

The Disappearance of Cabe Gallo : A Scorpion 2.0 Story

By Kate Simon

Paige Dineen looked around the room at the Scorpion team. It had been very quiet the last few weeks but that didn't mean the team wasn't working. Each member had their own projects. Toby was engrossed in his research on OCD. His theory, as she understood it, was that OCD could be tied to habits other than repetitive actions. He thought if he could find a treatment it could also be applied to things like smoking and gambling.

Happy was torching on something that Paige didn't recognize. It could be a part to a high tech motor or it could be a toy for their daughter. She and Toby had adopted Kathy six months ago. Paige had been amazed at Happy's fierce maternal instinct. Maybe because she grew up without a mother, she knew who she wanted to be as a mother. What ever it was, Kathy was flourishing.

Sly and Walter were working together on a coding project. They'd been going back and forth for hours at a white board debating computations Paige had no hope of understanding.

The one person who wasn't here was Cabe. After working non stop for five years he'd taken a few weeks for himself. She didn't begrudge Cabe a vacation but he was the only other normal in the place. No Cabe meant no Homeland cases. It was fine at first. They all needed a break but she hoped it wouldn't be too much longer. Homeland cases were the bread and butter of the company. They rest of the team didn't worry about it. That was her job. So was making sure they eat.

"I'm going to order from Kavel'ski's. Who wants what?"

"That's going to have to wait."

Paige looked over at the door and saw Homeland Director Katherine Cooper walking toward them. Katherine had recently been promoted and was now director of the entire western division. Normally someone on her level wouldn't directly interact with them, but she'd worked with Scorpion for three years. She had a soft place in her heart for the team. Following behind Katherine was a red haired woman in a dark blue suit and plain black pumps.

"Do you have an assignment for us?" asked Paige as the team gathered around.

“Yes. I need you to find Cabe Gallo.”

“What?” asked Paige.

“What do you mean find? He’s on vacation.” asked Happy.

“He asked for a week off. He’s now been off grid for more than two weeks. Homeland agents don’t get to go off grid.”

“What do you mean off grid?” Walter demanded. “Where was he going?”

“He didn’t say. He asked for a week and I gave it to him. He hasn’t taken time off in ages.”

“Ask Allie. She’ll know where he is.” Paige saw Katherine’s stunned expression. “She’s not missing too, is she?”

“No, she’s not. I didn’t realize you don’t know.”

“Know what?”

“Allie got a job offer and moved back east. She left six weeks ago.”

“She did what?”

“They broke up?” asked Happy.

“Well...”

“Katherine, I know you and Cabe and Allie are friends. You know what’s going on. Tell us,” said Paige.

“Normally, I wouldn’t but these aren’t normal circumstances. Allie wanted him to come with her but in the end he decided to stay.”

“He stayed for us,” said Walter.

Katherine looked at him. “If I could tell you you’re wrong, I would. I think the team was a large part of why he stayed.”

“Why would he do that?” asked Sly.

“That’s a question for another time,” said Katherine. “Now we have to focus on finding Cabe.” She indicated the woman standing next to her. “This is Special Agent Kate Riley.”

“We don’t need a replacement,” said Walter.

“I’m not a replacement for Agent Gallo. Your team is too cohesive a unit to alter,” said Agent Riley. “I’m here to help find him.”

“We don’t need any help. We’re Scorpion,” said Walter.

Agent Riley looked at him then walked over to his whiteboard. She looked it up and down, then picked up an eraser and a marker.

“What are you doing? Don’t touch that,” said Walter. “We’re working out a very complex coding problem.”

Riley erased a section of calculations and Sly gasped. She wrote in her own numbers and then capped the marker. “There. Now you’re done. Let’s get to work.”

“How dare you! Sly and I have been working on that for days,” said Walter.

Sly was staring at the board. “Walter.”

“Who do think you are?!”

“Walter!”

“What?”

Sly pointed to the board. “She fixed it.”

“What?” he gasped.

“Look,” said Sly. “She solved the differential equation.”

“That’s not possible.” Walter looked at the board and then Riley. “Who are you?”

Katherine gave them a little smile. “Beside being an infiltration specialist Agent Riley is the greatest mind in computer technology in the history of the FBI and Homeland.”

Paige spotted Walter's flinch. He didn't like being considered less than the best. She decided she'd switch the tone. "Infiltration?" she asked.

"I go into situations undercover and extract information without anyone noticing."

"Cabe is not information," said Paige.

"Understood," said Katherine, "but we will make the most of Agent Riley's skill set. Now let's get to it."

Cabe Gallo looked in the mirror and brushed his hair. He'd been in this motel twice as long as he thought he would. He was supposed to be back from this alleged vacation more than a week ago. He couldn't leave, not yet. He hadn't found the connection.

He tucked his t shirt in the top of his jeans. He looked at the image reflecting back. He wasn't used to seeing himself like this. Gone was his normal suit and tie. Now he was wearing jeans, boots and a Harley t shirt. He wasn't used to his tattoos being on display anywhere but his own bike club.

For the last few weeks he'd been trying to lose himself in work. Allie had left for Philadelphia. It had taken him a while to realize going with her was not the right thing for him. He couldn't imagine leaving the kids, his family. The idea of leaving them behind hurt more than not moving with Allie. That made him realize that he and Allie weren't meant for the long haul.

He'd spent all his free time in the last few weeks riding. Jumping on his Harley Road Glide Ultra and taking off down the PCH was something he did for himself. Being in the open air cleared the noise from his brain. Hanging out with his buddies at the clubhouse was relaxing. Nobody asked him about work. He never told the team about his riding, not even Happy.

Now he had to focus on finding what these guys were hiding before they put their plan in action and the whole world knew.

Kate Riley found Cabe's desk and started going through it. She saw a picture of the team on the desk but not one of his ex girlfriend. If there had been a picture of the ex and he removed it, the team wouldn't have been surprised when Katherine told them they'd broken up.

"Agent Riley, what are you doing?" asked Walter.

"My job." She found a laptop in a drawer and pulled it out. "Is this a company computer?"

"No, that's Cabe's," said Paige.

"That laptop is protected," said Walter.

Kate opened it and started typing. The laptop was protected but that was no match for her. She typed a few keys and the screen opened. She paused at the sight of his wallpaper. It was the team at Christmas. A young Ralph Dineen was sitting on his lap while he was reading the boy a book called 'I Want an Alien for Christmas.' This was a family. She tried focusing on her work but O'Brien was giving her a death glare.

"How did you get into his laptop? I set that up myself."

She sighed, pushed herself away from the desk and stood. This guy was pissing her off. "Okay, let's get all of this out of the way, shall we? I'm like the rest of you."

"Excuse me?" he asked.

"I graduated from Caltech at fourteen and got my third PhD at twenty two. I have doctorates in computer engineering, AI theory and encryption technology. That laptop was protected by Rimark Defender software. Rimark was founded by my father when I was sixteen based on my encryption software. My parents were killed by a drunk driver when I was twenty two. I still own Rimark. The reason I could get past the Defender software, even with your substantial tweaks to it, is because I wrote it, including the back door I just used. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have work to do." She sat down as Paige stepped forward.

“Agent Riley, we’re used to a more equal partnership, working with Homeland. The team is used to being consulted, not ignored.”

“Look, Ms. Dineen...”

“Paige,” she smiled.

“Paige. I was fully briefed on the team. I know it’s your job to hold their hands and be their emotional translator but I don’t have time to do my job and your job.” She looked around at the team, who were staring at her. “You people are all supposed to be so close but you never noticed your father figure has been missing for two weeks. Now, I’m going to find Agent Gallo. You can help me and we find him faster or you can stand here staring at me. You choose.” She went back to the laptop and started combing through files.

“You really don’t care what people think of you.”

Kate looked up to see a scruffy, thirty something in a pork pie hat. “No, Dr. Curtis, I do not. “

“Alright people, that’s enough,” said Katherine. “I brought Agent Riley in. Our focus needs to be finding Cabe. Does anyone have any ideas where he might have gone?”

“His family is gone. His ex wife, Rebecca, lives in the city,” said Paige,

“We’ve already checked with her. She hasn’t spoken with him since the incident with her old law firm,” said Katherine.

Kate looked through Cabe’s search history. He must not have thought anyone would look. He’d accessed some Homeland files and some old FBI files. She pulled up a file and her heart sank. “Ah crap.”

“What is it?” asked Katherine.

“He was researching the Knights of Khaos. He accessed news accounts but he also used his clearance to access Homeland files.”

“Damn. What the hell was he thinking?”

“Who are the Knights of Khaos?” asked Walter.



“A motorcycle gang. They’ve been around since the seventies. The government has been trying to break them up under the RICO statutes since then.”

“I take it your efforts have been unsuccessful,” said Walter.

“Not for lack of trying,” said Kate.

“What do you mean?” said Paige.

Kate stood and pointed at Katherine. “If the FBI had used what I got them, they wouldn’t still be a problem.”

Katherine held up her hands. “You’re preaching to the choir. Look and see what else you can find.”

“Why would he be looking into a biker gang?” asked Paige.

“Unclear, but my guess is for whatever reason, he’s gone undercover with the Knights.”

“Let me get this straight,” said Toby, “You think our straight arrow, born in a suit, Cabe Gallo, has gone undercover with a hell on wheels biker gang.”

Kate was getting annoyed at being constantly questioned. “Yes, based on what I’m seeing here, that is my conclusion. And you better pray I’m right.”

“Why is that?” he asked, Kate thought rather smugly.

“Because if he was looking into the Knights and he didn’t go undercover then he’s already dead. I’d prefer not to think we’ve already lost a man like Agent Gallo.” Kate looked at the team and began to regret her blunt manner. They were obviously very upset. She understood that they cared for this man but she didn’t have a lot of experience working with others.

“You have to be wrong,” said Happy. “He doesn’t even ride.”

Kate pulled up pictures from Cabe’s laptop and blue toothed them to the large plasma screen. “These pictures would say otherwise.” She saw the team’s shock. There was Cabe Gallo in t shirts and jeans with what appeared to be a number of visible tattoos.

She wasn't making this better. She looked over at Katherine. "Director, do you have information on this?"

"Yes. Cabe is a member of the bike club, The Boozefighters."

"Excuse me?" asked Happy.

"It's what he does to relax."

"Cabe Gallo is in a biker gang?" asked Walter.

"A club. There's a big difference," said Katherine.

Kate pulled up a group photo and sent it to the plasma. "This is a recent group photo of the Boozefighters." She pulled up a few news stories mentioning the group. "They are known for their charity rides to benefit veterans, education funds and children's homes." She put up another group picture and looked close. "Sly, please run your facial recognition on these men."

"Excuse me!" said Walter. "Sly works for me."

"If you had your ego in check I'd have asked you, but since you're still frozen in your indignation you're no help. The Scorpion facial recognition software designed by Ralph Dineen is far and away better than every facial rec out there." She looked at Paige. "Once we find Agent Gallo I'd appreciate the opportunity to talk to your son. His work is groundbreaking."

"I'll ask him," said Paige. "You seem to be confident you'll find Cabe."

"Yes, I'm confident. Scorpion and I both have an excellent success rate."

Sly enlarged the group picture and pointed to each face, Michael Levin, dermatologist, Frank Zullo, accountant, Nick Wolfe, attorney, as hard to believe as it is, this is Cabe, this is Jack Stevens."

"The movie star?" asked Paige.

"Yeah, I loved him in "Godzilla Returns."

Kate walked to screen and pointed to a man standing in the back row. "This man. Who's this man?"

"Carl Raines. He's listed as a retired government employee."

Kate went back to desk and tapped a few keys. A picture and an ID popped up on the screen. "I thought I recognized him. He's retired FBI." She hit another few keys and smiled. "He and Cabe went through Quantico together."

"How does that help us?" asked Walter.

"I have a place to start. Raines may have some information."

"But why would he have gone under without back up?" asked Walter.

"He may have felt the operation was too risky to involve the team."

Walter shook his head. "No, Cabe is too good an agent. He wouldn't have gone under without leaving us a trail. He'd expect us to go looking for him." He paced for a moment then stopped. "Happy, the fake ID and accounts you made for him for the case last month, are they still active?"

"Pete Burke. I'll check." She tapped a few keys. "Yes. They're still active. The bank cards are tied to a Homeland account."

"Have there been any recent transactions?"

Happy hit a few keys. "Yes! There was a transaction three days ago at the Desert Flower Motel outside Palmdale." She hit a few more keys. "I'm in the motel's system. Pete Burke is registered there for the next four days."

Walter nodded at Happy. "Good work." He turned to Kate and gave her a triumphant smile. "My people are excellent."

Kate nodded. "Yes, they are. Please forward me that information."

"Now what?" asked Paige.

"Now the Director and I will interview Carl Raines."

“That’s it? You can’t leave it at that. You need us to save Cabe,” said Walter.

Kate looked at him. Working with this guy is going to be rough. His saving grace was he really was as good as he thought he was. He may even be as good as she was. “Yes, I will need your help. After we talk to Raines, I’ll be going undercover.”

“You, as a biker?” Walter grinned.

“Yes, me. Now if you’ll excuse us. I assume you and your team will pour over Cabe’s laptop looking for anything I’ve missed. If Mrs. Quinn could track all the transactions on the Burke card we might find a pattern.”

“Already on it,” Happy called from her desk.

“Excellent. I’ll contact you when I’m ready to go under.” Kate and Katherine walked out to her car.

“Something you missed?” Katherine smiled.

“Yeah,” she chuckled. “That’ll keep them busy until I get back.”

Cabe sat down at the counter and ordered breakfast. The rest of the group would wander in soon. Butch said to be there by nine. It was easier for him to show up on time than the others since he didn't drink or do drugs. They tried to get him to join in but he convinced Butch if he was going to be of any use, he needed to be clear headed.

Butch Reed had been a member of the Knights for thirty years, with the exception of a couple of short stints in prison, just as long as he'd been in law enforcement. Butch had started out as a soldier but had risen to president of their group. The president of his club, the Boozefighters, was a defense attorney. Butch had risen to the top by being ruthless criminal. From the information Cabe had researched, the Knights of Khaos were into anything that would make them money. They had no loyalties except to themselves. If the rumors were true, the Knights were planning their biggest score ever.

The Knights were based in Los Angeles but for some reason they were encamped in a small motel outside Palmdale. He heard rumors through Carl and some of the other riders in his club of something brewing with the Knights. He hadn't planned on riding off with them but the opportunity presented itself and he took it.

"Yo! Burke. You're up early."

"Hey Butch. I just ordered."

Butch smiled at the barely twenty something waitress. "Hey sweet cheeks. Can I get my usual?"

"Sure thing," she grinned.

Cabe found it disturbing for a man Butch's age to be flirting with a girl young enough to be his granddaughter. However, it was not a good idea to point that out to a man with a hair trigger temper and a squad of men to back him up. "Look, Butch, the last few days have been fun but if this job isn't coming through I'm going to move on. I need to make some cash."

Butch slapped him on the back. "Stick around and you won't have to take another job for ages."

"Really?"

“After this I’m headed for an island with beautiful babes and no extradition.”

“Retire? You?”

Butch got uncharacteristically quiet. “I’ve been doing this over thirty years. I’m ready.” The cute waitress brought him his coffee and he smiled and straightened up. “Yeah, after Friday I’m ready to sit on a beach with a pretty girl.”

Cabe took a bite of his omelet. Whatever the Knights had planned, it was happening in three days.

Katherine pulled into the driveway of Carl Raines suburban home. A phone call from the Director of Homeland Security insured he'd be home. While Katherine drove Kate had looked over Raine's file. "His record is pretty straight forward. Excellent closure rate, numerous commendations."

"Translation, good guy. He'll help us if he can," said Katherine.

"Despite the fact that he's FBI and we're Homeland." They'd barely knocked when Raines opened the door.

Katherine flipped open her badge. "Mr. Raines, I'm Katherine Cooper, Director of Homeland Security. This is Special Agent Kate Riley. Kate flipped open her badge. "Thank you for seeing us."

"Of course, Director. Please come in." They walked into the living room and sat down. "How can I help you?"

"We're trying to locate Cabe Gallo," said Katherine.

"Excuse me?"

"He's been off grid for more than two weeks," said Kate. "We think he was doing some investigation on his own. We're hoping you have some information."

"Oh, God. He didn't," said Raines. "He asked me what I knew about the Knights of Khaos. I told him I'd worked on the case years ago." He paused and looked at Kate. "They're basically guns for hire. You name it, they've done it. But they're not know for their subtlety. They're sledge hammers. We tried then to get what we needed to shut them down but the federal prosecutor didn't think it was enough. I was pulled and reassigned." Raines looked at her again. "I'm sorry, Agent Riley, do I know you?"

"We've crossed paths."

"I'm sorry, I don't remember the case."

"That's okay," she smiled. "No one ever remembers me."

Katherine got the conversation back on track. "Why was Cabe interested in the Knights?"

“It was just talk. When you ride into a place with twenty or thirty bikes there are only so many places you can stop for breaks. It doesn’t matter if your group has cops and lawyers and teachers. If you’re riding a Harley, people assume you’re trouble. One of the places we stopped draws a lot of bikers. A couple of the guys were talking about a big job they had coming up. We heard them talking about what they’d buy with their cuts. They were talking about buying not just a new bike but a bike shop, speed boats, women. This wasn’t going to be just any other score. We thought they were full of it until we saw their leathers. They were Knights.”

“Could they have just had the jackets?” asked Katherine.

“No,” said Raines and Kate together. “To wear a club’s patches without belonging is a huge breach,” said Kate. “To wear the Knights leathers without belonging is a death sentence.”

“That’s right,” said Raines. “Now I remember. You worked on the Knights case too. You went under and got us the information on their drug running.”

“It wasn’t enough,” said Kate.

“Yes, it was. The prosecutor was a coward.”

“Agreed.”

“How has Cabe seemed to you lately?” asked Katherine.

“A little distracted. Like he was there but he wasn’t. We don’t talk much about what’s going on now. Occasionally we talk about the old days. The point of the club is to ride and relax.”

“Where would he have gone to connect with the Knights?” asked Kate.

“There’s a place off the five outside Glendale. It’s called The Pit Stop. If you’re looking for Knights in one place, that’s where they’ll be.”

“Thank you, Agent Raines,” said Kate nodded at Katherine and they stood to leave.

“It’s just Carl. I haven’t been Agent Raines for five years. But I can tell you this. If you’re going under with the Knights, be very careful.”



“Thank you, Carl, but don’t worry. I get in and out.” Kate smiled. “And no one ever remembers me.” She got back in Katherine’s car and started making notes. “I’ll need you to get me a Harley Soft tail. It’s low enough for me to ride it but big enough to impress.”

“Are you sure about this? How long has it been since you rode a Harley?”

Kate sighed. It had been a few years. “I’ll take it to the track before I go.”

“You need to be sure, Kate. You can’t half ass this.”

“I’ve never half assed anything, ever. You know that.”

“I know. I also know I’ve got one agent missing. I don’t want to lose another one.”

“I’ll do my best.”

“That’s what I’m counting on.”

Cabe found a spot in Butch's room. He'd called a meeting after breakfast and he and eight other men were waiting for Butch to begin. He looked around and recognized all but one of the men. He was a new addition.

"All right you guys, shut the hell up," said Butch. "We've got more information on the job. There's a tractor trailer coming through here Friday on it's way to the Mojave. It's not going to make it."

Cabe chuckled along with the rest of the crew. Now he knew it was a hijacking. "What's in the truck?" He noticed Butch glance at the new guy.

"You don't need to know that," said Butch. "All you need to know is how to stop the truck and their escort."

"Escort?" asked Cabe. He had a real bad feeling about this.

"You and Benny will stop the escort. Then the rest of you will stop the truck."

"How do you expect us to stop a track trailer with hand guns?" asked Frank a guy who looked a lot older than his mid thirties. These guys lived hard and it showed on their faces.

"Don't worry about that. We'll have enough fire power to stop it. You guys need to spend your time making sure your bikes are tight. And keep your heads on straight. No one leaves the hotel again until we head out for the job."

"What's our cut?" asked Cabe.

"One hundred K each."

There was laughing and back slapping and Cabe went along. Something still didn't sit right. Butch said he was going to retire on this. He was getting a lot more than one hundred thousand dollars for this job. And what ever it was, it was big. He knew he had to stop it, but he didn't know how, not alone.

Kate pulled into the Scorpion parking lot on her Harley Soft Tail. Katherine was quick with her allocation of resources. She'd taken the bike to a nearby track and rode for about an hour. She felt uneasy on the bike at first, but then muscle memory took over and she remembered the freedom of riding. When she was done checking in with Scorpion she'd be off to the Desert Flower.

She walked into the Scorpion office and saw Katherine and the team. "Hello Director. I'm back." Katherine looked at her and smiled. The rest of the team stared at her open mouthed.

"Agent Riley?" asked Sly.

"Yes?"

He looked her up and down. "You look...different."

"That's the idea." She'd dressed for riding in black jeans and boots. She'd worn a tight black muscle t shirt under a black leather jacket. She'd let her hair dry while riding to the track. That made her natural curls fill out. She thought it made her look like an escapee from an eighties hair band but it was a very different look from her normal self.

Toby Curtis walked toward her and also looked her up and down. "Ah...Agent Riley, did you dress like this when you went undercover last time?"

"Yes."

"They'll remember you. If there is anyone in the group who was there twenty years ago when you were conducting your investigation, they will remember."

"How are you so sure? No one ever remembers me."

"Because my wife, who knows I love and adore her, is about to smack me upside the head for drooling." Happy smacked the back of his head. "And...there it is." He smiled at his wife and made a kissing noise. "I'm telling you any straight man is going to remember you."

"Thank you?" she said, not sure how to respond.

“Toby’s right,” said Walter. “Sly, pull up any photos of the current Knights.” Sly transmitted several photos to the screen. “Eliminate anyone under forty.” Sly blanked out several pictures. “Identify these three.”

“Big guy, Jason Russo, forty. He was in the army until five years ago. Blonde guy, Mark Steele, forty five. His record shows he was in federal prison during the period Agent Riley was with the Knights. The last one is Butch Reed. He is the president of the Knights.”

Kate walked closer to the screen. “Do you have a picture of him from back then?” Sly put up a picture of a thirty year old Butch. “I remember him. He was a mid level soldier.”

“He’s more than that now. He’s done a few stints in jail but he’s been a suspect in much more serious crimes,” said Sly.

“How serious?” asked Walter.

“He was a suspect in several murders including a daylight robbery of bike shop that resulted in three deaths.” Sly looked at Kate. “This is a seriously bad guy. Are you sure about this? You could be hurt or...worse.”

Kate smiled. Sly was a good kid. “Thank you for your concern, Sly, but this is what I do. I’m not just a computer tech. I’m a trained agent. I can defend myself.”

“I sure hope so.”

“Besides, I need to find Agent Gallo.”

“What did you find out at the Pit Stop?” asked Katherine.

“Nothing.”

“Excuse me?”

“I mean no one was there. Not a single Knight. The bartender said he hadn’t seen one in days. Raines said that was highly unusual. This was their primary hang out.”

“What do you think?” asked Katherine.

“I think I need to get on the road as soon as possible if I’m going to find Agent Gallo.”

“You don’t know if he’s there,” said Paige.

“Mrs. Quinn, you got into their reservation system. Can you get into their surveillance?”

“The name’s Happy. I already tried. Their system either isn’t linked to a computer or it’s a fake.” She opened a box on her work bench. “I have some equipment for you. Here are two coms and two spares.”

“Palmdale is sixty miles from here. Will they reach?”

Happy rolled her eyes. “My coms have a range of six thousand miles.”

Kate looked at the tiny devices and smiled. “Impressive.”

Happy handed her a cell phone. “This is a burner but I’ve updated it with signal tracking software. It will tell you if the room your in is being bugged and enable you to find the device. I’ve also made the phone impossible to bug.” Happy pointed Kate to a blue background. “Go stand there.” She did and Happy took her picture. Five minutes later she handed her a new ID with her undercover name, Maureen Ryan.

“This is flawless work.” Kate looked at Happy and smiled. “It’s a good thing you’re on our side.”

Happy smirked. “For now.”

“Hah! I like you.”

“You’re not so bad, yourself. What bike do you have?”

“A Soft tail Slim.”

“That’s what I ride. Roll it in and I’ll take a look at it.”

“Excellent, thank you.”

“Agent Riley, we’ve updated you’re undercover identity.” Walter handed her a file. “Since your Maureen Ryan’s time with the Knights she’s spent time in jail for minor offences, burglary, an assault charge. I’ve set it up so you haven’t spent more than a few months in the same place. It will make it harder for them to track down.”

Kate nodded at Walter and smiled. "That's excellent work, Walter." She extended her hand. "Thank you."

"You're welcome."

She looked around the room. "Thank you, all of you. I'll need your assistance once I get there. "Dr. Curtis,"

"Toby."

"Toby, please deep dive Butch's history. Let me know if there's anything I should be aware of. What is he likely to do? I haven't seen him in twenty years and a lot can change."

"You got it."

"I need to get on the road."

"Bring him back to us," said Paige.

"I will."

Katherine stepped closer. "Kate, you be careful."

"I always am."

Cabe ate another overcooked burger as he sat in the motel diner. The Knights had taken over most of the back section of the diner. He still hadn't gotten specifics on what was in the damn truck that would pay them so much. He tried listening to conversations without being obtrusive. It was obvious no one but Butch knew the details of the operation, and maybe the new guy. The two had a couple of private conversations that Cabe couldn't hear. Some of the men began to hoot and holler and he looked in the direction of their attention. Coming towards them was a woman in tight biker leathers and long, flaming red hair. She walked with the confidence of someone comfortable in their skin. She appeared to be in her late forties, but she didn't have the hard look of someone who'd spent their life on a bike. She took up the stool two down from him and gave him a nod. He acknowledged her presence with a small smile.

Butch stood up from his seat and walked over to the new woman. "Red? Is that you?"

The woman looked at him and smiled. "Butch? How the hell are you?"

"I'm good. How long has it been? Fifteen years?"

"More like twenty."

"God, we're old."

"Speak for yourself," she laughed.

"What have you been up to?"

"Oh you know how it is, life on the road. Occasional guest of the state."

Now Butch laughed. "Oh, I know that." He got quiet and looked at her. "What are you doing here?"

"I saw all the bikes in the parking lot and I figured this would be a safe place to stop."

Butch was leaning closer when his young waitress came up to his side. She was wearing skin jeans and a short crop top. She put her arm around Butch while shooting daggers at the woman. "Hey baby, I'm done my shift."

“Sorry Red, gotta go.”

“It was good to see you again, Butch.” The girl pulled Butch aside to a booth in the back.

The woman pulled off her jacket and Cabe’s pulse quickened. Her low cut t shirt showed off her trim frame and porcelain skin. He turned back to his meal, not wanting to be caught staring at her breasts. Apparently he wasn’t the only one who noticed the woman.

Benny walked toward her and put his hand on her shoulder. “Hey sweet stuff.” He ran his hand down her arm. “All this sweet virgin skin. You should let me fix that for you.” He traced his finger in a circle. “I could give you a sweet rose right here.” The woman shook off his hand.

“I don’t like needles.”

Benny turned her stool around to face him. “I have my kit in my room.”

“I said I don’t like needles.”

He tried to pull her off her stool. The woman delivered a sharp blow to his solar plexus. He staggered back as she jumped to her feet. Benny turned red and charged her. “You bitch!” The woman delivered several more blows before spinning around and delivering a roundhouse kick. Benny dropped like a rock and began to moan. She leaned over him and smiled.

“Shall repeat myself?”

“No,” he moaned as the men pulled him to his feet. Butch looked her up and down. Cabe thought for a moment he might have to break cover to protect her. Butch started to laugh.

“Same old Red,” he said. Some of the staff and the regulars were staring at the scene. They didn’t need any of them calling the locals. Butch looked at his men. “Get him to his room.” He looked over at his Lolita. “Hey Tiff, put on some music.” Tiffany went behind the counter and turned on the sound system. Being the only gathering spot for



miles, The Desert Flower doubled as a night club after dark. There was a small bar and dancefloor where the locals spent their nights out. Tiffany took Butch's hand and led him to the dance floor. Once a couple of bikers were on the floor, the locals felt like they could dance too. Cabe looked at the woman who was enjoying her milk shake.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm good," she said. "What about you, tall, grey and...somber?"

Cabe chuckled. "I'm good."

She gave him a smile. "I bet you are." She extended her hand. "They call me Red."

"Pete."

Red didn't let go of his hand. "Come on. I want to dance."

"Oh, I don't..."

"You've seen what happens when I'm not happy."

"We can't have that." He let himself be led to the dance floor. Red slipped her hands around his neck and they began moving to the music. He saw Butch was watching them. Red smiled at Cabe, then leaned up and gave him a kiss. He tried to hide his shock behind a smile. She was a beautiful woman but he needed to focus on the job. She gave his neck a kiss then nibbled his ear lobe. His focus was wavering. Then she whispered in his ear.

"You're off the reservation, Agent Gallo."

He nearly missed a step but he kept moving. Butch was busy with Tiffany and didn't notice. He gave her a soft kiss and then whispered, "Who are you?"

She smiled and pulled him close. "Katherine sent me. You need to get me to your room. They're watching. We need to sell it." She pulled him into a kiss that just about curled his toes. When she pulled back he saw a wicked grin. She was enjoying throwing off balance. He turned to Butch, who was grinning at him.

“We’re out. I’ll see you in the morning.” As she turned to walk toward the door, Cabe gave her a hard slap on the ass. She took an extra step but all the men hooted. She grabbed her jacket and he held the door for her. They walked toward his motel room and he spotted a Soft Tail next to his Road Glide.

“Is that you?”

“Yeah, and I could have done without the slap.”

“Just trying to sell it.” He opened his room door and locked it behind him. “Okay, who the hell are you?”

She pulled her phone from her pocket and touched a button. “Okay, we’re clear. No bugs.” She held out her hand. “Special Agent Kate Riley, Homeland.”

“I think we can skip the formalities since you just had your tongue down my throat.” He was surprised when she flushed red and looked embarrassed.

“Hey! I’m here to save your sorry ass.”

“How did you find me?”

“The team,” she said as she pulled two coms out of the inside pocket of her jacket.

“Scorpion?”

“Yes. All of them, including the director, are waiting for us to check in. When you activate that com, be prepared to get your ass chewed.” She touched the switch and put in her com. “Agent Riley here. I have Agent Gallo. He’s unharmed.”

“For now,” said Katherine. “What the hell were you thinking?”

“I’m sorry, Director. I’d heard rumors of something big going down with the Knights. I went to their hangout in Glendale,”

“The Pit Stop,” said Kate.

“Yeah. That’s where I ran into Butch Reed. He offered me a place on his crew. I had to accept.”

“We’ll discuss that later. What’ve you got?”

“It’s a hijacking. They’re expecting a tractor trailer coming through here on its way to the Mojave. We’re supposed to stop it. Butch hasn’t said what cargo it’s carrying but it’s got to be something big. He’s promised each man one hundred thousand dollars.”

“That’s big.”

“That’s the thing. Butch says this job will let him retire to an island. It’s got to be paying him more than one hundred thousand.”

“We can look into what has gone through there in the past. That might tell us what would be going through that route now,” said Walter.

“Thanks, Walter.”

“Cabe, you had us all very concerned.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I told Agent Riley you’d leave a trail you knew we could follow. I knew you still had the Pete Burke ID. That’s how we found you.”

“Great work.”

“Are you okay, Cabe?” asked Paige.

“I am, kid. Don’t worry.”

“You have to come back safe. I can’t be the only normal here.”

Cabe chuckled. “Will do, kid.”

“All right. It’s getting late. Where are you now?”

“Agent Gallo’s room,” said Riley. “We made a reasonable exit from the group to get some privacy.”

“Reasonable?” asked Toby. Cabe could hear the smirk.

“Shut it, jackass.”

“Yeah, he’s fine,” said Toby.

“That’s enough,” said Katherine. “Check in with us first thing. If we have anything important in the meantime, we’ll call. You and Agent Riley get some rest. Agent Riley, one more thing.”

“Yes, Director?”

“If Agent Gallo looks like he’s about to do anything else this stupid, you have my full authority to kick his ass.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” she smiled, looking a little too pleased at the prospect.

Cabe grabbed a bottle of water from the small refrigerator. “Do you want one?”

“Yes, thank you.”

Cabe handed her the water and grabbed one for himself. “There are a few snacks in here. I don’t feel like spending more time with the Knights than necessary.”

“I understand that.”

“You know Butch.”

“I went undercover with the Knights twenty years ago. I was FBI back then.”

“So was Carl Raines.”

“Yes, we both worked the case. We were investigating the Knight’s drug trafficking. The prosecutor felt we didn’t have enough. We were reassigned. I hadn’t seen Carl since then.” She took a sip of water and sat down on the bed. “Let’s review what we’ve got. The Knights are hired hands, so whatever this is, it wasn’t their plan.”

“Agreed. Butch isn’t the mastermind. He’s got to be getting his orders from someone.”

“For what we found, the rest of the men are followers, not leaders.”

“From what I’ve seen none of these guys are geniuses. But there is one guy I haven’t been able to pin down. He showed up yesterday. Butch called him John and other

than conversation about the crappy food and the crappy hotel, I haven't gotten anything from him."

"He's definitely not a Knight."

"How do you know?"

"No patches. Do you think he could have been brought in just for the job, like you?"

"No, I don't think so. He has Butch's ear."

"So he's the link between the client, whoever he is, and the contractor, the Knights."

"That's my guess."

"We need to get his photo to the team," she said as she pulled out her phone. "They'll be able to ID the guy."

"True, but not tonight. It's late and if we go back to the bar now it will be suspicious." Cabe smiled. "They think you're busy ravaging me." She flushed bright red. He was surprised that an agent as experienced as Riley would be so easily embarrassed.

"I'm going to get my bag off my bike then I'm going to take a long shower. Thanks to you, I've been on a bike longer today than I have in the last twenty years." She yanked open the door and came back a moment later with a leather travel bag. She reached in and pulled out her service revolver, a 9mm. "Where's yours?"

Cabe pointed toward the bed. "Night stand."

"Aren't you worried about the maid?"

Cabe shook his head. "Not here."

"Yeah, what was I thinking?" She put her gun in the opposite night stand. She grabbed her bag and headed toward the bathroom.

"Riley, wait. I'm sorry about the cracks. You're putting yourself in the middle of this for me. Thank you."

"You're welcome. And call me Kate," she smiled, "After we get out of here."

“No problem, Red,” he grinned as she closed the bathroom door. He kicked off his boots and jeans, wondering if his boxers and maybe a t shirt would be enough to sleep in. Normally he’d have done without the t shirt but he’d probably been bold enough for one day. He didn’t have long to wonder. Kate came out of the bathroom with her hair wrapped in a towel. What little else she was wearing nearly stopped his heart. She had on an intricate black lace bra and a barely there panty. She had incredibly toned legs and ass but her breasts were as beautiful as he’d speculated in the bar. “My God, woman,” he gasped.

“What?” she asked, apparently oblivious.

“You need to put something on.” Cabe was shocked when she flamed red, again. She really didn’t know.

She pulled open her bag and grabbed a fresh t shirt. “I’m sorry,” she mumbled and she pulled the towel off her hair. He stopped her as she was trying to get the shirt over her head.

“Stop, Kate. I’m not offended, I’m stunned.”

“What?”

“You really don’t see it do you?”

“See what?” She looked at her body as if she’d find a horrible deformity.

“You’re a beautiful woman and your body is...”

“Is what?”

“What can I say without you beating the crap out of me?”

She seemed to relax a bit. “Take your best shot.”

“Remarkable. Very remarkable. Swimsuit edition remarkable.”

“Thanks, I guess,” she laughed.

“I’m quite serious.”

“Oh.” In the history of awkward silences, this one ranked at the top.

“Ah, let’s get some sleep. We’ve got a busy day tomorrow.”

Kate pulled the T shirt over her head. “You’re right.”

Cabe touched the strap of her bra. “Do you always sleep in this?”

“No, if we have to share...”

“Kate, I’m sorry if my comments made you uneasy.” He looked at her and grinned. “I’m a grown man and I can control my baser instincts.”

“That’s good,” she smiled. “Underwire is a bitch.” Then in a move he’d seen in films, she unhooked her bra and pulled it off through the arm of her t shirt. “Are you okay to sleep in that?”

“Actually, I’d rather lose the shirt.”

“That’s fine. But the boxers stay.”

“The boxers stay,” he smiled and yanked the shirt over his head. He thought he saw her flush red again. He’d hoped he hadn’t embarrassed her. “Your team didn’t know about your riding or the extent of your tattoos.”

“You can’t see them under the suit.” He thought he heard her say “What a shame.”

It was going to be a long night.

Kate stirred in bed and realized she was wrapped in strong arms. It took her a moment for her eyes to focus on the tattooed arm stretched over her waist. She'd had a fitful night. She had tried to remind herself that this was just a case. She was sleeping in a bed next to a fellow agent because it was their only choice. They needed their rest. That's all it was. But she was deluding herself. She couldn't remember the last time she'd woken up in a man's arms. Certainly not a man like Cabe Gallo. What harm could it do to enjoy this moment before they faced the day?

Cabe stirred and pulled her close. Kate risked putting her hand on his arm, feeling his strength. He nuzzled into her neck and placed a kiss on her shoulder. Kate tried to stop her heart from racing. She knew he wasn't thinking of her. He was thinking of the woman who left him, Allie. It wasn't her. It never was. "Good morning," she said as she rolled out of his arms.

"Ah, good morning," he said as he pushed himself to the other side of the bed. "Did you sleep?"

"Some. You?"

"The same."

"What time is Bruce expecting us in the diner?"

"Nine."

"Okay. I'll use the bathroom first." She grabbed her bag.

"Kate, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...you know."

"It's fine," she said as she closed the door behind her. She looked at herself in the mirror. She'd slept on her damp hair so it looked just as it had when she'd walked into the diner. She looked like fifty two year old woman, desperate to look thirty. She shook her head and reached for her toothbrush. She had to stop taking this personally. This was a case, nothing more.



“Shit,” Cabe cursed as he looked at the closed bathroom door. He’d crossed every boundary. What the hell was he thinking? He wished he could blame that half dreamy state when just waking, but he couldn’t. He felt like a total heel. Not because he was thinking of Allie when he pulled Kate against him or when he was kissed her shoulder. He felt like a heel because he wasn’t.

Kate came out of the bathroom dressed in her “Red” persona. Her curls were full and long and she’d added a some heavy eyeliner. “Hi, Red,” he smiled.

“Get your ass in gear. Butch is expecting us in thirty.”

He stood and grabbed some fresh boxers. “I won’t be long.” He stopped and watched as she pulled on her boots. The way she stood and moved was completely different from herself. She caught him staring.

“What?” she demanded with her hands on her hips.

“You’re so different. You’re not you.” He saw a crack in her façade.

“It’s what I do. I’m an infiltration specialist. I go under, get what we need and get out. I adapt to the situation. No one ever knows I was there.”

“How is that possible?” he chuckled. “You’re very memorable.”

“On occasion my cover identity may be, but I’m not. Most of the time I blend into the wallpaper.”

“I don’t know how.”

“Not relevant. Get ready.”

“Bossy,” he smiled. “We should check in with the team.” Kate pulled the coms out of her jacket and handed one to him. “Who’s on?” he asked.

“We’re all here, Cabe,” said Paige. “How are you?”

“We’re fine. We’re about to go in to breakfast with the Knights. There is one man we haven’t identified. Butch called him John but we have no last name. We think he’s the

connection between the Knights and whoever hired them. We're going to get a picture and forward it to you as soon as we can."

"Do you have any idea what they're after?" asked Walter.

"I don't think they know," said Cabe. "I think that's the only reason they're all waiting in a run down motel outside Palmdale. I think they're waiting for further instructions."

"A logical assumption," said Walter. "If we can identify the suspect we might be able to figure out what they're after."

Cabe and Kate pulled out their coms and secured them in her jacket. They couldn't risk the Knights seeing them.

Cabe walked into the diner standing close behind Kate with his hand on her back. He leaned closer and whispered, "Two booths up." Their target was sitting in a booth by himself. If they sat two booths up they could get a shot of the unidentified man. Cabe nodded toward Butch and Tiffany as they headed for their seats.

"Hey, Red," Butch grinned. "Pete treating you good?"

"I'm smiling and he's tired so, yeah," she grinned.

Butch laughed. "Well you let me know if he steps out of line."

"Will do, Butch," Kate smiled.

Tiffany shot her a death glare then reached for Butch's hand. "Baby, why are you bothering with this old bitch?"

Cabe looked at Kate and didn't like what he saw. She grabbed Tiffany's long hair and twisted it in her hand, forcing the girl's neck back.

"You're being disrespectful to Butch and to me. If you don't want this old bitch to snap your neck like a twig, I suggest you apologize."

"Butch!" Tiffany cried. Butch sat back against the booth and looked at both women. Kate yanked the girl's hair again.

“Ow! Okay, okay. I apologize.”

Kate released the girl and smiled at Cabe. “I’m hungry, babe.” He walked them to the booth and slid in across from her.

“What the hell were you thinking?” he whispered.

“Butch was watching what I’d do. If I’d let her disrespect me he would have been suspicious.”

“Remind me not to piss you off.”

“A wise plan,” she smiled. They ordered breakfast and Kate held his hand across the table. She rubbed her thumb over the top of his hand. He knew she was doing it for the benefit of the men watching them, but it was working on him. They finished their quick breakfast as Kate pulled out her phone. She smiled and positioned the phone so she got both Cabe and John in the frame and snapped several rapid fire shots. She looked at the picture and smiled. “So handsome.” She set the phone down on the table and hit a few buttons. The picture was now with Scorpion. They should be able to run facial recognition. It was only a few minutes before she got a text. It simply read, “*Urgent*” Kate slid out of her seat and slipped next to him. She ran her hand up his chest and gave him a kiss. “Babe, let’s get out of here.”

“Sure thing, Red.” They stood and Kate led him toward the door, past Butch’s table. “Butch, we’re...ah...”

“Going for seconds?” he laughed.

Kate shot a look at Tiffany. “More like fourths.”

“If you need me you’ll know where I’ll be,” he grinned and smacked Kate’s ass. They left the diner and headed to his room.

“Again with the ass?” she asked as she pulled out the coms.

“Just selling it.” He put the com in his ear. “Walter, we’re on. What’ve you got?”

“John is John Rowe. He’s a member of the Brotherhood.”

“Ah, damn,” he said.

“Who are they?” asked Kate.

“White supremacists.”

“Damn,” she said.

“We have an idea of what they want. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission runs trucks through that area full of nuclear waste on the way to storage in the desert.”

“What would they want with it?” asked Kate. “They couldn’t make a bomb with it.”

“I have a thought about that,” said Walter. “The Brotherhood has an encampment in the Mojave. Edwards Air Force base and Fort Irwin are within a one hundred miles of their encampment. Contaminate the water supply for both they’ll create a dead zone. The Brotherhood could operate without any observation.”

“What about their water supply?” asked Cabe.

“The area they’re in is fed by a different tributary, but either way, it’s irrelevant,” said Walter.

“Why’s that?” asked Cabe.

“Acid rain,” said Walter and Kate.

“Exactly,” said Walter. “The Brotherhood is not taking into account the effect of condensation on those waterways. The contamination will be pulled into the atmosphere and it will rain up and down the coast.”

“Not only would it destroy the environment of most of the west coast, it would effect the health of the population. It could kill millions,” said Kate.

“There’s something else you should know,” said Sly.

“Something worse than killing millions?” asked Cabe.

“Something more immediate. From what you’ve told us the Brotherhood has promised at least two million in payments.”

“About that, yes.”

“They don’t have nearly those kind of assets. They finance their operation with bank robberies. All the ones they’ve been suspected of pulling over the last five years don’t amount to half that.”

“Oh Christ,” whispered Kate.

“The Brotherhood can’t pay what they promised, which only means one thing.” Cabe sighed and looked at Kate. “They don’t intend for any of us to survive.”

Kate sighed and sat on the edge of the bed. “Damn, Gallo. Next time you get a tip about global destruction, how about you give the troops a head up? Now it’s just you and me and your team in LA.”

Cabe smiled and shook his head. “In my defense I didn’t know what the target was. And this isn’t the first time Scorpion has stopped terrorists from getting their hands on nuclear weapons.”

“Excuse me?”

“I’ll never live down riding sidesaddle on a nuclear missile in a Whimsical Boy costume.”

Kate sat frozen. “Are you high?”

He chuckled and sat down next to her. “Not even a little. When we get out of here I’ll tell you about it. In the meantime let’s figure out what we’re going to do.”

“First things first. We talk to Katherine,” she said. She hit a button and Katherine picked up on the first ring. “Hello, Katherine. You’re on speaker.”

“Hello, Katherine,” said Cabe.

“Let’s save the pleasantries. Walter brought me up to speed.”

“Do you know when the truck is coming through?”

“NRC said the truck will pass through your area with their Army escort on route forty before it veers off to back roads. The approximate time is eight a.m.”

“Are they going to divert?”

“No, we want to get them in the act.”

“Katherine, it’s just Kate and me. There are eight Knights and how ever many of the Brotherhood show up.”

“I know. Don’t worry. You’ll have plenty of back up.”

“Thank you, Katherine.”

“I want you back here so I can kill you myself!”

Kate smiled and whispered, “I don’t think she’s kidding.”

“I’m not!”

“There’s something else,” said Cabe. “There has to be a leak in security if they know when the truck is coming through.”

“I realize that. I’m working with the NRC and the Army and we will be burying that traitor in a very deep, very dark hole. You just worry about these guys.”

“Yes, Director.”

Kate disconnected the phone and smiled. “Are you sure you want to go back after this? That’s one very pissed off boss.”

“I think if we manage to stop these guys I’ll get back in her good graces.”

“Now, tell me about Whimsical Boy,” she grinned.

A pounding at the door startled them both. “Yo! Pete!” yelled Butch.

“Damn!” said Cabe.

“Strip!” Kate whispered.

“What?”

“He thinks we’re having sex.” She said as she pulled her t shirt over her head. She yanked off her boots and jumped into bed. She pulled the sheets up to her chest and pulled off her bra.

“Pete!”

“Geez, give us a second,” shouted Cabe who was now standing in boxers. He looked over at her and she nodded. He opened the door and Butch pushed his way in.

“Damn it, Butch! What the hell?!” said Kate.

“Sorry, Red.” He leered at her then glanced at Cabe. “Really, dude? Again?”

Kate sat up with the sheets clutched to her chest. Her bare shoulders and chest made it appear she was naked. She looked at Cabe and smiled. “He’s a machine.” She waved her hand at him. “Now can you say whatever you came here to say so he can get back to it?”

“Ah, yeah.” He turned to face Cabe. “We’re finally getting the time and location. My room at five.”

“Got it, now if you don’t mind...” Cabe said as he indicated the door. Butch gave them one last leer before leaving. Kate flopped back against the pillows and sighed.

“Hand me my clothes, please.” She put her bra and t shirt back on. “I’m getting too old for this. I should just put in my papers and call it a day, if they’ll let me.” She pushed back the covers.

He sat on the bed next to her. “What do you mean?”

She smiled. “I’ve put in my thirty. Twenty with the FBI and ten with Homeland. I’m ready to just sit on the beach.”

“Okay, lets circle back to thirty years of service but what do you mean if they let you?”

“My skills are valued. The department may put up a fight to keep me. Katherine had to give the powers that be a convincing argument to get me assigned to your case.”

“I admit, you’re a good undercover agent, but...I can’t finish that statement without you kicking my ass.”

She smiled and touched his hand. “That’s okay. I’m not supposed to stand out. I started as a computer analyst with the FBI. Back then you couldn’t hack remotely so I started going undercover. No one ever notices the IT guy. I have a very high success rate.”

“How high?”

“Ninety five percent.”

“This year?”

“Over thirty years,” she smiled. She had every right to be proud.

“Holy...you’re that good?”

“I could hack your brain stem if I wanted.”

“Hah! You sound like Walter.”

“He’s almost as good as he thinks he is,” she said. “He’s still got too much ego.” She smiled. “He really doesn’t like being second best at anything. He and Sly were working on a coding project. I needed their focus so I fixed it for them. He was not pleased.”

“You could out genius Walter O’Brien?”

“I wouldn’t call it that, but yes.” She thought for a moment she’d revealed too much when Cabe stared at her. It was the look she’d gotten most of her life.

“Are you like them?”

She knew what he meant. She was right, she’d revealed too much. Now he would see her only as the computer nerd. “Yes, I’m like them. I have three PhD’s. My father founded Rimark computing on encryption software I wrote when I was sixteen.” She stood and tried to separate herself from him.

“Oh my God,” he whispered. “You’re the Ghost.”



Kate stopped and looked at him. She needed to divert his attention. This was a road she shouldn't go down. "We should check our weapons. We can't be caught lacking." She reached into the nightstand and pulled out her service weapon. She felt Cabe's hands on her shoulders.

"You're the Ghost."

"Cabe, we have work to do."

"No, we don't, not right now. You're the Ghost. I don't know how it's possible."

Kate went from worried to angry in a heart beat. "Excuse me?!"

"The Ghost has been a legend for decades. You're not old enough."

"Okay, not angry anymore," she thought. "I'm fifty two."

"Wow. I put you at no older than forty five," he said. "You really are remarkable."

She smiled and tried to relax. "Thank you. And needless to say if you share that information I will demonstrate my extensive Krav Maga skills on you."

"Understood," he smiled. "Do you want to go back to the diner? We have time before the meeting. We could get some coffee."

"We can't go back yet." She smiled and put her hand on his chest. "As far as the Knights are concerned, you're too busy."

Cabe and Kate came back to their room after dinner. They didn't learn anything more from the men at the diner. They were all laughing and anticipating their big payouts. Cabe almost felt bad for them. Almost.

"Okay, fill me in on the meeting," said Kate. They hadn't had a chance to talk privately since the meeting in Butch's room.

"Let's bring everyone up to speed." They put in their coms. "Hey, guys. Who's on?"

"I'm here with Sly and Toby," said Walter. "I sent the others home to get some rest. They've been working non-stop."

Cabe sighed. He owed the kids a big apology for all of this. "We had a final meeting about the job. We're leaving here at seven a.m. and it will take twenty minutes to get into place. John Rowe will be providing weapons."

"That gives me an approximate location for the stop," said Sly. "I can update Director Cooper."

"Sly, pull up a topo map and tell me about the area," said Cabe.

"You're looking at nothing but flat land. Other than a billboard or two along that stretch of highway, there's no cover."

"Cabe, I won't be able to back you up. I'm good with a handgun but I'm no sharpshooter. They'd see me coming a mile away."

"It's okay, Kate. I trust Katherine will have enough back up."

"Toby, do you have any information of John Rowe?" she asked.

"From what I see this guy drank the Kool Aid. He is devoted to the cause. There are a handful of men at their compound along with their families. These guys are more than willing to die for their cause but they will not hesitate to make you die for yours. Cabe, in my opinion John Rowe will try to kill all of you before taking the truck."

"There's only one way to do that," said Walter.

"The weapons he gives us won't function," said Cabe.

“Cabe, I don’t like this,” said Walter.

“Neither do I,” said Kate.

“I agree it’s not optimal.”

“Not optimal?” asked Toby. “Try bat crap crazy.”

“Toby, it will be okay. Have a little faith. You guys get some rest and we’ll do the same. We’ll link up in the morning.”

“Cabe?”

“Yes, Walter?”

“Are you sure you can do this?”

“As sure as I can be.”

“Well, I’ve learned to have faith in your judgement but please be careful. If anything happens to you...”

“Our women will kill us,” said Toby.

“I’ll do my best, guys.”

Cabe had showered and changed into some fresh boxers. He got as comfortable as he could on the motel bed and started flipping channels. He needed to take his mind off tomorrow. He was trying not let Kate or the rest of the team know that he was as worried about tomorrow as they were. He heard the shower shut off in the bathroom. Kate came out of the bathroom wearing only a t shirt and a small pair of panties. Her long hair was combed wet, making the back of her shirt damp.

“Do you always wash your hair that often that often? It must be a lot of work.”

“Not usually but letting it dry like this keeps the curls. Usually I blow it straight.”

“Why?”

“Excuse me?”

“Why would you get rid of your curls? They’re beautiful.” He shocked himself at his bold question.

Kate smiled. “Thank you, but my job is to be non-descript.”

“I still don’t know how that’s possible.”

“You’ve only seen me in my biker babe persona.”

“Well, your biker babe persona is very effective.”

“Thanks.”

He gave himself a mental shake. What the hell was wrong with him? At least she didn’t think that was crossing the line. If she did he had now doubt she’d kick his ass. “How about we watch a movie?”

“What’s on?”

“Die Hard 2”

She rolled her eyes. “You’re kidding.”

“One man victorious against incredible odds.”

“A bit on the nose, isn’t it?”

“Think of it like a training film.”

Kate shook her head and laughed. “Gallo, you are something else.” She sat down on the bed next to him.

“You’ve never said, is there someone ready to kick my ass for being in the same bed with you?” he asked.

“Hah! No. Never married, no significant other. And I don’t need anyone to kick your ass for me.”

“Noted. So why are you single?”

“You know how it is. It’s the job. You get into it young and idealistic and the next thing you know it’s thirty years later and you wonder where your life went.”

“I hear that. I assume you’ve read my file.”

“You assume correctly. I did miss the details about Whimsical Boy.”

“Katherine very kindly left them out of the official report. So you know about me but I don’t know your history. Do you have a Whimsical Boy in your case file?”

“Not really. I’ve had a few that were more memorable than others.”

“Like?”

“I don’t know if I should.”

“You know I have clearance.”

She sighed and pulled the covers over herself. “Well, there was this one case. I was sent in to find funds that had been diverted from Iraqi reconstruction funds. I found a Colonel from Ft. Hood had established himself a nice little retirement fund. I found the money and transferred it back where it belonged before I arrested him.”

“I remember that case. It made the news. Wasn’t it an insane amount he stole?”

“Twenty million.”

“Damn. You got a conviction?”

She looked at him like he'd lost his mind. "Of course."

"My bad," he smiled. "What did he get?"

"Forty years in Leavenworth and a nasty limp."

"A limp?"

"He realized I was the one who'd found him out. I warned him not to try anything but he didn't listen. He wound up with three broken ribs and a broken femur."

Cabe chuckled. "Well, that's on him, isn't it."

Kate fell asleep before the end of the movie. Cabe turned off the TV and pulled the covers up over her shoulders. He was surprised when she curled up against him. Kate Riley was truly extraordinary. She wasn't just one of the best agents in the department, she was one of the best ever. She'd put herself at risk to save him from his own reckless behavior. Even after all she'd done for him, it might not be enough. Tomorrow he was going alone up against ruthless men who wouldn't hesitate to kill him. He pulled Kate close and lightly kissed the top of her head. And he didn't feel the slightest bit guilty.

Cabe and Kate dressed in relative silence. They both knew what they were facing. "Let's check in," he said. Kate handed him a com. "Good morning, team." He heard replies from everyone, including Katherine.

"Are you ready for this, Cabe?" asked Katherine.

"Yes, director."

"We've diverted the cargo but not the truck. We need to get these guys. When they open the truck they'll find a squad of heavily armed soldiers."

"The problem is Cabe won't be able to defend himself," said Kate. "We've already determined the Brotherhood doesn't intend for any of the Knights to survive. Whatever weapons the Brotherhood supplies will not be functional."

"Kate, I'll have my service weapon at my back. I'll be okay."

"Against automatic weapons? Katherine, I don't like the odds."

"I don't like it either but this is the best scenario we've got," said Katherine.

"I have an idea," said Walter. "The truck has cameras front and back. We can tap into those and at least you'll have an idea what's going on out of your line of sight."

"That's great, Walter, thanks. Look, everyone, I'm sorry I've put you through all this but we've been through worse. We'll get this done and then dinner at Kavel's is on me."

"Cabe?"

"Yes, Paige?"

"We love you."

Cabe took a breath. He knew they were scared he wouldn't make it out of this. He was scared too. "I love you too, kids. You know that, right?" Once again he heard them all reply, even Walter.

"Cabe, I want you to remember something," said Toby. "I've studied every bit I can about these guys. I know you've spent time with them and probably gotten to know some

of them. You need to remember that these guys are very bad dudes. They live to serve only themselves. None of them will hesitate for a second to kill you if they feel you betrayed them. Respond accordingly.”

“Thanks, Doc. I have to get going. I’ll see you all soon.”

“You better,” said Happy.

Cabe smiled and took out his com. Kate took out hers and set it aside. He was surprised to see her eyes were glazed with tears. “I’m going to be alright.”

“I wish I could be out there with you.”

“You know you can’t.”

“I know. It doesn’t make it any easier.”

He opened the door of their motel room and saw the men gathered. “I’ve got to go.” He went to put the com back in but she held on to his hand.

“I promised those kids I’d bring you back to them. Don’t you dare make me a liar.”

“I won’t,” he smiled.

“See that you don’t.” She slid her hands up his chest and pulled him into a fiery kiss. For just a moment he let himself meet her passion with his own.

He glanced back at the men, then at her and smiled. “No one was watching.”

She gave him a sly smile. “I know.”



Cabe pushed aside thoughts of Kate and the team. He needed to focus on the job at hand. He slipped the com back in his ear and hoped everyone would be too busy to notice it. John Rowe pulled into the parking lot behind the wheel of a pickup truck.

“Woo hoo!” yelled Benny. “The good stuff is here.”

John got out of the truck. “Lay off. What are you going to do, ride down the road with an AR-15 strapped to your back? I’ll hand them out when we’re in place.” Tiffany picked this very inopportune moment to come out of Butch’s room.

“Butch, baby, how long are you going to be? I got the day off and I want to go out.”

John looked really angry at Butch and grabbed Tiffany by the arm. “Why the fuck are women still here?”

“Don’t worry. She’s fine. Tiffany, baby, go back to the room and wait for me.”

“Is that red head still here?” asked John.

“Yeah, why?” Cabe demanded.

He ignored him and pointed at Benny. “You. Get the women and keep them here.”

“What? No,” Benny whined. “I don’t want to babysit.”

John pulled a revolver from under his jacket. “Do as your told.” Butch nodded and Benny started toward Cabe’s room.

“Let me tell her,” said Cabe. He knocked on his motel room door and waited for her to unlock it.

“What’s going on?” Kate asked.

“Benny and Tiffany are going to wait with you until we get back.”

She glanced back and forth between Benny and a very unhappy Tiffany. “Dandy.” She stepped aside and let them in. She smiled. “When you finish here, what do you say we head for a beach?”

“Sounds great.” Cabe leaned in and kissed her cheek. “You good?” he whispered.

"I've got this," she whispered.

He was sure she did.

Cabe rode beside Butch as they followed John's truck. John pulled to the side of the highway behind a stand evergreens. "Pulling off," he said quietly, hoping the team could hear him over the motors. The rest of the Knights pulled over and shut off their engines.

"Alright, listen up," said Butch. "Pete and I will stop the escort. Jason and Mark you take the cab. The rest of you get the back and clear out anyone in the trailer."

John stood in the back of the truck and handed out the weapons. Each man looked at their new weapon. From what Cabe could tell, everything about these weapons was right. That could mean only one thing. Blanks. He noticed that the weapon John picked out of the crate had a stripe of green paint on the stock. John's weapon would have live rounds. He had to hope the team was listening. He moved aside and face the trees. "Blanks," he whispered.

"I'm not surprised," said Toby.

"The truck is ten minutes out," said Walter.

"We heard Butch give out the assignments. Where is the Brotherhood guy?" asked Toby.

"In his truck."

"I don't have to tell you he's in a spot to take you all out," said Toby.

"No." His answer was covered by the sound of a tractor trailer coming up the highway. The men got on their bikes and rode down the highway, coming even with the truck and the escort van. John pulled his truck across the road in advance of the van. The van and the tractor trailer both screeched to a stop. Butch nodded at him and they pulled in front of the van. They jumped off their bikes and trained their weapons on the drivers.

“Out of van!” Butch shouted. The men didn’t move. Butch trained his weapon on the men. “Get out now!” Butch fired but as expected, it was all flash. “What the fuck!”

Cabe heard the back of the trailer open and the men began to shout. He heard weapons firing.

“Cabe, the soldiers have engaged the men. Some are running,” said Walter. Cabe heard several more rounds fired. “They didn’t get far.”

A moment later two soldiers rounded the side of the trailer. John raised his weapon and began to fire. Cabe dropped the useless weapon and grabbed his service weapon. He fired and hit John square in the chest. He looked back and saw Butch was down. He moved toward John and could see the man was dead.

“Cabe, are you okay? Cabe!” called Paige.

“I’m fine, Paige. I need to secure the scene.” He moved toward Butch.

“I don’t know what happened. Damn gun missed.”

“You didn’t miss. They were loaded with blanks. Only John had a live weapon. He never intended for any of you to survive this.”

A soldier approached them. “Agent Gallo?”

“Yes, sergeant.”

“Director Cooper advised us you were on site. Two more suspects are down, the others are being secured.”

“Thank you, sergeant.”

“Agent Gallo?” asked Butch.

“I’m with Homeland.”

“Damn,” he whispered. “So much for my retirement.” Butch moaned and closed his eyes.

“We’ll get you treated,” Cabe said.

“It’s too late for that. Do me a favor, when you see Tiffany tell her she can do better than me. She’s a good kid.”

Cabe nodded. “Will do.”

Butch gave him a small smile. “A damn cop.” Butch closed his eyes for the last time.

Kate paced the room while Tiffany flipped channels from the bed. Benny sat in the corner of the room with his handgun stretched over his lap. Cabe had been gone for an hour. She'd heard the takedown through her com and knew everything had gone according to plan. Well, according to their plan. Butch's plan didn't include being shot dead.

"This is boring," said Tiffany as she tossed down the remote. "There's nothing good on. I'm going." She tried to stand but Benny pushed her down.

"You're not going anywhere."

"Don't touch me!"

He ran the barrel of his gun down between her breasts. "I'll touch what ever I want."

"Butch will kill you."

"Leave her alone, Benny."

He turned his gun on Kate. "You shut up, bitch! I'll do whatever I damn well please. I'm the one with the gun."

In one lightning fast move Kate snatched the gun from his hand and pointed it at Benny's chest. "Think again, Benny." She stood aside and pointed in the direction of the bathroom. "Move."

"I'm not going anywhere."

Kate couldn't believe the guy was this stupid. "Really, Benny? I've kicked your ass once. Do you really think I wouldn't ventilate your chest? Now move!" Benny moved into the bathroom and she shut the door. "Tiffany, get me that chair." The girl brought her the chair and Kate jammed it under the handle. Benny would stay put until backup arrived. Kate took a breath and noticed Tiffany looked ready to pass out. "Sit down." She got the girl a water from fridge. "Drink this."

"Why did you do that? Why did you stop him? I thought you didn't like me."

"You're a rude child. But that doesn't mean I was going to let him rape you." She heard the team over her com.

“Kate, talk to us. Are you okay?” asked Paige.

“Yes, Paige, I’m fine. I disarmed the suspect and he’s secured in the bathroom. He’ll stay put until Cabe returns.”

“Who are you talking to?” asked Tiffany.

Kate reached into her overnight bag and pulled out her badge. “Special Agent Kate Riley, Homeland Security. I was talking to my team.”

“You’re a cop?”

“Special Agent.”

“I’m outta here,” she said as moved off the bed.

“Sit! You’re not going anywhere.” A knock on the door was followed by Cabe shouting.

“Kate! Are you alright?”

She pulled open the door and saw Cabe, dusty and dirty. She’d never been happier to see anyone. She threw her arms around him, despite the gun still in her hand. “Cabe, you’re okay.”

“Yeah, I’m fine. I heard through the com. What the hell happened? Where’s Benny?”

“He’s in the bathroom. Grab some back up and get him out of here.”

Cabe turned and whistled. A heavily armed soldier approached. “A suspect is locked in the bathroom. Secure him with the others.”

“Yes, sir.” The soldier retrieved Benny from the bathroom and secured his hands with a plastic cuffs. Benny shot them all a death glare as he was led away.

“You’re a cop too?” asked Tiffany.

“Special Agent Cabe Gallo, Homeland Security.”

“Where’s Butch? What did you do to him?”

Cabe moved toward the girl. "Butch is dead." Tiffany gasped and sat down on the bed. He sat down next to her and took her hand. "Butch asked me to tell you something. He said you could do a lot better than him."

"He did?"

"I think he really cared for you."

Tears ran down the girl's cheek. "Am I in trouble?"

Kate sat down next to the girl. "You're going to have to answer questions. Tell them what you know." A Homeland agent walked in through the open door and flashed his badge.

"Agent Gallo, Agent Riley, I'm Special Agent Dennis Lane. I have a message from Director Cooper. You are both to, and I quote, get your asses back to the garage as soon as possible."

Kate smiled. "Will do. Agent Lane, Tiffany will need to be debriefed. Make sure she is no where any of the Knights."

"Yes, ma'am."

Tiffany paled. "Debriefed?"

"That means they ask you questions. Be honest and you can get out ahead of this." Tiffany nodded and stood. "Tiffany, a word of advice. In the future, be careful of old bitches. You never know what we're capable of."

The girl gave her a small smile and nodded as the agent led her away. Cabe closed the door behind them and sat down. He touched his com.

"Team, the rest of the Knights have been secured and a clean up team is on site. Agent Riley and I will be back at the garage as soon as we can get back to LA and change."

"We'll be waiting for you," said Paige.

Cabe took out his com and Kate followed suit. "Are you okay?" she asked.

"I'm fine."

"No, you're not."

"I wasn't fast enough."

"For what?"

"To save Butch. John shot him as the soldiers came around the corner."

"Cabe, John could have killed those soldiers if you hadn't stopped him."

"I know."

"Do you? I know you feel bad about Butch but his whole life led him to this situation. He had a history of violence. He tried to kill the men in the escort van. The only reason he failed was the gun was loaded with blanks."

"You're right."

"It still doesn't make this any easier."

"You're right."



Cabe parked at his car and stared at the garage. He'd gone to his apartment first to shower and change. He should be exhausted but he was still running on adrenaline. He was looking forward to seeing the kids but he was not so sure about seeing his boss. He took a breath and headed toward the door.

"Cabe!" shouted Paige as she pulled him into a hug.

"Hi, kid."

She slapped his chest. "Don't you 'Hi, kid' me. You scared us."

"I'm really sorry."

"I would hope so," said Walter as he shook Cabe's hand. Walter stepped aside for Sly, who gave Cabe a hug.

"We were very worried."

"I know, buddy. I'm sorry. But Agent Riley told me how much you helped to find me."

"Of course. You're one of us."

"Thanks, buddy."

Happy stood in front of Cabe, with her hands on her hips. "You ride." That was Happy, direct and to the point.

"I do."

"You never said."

"I know. I'm sorry."

"What do you ride?"

"Road Glide Ultra."

"Huh. Good bike. Bring it in. No telling what some hack mechanic has done to it."

"Hey, I work on it myself," he smiled.

She looked at him and nodded. "I stand by my statement." She turned to leave, then turned back. "I'm glad you're okay."

Toby walked up to him and patted his back. "Who would have thought it? Cabe Gallo is a badass biker."

He smiled and gave him a hug. "Shut it, jackass."

The front door opened and Toby looked over his shoulder. "Agent Riley, I see you've retired the leather."

Cabe turned toward the door and saw Kate had changed into a dark blue, tailored suit. Her curls were gone and her hair was tamed straight, clipped into a ponytail. "Agent Riley, you look...different."

"It's like I told you, non-descript."

"I wouldn't say that," he smiled.

The door opened again and Katherine walked in. She looked Cabe up and down. "You seem undamaged."

"I'm fine, Director."

"Good. Both of you follow me." She headed toward the small office and closed the door behind them. "Homeland executed a search warrant on the Brotherhood's compound. They found a cache of weapons big enough to start a war. They made multiple arrests. The rest of the Knights have been charged. Congratulations. Your work has dismantled two criminal organizations. You prevented them from poisoning the waterways of the west coast that would have resulted in millions of deaths."

"Thank you, Director."

Katherine put her hands on her hips. "That is the only reason I'm not pulling your badge. You went off the rails. You went undercover without backup. You endangered yourself. I was forced to put Agent Riley in harms way to pull you out. I have to be able to trust my agents. For that reason I'm ordering mandatory sessions with Dr. Curtis."

"What?"

“You will continue these sessions, as often as Toby deems necessary, until he feels you are in no longer a danger to yourself or your team.”

“Director, I realize I went off book...”

“Off book! You threw the book out the window. You will comply order or I’ll pull your badge right now.”

“Yes, Director.”

“That’s not all. I’m temporarily assigning Agent Riley to Scorpion.”

“What?” Kate and Cabe said.

“Agent Riley you will shadow Agent Gallo for a minimum of three months.”

“Director, I work alone.”

“I’m sorry, did I give you the impression you had a choice? Agent Gallo needs a supervisory agent until he’s given the all clear by Dr. Curtis. And you could benefit from working with a team like Scorpion. Are we all clear?” she asked.

“Yes, Director,” they replied.

“Good,” she nodded. Then she smiled. Katherine pointed to Cabe and opened her arms. “You, bring it in.” Cabe smiled and gave her a hug. “Don’t you scare me like that again.”

“I promise, Katherine.”

“Good. Now get to work. You both have reports to write.” She smiled and left the office. Cabe and Katherine followed her out to the main room.

“Is there a spare desk I can use?” asked Kate.

“Yeah, next to mine.”

“We should get to it. Those reports aren’t going to write themselves.”

Cabe placed a hand on her arm. “Kate, we had a very tense time. There was a lot of adrenaline. We were...what I mean is some things happen because we’re caught up in the moment.”

Kate looked at him and smiled. “I wouldn’t say that.”

Cabe smiled as Kate walked toward his desk. This was going to be interesting.

Katherine Cooper stood next to Toby as he watched the new dynamic of the team. “You realize adding Agent Riley is going to be an issue. She’s not a team player.”

“That’s what I’m paying you for. Work with her.”

Toby caught a look between Cabe and Kate that stopped him. A lot more happened on this case than they knew. “Uh oh.”

“What?”

“Things just got a lot more complicated.”