

Chapter 13

The Abbi and Andrew Team

Abbi's phone buzzed with a call from Judith, at the answering service for Carter Private Investigations. Once Abbi had pulled to the shoulder of the roadway, Judith relayed to Abbi that a Denver resident's wife had disappeared on her way home from her job north of Castle Rock. Judith continued, "Miss Carter, I'm sorry to disturb you but he seemed to be getting nowhere with the Denver Police and panicked. He wants to hire your

firm to help locate his wife. Can I give you his name and cell phone number?" Abbi replied, "Let me take out my tablet first, OK continue". A minute later she had given Abbi the caller's name, "Ronald Greene, age 38. His wife, Francine, age 33. His phone number is 720-387-6862." Abbi called Greene a minute later and he explained that she was currently enroute from Greeley and should be able to see him at about 3:30 - 4:00 PM today. Ronald gave her his exact address. Abbi thought for a moment and asked, if possible, would he come to her offices in Boulder to save time. Also, please bring in a recent photograph, her cell phone number and make, model and plate number of her car, and the location, name and phone number of her employer. Ronald Greene agreed to meet by 3:00 PM

in her Boulder office, and Abbi gave him her exact address as well as Andrew's law office, Wolf-Block-Rome PC, since she was Andrew's subtenant.

Abbi made it back to her office by 2:45 PM avoiding the heavier snow which was just beginning when she exited I-25. She shook the snow off her coat and walked toward Andrew's office. He smiled, stood and came around his desk and gave his fiancé a big hug. "How are you feeling, how was the drive, how about a cup of coffee?" he lovingly asked.

"I'm good, I'll tell you about my visit tonight at dinner, remember we are eating at Jane's. I have a client for Carter Investigations coming in at 3:00 whose wife has disappeared. I need to spend a few minutes preparing an agreement. Would you mind sitting

with me when he comes in?" Andrew agreed and Abbi quickly printed out a contract for Ronald Greene to sign. She put together a check list of what she had so far and what she needed from him.

Greene arrived at their offices a few minutes early and Andrew escorted him to the conference room. He offered coffee, sat with the client and explained his presence. Abbi entered and introduced herself and asked how the driving was coming in from Denver. She also explained that when she spoke to him earlier, she was on her way home from a meeting at Northeast District headquarters of the State Patrol. Abbi explained that she had recently been appointed as Assistant to the Governor to help Colorado contain rising fentanyl deaths. But she ex-

plained that it was not a full-time position, and she maintains Carter Private Investigations specifically to help resolve cases like the one Greene had brought to them today. Abbi then went through a checklist of questions which Greene quickly, yet calmly, answered. Andrew asked a few questions to allow Abbi to keep transcribing his responses. Abbi gave Greene a table of fees for services, a service contract and several releases giving Carter access to both his and his wife's cell phone accounts, as well as access to view all their credit cards accounts to assess recent activity. Today the retainer was \$1,500, plus her hourly rate of \$150. He signed the set of documents and gave Abbi a credit card. She excused herself and used her laptop as a vir-

tual terminal, processed his payment and returned with his card.

"OK, Mr. Greene, I can begin this immediately. I will trace your wife's phone usage and credit cards, Give me 48 hours. I will be back to you immediately if I have contact or locate Francine. They were finished by 3:30 and Abbi told him to keep his cell phone always charged and on him and not to leave his home vicinity. Abbi sat with Andrew and said, "What do you think?"

Andrew thought for a moment and then looked up, "Abbi, it is a mystery, and he looks legit so far. Are you going to do phone taps now that you have his releases and look at card activity? He mentioned the last time he spoke with Francine was about 7:30 AM yes-

terday, so what about her employer? Did he seem nervous to you?"

Abbi went into her office and opened her computer. She found that Francine worked for Arrow, a huge electronics firm with world headquarters in Centennial CO, 30 minutes south of Denver. She was an executive at Arrow despite her young age. Ronald had explained that they were in their defense business, and she had been there six years. When Greene married, she was already employed by Arrow. Ronald was an attorney with a small practice in Denver with four other attorneys. They all handled slip and fall and typical small dollar cases, most all were private Individuals suing companies. Francine drove a late model BMW 5 series which was provided to her, as a company car. Her husband did

not have the plate number but knew that it was a 2023 blue metallic BMW M550i. "Nice car." Abbi thought, probably over \$100K.

Abbi created a timeline: wife Francine leaves her home in Denver at 7:30 AM driving the BMW M550i. She drives down I-25 to Centennial CO and presumably arrives at Arrow Electronics. She returns home usually before 6:00 PM. No text messages either. At 4:39 PM yesterday there is a credit card transaction at a Philips 66 fuel stop at mile marker 98.4 . Amount charged was \$76.84 on an American Express card. The transaction cleared the card processing company. A second charge appeared one hour later, but this one is at another fuel station 38 miles south of the first. Greene's car was being driven away from

Denver not towards it. Abbi was puzzled. Her search would begin with the queries:

1. Had Francine been kidnapped and were her abductors are using her credit card, or did she lose her credit card, or had it been hacked?

2. Had Francine driven of her own volition to the second gas station. It wasn't a gasoline purchase but incidentals, not an automotive service and only a \$19.50 purchase. Why? Is she driving on her own, going where?

These were questions that Abbi couldn't answer. She asked Andrew if he would take a road trip with her the next morning. Abbi wanted to head in that direction early g and Andrew agreed. Francine's BMW would be easy to spot, if it was still along I-25. She suggested that they take a change of

clothes. If they end up staying out overnight, they should grab road food, especially if they needed to sit in their car to observe. She said that tomorrow, she would drive her Jeep. Heidi was built for anything. She left their office without Andrew who said he would be home right behind her. She reminded Andrew not to be late, they were having dinner at Jane's.

They picked up dinners to take over to Jane's and were there by 5:30 PM. She was finally looking very pregnant, and she and Bryant were clearly excited. The babies' room was ready, although there would be no crib until their birth. Andrew pulled Bryant aside and explained, " You both knew Abbi has started her part time assignment from the Governor, Assistant to the Governor". I think we assumed he simply gave Abbi a nice gold

"Retired Lieutenant's badge" and gave her a car. It turned out to be her old, unmarked Dodge Charger. We wanted to talk to you first Bryant and then to Jane. I talked to Abbi about my concerns not just about her safety going forward, but about everyone's safety as she oversees the state effort to go after fentanyl distribution The Governor's got his Troopers protecting him, but what about us, you and Jane, my mom, Jane and Abbi's parents? I think there is a serious risk for all of us; I wanted to get your take on this. Oh, I also wanted to tell you Abbi has a new real case for her agency, and we will be on the road, both of us, starting early tomorrow morning probably just one or two nights, but you can always reach us by cell."

Bryant, "That's a lot. You're not wrong. The risk scale just went up, all the way up. Probably not tonight, but after a couple of busts or seizures. If she gets lucky the drug cartels or distributors are not going to be happy, and they will try to end it. What they will do is anyone's guess. Jesus, look at the shotgun that got Abbi in the chest, she was very lucky." Bryant paused, "OK, I think for starters, Judge Wilson and Erica can get a State Police driver when they go out. That should be easily approved. Because of her training someone is going to tell us that Abbi can handle herself, which is probably true for her and for me. That leaves Jane, Esther and you. For the time being, I will volunteer to see Esther and discuss this with Jane. Andrew, for the moment, you are in Abbi's very capable

hands, but you need to plan ahead any commitments. Let's start there and when you get back, we'll discuss a plan for you alone. I'll call Judge Wilson and explain our concerns. How about some coffee, Andrew, Abbi?"

The next morning after her jog, Abbi showered and dressed in jeans and a flannel shirt. She found a warm jacket, gloves and boots in their hall closet and retrieved her Sig Sauer 716i rifle, a box of 308 cartridges and her handgun from the basement gun safe. Abbi had been given the scoped rifle by her father years ago when they hunted on their property near Pike's Peak. It had been years since she had even touched it but, just in case, she put it into a canvas carrying case. She also grabbed a set of binoculars that were probably 25 years old but OK for their job.

Being armed was in Abbi's makeup since she became a Trooper. When she decided to go out on her own as a private detective, carrying a pistol was her norm. She went up to their bedroom to find a second pair of jeans, another heavy shirt, a sweatshirt from the Academy and a change of underwear. Her phone and laptop were next. Abbi went to the kitchen and took out 6 bottles of water and 6 power bars. Now she felt she was ready to track down Francine Greene or anyone holding her. Andrew came into the kitchen a minute later and Abbi explained what he should take and wear. She found a duffle bag and asked Andrew to use it for his clothes while she got her Jeep out of the Garage and moved her Charger inside. While Andrew was dressing, she called Esther and explained that

she had taken a case of a missing wife and that she had asked Andrew to come along, she said for company on the drive but also, he was another set of eyes. By 7:30 AM they were ready to drive, stopping once to get two subs for the ride and downtime sitting in the Jeep. Abbi planned to drive first to the Phillips station and ask about the video of Francine's time there and then drive to the second station and look again. They took \$250 in cash plus a few credit cards.

They reached the first station by 8:45 AM. Because of a random arrival of Trooper Jason Reynolds, whom Abbi had worked with, the attendant was willing to pull up the previous day's video when Francine had purchased her fuel, They watched Francine swipe her card at the pump, then fill the tank, but when she

returned to her car, there was a person in the back seat. They didn't realize that for one second the driver's side door opened, but clearly someone had hopped over the front seat and was obscured. This happened at 4:41 PM yesterday.

They then watched the BMW as it drove off the property. Abbi then spoke to Trooper Reynolds and asked for his assistance; he called into his Post and then agreed to lend support. The Troop office would notify both Reynolds and Abbi by her cell if the car was spotted. Based on the video Abbi watched it was being driven south on I-25 toward the second purchase she had made. That's where they were headed, and the Trooper lead the way. The drive would be only 15 minutes at Trooper speed, just under 90 miles per hour,

with his strobe lights flashing. The south-bound road was virtually empty. Again, the Trooper convinced the attendant to review the tape from yesterday and they spotted the white BMW. This time it didn't drive to the pump island but parked. The station's cameras revealed the driver to be a male approximately 30 years old exiting from the driver's position but there was no one else visible in the car. Francine had vanished. Trooper Reynolds took notes, a Colorado tag was visible from the front bumper, DT-8504, which traced back to Arrow Electronics in Centennial CO. thirty minutes south of Denver .

Abbi phoned Arrow Electronics and after some explaining, she was connected to Human Resources. Again, she identified who she was, "You appear to have an employee dri-

ving a car, registered to your company, that looks like it has been stolen and driver possibly abducted."

Abbi then asked if the car had a GPS tracker, explaining that she was an investigator for the husband of the employee but had a Colorado State Patrol officer now with her trying to catch up to this vehicle. She was employed by Francine Greene's husband. Abbi waiting for a response. Because of her law enforcement experience, Trooper Reynolds was willing to have Abbi take the lead. She also explained to the Trooper that she was recently hired by the Governor as "Assistant to the Governor" and showed her gold badge. She hadn't yet received her state issued ID and business card with the red seal of Colorado. The Trooper was satisfied that Abbi knew

what she was doing. While she waited on the phone, he again called into his commander to explain what was happening. They confirmed who Abigail Carter was. Arrow's Human resources came back on the line and gave her the location of the BMW. According to the GPS coordinates It was now stationary off of I-25, south of Pueblo. Reynolds took the lead, followed by Abigail and Andrew as they sped down I-25 toward the last GPS record. The Trooper had asked his office to review active cameras along I-25 and heard that he might have a live feed in a few minutes. While they drove, Abbi asked Andrew to phone Ronald Greene and provide an update. He put the phone on speaker so they could both hear Greene speaking. Andrew inquired if Ronald had heard from his wife or from anyone. Then

Andrew reported to him what they were doing, and that Abigail and the State Patrol are working together. He was with Abigail, and they were near Pueblo CO where her car had been spotted.

The car was parked at a Days Inn just off the Interstate. The Trooper entered the registration office and explained an abduction had occurred and they believed that the perpetrator was located here. He asked the front-desk manager to walk to office and show them the recent video displaying the outside near registration, as well as inside at check-in. Within five minutes both the Trooper and Carter spotted the car, with Francine and a male in the front seat. Then the driver opened the door and entered the motel's registration desk and requested a room for two

nights under the name Brad Foster. He had left Francine in the car, but her wrists may have be taped, they weren't sure.

Reynolds called for backup, and they waited ten minutes for a second Trooper to arrive. The video camera from inside showed them entering Room 223 on the second floor as their destination, but that was hours ago. Carter and Reynolds sprinted toward the room while the second officer tracked down the BMW and looked for any signs of a struggle or blood or other indicators. Andrew stepped forward again and asked guest registration to confirm the name of the person who had signed for the room, He repeated what he told the Trooper and Abbi, a Brad Foster. Before Abbi and Reynolds had made their approach to the door, Andrew called

Ronald Greene to ask if the name "Brad Foster" meant anything.

Ronald screamed, "Oh my God, yes! Francine had a restraining order against him a years ago. He had been her boyfriend, but he started stalking her when they broke up and then became verbally and physically abusive whenever he approach her." Andrew thought to himself, "It looks like he hadn't given up." He then texted Abbi what the husband had told him.

Abbi showed officer Reynolds the text on her phone. They conferred for a minute, Abbi knocked on the door, " Maid Service, I have fresh towels, please open." The response was, "Go away!" Before Reynolds could blink. Abbi had drawn her weapon and simultaneously kicked the door in. Francine weakly

screamed, "Help!" Abigail stormed into the room screaming at Brad Foster, "Don't move an inch or I will shoot you dead!".

The crisis ended as Reynolds who was just behind Abbi grabbed Brad Foster and dragged him out of the room, spun him around outside, "Brad Foster, you are under arrest for kidnapping and assault..." Reynolds shoved him against the wall, frisked and then cuffed him. Abbi closed the door so that Francine did not have to hear Reynolds barking at Foster. Then Abbi walked over to Francine and sat by her, "Francine, my name is Abigail Carter. I am going to get an ambulance for you in a minute or two. I am a private investigator, your husband hired my firm when didn't come home yesterday. Your employer was also worried about you and

provided us GPS tracking, and we found you. Francine, you being hurt? Did Foster attack you here?"

Before Francine could answer Abbi walked into the bathroom and found a plastic glass and two plastic water bottles. She brought them over to Francine and encouraged her to drink at least one full bottle of water. After she finished the water, Francine wanted to talk. She explained that Brad was an old boyfriend, who started out kind, but after six month, she wanted to break up with him, and he became hostile; that was five years ago. He was unstable, started stalking and verbally accosting her whenever he saw her. That's when she got a restraining order. She thought that he eventually gave up on her. But somehow, his fixation became alive

again and he caught up with her and grabbed her two nights ago. She explained that he had a fantasy that they were going to live together somewhere. She thought if she played along, she could stay stay safe. However, this time when she didn't show interest or agree with whatever he said, he became violent and had struck her several time. Abbi could see the bruising on her face, arms and wrists. Abbi called Andrew and asked if he could come to the room to bring some ice. Abbi introduced Andrew, and she stepped out and found Reynolds by his cruiser. Abbi asked if Reynolds needed anything from them as she wanted to drive Francine back to Denver, about 3 hours away. She had said she didn't want to go to the local hospital, but he had called for an ambulance with a paramedic to

examine her regardless. When the crew arrived he went up to the Room when Abbi was still tending to Francine, The medic examined her but she told him she was declining transport. He got her to agree to allow him to apply some antiseptic, POLYSPORIN[®] ointment, and gave her the tube to continue applying. He also gave her two cold packs to use until she got home, off on on for 20 minutes each. He told her the time would reduce the swelling if she followed his directions. Francine agreed and promised to do as he asked and then signed a release decline further treatment.

While Francine was being tended to Reynolds conferred with the second Trooper, Hank Jacobs and they transferred Foster into the back of Trooper Jacobs' cruiser and to be taken to the local Sheriff's office.

Then Reynolds approached Francine, Abbi and Andrew,. "My commander approved and I'd like to see you safely back to your home in Denver if that is OK with your Mrs. Greene. It's a long drive and I suggest we get dinner and fuel up? We can have your car towed back to Denver." Andrew, spoke first and said to the officer, "If Francine and the state are Ok, I can drive her BMW and follow the two you. I'm not familiar with her car, so not too fast." They all agreed. Abbi had already retrieved the car key before Brad Foster before he was taken away and handed it to Andrew. Reynolds said there was a decent diner less than 1 mile up the road and from there it would be a straight drive up the Interstate, into Denver.

They all ate and Reynolds agreed that Francine could be driven in Abbi's Jeep. Abbi had explained that Francine might profit by three hours of woman to woman time. Francine called her husband before they went into the diner and assured him that she was OK and had declined going to a hospital. She briefly told him what had happened, and it was over, she would be home in three hours and would call from the road. She would be escorted by the State Police and driven by Abigail Carter and her fiancé would follow driving her car back to Denver.

The three cars arrived at Ronald Greene's home at 7:30 PM. He was standing outside when the Trooper pulled up and turned off his emergency light. Francine embraced her husband and Trooper Reynolds interrupted

and asked that they all enter Greene's home to finish up some releases that he needed. He first gave Francine his card with his direct number as well as his Trooper's phone and its location. He took a detailed statement which he asked Francine to sign and Andrew to witness. While Francine was taking with Reynolds, Ronald walked into the kitchen and came back with a large carafe of coffee and cups for everyone. It had been a long day.

Now at home, Andrew realized that he had never seen Abbi in her police role; he had seen her dressed in her Trooper uniform each morning, but Abbi had been concerned about violence that Andrew perceived when she walked in with her patrol rifle and other weapons if he was near her when she looked them up. Eventually Abbi realized it so when

she came home, she stripped off her uniform in the basement and stored her weapons in their gun safe. When she was an ISS Investigator, Abbi appeared in street clothes. Andrew just heard about her cases, never actually participated with her; nor did he ever want to. This was a side of Detective Abigail Carter that would remain hers alone! For Andrew, Abbi was his fiancée and soon to become his wife.

Tomorrow will be a new day for Abbi and Andrew. He was feeling that another page had turned in the life of Abigail Carter, Private Detective.