was in the field too.

In addition to the overall oversight of the Sector Office, Pat directly supervised the day shift crew. He pulled the daily logs from yesterday to review them to see if any assignments to be given to his agents needed tweaking for the day.

While in his office, he heard the bell ring signifying that someone had entered the office through the rear door from the motor pool lot. He assumed it was Elizabeth returning from the field and coming in to prepare for her crew’s end of shift. He thought he heard some movement in the breakroom where she was probably preparing fresh coffee for the incoming agents. Pat pushed his chair back away from his desk, got up, and left his office to see who it was. His assumption was correct.

“Morning, Elizabeth.”

“Good morning” she replied coolly.

“Anything of notable interest during your shift?”

“We intercepted a van of eight suspects, all adult men, and caught an apparent family---a mother, dad, and five children---attempting to sneak in just east of Palomas.

“Good work. Any injuries?”

“No.”

“Good. Thank your crew for me please.”

“Will do.”

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Elizabeth offered only short, curt replies to questions and inquiries directed at her from Chief Brennan. It was obvious to Pat that she was holding a grudge against him for her perceptions of what role he may have played in the disappearance of Teresa Morales. If he could prove her perceptions to be false, she would probably apologize and again work more closely with him again. But there was nothing he could do now but stay with his version of the story. She would remain suspicious and cool toward him. It was an uncomfortable situation for him but evidently not for her since she believed more strongly than ever that he had something to hide, and she was determined to prove it.

About 1430 hours, Pat received a phone call on his cell phone. Rapidly he flipped open the cover and recognized the name Christopher Pierce on the caller ID.

“Hello, Christopher. What’s up?”

“I guess we will consider you to be the uncle of a beautiful baby boy, Pat.” Christopher replied with a gleeful sign in his voice. He continued “She gave birth to a 5 lb. 8 oz. baby boy. Although he was premature by a few weeks, he is healthy but small at about 17 inches. And I can tell you, he has a set of lungs on him. He popped out letting the world know that he had arrived.”

“Oh, that’s great news. And how is Teresa?”

“She is absolutely exhausted, but the happiest I have ever seen her, and she is happy all the time. And, for your information, she has named her baby after you---Patrick Luis Morales Moreno---Pat for short. I think she wanted to name him Saint Patrick, but we told her that Saint was a title reserved for very special people at the end of their time here on earth. I don’t know if that is right or not, but it convinced her to leave Saint out of his name. Besides, she likes to use that title for you!”

“I know, I know. Well I am honored to be a namesake of the child of a special young woman. Tell Teresa that you talked to me and that I am so happy for her and honored. I will try to come up to the ranch in a few weeks to see her and the baby. I will let you know before I come. In the meantime, can you take a photo of Teresa and Patrick and send it to my cell phone, please? That would be wonderful.”

“I’ll send you a photo and give Teresa your message. I know she wants to show you her new baby. Let us know when you can come see us, Pat.”

“I will, Christopher. Oh hey, by the way, let me know how much the mid-wife services cost and what else I owe you---medicines, supplies, food---whatever. It’s all on me. After all, I am the namesake!”

“Yes, you are. Take care and we will be in touch, Pat.”

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Pat was so relieved to get the good news that Teresa and child were fine that he couldn’t keep a wide smile from forming on his face. He felt like what a father must feel like upon the birth of his first child. Pat had been married for a short time right out of college but had had no children. This feeling of relief, joy, and pride was the closest he would ever get.

Elizabeth had planned her unofficial investigation into Pat Brennan and was ready to implement it on her own time. She had met with Bud and Martha Pierce trying to uncover any lead that might help her. Nothing of significance had become apparent to her at the time, but now she was trying to connect dots, any dots, to see if she could support her theory. In reviewing her notes and the statement she had taken from the Pierces, she noticed that they said they had two children, a rancher son in Arizona and a daughter in Salt Lake City. Chief Brennan had gone to Arizona for his leave. He supposedly was just going to pass through Arizona on his way to the west coast. However, it seemed that every time he called into the office to check on things, he was still in Arizona. Could there be some connection with the Chief going to Arizona and the Pierce’s son living in Arizona on a ranch, which would be the perfect place for an illegal alien to disappear? In fact, many ranchers have an illegal, a “Mexican,” working on the ranch sort of like their right-hand man. The Border Patrol knew of this practice but usually didn’t interfere because the illegals stayed on the remote ranch, had no involvement with drugs, and were only in the U. S. to make money that they sent back to their families in Mexico. They didn’t intend to make a permanent residence in the U. S. or to bring their families to the U. S., and they were only occupying a job position that no American would accept. The Border Patrol had more important issues to deal with than harass a decent hard-working Mexican that was harmless to an American’s way of life.

Elizabeth’s shift ended usually about the time the Chief reported for duty in the mornings. She began going into his office before he arrived and looking for phone bills or payment slips in his trash to see if she could identify his cell phone provider. When that was unsuccessful, she planned to visit the local offices of the three most popular cell phone providers to determine if one of them provided service to one Patrick Brennan, 627 Locust St. Lordsburg, NM. She would make these personal visits in uniform with her badge and side arm and indicate that her inquiry was a part of an “official investigation.” Using this tactic, she was able to ascertain that Cisco Communications of El Paso, Texas was the Chief’s cell phone provider. So far, so good.

Her next move was to call the corporate office of Cisco Communications to see how she could retrieve a list of phone calls made from the chief’s number during the period from Ms. Morales custody until the present. In talking with Cisco customer service, she was told that if she emailed them such a request on an official Border Patrol letter head from her official duty station and give her official title and badge number, they would review her request. Two days following Elizabeth’s email request, she received a return email with an attachment of the list of calls made from Pat’s cell phone number. The list was a treasure trove of information that

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would be helpful to her. It includes the location from which the call was made, the number called, the location of the number called, and the length of the call.

Elizabeth’s analysis of the phone log indicated that the Chief had called the Ax Handle Ranch via Ranchers’ Radio 27 times beginning about the time Ms. Morales was apprehended. Chief Brennan had also called two numbers in Springerville, Arizona 18 times between the day Ms. Morales was to be deported and two days later. Elizabeth assumed the numbers belonged to Bud Pierce’s son and daughter-in-law or perhaps one was a number for the ranch headquarters. In any event, Elizabeth was certain that this phone log indicated that all the calls from Brennan to the Pierces in Arizona had something to do with Ms. Morales location after the deportation day and perhaps even now. Elizabeth knew what the next step would be in her unofficial investigation.

Baby Patrick was a real hit around the Christopher Pierce family household. Sally’s strong motherly instincts were heightened with a new baby around. She did much of the changing, feeding, rocking, burping, cooing, and providing all the attention a newborn needed and more. And Sally was a great resource and mentor to Teresa who had strong maternal instinct of her own. The Pierce kids absolutely adored baby Patrick and loved laying on the floor with him on his blanket with him as he waved his arms and kicked his legs and gurgled and laughed. Even Christopher took to holding and rocking the baby. It wasn’t uncommon for Teresa and Sally to find Christopher asleep in his rocking chair with baby Patrick asleep on his shoulder. Teresa and her baby were an integral part of the Pierce’s family, loving and being loved.

Teresa so wanted Pat to see baby Patrick that she couldn’t keep from thinking about when that would happen. She had not driven a car since she left Mexico and didn’t have that much experience driving even before that, but she wished she was confident enough to borrow one of the Pierce’s vehicles to drive to Lordsburg with baby Patrick. But she had no license, was an illegal person in this country, and was not competent to drive, so a wish is all it was. Perhaps Sally should take the kids to the Ax Handle Ranch to visit Bud and Martha for a few days. There was something about the old ranch headquarters that they loved. They loved the way their grandparents pampered them, they liked the earthiness of the old place, and they knew it had an important connection to their daddy and his relatives before him. It was hot and dry and didn’t have the pine trees and wet meadows like the Cross Timers Ranch, but it fascinated them because it was so much different than “their” ranch.

So, it was that Teresa broached the subject of Sally and the kids driving to the Ax Handle Ranch to see Bud and Martha, and Pat could come to the ranch and see Teresa and the baby. At first, Sally was not too keen on making the trip. The idea was very good, but she hadn’t driven long distances with the kids without Christopher’s assistance with the kids and the driving. But Christopher couldn’t get away from the ranch now and wouldn’t be able to go. Sally was also aware that travelling with an illegal alien, if she were to be pulled over or stopped by any

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officials, would be bad for her and especially bad for Teresa. Law enforcement officials just had a way of recognizing illegal people even when dressed in clothing matching the American culture. They just had a way of knowing. So, although it was an idea that could work, she was fearful of consequences. Christopher was especially against the idea believing that there were just too many things that could go wrong.

After this idea was aborted, Sally decided they would call Pat on his cell phone one evening after hours and invite him to the ranch for a weekend stay or longer if he could. Although he was welcome at the Cross Timbers anytime, they hadn’t specifically invited him to come to the ranch for a visit and a stay. So, one night when they were all settled at home, Christopher called Pat with Teresa, Sally and the kids all in attendance.

“Hello, this is Pat.”

“Pat, it’s Christopher Pierce. How are you?”

Hi, Christopher. Everything okay up there?”

“Everything is just fine, that is except that this new baby wants you to come for a visit.” The kids covered their mouths as they giggled at what their daddy had just said to Pat because they knew the baby couldn’t talk yet and had made no such request. “Can you get away for a long weekend soon to come see us?”

“I have been thinking very seriously that I need to get up there and see young Patrick. I think I can take off around noon on a Friday and stay there Friday and Saturday nights and come back on Sunday. Would that work for you guys?”

“Oh, sure. Whatever works for you. When you thinking?”

“How about not this upcoming weekend, but the next weekend? It’s so damn hot down here that I could use a day or two of cooler temperatures. Would that be alright?”

Pat could hear Christopher relaying what Pat had suggested to the little audience gathered around him. Then he got back on the phone. “That would be just fine. We will count on it then.”

“Okay, that’s the plan. I will check in with you next week to confirm that that weekend is still good for everybody.”

“Sounds good. But before you hang up, there is a cute little woman here that wants to say hi to you.” Christopher handed the phone to Teresa as the kids giggled again at the cute little woman reference.

“Hello? This is Teresa.”

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“Hello, Teresa, how are you and how is that baby?”

“We all good. You come see Patrick soon, okay? He miss you and me too.”

“I told Christopher that I plan to come to see you in about ten days, okay?”

“Yes, that is good. Okay, bye.”

“Bye, Teresa. I can’t wait to see you too.” But she was gone, having given the phone back to Christopher.

“Well, take care, Pat, and we will see you soon.”

“Thanks for calling, Christopher. I really appreciate it.”

The phone conversation had been wonderful, just what Pat needed to cheer him up a bit. He had been a little blue from not being able to see Teresa and the baby, but also from the increasing distrust of him by Elizabeth Hollingsworth. There was no indication that she was discussing her suspicions with other staff members, but their working relationship had become ice cold.

Elizabeth had a plan in mind as part of her suspicions of Chief Brennan. At first, she thought about contacting the Tucson Sector office and request that an agent go snooping around Springerville to see if anyone had noticed a young, one-legged Mexican woman, perhaps with a baby, around their town. Visits to grocery stores or Wal-Mart, asking employees if they had seen anyone fitting that description, might result in something positive. But such a request from one sector office to another had to be officially filed and had to be based on some concrete evidence, and since Elizabeth ‘s investigation was “off the record,” she decided against such a move. Besides, Chief Brennan would have to sign off on such a request, and he would then become aware of Elizabeth’s evidence gathered thus far. So, she decided to take a weekend trip to Springerville and conduct her own search for clues. She couldn’t go this weekend, but next weekend would probably work. With this decision made, she became a little less stand-offish toward the Chief the next few days at work, and Pat noticed that she seemed to be more agreeable. Maybe, he thought, she was getting past the Morales issue and losing interest in uncovering deception in Chief Brennan’s version of the story.

On the Friday of the next week, Chief Brennan had cleared his schedule so that he could depart his office and Lordsburg by 1300 hours and drive to Springerville and the Cross Timbers Ranch to see Teresa and finally meet baby Patrick. The morning of the trip, Pat found himself getting more and more excited to see Teresa’s baby. He thought back to when he found her on that mountainside in a precarious condition. That she survived and that she delivered a healthy baby was remarkable, he thought. Maybe miracles really do happen. Much had happened since that fateful day, not just to Teresa but to him as well. Two lives had been impacted, and his in more ways than he was knew.

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Pat left for Lordsburg in his Ford Bronco intending to arrive by 1930 hours. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was planning on leaving for Springerville early the next morning, a Saturday. She had never been to Springerville and wasn’t sure how long it would take her to get there. Looking at the map as a crow flies, Elizabeth didn’t think it looked all that far, but by road into and through the mountains it would take longer than it looked. Neither Pat nor Elizabeth knew that the other was going to Springerville. That they would be there at the same time was known by neither.

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**Chapter 18: Springerville**

As Pat drove up to the Cross Timers headquarters, the well-lit front deck made visible the entire Christopher Pierce family sitting around a large patio table with a fire-pit in its center. Although the evening mountain air was cool, the fire was as much for ambiance as heat. As Pat drove around the circle drive, the gathered pushed away from the table and stood except for Teresa who remained seated holding Patrick. As Pat pulled the Bronco up adjacent to the front deck, he saw big grins on all the family assembled, obviously anticipating Pat’s joyous reaction to seeing the baby for the first time. And then he saw Teresa sitting at the table, her face radiant against the light of the fire-pit, smiling proudly while holding her small child. She waved to him with her free hand.

Pat climbed from the Bronco, closed the door, and met Christopher with his hand extended who had come off the deck to greet him.

“Glad you could come, Pat. ‘

“Hi Christopher. Thanks for having me. I am excited to be here and excited to see this new baby I have heard so much about.”

“Well, let’s get to it then” Christopher replied as he turned toward the deck steps.

Pat followed him, greeting the Pierce kids with a hello and a pat on each of their heads as he passed by on the way to the table. Sally intercepted him just before he got to the table and wrapped her arms around him and gave a strong squeeze. “Great to see you again, Pat.” Sally grabbed Pat’s left hand and led him the remaining few feet to the table where Teresa was sitting waiting impatiently to hug Pat and show him her new pride and joy.

“Hello Teresa.”

“My saint Pat” Teresa said tenderly as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek. “You finally here. And this is baby Patrick” she said as she lifted the baby up for Pat to hold. “He will be like you. He is good boy.”

Pat held Patrick snuggly close to his chest at first. As he became more comfortable holding something so fragile, he raised Patrick up to eye level and stared into his face. Pat had never really seen the beauty in new-born babies. But he genuinely found baby Patrick to be very cute, not red and wrinkled that he was expecting. Although his hair and eye color had not yet been established, Patrick appeared to have Teresa’s dark features which Pat found beautiful. No one knew who the father was or his features, but Patrick saw in baby Patrick a definite likeness to Teresa.

As Pat held the baby, he started kicking and wiggling and gurgling, and Pat was sure that he detected a smile on the baby’s face. Baby Patrick is happy to see me, Pat thought. Teresa has

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been blessed with a real gift from God, perhaps a recompense for the tragic luck that had befallen her. Good for her. He was so happy for her and her little bundle of joy.

“Teresa, you have a beautiful child. If he is like you, he will be strong and of fine character. You will be proud of him. Raise him to be so. I am so happy for you, Teresa.” Pat was close to tearing up thinking about how much she had been through and her reward for perseverance. Teresa stood up from her chair supporting herself on her only leg and wrapped her arms around the only man that had any meaning in her life. Quietly, tears flowed from her eyes and down her cheeks onto Patrick’s shirt. She wasn’t sobbing, her body wasn’t heaving, but Pat just knew the sad happiness flowing through her body. He felt it too. He loved her and wished that, in a different time and circumstances, he could and would be hers. But he couldn’t, and it was a sad state to be in.

Saturday morning early, Elizabeth was on the road to Springerville. Her mission was to see if she could uncover any connection with Springerville and Teresa Morales’s existence in the United States. However, she was also in a mood of discovery and interested to see the Mogollon Rim and Black Range in New Mexico and then the White Mountains of Arizona. She had heard what beautiful country it was along the western New Mexico-eastern Arizona border, and now she was going to see it. It was sparsely populated with no towns of any real size except for Reserve, NM. It was still primitive territory in many ways, having fallen behind the rest of the country’s modern conveniences. Telephones were still uncommon in some parts. Some ranches were not supplied public electricity and had to have their own generating stations. And it was so far to a town of any size that most ranches had to have their own “supply store” where food stuffs and dry goods were stored in bulk and available when needed.

This was the land of the large ranches that had been carved out of the wilderness by tough, adventuresome men. These ranches had cowboys that lived along the outer boundaries of the ranch far from the ranch headquarter and managed the part of the ranch and the livestock for which they were responsible. These cowboys would gather and move their herds to fresh pastures with quality forage and give the last grazed-pasture a much-needed rest for the opportunity to regrow high quality forage before another grazing rotation. They had to maintain the fences and the waters and feed the livestock when quality forage was sparse. It was a lonely job, but for those of the solitary type, it was perfect.

During branding season, all the cowboys from across the ranch would come together to work the herds on the ranch. The group would move from herd to herd. They worked the cattle the way it was done before squeeze chutes and propane flame. In an old circular corral made of cut juniper limbs, they would rope the calves, flank the calves, brand, castrate, and doctor the calves before releasing them back to their mothers. They did the same during weaning and shipping season. It was during these work sessions that the chuck wagon showed up to prepare delicious meals at breakfast and supper. It was during this time of the year that the men got to

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live the old cowboy way, sitting around a campfire eating, drinking, telling tall tales, talking about women, telling jokes, laughing, cussing, and sleeping on the ground.

Elizabeth made a leisurely trip of it, taking in the sites along the way and even stopping at a couple of historical markers to read about the significance of the sites. It was country that had been inhabited by native Americans in ancient times, then explored by Spanish explorers searching for gold, and finally settled by cattle and sheep men utilizing the vast grasslands of the intermountain plains and plateaus.

Elizabeth arrived in Springerville mid-afternoon and turned her attention to her mission of finding any trace of Teresa Morales’s existence. As she drove by a local grocery mart, she decided it would be an appropriate place to begin her investigation. She slowed her Honda sedan, moved into the left lane, and made a U-turn to return to the store she had just passed. She pulled into the parking lot, parked her car, and went in.

When she first entered, Elizabeth just rambled around to get a feel for the store. She thought to herself, what employees are most likely to have seen and remember a pretty Mexican girl with one leg in the store? Besides the checkers, she thought that maybe the butcher and the produce workers would know of her if in Springerville.

Elizabeth first went up to the butcher counter. A man in a white butcher coat with some blood smears on it approached from behind the glass that separated the counter from the cutting room. Wiping his hands on his coat, the man asked how he could help Elizabeth. She apologized for the bother and explained that she was looking for a certain Mexican girl that had part of her left leg amputated and was probably on crutches. And one more important piece of information: The girl may be associated with a Mrs. Pierce of the Cross Timbers Ranch.

The butcher knew exactly who Elizabeth was asking about, stating that “Oh, yeah, I know who that young woman is. She is always with Mrs. Pierce and her kids. I think maybe she is the kids’ nanny or something.”

Elizabeth thanked the butcher and turned toward the produce section feeling elated that her investigative work had supported her hypothesis so far. But there was still some more checking to do.

There were two employees working the produce section, one rearranging heads of lettuce and another adding new apples in the fresh fruit display. Elizabeth surveyed both employees about being aware of a pretty Mexican girl amputee that accompanied Mrs. Pierce of the Cross Timbers Ranch sometimes when the kids are with her. One didn’t know who Mrs. Pierce was and didn’t remember Teresa by description. The other employee, however, knew Mrs. Pierce and had seen the girl with Mrs. Pierce and the kids.

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After polling several of the checkers about seeing a girl matching Teresa’s description, Elizabeth had all but proven her theory: All three checkers had seen the girl described as Teresa. By now Elizabeth was so impressed with herself and for her investigative work, she couldn’t wait to share the news with someone. But who? She had better get control of her emotions and keep this information to herself for now. What Elizabeth had uncovered was dangerous evidence to the career and future livelihood of Chief Pat Brennan and others involved in perpetuating a crime. Now that she had this proof, she must be very careful with it and not let it out except at the right time to the right people.

Elizabeth’s mission had been achieved. She had proven her theory that Teresa Morales was not in Mexico but in the United States. She had not, however, firmly established that Chief Brennan was the one that planned and executed Teresa’s false deportation and allowed her asylum in the U. S., although the circumstantial evidence strongly supported her theory that he did. But she was proud of herself for discovering as much as she had and felt like celebrating. Surely there was somewhere in Springerville where she could have a nice glass of red wine and a garden-fresh salad and blackened salmon. But first she had better find a motel and get a room

She found her a nice room at the Springerville Holiday Inn Express, cleaned up a bit, and headed out in search of the Aspen Leaf Bar and Grille that the motel clerk recommended. She found it with not much trouble thanks to the good directions she was provided. She pulled into a half-filled parking lot and went inside. The hostess offered to seat her in the dining area, but Elizabeth declined and walked into the bar side where she found a small table in the corner that suited her mood. It was a very nice establishment, much nicer than anything in Lordsburg, and she was already glad that she decided to come out.

After an enjoyable evening of delicious wine and supper, Teresa paid her tab and exited the bar. As she was walking to her car, she noticed a familiar Ford Bronco with New Mexico plates in the parking lot. She stopped in place, and thought for a second, then turned to look back at the bar. Chief Brennan is in the restaurant!

She proceeded to her car and got in and sat in the driver’s seat with the door open and the car not yet started. What should she do? Should she enter the restaurant and if the Chief is with Teresa Morales and others, she could photo-document it with a photo from her phone. Should she confront him or just covertly document his presences with Teresa in Spingerville, AZ if they are together inside the restaurant? After more careful thought about the situation she now found herself in, she decided to sneak in from the bar side to see if she could at least see who he was with and what he was doing.

She got out of her car and closed the door. She cautiously proceeded across the parking lot to the front door and re-entered the lounge side of the establishment. She went directly to the bar tender who had served her before.

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“Hi again” he said as she approached the bar.

“Want another drink after all, huh?”

“No thanks, I just need to peak into the restaurant side to see if someone I know is in there. Is that okay?”

“Sure. Describe who you think might be in there and maybe I can tell you where they are sitting. I have served a few drinks in there tonight.”

“Well, I am trying to find out if there is a pretty young Mexican woman with an amputated leg and probably on crutches, and she may be with a gentleman, dark hair, nice looking, about 40 or so. They might be with another couple or family, the Pierces from the Cross Timbers Rach.”

“Oh sure, the Pierce’s are in there and the Mexican girl and gentleman are in there too. The two Pierce daughters are with them, and the Mexica girl has a baby with her.”

“Can you tell me where they are sitting?”

“They are at the big round table in the southwest corner of the restaurant. The Pierces are in the corner facing out at the dining area, and the gentleman, lady and baby are on this side of the table across from the Pierce’s. You can access the dining area through that breezeway” he said as he pointed to it on the opposite side of the lounge from the entrance.

“Okay, thanks” Elizabeth replied sheepishly, not sure if she should look in there or not.

“Excuse me, I’ve got some drink orders to fill. Let me know if you change your mind and want a drink.”

“Thanks” is all Elizabeth said in reply.

While the bar tender was busy making drinks and wasn’t paying attention to Elizabeth, she slowly moved through the breezeway toward the dining area. Once there, she peaked around the wall into the seating area of the dining room. Immediately she saw who she was looking for sitting where and how the bar tender had told her. She aimed her phone at the table and clicked a photo from afar. Although Pat was sitting with his back to the camera, she got a good side-view shot of Teresa holding her baby. She noticed that the baby was small, but very cute. She was happy for Teresa to have delivered what appeared to be a healthy baby.

None of the subjects in the photo seemed to notice that their photograph was being taken, and Elizabeth left by way of the bar. In the parking lot, she took a photo of Pat’s Bronco with the restaurant’s name sign in the background. She then returned to her car and drove immediately to the motel where she was staying. In her room, she recorded her thoughts and made notes of what she had observed and photographed. She had put together a strong case against Pat’s story of delivering Teresa to her home country. She definitely had career-ending proof against

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the Chief, and she probably had enough damaging material that could lead to a criminal conviction of Chief Brennan. As she thought about the information she had collected, she realized how much power over Chief Brennan she now had. Position and power are what Elizabeth desired. Right now, she felt very powerful.

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**Chapter 19: The Reckoning**

Patrick had a wonderful but short weekend at the Cross Timbers with Teresa, little Patrick, and the Pierce family. It was the closest he had come to a family experience in a long time, maybe going back to his late childhood or young adult days at home during holidays with his own family. Pat had once been married but for only a short time and not much in the way of family get-togethers ever occurred because of turmoil early in the marriage. But spending time with Teresa and her baby was nice. It felt right. But he tried not to dwell on “what ifs.”

Elizabeth too had a wonderful short weekend in Springerville because the results of her investigation proved what she thought all along.

When Pat resumed his duties at the office the following Monday, Elizabeth was in the field having dispensed the agents on Sunday night. She knew she would encounter Chief Brenan at the end of the shift about 8:00 AM on Monday when the Chief would assign the daytime agents their duties for the day. Since the events of the weekend, she had mulled over in her mind just how to broach what she now knew about Teresa and the part that the Chief had played in Teresa’s release from custody. Now she was determined to confront him with what she knew, see what he proposed to do about it, and then decide her next move. Elizabeth expected the Chief to be shocked once he knew of the proof she had to substantiate her original theory that Teresa had not been deported and was still in the U.S.

Elizabeth’s agents had returned from the field, and she was in the conference room debriefing them. Pat was in the assignment room with his agents passing out their assignments for the day. Once Pat’s agents had departed for the field, he returned to his office. Shortly thereafter, there was a soft knock on his door. Pat looked up to see Elizabeth standing there.

“Chief, do you have some time to talk?”

“Yes, Elizabeth. Come in and have a seat.”

Elizabeth entered Pat’s office and closed the door behind her. Pat wasn’t sure what to make of that but said nothing. Elizabeth took a seat in the chair closest to Pat’s desk and scooted it a bit closer than it had been. She cleared her throat before beginning to talk. She had Pat’s full attention.

“Chief, as you know, I have suspected that Teresa Morales was never actually deported across the border into Mexico, despite your version that you personally placed her into the hands of the Mexican authorities.”

“I’ve been aware of your suspicions based on the Mexican authorities claims that they never received her.”

“And do you still contend that you personally delivered her to them?”

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“Yes of course I do. I have told you that I don’t know how many times. That’s what I did.”

“Chief, let me get to the point of this discussion. I was in Springerville, Arizona this past weekend, and I know you were there as well. In fact, I know you were having supper with Teresa Morales, her baby, and the Pierce family last Saturday night.”

Pat sat in stunned silence staring at Elizabeth waiting for whatever bomb she would drop next.

“I also surveyed a few of the larger retail stores in Springerville and found that Ms. Morales accompanies Mrs. Pierce on a regular basis to those stores. The belief by some is that she lives with the Pierce’s and serves as the nanny for the Pierce children and performs other household duties as well.”

Pat felt obligated to say something but was in no position to deny Elizabeth’s findings. “Okay” was all he said waiting for Elizabeth to continue.

“So Chief, do you still stand by your original story of Ms. Morale’s deportation?”

Pat shifted in his desk chair and paused a few seconds before responding. “What do you want me to say? That I still stand by my story? You are to be commended on your investigative efforts to uncover my ruse. Now that you know that I was not truthful, what are your intentions? Or maybe I should ask you what you expect of me now?

Chief, I have not disclosed to anyone else what I have found out. I would like to know what you think you should do.”

Pat now felt cornered and angry at Elizabeth’s perseverance and because of his own carelessness that allowed Elizabeth to prove his story to be false. On many occasions, he had contemplated what would happen if he were found out. Now he had been found out. And if it became known to the agency directors, he would immediately be suspended, he would ultimately be fired, and then he would be fined and face prison time. All of this was racing through his mind as he tried to formulate an answer to Elizabeth’s question: What should he do?

“Elizabeth, I know the consequences I face for what I have done. And with the information you have gathered, you hold my career, maybe even my life as a free man, in your hands. I accept my fate, whatever it is to be, but I would like to offer a solution that I hope you will find acceptable.”

“Let’s hear it” Elizabeth replied from her new position of power.

“I propose that I resign from the agency, put in for my retirement funds I have earned in my 20 years, sell my house, and disappear. I will recommend in the strongest terms that you should replace me, and I will do all I can to make it happen. You, on the other hand, will bury your file

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on this matter and leave Ms. Morales alone to live her life untouched and unbothered. What do you say to that proposition?”

Now it was Elizabeth’s turn to mull over in her mind what the Chief just presented to her. His plan, if she agreed to it, would open the Sector Chief position, which she should have a good chance to fill or to fill another vacancy of equal authority somewhere else in the agency. That was her main goal, to gain more authority and power. Then, regarding the Chief, he wouldn’t be officially punished but would leave the agency and lose his advancement opportunities, which would be punitive in nature. And regarding Ms. Morales ’status, Elizabeth did have empathy enough to leave her alone, especially now that she was part of an established family and supporting herself and her baby, which was officially a citizen of the United States.

“Okay, Chief, I think I can accept your proposal. I will agree to never mention to anyone the reasons for your resignation or your infractions that led to it. However, I can’t be held accountable by you should someone else in the agency uncover evidence of your actions or if an official investigation is implemented.”

“I know that, Elizabeth.”

“Good. Then let’s put our heads together and arrive at a written contract that specifies the conditions we both agree to and must follow. Then we both sign it and keep it in our own personal effects not to be shown to anyone else.”

“That’s agreeable with me.”

“Chief, what is your proposed time-table for resigning and leaving the agency, selling your house, and all that needs to be done? Any idea on when your position would be advertised?”

“I will give my notice of intent to the agency tomorrow with an effective two-week notice. I will list my house for sale as soon as I make a few repairs and improvements, which shouldn’t take but a week or so. And once it sells, I am out of here. You will be assigned acting Chief until the position is filled, hopefully by you. Honestly, I think you have an excellent chance at getting this position, but I don’t know of all the potential candidates within the agency that might be interested. But you are certainly ready for a Sector Chief position, here or somewhere else, or a position of equal rank and status.”

“Alright then, let’s go in my office and begin working up this agreement.”

“Elizabeth, you are technically off duty. Do you want to do it now or would you rather go home and get some rest and we do this later?”

“I would just as soon get it done. Let’s get the ball rolling so we can reach closure on this matter and move on with our lives. By the way, what will you do after leaving the agency?”

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“I have no idea. This all happened rather quickly, don’t you think?”

“It did. I’m sorry that I had to do it, but I just knew in my heart that something didn’t add up, and I knew of the compassion that you had for Ms. Morales’ plight. Honestly, I am not surprised that you did what you did. But despite your good intentions, it was wrong.”

Pat pushed away from his desk and stood up. “Let’s go get this deal finalized. I’ve got a lot to do and a lot to think about.”

After Pat and Elizabeth had put into writing the terms of their joint agreement, Pat got to work immediately making ready for the announcement of his resignation from the agency. He would call his Regional Director to advise him of his intent to resign followed by a letter of resignation. He would then draft another letter recommending Elizabeth Hollingsworth as his replacement, which would make sense since she was qualified, had excellent evaluations, and was already in place with the knowledge of the staff, the work required, and the nuances of the Lordsburg Sector.

Pat would also request a pay-out of his retirement funds, lost vacation time, and any payment for sick leave that hadn’t been used. The personnel office would work up an estimate of funds Pat would be receiving approximately 60 days after his official departure date. He would realize enough money that he could support himself without working while he decided what his next move would be. He wouldn’t be rushed to decide his next move.

In the evenings after work, Pat patched and painted and hammered and nailed to make his house more desirable to sell. He cleaned and scrubbed and mowed and watered and even planted some new flowers in the front to make his house more attractive. His house went on the market and realtors began showing his house to interested parties. The house sold two weeks after he listed it for the asking price. The closing was tentatively schedule for about four weeks later, so Pat didn’t have to move out immediately and would have time to figure out where to go.

While still Sector Chief, Pat made visits to several ranchers that he had worked with over the years. It was a special trip that he made to the Ax Handle Ranch to see Bud and Martha Pierce, whom he considered to be very special friends. It was an emotional goodbye with promises to stay in touch and keep them informed of his whereabouts. Pat had a great deal of respect for the Pierces and would miss them.

After Pat was no longer with the agency, he made a special trip to the Cross Timbers to see Teresa, baby Patrick, and the Pierce family. They all already knew of Pat’s resignation and that he had sold his house in Lordsburg, but they were in the dark just like everybody else about what Pat would now do.

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The visit to the ranch was very special, almost like a family reunion. Christopher and Sally were so good to him and fun to be with that he loved them like family. And being with Teresa and baby Patrick again was especially enjoyable. In private conversations with Teresa on the back deck, she pleaded with him to stay at the ranch---perhaps Christopher could hire him as a ranch hand---in hopes that her saint would become a permanent part of her life. Pat loved Teresa very much and would like for such a plan to work out under different circumstances. But he felt too old for her and would hold her back from experiencing a wonderful and full life in the United States because of her youth and personality and beauty and exuberance for life. She could and should have much more than what Pat could offer her. He loved her so much that he wanted the very best for her and Patrick. It was a tearful rejection of what would have been a story book ending. It wasn’t to be.

After Teresa was able to accept Pat’s rejection of staying with her, she formulated a wild but interesting consideration for Pat to ponder. How about he goes to her hometown of *Piedras Rojas, Mexico* and maybe teach English second language to the students there, or maybe work with Teresa’s sister, Rosalinda, at the bar. Teresa brought up how much she loved Pat’s red enchiladas, so maybe he could go there and help with the preparation of the meals and cook his good Mexican food in addition to serving *cerveza* and *tequila*. She could tell him where *Piedras Rojas* was and who to look for when he got there. Last she heard, her father, though suffering dementia, was alive and still in his house with Rosalinda. They would probably let him stay there for a while to see if he liked it and could make a living there. At least for a while, she thought.

Pat thanked her for such a beautiful idea, but really didn’t give it much thought. But he promised he would think about it and let her know if brave enough to try it.

Another goodbye and another emotional time for all at the Cross Timbers. Just before his departure, Teresa picked up baby Patrick from his walker, reached for Pat’s hand, and lead him away from the others who were gathered in the den. Once they were alone, Teresa handed Patrick to Pat to hold and embrace. Then as tenderly as Pat had ever been kissed, Teresa’s mouth found Pat’s and they expressed their love for each other in a kiss that could never be duplicated. When the kiss finally ended, both Teresa and Pat had tears flowing down their faces. They then rejoined the Pierce family to say goodbye. Pat said his goodbyes and promised to be back again soon once he decided what to do next. Seeing Teresa’s beautiful face again and knowing the love she felt for him was one of the greatest things that Pat had ever experienced, but the hardest thing he ever experienced was saying goodbye, walking out the door, getting into his Bronco, and driving away. Not even 100 yards down the road from the ranch headquarters, Pat broke into an uncontrollable sob. He had found the love of his life and would never forget her.

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As Pat was packing his personal effects and getting ready to vacate his house, he began thinking about the wild and crazy idea Teresa had come up with for Pat to move to her old hometown of *Piedras Rojas*. He liked the idea of trying to teach the children or anyone interested in learning to speak English, the language of world trade. Speaking and reading English could open new doors of opportunity for them.

Maybe the cooking thing would work out too. Pat loved to cook *enchiladas* and *chile rellenos* and *tacos* and all kinds of Mexican food. He knew he wouldn’t make much money and maybe not even enough to live on, which would be meager. But he would have plenty of money to fall back on if needed. It would be like a vacation and an extreme break from what he had been doing his whole career. He had nothing to lose by going there and giving it a try.

Pat talked to Teresa regularly by phone and eventually told her he thought he would go to *Piedras Rojas* to look around and see if there was any potential to do what she had suggested. She was so excited to have provided some advice to Pat, which he apparently had taken seriously, after all he had done for her. It wasn’t much in the way of repayment, but it was something. She would do anything to help her saint when in need.

Teresa promised to write to her sister and father and tell them to watch for Saint Patrick to show up. When she wrote the letter, she had much to tell them about her current situation. In her last correspondence to them, she advised them that she was going to make a run at crossing the border. Her pregnancy was not mentioned, and she hadn’t written them since the snake bite, the removal of her left leg, or the birth of baby Patrick. And in it, she explained to them all the wonderful care she had been provided, and all that Saint Patrick had done for her from carrying her off of the mountainside with snake venom in her veins to keeping her from being deported and finding her a wonderful place to live and work. She was very happy and owed it all to Saint Patrick, for whom she named her baby.

Pat rented a storage unit in Lordsburg for a couple of months and stored his furniture and other belonging he would not need or wouldn’t be able to take to *Piedras Rojas*. He bought a map of Mexico and plotted his route for driving there. Then packing his clothes and a few other items that might be helpful to have with him, he loaded up the Bronco and departed for Mexico and a new adventure and perhaps a whole new life.

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**Chapter 20: The Saint of Enchiladaville**

Two easy days later, the Ford Bronco with New Mexico plates drove into *Piedras Rojas*. It appeared to be a sleepy little agricultural-based town that was the hub of activity for the all the surrounding farms and ranches in the area. Pat found the town to be populated with about 2,500 souls with an additional 500-1,000 additional citizens in the rural areas adjacent to the town. It had a descent school complex in the center of town that housed the elementary, junior high, and high school education facilities. Across the street to the east from the school was the central park with a gazebo in the middle of it for occasional weekend fiestas and dances, which were well-attended by the citizens of the area. And on the other side of the park from the school complex was the historic downtown section with shops, cafes, bars and a two-story hotel.

The large, ornate Catholic Church sat across from the park on the south side and used the park after Sunday services for gatherings and picnics almost every Sunday. Large cottonwoods, willows, and mesquite trees occupied the park and provided the much-needed shade for the park’s many activities. While driving around the town upon first arriving, Pat was impressed with how quaint and pretty it was sitting in the shadow of the red rock formations from which the town derived its name. First impressions mean a lot, and Pat’s first impression was that he liked it.

Pat reached over to the other front seat of the Bronco to retrieve the notes he had taken from Teresa about how to find the bar where Rosalinda worked and where Rosalinda and her father lived. He then directed the Bronco to the downtown district to the east of the central park. He drove slowly down the main street looking on both sides for the *Paisano* Bar, where Rosalinda was said to work. When he saw it on the south side of the street, he pulled over to take the first space in which to park the Bronco. Being mid-week and early evening, there didn’t appear to be much activity downtown, but the easily distinguishable Mexican music emitting from the open front door to the *Paisano* and the patron’s voices from inside gave Pat the indication that this was a popular place in town.

He walked in and accepted the stares from others in the bar with a smile and a gentle nod of his head as he headed past the little wooden tables to the bar. He took a stool at the bar and sat down, removing his ball cap and setting it on the bar in front of him. The others at the bar looked his way and nodded politely. It was rare to have a stranger at the bar or a perceived newcomer in town.

A pretty lady came to him from behind the bar and asked him in Spanish what she could get him to drink. He replied in Spanish that he would like a Coors Light. She replied that he must

be an American to request a Coors Light which they did not have. He then ordered a *Dos Equis*. He pulled out his wallet while she retrieved the *cerveza* for him.

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When she returned with his bottle of beer, he asked her if she took American dollars. When she said that she did, Pat pulled out a $20 bill and handed it to her. She went to her cash box and brought him his change in *pesos*. Not knowing the exchange rate, he accepted the change and left it on the bar in front of him while he took a swig from his cold bottle of beer.

The bar maid went off to do some other chores, but returned to him to strike up a conversation, mainly what the hell was he doing in *Piedras Rojas*. It wasn’t like *Piedras Rojas* was a tourist destination.

He introduced himself and said that he had come to town on the advice of a person very close to him named Teresa Morales. The lady listened to his brief introduction, but when he mentioned the name Teresa Morales, her eyes lit up and a large grin came across her face as she replied “That’s my sister! I know you now. You are the Patrick that Teresa refers to as Saint Patrick. As she spoke those words, Rosalinda Morales came out from behind the bar and gave Pat a firm hug. “She told my father and me in her letter what had happened to her with the snake and her leg and that now I am an aunt and our father is a grandfather! I am glad to meet the person who saved my little sister’s life and took care of her.”

Pat looked from Rosalinda to the ground and back as she laid all that praise on him. He was embarrassed and humbled by the appreciation Rosalinda showed him. And as he listened to Rosalinda’s words, he played back in his mind the lovely girl he left behind at the Springerville, Arizona ranch. Rosalinda was very much like Teresa, and it hit him that she was a genuinely nice person like Teresa.

“I knew that she wrote to you and your father to tell you both of what she had been through since coming illegally into the United States. She is a wonderful young lady, so strong and determined, I just couldn’t send her back.”

Rosalinda gave Pat a final squeeze hug and released him and took a step back. And now staring Pat directly in the eyes, she said “She loves you very much. I am glad you came. I will help you however I can to meet the school officials about teaching our children English. Maybe tomorrow I can see if any are around to talk to. School is out for the summer, but we might find someone to talk to about this.”

“That would be great” Pat replied gratefully.

“My sister also said that you are a good cook and maybe you would like to work here to cook and help at the bar?” Rosalinda stated in question form.

“I would be interested to try my hand at cooking Mexican food, which I love so much.”

“After I got Teresa’s letter, I told the owner that you might come to *Piedras Rojas* and that you were a good cook. He said he could use you here.”

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“Well, that sounds great.”

“Tomorrow morning, he will be here, and I will introduce you to him and he may have you cook some of your enchiladas for him to try, sort of like a test. Then he can show you how to cook other items that are on the menu and that people like to order.”

“That sounds wonderful. I appreciate all this help you are giving me, Rosalinda.”

“Oh, it is nothing compared to what you did for my little sister. We are so grateful to you.”

Pat replied “I am looking forward to tomorrow. I am going over to the hotel and get a room and get some rest, and then we can meet again tomorrow.”

“Plan on staying with my father and me at his house starting tomorrow. I would send you over there now, but he is always a little confused and might not know who you are to just move in tonight. I close tonight and won’t get home until late. So, we can meet again tomorrow, okay?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, you come back here about 10:00 in the morning. You can cook for the boss and then we go to my house to meet father and get you set up to stay with us, okay?” Pat accepted Rosalinda’s schedule, had a second beer, and then went to the hotel and got a room for the night.

Pat thought to himself as he lay in bed with the whir of the window air conditioning blowing on him Wow, what a day it had been. A great day, in fact as he thought in anticipation of tomorrow’s schedule.

Promptly at 10:00 in the morning, Pat was at the bar to meet Rosalinda who introduced him to her boss, Alberto Munoz. A short, chubby man with a black bushy moustache, Mr. Munoz was very cheerful and sociable type of man that had assumed the *Paisano* from his father and had made it even more successful than it had been. People liked Mr. Munoz and he liked people. He ran an establishment that adults enjoyed coming to whether to eat, drink, or both.

Mr. Munoz was happy to make Pat’s acquaintance and had been looking forward to meeting him. How refreshing it would be to have a *gringo* cooking and serving at his establishment. The curiosity factor of having a *gringo* working for him in the kitchen and bar would draw even more patrons to the *Paisano* Bar.

Rosalinda left Pat with Mr. Munoz while she ran some errands. By the time she returned to the *Paisano,* Pat had cooked red enchiladas for Mr. Munoz, which he thoroughly enjoyed, and Mr. Munoz showed Pat how to cook some other dishes, shared recipes with him, and showed him how the kitchen was arranged for preparing, cooking, and serving meals to customers. Mr.

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Munoz did the cooking for lunch, from 12:00 until 2:00 PM and then came back to cook suppers from 5:00 until 8:00 PM. The bar service was open from 11:00 AM until 11:00 PM during the week Monday through Thursday but stayed open until 12:30AM on Friday and Saturday nights. There was no food service on Sundays, but the bar opened from 1:00 PM until 9:00 PM when Mr. Munoz tended bar and interacted with a regular bunch of customers.

Mr. Munoz wasn’t sure yet how he would work Pat into the schedule, but he looked forward to turning some of the cooking responsibilities over to Pat so that he could be behind the bar more to meet and serve his regular customers. He loved the social aspects of the *Paisano* Bar and looked forward to working less and socializing more.

Mr. Munoz handed Pat some paperwork to complete to make his hiring official. Once completed, the paperwork was to be returned to Mr. Munoz tomorrow morning. Pat would then begin work by shadowing Mr. Munoz during the 12:00 to 2:00PM lunch service. Pat might have to do that for a couple of days before Mr. Munoz left him alone to do the cooking. Mr. Munoz would know when Pat was ready.

Pat would begin at $15.00 American equivalent in Mexican pesos a day for an eight-hour day. Once he was on his own and his responsibility increased, his pay would be increased. Rosalinda assured Pat that Mr. Munoz was a generous business owner and very good to his loyal and hard-working employees. The benefits included complimentary meals when working and Pat would have Sundays off.

Pat was very excited about being hired by Mr. Munoz. He hadn’t expected for things to be moving so quickly. He just arrived in town last night. Now he and Rosalinda were going over to the *Piedras Rojas* school office to see if they might be interested in Pat perhaps teaching an English class to students at some level or perhaps even an evening class open to the residents of the community. The lady at the front office listened to Pat, speaking in perfect Spanish, introduce himself and pitch his proposal. When he finished with his brief impromptu presentation, the lady reached into a file cabinet and handed him what appeared to be an application for employment. She asked him to complete the personal profile and then compose his ideas for the English classes to students and community residents and bring the paperwork back to her when completed. She thought it to be a worthy idea and would pass it along to the supervisors.

Pat and Rosalinda had gone from the *Paisano* to the school office in Pat’s Bronco. Pat then returned to the bar so that Rosalinda could get in her car and drive to her home with Pat following. Upon arrival at home, Rosalinda cautioned Pat that her father suffered from dementia and was confused most of the time and says and does weird things and to just deal with it.

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“Papa, this is Pat, the one that Teresa wrote us about, the man that saved her life in the United States.”

Mr. Morales was sitting in his worn-out fabric easy chair staring at Pat as if he knew him. “Did you fight for the north with Pancho?”

Pat looked at Rosalinda, whose nodding head indicated what Pat’s answer should be. “Why yes, I did fight for the north. I think I met you before. You must have been in Pancho’s army too.”

“Yes, yes I was.” Mr. Morales tried to rise from his chair, but couldn’t do it by himself, so Rosalinda gently pulled him up by his arms. Once he was standing, Mr. Morales came to attention as straight as his little stooped frame would allow and gave Pat a tight, perfect salute. “On behalf of Pancho Villa, I thank you for your service.”

Pat popped to attention and returned the old man’s salute. “Thank you for your service, sir” Pat responded. The old man dropped his salute and with Rosalinda’s assistance, was reseated in his easy chair. “I was a general, you know” he said looking back up at Pat.

“Yes sir, General Morales. I remember you, sir. You were an outstanding general for Pancho.”

As Pat’s words, the old man turned his eyes toward the floor with a weak smile on his face, an expression of contentment.

Rosalinda showed Pat to the vacant room once occupied by Teresa when she still lived at home. Pat could envision Teresa as a girl living in the room. “This is where you may stay. We may charge you a small rent fee to help with the utilities and food, but it shouldn’t be much. We don’t need to make money from you. We owe you so much for what you did for Teresa. The room okay for you?”

“Yes, it is very nice. Thank you so much. I will be a good tenant and cause no problems.”

“I know that about you already, Saint Patrick” Rosalinda said softly. She stared into Pat’s eyes for a brief time, then turned and said, “Let’s bring in your personal belongings so you can get situated.” Pat followed her out to the Bronco with a feeling of humility and contentment. He had a very good feeling about the direction in which his life was now headed. He felt blessed.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth had no idea where ex-Chief Brennan had gone. She just knew he was no longer in Lordsburg. She was now acting Sector Chief and had officially applied for the position. She felt good about her chances at being the next Sector Chief of the Lordsburg Sector.

“Chief Hollingsworth, Regional Director Andersen is on line two for you” came a call from the receptionist on Elizabeth’s speaker.

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“Thank you, Cindy.”

Elizabeth took a deep breath and pushed button two on her phone and picked up the receiver.

“Elizabeth Hollingsworth” she answered.

“Elizabeth how are you” the voice on the line asked.

“Fine, sir. What can I do for you?” Elizabeth was anticipating some good news about the position she had applied for.

“Elizabeth, it has come to my attention that the Mexican authorities at their station in *Juarez* claim that one of their own, a woman named Teresa Morales, who was to be deported was never received by them. They also claim that she was injured while in our custody and subsequently became handicapped. They claim that we knew she had been injured on our watch and didn’t deliver her because of our incompetence and that we have her somewhere. What do you know of this matter?”

“Sir, Teresa Morales was definitely not injured on our watch. We were not even aware of her existence until after she was injured. Ex-Chief Brennan found the woman on a ranch in the south end of our jurisdiction, and she had suffered a rattlesnake strike and was in dire condition. He carried her out and got her to the hospital. She lost her leg as a result of the snake bite, but Chief Brennan definitely saved her life. That can be substantiated by the medical professionals at the Lordsburg hospital.”

“Okay. So where is she now?”

“Sir, Chief Brennan is positive he delivered her to the Mexican authorities himself, and that they are mistaken about claiming not to have received her.”

“Where is ex-Chief Brennan now? We have got to resolve this issue.”

“Sir, as you know, Chief Brennan resigned and left town. I have no idea where he went or what he is doing now.”

“Let me ask you then, why did Chief Brennan resign so suddenly? He was a good man and running a tight ship. Why did he just leave?”

“Sir, the best I can tell is that he was tired of the work, of catching people in our country illegally. He wanted to do something different, I guess.”

“Well, Elizabeth, we need more answers as to why he left and where the Morales woman is. There may not be a connection, but then again there may be. We need to know for sure. I will initiate an investigation from my office as to what happened to the woman. I ask that you cooperate with the agents assigned to dig into this matter.”

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“Yes sir, I understand. Whatever I can do to help them, sir.”

“Thank you, Elizabeth. I knew I could count on you. Someone will be in touch soon to begin the investigation. Keep up the good work down there.”

“Thank you, sir.”

Regional Director Lars Andersen hung up. Elizabeth placed her receiver in its cradle. She spoke out loud the first thought that came into her mind: “Oh shit.”

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**Chapter 21: *El Paisano***

*(In Spanish)*

“Hey, Saint, would you grab me another beer, please? “

“Sure thing, Perez. Is that it?” The Saint had been washing the bar glasses in the bar sink, so he wiped his hands on the dingy towel that was wrapped around his waist and went to the beer box.

“No, I’d better eat something. How about a ground beef red enchilada and a couple of sopapillas?”

“Want beans and rice or beans and posole?”

“Posole, please, Saint.”

“Fried egg on top?”

“Sure, that sounds good. Now I am starving just thinking about it!

“I think you’ll survive a few more minutes, but I’ll get right on it, Perez,” the Saint said as he opened the bottle of beer on the opener that was screwed into the back of the bar and set it in front of Perez. He then went through the door from the bar leading to the kitchen where he quick-fried three corn tortillas soft and built a three-layered ground beef enchilada and garnished it with grated cheese, salsa, and chopped lettuce. He then fried an egg sunny-side up and slipped it on top. He added a scoop of pinto beans and pork posole on the plate and left the kitchen to set the wonderful concoction on the bar in front of Perez.

“Thanks, Saint. Looks delicious.”

“Eight bucks, Perez,” the Saint said.

Perez pulled ten Mexican dollars from his wallet that had been laying on the bar in front of him and handed them to the Saint. “Thanks, Perez.”

Pat took the money over to the cash box to make change amid vocal requests from the other patrons in the *Paisano* Bar and Restaurant for more drinks or more food or both. The Saint would get to them all in due time. No one would go hungry or thirsty.

Perez had finished eating and killed the last of his beer with one final chug. He set the bottle back on the bar next to is cleaned plate. He laid fifty cents in coin next to the empty bottle as a tip. As he scooted his bar stool away from the bar and stood up, he said “Thanks, Saint. Have a good one.”

“Thanks for coming in, Perez. See you next time.”

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Pat put the coins in a small salsa jar used for tips. He took the plate and eating utensils to the kitchen sink and grabbed wet, soapy dish rag to wipe down the bar where Perez had been served. Pat then dropped the dish rag in the bar sink and went around the dining area to check on the needs of the few patrons still in the bar and to bus the tables of those who weren’t.

When Pat first arrived in *Piedras Rojas*, he had little time to think about his former life. He was too busy listening and learning and working hard to be a good employee at the *Paisano* and be sociable and friendly to its valued patrons. It had been stressful at first. A new place, a new culture, new people, a whole new life. But with time, his comfort level increased as he learned the procedures and the people that frequented the bar. He now had time to revisit his past in New Mexico, his childhood, his school years, and his professional career years. He loved New Mexico and missed it but felt that he might never return to it. He also began to reflect on just how abruptly his career had ended and the peculiar way in which it had. And although he wasn’t lonely, he felt alone.

The only person in *Piedras Rojas* that knew the truth about Pat’s past and the genesis of the nickname “Saint” was Rosalinda. She was his guardian and coach as he navigated his way through his new life in Mexico. She had found him employment and served as his landlord and valued companion.

Now, Rosalinda and Mr. Morales were Pat’s family. He loved them and they loved him because of all he had done to rescue Teresa and find her refuge in the United States, but also because Pat was such a kind, humble person. He was very comfortable with his arrangements.

The three of them didn’t function much as a family during the busy week with Rosalinda and Pat working at the *Paisano*, oftentimes on different schedules. But on Sundays, the three of them would attend the Catholic Church and have a nice dinner together either at home or in the park across from the church weather permitting. Then after lunch, Rosalinda and Pat would do the wash and clean house and then get Mr. Morales out of his old lounge chair and put him out in the front dirt in a yard chair under the mesquite tree, and then the three of them would drink *cerveza* and visit with each other and catch up on life.

Although physically present, Mr. Morales wasn’t able to participate in much of the conversations because of his diseased mind and the lack of understanding it caused. But Rosalinda, with gentle coaxing, tried to keep her father engaged as much as he could. Pat recognized the genuine love Rosalinda expressed toward her father, and he was moved by it.

Although Pat didn’t miss his life in the United States, he did miss Teresa Morales. Their telephone visits were almost nonexistent. Pat wanted Teresa to adapt to the United States, enjoy baby Patrick and the Pierce family, and perhaps someday meet someone significant who would love her and sweep her off her feet so they could create a family together. He just wished he could be that person despite the age difference between them. The old adage that

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“Absence makes the heart grow fonder” seemed applicable as Pat’s feelings for Teresa grew. And unbeknownst to him, Teresa was experiencing similar feelings too, especially as the holiday season and the thought of family and friends approached.

The holiday season of Thanksgiving followed by Christmas followed by New Year’s Day began earlier in the U. S. than it did in Mexico. Because Mexico doesn’t celebrate Thanksgiving, their holiday season begins closer to Christmas, and when it does it represents a more religious celebration than the commercialized celebration that Christmas has become in the United States.

The emphasis is more on baby Jesus and Mary and the Church instead of the shopping malls and big box stores as it is in the U. S. Decorations aren’t as elaborate and spending on presents isn’t as much. Money is given to the church, not as payment for indulgences as in ancient times, but probably subconsciously out of guilt for sins committed throughout the year. Presents are exchanged, but the family gatherings revolve around elaborate dishes of Mexican food prepared and shared with family and friends. The culture dictates the celebration of the season.

Teresa enjoyed the celebration of Thanksgiving and its representation of thanks given by the early American pilgrims for their sustenance in a new land, although the foreigners who settled in Mexico did so years before the American east coast was settled by the pilgrims. She enjoyed the main meal of turkey and dressing, mashed potatoes, green beans, fruit salad, rolls, and cranberry jam which she and Sally had prepared. Although unfamiliar with the dishes, she found them delicious. But to Teresa, the best part of the celebration was being with her new family, the Pierces, who treated her as one of their own.

Soon after Thanksgiving, the Pierce family made their annual trek into the forest to select the perfect tree for Christmas. It was an all-day event with a lunch of sandwiches, chips, cookies, and drinks served in the pickup with the heater on. The weather was cold, and there was a blanket of snow at elevation where tree candidates were likely.

The entire family roamed the hillside looking for just the right tree, and once it was selected and agreed to by all, Christopher sawed the tree off at its base and drug it down the hill to the pickup while Sally and the kids romped in the snow, tackling each other and throwing snowballs.

Teresa, never having experienced snow, was content to remain by the truck on her crutches and watch the activities of the others. The joyous sounds of the kids and Sally at play in the snow and Christopher with the special tree brought down for decorating made for a beautiful tradition. And, although the Pierce’s tradition of selecting the tree from a snowy mountainside

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was so different from the Christmas traditions of the Morales family, the sounds of happy children and the joy of the season were the same.

A wave of home sickness swept over Teresa as she missed her real family for the first time since leaving *Piedras Rojas* on the bus for *Juarez*. This time it was just as painful.

In *Piedras Rojas*, the holiday celebration was still weeks away, but Pat was aware that the holiday season was in full swing in the U. S. He would be a part if he were there. The thought of being with family and friends made him think of Teresa. She would experience the holiday season with the Pierce family. He realized just how much he missed seeing her again. Absence was making his heart grow fonder.

Depression is caused by dwelling on incidents from the past. Anxiety is created by the uncertainty of the future. Pat would be susceptible to both disorders if he didn’t maintain a positive attitude and immerse himself into the culture and people of *Piedras Rojas. H*e was doing just that. He had no intention of going bananas in Mexico.

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**Chapter 22: An Imminent Investigation**

It was late fall with winter just around the corner. Even though night-time temperatures were chilly, it was still warm and very pleasant in the daytime in southern New Mexico. Everyone always says of where they live, “you should be here in the fall. It’s beautiful here in the fall.” And that was true of the boot heel of New Mexico as well.

It was usually sunny with very little wind. Most of the deciduous tree’s leaves had turned, but some still hung on the trees waiting to fall. The rangeland grasses were dormant, providing beautiful golden-yellow landscapes interspersed with green from the junipers and yuccas with various shades of yellow, orange, and red provided by oakbrush, mesquite, and skunkbush sumac.

To the north, the Silver City area had already received a dusting of snow, and the Black Range showed some snow on its peaks. But the desert below had received only light rains, stimulating the germination of some winter weeds that only added color to the glorious landscapes.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth enjoyed fall in the southwestern deserts as much as anyone. As the holiday season approached, she seemed more at peace with herself. She had been officially appointed Sector Chief of the Lordsburg Sector as she had expected, and she had heard nothing more of the impending investigation into the whereabouts of Teresa Morales. It had been a few weeks since last she heard about it, but she wasn’t going to refresh her superiors’ memory of it by asking about its status.

It had been a busy summer for the Lordsburg Sector keeping the onslaught of undocumented persons from the south coming into the United States illegally. The hot summer temperatures do little to dissuade the Mexicans from trying to get in. But with the cooler temperatures of fall, the activity, especially of entire families attempting entry, increases the agent’s workload even further, putting a strain on already exhausted resources.

Sector Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth had gotten her wish to be in-charge and was doing her best to run an effective and efficient operation. She had learned well under the guidance of Pat Brennan, and she was performing her duties as his replacement at a high level. She was even getting along better with her staff of agents, and they seemed to like her better than before. Maybe that’s what showing them a little respect will do. If she were to be successful as Sector Chief, she would need the staff on her side and on mission.

“Chief Hollingsworth, this is Director Stephens. How are you?”

A call from Elliott Stephens, the director of the agency, whom I have never even met, Elizabeth thought. Wow! “Hello Director. I am fine, sir and you?”

“Just fine, thank you. Congratulations on being appointed the Lordsburg Sector Chief. How is it working out so far?”

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“Very well, sir. I get more comfortable with it every day and think things are going just fine.”

“I knew you would like it, and I think the Southwestern Sector is in good hands with Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth. You may not know it, but I got my start down on the southern border and know how difficult it can be to curb the flood of humanity seeking to be in the greatest nation in the world. I mean, who can blame them? But you and I and the rest of our fine men and women agents, regardless of our personal feelings, are charged with protecting our citizens against the onslaught of those wanting in illegally. Thank you for your service and due diligence.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Elizabeth, the reason for my call is this Teresa Morales situation. It just won’t go away, and in fact, it is gaining strength. The Mexican authorities continue to insist that they never did receive her from us during the deportation process as ex-Chief Brennan claimed. I know you are aware of the Mexican’s assertions, but now they are insinuating that she was injured while in our custody or even mistreated in some way to cause her injuries while on our watch.”

The Director continued. “They knew she was disabled in some way because we had indicated that she would need a wheelchair upon her delivery at the deportation center in El Paso. Maybe they were not informed about the rattlesnake bite she suffered before Brennan located her and took her into custody. Anyway, they are now trying to claim a cover-up on our part, that she was injured due to our ineptitude, and we never did plan to deport her as planned because her injuries weren’t healed or worse than we thought or something absurd along these lines.”

Elizabeth listened patiently, only offering an occasional “yes, sir” to indicate she was following what the Director was saying.

“We don’t want this to turn into an international incident, and it won’t if we can prove our side of the argument. But we need the facts. Do you have any idea where Brennan is? We need to put him under oath and get his sworn statement to confirm that he did deliver her to the Mexicans.”

“Sir, after Brennan resigned, he sold his house and left town. I haven’t heard from him, nor has anyone else, and no one seems to know where he went or what he is now doing.”

“And no more on where the Morales girl might be, huh?”

“No, sir” Elizabeth lied.

“Well, Elizabeth, I hate to think that there is a connection between Brennan’s leaving and the disappearance of the Morales girl, but that is what keeps creeping into my mind.”

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“Yes, sir.”

“We have got to get to the bottom of this mystery in order to derail the Mexicans’ attempt to create an international incident by claiming that the U.S. is covering up mistreatment of Ms. Morales while in our custody. They aren’t backing down on this deal.”

“I understand, sir. What can I do at my end, sir?”

“Glad you asked, Elizabeth. The FBI has offered to get involved in this matter. Through an inter-agency memorandum of understanding, they are assigning a special agent to conduct a thorough investigation into the disappearance of Miss Morales. He will probably have to track down Brennan to bring this matter to a close.”

As Elizabeth listened intently, the director continued. “I don’t know the gentleman personally, but I understand that a James McNally is the special agent that will conduct the investigation. I don’t think you or your people will be directly involved, but I do ask that you provide office space and any secretarial assistance he may need. I imagine he will want to take your statement about what ex-Chief Brennan shared with you about his delivery of the girl to the border and any other ideas or thoughts you might have on the matter. Just give him your complete cooperation.”

“Yes, sir, I’ll assist however I can. Whatever he needs.”

“Okay, good. I understand that he has a good track record of finding whoever it is that he is looking for and solving difficult cases. We are all hoping that he will be able to solve this mystery.”

“Yes, sir.”

“He will be in touch shortly about when he plans to arrive at your location. Thanks for all you can do to assist him. And keep up the good work, Elizabeth.”

“Yes, sir, and thank you sir.”

“Goodbye” and the Director hung up.

Elizabeth replaced the hand-held phone into its cradle. She leaned back in her office chair and in her mind replayed the conversation she had just had with the Director. She knew way more than she had let on to the Director. A wave of concern washed over her. She knew she wasn’t complicit in Teresa Morales’ failure to be deported or her disappearance, but her own amateurish investigation had discovered Teresa’s whereabouts and Pat Brennan’s involvement. A high-powered professional investigator would have no problem tracking down Teresa’s location, but would it come out that Elizabeth had learned of Teresa’s location and not reported it to the agency? If it did, she would be found complicit in a cover-up.

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Elizabeth absolutely had no knowledge of Pat Brennan’s whereabouts, but she figured Teresa did, and that Agent McNally could be very persuasive in getting the answer from Teresa once he tracked her down and uncovered the truth.

Elizabeth continued to revisit the entire matter in her mind. The more she thought of a formal investigation and what it would uncover about Teresa Morales’ location in the U. S. and the scheme carried out by Pat Brennan to place her there, the more worried Elizabeth became that it would be discovered that she had learned of Teresa’s sanctuary in Springerville, AZ and not reported it to her superiors. Elizabeth began to feel ill. A wave of nausea swept over her. She closed her eyes and leaned back in her chair, willing the sickness to pass. After a few minutes, Elizabeth’s nausea subsided, but she remained emotionally ill thinking about what the FBI investigator would surely discover.

Anyone that assisted Pat in carrying out the plan to not deport Teresa or assisted in transporting her or hiding her from authorities were subject to indictment and punishment. Anyone who knew that Teresa was in the United States illegally and failed to report it to the authorities could also be guilty of a crime. She suspected heads would roll. She just hoped one of them wouldn’t be hers.

In bed that night, Elizabeth had difficulty sleeping. She was restless, couldn’t get her mind to slow down and quit racing from thought to thought. First, about what the FBI investigator would uncover and how these facts would impact Elizabeth’s career and livelihood. Secondly, her thoughts turned to the way she had handled the information that she had uncovered through her amateurish investigation. She was feeling guilty for violating her responsibilities. But was this guilty feeling a result of her failure to report that she had discovered Teresa’s whereabouts, or was the guilt because her superiors would soon know that she had withheld this information from them? Why hadn’t she just reported what she had uncovered to the agency and let the officials handle it from there? More importantly, why had she gone to Chief Brennan with the information she had uncovered and initiated some half-ass blackmail scheme to get the Chief to resign so that she could fill the position of Chief? Is that the kind of person she had become---or had always been---one willing to do whatever necessary to get a raise, to get a promotion, to gain more power, to climb the ladder of success, or to break the glass ceiling? Had she just worked hard and performed her duties, these goals would have been achievable without the need for a shortcut like blackmail. Now she was facing a serious interruption in her career climb. Or worse.

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**Chapter 23: The Ax Handle Ranch**

The green Border Patrol Chevy Blazer drove slowly up to the old rock house that served as the headquarters for the Ax Handle Ranch and residence of Bud and Martha Pierce, owners and operators of the ranch. When Elizabeth Hollingsworth came to a complete stop, she turned off the ignition, slowly opened the vehicle door, and stepped out. She closed the door and stepped away from the Blazer and surveyed the surroundings, the low hills nearby, and the Peloncillo Mountains to the west. It was mid-morning on a late fall day, no wind, and the sun was not impeded by any clouds. It was warm and the leaves, although turned were, for the most part, still on the hackberry trees, the desert willows, and the occasional cottonwood along the Macho Draw she had just crossed. She noted how beautiful it was this close to the Mexican Border.

While she was standing there, the front door to the rock house opened and Martha Pierce stepped out onto the concrete step. Chief Hollingsworth heard the door open and turned to face it and started a deliberate walk toward the lady on the step.

“Howdy, Mrs. Pierce, I’m Chief Hollingsworth of the Border Patrol in Lordsburg. How are you today?”

“Yes, I remember meeting you at the hospital, I think, when Teresa was brought in.”

That’s right. Things were happening very quickly that morning, so we didn’t get to visit, just meet.”

“And you took Pat Brennan’s position as Chief, is that right?”

“Yes, ma’am, that’s correct.” Elizabeth replied.

“So, what do we owe the pleasure of your visit to the Ax Handle?”

“I came here to introduce myself as the Sector Chief, but also to inform you of a formal investigation into the disappearance of Teresa Morales. We both know where she is and how she got there instead of being deported to Mexico. An FBI agent has been appointed to investigate what really happened at the border the day she was to be deported. If I was able to locate Teresa in Springerville, I know he can too. And although I don’t know where Pat Brennan is, I have a feeling that you do. Brennan might be interested to know what is developing.”

“Why is there going to be an investigation? You didn’t tell your people where Teresa was, did you? I thought that was to stay between you and Pat.”

“No, I haven’t said anything, but the Mexican government was expecting to receive Teresa at the deportation center but claim they never saw her, and that they never took possession of her. And we know why, don’t we?”

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Martha didn’t answer the rhetorical question posed by the Chief. “But why are Mexican authorities so interested in one Mexican girl that wasn’t deported? They don’t seem to care that 2,000 a week, or whatever it is, are sneaking into our country. Why do they want this one back?” Martha questioned showing her agitation.

“My take on it is that the Mexicans are trying to blow this up to make us look bad, like maybe she was mistreated or injured while in our care, and then we didn’t want her going back to Mexico in an unhealthy condition due to something we did wrong?”

“That’s ridiculous. After all that Pat did to save her life, for them to make up something to make you guys look bad just ain’t right. That girl would have died if it hadn’t been for Pat!”

“I know, I know. That is what is behind the investigation, to find Teresa and have her recount exactly how and why she lost her leg, not because of anything we did or failed to do but because of the snake bite she encountered before the Americans even knew of her existence. That is what we need in order to deflate the hot air the Mexican’s are blowing and deflate their assertion that the Americans mistreated her in some way.” Elizabeth was getting agitated too thinking about such allegations by the Mexican authorities. “I’m sorry.” She said to Martha. I got a little worked up thinking about the Mexicans’ assertions.”

“No problem, Chief. I’m with you. I understand how you must feel about the disparaging version the Mexicans are promoting and how it makes the Border Patrol look bad. I get it.” Martha responded.

“Thanks,” Elizabeth responded.

“But, Chief, let me ask you about what this investigation is going to mean for Pat Brennan?”

“Mrs. Pierce, I don’t know where Pat is. But the FBI investigator can probably trace him, especially if he interrogates Teresa Morales. He can make it hard on her to get the answers he wants.” Elizabeth answered.

“You know of Pat’s role in Teresa’s not being deported, and you know where Teresa is now. Once the FBI man knows, it will certainly be the end Teresa’s life in the United States, mean big trouble for Pat when he is found, and probably mean trouble for Bud and me and Christopher and Sally. And what about you?”

“I will be in hot water for uncovering Chief Brennan’s scheme but not reporting it to my superiors. If the FBI agent finds Teresa, we will all be implicated in some way. For knowing and not reporting or for aiding and abetting.”

“What if the FBI man can’t locate either Pat or Teresa, what can he prove anyway? Isn’t it still our word against the Mexican’s that she was taken good care of while in our care, and that she was deported as Pat reported?”

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“Yes, but the stalemate must be broken. They have become much more vocal in their assertion that she was not delivered to them and injured while in the custody of the United States. The investigator must prove to the Mexicans that she is well and was not harmed in any way while in our possession. But to do that, the investigator needs to find Teresa in good health and return her to the Mexican authorities. He will then go after Pat for his role in the whole thing.”

“Oh, my. Bud won’t be happy about this news.”

“I recommend you contact Christopher and advise him of the investigation and the arrival soon of the FBI Special Agent. I don’t know what to tell him to do with Teresa. Maybe he can relocate her to somewhere else in the U. S., but it might only be a short-term fix. An FBI investigator can probably track her down wherever she is with enough time. Maybe she should return to Mexico before she is captured in the U. S.”

“That will be a real shame if after all Teresa has been through, she has to leave and return to Mexico. I agree that Teresa needs to get away from the Cross Timbers, but maybe there is somewhere else she can go. We have family in Phoenix and in Utah but not much time to make arrangements for her. Mexico is the last option, and not the one we want to use.”

“I know, Mrs. Pierce,” Elizabeth responded mournfully.”

“When do you expect this investigator to show up around here?”

“I don’t know. I was informed just this morning that a formal investigation conducted by an FBI Special Agent will begin soon. I expect to hear from him soon enough. My guess is that you and Mr. Pierce will hear from him soon enough as well.”

“Any time is too soon.” Martha replied.

Elizabeth shifted her stance uneasily as if it was time to go. Martha was deep in thought at the implications of a formal investigation, interviews and formal statements, constant worry about the status of the investigation and its conclusion and what affect it would have on the Pierces families in both New Mexico and Arizona.

“Mrs. Pierce, I am sorry to be the bearer of the news of the investigation. I anticipate that I will not be directly involved in it, and I probably won’t be able to communicate any further with you about it. I wouldn’t be surprised it the investigator places a gag order on all of us at the Sector Office to keep what we inadvertently learn about the investigation from becoming public.”

“Well, Chief, I want to thank you for alerting us. Bud and I will cooperate as best we can,” Martha replied with more worry in her voice than conviction. “Forgive me for being a rude host for not offering you in. Would you like a drink of water or lemonade before you go?”

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“Thank you, but no thanks. I have a bottle of water in the Blazer. Good luck to you and Mr. Pierce. Nice talking to you.” Elizabeth turned and began slowly walking back to the Blazer. She opened the door and climbed in. She fashioned the seat belt around herself and started the vehicle. She gave a final wave to Martha Pierce as she slowly began pulling away from the house and back to the main road. Martha returned the wave but just stood in place staring off into the distance with either nothing or everything on her mind. Wait until I tell Bud, she thought.

After Chief Hollingsworth left, Martha began to think only negative thoughts which led to worry. I sure wish Bud would get back so we can talk about this and what it means, she thought. About an hour after Elizabeth left, Martha heard what turned out to be Bud’s pickup pull up in front of the house. She had tried to get her mind off the impending investigation by preparing a supper of pot roast, new potatoes, onions, and carrots. She got the meat in the oven and the vegetables chopped up and ready to add once the meat was nearly done, which would take all afternoon. She also had soaked a pot of pinto beans all night and they were now cooking. Pinto beans with a ham hock to serve either alone or as a side dish was a staple at the Pierce home as were green chiles, roasted and ready to peel and eat.

Preparing the meal took Martha’s mind off the investigation and what it might mean, but when she heard the sound of Bud’s pickup parking out front, her negative thoughts came flooding back and brought her to tears as she became overwhelmed with worry and sadness for Teresa Morales. When Bud walked through the front door, Martha had her back toward him as if she was washing dishes. She didn’t want Bud to know she was upset.

“Hi Bud” she said without turning around.

“I smell something good. What you got cookin’ for supper tonight?”

“Pot roast, dear.”

“Sounds great. I will be ready to eat when it’s done.”

“It will be ready about sundown.”

When Martha finally turned to face Bud, her tears had dried, but both of her eyes were noticeably red, a dead give-away that she had been upset. Martha didn’t cry very often. She expressed her emotions in other ways but not often through tears. Bud, upon noticing Martha’s red eyes, knew that she had been crying. Bud started toward Martha, who stood in place with her eyes down.

“What is it, honey?” Bud wrapped his large frame around the smaller woman in a bear hug and then rested his head on hers. He then looked into Martha’s eyes, which had begun to water again and knew something serious had upset her. “What’s the matter, Martha?” he asked softly.

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“Bud, the government is beginning a formal investigation into the whereabouts of Teresa Morales and Pat Brennan. It seems that the Mexican government is trying to create an international incident about the U. S. not returning her to them because she had been hurt somehow while in U.S. custody.”

“Who told you this?”

“The new chief, remember Pat’s assistant chief, that young woman Elizabeth? She was here earlier to tell us. It could be bad for all of us that had anything to do with Teresa staying in the United States. Oh, Bud, I am worried.”

“Okay, honey, settle down. Just relax. Let me think a minute.” Bud replied.

“What are we going to do?”

I’m thinkin, I’m thinkin,’ “Bud answered as he began walking slowly around the kitchen deep in thought.

“Bud, we’ve gotta alert Christopher and Sally.”

“I know, I know, honey.”

“Well, I’m going to call…” Bud cut her off in mid-sentence.

“Not now. Let’s wait and call tonight when Christopher is home. I reckon he will have some ideas about what to do.” But in Bud’s mind, he already knew what had to be done.

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**Chapter 24: The Cross Timbers Ranch**

“Hello.”

“Sally, this is Bud.”

“Hey, Bud, how’s it going?”

“Oh, pretty good. However, somethin’s come up that I reckon will cause us problems, especially Teresa. If Christopher is home, you might get him on the phone too so we can all chat and come up with a solution.”

“Bud, I’m anxious to hear what the problem is, but let me get Christopher on the phone so you can tell both of us. I think he’s outside gathering some firewood. Just a second,” Sally said just before she laid the phone down to go look for Christopher.

She opened the sliding glass door to the back deck, stepped out into the crisp, fall air and shouted for Christopher. He responded, “just a minute” as he approached the deck from the darkness of the backyard pushing a wheelbarrow filled with firewood.

“Bud’s on the phone.”

Christopher parked the wheelbarrow and began walking up the deck steps toward Sally.

Sally continued. “He wants to talk to both of us. Something about Teresa. I’ll get on the bedroom phone and you use the kitchen phone.”

“Okay” Christopher said quietly as he headed toward the kitchen.

Christopher picked up the phone. “Hey, Dad, what’s up?”

“Christopher, is Sally on the line too?”

“I’m here,” Sally offered from the phone in the bedroom.

Christopher and Sally listened intently and didn’t interrupt Bud as he told them of the impending investigation to be conducted by an FBI agent and what he feared might happen.

“Okay, here’s the deal. Martha got a visit from the gal that is now Pat Brennan’s replacement as Sector Chief. Christopher, Sally, I don’t believe you know this Elizabeth gal, but she has been the acting Chief ever since Pat resigned. Anyway, she told Martha that an FBI agent was fixin’ to begin an investigation into Teresa’s whereabouts. He is expected to show up within a couple of days, and I expect that it won’t take him long to head your way looking for Teresa.”

“We are with you so far, Dad” Christopher offered.

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Bud continued, “This Elizabeth gal was able to track Teresa down on her own, and I suspect the investigator can do the same thing no sweat. In my way of thinking, we need to get Teresa off the Cross Timbers before the investigator can get his hands on her. My guess is they think Pat brought Teresa to the Cross Timbers, and he is who they really want.”

“Dad, if investigation leads him to Springerville, our involvement will be exposed. We will be found out, and there is nothing we can do now to change that. However, maybe we can lessen the damage by getting Teresa and baby Patrick out of here and return them to Mexico. We need to contact Pat to tell him of this investigation and its implications for him. Pat can probably help us relocate Teresa back into Mexico.”

Sally remained quiet at her end of the phone, almost in a state of shock with these developments, her mind racing about the fate of Teresa, baby Patrick, and Pat Brennan. Her eyes began to water as a wave of sadness swept over her at the thought of losing Teresa and baby Patrick.

Bud responded. “I think you are right, son. Let’s get Teresa and the baby back into Mexico and let Lordsburg know that she and baby Patrick are there and that they are in good health. This Elizabeth gal can tell El Paso to tell the Mexicans that Teresa is back where she is supposed to be and drop the damn thing. If they need to confirm her return to Mexico, they can do their own investigation. That way, our authorities won’t be able to get to her and find out where Pat is. And besides, why would they need to find Pat? It will be over with.”

“Dad, they want Pat punished for his role in Teresa’s not being deported as he reported. Right now, that is only their theory. We know it’s true, but they don’t have any proof of it. But if they can prove it, he will be deep in a pile of what comes out of the south end of a northbound horse. It will be really bad for Pat.” Christopher had quite a way with words.

Sally was on board with what needed to be done---to return Teresa back to Mexico--- and Martha sadly nodded agreement to Bud’s idea. It broke her heart to think that, after all Teresa had been through since sneaking into the United States, she would have to go back to Mexico and try to start over with baby Patrick. Teresa had experienced a real taste of what it would be like to live the U. S., and her baby was a legal U. S. citizen for having been born here. Unfortunately, it appeared that her American experience would end. At least she had had an American experience.

“Christopher, okay you guys get in touch with Pat to tell him what’s going on and what we think needs to be done. He will know better than us what to do with Teresa. See if he agrees that the best thing to do is get Teresa back into Mexico before the FBI guy can get his hands on her. Or, if he can think of a plan that would allow Teresa to stay, what would it be? But we gotta hurry. We may only have a couple of days, tops. We don’t want her in their custody. They

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would interrogate her to confirm Pat Brennan’s involvement, and Teresa would in no way want to be a party to the demise of her saint.”

Sally chimed into the conversation. “Teresa would rather die than be in any way responsible for bringing down Pat Brennan. She loves him. We don’t want to put her in that position, so we need to smuggle her back across. Find out if Pat can meet us somewhere on the border---maybe *Palomas* would be good---and take Teresa and baby Patrick home.”

“Guys, guys” Bud interjected to get everyone’s attention. “We cannot take her back to Mexico through an official border crossing, even a small one like *Palomas*. We must avoid contact with any officials from either country.’

“Okay, Dad, why not take her back to the place where she entered the U. S. to begin with. It makes sense. We bring her back to the Ax Handle, sort of a temporary safe-haven, and then have Pat come up from the south and meet us at a predetermined place along your southern boundary fence and poof, she’s back in Mexico. It will trigger the surveillance system in El Paso, but we would be long gone before anyone could get out there to check it out. Anyone see any problems with this plan?”

All of those on the line gave their approvals. “Sounds good to me” Sally replied. “Me too.” Martha chimed in. “Christopher, you are a chip off the ole’ block cause that’s sure enough what I was thinkin’ too. A simple plan with favorable odds and no hiccups. No outsiders involved, and it all takes place in the controlled environment of the Ax Handle.” Bud added.

“Okay, sounds good. Sally and I will sit down with Teresa after this call and explain the need for her to leave the U. S. as soon as we can make it happen. Then we’ll call Pat, or get word to him about when and where would work for him to meet us at the border and take Teresa and baby Patrick back to her hometown---what is it again?”

*“Piedras Rojas,”* the others all said simultaneously.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Said Christopher as his memory was jogged.

“Okay, Christopher. Let us know how Pat receives the news and…”

Martha cut in “and let us know how Teresa takes the news that she needs to go back.”

“Yeah, that’s right” Bud continued. “And, Christopher, impress upon Pat the urgency of getting Teresa relocated back into Mexico. If they get to Teresa, it will be bad for Pat. They want blood. Pat’s blood.”

“I got it, Dad. We’ll call you once we get in touch with Pat and talk about the plan. If he has any other ideas about what to do, ‘I’ll let you know.”

“Good, son. We’ll talk again soon. Good luck with Teresa. *Adios*, Christopher, Sally.”

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“Bye, kids” Martha added. She and Sally had been totally quiet, but they had listened intently to what the men felt had to be done and how. The intensity of the situation had temporarily set aside the sadness that all felt about Teresa giving up her dream of raising baby Patrick in the United States. But the sadness would resurface once the plan was implemented, and Teresa would be gone with the end of her American experience.

Just because the phone call was terminated and all parties had hung up their phones, the emotional intensity remained with all. Bud and Martha were less emotional about the impending return to Mexico for Teresa and little Patrick than they were about Pat Brennan’s fate. His grand scheme to give Teresa her dream life in America was about to fail, but what would the end consequences for Pat be? If found out, Teresa would just be returned to Mexico. No punishment, just the end of the dream. Pat, on the other hand, would face serious criminal charges, probable jail time, and perhaps his required reimbursement of the retirement funds he had been paid. It would be devastating for Pat. It wasn’t as if Pat had committed a heinous or violent crime. If found and the plan he carried out was proven, Pat would face severe consequences, perhaps as severe as punishment for committing a violent crime. That didn’t seem fair, but fairness wasn’t a consideration.

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**Chapter 25: The Investigator**

“Chief, there is a call for you on line three.”

“Thanks, Cindy” Lordsburg Sector Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth responded into the phone headset before pushing the red blinking light for line three.

“This is Chief Hollingsworth. How may I help you?” Elizabeth answered in a professional but agreeable tone.

“Chief, this is James McNally, FBI Special Agent. How are you today?”

“I’m well, thank you. I have been expecting your call. How may I help you, sir?”

“As you probably know, under a memorandum of understanding between our agencies, I have been assigned to investigate the disappearance of one Teresa Morales who was to have been deported to Mexico by then Sector Chief Pat Brennan. I think you know of the case to which I refer.”

“Yes, sir, I am familiar with the case. I was Chief Brennan’s assistant at the time. However, sir, I don’t have any first-hand knowledge about the actual delivery, or alleged delivery, of Ms. Morales by Chief Brennan to the Mexican authorities. I only know what Chief Brennan told me, which is that he delivered Ms. Morales to the Mexican authorities himself. I have no reason to doubt his version of the story.”

“Are there other versions of the story?”

Elizabeth, who was already a bit edgy in anticipation of Mr. McNally’s call, became more so when she took the call. “What I mean, sir, is that evidently the Mexican’s contend that Ms. Morales was never delivered to them, contrary to Chief Brennan’s account.”

“Chief, we can discuss this more in depth in person when we meet, but let me ask you, why do you think two such different accounts of the delivery of Ms. Morales exist? Only one account of what happened can be accurate. Which one do you believe is accurate?”

Now Elizabeth was trapped. She knew the truth---that Chief Brennan had not delivered Teresa Morales to the Mexican officials as he reported, but he had instead smuggled her back into the United States. However, she wasn’t supposed to know anything other than the official version as reported by Chief Brennan that he had personally hand-delivered Teresa Morales to the Mexican authorities and relinquished custody of her to them. Elizabeth had to stand by her original story that she believed Chief Brennan’s official account of the delivery. If she indicated otherwise, she could be considered complicit in the ruse of not accurately reporting Teresa Morales’s actual location.

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“It appears that it is his word against the word of the Mexican officials. I am sure it is extremely hectic at the border when busloads of immigrants are being returned. I wouldn’t expect it to be out of the ordinary for a person to occasionally be unaccounted for or lost in the process that deals with so many people every day. I can see it happening. Chief Brennan was my boss and a good one. He was always by the book and an excellent field agent, and I had no reason to question Chief Brennan’s account of how he deported Ms. Morales.” Elizabeth was trying to sound committed to Chief Brennan’s version.

“Chief Hollingsworth, according to the Mexicans, Teresa Morales was a high-profile person of interest to the Mexicans, and they were ready for her arrival and looking forward to her return. It would seem unlikely that she was processed back into Mexico without them being aware of it.”

Elizabeth retorted with “Sir, she was considered a high-profile immigrant to us as well. That’s why Chief Brennan personally delivered her to the deportation station himself and provided her with care and comfort on the way to El Paso.”

Cutting from the formality of the telephone conversation up to this point in the exchange, Agent McNally, who felt as if he wasn’t really gaining any information from Elizabeth that he didn’t already know decided to bring it to a close. “Well, I have been assigned to your agency to untangle this web of mystery or deceit and to find Teresa Morales’ and ex-Chief Brennan. It is imperative we locate Brennan and obtain his sworn statement to compare-and-contrast with what we think are the facts in the case.”

“Yes, sir” Elizabeth replied calmly although her head was full of “what ifs.”

“Let me tell you of my schedule. I plan to fly to New Mexico on Wednesday, rent a car, and drive to Lordsburg that same evening. I would like to meet with you in your office first thing Thursday morning. Will that work for you?”

“Yes, sir, that will be fine. “

“I will be flying out of Reagan Airport in DC. Is Albuquerque my best destination for renting a car and driving to Lordsburg?” McNally asked.

“Actually, sir, if you can fly into El Paso and pick up a rental car, you would save a couple of hours of driving time to Lordsburg.” Elizabeth responded.

“Oh, good information. I looked at going through Denver on the way to Albuquerque on United, but I’ll look at American going through DF/W and out to El Paso. Let’s keep the Thursday morning meeting on the schedule, but if it isn’t going to work out until later, I’ll let you know.”

“That sounds good, sir. I will pull all the records pertaining to the Teresa Morales incident and have them ready for your review.”

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“That sounds good, Elizabeth. I think I have copies of about everything---Brennan’s logs, hospital reports, deportation documents---but if you have any notes you took or if you can write down your observations and thoughts on the whole affair, that will be helpful. And please document what you have learned of this case since Brennan’s departure.”

Elizabeth immediately thought no, you don’t have copies of everything. Elizabeth was thinking of the secret file that contained the telephone logs of Pat Brennan’s calls to both the Ax Handle Ranch and the Cross Timbers Ranch to arrange what would be sanctuary for Teresa Morales at the ranch outside Springerville. The file also contained photos she took of Pat Brennan’s Ford Bronco in the restaurant parking lot in Springerville and photos of Pat and Teresa dining with the Pierce family at the Aspen Leaf Bar and Grill. She had not disclosed any of this information to the agency. She used what she had against Pat to get him to resign so she could take his position. In exchange for Pat’s resignation, Elizabeth agreed not disclose what she had learned. In fact, she had signed an agreement with Pat Brennan that she would keep her findings in a secret file. If the contents of the secret file became known to her agency, she would be in serious trouble and face dire consequences. And it would prove that Pat hadn’t deported Teresa.

Elizabeth returned her thoughts to the moment and replied to Agent McNally that she would accommodate his request for information she had. However, she wasn’t being truthful. She would not disclose the information in the file. Not to protect Pat Brennan or Teresa Morales, but to protect herself.

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**Chapter 26: Esubio “Gordo” Valdarama**

It was about the end of Pat Brennan’s shift cooking and tending bar at the *El Paisano.* Business was slow at the moment, and Pat was behind the bar visiting with one of the regular customers, Eusebio Valdarama, called Gordo by those that knew him because of his substantial girth. In fact, Gordo was almost as wide as he was tall.

Gordo had long jet-black hair combed straight back and held in place by some undisclosed petroleum substance. He owned and operated a fuel depot, so some speculated that the substance might be joint grease. His lush head of hair was accompanied by thick black lambchop sideburns and a bushy black moustache that hung down and covered his entire mouth. Only when he smiled did one know that he even had a mouth and teeth, which were gleaming white, contradictory to his black hair, chestnut- colored skin, and brown eyes which projected a jovial gleam. Based on his shape and looks, one could see in him a resemblance to an Elvis Presley head painted onto a beach ball with legs.

He was very popular and well-liked because of his disposition, wide smile, and big hearty laugh. And despite his shape and unique looks, women were drawn to him like ants to sugar. Other men wondered what magic spell he cast over them. Some wondered if he had some private physical feature that provided them with exceptional pleasure. Whatever it was, he enjoyed their company, he enjoyed their affection, and he enjoyed giving them the attention they sought from one that would offer it so freely. If he was in the bar, he always had a roll of cash with which to buy drinks for friends and for women showing him some attention. If he didn’t have the cash, he wouldn’t come to the bar.

Gordo loved to bullshit about any and everything. He could take a small-talk subject and turn it into the center of a serious conversation that would draw in others and make him the center of attention at his table. Eusebio’s presence seemed to energize everyone else in the bar. Most of the time, the *Paisano* was a quite drinking place to quietly unwind and take the edge off the day’s pressures and disappointments or quietly revisit positive achievements made. But when Eusebio was present, the bar atmosphere elevated to a higher level, a different stage of enjoyment. People drank more, ate more, and had more fun than planned when they came to the bar.

“Sorry to be a little late, Pat,” Rosalinda’s voice projected from the kitchen area as the door to the outside snapped shut. Before Pat could respond, Rosalinda was at Pat’s side offering a warm hug. “Hey, Gordo,” she said turning toward Eusebio.

“How about a hug from my favorite gal,” Eusebio said to Rosalinda, who rolled her eyes, as he stood up and spread his arms in anticipation of his request. Rosalinda moved from around the bar to embrace Gordo as his, short stubby arms closed around her.

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Once free from Eusebio’s embrace, Rosalinda turned to Pat and said, “I’ve got it now, Pat. Take off.”

“Ok, thanks, honey.” He quickly told her what the other patrons scattered about the bar were drinking or eating and brought her up to speed on their status of money owed and payments made. Then, Pat walked around the bar to join Eusebio on the other side. He settled in on the stool next to Eusebio.

Without even asking, Pat was served a bottle of Coors light by Rosalinda who set it in front of him at his position at the bar. “Thanks, honey.” Pat responded. Coors Light wasn’t even on the radar until Pat arrived, and when he found that it wasn’t available, he convinced Alberto Munoz, the owner/operator of the *El* *Paisano* that Coors Light was popular in the United States, very refreshing, and to bring in a few cases to offer those that might be willing to try an American beer. It had been well received by many and a popular choice by some.

After a bit of small talk and chit-chat between Gordo, Pat, and Rosalinda interspersed with sips of beer, Rosalinda moseyed away to check on the other patrons and do some chores in the kitchen. The chit-chat between the two men took a more serious turn when Gordo asked Pat, after taking a swig of his beer, “So Saint, what’s your story?” It was not asked rudely nor was it asked in a threatening way. Gordo’s tone was one of curiosity, interest in Pat’s background, interest in how the hell he ended up in *Piedras Rojas*.

Pat wasn’t prepared for the conversation to become so serious so abruptly. “What do you mean what’s my story, Gordo?”

“Well, I mean why are you here? Where did you come from? Everyone has a story---who they are, where they have been, where they are going, what they are looking for---you know, loves, losses, achievements, failures, stuff like that. I am just curious how it is that we are so lucky to have you choose our community to live and work. You are a nice man and well-liked by all. We are all glad you are here. But why?”

Pat took a deliberate drink on his beer as if thinking of a proper response to Gordo’s interrogation. “I don’t have much of a story. Nothing that would interest you.”

“Oh, *amigo,* I think you do. Me, I am a local-yocal with not much to tell, and yet I can spend all day telling you about it. You? You are not from here. You’ve been around. You’ve seen things, done things. You just might have a good story to tell.”

Both men paused from their conversation to take a swig of beer and contemplate their next words to be spoken. Pat remained stoic in the face of this sudden onslaught of interrogation. It looked like all that would save him would be if a couple of young lovelies walked into the bar to divert Gordo’s attention. But unfortunately for Pat, that didn’t happen, so Gordo continued.

“Are you running from something?” Eusebio asked in a more serious, inquisitive tone.

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“What would I be running from?” Pat inquired again, playing dumb although he knew there were rumors driven by speculation about Pat’s previous life. Was he a criminal running from the law or a prison escapee? Maybe he was an army deserter. Had he been a spy? Only Rosalinda knew the truth.

“Everyone is running from something, Saint. Some know why they are running and from what, while others don’t have a clue. But we all are running from something. Guilt, unhappiness, other people, life, even death. But here you are, an educated, handsome, friendly gringo from north of the border where many of my people want to be. But you just show up out of nowhere and start working and living south of the border and trying to be one of us.”

“I am not trying to be one of you people. Gordo, I simply wanted a change. I just felt that the way to make a change and start over was to move to another place, a totally different place where I could step back and slow down and discover what is really important in life.”

“I get it now, my friend. You are not running from something, but you are running after something.”

“Not really running, Gordo. More like patiently seeking.”

“And, what is it you seek, Saint?”

“I have no idea what I seek, but when I find it, I will know it.”

More sips of beer by both men as the mood turned more contemplative.

“Rosalinda, please bring me and my friend here another round of beers.” Gordo requested after finishing his current bottle of brew. Rosalinda complied and set a new, cold bottle of beer before each man. Then, drawing in a large breath of air as a distance runner would before beginning the final push for the finish line, Gordo offered “Seek and you shall find!” He took a swig of his new beer. Pat remained passively quiet and let Gordo entertain himself.

“Seek and you shall find!” Gordo said once again. He continued this conversation with himself as if no one else was around. “Who said that---seek and you shall find?” he said again speaking to himself. “Oh, I think it was Pancho Villa who said it. Viva Pancho!” he said as he broke from his conversation with himself, broke into a wide smile and raised his beer in the air to toast to an imaginary Pancho Villa before turning to clink bottles with the Saint.

Pat just remained passively quiet and contemplative as his friend entertained himself. Then, after a brief silence, Pat inquired of Eusebio “So, what is it you seek, my friend Gordo?”

As the image of Pancho Villa dissipated from his thoughts, Gordo took a long swig of his beer and admitted, “I seek for a few lovelies to enter this bar about now.” He then tipped his bottle of beer back and killed it.

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**Chapter 27: What to do Now?**

After Christopher and Sally concluded their phone conversation with Bud, they came together at the kitchen table to briefly discuss what and how to tell Teresa that she and baby Patrick would have to leave the Cross Timbers Ranch and the United States and return to Mexico. They were saddened to have to give her the heart-wrenching news after all she had been through to achieve her dream of having her baby in the United States and to live and raise him as a U.S. citizen, which baby Patrick was. She would now have to abandon the dream and return to her home country.

“Oh, Christopher, this is so sad. I love her like a little sister. And that precious baby of hers. It isn’t going to feel the same around here without them.”

“I know, honey. She was so dead-set on getting into the United States to have her baby and start a new life here that she challenged the desert and the mountains all by herself and looked death straight in the face, stared it down, and survived with the help of some unlikely strangers willing to help her. She couldn’t have made it without them. But it all worked out for her. But we have been blessed to have gotten to know Teresa and become a part of her life. She is just a lovely, spunky, positive person full of love and willing to express it and share it. She has been as good for us as we have for her.” Christopher was obviously emotional about what had to be done, and he was doing little to hide his emotions. Sally was moved by the compassion Christopher showed.

“Babe, I know, I know. I love her and will miss her,” Sally replied to Christopher’s obvious sadness. “But we best call her in and explain what’s got to be done. This all needs to happen quickly before that investigator guy picks up her scent and tracks her here. We can’t let her get caught. They are after Pat Brennan and she knows where he is, and they will make it tough on her to tell them what they want.”

Both Pierce daughters skipped into the kitchen from the back of the house where Teresa was changing baby Patrick. “Mommy, Mommy, Teresa said we helped her change baby Patrick and can have a popsicle.” The oldest said.

“Did you really help Teresa, or did you just watch?”

“We helped her. We brought her a new diaper and threw the dirty one in the trash.”

“Did you wash your hands?”

“Yes, but I saw the poopy diaper. Do I need to wash my eyes too?”

“No, no, as long as your hands are clean,” Sally replied with a chuckle. She opened the freezer door and removed the box of popsicles. “Pick out the flavor you want.” Christopher’s mood lightened as he watched the popsicle transaction.

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After a lime and a grape popsicle had been chosen, Sally peeled the paper from each one and handed them to the girls, who took their respective flavor. “Girls, please tell Teresa that Mommy and Daddy need to talk to her.” They acknowledged their mother’s request and skipped out of the kitchen and down the hall to Teresa’s room.

“Christopher, can I get you anything while I’m up? How about a banana-flavored popsicle?” she asked half-kidding.

“No thanks, I’m good.” Christopher replied in a low tone indicating that he had something on his mind. Sally didn’t have to guess what it was.

In a few minutes, Sally and Christopher heard the familiar sound of Teresa and her crutches coming into the kitchen.

“Come in, Teresa. Have a seat at the table with Christopher. Can I get you anything?”

“Thank you, Miss Sally. I need nothing.” Teresa replied. She often called Sally “Miss Sally” when she felt she was being addressed as an employee rather than a member of the family. She slid into a vacant chair and laid her crutches on the floor behind her.

Teresa, the girls said they have been helping you with Baby Patrick.” Christopher said with a wry smile as if he knew better.

“Oh yes, *senior* Christopher. They very helpful,” Teresa replied. She was curious what this little “meeting” was about, and she hoped that she hadn’t done something wrong.

Sally returned to her chair as Christopher cleared his throat as if about to speak.

After an awkward couple of seconds, Christopher began. “Teresa, there is something we need to talk to you about---and no, you aren’t in trouble,” He added aware of Teresa’s concern for being called in. “It has been brought to our attention that the government is going to begin an investigation into your whereabouts. They still think that you are in the United States instead of Mexico.”

“They come look for me?” Teresa asked.

“Yes, that’s right. They are looking for you. But really, they are looking for you so you can tell them where Pat is. They are after him for letting you stay.” Christopher answered.

Sally joined the conversation. “Teresa, you don’t want them to find Pat and neither do we, but they will find you very easily and then do what they have to do to get you to tell them where Pat is. Then, they will go capture him and punish him for helping you stay in the United States.”

Teresa had made eye contact with both Christopher and Sally as they spoke, but now she had her head down so that neither of them could see the tears forming in her eyes as she realized

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what she would have to do to avoid being found and interrogated about Pat’s involvement and current location.

Sally placed a friendly hand on Teresa’s slumped shoulder and offered, “I am so sorry, honey, but we are going to have to take you back to Mexico so the American investigators can’t get to you.” Sally felt Teresa’s shoulders heave as sobs of sadness erupted from her slumped body. Now with her head bowed and resting on the table in front of her, Teresa let out a mournful cry like that of a wounded animal, and it broke Sally’s and Christopher’s hearts.

Teresa’s sobbing continued, her head down and her body heaving. The feisty, tough young woman who had endured so much difficulty and challenge and pain finally broke. It was too much to bear. She couldn’t hold back the disappointment and she was totally overcome by its power.

Christopher and Sally were so overcome by the emotion of the moment, neither could utter a word. They each wanted to say something to sooth her or quiet her or to reassure her that they knew how she felt, but in no way could they know how she felt. Neither one of them had ever been through anything close to what Teresa had experienced. So, they sat, totally helpless waiting for poor Teresa to vent her disappointment and sadness through tears.

After what seemed an eternity, Teresa began to quieten as the sobbing subsided and her breathing slowly returned to normal. She raised her head from the table and was met by Sally’s extended hand holding some tissues. Teresa took the tissues and wiped her eyes and blew her nose and did her best to regain her composure. She cleared her throat and said, “When we go back to Mexico?”

“Soon, honey. Probably in a day or two. But know that we love you and will forever consider you one of our family. And some day, we will see you again. Don’t you worry about that.” Sally said sweetly and reassuringly. Her love for Teresa and her baby was genuine and it showed. Teresa wiped her eyes again and put her head back down on the table.

Christopher had been silent. He was totally torn up by Teresa’s sadness and its effect on him. But it came to him that something joyful for Teresa would result with her return to Mexico. “Teresa’” he said softly. “Upon your return to Mexico, you will be able to show off baby Patrick to your father and sister and your whole family. And baby Patrick will get to know his grandpa. Isn’t that wonderful? And,” Christopher said more slowly now to emphasize his point, “you will get to see Saint Patrick again. Isn’t that wonderful?”

With those words, Teresa slowly raised her head from the table and looked up at him, her eyes red and swollen from the tears. But as Christopher’s words sunk in, Teresa’s face transformed from one of anguish into one of softness as a gentle smile came across her face, her emotional state transforming from sadness to joy at the thought of Saint Patrick.

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And Teresa spoke. “I selfish. I think of me and my baby only and not honor others that help me be in America. Mr. Christopher and Miss Sally, I grateful to you for being my friends and American family. And my Saint Patrick, I selfish and should thank him always. I so much miss him and want see him soon.” It was apparent that Teresa had a vision of Pat in her mind as she spoke, and her smile evoked pleasant memories of when they had been together.

“And you will see him soon.” Sally softly said.

“Well,” said Christopher, “speaking of soon, we need to call your sister and get word to Pat what’s going on and see if he can meet us at the border. Our plan is for all of us to take you back to my Dad’s ranch, and he can then drive you to the border to meet Pat. Teresa, that means that you would return very close to where you crossed the border and began your journey into the United States.”

“Close to where big snake lives? I no want to see him more.”

“No, honey, we won’t see that evil snake again, I assure you. And you won’t be alone this time. My dad will take you to the border to meet Pat so he can take you home to *Piedras Rojas*.”

Sally had been quiet, letting Christopher communicate with Teresa what had to happen, why, and how. Now, it was her turn to get involved. “Teresa, why don’t you and I go to your room and separate things you will want to take from the things you can leave behind, at least for now. You may have some clothes that we need to wash. Once you get settled back home or wherever you plan to end up, we can figure out how to get to you anything you leave behind.”

Sally stood up and Christopher and Teresa followed her lead. Christopher asked softly, “Teresa, do you understand why you need to go back to Mexico?”

“*Si senor*.”

“And you feel better about what we need to do?”

“*Si senor*.”

“Good. This evening we will call your sister and arrange to meet at the border within the next couple of days.”

To lighten the mood, he offered, “Maybe we should all have a popsicle.” He pushed away from the table, went to the refrigerator, and retrieved the box of assorted popsicles. He picked out a yellow one, set the box on the table, and walked out onto the back deck in silence.

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**Chapter 28: The Arrival**

“Chief, FBI Special Agent James McNally is on line three for you.”

“Thanks, Cindy.” Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth answered. She looked down at the phone console and saw line three’s blinking red light. She took a couple of seconds to gain her composure then picked up the receiver from its cradle.

“This is Chief Hollingsworth. How may I help you?” which was her usual response to an incoming call.

“Chief, this is Special Agent McNally of the FBI. “

“How are you, sir?” Elizabeth responded courteously.

“I’m well, thank you. I just landed in El Paso and am awaiting the arrival of my bag. I’ll then pick up my rental car and be on my way to Lordsburg.”

“Good sir. I was expecting your call about now, so I suppose your flights were on schedule.”

“D.C. to D/FW was late leaving, and I barely made the connection for El Paso, but it all worked out, that is if my luggage made the connection too. I’ll find out soon enough. So, what am I, a couple of hours away from Lordsburg?”

“No sir, more like three hours. You will take I-10 to Las Cruces, then Deming, then Lordsburg. I made you a reservation at the Westward Ho! Motel, which is on the north side of I-10 at the second Lordsburg exit.”

“Good. Then I should get to Lordsburg around 4:15 PM or so, right?”

“That’s about right, sir.”

“Alright, I will check-in when I get to town and give you a call. Would you join me for supper? That way we can get acquainted with each other before we get down to business tomorrow morning.”

“Sir, I think that will work. Call after you get checked-in and we can decide where and when to meet for supper. What kind of food would you like?”

“Might as well start off with Mexican food.”

“Okay, I know just the place. I’ll tell you more when you get in.”

“That sounds fine. I’ll see you in a few hours then.”

“Yes, sir, see you then. Bye.”

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“Bye.”

Elizabeth hung up the phone and sat in her office chair a few seconds before pushing away from her desk to stand up. This whole investigation thing seemed so unnecessary. Really, who had been harmed by letting Teresa Morales stay in the United States? Really, was it that important to find her and have her give up Pat Brennan for his role in the scheme? Pat had already suffered enough, wherever he was, and Lord knows Teresa sacrificed her leg and almost her life to get in and stay. One young Mexican woman to hunt down and find. Is it worth all this trouble? Really?

What was really agitating Elizabeth wasn’t the importance that had been placed on finding Teresa in the United States and then finding Pat Brennan, wherever he was. What was eating at Elizabeth was the strong possibility that she would be found out for having discovered the scheme, albeit after it had been perpetrated, and not reported it to her agency. If this investigator is even a half-wit, he will uncover what Teresa was able to uncover, and then uncover that she had uncovered it but didn’t report it. And she figured that agent McNally was no half-wit. What would that mean for her? What would her punishment be? And in a few hours, she would be dining with the very person that more than likely would bring her down. Boy, this whole investigation is a crock of shit, she thought.

Elizabeth resumed her regular administrative duties and tried not to think about the investigation, which now was only hours away from beginning. But she couldn’t shake thinking about how it would go. This FBI guy probably has already dug into the alleged facts of the case, dissected them, pinpointed inconsistencies, and arrived at his own version of what went down and who did what to make it happen, she thought. Wow, this could get ugly! Boy, this whole investigation is a crock of shit.

About 5:30 pm that afternoon, Elizabeth met with James McNally at The *Dos Rios* Mexican Restaurant and Cantina in Lordsburg. The restaurant was popular among the locals for its great homemade salsas, corn and flour tortillas, tamales, and chile rellenos. Although the name meant two rivers in Spanish---*Dos Rios*---there wasn’t even one river in Lordsburg. That didn’t seem to matter to anyone looking for authentic, tasty Mexican food at a fair price.

Elizabeth and McNally had a relaxed meeting and meal to get acquainted and visit about almost everything except the case McNally came to investigate. A couple of frozen margaritas with salt set the tone for a relaxed evening. Elizabeth enjoyed the evening and tried not to think about what was to come in the morning. Her guard was down, and her concerns about what the investigation would uncover didn’t matter right now. She had been filled with tension all day thinking about meeting McNally, but he seemed to be a nice man and meaning no harm to her.

He had told her of his background and how he became an investigator. He also even told her of some of the more bizarre cases in which he had been involved. Elizabeth was fascinated by his stories and experiences. She opened-up to him about her own experiences, her own perceived

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strengths and weaknesses, and her career goals, which were lofty. McNally listened closely and tried to glean as much as he could about Elizabeth by listening closely to what she had to say and how she said it.

McNally felt that because God gave us two ears and one mouth, we should listen more than we talk. His observation was that most people talked too much and failed to listen well because they were too busy formulating their next response.

One observation technique McNally thought was useful in some situations was to remain quiet and see how the other person or persons reacted to a void in a conversation. Some people couldn’t stand the quiet and would break the silence by talking. What was said to fill the void might be meaningful in words or behavior.

It had been a nice visit with Agent McNally, but otherwise the evening was uneventful for Elizabeth. On the other hand, the investigator was able to pick up some hints about the personality of the person across the table from him. He detected her desire for status and power with aspirations beyond Sector Chief. Obviously, she was ambitious.

McNally also detected from his visit that Elizabeth liked to be in control, and she seemed very sure of herself. But it appeared to the agent that Elizabeth put on a fake demeaner to disguise her insecurities. His analysis of the Chief’s personality may or may not be accurate or important, but then it might aid him in solving who and how Elizabeth might be involved in the Teresa Morales mystery.

“It was nice meeting you, Chief. What time works for you to meet in the morning?”

“Sir, I need to meet with the night shift when they come in at 7:00 AM and review the assignments for the day shift. Assuming no surprises needing special attention, I should be available by 8:00 AM or so. Will that work for you?”

“That will work. I will be at your office about 8:00 AM. See you tomorrow.” McNally said as he offered his right hand to Elizabeth for shaking. She shook his hand and thanked him for buying supper and for a nice visit. Then they went to their respective vehicles and parted ways.

Shortly after eight the next morning, Agent McNally’s rental car pulled into a visitor’s parking space in front of the Lordsburg Sector Office. McNally exited the car and went around to the passenger’s door and opened it to retrieve his briefcase. He then locked the car and went into the office and walked up to the receptionist’s desk.

“How may I help you, sir?” Cindy asked McNally from her station at the receptionists’ desk.

“Yes, good morning. I am FBI Special Agent McNally here to see Chief Hollingsworth. She’s expecting me.” He answered.

“Yes, sir, she mentioned that she had an appointment with you this morning. One moment, please.” Cindy then picked up her phone, punched in a couple of numbers, and after a brief pause said into the phone “Mr. McNally is here to see you.”

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After another brief pause, Cindy replied into the receiver “Yes, Chief” and hung up the phone. She then pushed her chair back away from her desk, and as she moved around the reception desk to the lobby, she told Mr. McNally, “Right this way, please.”

Cindy, with McNally following close behind, went through the open door to the briefing room and flipped the light switch on as she did. She then stepped out of the way and turned toward McNally and said, “please, have a seat. The Chief will be right with you.” Cindy then exited the room and closed the door behind her.

The agent purposely chose his spot at the conference table and placed his briefcase on the table in front of the chair her intended to take. He opened the briefcase and removed a yellow legal pad and a manila folder stuffed with documents. He then took his place in the chair, scooted up to the table, and began slowly going through the folder sheet by sheet. He removed nothing from the folder and closed it as if satisfied that the contents were in order.

McNally then scooted the legal pad into position to begin writing on it. On the first line he wrote the current date and Lordsburg, NM. This would serve as the heading for the written statement he was prepared to take from Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth.

Shortly, the door to the conference room opened from the outside and Elizabeth Hollingsworth entered the room. As she closed the door behind her, she felt a chill in the room, and it wasn’t caused by a low room temperature. Maybe it was just her anticipation of giving her formal statement, but the friendliness exhibited last night by the agent had been replaced by a formal, official demeaner. Elizabeth could feel the difference, and it made her uncomfortable. Now she wasn’t in charge.

“Good morning, Chief. Have a seat.” McNally said in a business-like manner pointing at the first chair along the side of the table. He didn’t stand to greet her. He didn’t even smile. He seemed preoccupied with thoughts as he rearranged the position of the yellow legal pad before him. Last night at supper, Elizabeth was at ease. This morning she was uneasy.

McNally was seated at the head of the table, and Elizabeth was seated in the first chair adjacent to him. In a business setting, at formal dinners, and even family gatherings, the person seated at the head of the table usually assumes a leadership role or may be in a position of power. That was the case in the conference room at the Lordsburg Sector Office of the Border Patrol at 8:18 AM.

“Chief Hollingsworth, I would like to take your official statement about what you remember about and now know about the deportation of Teresa Morales and ex-Chief Pat Brennan’s role in it, and what actually happened. I know that you weren’t directly involved in the deportation process and were not aware of any infractions at the time. However, I suspect that you now know more about the events surrounding the alleged deportation than you did at that time. I need to capture that information.”

Elizabeth felt a chill. She sure did know more than what Chief Brennan reported.

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McNally pulled the legal pad back into position for writing. Under the date and location heading that he had already written, he began writing the first statement: My name is Elizabeth Hollingsworth. I am the Lordsburg Sector Chief for the United States Border Patrol. I previously served as Assistant Chief of the Sector and reported to the then Sector Chief, Pat Brennan. He read back to Elizabeth what he had written.

“Chief, is this accurate so far?”

“Yes, sir.” Elizabeth responded.

“Good. Now according to the files, Teresa Morales was apprehended by Chief Brennan during the early morning hours on July 13th. She was suffering from a severe rattlesnake bite, and the Chief carried her out of the foothills to a location on the Ax Handle Ranch where she was then transported to the Bootheel Regional Hospital in Lordsburg for treatment, which included saving the baby she was carrying in her womb and the removal of her left leg as a result of the snake bite. Is this correct?”

Elizabeth listened carefully to McNally’s recitation of the alleged happening that day. She then responded. “That is an accurate description of my understanding of what happened as Chief Brennan reported it. However, I wasn’t there and can’t confirm or deny the actual events.”

“I understand, so let me word your statement to show that you weren’t a witness to these events, but this was the way it was described by Chief Brennan to you, okay?”

“Yes, sir, that would be correct.”

With that, McNally began to add to the statement the series of events he had just described and that she understood them to be accurate although she wasn’t a witness to them.

When finished writing, the investigator put his pen down on the legal pad. He then asked Elizabeth to describe the events at the hospital when she was present. Elizabeth proceeded to relate to McNally her arrival at the hospital just as the ambulance carrying Teresa Morales arrived with Chief Brennan, Bud, and Martha Pierce following in Bud’s pickup. She related her observation of Teresa Morales as she was unloaded from the ambulance and taken into the emergency room. She also filled the investigator in on her discussions with Chief Brennan and with Martha Pierce in the waiting room. Investigator McNally wrote it all down and reread it back to Elizabeth to ensure that he had gotten it right.

The conversation continued with McNally recording on paper in story-like fashion all the points relating to Teresa Morales’ medical condition and improvement and Chief Brennan’s concerns for and interest in Teresa, her condition, and his plans to deport her. Nothing remarkable had come out in the statement thus far. McNally was familiar with the documents and notes from the case and Pat Brennan’s log-book description of events. Elizabeth’s statement was following the same, familiar story. Pat personally deported Teresa Morales at the El Paso Deportation Center and into Mexican official’s hands at the *Juarez, Mexico* station. That was the story recited by Elizabeth based on Pat’s version he had related to her.

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It was at this point in the statement that Elizabeth felt that the conclusion was near. She was starting to feel relieved, to relax a bit. However, Investigator McNally wasn’t finished. He had yet to tap into what Elizabeth might have learned since Chief Brennan’s resignation and what her new version of the story might be. He knew some things that Chief Hollingsworth didn’t know he knew, but she didn’t know it yet. But she would know it soon enough.

“Okay, Chief Hollingsworth, let’s take a break.” Investigator McNally announced as he set his pen down and pushed his chair back in preparation to stand. “How would 30 minutes work for you? You may have some phone calls to return or messages to tend to.”

Somewhat stunned at the realization that the statement session wasn’t finished, Elizabeth pushed her chair back slowly and replied, “that should be fine.”

“Good. We can resume our session about 10:45” he said as he looked at his watch.

Elizabeth left the room and went to the receptionist desk. “Cindy, any calls or messages needing urgent attention?”

“No, Chief, nothing urgent. I left a few messages on your desk.”

“Thanks, Cindy. Oh, by the way, I will resume my meeting with the investigator at 10:45 and will tied up the rest of the morning, it looks like.”

The Chief then went down the hall to her office and closed the door behind her. She sat at her desk, looked quickly at the message slips Cindy had left for her. Seeing nothing that couldn’t wait, she picked up the receiver of her desk phone and dialed a Springerville, AZ telephone number that was scribbled on her old desk pad. After a few rings, a female voice at the other end answered.

“Hello, Cross Timbers Ranch.”

“Mrs. Pierce?” Elizabeth asked.

“Yes, how may I help you?” Sally Runyan Pierce asked.

“This is Chief Elizabeth Hollingsworth with the Border Patrol Sector office in Lordsburg. I have something important to tell you, but I don’t have long. The FBI investigator is here taking my statement. My guess is that he will know of Teresa’s location very soon if he doesn’t already. You need to move her as soon as possible because he may be headed toward Springerville to look for her when he is finished with me. That’s all I can say. I must go now. Good luck.” And she returned the receiver to the phone’s cradle.

Sally heard the phone receiver go dead. She sat there a few seconds trying to process what the Chief had just told her. She had called to warn them that Teresa’s fate was in jeopardy. And very soon.

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**Chapter 29: The Plan**

It was early evening and the middle of rush hour at the *Paisano* Bar when a rare phone call came in. The phone rang a few times before Rosalinda Morales was able to break free to answer it.

“*El Paisano*” she answered while continuing to prepare a plate of red pork *tamales* with pinto beans for a customer.

At the other end in a meek voice the speaker said in Spanish “My sister Rosalinda, it’s…”

But before Teresa could finish, Rosalinda recognizing the voice at the other end of the line, responded excitedly “Teresa, Teresa is that you? My little sister, how are you?”

Rosalinda set the plate of tamales down so she could concentrate on the call. She now could hear what sounded like gentle sobbing on the other end of the line. Teresa then proceeded to explain to her sister that a government investigator was coming for her, and she would have to leave very soon and return to Mexico with baby Patrick. And would it be okay if she came back to *Piedras Rojas*? And would she tell Saint Patrick what was happening? And could he come to the border to meet her and take her back to *Piedras Rojas*? And could he come the next day so she could get out of the United States before the government man found her, and then he could take her and her baby back to *Piedras Rojas*? And would she tell Papa that she loved him and hoped to see him very soon? And tell Papa that he will get to see his grandson very soon.

Rosalinda was overcome with worry and concern for her little sister as she listened to her sister’s fragmented story of what was happening and what she was requesting and the suddenness of it all.

She told Teresa that of course she could return to *Piedras Rojas* and Pat could come to the border to get her and the baby and bring them home and she could move in with them in Papa’s house and Papa would be so happy to see them and everything would be just fine and don’t worry about a thing.”

“Teresa, give me the number there so Pat and I can call you tonight to work out the details of where to meet you on the border and when exactly to meet.”

Teresa had composed herself by now and was communicating more coherently than at the beginning of the call. She gave Rosalinda the telephone number for them to call and added, “I will cross the border into Mexico at the same place where I crossed it into the United States. My Pat will know this place.”

They agreed that Rosalinda and Pat would call her later tonight to make final arrangements.

After both parties had hung up, they got busy working on what had to be done to get Teresa and baby Patrick transferred from Springerville to *Piedras Rojas*. Sally Pierce had heard

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Teresa’s end of the conversation in real time. After she had hung up the phone, Teresa filled Sally in on what Rosalinda had said---that Pat would come get her at the border and that Rosalinda and Pat would call later tonight when they got off work to make final arrangements.

After the phone call, Rosalinda had to catch up on some customer’s orders and to serve food and drinks. She had occasion to connect briefly with Pat, only to say, “Something important has come up involving Teresa, and we need to talk soon.”

Pat was busy in the kitchen cooking ground beef for more enchiladas, cutting chunks of pork for *posole* and tamales, mixing masa, and keeping an eye on a large pot of pinto beans. His concentration was on the food because the orders were pouring in, but he couldn’t help but worry about Teresa. What did Rosalinda know about Teresa? He was very anxious to hear to what she was referring.

As the food rush began to slow and the demand on cooking began to recede, Pat got Rosalinda’s ear as she had cleared some tables and was returning dirty dishes to the dishwasher. “What’s going on with Teresa?”

‘She called all upset because she believes the government officials are coming for her very soon. She also said she needs to return to Mexico very soon to avoid being caught. She wants you to meet her at the border and bring her and her baby back. I told her we would call her after work.”

“Oh shit,” is all Pat could say as he mentally digested Rosalinda’s words. He could imagine what was going on and how upset Teresa would be. He felt the urgency to talk to her and soon.

About two hours passed before Rosalinda came in the kitchen to tell Pat that business was now slow enough that they could call Teresa. She assigned *Paisano’s* dishwasher, Nado Gomez, to watch the bar and dining area while they placed a call to the Springerville number. Nado had never tended bar, but as long as he could open bottles of *cerveza* and pour shots of tequila, he could handle it.

“Cross Timbers Ranch,” answered the male voice at the receiving end of the phone call.

When Rosalinda heard the voice, she immediately handed the phone to Pat. “A man is on the line,” she said.

Pat took the phone from Rosalinda and said, “Is this Christopher?”

“It is. Is that you, Pat?”

“Yes, Christopher. Sorry I couldn’t call sooner, but we have been super busy at the bar tonight.” Pat skipped the usual small talk and jumped right to the point. “What’s this about Teresa needing to get back to Mexico, Christopher?”

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“Well, your old buddy, Elizabeth Hollingsworth, called today to warn us that an FBI investigator is in Lordsburg and is trying to locate Teresa. Hollingsworth warned Sally that the investigator would be coming to Springerville perhaps as early as tomorrow. We need to get Teresa and the baby out of here and back to Mexico *pronto.*

“Sounds like it. Well, if he finds her, they will deport Teresa to Mexico. The problem is that they can press charges against you and Sally for harboring an illegal alien, or an undocumented worker in this case.”

“Pat, I know that wouldn’t be good for us, but we think that they are really trying to locate you and will use Teresa to do it. “

“I get it. They could be tough on Teresa by threatening to send her back to Mexico without her baby. Because baby Patrick was born in the United States, he is a U. S. citizen, which complicates matters of deporting a mother without her child. They will use that as leverage to get Teresa to talk. I know she doesn’t want to disclose my whereabouts, but she would rather do that than possibly give up her baby.

“No, it would break her heart to give you up. Wow, what a tough spot she will be in if they take her into custody. We just can’t let them put her through that.”

“No, we can’t. So, what are you thinking?”

“Teresa and Sally have her all packed up and ready to leave early tomorrow morning. Why don’t I take her and baby Patrick back to the Ax Handle, and then Dad can carry her down to the border where she crossed into the U. S. to begin with. What do you think of that idea?”

“I think that is the best way to handle it. I can get to the border in time to meet you guys there and transport her and the baby back to *Piedras Rojas*. Bud can bring her down through the ranch virtually unnoticed by the authorities. That would be perfect.”

“I called Mom and Dad earlier this evening to tell them the situation, and he is the one that made that suggestion.”

“Good ole’ Bud. We can always count on him,” Pat declared. “Okay, what time do you want to meet up? Once you get to the Ax Handle, I think things should relax a bit and the urgency will subside. You guys could visit with Martha and Bud a bit and spend some time with Teresa and the baby before she has to leave for the border.”

“Well, we want to get out of here early tomorrow just in case that FBI plans to show up tomorrow. Sally and the kids will go with us to the Ax Handle, so if the FBI does show up, no one will be here to be interrogated. I suspect we should arrive Dad’s headquarters by 10:30 or 11: AM.”

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“Okay, why not let’s shoot for meeting at 2:30 PM on the border fence just east of the foot of the Peloncillos. It was in that area somewhere that Teresa crossed the border and entered the United States. I found her in the Rock Springs Pasture. Bud could drop down through the pasture from the water storage to the where the mesquite dunes begin. That way I think he will avoid detection from the authorities until he gets right to the border and the electronic surveillance equipment will alert El Paso of some activity there. I will park somewhere south of the border and watch for Bud’s arrival. I will try to time my arrival with his to keep our exposure to a minimum because once El Paso detects movement north and south of the border at the same spot, they will scramble a drone and a ground detail to ensure no one’s coming in. We will want to make the transfer as quickly as possible.”

“Pat, how long will it take for Bud to get from the headquarters to the border fence passing through the Rock Springs Pasture?”

“He’d better allow for at least an hour. It’s pretty slow going in places and not a good road.”

“That’s the plan then. Do you still have Mom and Dad’s number as the Ax Handle?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Well, call them if you encounter some delay or problem. Otherwise, we will see you on the border tomorrow about 2:30 PM.”

“Great. Be careful and have a safe trip. And, Christopher, tell Teresa I can’t wait to see her and baby Patrick.”

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**Chapter 30: The Interrogation**

Elizabeth Hollingsworth was back in the sector office conference room with FBI Special Agent McNally to resume giving her statement of events surrounding the deportation of Teresa Ochoa Morales. Once they were both settled, McNally began.

“Chief, your statement so far has revolved around all the events, as you remember them, from apprehension until deportation and then the claim by the Mexican authorities that Miss Morales was never deported into their custody.”

“Yes, sir” Elizabeth responded.

“Now, I would like to capture in your statement anything about this case you have learned subsequent to the Mexican’s claim that they never received Teresa Morales. My investigation has uncovered some investigative steps you took to determine what happened to Miss Morales.”

With those words “investigative steps you took,” Elizabeth suddenly felt faint. Had McNally obtained Brennan’s phone records and all the calls he made to the Ax Handle and the Cross Timbers just before Teresa’s deportation? Did the agent suspect that Pat delivered her to one of those places rather than deport her? And did he know that Elizabeth had discovered the same information but not reported it to the agency? Elizabeth felt a hot flash and instant perspiration on her forehead. Her stomach contracted and her bowels suddenly felt loose.

“Sir, will you excuse me for a few moments, she whimpered as she stood to leave the room. “I am having stomach issues…,” she added as she exited the room.

“Are you alright, Chief? You look pale?”

She mumbled something and walked unsteadily toward the ladies’ room.

She retuned some five minutes later looking somewhat refreshed but still pale. She took her seat and looking at the investigator, she said she was sorry for the interruption. “No problem,” he replied.

“Okay, let’s begin again. As I was saying, I think you did a little investigative work on your own after the deportation had allegedly taken place. Is that right?”

Elizabeth needed to weigh her words carefully in response to the investigator’s question. What did he already know about what she might have uncovered? If she wasn’t truthful and he had proof that she wasn’t being fully candid with him, things could go bad for her. Was he bluffing that he knew she had done some investigative work? Does he know that she learned the truth about the deportation and the whereabouts of Teresa Morales? Her mind was racing, trying to formulate an answer for him.

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The investigator remained quiet during the pause that occurred from the time that he asked the question and the time it took for Elizabeth to formulate answer. He waited patiently, but the silence in the room was deafening for Elizabeth. Finally, she spoke.

“Yes, sir, I did conduct an informal investigation on my own that I told no one about.”

The agent wrote these words down in the statement, and then inquired, “And what did your investigation uncover?” As she spoke, he continued writing.

“I found out that Teresa Morales had not been deported after all, and that she had been transported to a ranch near Springerville, AZ.”

“And how did you discover this?”

“Sir, I obtained Chief Brennan’s private phone’s record of out-going calls and found number of calls had been made to a phone number in Springerville just days after Teresa Morales allegedly had been deported. That number turned out to be that of the Cross Timbers Ranch.”

“How did you confirm that the reason for the phone calls from Brennan to the ranch were related to Teresa Morales?”

“One weekend, I decided to go to Springerville and show a photo of Teresa and her describe her to employees at the market and Wal-Mart to see if anyone had seen her. I obtained overwhelming positive results.”

“And to whom did you report the results of your informal survey, Chief?”

“Chief Brennan, sir.”

“You didn’t report your findings higher up the chain of command.”

“No, sir,” she replied. He didn’t ask her why not.

McNally continued to write what Elizabeth had said into the statement while Elizabeth sat quietly in her chair. He then looked at Chief Hollingsworth and asked. “To the best of your knowledge, is Teresa Morales still at the Cross Timbers Ranch?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Chief Hollingsworth, one last question and response for your statement. Where is ex-Chief Pat Brennan?”

“Special Agent McNally, I have no idea where Pat Brennan is.”

McNally added that response to Elizabeth’s statement. He then signed the statement as the witness to the statement, turned the pad of paper around and slid it across to Elizabeth to read and sign.

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“What if I don’t sign this?” she asked

“It doesn’t matter. This is a statement of your recollections in your words recorded accurately. The changes you requested as we conducted this statement were made and you initialed these changes as correct. I ask you to read this written account of your recollections to make sure it is accurate. Make changes as you see fit. Then sign it if comfortable that everything in it is correct.”

McNally stood up from his chair. “Take your time, Chief. I’m going to take a break and check my messages. Come out when finished, but leave the statement on the table here, and I’ll collect it.”

Teresa now was alone with her thoughts, her recorded recollections, and her anxiety of what was to come. She read the four-page statement and attached her signature to its conclusion. She stood up and left the room leaving the statement on the table as McNally had directed.

She was at her desk in her office when Agent McNally walked in with the statement in his hand. “Chief, I’ll get out of your hair now, but I will keep you advised of what’s going on as my investigation proceeds. As far as your statement goes, I am not here to judge those involved in the case. Obviously, the statement and all my records of this investigation will be turned over to your agency administrators once my work is done. I have nothing to do with any consequences, good or bad, that befall others as a result of this investigation. I am just gathering the facts and not here to editorialize what I think. Good luck to you.” as he extended his right hand across Elizabeth’s desk toward her. She stood and shook his hand.

“Goodbye, Agent.” Is all she could think to say.

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**Chapter 31: On the Move**

Nightfall came and the sun arose the next morning just as expected. By the time it had cleared the eastern horizon, much was going on in the lives of the key players of the whereabouts of Teresa Morales and Pat Brennan. Teresa and her baby were in the silver Chevy Suburban with Arizona plates accompanied by the entire Christopher Pierce family on the road to the Ax Handle Ranch south of Lordsburg, NM. Pat Brennan was at a local auto repair shop in *Piedras* *Rojas* where he was getting his old Ford Bronco serviced and checked out before departing on a trip to the Mexican border with New Mexico. FBI investigator James McNally was eating a breakfast of two fried eggs, over easy, a slab of ham, hash browned potatoes, wheat toast, and a glass of chocolate milk in a local diner in Lordsburg, NM prior to driving to Springerville, AZ to find Teresa Morales. He wasn’t in a big hurry. He anticipated her presence at the ranch and his unannounced arrival would surprise her.

Elizabeth Hollingsworth was in her office at the Lordsburg Sector Office trying to handle her duties as normal. Although rattled by the disclosures during her statement that she had found Teresa Morales in Springerville, AZ and failed to report her findings to her superiors, the FBI Agent told her off the record that, because she wasn’t involved in the scheme not to deport Ms. Morales, that she probably would not face legal charges, but that her agency would more than likely punish her in some way---reduction in pay grade, transfer to another position, suspension without pay---for not disclosing what she knew, which if she had, Pat Brennan more than likely would have been apprehended, questioned under oath, and the whole thing resolved. No doubt that the prize in this hunt was Pat Brennan.

Because of their early departure, Teresa, her baby, and the Pierce family arrived at the Ax Handle Ranch headquarter about 10:30 AM. Pat Brennan didn’t need to arrive at the border location until mid-afternoon, so after getting his vehicle serviced, he bought some Coors Light and sodas and iced them down in his ice chest. He bought some trail mix, peanuts, and Oreo cookies to snack on going and coming. Agent McNally, unaware that the Teresa Morales he was seeking was no longer at the Cross Timbers Ranch, took a less-than-urgent drive to the Cross Timbers Ranch northwest of Springerville arriving about 1:45 PM.

The Pierce gathering at the AX Handle Ranch was very emotional. Martha and Bud were always happy to see their grandchildren from the Cross Timbers Ranch, and their son, Christopher, and their daughter-in-law, Sally Runyan Pierce. They were a very close family. They loved each other, they respected each other, and they retained the family culture and traditions that were passed down from generations before such as honesty, hard work, and following Jesus’s teachings. When Teresa Morales was rescued with the help of Bud and Martha Pierce, and when she became a part of the Christopher Pierce family, she was accepted by all not because she was a crippled, pregnant unmarried woman that needed pity. They accepted her into the Pierce family because she was a good person, broken but good in their eyes. They loved her

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and her baby, and it was very sad for them to know that she had to leave them. They were losing one of their own.

Martha had prepared a typical Ax Handle family meal that was ready to be serve shortly upon the arrival of those from Springerville. Roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, pinto beans, flour tortillas, and cherry pie for dessert. After the blessing, all ate their fill while talking and laughing and revisiting old memories and anticipating the future. No sadness was expressed, at least outwardly, by anyone. It was a celebration of life for the living.

As the old saying goes, all good things must come to an end. So, after all had eaten and table cleared by the children and the dishes washed by the women, the somber realization that it was about time to take Teresa to the border fence to meet Pat Brennan set in. The earlier happiness dissipated and was replaced by a fog of gloom. The time to depart for the border was fast approaching.

Bud and Christopher were out front under an ancient cottonwood with a canopy of brittle, golden leaves watching the girls throwing rocks at nothing in particular into the Macho Draw. It was a warm fall day in the Chihuahuan Desert. “Christopher, reckon that shiny Suburban of yours can carry all of us to the border?” Bud inquired.

“Well, there are five grownups and three little people. It will, and comfortably too. Is that the new plan, Dad?” Bud had planned on taking Teresa and baby Patrick to the border alone in his pickup after all the goodbyes had been said at the ranch headquarters.

“Yep, why not. That way everyone can see Pat again and give Teresa her goodbye hugs at the border. And we get to spend more time with Teresa and the baby.”

“Alright, then. Teresa is to be there at 2:30 PM, so we better get everyone loaded up and get going. We don’t want to be late and have Pat wait very long. The less time we spend at the border fence, the less that can go wrong.”

So, at 1:23 PM, the shiny silver Chevy Suburban with AZ plates departed the ranch headquarters for the border along an old, unimproved ranch road through the Rock Springs Pasture to a nondescript location on the Mexican border to return one of its own to her home country.

Although Teresa had been to the Ax Handle Ranch before, it had been in the dark, the night and early morning that she was traversing the Rock Springs Pasture after crossing the border from Mexico. She had never seen it in the daylight, at least that she could remember. About sunup that first morning, she had lost consciousness because of the snake bite and never really knew where she was after that.

As the silver Suburban crawled along on the rocky road, Teresa became curious. “Mr. Bud, is this where my Saint Patrick find me?”

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“Well, it was somewhere around here. I reckon it was down that way” Bud said as he pointed to the east down the mountainside toward the desert below. “He found you down in those rocks somewhere and carried you down to the desert where I met him and then we took you to the hospital.”

“Is snake here? He get my other leg?”

“No, dear, don’t you fret about that. That mean old snake is long gone. You’ll not ever see him again.” Bud said softly. The side conversations in the Suburban had ceased as respect for the anxiety Teresa was experiencing.

Shortly, the conversation between Bud and Christopher moved to a discussion of the drought conditions at the ranch. Two ranchers can’t get together and not talk about dry conditions if they exist.

“Son, we’ve got good stands of grass up here in the high pastures, but we grazed ‘em and then had to rest ‘em. We normally get some moisture up here, but not this year. I had to move ‘em to the desert pastures, but the tobosagrass is fried and not worth spit. I’m feeding ‘em alfalfa hay, but my feed bill is breaking me. I’ve got to sell more cows or find a place to pasture ‘em.”

“Dad, I culled quite a few mother cows in October and moved my steer calves down to the valley. You are welcome to ship your heifers to us and we can run ‘em til spring. “

“Thanks, Chistopher. I may do just that. Too bad there ain’t no demand for camel meat. I understand camels are about the only animals that will eat creosotebush, and we got plenty of it.

The Ford Bronco with New Mexico plates was in the Mexican Frontier headed north and within 20 miles of its destination. Pat wanted to get close enough to the rendezvous point to watch for the arrival of Bud’s red Ford F150 pickup carrying Teresa and baby Patrick. But he didn’t want to get so close that it might generate interest from the Border Patrol. At least, not until 2:30 PM when the transfer would take place. By then, the authorities would be too late.

FBI Investigator McNally pulled off the main road leading to the Cross Timbers headquarters and onto the circle drive in front of the main house. It was a beautiful log-style mountain home, large and looking like a resort lodge. Feeling like he had just driven on to the set of the television show Ponderosa, he half expected Pa, Adam, Hoss, and Little Joe to come out of the house to greet him. Instead, no one came out of the house, and it appeared that no one was around. He opened the car door of the rental car and stepped out. Realizing how much colder it was here at 7,000 feet elevation, he reached back into the car to retrieve his jacket, which he put on. He then went up onto the front deck and to the front door and knocked. No response. He knocked a second time, but again no response.

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He walked off the front deck and pulling his jacket collar up to shield his neck, went across the yard toward the north side of the house. The driveway leading into the garage was vacant, but beyond the driveway was a pickup with a livestock trailer hooked up to it. Beyond that, McNally saw a large, red barn standing guard over the corals and working pens. It was quiet except for the sound of the windmill turning in the gentle breeze and the cawing of the ravens overhead.

Taking one last look, the investigator turned to return to his vehicle. No one appeared to be around. He felt like he was the only person on the face of the earth in this beautiful, solitary setting. It was both peaceful and unsettling. He had driven all this way expecting to discover Teresa Morales at her hidden sanctuary, place her into his custody, interrogate her, and then pursue and find Pat Brennan. He was disappointed and a little angry. As McNally turned his rental car onto the main road that returned to Springerville, he saw the trailing dust of another vehicle headed toward him.

Jasper Rose and Morris Norris, two of the Cross Timbers’ ranch hands, were returning from repairing a livestock pipeline that supplied water from the water storage to several drinking tubs across one of the southern pastures.

“I wonder what that car is doing out here?” questioned Jasper, the driver of the ranch pickup that was approaching McNally’s rental car.

“I guess we will find out soon enough,” replied Morris Norris, the ranch hand riding shotgun. Morris was a young black man that had left his hometown of Trenton, NJ for Phoenix to find a job and start over after making some bad decisions back home. His old car had broken down near Springerville and was in the shop that maintained the Cross Timber’s vehicles when Christopher Pierce came in. Black people were uncommon in Springerville, and the shop owner had mentioned to Christopher that the poor guy was in dire straits and in need of some money to pay for his car repairs and to continue his trip to Phoenix. Christopher could use another hand, and after talking with Morris, figured he would give the young man the opportunity to prove himself and get a second chance at life. Christopher had not been disappointed. Morris had never been shown the respect that Christopher afforded him, the chip on Morris’ shoulder fell off, and Morris vowed to act and work the way Christopher expected. Morris had never encountered a white man as nice and respectful as Christopher Pierce.

Jasper began to slow and rolled down his window as the car grew close. McNally too slowed down as the two vehicles approached each other. Once the agent’s rental car came to a stop beside the ranch pickup, he rolled his window down to converse with the other driver.

“Can I help you, sir?” Jasper asked followed by a spit of brown juice out the window onto the dirt road. McNally took note of the driver of the pickup as a young man wearing a stained, canvass coat and sweat-stained cowboy hat and the young black man in the passenger’s seat.

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“Yes, I was looking to visit with Christopher Pierce, but no one appears to be home.”

“No sir, the whole family left this morning for New Mexico. I think they are to be back late tomorrow. Is there something I can help you with?”

“No, no I was hoping to visit with Mr. Pierce about a private matter. Do you work for the Cross Timbers Ranch?”

“Yes sir, I do. The name is Jasper Rose. And yours, sir?”

“Nice to meet you, Jasper. I’m James McNally. May I ask you, Jasper, does Mr. Pierce allow deer hunting on the ranch?” McNally had no interest in deer hunting. He just wanted to reduce any suspicion the ranch hand might have about McNally’s presence.

“Not usually, sir. I know he finds it distasteful that some ranchers sell hunting rights to go in and kill the deer or elk on their ranches. We have talked about this before. If we start having trouble with too many deer or elk, he will agree to some type of herd reduction program to get the herd size in line with the browse resources available. But as a rule, deer and elk don’t compete with cattle for food, and we don’t see the need to kill the elk or deer. They are part of the natural scheme of things here, and we like them more than the blood money city people will pay to kill them.”

“Well, you have explained his position very well. Thank you for that. And you say they will be back tomorrow sometime?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Any idea where in New Mexico they went?” the agent questioned.

Jasper’s interest was aroused by McNally’s question. Why does this guy care where Christopher went if all he came out here to do is get permission to hunt, Jasper thought to himself? This guy is in city clothes and driving a sedan. He’s not wanting to hunt. He wants to see Christopher about something else.

Jasper spit again out the widow before answering. “The Pierce family went to visit Christopher’s parents.” Jasper looked over at Morris and then continued. “Do you need to see Christopher for some other reason than permission to hunt?”

Like a slap on the side of his head, it hit the investigator that Christopher’s parents operated the Ax Handle Ranch just north of the Mexican border. That’s where Teresa Morales was found after entering the United States. Teresa must be with them. Were they taking her back to the border and back to Mexico? “Oh, shit,” McNally mumbled to himself when he realized why they went to New Mexico.

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“No, no, that was it. No need to bother him. I gotta go. Take it easy,” McNally said as he rolled up his window and put the car in drive. He took off in a cloud of dust before Jasper could respond.

“That was weird,” Jasper said looking over at Morris.

“Yeah, that dude had something on his mind, and it wasn’t about huntin,” Morris offered. “He was too citified to be a hunter. He was up to something, though.”

“Yeah, he wasn’t no hunter. I wonder why the heck he was out here?” Jasper didn’t expect an answer because Morris had no idea either.

Jasper spit out the window again and rolled up the window. He put the pickup in gear and started slowly forward still concerned about what McNally was really up to.

As soon as James McNally was up to speed, he reached for his cell phone and dialed the number of the Lordsburg Sector Office. His mind was racing as he thought of Teresa heading toward the border. Was it merely coincidence that the very day he was going to drop in unannounced at the Cross Timbers Ranch that the Pierce family would return to the very ranch where Teresa had crossed the border? Teresa must be with them, he thought.

“Hello, Lordsburg Sector Office. This is Cindy. How may I help you?”

“Cindy, this is FBI Special Agent McNally calling for Chief Hollingsworth. I hope she is available.” He added with a sense of urgency.

“Hold one moment, Mr. McNally.”

He was put on hold. “Come on, come on” he said out loud to the phone connection. About thirty seconds passed before the Chief picked up the phone from her end. To McNally, it seemed like an hour had passed.

“Yes, Special Agent, what’s up?”

“Chief, I’m just leaving the Cross Timbers Ranch and there was no sign of Teresa Morales or anyone else for that matter. One of the ranch hands told me they had gone to check on Mr. Pierce’s mom and dad. That means they are going to the ranch where Teresa crossed into the U. S. I think they must be taking her back to Mexico.”

McNally went quiet for a few seconds, his mind processing the irony of Teresa Morales returning to the border ranch on the very day that he traveled to Springerville to take her into custody. Coincidence?

He resumed speaking. “Is that purely a coincidence that the very day I go to pick her up that she has returned to the vicinity of the border? Or did someone alert them that I was headed to

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the Cross Timbers?” McNally wanted a response from Chief Hollingsworth but didn’t expect one.

”Sir, maybe something came up at the Ax Handle and Christopher needed to be there. Maybe it is just bad timing,” Elizabeth offered trying to deflect McNally’s insinuation. “She sure went through a lot to get settled in the U. S. to just suddenly give it up and go back to Mexico, don’t you think?”

“Well, something’s going on that we need to check out. How long would it take you to get to the Ax Handle headquarters?”

“Oh, about 45 minutes, sir.”

“Okay, I need you to take off for the Ax Handle to see if Teresa is there. Don’t call ahead. Try to arrive unannounced so as not to spook her back to the border. If there, put her into custody and the whole family if you need to control the situation. Call me when you get there. I am on my way back to Lordsburg now but several hours away.”

“Will do. I am heading out now. I’ll be in touch.” It was now about 2:10 PM.

Pat was parked about 100 yards south of the border in the bottom of a sandy draw that drained off the rocky foothills down into Mexico. He was hidden by several giant clumps of sacaton grass growing along the banks of the draw, but he had left himself an unobstructed view of the Rock Springs Pasture on the other side of the border. About 2:25 PM, Pat saw a shiny, silver vehicle creeping off the hills toward the border. He was expecting to see Bud’s red Ford pickup. Who is this, he thought? He grabbed his binoculars and brought them to his eyes. He could now see that it was a Chevy Suburban with Arizona plates, and he sighed a sigh of relief. It was Christopher and Sally’s vehicle, and it was full of people, which must be the whole family coming to say goodbye.

Once the Suburban was down in the sandy mesquite dunes and approaching the fence, Pat began moving toward them for the rendezvous. As Pat drew close to the fence, he saw a flurry of waving hands from inside the Suburban. Pat was waving his left hand out of the window and began honking the horn as he came to a stop just short of the fence. Everyone unloaded from their respective vehicles with wide grins all around. The gloom of losing Teresa to Mexico was replaced by the joy of seeing a happy, smiling Pat Brennan again. Teresa’s stoicism broke as she climbed out of the Suburban with a mix of emotions---sadness for leaving the Pierce family and the United States, but total elation at seeing Saint Patrick, her savior, again. Pat had exited the Bronco and crossed over the fence and was hugging and shaking hands with all, that is until Teresa presented herself. Everyone stepped back and all got quiet as Pat turned his undivided attention to Teresa. He walked slowly toward her with love plastered all over his face. Teresa was on her crutches and leaning against the front bumper of the Suburban. Her face was filled with happiness at seeing her saint again. As Pat slowly approached her, Teresa opened her

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arms and took Pat in them as they came together. Tears were streaming down her cheeks and tears had welled up in Pat’s eyes, which he tried to blink away with no success. The others broke into polite applause to witness the reunion of these two people.

Pat and Teresa exchanged quiet murmurs which no one else could audibly decipher, but the body language told it all. An electrical charge was arcing between them, and no one best interfere. But as overdue as their reunion was, it had to be cut short because of the electronic surveillance capabilities of the Border Patrol to detect activity along the border and subsequent deployment of drones and mobilization of field agents.

“We gotta get outta here.” Pat shouted after he released Teresa from the hug.

Bud had grabbed Teresa’s and baby Patrick’s personal items from the Suburban and set them over the fence onto Mexican soil. The women and children were around Teresa hugging and saying their last goodbyes. Pat hugged Sally, Martha, and the kids and then accompanied Teresa through the sandy soil to the fence. Bud lifted her over the fence to Christopher who had put Teresa’s things into the Bronco and come back to the fence to assist. Christopher gave Teresa one final hug and then placed Teresa into the passenger’s seat of the Bronco.

Pat crossed through the barbed wires to the south side of the fence. He then reached across to shake Bud’s hand. “Thank you, Bud. You are a saint too.”

Pat turned to Christopher and shook his hand. “Thanks for all you and Sally did to make Teresa’s experience in the U. S. a wonderful one. We will be in touch.”

As Christopher slipped through the fence, Pat returned to the Bronco’s driver side and climbed in. Turning to Teresa, Pat said, “Are you ready to go home---I mean your real home?” and blew her kiss.

Teresa, with a sweet smile on her face, returned the kiss and replied, “Let us go home.”

Pat and Teresa pulled away from the fence waving madly to the Americans, gathered around the Suburban watching the Bronco pull away. Waving, they yelled “Bye Teresa, Bye, Pat” and then climbed into the Suburban as the Bronco disappeared in a cloud of dust. “Let’s go, gang” said Christopher as he started the motor, and all doors were snapped shut. He put the silver coach into gear and turned it up toward the hillside from where they came.

There were smiles and happiness all around. There was no time for tears. The Americans were blessed to have had Teresa as a part of their family, albeit for less time than originally thought, but her time with them had been a positive experience for all. They considered Teresa to be a part of their family now and forever. The goodbyes weren’t permanent. They would all be together again someday.

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**Chapter 32: *Piedras Rojas***

“Papa, Pat went to get Teresa and her baby.”

“Where did he go?”

“Do you remember that Teresa is in the United States? And she has a baby now? Pat is going to bring them back home to *Piedras Rojas*. They should get here tonight. Aren’t you excited?”

Mr. Morales remained seated in his ratty fabric easy chair with a blanket across his legs. He didn’t smile and didn’t show any emotion. He didn’t look at Rosalinda as she spoke, instead he kept his eyes directed in the general direction of the floor, and Rosalinda knew that her father’s diseased brain was trying to process who and what they were discussing.

She knelt down beside the chair and reached around Mr. Morales’ neck and cradled his head in her arms. “Oh Papa, do you understand that your youngest child, my little sister, Teresa, will be home soon. Do you remember her?”

Softly he responded. “I think so. “

“Well, we will have a nice homecoming celebration for her tonight. I will help you get into your uniform so you will look nice for Teresa when she arrives.”

“Is Pancho coming too?” he asked, looking into Rosalinda’s eyes with a soft, pleading stare.

“Not today, but we must always be ready for the arrival of the great General Pancho Villa. He will come to see you soon, I am sure.”

“Okay” he said apparently satisfied with Rosalinda’s gentle explanation.

“We have much to do to get ready for Teresa and her baby. I will cook us a good meal, and I must make room for Teresa and baby Patrick a place to sleep. They will be with us for quite a while, I think. At least I hope so.”

Teresa went over to the old radio in the corner and turned it on. Festive Mexican music suddenly erupted into the quiet room. Rosalinda did a few polka-like dance steps to the music to energize the atmosphere in the room. She bounced over next to her father’s chair and reached for his right hand that was folded in his lap. Taking in her left hand, she swayed with the music as if dancing with the old man seated in the chair. A soft smile came across Mr. Morales’ face, and his eyes seemed to light up a bit. The love that existed between father and daughter would have been in full display to any third party to witness the scene.

“Okay, Papa, I’ve got to get to work. She replaced his right hand back into his lap and released it. She then went over to the kitchen sink to retrieve Mr. Morales’ little old jelly jar that served as his water glass. She filled it with six ounces of water from the tap and took it to Mr. Morales.

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He reached up to take the glass. Trembling slightly, he lifted the glass to his lips and took a sip of the warm water. As he brought the glass away from his lips, Rosalinda remarked “Dancing makes you thirsty.” She smiled and touched the back of her left hand against his face. “I love you, Papa.” The old man just sat still alone in his contentment.

Rosalinda went into the bedroom that had been Teresa’s but was now occupied by Pat. Her thought was to make a pallet in the living room for Pat to sleep on and restore the room to its arrangement when Teresa was still at home. And, of course, she would need to make a little sleeping place for the baby.

Rosalinda had no way to know what emotional state Teresa was in with abruptly having to leave the United States, of which she had sacrificed so much to become a part. But she knew of the love that existed between Pat and Teresa and that their reunion had to be a joyful one. Rosalinda gave no thought to their future together. No need muddling her mind with concerns for either of them now. She wanted Teresa’s return to be a joyful one, one that would make her happy to be back in *Piedras* *Rojas* with what was left of her family. It could never be like old times, the good ole’ days as they say. But it could be the beginning of a fresh, new start leading to a wonderful life, and Rosalinda intended to do all that she could to make it happen.

Back at the *El* *Paisao* Bar, Nado Gomez was tending bar and doing his best to keep the operation running smoothly. Things had slowed down now that it was *siesta* time. The lunch crowd had come and gone, and Rosalinda had come in to prepare the food for the day while Nado tended bar and prepared drinks. For a person untrained in bartending, Nado did well enough to escape any harsh criticism. His pours were adequate, and he didn’t spill any beer on any patrons.

Nado was behind the bar washing drink and shot glasses from the lunch crowd when Eusebio Valdarama strolled into the bar. As his eyes adjusted from the bright outdoors to the darkness inside the *Paisano*, he noticed that he was the only person in the place except for Nado Gomez. He approached Nado’s station behind the bar and began his usual bullshit.

“What the hell are you doing behind the bar acting like a bartender, Nado?”

Nado was often the brunt of Eusebio’s good-natured ribbing but wasn’t bothered by it.

“Oh, just standing behind the bar acting like a bartender. What are you doing out and about during *siesta* time, Gordo?”

“I was just roaming around looking for some young lovelies to take a *siesta* with.” Eusebio said with a wide grin that could be seen even under his big, black, bushy moustache.”

“Sorry*, mi amigo*, but there are no young lovelies in here yet.”

“Hell, I would be happy with some old lovelies about now.”

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“So, what’s your plan then, to stay in here drinking until after *siesta* and hope the lovelies come out to party?”

“You nailed it, oh wise bartender. To get started with my mission, how about a shot of tequila with a lime followed by a can of the Saint’s favorite *cerveza*.”

“Coming right up, Gordo.” Nado replied as he pulled a shot glass and bottle of tequila from the shelf and set them in front of Eusebio. He poured the shot, grabbed a small piece of lime from the refrigerator, and set it beside the shot glass. While Eusebio was slamming his tequila, Nado set a can of Coors Light on the bar next to the empty shot glass.”

“Another shot, Gordo?”

“Not yet, *mi amigo*. I want to savor this premium American beer while I await the arrival of the young lovelies. I need to save my money for when they show up. I have to go slow.”

“I’ve never known you to go slow.” Nado offered as he turned to go into the kitchen.

When he returned to the bar, Gordo asked where Rosalinda and the Saint were today. Nado answered that Rosalinda had worked the lunch hour and had to go home and check on *Generalissimo* Morales. As far as the whereabouts of the Saint, Nado wasn’t sure.

“I think he had to go out of town today but should be back tomorrow.”

“Where did he have to go? You don’t just go out of town because there is nowhere to go unless you have a specific place and reason to go, like to *Juarez* or *Chihuahua* or *Hermosillo.* See, I think he is a secret agent man or a spy or something weird like that. Why did he leave the United States and why is he here of all places? If for some reason he had to exit the U. S., why pick this place? Why not go to one of the beach towns where the young lovelies hang out?”

“How would I know anything about the Saint’s past? I don’t really know much about him. We all have things in our past that we want to keep secret, and he’s probably no different.”

“Rosalinda’s the only one in town, and maybe in all of Mexico, that knows the Saint’s story---and she’s not talking. Isn’t that odd for a woman to not talk about things they know that no one else knows? They talk about everything whether they know what they are talking about or not.”

“Not Rosalinda. She’s one of a kind. She’s very special.”

“She really is.” Replied Eusebio in a contemplative tone. “She is a lovely.”

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**Chapter 33: Too Late**

The Southern Border Patrol Monitoring Center in El Paso, Texas detected some activity along the border in the Lordsburg, NM sector.

“Sir, we’ve got some activity to the west in the Lordsburg Sector.” Said Sgt. Scott Warner to the Shift Commander, Lt. Oliver Jones.

“What is the location, Sgt?”

“Just a minute, sir. I’ve got the coordinates but need to locate them on the map. At his computer terminal, Sgt. Warner was inputting the coordinates and awaiting the map and the exact location to show up on the computer screen.

“I’ve got it, sir. It is along the south boundary of the Ax Handle Ranch, it looks like their Rock Springs Pasture, just east of the foot of the Peloncillo Mountains. It looks like two vehicles, one south and the other north of the border.”

“Sgt. Warner, I’ll order up deployment of the drone. You call the Lordsburg Sector Office. Elizabeth Hollingsworth is the Chief there now. Advise them of the strong possibility of movement of illegals north through the Ax Handle so she can deploy field agents to the area and set up roadblocks to intercept. Good work, Warner.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Lordsburg Sector Office. This is Cindy. How may I help you?”

“Cindy, this is Sgt. Warner from the El Paso Monitoring Center. We have activity along the south boundary of the Ax Handle Ranch in the Rock Springs Pasture. Will you please alert Chief Hollingsworth so she can issue deployment orders?”

“Will do. Thank you, Sgt.” Cindy hung up and immediately tried to call the chief on her mobile phone, but the call rolled over into her message box as if there was no cell coverage available, which was not uncommon. Cindy then went to the Rancher Radio transmitter to call the Chief on the radio.

“Headquarters to Chief, over.” Cindy said as she depressed the talk button. She then released the button and awaited a response, which came soon.

“Headquarters, this is Chief. What you got, over?”

“Activity reported on the southern border of the Ax Handle in the Rock Springs Pasture. Movement to the north detected, over.”

“I’m on it, Cindy. ETA 15 minutes. Chief out.”

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Elizabeth hung up the radio hand unit, repositioned herself in the driver’s seat, flipped on her flashing lights, and put her foot deep into the gas pedal. The Blazer leaped forward as it headed for the end of the blacktop. When the asphalt came to an end, the green Blazer veered onto the dirt BLM road that led to the Ax Handle headquarters creating an impressive dust cloud behind it.

As the silver Suburban steadily climbed the rocky ranch road in the Rock Springs Pasture on its return to the Ax Handle headquarters, the mood among the occupants was joyous. Although they would miss Teresa very much, they were all touched by the tenderness of the moment when Teresa and Pat embraced and exhibited such joy at being together again. The happiness all felt far exceeded any gloomy feelings they had about Teresa’s departure.

Chief Hollingsworth arrived at the Ax Handle headquarters in almost record time, but as impressive of a driving feat as it was, it was all for naught. She hurriedly pulled up in front of the ranch house sliding to a stop and dust boiling up and over the Blazer. If anyone was home, they would have heard the commotion she made and come out to meet her. However, although Bud’s red F150 was parked beside her, it appears that no one was inside. After no response to her knocking on the front door, she went back to the Blazer so she could call out on Rancher Radio.

“Chief to headquarters, over,” she said into the hand-held transmitter. No immediate response, which wasn’t that unusual. She radioed a second time and heard Cindy’s voice respond.

“Headquarters here, over.”

“Cindy, no one is here at the Ax Handle and no sign of the Arizona family or Teresa Morales, over.”

“Roger that, over.”

“Cindy, call FBI Special Agent McNally on his cell phone. The number is on my desk. I don’t have cell coverage out here. Tell him that I will remain here until someone shows up, but no sign of them now, over.”

“Roger that. Anything else, over?”

“That’s it. I will stay in touch. Chief out.”

“Headquarters out.”

Immediately following the Chief’s radio transmission, Cindy attempted to reach Agent McNally on his cell phone, but it rolled over into his message box which meant he probably didn’t have

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cell coverage either. She left him a message to call her at the Lordsburg Sector Office. He was somewhere between Springerville and Lordsburg and out of contact.

Back at the Ax Handle, Elizabeth wasn’t sure what her next step should be. Should she wait around hoping someone would show up soon, or should she drive down toward the border? She didn’t know the ranch layout and roads well enough to know which ranch road to take. She could go back out to where the asphalt ended and head south from there knowing that NM state highway 338 went to the border, but that would have been too obvious and too susceptible to detection for illegals to use that route. So, as anxious as she was to do something productive, Elizabeth decided to wait for the Pierce’s, either the New Mexico clan or the Arizona clan, to arrive and hopefully Teresa Morales would be with whomever showed up.

While Elizabeth waited in her Blazer, she took the opportunity to document in her logbook all of the events of the unsuccessful search for Teresa by McNally and herself. She detailed McNally’s unsuccessful search in Springerville and her urgent trip to the Ax Handle thinking Teresa may have been transported there by the Pierce family. Since she had warned Christopher Pierce about Agent McNally’s intentions, she suspected the Pierces had transported Teresa from the Cross Timbers to the Ax Handle. Now, it appeared that the transport of Teresa continued beyond the Ax Handle Ranch to the south.

Elizabeth completed her notes in her logbook and got out of the Blazer to enjoy what she could of a beautiful, cool fall day. She walked down to the Macho Draw for no reason than to stretch her legs and think what she could do next. Then Elizabeth thought she heard a vehicle and the crunching sounds made by tires on a gravelly surface. She held her breath and remained totally quiet. The sounds were getting stronger and sounded as if coming from the foothills southwest of her location. She hadn’t gotten her binoculars out of the Blazer, but concentrating on from where the sounds were coming, Elizabeth now saw a silver vehicle moving down the hill toward the draw.

She watched intently as the vehicle dropped to the bottom of the hill and disappeared behind a grove of hackberry trees along the Macho Draw blocking her view of the vehicle. But the sounds continued to grow louder, and she knew that its destination was the headquarters. Her gut feeling was that it was the family for whom she was looking.

As the nose of the vehicle climbed over the edge of the draw toward her location, she saw the Arizona plates on the silver Chevy Suburban full of people. She figured it was the Pierces and had an idea where they had been.

The occupants in the Suburban politely waved as they pulled up next to the green Blazer. She obviously recognized Bud and Martha and assumed the driver was Christopher and the others were his family. She did not see Teresa Morales in the vehicle.

The occupants of the silver vehicle were unloading when Elizabeth walked up.

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“Good afternoon, Chief,” Bud offered.

“Hello, Mr. Pierce, Mrs. Pierce,” Elizabeth responded acknowledging Bud and Martha.

Then, looking at Christopher, Sally, and the kids, Teresa said “Hello, I’m Chief Hollingsworth” as she extended her hand toward Christopher. I recognize you from the restaurant in Springerville.”

“You mean that time you were spying on us?” Christopher replied pointedly.

Chief Hollingsworth did not respond to Christopher’s remark. The awkwardness of the moment was broken when Sally stepped up to the Chief, extended her hand and offered “Hi, I’m Sally.”

“Nice to meet you, Mrs. Pierce.”

“We owe you a debt of gratitude for warning us about the FBI investigator coming to look for Teresa,” Sally continued. The other Pierces also chimed in with a word of thanks for the alert.

“Please, don’t tell anyone that I warned you,” the chief implored.

All the Pierces agreed that that wouldn’t be a problem.

There was a pause in the conversation before Elizabeth asked the question the others anticipated that she would ask. “I don’t see Teresa. Where is she?” Elizabeth asked the question because everyone expected her to, although she presumed Teresa was now in Mexico.

Sally, who now assumed the role as spokesperson for the families, answered the chief’s inquiry. “We just got back from dropping Teresa off on her side of the border.”

“I suspected she might be back in Mexico. Did you just take her, I mean is that where all of you have been just now?

“Yep, we’re just gettin’ back from taking her. Her and baby Patrick,” Bud chimed in.

The Southern Border Patrol Monitoring Center reported some suspicious activity along the border fence at the south end of your Rock Springs Pasture about an hour or so ago with vehicles on both sides of the border. I guess that was you guys.”

“Yep, that was us,” Bud answered.

Elizabeth was interested to know if Pat Brennan was somehow involved in Teresa’s return. “Who met you from the Mexican side of the border?”

“A member of her family met us there to take her back to her hometown,” Bud jumped in before Sally or anyone else could speak up to say that Pat was who they met. Everyone else nodded in agreement. It was enough to convince Chief Hollingsworth that Pat wasn’t involved.

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“Well ladies and gentlemen, I best get on my way back to the office. I will contact El Paso to inform them of Teresa’s status and no further need to pursue her. Maybe now both governments will be satisfied and drop this entire matter.”

“I hope they do let it go. She is a wonderful young lady that would be an asset to whichever country she is in. She was causing no harm to anyone by being here, and in fact she filled a role around our house that we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to fill. We love her and will miss her greatly,” Sally said speaking for everyone else who nodded in agreement.

Martha, who had been quietly listening to the conversation and hadn’t spoken a word, interjected, “I know Teresa wanted to live her entire life in the United States, but although she fell short, at least she was able to have her baby here, and now he is a U. S. citizen. Perhaps baby Patrick was God’s blessing to her, giving her a son that she can now share with her own family in Mexico. Maybe it was meant to be this way. Think of the other lives that baby will touch back home in Mexico.” It was nice thought that eased the pain of her being gone. The others nodded in agreement.

Chief Hollingsworth responded, “So, I guess she is back where she belongs.” But no one nodded in agreement this time.

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**Chapter 34: Gone**

Elizabeth had warned the Arizona Pierce’s that an FBI agent would be coming their way soon looking for Teresa Morales, but she didn’t figure that meant Teresa would be returned to Mexico. She figured the Pierces would move her somewhere else, at least temporally, until the FBI agent gave up and went home. Just because the Pierces said she was in Mexico where she was supposed to be didn’t mean it was necessarily true. She could be in hiding somewhere in the U. S., and they just went to the Ax Handle to decoy her return to Mexico. Then when the heat was off, she would be returned to the Cross Timbers and resume her new life where she left off.

Elizabeth didn’t press the issue. They weren’t going to give her a straight answer about Teresa’s location. Her instincts were of no help. Teresa had either been dropped back across the border and was back in Mexico, or she had been given sanctuary somewhere else in the United States. After all Teresa had been through to get to the U. S., the Pierces might have her hidden away somewhere else in the United States.

Elizabeth returned to the Sector office in Lordsburg perplexed at not knowing Teresa’s location. Agent McNally should be arriving soon. He would need to use his expertise and his best investigative skills to solve this mystery.

It was after hours by the time Agent McNally arrived back in Lordsburg. The shift change had taken place, but Chief Hollingsworth was still at the office awaiting McNally’s return. She heard the front door open and assumed it was him. She got out of her chair and was intending on meeting him at the vacant front desk, but McNally proceeded directly to her office, and they met at the office door.

No warm and fuzzy small talk was exchanged between the two.

“Hi Agent McNally.” Elizbeth offered.

“So, what have you ascertained about Ms. Morales’ whereabouts. Where is she?”

“Sir, I don’t know where she is. She wasn’t at the Ax Handle and in fact no one was at the headquarters when I got there. After waiting around for about 30 minutes, the entire Pierce family drove in from the south in Christopher’s Suburban. Teresa was not with them.”

Elizabeth returned to her chair and sat down. Agent McNally took a seat across the desk from her.

“Ok, so where did they say she was?” McNally asked in an agitated tone.

“They said that she was in Mexico where she is supposed to be. They tried to make it sound as if she’s been there all along.”

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“In other words, they aren’t talking, huh? Well, we’ll see about that.”

The FBI agent got up from the chair and took a couple of paces across the room, thinking what his next move would be in what had become a chess match. He suddenly stopped pacing as if an idea came to him.

“Chief, I’ll see you first thing in the morning,” he said and then walked out the door.

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**Chapter 35: A Joyful Reunion**

Pat Brennan, Teresa, and baby Patrick were in the Ford Bronco and heading away from the border. Teresa showed no signs of being unhappy at being back in Mexico. To the contrary, she seemed very pleased to be back in the company of her saint, Pat Brennan, and the prospect of introducing her baby to her sister, Rosalinda, and her father, Luis Ochoa Morales, upon her return to *Piedras Rojas.* She had been gone for almost three years and had not returned in all that time and had little contact with her family in that time. But now that she would be back soon, she was elated at returning. And it would be an even better return since Saint Patrick would be with her. She would have the best of both worlds.

Teresa would have been sitting next to Patrick as he drove the Bronco away from the Mexican frontier except for the bucket seats that prevented it. But still, she kept touching his right shoulder and arm as he drove. He had held her hand briefly when they first started driving but pulled back so he could have both hands on the steering wheel on the rough roads. Pat too was happy to be in Teresa’s presence once again.

They both smiled and enjoyed conversing about *Piedras Rojas*, how Pat liked it there, how much he liked Rosalinda and her father, his work at the *Paisano,* and the patrons that he had met since being there. It was funny to her that her Saint Patrick had become a part of the world she once knew so well.

“My Saint Patrick has saved me again,” Teresa said several times. And it seemed that that had been the case. He had saved her from dying from the snake bite, he had saved her from being deported along with busloads of other deportees, he had saved her by finding a nice place for her to live while in the United States, and now he was saving her from apprehension by an FBI Special Agent that was hot on her trail. He loved her and was happy to do it.

Teresa often thanked Jesus, Mary, and Joseph for bringing Pat Brennan into her life. Not only was he her savior, she loved him and wanted to be with him. She dreamed of a future with him. She knew that he had strong feelings for her too, but she wasn’t sure that his feelings for her were of the same magnitude. Another thing she was unsure of: Was Saint Patrick interested in a future with her?

Back in *Piedras Rojas* at the Morales home, the excitement continued to grow at the anticipation of seeing Teresa and her baby. Well, at least Rosalinda was excited. She had rearranged Teresa’s old bedroom like it had been before she left for *Juarez* except for the addition of a baby bed she borrowed from a friend. She got Pat set up to sleep on the floor in the corner of the den. She had cleaned the house from top to bottom. Time flies when one is busy, and before she knew it, Rosalinda was anticipating their imminent arrival.

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Mr. Morales, in his limited ability to comprehend what was soon to happen, pretty much resumed his normal activity of sitting in his old easy chair with a blanket over his legs. But he knew something big was going to happen. By watching Rosalinda zoom around the house doing things, he knew this was not a normal day. Several times she told him that Teresa would be home soon, but he wasn’t exactly sure who Teresa was. Even when Rosalinda showed him a photo of Teresa that had been hanging on his bedroom wall, who was in the photos was still a mystery to him. Once when Rosalinda mentioned Teresa’s name, a little spark appeared in his eyes as if he remembered her. But it quickly dissipated and returned him to the world of confusion.

Rosalinda wasn’t to be deterred by a lack of enthusiasm from her father. She understood his dementia although baffled by it. Upon seeing Teresa, Mr. Morales may snap out of it and remember his youngest daughter. At least that was her wish.

Back at the *Paisano* Bar, Nado Gomez was adapting well to his bar tending assignment. The owner, Albert Munoz, had come in to lend a hand although he was doing more bull shitting with the patrons than work. But business was good and the service good enough even without Rosalinda and the Saint on duty.

Eusebio Valdarama had come in, so he must have had a wad of cash in his pocket. He nursed several beers waiting for some young lovelies to come in, but after a while when none arrived, he gave up and left. He would try again tomorrow if he didn’t lose or spend the wad of money that was in his pocket.

The reunion that was to happen soon at the Morales home would truly be a time for thanksgiving. Although Thanksgiving was an American invention dating back to the pilgrims’ days, it can be said that a Mexican Thanksgiving would soon be in order. The return of the prodigal daughter deemed it so.

In addition to the cleaning and rearranging the house, Rosalinda had prepared a Mexican meal suitable for this special occasion. She had made masa for fresh tamales stuffed with red chile pork, pan fried chile rellenos stuffed with cheese, and made flour tortillas from scratch. Sopapillas filled with honey, pinto beans, and salsas would complete the meal. It would be a wonderful and festive occasion.

It was after dark when the Ford Bronco pulled into the front dirt yard of the modest adobe house. The dim porch light on the little house was like a beacon lighting the way for Teresa’s return to the place of her childhood and her wonderful memories of her family.

Before Pat could bring the Bronco to a complete stop and turn off the motor, Rosalinda bounded through the front screen door and across the dirt to greet them. In the headlights, her smile beamed. Teresa couldn’t exit the vehicle fast enough. Rosalinda was at the passenger side door wrapping her arms around the little sister she hadn’t forgotten but feared

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she would never see again. Tears of joy were flowing down both of their cheeks as the love between them ignited.

After the embrace, Teresa handed baby Patrick to Rosalinda. She pulled the precious bundle to her bosom and held him tight, cooing in his ear the sweet sounds of a loving mother, although she had never experienced motherhood herself. Instincts, instilled from a tight, family upbringing, were drawn upon.

Pat quietly collected Teresa’s belongings from the Bronco. Rosalinda stepped away to allow Teresa to slide down out of her seat and touch her right foot on the earth of her upbringing. She then reached in to retrieve her crutches, mounted them, and began to move toward the front door of the house.

Mr. Morales had come to the front door with his blanket wrapped around his shoulders, standing inside and peering through the screen door at the happenings outside. He did not smile, but rather stood expressionless. His mind was blank at the incomprehensible event. But as Rosalinda stepped up and opened the door holding baby Patrick, a gentle smile crossed the old man’s face at the recognition of what she was holding if not to whom it belonged.

Teresa was close behind Rosalinda and pulled up along-side of her at the door.

“Papa, here is Teresa, the last of your children,” and holding the baby out to him for a closer look, “and this is your grandson.”

Rosalinda beamed with happiness, but Teresa, her eyes still wet with tears, smiled cautiously in anticipation of her father’s reaction.

After a brief pause, the old man reached out his arms in which Rosalinda placed the baby although she continued to support the baby’s weight with her own strength. A gentle smile formed on his face, and his eyes appeared to soften as he became aware of the precious soul he was holding. Teresa moved in close to her father and put an arm around his bony shoulders. He moved his eyes toward Teresa’s, and it was clear that he recognized his youngest daughter by his side. The connection between the baby he was holding and his youngest daughter beside him was understood for a few brief seconds until the fog of confusion reclaimed his mind and its ability to understand. But that brief time was all it took to lift Teresa and Rosalinda to a level of happiness neither had experienced in a very long time because their father had comprehended Teresa, baby Patrick, and the connection between the two, if only for a few seconds.

Rosalinda was moved but remained stoic. Teresa, on the other hand, couldn’t hold back the tears. They erupted from her eyes and flowed down her cheeks and off her chin. In her heart, she thanked God for having the compassion to allow her father the ability to understand who they were.

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Pat had gathered Teresa’s belongings and joined the others at the front door just as the fog of confusion overtook Mr. Morales’ mind. Pat saw Teresa’s tears and assumed that she was upset because her father hadn’t recognized her. But he quickly realized that Teresa’s tears were generated by joy, not sadness, and was thankful that her expectations of a joyful reunion had come true. Hopefully, this happiness would establish a pattern of happiness that would accompany Teresa the rest of her days in Mexico.

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**Chapter 36: Where Is She?**

FBI Special Agent James McNally was at the Lordsburg Sector Office promptly at 8:00 AM the next day after his return from Springerville. As an investigator, he had an urge to investigate. His idea was to go to the Ax Handle Ranch and have Bud Pierce take him to their south boundary fence in the proximity of where Teresa Morales is believed to have crossed the border into the United States from Mexico. His instincts told him that she was no longer in the U. S. and had returned to Mexico, but to do so, she obviously needed much assistance. The Pierce family would have been the obvious assistants, and what if Pat Brennan was somehow involved?

“Chief, I am going out to the Ax Handle Ranch to question the Pierce’s. I also want to survey the border fence along the Ax Handle boundary to see if there is any evidence to support my theory that Teresa is back in Mexico.”

“Ok, sir.” Elizabeth responded.

“I would like for you to call the Ax Handle and advise the Pierces that I am on my way, and that I expect them to give me an accurate accounting of what’s gone on regarding Teresa Morales in the past 24 hours. I’m not fucking around with this anymore. I intend to get to the bottom of where Teresa is and where Pat Brennan is.” Agent McNally was obviously agitated by his lack of results, being a step behind Teresa’s movements, and possibly being outsmarted. He couldn’t stand to be outsmarted.

He continued, “And tell them not to go anywhere. I expect them to cooperate with me.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Thanks. I will check in with you later this morning to inform you what I found out and what I plan to do next. And if you can uncover anything, get in touch with me ASAP.”

Agent McNally had turned and was out the door before Chief Hollingsworth could acknowledge McNally’s instructions. Although she didn’t answer to him, Elizabeth felt obligated to do as he said unless she had better ideas. She did not.

The drive to the Ax Handle Ranch was not leisurely for Agent McNally. He was going there with intent, not to go sight-seeing or to go to a social event. He was going to solve a mystery and he expected to do so.

Following the detailed map he had of the area, the agent pulled into the Ax Handle headquarters and parked by a silver Chevy Suburban with Arizona plates. He got out of his rental car and pulled out his notepad to record the license plate number and recorded the VIN number beneath the windshield. His assumption was that the Suburban belonged to Christopher Pierce of the Cross Timbers Ranch.

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The front door to the house opened and out walked Bud and Christopher Pierce. “This must be the FBI guy that the Chief called us about,” Christopher said stating the obvious.

“Can I help you?” Bud asked suspiciously

“Yes. I was just coming to the door to introduce myself. I am FBI Special Agent James McNally,” the agent said extending his hand to Bud, who shook the hand, and then to Christopher who did the same.

“Nice to meet you, sir. What can we do for you?” Bud replied politely but realizing that this guy was not here for friendly purposes.

“Well, I am investigating the disappearance of Teresa Morales who we believe is in the United States.” He paused a second before continuing. “Or at least we believe she was.”

Bud’s eyes were diverted to the ground, and he shuffled his feet while he thought of a response, but before he could, Christopher spoke up.

“Teresa Morales, huh?” Then turning toward Bud, he said “Wasn’t that the girl that was found snake-bit on the ranch, Dad?”

“Yep, that was her.”

Christopher resumed his response to the agent. “Agent, I assume she is in Mexico where she is supposed to be.”

“As of when, Mr. Pierce.” The agent asked.

“Well, she was deported after she recovered from the snake bite, wasn’t she? This past summer sometime, I think. Chief Brennan took her back, didn’t he?”

Now McNally was getting agitated and tired of this run-around. “Oh, come on now, we all know that Ms. Morales has been housed at your ranch rather than being deported. The details of how she avoided deportation or how you got involved aren’t clear, but we have some strong suspicions that ex-Chief Pat Brennan perpetrated a plan to let her stay in the United States, and it happened to be at your ranch.”

Christopher and Bud looked at each other as if to say, now what do we say.

Bud now took the initiative. “Look, fella, you come out here to my ranch and you start throwin’ these accusations around. But this stuff sounds serious, and we ain’t talking to ya until we talk to a lawyer. Sounds like you think we are involved in something illegal, so we ain’t saying another word without our lawyer being here.”

McNally had pushed too hard. He really wasn’t interested in charging the Pierce’s with any wrong- doing. That could come later. He just wanted to know where Teresa Morales was now.

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He needed their assistance and wouldn’t get it if he pissed them off, which he had already done.

“Mr. Pierce, I am sorry if you took it that I am accusing you of something. I am not. I am just telling you that we believe that Teresa has been here as recently as yesterday and want to know where she is. If I am incorrect about her having been here, just tell me.”

The Pierces didn’t look at each other. They just stared at agent McNally taking in the meaning of his words. Had he laid a trap to catch them with their response? So far, they hadn’t admitted to anything involving Teresa. Now, if they said yes, they admitted involvement. If they said no, it was a bold face lie that could add charges against them if proven that the Pierces lied to a federal agent.

“Agent, I told you we ain’t talking without a lawyer.” Bud said. He looked at Christopher and then turned back to the agent. “As far as we know, Teresa Morales is in Mexico where she is supposed to be. That’s it. We ain’t saying anything more.”

McNally took in Bud’s words. In his response, Bud had provided the agent the answer he was looking for. The agent knew he was hot on Teresa’s trail, and he didn’t want to abandon it now. He wasn’t interested in proving charges against the Pierce’s for their involvement anyway. That would be another matter. He needed to stay on mission to locate Teresa Morales and ultimately Pat Brennan.

“Alright, Mr. Pierce, we are through here. But before I leave, I want to go to the border fence and look around. I have a map of your ranch and can figure out how to get there. If I must get a warrant to be able to look around your south boundary, I will get it and come back. But I am asking your permission to go down there now while I’m here.”

“Mr. McNally, help yourself, but you can’t get there in that sedan, at least not by going through the ranch. It’s rough and rocky. Steep in places, too.”

“Okay. I get it.” He knew better than to ask Bud or Christopher to take him down through the ranch in one of their four-wheel drive vehicles. He didn’t expect any cooperation from them.

“Thank you, gentlemen, for your time. Sorry to have bothered you.” They shook hands, and McNally turned to return to his rental car. The Pierces turned to go back in the house.

McNally stalled around his sedan waiting for the Pierces to go inside. He then slipped his phone out of his pocket and took two photos of the tire treads on Christopher’s Suburban. He wanted the tire tread design in case he found fresh matching tire tracks along the border.

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The agent backed out of the yard and followed the road that exited the ranch. But just after he crossed the cattleguard on the east boundary, he stopped and unfolded the map of the ranch.

On it, he saw the dirt road that was an extension of highway 338 that continued south along the Ax Handle’s east boundary. It terminated at the U.S.-Mexico border.

He laid the map o the passenger seat and turned the car south on the road he had found on the map. Unknown to the agent, the road would pass along-side the watergap where Pat had met Bud, Martha, and the ambulance that fateful morning after carrying an unconscious, snake-bit Teresa Morales out of the mountains to medical help. This heroic act had saved Teresa’s life and the life of baby Patrick.

Although the road wasn’t paved, it was smooth due to its sandy base. Following the road as it wound through the mesquite-crowned dunes, Agent McNally being from the East, encountered critters he had never seen before. Earlier he passed by a herd of pronghorns grazing near the road. Now a roadrunner darted across the road just in front of the car. “What the hell was that?” he said to himself. Then shortly, a jackrabbit, running and jumping, swerved through the dunes ahead of him. He recognized it as a hare but not like any others he had seen. “Wow, that dude was moving” he said to himself as the jackrabbit outran his car and disappeared into the dunes.

McNally was in a land with which he was unfamiliar. Dry and brown, strange plants and animals. And he was on the verge of losing his suspect in this strange land. Will this nightmare ever end, he wondered?

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**Chapter 37: A Search for Clues**

When he arrived at the border fence, Agent McNally parked his sedan and tried to call Chief Hollingsworth on his cell phone to advise her where he was and what he was intending to do. However, there was no cell coverage, and the call wouldn’t go through. He had wanted her to alert the El Paso Border Electronic Surveillance Center that he was there and no need to deploy drones or field agents.

In El Paso, agent McNally’s presence was detected. Since there was no activity on the southside of his location, a transfer of illegal aliens to north of the border didn’t appear imminent. However, they would remain observant and deploy the necessary resources should the situation change.

Agent McNally’s intention was to follow the border fence to the west expecting to find fresh signs of a transfer across the border. He was specifically looking for tire tracks left by the silver Suburban on the north side and tire tracks and footprints on the south side that corresponded with those on the north.

It was going to be strenuous hike, but he felt obligated to do it. He wanted to connect the dots and stay on Teresa’s trail even if it indicated that she had returned to Mexico. If he found what he expected to find, it wouldn’t be the end of his investigation. He was driven to follow the trail across the border and wherever it went in Mexico. He was determined to find Teresa and ultimately Pat Brennan wherever he might be. McNally was an excellent investigator and wasn’t about to concede failure in solving this mystery.

The agent had a bottle of water in one hand and another in his coat pocket as he left the rental car. He had a sports coat on as his only warmth. He crawled through the eastern border fence of the Ax Handle Ranch and proceeded west along the north side of boundary separating the two countries. He was on United States soil with the expanse of Mexico and the Chihuahaun Desert across the barbed wire to his left. It felt weird to him to be in such a vast area of nothingness---no people, no cars, no buildings, and no signs of human occupation or even presence. But the sheer magnitude and beauty of this land was overwhelming. He suddenly felt insignificant in the grand scheme of things. That’s because he was.

After following the border fence for close to two hours and a distance of almost four miles, Agent McNally came onto a site near the edge of the foothills where it appeared that some activity had occurred. There were tire tracks on both sides of the border fence and footprints of all sizes on the north side. On the south side was a different set of footprints from those on the north side. But one unusual set of footprints he found on both sides. These prints were made by a single shoe, not two, and a set of spike marks parallel to the line of travel of the footprint but alternating with each footprint. As the agent followed the prints, he saw a footprint and then instead of another, he observed the spike marks. Crutches, he thought.

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McNally crawled through the fence to the Mexican side. He saw the same pattern until the footprints ended at the tire tracks on the south side. The person on crutches had crossed into Mexico.

McNally’s keen eyes detected the prints and tracks from which he was able to deduce what had happened. He read them like a book. They told a story. Teresa Morales left a vehicle, probably the silver Suburban, on the U. S. side, using her crutches she moved to the border fence and crossed it, and then proceeded to another vehicle on the Mexican side.

Although the soil surface was sandy making the tire tracks difficult to read, the tire tracks north of the border appeared to resemble the tracks made by the silver Suburban. However, there was no way to know what type of vehicle carried Teresa away from the border fence. Or who was driving.

Agent McNally had discovered a treasure trove of information by reading the sands. He speculated who met Teresa and took her south, but he couldn’t prove anything. He had plenty of time to think of possible theories of who met Teresa and where were they going as he began his return hike to his rental car.

Although it was November and the sun sat low in the southern sky, there were no clouds, and it was bright and sunny and felt warmer than the actual air temperature. McNally showed no signs of exhaustion because of his excitement over what he had read in the sands. But along the way back, it came to him that rattlesnakes lived in this country and had nearly taken someone’s life not far from where he was.

He knew very little about rattlesnakes, but from college biology he remembered the study of reptiles and knew they were cold-blooded animals and unable to move about when the weather got cold. He had heard of snake dens where snakes came together and hibernated through the winter. But on a bright and sunny day like today, would snakes come out and sun themselves and be active? And would it bite someone that encountered it?

Now he became obsessed with the possibility that rattlesnakes were out sunning themselves and would bite him if he came too close. He slowed down and started being cautious where he stepped. Their camouflaged skin made them difficult to see. If one were to rattle at him, it would scare the shit out of him. He didn’t like being scared shitless, so he watched his step very closely.

Occasionally, a grasshopper would take flight and spook him with the rattling of its wings. By the time he reached the safety of his rental car, he was relieved but exhausted physically and mentally. He thought, wouldn’t it be ironic if he were to have experienced a snakebite like Teresa Morales? And, if he were to get snakebit, would he too lose a leg? If so, it would mean that a one-legged person was pursuing another one-legged person.

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As he turned the car away from the border to return to Lordsburg, he had returned his thoughts to the mystery of Teresa’s and Pat Brennan’s location. He knew what he had to do next and began formulating a plan to do it.

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**Chapter 38: Determined**

It was late in the afternoon when the FBI agent walked slowly into the Sector Office in Lordsburg. He was worn out and moving slowly, but he still had business to attend to.

Cindy was at the receptionist’s desk in front when he walked in. He could tell that she was arranging her desk in preparation to leave for the day.

“Hello, Agent McNally,” she offered.

“Hi Cindy,” he said quietly.

“Rough day, sir?” she inquired based upon his looks and his movements.

“I would say it was a rough day but productive.”

“Well, that’s good. I think the Chief is in her office if you need to see her.”

“Thanks,” he said as he moved toward Elizabeth’s office.

When he reached the chief’s office, he knocked on the door jamb to announce his arrival but didn’t wait for an invitation to enter. He took a seat across from Elizabeth at her desk.

“Rough day?” she asked.

“That’s what Cindy asked me too. Do I look that bad?”

“You look tired is all, sir.”

“I’m definitely tired. It has been a long day.”

Elizabeth did not respond but instead waited for the agent to describe his day and what were his findings.

“Forgive me if I seem a little cranky, but it’s because I am a little cranky.”

Elizabeth had no idea what the agent would say next. He was obviously unhappy about what he found out today, she thought to herself. She said nothing, waiting for McNally to explain what he was cranky about. He didn’t disappoint her.

“Chief, if you had just shared with your agency what your investigation had uncovered, we wouldn’t be in this mess. None of this would have been necessary.” He was looking Elizabeth directly in the eyes with a glare that called for a response.

“Yes, sir,” is all she could muster. He was right and she knew it, but she offered no explanation for not sharing what she had found out.

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“Is that all you have to say, Elizabeth?” He said he was cranky, and he was.

“Sir, for selfish reasons I did not disclose what I had learned about Teresa Morales and Chief Brennan. I am sorry now. If my neck were a little longer, I would chew my own ass,” she said trying to lighten the mood. His mood wasn’t about to be lightened.

“You know, you can make light of this whole deal, but there was a serious oversight on your part. You were complicit in allowing Teresa Morales to avoid deportation and find refuge in the United States. Not that you were an active participant at the time, but you later uncovered the ruse and did nothing about it. Why did you not report what you knew?”

Elizabeth sat still staring at McNally. She didn’t know what to say, so she said nothing. But after a couple of silent seconds of stare down, the agent continued the one-sided conversation and took it down a different path.

“We know Teresa ended up getting to stay in the United States, but we don’t really know the details of how Brennan pulled it off. But frankly, I don’t care. All I care about now is finding Brennan, and I think if I find Teresa, I will find Brennan. Once I find Brennan, we can get the answers to the questions we need to solve this mystery.”

“Yes, sir.” Elizabeth responded not wanting to interrupt Agent McNally’s rant. He was angry that his investigation hadn’t yet resolved the issues at hand, but he wasn’t done and was determined to continue it until he located Teresa and then Pat. It had now become personal.

“So, here is what we do next,” he said to the Chief more determined than ever.

“I am positive that Teresa Morales is back in Mexico. I found evidence along the border that she was carried to the border by the Pierce family and crossed the border fence into the company of another party on the Mexican side. No way to know who met her there, but I have a feeling where she went.”

“Agent McNally, do you want to share with me where you think she went?”

“Elizabeth, I think someone from her hometown of *Piedras Rojas* met her at the border and transported her back there. “

“And, sir, your intentions are?”

“I am going after her. I’m going to *Piedras Rojas* to find her or find out where she went from there, or find someone, maybe some of her family, that knows where she is if she is not in *Piedras Rojas*.”

“How long is it going to take for you to get the official approval from Washington. I mean you have to request approval based on strong evidence that she is there, right, file the appropriate paperwork and await approval to go into Mexico?”

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“You don’t understand. I’m going to keep tracking her while her trail is hot. I’m not going to wait around for any approvals. That means first thing in the morning I will be driving to *Piedras Rojas*. I’ll take vacation time if I have to. I am determined to find Brennan and think I will be getting very close to doing just that once I get to *Piedras Rojas*.”

“Agent McNally, how can I help you from my end?”

“In the morning, I need for you to call your American contact in El Paso that deals with the Mexican authorities regarding Teresa Morales. Convey to him that Teresa Morales is back in Mexico, and we suspect she is alive and well in her hometown of *Piedras Rojas*. Tell him to tell the Mexicans that we are wrapping up our investigation and a full report will be forthcoming. Stress that everything is well. Understand?”

“Yes, sir, I understand.”

“Good. Now, I need to use one of your computer stations so I can prepare some arrest warrants and extradition orders for the return of Pat Brennan to the United States. I will take them with me fully intending to find Pat Brennan and present the paperwork to the local authorities so they may place him in custody and then be returned to the U. S. with me.”

“Can you do that? I mean, don’t the warrants and extradition papers have to be prepared by the court”

“Technically you are correct. Although the papers I am going to prepare will be bogus, they will be good enough to convince some local Mexican official to assist me in detaining Brennan. I’ll file the proper requests once I get back in the U. S. with him. Now, please get me an official photo of ex-Chief Brennan from his personnel file. I will need it. As far as I know, he is just a ghost. I’ve never met the son-of-a-bitch.”

Elizabeth thought to herself as she listened to the agent’s plan that now it’s McNally that is violating official procedures and breaking the law. And in a very, big way!

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**Chapter 39: The Discovery**

Magdalena Torrez entered the church through the main door off *Piedras Rojas’* central plaza. She proceeded slowly down the main isle of the sanctuary. Then she stopped and respectfully bowed toward the large crucifix looking down on her from its lofty position. She then moved slowly toward the confessional in the side wall.

“Father, I have seen a vision that disturbs me greatly, and Father, I need your interpretation of its meaning, “Magdalena Torrez gently spoke to the indistinguishable person behind the inner wall of the confessional.

“The face of Jesus didn’t appear to you again on a flour tortilla, did it?”

“No Father, this was a very elaborate vision, more like a dream, that floated into my mind like a vapor and formed into beings that I think represented Adam and Eve and the serpent and the Devil, only they weren’t in the Garden of Eden or a paradise but like they had been banished to a wasteland, a desert with thorny bushes and sharp rocks, a waterless place, under a cloudless sky, hot and dry. Was it Hell, Father, that I witnessed in my vision?”

“Sister Magdalena, God may have opened your eyes to an event that has meaning. Can you tell me more, perhaps more detail about the persons you interpreted to be Adam and Eve and the Devil and the serpent you saw in your vision? Was it a snake with limbs or was it limbless?” That was an important detail to know. If it had limbs, God had not yet banished Adam and Eve from the Garden nor punished the serpent to a life of crawling on its belly and breathing dust forever. But if Magdalena ‘s serpent was indeed a snake, God had already punished the serpent and banned Adam and Eve from paradise.

“It was a limbless snake. And the Devil-man had a badge of some kind. Adam appeared as a nice man but older than the woman, the Eve-person. But the weird part of the vision was that the Eve-person only had one leg.”

Father Martin was intrigued by what he had heard and wanted to dig deeper into it. What did it mean? Magdalena Torrez had reported some outlandish spiritual visons and apparitions over the years, but although many viewed her as a whacky old woman, some in the community thought that she had been blessed with a gift and that her visions had meaning and weren’t to just be made fun of and cast aside.

“And you think this was an inspired vision, not a night-time dream?” Father Martin asked.

“Father, it was very clear to me. More than a dream. It was like I was awake. It seemed as if I was there, watching it unfold.”

“Bless you, my sister. I will ask God for an interpretation, and I will pray that God tells you of its meaning. But do me a favor, will you?”

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“What’s that, Father?”

“Go straight to God yourself and ask for an explanation. If He talks to you and explains its meaning to you, please let me know.”

“I will, Father.” And she crossed herself.

FBI Agent McNally was well into his trip to *Piedras Rojas.* Teresa Morales was enjoying her first full day being back home in *Piedras Rojas*, visiting with her father, showing off baby Patrick, and spending time with her saint, Pat Brennan. In the afternoon, Pat had to go back to work to cook and tend bar and perform whatever duties were required at the *Paisano* Bar. Rosalinda, however, had taken the day off from work at the *Paisano* to assist Teresa get settled at home and take Teresa around town to see various old acquaintances and run some errands. They had always been close and gotten along with each other. Now they were totally enjoying each other and time with their failing father. The Luis Morales home was indeed filled with love.

As evening approached, the *Paisano* began filling up with eating and drinking patrons. The mood was festive as it usually was when a collection of characters assembled. Many young lovelies were out on the town, and Eusebio Valdarama had cash in his pocket and was to have a busy, successful night.

“Gordo,” Roberto Montoya whispered into Eusebio’s ear at his table,” be careful with so many young lovelies because if you do it too much, your *chorizo* will fall off and you will have to squat when you pee, *mi amigo*.”

“It’s worth the risk,” Eusebio replied with a wide grin on his face.

D. R. Wailes, a sales representative from El Paso for GrowSource, an agricultural supply company that sold seed, fertilizers, pesticides, and supplies to many of the farmers in the area, made a sales trip to *Piedras Rojas* once a month, and he was in town making sales calls and now entertaining some of his customers at the Paisano with food and drink. Called “doc” because of *his initials, Wailes was one of the few gringos that was ever seen in the Paisano.*

Albert Munoz, the *El* *Paisano* owner, who had come in early to drink and socialize, anticipated a busy evening was ahead and ordered Nado Gomez to assume most of the cooking duties so that the Saint could handle the drink orders and the bar patrons. It was lively inside the *Paisano* as a large crowd for aweekday night was building. Albert might even have to work to help keep up with business.

Agent McNally arrived in *Piedras Rojas* in late afternoon. He had had an unremarkable drive, but he continued to be driven by the prospect of locating ex-Chief Brennan and bringing him to justice. Brennan needed to be punished for what he had done and pay for all the trouble McNally was having to go through.

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When the agent pulled into town, he wasn’t sure where to begin. He drove around and located the downtown area. There was a historic-looking hotel near the central plaza that he entered to get a room for the night. Once he was checked-in and settled in his room, McNally pulled the portfolio with the Teresa Morales file in it from his briefcase. He flipped through the file until he came to the photo of ex-Chief Pat Brennan. He studied the face on the photo carefully. He would never forget the face looking back at him.

The agent needed to decompress from the drive and collect his thoughts about the next steps he would take. A cold beer sounded good and a good way to relax. He closed the file and returned it to his briefcase.

The agent went by the front desk to ask where close-by he might grab a beer. The desk attendant told him of the *Paisano* bar being just a few doors down. He mentioned a few other bars that the agent took note of, but McNally figured he would start at the closest one, the *Paisano.*

As he approached the front door to the *Paisano,* he could hear the loudness inside. It sounded busy. He stood outside the bar door rethinking about going into a place full of locals. The agent felt that he would not fit in. He didn’t speak or understand Spanish, so who could he converse with? It might be crowded inside, but he would be alone.

McNally opened the door to peak in. Most of the tables were occupied, but there were a few open spots at the bar. And then he noticed the man tending bar. He looks like a gringo. If so, I can converse with him in English and maybe find out if he knows where the Luis Morales family lives, the place where a one-legged daughter may now live.

The agent entered the bar and headed toward an opening at the bar. As he approached, the man behind the bar began to look familiar. As he took a stool at the bar, he was sure that the man on the other side was the ghost he had never seen but for whom he searched: ex-Lordsburg Sector Chief Pat Brennan. McNally whispered to himself, “You gotta be shittin’ me!”

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**Chapter 40: Impending Custody**

**(Present Time)**

Following the confrontation in the bar with FBI Special Agent McNally, Pat’s head was again swimming with negative thoughts. He was visibly upset. And why wouldn’t he be? An FBI Special Agent just magically appears in the *El Paisano* from nowhere and threatens Pat with arrest and return to the United States to face severe consequences such as fines and prison time. If that were not enough, he would have to leave Teresa and baby Patrick behind for an extended period if not forever. This new and wonderful life he had found was now in jeopardy.

Pat’s first instinct was to run, to flee back to the United States and get lost there. But he remembered the agent’s words: “And don’t think of running. I will find you wherever you go.” Pat believed the agent meant what he had said.

He only had a few hours to arrive at a solution. He needed help, but to whom could he turn for advice, or better yet, a plan of action?

Pat went to the bar telephone and called Rosalinda, who was off duty at home. Teresa answered the phone. “Hello,” she answered.

“Teresa, we’ve got a real problem. The FBI agent from the United States that has been investigating your disappearance was just here at the bar. He doesn’t want you. He wants me. He is confident that I am ex-Chief Pat Brennen. I did not admit that I am, but he figured it out. Anyway, he was here for about 45 minutes having a few beers and asking me questions. He is so confident that I am Pat Brennan that he requested that I turn myself in and return with him to the United States for violating the laws of the United States based on his belief that I didn’t deport you to Mexico as I reported.”

“Oh, my dear Saint Patrick, you no go with him,” Teresa responded with anxiety in her voice.

“No, but he said that he has all the evidence he needs to prepare extradition papers and will come tomorrow with the local police to arrest me and take me back.”

“Can he do that? Can he come to our country, not his country, and take you away?”

“The United States and Mexico have what’s called an extradition treaty that allows suspected criminals to be taken back to the country where the crime was committed. If he can convince the police that I am the guy he is looking for, that he has the evidence needed for them to extradite me, he can take me back with him.”

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“Oh Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! I love you. He no take you. You belong here with us. What can we do?” Pat paused before answering. He didn’t know what to say. “I don’t know” he answered dejectedly.

Pat heard Rosalinda’s concerned voice in the background. “What’s going on? Is that Pat? What’s the matter?”

Pat could hear Teresa excitedly trying to give Rosalinda a short version of what Pat had said. Then Pat heard Rosalinda say, “give me the phone, gimme. Let me talk.”

“Pat, Teresa tells me an American officer came to take you back to the U.S.”

“Yes, and he is coming back tomorrow to get me, assuming he can convince the local police that I am the guy he has been looking for. He has several convincing pieces of information that I am ex-Chief Pat Brennan. It doesn’t look good for me.”

“Let me think, let me think a minute” Rosalinda said already deep in thought, searching for the best action to take. After a tense few seconds, Rosalinda said “just try to relax. Let me call some friends of mine at the police station to see just how serious this is. I will try to come up with a plan. Just keep working and when you get home tonight, we’ll talk about what to do.”

Pat wasn’t reassured by Rosalinda’s words, but they did comfort him in knowing Rosalinda was so concerned for him. She was a true friend. “Okay. Thanks, Rosalinda.”

Pat was preoccupied about the events of the evening and anxious about tomorrow, but as the bar business was slowing down for the evening, he began washing and cleaning and sweeping and stocking so he could close for the night.

FBI Special Agent McNally was pleased with himself. Sure, he had gotten lucky to have stumbled onto Pat Brennan, but McNally was proud that his investigative skills were still sharp, and he had solved the mystery. He could not wait until tomorrow to bring the Teresa Morales-Pat Brennan episode to a conclusion.

When Pat got home, Rosalinda was more upbeat than Pat expected. She had spoken with the local police chief, Diego Molina, whom she knew. She filled him in on the entire situation from when Pat had found and saved the life of her sister, found her residency in the U. S., and smuggled her back to Mexico before being found by the authorities. Rosalinda also told the chief of the love that existed between Teresa and Pat. Molina didn’t specify what he would do, but he told Rosalinda that he had an idea. He put Rosalinda’s mind to rest.

Rosalinda also called Albert Munoz to tell him of Pat’s predicament. Albert Munoz said he would contact his friends and customers and ask them to assemble at the bar at 9:00 in the morning as a show of support for Pat and protest his removal from Mexico. He would open the bar to accommodate the patrons and have *posole* and *burritos* available to serve. He

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anticipated a lot of business. By the time the authorities would arrive to get Pat, there should be quite a reception party waiting for them.

After Rosalinda had shared with Pat and Teresa what she thought would happen the next day, she suggested all go to bed. Tomorrow would be busy, and everyone needed to get some rest. A lot would happen on what just might be a historic day in *Piedras Rojas*.

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**Chapter 41: Revolution and Resolution**

The next morning began early. Rosalinda, Teresa, and Pat were up and dressed and ready for what was to happen today, whatever it was.

Rosalinda said to Teresa, “Come with me. We need to talk to Papa.”

“What about?” Teresa replied.

“Come on” Rosalinda answered as she started for her father’s refuge, his old lounger. He was still sound asleep as the two women approached.

“Papa, Papa,” Rosalinda said quietly as she gently shook Mr. Morales’ shoulder.

He suddenly opened his eyes almost wild with confusion. “What, what is it?” he asked excitedly having been awakened from a deep sleep.

“Papa, it’s okay. Sorry to wake you.” She continued to sooth the old man until he had his wits about him. “It’s Pat. The American federales want to take him back to the United States. We need to mobilize the troops to protect Saint Pat from being captured and taken prisoner.”

“Help me up” Mr. Morales said. “I need to ready myself. Where’s my pistol and my hat”

“I’ll get them. Go with Teresa to get a drink of water and splash some water on your face to wake up.” Teresa gently took her father by the arm and slowly guided him into the kitchen where she filled his little jelly jar with water and handed it to him. He drank of the water in small sips while Teresa wetted a dish towel and dabbed his face and neck with it to fully awaken him.

Rosalinda entered the kitchen with Mr. Morales’ gun belt holstering his derelict pistol with no firing pin and no bullets, his broad-brimmed straw hat, and his makeshift uniform with the old medals pinned on the shirt.

Working together, they got Mr. Morales into his baggy uniform. Rosalinda placed the gun belt around her father’s waist and buckled it. Teresa placed his warped hat on his head, which he adjusted to fit. In his sagging pants, old faded too-large shirt, gun belt, and crooked hat, Mr. Morales looked like anything but a general in Pancho Villa’s northern army, but that is exactly who he thought he was as the gentle cloud of dementia enveloped his brain.

“Okay, let’s go, troops” Rosalinda commanded as she headed for the front door and the old pickup outside in the yard. Mr. Morales shuffled along behind her with Teresa by his side.

Once at the pickup, Teresa helped her father onto the front seat on the passenger’s side. Rosalinda climbed into the driver’s side and got the engine running. She backed out of the dirt

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yard onto the dirt road and turned toward town and the *Paisano* Bar with Pat and Teresa following her dust cloud in the Bronco.

At the Paisano, they entered through the back door into the kitchen and proceeded into the bar, which already had a good crowd. Albert and Nado were hustling around serving *posole* and burritos and beer to an early but joyous crowd. No one was exactly sure what the occasion was, but when Rosalinda, Teresa on crutches, “*Generalissimo*” Morales, and the Saint entered the room, everyone in the place knew something big was up.

The patrons began shouting greetings. “*Generalissimo,”* “Saint,”” Rosalinda,” they shouted and clapped. Rosalinda and Pat waved at the gathering inside the bar. Mr. Morales just shuffled in with his eyes down. Pat immediately went to work bussing tables and collecting empty bottles from the tables before going to assist Albert and Nado with serving patrons.

Rosalinda slowly escorted Mr. Morales to a chair at a table. “Sit here, Papa,” she said as she helped him into the chair. She then went behind the bar and got her father a bottle of beer and took it to him to sip on. “Here, Papa,” she said setting the beer down in front of him.

“When is the battle?” the old man asked.

“Soon, Papa.” Rosalinda replied.

Teresa was making her way across the room to join her father at the table. Not all the patrons remembered Teresa from before, and no one had seen her since losing her left leg. A murmur of conversation flowed like a wave after her. Some speculated that somehow the Saint was involved. Where did he come from? Where has she been? Are they together?

Once Teresa was settled in a chair next to her father, Rosalinda called for quiet in the room. Then she addressed the assembled:

“Thank you for coming out early today. Most of you wonder what is going on, why did we open early and ask you to come. Let me first say, this is not a celebration. In fact, it is a somber day. That is because an American *federale* is in town to arrest our friend, the Saint, and take him away from *Piedras Rojas* and back to the United States.

“Do you want to know how he got the nickname the saint?” Rosalinda asked the crowd.

“Tell us, tell us,”a chant began.

“The reason he is referred to as the Saint is because he saved the life of Teresa, my little sister sitting back there with Papa,” and she pointed in their direction. “She had suffered a rattlesnake bite and surely would have died had he not found her and carried her to safety. The snakebite was so bad that her leg had to be removed.”

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She continued, “Because the Saint didn’t deport Teresa back to Mexico and found a way for her to stay in the United States, he has been hunted by the American authorities. Now he has been discovered here, and tomorrow he will be taken back. We love the Saint and don’t want him taken from us. My little sister loves the Saint and wants him to stay and help raise her baby, baby Patrick. We are hoping that a show of support for the Saint might help in some way.”

With that, Rosalinda went over to Pat and gave him a hug and kissed him on the cheek. The room erupted in cheers, and all began chanting “Let him stay, let him stay!”

*“Generalissimo* “Morales joined in the chant, but because he didn’t understand what the crowd was chanting, he chanted “*Viva Mexico, Viva Mexico.”*

“What good is all of this going to do for me? The American will have the right to take me away regardless of what the people of *Piedras Rojas* want,” Pat whispered to Rosalinda as the chants continued.

“Yes, but will he serve the papers on you in front of large group of people here that are in support of you, knowing how upset that would make them? Besides, what did you do wrong? Teresa is back in Mexico and…” Pat cut her off.

“He doesn’t know she is here. He thinks she probably is but hasn’t seen her.”

“He’ll find out soon enough that she is here, and then what will be his proof that you didn’t return her to Mexico? He won’t have any, and our police won’t be obligated to honor the extradition request.”

“God, I hope you are right, Rosalinda.”

Word had spread out of the bar and onto the streets of *Piedras Rojas* that the American *federales* were coming to take an exiled American back to the United States against his will. Most had never heard of the man referred to as the Saint, and no one knew the story behind the man and his nickname other than the Morales family, but as word spread from mouth to mouth, the more the legend of the Saint grew and the more it inflamed the passions of the citizens. No Americans were going to come into their country to remove the beloved Saint, whoever that is.

The crowd soon extended to the central plaza down the street. As the crowd numbers grew, the atmosphere downtown took on a festive feel. Rosalinda had gone to the plaza to share the story of the Saint and encourage all to act peacefully as a sign of respect for the Saint.

A local band of musicians arrived and set up in the central plaza gazebo. With their accordion, guitars, base, and trumpets laying down traditional festival sounds, a sense of nationalism spread through the gathering. Although morning on a weekday, citizens continued streaming into the plaza. More word of mouth.

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About 9:40 AM, a single police car on its way to the *Paisano* slowly maneuvered though the large crowd that was spilling out of the plaza and into the adjacent streets*. Piedras Rojas* police officer Martin Villareal was driving, police chief Diego Molina was in the passenger seat, and FBI agent James McNally was in the back seat. The flashing lights were operating, but the siren remained silent.

“What’s with all these people,” agent McNally asked the other two in the car.

Officer Villareal answered, “maybe it has something to do with this saint that you seek.” Police Chief Molina said nothing, but he knew the real reason for the crowd: A protest against returning the Saint to the U.S.

Officer Villareal continued, “Not this many people even know of the Saint, do they, Chief? Just the bar customers, right? I mean, why would they gather to celebrate someone they don’t even know and a gringo at that?”

“We will find out soon enough,” Chief Molina replied. He knew his people well enough to know that there were many more followers than leaders, and if they had the time and learned of a gathering, they would join it whether they knew the reason or not. It offered a break from their dull, rote lives. Someone must have a good reason for orchestrating the event, and whatever that reason, it was good enough for others to join in.

Mc Nally remained silent, having no clue about the reason for the gathering. The car continued at a snail’s pace through the crowd toward the bar.

As the police car finally arrived at its destination, all three occupants knew immediately the reason for the gathering. A large, white bedsheet hung from the front wall of the bar proclaiming in Spanish in bold, red letters “Leave the Saint in Mexico.”

The locals surrounded the police car as it came to a stop in front of the bar. They were chanting “Leave the Saint alone, leave the Saint alone.” They were not violent or riotous, as they had been instructed by Rosalinda. They were, however, fervent in their passion to allow the Saint to remain in Mexico.

“Now what?” McNally asked nervously from the backseat.

“Well, we came to take Brennan in, and that’s what we are going to do” the police chief stated authoritatively. “Let’s go,” he added as he opened his car door. The others did the same, pushing the crowd back away from the police car with the opening of the doors. “Move back. No funny stuff” shouted Officer Villareal. The chanting continued but even louder than before.

Like Moses parting the Red Sea, the chief moved toward the front door of the bar as the crowd parted to let him pass. Agent McNally and Officer Villareal followed closely behind.

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Sitting in the chair just outside the door sat Mr. Morales. Upon seeing the police officers in uniform, Mr. Morales, imagining them as reinforcements sent by Pancho, attempted to stand, but was too weak to lift himself from the chair. Molina assisted Mr. Morales out of his chair, popped to attention, and saluted the stooped over old man, who returned the salute with one of his own.

“Pancho send reinforcements from the south, *que no?”* the old man asked*.*

“Yes, “*’Generalissimo,*” we have come to join the insurrection.” The Chief replied playing along with the old man’s perception fueled by his dementia. “We need to enter the war room to plan our offensive moves” Chief Molina continued. He then gave another salute to Mr. Morales and then helped him sit back down in his chair.

“What was that all about?” Agent McNally asked since he knew nothing of the local legend of “*Generalissimo*” Morales.

“That old timer is Teresa Morales’ father, and he thinks he was a general in Pancho Villa’s northern army. He is suffering from dementia, so it’s easier to play along with him and let him be.”

The three men crowded their way into the packed bar. Most were already drinking beer and became boisterous as the men entered. The Chief told those assembled in the bar that he had to take Pat Brennan, the Saint, to the police station to sort everything out. No need for violence, and if anyone interfered, they would be arrested. That quieted the bar customers, and Pat came from behind the bar where he had been serving customers and presented himself to the Chief, who handcuffed him.

“You could have made it easier on yourself if you had come with me yesterday” McNally snarled. If you had just told me where Teresa Morales was…”

“Do you want to know,” Pat cut in?

“Of course, I do. What the hell do you think this is all about?” McNally snapped.

“Teresa? Teresa, where are you?” Pat called out across the bar.

From one of the back tables where Rosalinda was now sitting, Teresa pushed back her chair, mounted her crutches, and started sliding through the crowd toward Pat. She had tears in her eyes as she slid up close to Pat and leaned against him. Pat too was tearing up when he leaned his head against Teresa’s head, unable to hug her because of the handcuffs.

Agent McNally just stared in disbelief at the mystery woman he had only heard about. Not that it mattered, but he was taken by her beauty.

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Pat regained his composure and addressed the crowd in the bar. “It has been my pleasure to have been a part of the *Paisano* and to meet all of you and make so many friends.” Then looking at Mr. Munoz who remained behind the bar, Pat said “Thank you, Albert, for taking me in and giving me a home here. And, Rosalinda, you and *Generalissimo* Morales have been a family to me, something I’ve not had in some time. Thank you for all you have done for me. I will miss all of you.”

Pat then turned to face Teresa and looking directly into her teary eyes, he said quietly, “Thanks you for all you have done for me and your love for me. Everything will work out. Take care and give baby Patrick a kiss for me too,” and he kissed Teresa gently on the lips. He too had tears in his eyes.

The assembled were caught up in the emotion of the tender moment between these two people to which so much had happened. The room was silent, and there was no shortage of tears among the gathered.

The Chief tapped Pat on the shoulder as a signal that it was time to go. “Let’s go, Saint.” Teresa released her embrace and with a final peck on Teresa’s cheek, Pat turned and was led out the door through the outside crowd to the police car. He was placed in the back seat, and agent McNally climbed in the back seat on the opposite side. The two Mexican officers got up front with Villareal again in the driver’s seat. He started the engine and began slowly maneuvering through the crowd toward the police station. The chanting that had subsided while the officers were inside the bar began again. Pat was engulfed in sadness but honored at the crowd’s acknowledgement. He was unable to wave because of the handcuffs on his hands.

“*Seno*r Brennan, when we get to the station, Judge Melendez will meet with us to issue the official papers to return you to the United States,” said Chief Molina. Pat sadly replied, “Okay.” McNally smiled but he wasn’t sure why. Although proud of himself for finding Brennan, he felt a touch of compassion for breaking up this beautiful relationship.

Upon arrival at the police station, all exited the car and the chief led Pat through the front door, down the hall to a room with the nameplate Judge Melendez on the wall outside the door. All entered the judge’s chambers to find Judge Jorge Melendez seated at his expansive desk. The chief uncuffed Pat.

“Judge, we have Mr. Pat Brennan, known locally as the Saint, here for processing.”

“Thank you, Chief. *Seno*r Brennan”, the judge said as he extended his hand toward Pat and then shook hands with the others. Then they were instructed to take a chair and sit down.

Addressing agent McNally first, the judge said “Sir, you are from the United States government and are here to take possession of Mr. Brennan I presume, is that correct?”

“Yes, your honor, that’s correct.”

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Then addressing the police chief, the judge inquired “Any problems taking Mr. Brennan into custody today, Chief?”

“No, judge, Mr. Brennan was very cooperative. However, the citizens of our fine town gathered in the plaza and in the *Paisano* to rally behind Mr. Brennan and express their displeasure with the intentions to return him to the U. S. Also, it was a very emotional goodbye to the Morales family, with whom Mr. Brennan has been staying since arriving in *Piedras Rojas*. It was Teresa Morales, the girl that lost a leg due to a rattlesnake bite while trying to enter the United States illegally, that named Mr. Brennan the Saint because he found her and carried her out of the mountains and got her to the hospital for medical treatment. He saved her life and the life of the baby she was carrying. She was pregnant at the time.”

“Is that correct, Mr. Brennan?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“And do you like *Piedras Rojas*, Mr. Brennan?” the judge continued.

“Very much so, your honor. I like the town, the people, and the Morales family has been my family since arriving here.” Pat replied with sadness in his voice. “I am sad I have to leave” he added.

The room became quiet as the judge entered a contemplative mood, mulling over the responses he had received to his questions and the paperwork before him. After what seemed a long pause, the judge finally said “Mr. Brennan, you are under arrest for inciting a riot and unlawful assembly.”

Everyone in the room was stunned at the judge’s statement, especially Pat. Not Chief Molina, however.

“But your honor, I didn’t…” The judge cut Pat off in mid-sentence.

“Quiet, quiet, Mr. Brennan” the judge said as he held up a hand toward Pat to keep him from continuing. The judge already knew what Pat was going to say…that he had nothing to do with creating the protesting crowd in the bar, in the streets, or in the plaza.

Then turning to Agent McNally, the judge said, “Mr. Brennan has violated the laws of the Republic of Mexico and must serve out his sentence for these crimes before he can be extradited to the United States.” The judge paused briefly, then continued. “You might as well return to the United States without Mr. Brennan. The Saint must remain here to serve out his term.”

McNally sat a minute in shock turning his stare from the judge to Pat to the police chief and back to the judge. No one said a word in anticipation of McNally’s response.

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“Your honor, I can return for Mr. Brennan once he has served his sentence here. So, sir, may I ask what his sentence will be?”

The judge cleared his throat. All sat in anticipation of the judge’s answer. “Life.”

McNally couldn’t believe what he had just heard. He just sat quietly taking in its meaning. “But your honor…” but the judge held up a hand to stop the agent in mid-sentence. “I have made my ruling, Mr. McNally.”

Then the judge extended a hand toward Agent McNally. “Would you please give me your extradition orders, Mr. McNally?” McNally removed the papers from his portfolio and handed them to the judge. Judge Melendez reviewed them quickly, tore them in half, and handed them back to the agent.

The judge then came to his feet, a sign that the meeting was over. The others followed his lead. He shook hands with the police officers and shook hands with Agent McNally who was still in shock at what had just happened. Turning to Pat, he said “I have heard of the one they call the Saint. It is a pleasure to meet you, Saint. You are now in the custody of Chief Molina. Good luck.” He shook Pat’s hand warmly with a gentle smile on his face.

Then, looking back at Agent McNally, he remarked, “Enjoy the rest of your time in Mexico. I hope you like our country.” He then turned and walked through a side door into his inner sanctum.

McNally got in his government vehicle and began his return drive to the United States, his brain enveloped in a fog of incomprehension. What the hell just happened back there, he thought?

Officer Villareal went to a phone to call the *Paisano* to tell Rosalinda of the final disposition of the Pat Brennan case. Pat would be returned to the bar very soon.

Chief Molina escorted Pat into his office. Without taking the time to sit down, the chief said, “Mr. Brennan, Saint, your sentence has been suspended for a lack of evidence. You are free to go. I will see you again, probably in the *Paisano*,” he said as they shook hands. “Take care, my friend. We are happy that you chose *Piedras* *Rojas*.”

As Pat walked out of the Chief’s office, he met Villareal in the hallway. “Come with me,” the officer said smiling. “I’ll give you a ride to the *Paisano*.”

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**Chapter 42: The Judgement of Angels**

It was a beautiful wedding. Not lavish and a bit untraditional, but beautiful. There was no rehearsal dinner, there were no formal invitations sent, and there was no honeymoon planned after the wedding ceremony. Costs for the wedding were paid for by the generosity of the community because of the love for the two principals and the Morales family.

The event took place on the Saturday following New Year’s Day in the Roman Catholic Church and spilled into the plaza. Although winter, the weather was sunny and warm allowing for outdoor activities. Teresa wore an altered version of her mother’s wedding dress, white but with bright, loud flowers sewed on the front and shoulders. Teresa had wanted the dress altered to represent Spring and the beginning of a new life.

Pat Brennan bought a cheap suit that would be appropriate for the occasion. Baby Patrick served as the ring bearer, but because he was still in infancy, he was carried down the aisle by the young son of one of Rosalinda’s friends who stashed the ring in his pocket so it wouldn’t get lost.

The daughter of another of Rosalinda’s friends was the flower girl. Rosalinda was Teresa’s bridesmaid, and Albert Munoz served as Pat’s best man. *Generalissimo* Morales served his daughter as father-of-the-bride with the assistance of Nado Gomez, who was charged with getting him down the aisle and propping him up during the vows.

Citizens were invited to attend mass and the ceremony in the church, and following the sacraments, most spilled into the plaza to continue the celebration. Attendees were asked to bring a food dish into the plaza for a pot-luck dinner following the ceremony, and many also brought modest gifts for the newly-weds, although asked not to do so. The atmosphere in the plaza was festive but orderly as a show of respect for the Saint and his new bride. Police Chief Molina and Officer Villareal milled around in the crowd to partake of the festivities and ensure that order was kept. Even Judge Melendez attended the festivities.

Pat, Teresa, and baby Patrick rented another house nearby Mr. Morales’s home. Members of the Morales-Brennan family were very close to one another. Teresa and baby Patrick attended to Mr. Morales off and on during the day. Albert Munoz decided to sell the *Paisano* toRosalinda and Pat. Using some of his retirement funds as a down-payment, Pat made the deal with Rosalinda as his managing partner in the operation of the bar. Mr. Munoz carried the balance of the purchase price with very favorable terms. He wanted his bar to be operated as he had and remain a popular destination for the locals to eat and drink. Now he was able to socialize with his old buddies in the bar and remained a regular in it. And, as part of the sales contract, all of Albert’s drinks were on the house forever.

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FBI Special Agent McNally, upon his return to the United States, completed his investigative file on the Morales-Brennan case. In it, he alleged that both Teresa and Pat Brennan were somewhere in Mexico, maybe together, maybe not, but that their trails had grown cold, and it wasn’t worth continuing the investigation since Teresa was back in Mexico where she belonged. He didn’t implicate the Pierces or Elizabeth Hollingsworth in his report, just Pat Brennan. McNally retired from the FBI as soon as he was eligible and took up water painting after completing a class at his local community college. He worked at it but wasn’t very good.

Chief Hollingsworth did well as the Lordsburg Sector Chief, but her career stalled after Agent McNally submitted his report on the Morales-Brennan investigation. She later transferred to the Internal Revenue Service to become a supervisor in the criminal investigations department in Baltimore, MD. She did well at the IRS but made many enemies as she progressed up the career ladder.

Mr. Morales continued to fail, but the vision of battles along-side Pancho Villa waned, and he found contentment with Rosalinda, Teresa, the Saint, and especially baby Patrick. While Rosalinda and Teresa were making tamales one evening, Teresa found her father unresponsive. He died peacefully in his old, frayed lounger with a gentle smile on his face. Rosalinda and Teresa, though heart-broken at his passing, knew he had been visited by God and taken to be eternally with Maria, the love of his life and mother of their beautiful children.

Mr. Morales’ body was dressed in his makeshift military uniform, and although he never served in the military other than in his diseased mind, he was buried with military honors in the *Piedras Rojas* central cemetery along-side his wife, Maria. A large crowd came to pay their respects.

Mr. Morales was rememberedas a gentle soul, God-fearing, loyal to Mexico, the people of  *Piedras* *Rojas,* and especially his family. Years later, the legend of *Generalissimo* Morales, a beautiful one-legged woman, and a Saint would be remembered in the legends and lore of  *Piedras* *Rojas*.

**Chapter 43: Epilogue**

The Saint of Enchiladaville is a work of fiction. Although the United States Border Patrol is a real government agency important in controlling illegal immigration and providing safety to the citizens of the United States, the structure of the agency as portrayed in this story is not accurate.

The United States is a nation of laws, and the rule of law is one of the main tenants on which this great county was founded. The men and women of the Border Patrol have a challenging mission, and they face difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances while attempting to achieve this mission. This story is dedicated to these fine people and the work that they do to secure our borders and protect us all.

Mike Carrigan

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