

Chapter 8: Darkness Channeled

As Norma, Norman, and their new-found sister/aunt sat down to dinner:

“Norma, this looks amazing. I’m the first to admit I’m not much of a cook. I make one good thing for dinner: take-out orders.”

Norma laughed, “Maybe that’s something I could help you with, if you want. And thank you. Would you like a glass of wine? I’m not supposed to drink with the pain pills for my hand, but you can go ahead.”

“I’m going to have to pass this time, too. Technically I’m still on duty for a few more hours. We’ve had something of a break in the case, and if I get a certain phone call-- I’m gonna have to jump up and go. But I’m hoping it’ll wait a little while.”

“What kind of ‘break’?” Norman asked.

“I’m telling you two this off the record, not as an agent, okay?”

“Of course.”

“We found an alleged accomplice of Keith Summers. One who can tell us exactly what went on here. It led to enough evidence for a warrant to search your motel office. So far, just the office. I’m going to be serving it to you as soon as the judge clears it, in a couple of days at most.”

Both Norman and Norma’s eyes widened at that news.

Norma wanted to know, “ Are there any more of those dangerous creeps around, ones that might show up here?!”

Emma S. shook her head. “You don’t have to worry. I’ve still got the surveillance van across the road on you guys. No one’s showing up here without them seeing it, and at the first sign of trouble they’ll be on it in two seconds.”

Norma gave a sigh of relief. “Oh, good! I’m not sure how I’d sleep at night otherwise.” Not like she was going to mention the truth: that she felt safe as long as she had Norman curled up in bed with her.

Norman asked her, “Um, did you find any of the women those guys had...kidnapped?”

“No, not here in White Pine Bay. Not so far. We have in other cities. It’s not something one easily forgets, I’ll just leave it at that.”

He was quiet for a minute, then: “Did you always want to be an FBI agent?”

Norma thought of telling him to give the questions a break and let Emma S. finish dinner. She imagined her sister deserved a break from the shop talk, but at the same time, she was curious to know the same thing.

“Ever since I was a little older than you. My dad was a detective, then a lieutenant, until he retired a few years ago. I grew up around law enforcement; it’s always been something I’ve believed I could distinguish myself at. My mother was a 911 dispatcher most of the time I was growing up, until she retired too. They always taught me, ‘There’re plenty of evil people in the world, and if you have the ability to do something about it--then you have the responsibility to do something about it.’ Oh, hi Dylan...”

Dylan had just skulked in, almost 45 minutes late for dinner, hoping to grab something to eat out of the fridge and avoid dealing with Norma. He looked up and gave a slight smile at seeing Emma S. at the table with his mother and brother.

“Hi. Uh, hi everyone..”

Norma briefly gave him a dirty look, but she remembered she was going to try to get along with him. “Dylan, why don’t you fix yourself a plate and join us?”

He did, sitting in the empty seat across from Norma, with his brother on his left and his aunt on his right. Like Norman, he was feeling awkward at the new addition.

Our family is so screwed up, and she seems so put-together. Why in her right mind would she want to be a part of this?

“That’s a Harley V-Rod you have, am I right Dylan?” she asked abruptly.

He looked at her with raised eyebrows. His newly-found aunt was full of surprises.

“Yeah. Do you ride?”

“I used to. I had one like it for a while after I finished college. I saved up enough over four years to buy it, and right after graduation I took a road trip with a couple of friends down to Florida from Ohio. My dad had a fit when he found out, but..what can I say? It was a hell of a lot of fun.”

“Sounds awesome. Nothing like the open road, is there?”

She smiled at him. “No, I should say not. I still miss it sometimes, haven’t been on one in years.”

Dylan knew how corny it sounded, but he couldn’t think of another way to describe it: her smile was a ray of light breaking through the dark clouds that had hung over his whole unhappy life. He was amazed how easily he forgot there was anyone except the two of them in the room.

My god. She's beautiful. And she's so cool, to top it off.

"I feel like I've been talking about myself all evening. Why don't you guys tell me some stuff about you? How do you like it here in White Pine Bay? I mean, aside from what's happened this week, of course."

Norma said, "It seemed like a beautiful little coastal town. The perfect place for us to start over. But ever since..."

Emma S. reached over and squeezed Norma's hand. "I know. It's going to be a process to get past that. But you don't need to let it taint your view of the whole town. If you do, he wins. Even though he's dead."

"Yeah, you're right. I need to remember that."

Just then, Agent Spooler's cell phone rang. It was Sheriff Romero.

"The OHP stopped Maggie Summers at a rest stop up in Clatsop County. Apparently she was camping out in her car, on her way to Washington State and eventually trying to escape into Canada."

"Do they have her?"

"Yes."

"Text me the address up there. Let's roll."

She hung up and told her family, "We got the accomplice. I have to go. I'll call you when I know anything new." She briefly hugged Norma and then flew out of the house and down the stairs through the now-pouring rain to her car.

Jesus you could break your damn neck on these stairs in the rain!

Agent Spoole flipped on the dashboard bubble light and siren. She sped north as fast as the rain would allow.

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A few hours later, Maggie Summers was seated at the interrogation table at the FBI's command post. Romero was getting his first look at Agent Spoole in action with a suspect, and he found it almost..unnerving. She was circling Maggie like a shark scenting blood in the water. She opened and slapped a file folder on the table in front of her; it showed copies of photos of Keith linked to a probably-outdated photo of Joe Fieretti, both of those linked to a ghosted photo of a third unknown suspect.

Agent Spoole then pulled out a pack of Marlboro Special Blend Lights, lit up, and blew a lung-full of smoke into Maggie's face.

"We know that you know. That your brother and this Fierretti character had a third partner who's pretty established in this town. I need to know three things: Where is Fierretti, how do we find him, and who is this third partner?"

Maggie sobbed, "I don't know! I mean I don't know who else was-"

Agent Spoole was on her in a second, grabbing her by the sweatshirt collar.

"Maggie," She said in a deceptively calm, soft voice, "I have been awake for almost 20 hours. But even without that, I HATE hearing 'I don't know.' It pisses me off very quickly. Because I know it's a load of shit. So, you can tell us who your brother's and Fierretti's third partner was, or you can piss me off. You don't want to see the latter, believe me."

Maggie glared and then spit in Agent Spoole's face. "Fuck you. I'm not telling you anything. Not worth it."

Agent Spoole back-handed her hard across the face, bloodying her mouth and knocking her out of her chair, onto the floor. Romero started to move to intervene, but the federal agent snapped up to face him. The vacant-yet-feral look on her face: it genuinely scared him. She deadpanned two words:

"Get out."

Her blue eyes were dilated so much they looked almost totally black. He bid a hasty retreat out into the bullpen. With him gone, Agent Spoole hauled Maggie Summers back into her chair.

"So, who's the third guy who was working with Fieretti?"

"I swear don't know!"

"BULLSHIT! You did their bookkeeping for almost 10 years! You expect me to believe you never knew that?! Don't insult my intelligence; do I look stupid to you? Well, do I?"

"N-No." Maggie sputtered.

"So, let me theorize for a moment. You knew your brother was having kidnapped women held in that motel and forced into prostitution, and it went on for almost a decade. You never thought once of going to the authorities. Maybe you had some *fixation* about what they were doing." Agent Spoole pulled up another chair, stepped up on it, and then sat on the edge of the table, leaning close to Maggie Summers. She took another drag on her cigarette.

“Maybe you watched what was going on through a hole in the wall. Maybe you liked it. Maybe you fantasized about being chained up and gang-banged yourself. Hm? Is that it? Maybe even inviting your brother to join the gang-bang?”

“SHUT UP!! You’re one sick bitch, you know that?!”

“HA! You haven’t seen the worst of me. Not even close.”

Agent Spoule got off the table and pulled the same chair across from Maggie, sitting in it, leaning back and propping her feet on the table. She took several more drags on her cigarette, flicking the ashes into an empty styrofoam cup, this time looking thoughtful rather than hostile. Finally she went on,

“You’re facing some pretty serious charges. Multiple counts of aiding and abetting kidnapping and sex trafficking, false imprisonment, rape, and now we can throw in obstruction of justice for good measure. You’re looking at 30 years minimum in prison, Maggie. Believe me, where you’ll be going: you won’t be Ms. Popularity once the gen-pop finds out what you’re in for. Well, not in a good way anyway.

Maggie started to sob, “I can’t go to prison!! I might as well be dead! I couldn’t live through that!”

“Then work with us! Where is Fieretti?”

“I want a lawyer! I’m not telling you a thing until I have one!”

“Fine. If you want to drag this out even more. It makes little difference to me or my squad. It’s the weekend. You’ll get to wait and think about your answers until Monday morning.”

“I don’t care!”

Agent Spoole got up and strode towards the door.

“Wait, that’s all?” Maggie wanted to know.

She turned back. Her voice was both calm and menacing.

“You want more?”

Maggie shook her head. Agent Spoole left the interrogation room. Predictably: Romero, Deputy Shelby, and Agent Rivera were hovering outside. She turned towards Romero, “She’s decided she wants to chill out in a jail cell until Monday morning, when she can call an attorney. We’ll pick it up from there. Want to take care of that in the meantime?”

“Of course. Was that really?--um, never mind.”

He was struggling to process what he’d seen from her in the interview room. But then she smiled at him.

“Nice work, officer.” she said. “You helped us bring her in. I’ll remember that.”

“You’re not bad yourself.”

Romero went in, cuffed and led out the suspect. “Let’s go, Maggie.”

Shelby was glaring murderous daggers at Spoole and Rivera all the while. “You have no idea how things are done around here. You’re making a big mistake.”

“Yeah, okay. Whatever. I’m still waiting for evidence of that.”

Agent Spoole watched as Romero and Shelby carted Maggie Summers off to a jail cell in the sheriff's office. She said good-night to Rivera and the rest of the agents still on duty. She somehow managed to drive herself back to her motel room, drag herself through the shower, then collapse into bed before falling into a deep sleep.



Romero and Shelby had normally gotten along fine, but this car ride was quickly turning into a shouting match as they headed out to Highway 88 the following night. The sheriff thought it was past time they introduced themselves to the new owners of the Seafairer. If for no other reason, to see who Agent Spoole and her G-man squad had rescued from what ended up being Keith's very last drunken rampage.

"Are you just cooperating 'cause you'd love to screw her? Is that it? Don't think I can't see it; your tongue's practically hanging out every time Clarice Starling's around!"

"You watch yourself!" Romero snapped. "You're about five seconds from getting suspended. Don't think I won't do it!" And no, it's about doing the right thing and getting the feds out of here ASAP. The sooner they're gone, the sooner things can get back to normal."

"I say we run them out. However possible."

"I say that's the stupidest idea you've ever had! You want this town to end up boarded up and shut down? 'Cause that's exactly what would happen. You want to pit the families here against the full force of the FBI? It'd be a goddamn bloodbath, but I already know who'd be on the losing end: White Pine Bay."

“Whatever. That bitch has you whipped and chained. Speaking of which, will you let me know if she’s into whips, handcuffs, anything kinky? I bet she is. I bet she’s a nasty little dom in bed. Can’t fault your taste in women, though. She’s hot, despite that femmo-nazi attitude. Don’t you think she’s kinda out of your league, though?”

Romero lurched the SUV to the side of the road, stopped, reached over and grabbed Shelby roughly by the jacket collar.

“One more word about her, and I’ll throw your ass out right now!”

He shoved him away, hard enough for him to hit the inside of the passenger door. The deputy was fuming but did shut up for the rest of the way.

*Agent Spooler’s a big problem, regardless. If Alex won’t help me get rid of the problem, I’ll have to do it myself.*