

### Chapter 3: Versions of Events

As promised, the kitchen was spotless. The house was silent, peaceful. Just how she wanted it for her and Norman. Someone had put plywood over the back entry until they could get the door replaced. No one could have guessed a bloody shoot-out happened the night before. Norma was relieved, feeling they could move on from this. Just a creep breaking in last night, now one very dead creep. It was still their time to start over here in White Pine Bay. The two of them.

“It’s all gonna be good, Mother.” Norman put his arm around her waist, guiding them both upstairs and to her room. “Nothing like that’s going to happen again. I won’t let it. I’ll be here to protect you, from now on.”

She smiled at him, wrapped her arm around his waist and leaned against him. “I feel so much better hearing that, sweetie. I won’t let anything bad happen to you either. It’s you and me.”

He dropped a kiss to her lips. “Forever. I love you so much.” he whispered, pressing his forehead to hers.

“I love you too. More than anything in this world. All I’ve ever wanted was for life to be beautiful for you.”

“It is with you, Mother. Every day with you is beautiful. We’ll be okay, as long as we’re together.”

She ran her thumb gently down the center of his bottom lip. “As long as we’re together...nothing bad can really happen.” She gave him another brief kiss and a look of promise in her eyes. “Come on, let’s go get cleaned up, make sure we have enough time.”

They went up the stairs hand-in-hand, through her bedroom and into her bathroom, kicking off their shoes on the way. Norma shut and locked the door behind them (something they were always going to have to remember). She pulled his sweater over his head and started unbuttoning his shirt, sliding her hands over his chest, loving the feel of his soft skin.

“Mmmm...god Mother that feels so good!” He undid the buttons on her blouse; she pulled it off and tossed it aside; she never wanted to wear that one again. She reached over and opened the shower door, turning on the water so it could start heating up. She unbuckled his belt and undid his pants as he captured her lips in a deep kiss. “Norman..mmm..I love you..I’ll always take care of you.”

He unzipped her skirt, let it fall. She kicked it aside, pulled down his pants; they both pushed and kicked those aside. He stripped off her camisole, leaving her in only her bra and panties. She felt through his boxers he was very aroused. She pulled them down, freeing him, let them drop, wrapped her hand around his hard cock and started stroking him like she knew he loved.

“Ohhh my god!! Mother!! I love you!!”

“ I love you too. I want you. Right now.”

She kissed her way slowly down his chest and belly, got on her knees and took him in her mouth, loving the whimpers of pleasure coming from him. Norman couldn’t remember why he’d taken off with those high school girls in the first place. He had all he wanted, all he needed, right here at home: his soul mate. It wasn’t their first time, but every time still felt like the first.

The bathroom was filling with steam from the running shower. She kept sucking along his whole length, feeling him get harder in her mouth. His breath was getting heavy as he got closer, finally came. She swallowed, wanting every bit of him in

every way. With him, it had been the first times she'd ever done that. She'd always refused to with any other man. Not with his father, not with anyone. Only him; he was the only one. She got up and guided his hands to unhook her bra, let it fall. She slipped her panties down and pulled him into the shower with her.

"Come on, sweetie. Wash me down." She grinned, handed him the body wash and the sponge that went with it. He eagerly covered her with suds, and she grabbed him around the shoulders, kissed him hard, pressing her body all along his, lathering him up too. He'd smell like her, but was that such a bad thing? Did it even matter? They didn't think it did. They had their own little bit of paradise, the two of them. Neither of them could ever love anyone else. Ever.

As they finished showering, eventually got out, dried off, and went to get fresh clothes on, they'd completely forgotten any worry over the meeting they had with the FBI.

~~~~~

Agent Spoole had made a big mistake, as far as the White Pine Bay investigation was concerned. She knew this as she skimmed the coroner's report that had been emailed to her shortly after she finished the phone call with Norma Bates. Yes, it was self-defense, and yes it was (arguably) justifiable use of deadly force. But it had also thrown a huge wrench into the case. If only she'd put Keith Summers down with a shot to the shoulder or the leg. As soon as the doctor cleared him, she could've hauled him into the command post's interview room and grilled him until he broke. She knew he would've eventually slipped and said enough to incriminate himself, giving the task force enough grounds for a search warrant on the motel. Not to mention enough for them to arrest him.

*As it is, we now have exactly jack-shit as far as probable cause on that place.* She only confirmed this as she read through the latest field reports from the other

surveillance spots that were suspected as holding cells for trafficked women. All of them: a whole lot of nothing.

*Duncan wouldn't have screwed up like this, and even if he had: he'd know what to do now.* Agent Spoole wished crazily for a second that she could call him, but of course that was out of the question.

There was only one other option. Agent Spoole turned off her laptop and strode out of her makeshift office into the bullpen. Her team of agents had set up their command center in an inconspicuous “semi-furnished” rent-by-the-month office space on the far north end of one of White Pine Bay’s main streets. “Semi-furnished” actually meant a handful of battered desks and office chairs, but thankfully plenty of outlets for everyone to hook up their phones and computers--mainly what they needed. The place consisted of a small reception area no one really used, leading to a large open room that served as the bullpen, with a small office for the SAIC on the left side and another room that served as the interrogation room on the right. Although the P.C. term for it was “interview room.”

The bullpen was dominated by several white boards covered with suspect photos, maps, hand-drawn charts of suspect connections, and various other notes related to the trafficking-ring investigation in White Pine Bay. Agent Spoole plugged her laptop into a projector at the front of the room and pulled up an interactive satellite map on the wall screen.

“All right, morning briefing! That means all of you! Put the goddamn phones away during briefings; I’ve already said I don’t want to see them!” Agent Spoole could make her voice fill a room when she wanted to. Those who were wise shut up and listened to her. When there were 14 male agents and only two other female agents besides herself, she had to be this tough and demanding to command their respect.

“In light of recent events, we temporarily have less to go on than we might have had 24 hours ago. So, for now we’re all going to do some good old-fashioned gum-shoeing until we dig up some viable leads. I don’t have any doubts we will. All of us will spread out over this three-mile radius to the north, east, and south of the Seafairer Motel. Start knocking on every door and questioning every resident about that place and its late owner. Someone had to have seen or heard something suspicious at some point. If they clam up and start acting suspicious themselves, go get a warrant, go back, and put some heat on them. If they then start getting resistant or belligerent, haul them in here on a suspicion-of-obstruction charge. Any questions?”

There were none. Agent Spoole spent the next half hour handing out specific locations to each pair of agents. She then dismissed the briefing, made herself a second cup of coffee, and went back to her office. Passing Agent Rivera’s desk, she told him, “I’m going to be on a Skype call until the Bates get here at 10. Unless there’s a major break in the case, or the building catches fire, or anything along those lines, don’t bother me. Got it?”

He got it. She shut her office door, put her laptop back on her desk, and signed in to the remote access point for any documents she had stored on her home desktop back in her empty Bethesda, Maryland apartment. She located the files she wanted, downloaded them, and sent them to the wireless printer. Agent Spoole then pulled them out and sat staring at them for several minutes: her adoption papers. Her birth parents were listed as one “Edmund and Francine Calhoun.” The names meant nothing specific to her, at least not so far. She also had copies of their last known address and phone numbers, though those could be different by now. She’d wanted to contact them over the last 15 or so years, but she’d been too afraid to. Until now. Before she lost her nerve, she logged into the internal FBI database and did a query for birth and marriage certificates for those two names in the Akron, Ohio area.

While the search was processing, Emma S. recalled a conversation she'd had with her father years ago, not long after she graduated from Quantico. He'd said, "You can always look for them if you want to, and you'd have our blessing. Just don't unlock doors unless you're prepared to go through them, sweetheart." No words rang truer at this moment. Emma S. opened her eyes and looked at the results. What she saw made her world tilt more off center:

Children: Calhoun, Caleb John. DOB 11-22-71

Calhoun, Norma Louise. DOB 8-6-74

"Holy shit...It has to be a coincidence. That's it, just a random name coincidence, that's all.." She wanted to believe that. But a major part of her mind wouldn't let her.

She logged into Skype and placed a call to "C\_Spoole200" back in Toledo. Also known as Candace Spoole, her mother. She flipped on the webcam and hoped Mom had figured out how to turn on hers by now. The last time they'd tried to Skype with video had been a funny if somewhat frustrating situation. Her parents loved this "new-fangled Internet technology", but they weren't always the quickest to figure it out either.

"C'mon, Mom. Answer me, please. I need you right now." she said under her breath.

Candace finally appeared on the screen. "Hi sweetie! Can you see me? and hear me? I think I got this thing working like it's supposed to."

Emma S. laughed, "Yeah, Mom. I can do both. Great job on joining more of the 21st century. How've you and Dad been?"

"Oh, you should see this fancy video machine your dad just got! It can take all our old video tapes and make DVDs out of them. You can also make it so you can email videos to people; it's the neatest thing!"

“That’s cool, Mom. Good to know Dad’s still enjoying retirement. I need to talk to you about something though.” As much as she’d love to spend hours chatting with her mom, she didn’t have much time to tell her the whole story either...

“What is it, darling?”

“Um, I...I’m not sure where to begin. This case I’m working on: we caught one of the main suspects breaking into a house here in Oregon. He attacked the woman living there, but we got him before he could do any serious damage.”

“Of course. Not that I’d ever doubt you’re at the top of your game.”

“Mom, this woman who got attacked...her name’s Norma..and there’s a “Norma” listed as another daughter of my birth parents. I did a records search on them. From her birth date, she’s five years younger than me...”

Candace grew serious quickly, “What’re you saying, Emma?”

“I’m saying...Mom, she looks like me. It’s uncanny. We practically have the same faces. I’m not exaggerating. I...I just have this gut feeling this could be my sister. I’m going to find out more, find out for sure. I know it sounds like a crazy random coincidence, but I want to know...one way or another. I just wanted your blessing on this.”

“You’ll always have it, you know that. Your father and I figured this day would come eventually, when you’d be ready to pursue this further. It’s totally normal to want to learn about your birth family; they’re where you came from, so you’re really finding out more about yourself. Just remember that what you find out might not be exactly a rose garden, sweetie.”

“I know. I’m prepared for that, the best I can be anyway. Do you remember anything about the Calhouns, Mom?”

“Not much. It was so many years ago. I only saw Edmund and Francine for a few minutes in the hospital when you were born. He was a big burly man, and he seemed really domineering over his wife. I don’t think he even said a word to me or to your father. The doctor gave you to us and then had us take you out of the room. We never saw them again after that.”

“Okay. I have no clue what I’ll say to them if I track them down. I guess that I don’t have any bad feelings towards them, whatever reason they had...that I turned out pretty good...that they gave me to the best family in the entire world...” Emma S. could feel some tears coming on and her throat tightening. This was going to be a lot rougher emotionally than she’d anticipated.

“We love you, Emma. More than anything in this world and always will. I couldn’t love you more if I’d given birth to you myself. Nothing can ever change that.”

“I love you too. You’ll always be my parents. Nothing can ever change that either.”

Emma S. wrapped up the call with her mother after a few more minutes, turned off Skype, and sat back in her chair, staring at her leather shoulder bag sitting in the corner--the one that still held the DNA samples she’d taken the night before.

*Feels like I’m carrying around my future, and hers, and her son’s, in my bag.*

~~~~~

Finding the FBI office address that Agent Spoole gave her was easy enough, but Norma still sat there in silence for a few seconds after parking the car, her hands gripping the steering wheel.



“Are you okay?” Norman asked

“I’m fine, honey. I just want to put this behind us, just want to get it over with...”

“We will. It’ll be okay. We’re not in any trouble, Mother. They only want to know what happened. We didn’t do anything wrong.”

If only Norman knew what she was keeping from him, what had really happened the day his dad died. Norma couldn’t help but be scared because that FBI agent had some kind of laser-like almost-sixth-sense, like she could pick up things about people without them having to tell her. Norma could only hope and pray that Agent Spolee’s mental radar wouldn’t pick up anything as far as what she was hiding. The best thing was to be as casual as possible, not to give anything away. Though that wouldn’t be easy. She was just glad Norman seemed so damned calm. She needed him to lean on now, her rock, her one constant.

The other agent from the night before--what was his name again?--met them in the front reception room and led them towards the back after she handed over her blood-stained skirt and blouse, to a small room to the right of a busy open office area. Agent Spolee was already in there, setting up a tape recorder along with a pitcher of water and glasses in case anyone needed it. She looked up and smiled, though her smile looked a little forced. There was also an odd look in her eyes, one that Norma couldn’t quite read.

“Good morning, Norma. Norman. We’re going to start with Norman’s statement first. Since he’s still under 18, you have the choice to be in the room during his interview, Norma, or we can interview you two separately.”

“I’d like to be there.” Of course Norma would take that option. Norman was a little irritated at Agent Spolee talking about him as if he weren’t there, but he rationalized

she didn't mean anything patronizing or insulting with it. A habit of her job, most likely.

Norman and Norma sat across the interview room table from Agent Spoole and Agent Rivera as Emma S. switched on the tape recorder and Rivera prepared to take notes on a legal pad. She started with a rather monotonous:

"Today is October the 3rd, the time is 10:04am, this is Special Agent in Charge Emma Spoole. Also present in the interview room is Assistant Special Agent in Charge Michael Rivera. Interview subjects are Norma Louise Bates and Norman Bates, both of White Pine Bay, Oregon. Mrs. Bates, for the record would you please state your full name and address?"

"Norma Louise Bates. 4114 Highway 88, White Pine Bay, Oregon." This seemed repetitive and unnecessary to Norma, but she did as Agent Spoole asked.

"Thank you. Norman Bates, we're going to start with you. Could you please state your current age, for the record?"

"I'm seventeen"

"Let it be noted that Norma Bates has opted to be present during this interview of a minor. Norman, in your own words, could you tell us what happened between Keith Summers, your mother Norma Bates, and yourself from the morning of October the second and the early morning of October the third?"

Norman began, "Well, that morning I was outside on the front porch beating rugs, and Keith Summers came up and asked if I was Norman Bates. I said I was, and he started going on about all this stuff he already knew about us. Like we're from Arizona, we live here by ourselves, and how Mother bought up his family's property."

Agent Rivera cut in, "Norman, did Summers appear to be intoxicated or otherwise other the influence of any controlled substances?"

Norman thought for a second, "He was stumbling around, a few times anyway, so yeah I guess he could've been..."

Rivera scribbled something on his notepad, then Agent Spooler asked, "Can you describe Summers' demeanor; did he seem angry or belligerent, or anything like that?"

Norma interrupted, "Yes, he was! He was acting like a total--"

"Mrs. Bates, could you please refrain from interrupting; you'll get your turn to tell your side when we're finished with Norman."

Norma looked annoyed but didn't say anything further.

Norman went on, "Yeah, he was pretty angry. He told me I looked like a little kid who couldn't run much of nothing, like run the motel. Then my mom came out and wanted to know what he wanted. He said she looked like she was the one who needed help. She wanted to know how, then he started going on that it's still his house, it's been in his family for a hundred years, that 'what makes us think we can run it by ourselves.' Mother said because we can, and then she said to get the hell off our property."

"Did Summers directly threaten you or your mother in any way?"

"Uh..no, I guess not. But Mother said she'd either call the police or she'd shoot him herself if he came around again."

Rivera scrawled more in his notes for several seconds, and Spooler raised her eyebrows questioningly at Norma.

Norma couldn't help herself, "Don't you have what happened that morning on your surveillance tapes, anyway?"

Agent Spooler gave her a steely look, "One more interruption, Norma, and I'm going to have to ask you to leave the room until we're ready for you. Is that clear?"

"Yes." Norma stayed silent while Norman finished his version of events.

"Did Summers say anything else to you two?"

"Just that he goes fishing with half the police here, so go ahead and call them. Like he thought they wouldn't do anything about it if he kept bothering us."

"Try to just stick to the facts, okay Norman?"

"Okay. Then that night I snuck out of my room and went to a party. When I got home, a bunch of you were there, so I got scared because I figured something bad happened to my mother. You let me in through the back door, and, um, I was so relieved he hadn't done anything really bad to her..."

Norman's voice trailed off, remembering the absolute terror and panic roaring through him when he'd first gotten back home, before he'd gotten inside and seen she was okay. Summers could have well raped Norma, possibly even killed her. He shuddered at the very thought. If she were dead, he'd be one step after. He couldn't live without her, not for one minute, not ever. He was glad Agent Spooler had shot Summers to death; the piece of shit deserved to have his head blown off. For that alone, Norman felt he owed a debt of gratitude to this strange dark-haired

doppelganger of Norma. He had no idea how he'd go about repaying Agent Spoole, but maybe someday he'd have the opportunity.

"Thank you, Norman. That'll be all we need from you." Emma S. interrupted his thoughts.

"Could I go use the restroom, please?" he asked.

"Of course. Out the door, take an immediate right, restrooms are all the way at the back of the bullpen, can't miss 'em."

Once Norman returned to the interview room, the rest dragged on and on for over another hour. They were asking Norma a lot more detailed questions, about their life in Arizona, about her buying the motel, about how much she knew about Summers before she bought it, about Summers breaking in and trying to hurt her, even about his dad. As the questions kept coming, he couldn't stop staring back and forth between Agent Spoole and Norma.

He knew it was rude and made other people uncomfortable, but he couldn't help it. Across the table, he could see both their faces relatively close, and it was feeling more and more like an episode of "The Twilight Zone." Norman had read somewhere that everyone had an exact look-alike somewhere else in the world, but at the time he'd thought the writer was full of it. But this was real; pretty much except for their very different clothes and hair colors, Norma could almost be looking into a mirror. It was..kind of creepy. What could it possibly mean?

If his mother had any other family members, he had no idea. She'd never told him. She'd told him so little about her life growing up, about his late grandparents, about any of it aside from Dylan's father before she'd married Sam. He wished she had, but Norman also realized Norma was as bewildered and confused at this situation

as he was. A couple of times, Agent Spooler looked her in the eye and both of them seemed to lose their trains of thought for a few seconds.

While Norma was going on about finding the motel and house listed on a foreclosure sale website, Agent Spooler glanced over at Norman--probably because she picked up on how much he kept staring at her. There was something in her eyes--that exact same shade of blue eyes--that said a lot, like she was wondering the same things about them. It only lasted for a couple of beats, then Agent Spooler went back to her droning:

“Did your late husband ever have any contact with Keith Summers that you know of, like maybe a business deal that went bad?”

“Not that I know of. Sam sold insurance, and he never said much about his work. Except when he complained about this or that customer, but he never mentioned any Keith Summers.”

By this point, both Spooler and Rivera were scrawling on notepads. Norma was starting to sweat a little under her arms and was fighting to keep her face neutral and calm-looking. The subject of Sam was making her nervous as hell.

*What if they start digging into Sam's 'accident'? What if they find something about it that seems suspicious?! Oh my god...Norman..what if they figure out what really happened?!!*

But neither of the agents asked anything about it. Norma and Norman had no way of knowing that was the furthest thing from Emma Spooler's mind.

“One last question, Norma: could you give us the name and contact information of the real estate agent who sold you the property formerly owned by the late Keith Summers?”

“Sure.” Norma got her phone out of her purse and pulled up the info. “Matthew Johnson, at White Pine Bay Realty.” She told them Matt’s address and phone number too.

Agent Rivera wrote something at the bottom of his legal pad and shoved it over to Agent Spolee. She nodded, wrote one word under that message, and underlined it with a quick slash of the pen. She then said, “That concludes this interview with Norma Louise Bates; the time is 11:51 am.”

She switched off the recorder and smiled. “Thanks for your cooperation and patience, both of you. What you’ve told us is actually quite helpful under the circumstances. You’re free to go. We’ll be in touch if we think of anything else you might be able to help us with. Do you have any questions?”

Norma did. “Yes, could you *please* tell us what exactly it is you’re investigating? I just want to know if it might affect my business. The last thing I need is my motel getting a bad reputation; I’m trying to make a new start for me and Norman here.”

Agent Spolee looked at her for a couple of silent seconds, considering the possible consequences of disclosure. “All right, fair enough. But outside, off the record. I’ll walk you to your car.” She and Rivera exchanged slight nods as they all left the room, meaning: *You didn’t hear that. Keep your mouth shut and I will too.*

Rivera went back to his desk, cut a check to cover the door damage, and handed it over to Norma. Agent Spolee then left the building with Norman and Norma. As soon as they reached the sidewalk, Spolee pulled what looked like a small black drug-paraphernalia pipe out of her jacket pocket, clicked it on, and took a deep drag/exhale of vapor. She saw Norma’s shocked expression and let out a short laugh.

“E-cigarette. I know it’s not very ‘FBI’ of me, but I’m trying to quit the real things. I’ve been having a nicotine fit for the past hour. Hope you don’t mind.”

“No, not at all. I’ve just never seen one of those things before. I’ve never smoked.”

“Good. Don’t ever start. It’s a nasty habit and a bitch to try to kick. Anyway, about Keith Summers. He was one of our many suspects involved in a criminal organization here in Oregon, also in California and Washington state. An organization that trafficks in women. As in kidnaps them and forces them into prostitution.”

“Are you serious?! Here in White Pine Bay?! Is there nowhere safe anymore? I can’t believe this...”

“Norma, keep your voice down. Like I said, off the record. I shouldn’t even be telling you this, or asking you to do me one favor.”

That last part caught Norman’s attention. “What? I’ll do it, whatever it is. You might’ve saved my mother’s life; I can’t thank you enough for that!”

“Just doing my job. But I appreciate the enthusiasm, Norman. When you two start fixing up your motel, could you keep an eye out for anything unusual in the rooms or the office? It could be old writing scratched on the walls, gouge marks on the bed frames, weird-looking stains, dents or gouge marks on the door or window frames, even hidden notes--though those are probably too good to hope for. And Summers’ old records: if you see anything weird with any of those you find--like a lot of motel bookings all at once after a dead spell, a lot of cash-only payments at once, anything like that. You find any of that, or anything else that just seems off: Will you call me? Even if it turns out to be nothing; that doesn’t matter. Even if it’s in the middle of the night, I don’t care; call me anyway. Will you do that for me?”



Norma silently acknowledged it was the truth: Agent Spoole had likely saved her life. And she agreed with Norman: it didn't matter if it was the agent's job; it didn't change the fact she might owe her her life. Norma still wasn't used to the idea of someone helping instead of hurting her, but maybe..this was different. There were still other women out there being harmed, even worse than she herself had once been harmed. Here was Agent Spoole, charged with stopping it--if she could. But Norma realized Spoole needed her and Norman's help. The least they could do was try to give it to her.

"Yes. We will."