

# Chapter 21

## Abbi's Responsibilities Grow

**T**hursday night after their wedding planner had gone, Abbi and Andrew embraced, knowing that their wedding was going to be a fabulous day.

Andrew had confirmed his booking with Signature Aviation, a chartered plane service, that would fly them Sunday evening from Denver to Miami, and back home after their honeymoon. Then he verified their tickets on

American Airlines roundtrip from Miami to Aruba and also checked that both of their passports were current. The boutique hotel, Ocean Z in Aruba, had emailed back after arranging 4 nights of off-site dinner reservations. They visited Jane and her twins, and Abbi offered to help Andrew shop for a suit at Balani, a custom clothier in Denver.

Sunday morning, Abbi and Andrew enjoyed not rushing out of bed as they typically did on workdays to allow time for their new jogging routine. Once they passed through their garden and entered White Mountain Park, Andrew followed Abbi's lead, aware of what lay ahead. He was no longer surprised by fallen branches, large rocks and sudden inclines and descents. The pains that he felt at the start of their jog slowly abated as his

muscles warmed. Forty minutes later, they paused in their garden to spend a few minutes with their Koi. They both realized that the Koi responded to their attention, maybe for the snacks, or maybe they recognized Andrew and Abbi's voices. Finally, Andrew took Abbi's hand, and after waving goodbye, they returned to the kitchen. Andrew called out, "Coffee, tea or hot chocolate?" to Abbi. As they both sipped their beverages, Andrew explained that the mining client with whom he had spoken had contracted with Andrew to handle their Colorado leases. Andrew now had a solid revenue stream. He brought out his laptop and showed Abbi what he was working on. Abbi thought she understood most of what he showed her: land leases, restorations and fees. Abbi was impressed

by what Andrew had developed and the research he had done, considering this was a completely new legal arena for Andrew. Although there was coal mining in Pennsylvania, Andrew had no previous experience with mining leases.

On Monday morning, Abbi reminded Andrew that she would be out for a few nights. She would be driving out to Fruita Colorado, the District 4 Offices of Colorado's Northwest State Patrol. The drive would be almost five hours, driving west from their condo on I-70. She would leave after lunch and spend the night at a hotel near the offices, spend all day Tuesday at District 4, and come home Wednesday afternoon. She wanted to send a report to the Governor, detailing that she had been to half of the district offices so far, and

had observed field work. This district included eleven counties, covered by three Troop Offices and five Posts. All told, Major Rollins had one hundred and thirty-five troops under his command. As Abbi packed her state car for her drive, she went to the basement gun safe and removed the state's Sionics Patrol Rifle and a box of .223 cartridges. This was part of a routine that she had practiced every day since becoming a uniformed Patrol Officer. Now she would be out on official state business. She never altered the skills that she had learned at the Academy, even now that she was a Lieutenant for those ten hours per week. Abbi was extremely adept at dividing up her weeks and months, allotting time for her own business, and time as a state officer. Different hats on different days: it was just

a matter of fact for Abigail Carter. She had learned to project authority by her voice, as well as her actions. Abbi had become a proficient problem solver who quickly identified solutions and acted.

Abbi checked her laptop to confirm her reservation at the Marriott Courtyard in Grand Junction for two nights. It was the best hotel available, and only twenty minutes from the district offices. She intended to get an understanding and firsthand look at the various highway routes which could be utilized for drug traffic.

While Andrew and Abbi were having lunch on Monday, Andrew's cell phone rang. He had programmed various ring tones and recognized his mom calling.

"Hi, are you OK? Sure, we can do that. I can come over around 9:00 AM tomorrow. Abbi is going to be out for a few nights."

Abbi called over to Andrew," What's going on?"

Andrew responded, "I think my mom wants to buy a dog. She and Mrs. Arnold have been walking Champy together, and Esther has been doing some research. She found a breeder of Alaskan Klee Kai. She said that it's like a miniature Husky and this breeder will be in Denver for a show. Mrs. Arnold gave her the name of her vet and she's already called them. The vet checked out the breeder for her. So that's what I'll be doing, meeting the breeder at a show with my mom, and then I guess she'll be putting a deposit on the pup she selects. Oh, in exchange for helping her,

she'll shop with me for my new suit which takes that off your To Do list."

Abbi looked at Andrew and smiled, "You know I highjacked Esther to come to Colorado so she could still be near you. Esther is healthy- she has taken care of herself since your father died, and having a dog will open her up to new adventures. It will also motivate her to get out and do more daily walking. If she gets a trainer to help her, I'm sure that she'll do well and be happy. Andrew, you owe this to your mom, even if we both have to make time to help her with the dog. Now that Jane is home with her new boys, she can give Esther phone advice since she raised Queenie from a pup."

She hugged Andrew, kissed him after finishing her lunch, and headed out the door



for her drive to Grand Junction. This was a workday for Abbi, so she was wearing one of the pants suits Jane had selected for her. With her badge and her gun on her belt, she was now Lieutenant Abigail Carter, Colorado State Police. She wanted to complete most of her drive in daylight because in this area of Colorado, a variety of animals often attempted to cross I-70 at dusk. Getting settled in Grand Junction by dusk was her goal.

Carter was behind the wheel of her unmarked black Dodge Charger westbound on I-70. She only drove twenty minutes before she entered the interstate. Once she left the metropolitan area of Denver, the landscape changed, and green vegetation changed to straw colored brush. Occasionally the highway was bordered by a rock covered land-

scape, with hillsides covered by scrub pine. Abbi had lived most of her life here, but this time of year the landscape felt dreary. Snow had not yet arrived to afford the scenic beauty that most people picture when visualizing Colorado in the winter. After two hours, Lieutenant Carter needed of a fresh cup of coffee. She had passed Idaho Springs but drove an extra 30 minutes to find a location just off I-70.

It was 2:50 PM when she pulled her cruiser up to the diner's parking lot. It was then that she saw it. She continued to drive past, turning right twice, placing her cruiser on the opposite side of the building. Carter had slowed down, and inched along, finally stopping. She peered through her windshield. Carter knew what wasn't right. What she saw was enough.

She slowly shifted into reverse, backing up to avoid detection. Stopping her car again, Carter took a deep breath and asked herself, "Abbi, what do you see?" She lifted the P25 Motorola police radio from its cradle and spoke. "Code 6 radio 1794392 Location mile 249, Becky's Diner. off I-70, 10-18." A dispatcher answered. "Identify 1794392."

Carter replied, "Badge 4937, Carter, Abigail, Lieutenant"

Dispatcher, " Back up officers are seven minutes from your 20. What additional assets are needed?"

Carter replied, "Fire and ambulance, Block I-70 each direction 1 mile from this location. Detain late model Ford Red F-250 CO plate last digit 620 or 629. Consider heavily armed." Carter slowly opened her door and walked

to her trunk. With the lid raised to shield her from view, she put on her tactical vest and removed her patrol rifle and box of cartridges. The rifle had been stored loaded when Carter placed it in her trunk earlier that morning for her trip to Fruita. She then quietly returned to her car, leaving the driver's door ajar, and waited.

As she waited, Abbi reflected on all that she had done since leaving California, bringing her to this critical moment in time. Her life was filled with loving family and joyous days ahead. Right now, though she had to refocus on her role as a state official. Suddenly, her radio crackled, announcing an arriving Trooper. She advised her position and waited inside her car. Vest, Badge, Handgun, Sionics Patrol

Rifle. Ready.