

Chapter 15

Answering the Call

Monday morning arrived, Abbi and Andrew committed to work on their guest lists. With coffee in hand, they began their wedding guest list for February. There was no wedding venue, food or music decided upon yet, but the guest list was an important start. Abbi grabbed her cell and called her mom. When Erica answered, Abbi told her they were on speaker.

"Andrew how are you two doing?" Andrew told Erica of their weekend adventure at the

cabin and their escape from Pike's Peak. He continued: " I think you have Sunday, February 7th on your calendar. We're creating a guest list and want your input. Obviously, Wilson will walk Abbi down the aisle, but whom would you like us to invite?"

Erica thanked them both for telling them firsthand about the earthquake, and confirmed she had their wedding date on her calendar. She promised to put together a list of names and address. Next, Andrew & Abbi called Jane, asking first how she was feeling, and secondly if she & Bryant could prepare a list. Jane told them if she hadn't gone into labor by January 15th, the twins would be born by caesarean. They would get a list made up in the next two days. Although Jane initially thought that Abbi's inviting Andrew to move

in with her had been hasty, she had come to value Andrew and now recognized him as the perfect match for her sister

When they called Esther, she sounded troubled. She had watched the news, but hadn't heard from them. Esther had always given them space since Abbi was working two jobs and Andrew was building his law practice. Nonetheless, Esther had been working with Abbi on her conversion, and there was still more to be done. Abbi apologized, explaining that their time away was great, but unfortunately had lasted less than twenty-four hours before the quakes. She promised Esther that they would keep in touch daily. Esther deserved that from them. Abbi realized Esther was alone; she had come to Golden to stay close to Andrew, and to

feel connected to them, and it was incumbent upon them to honor that relationship.

She heard her phone chime, and saw an incoming call from Warren Haines, the Governor's assistant. He asked if she could come to his office. He assured her the governor was happy, but the Governor wanted to speak with Abbi. If Andrew was available, he could join them. Now Abbi was puzzled. She asked him if 10:00 AM. Wednesday would work. Haines put her on hold while he checked, and then said "Yes, see you then Miss Carter."

They returned to working on the guest list- from Andrew's side, Esther, Leah, her husband Mark Silver and their twelve-year-old son, David. She added her Training Officer, Dan Hodges, whose life she had saved within

the first two weeks of graduating. and Robert Neilson, the ISS Investigator who saved her life. He was the newest and youngest member of her ISS team that night.

"Andrew, we need to discuss something important. I want you to know that my parents put aside inheritances from both my parents' families. Jane and I were recently given this money as trust funds. It's invested by a wealth management firm. Jane hasn't used any of hers, but I had them help me purchase my car Heidi, as well as our condo. I want to use the fund to set up a scholarship for women who sign up to become Colorado State Troopers. My Academy class had only four women versus almost fifty men. I want the governor to have the women I graduated with sell this program to second year college

women. I've talked to Corient, the management firm, and they are working on a proposal. The cost estimate would be \$30,000 per year for a five year period at first. My trust fund currently earns almost \$500,000 per year in interest, so my investments can fund the scholarships. Before I do this, I want to invite the women that I graduated with to dinner here to discuss my plan with them. I have their emails, but I want your input too. Do you have any questions?"

"Abbi, I'm proud of you and I'm sure your folks are too. You'll be doing a service for the citizens of Colorado. Even though male Troopers and female Troopers here are not the same, by having more parity, these women might help diffuse situations and be calmer than testosterone-laden males!

Sometimes, a woman's compassion might help diffuse a tense situation. I like the idea, and I think having your plan reviewed by these Troopers might be a good way to understand their story. Then, you might adjust to what you want to offer. Bottom line, Abbi, I fully support this and I'm so happy that you and Jane have these gifts to allow you to do this. I'll be happy to draft a plan for Governor Molis, assuming we see him on Wednesday. Why don't you reach out to your classmates? Ideally I think speaking to all three at the same time would facilitate things."

Five minutes later, Abbi had sent three emails to her former classmates and asked if they could come in to talk in person. She proposed a few dates and time for a meeting in Andrew's conference room. She would pro-

vide food and beverages, and she explained what she wanted to accomplish; then she waited.



Later that day, the service forwarded a call for Carter Private Investigations. Abbi called and spoke to Mrs. Gloria Ernhart from the Denver area who wanted assistance in locating her teenage daughter Sandy. By 2:00 PM Abbi had spoken with her, gotten additional details, explained what Carter Private Investigations could do for her, and gained some knowledge about her daughter. Abbi had agreed to see her by 3:30 at Gloria's home. Andrew said he would like to come along, and then they would drive from Gloria's home

back to their condo in Boulder. Andrew was being protective, but Abbi was happy to have him present during the interview. She had explained her fees, as well as explaining that a contract for services would be provided.

They arrived in separate cars. Abbi made mental notes as she walked to the front door. Mrs. Ernhart opened the door and Abbi introduced herself and Andrew. She explained there was no fee for Andrew Wolf, he was present to help Abbi gain as much information as quickly as possible. Mrs. Ernhart explained that her daughter Sandy, seventeen years old, was a senior in Denver's D'Evelyn Junior/Senior High School, ranked No. 1 in Colorado. Mrs. Ernhart had been divorced for twelve years, and her ex-husband was remarried, living in Washington state. She didn't

think that he was a factor in her daughter's disappearance. Gloria gave them a recent photo of Sandy, who was last seen Thursday when she was driven to school by a neighbor who drove her own daughter and Sandy to school. From the principal's office she knew that both girls appeared to enter the building, but they had different home rooms and that was the last time Jean Decker, the neighbor's daughter had seen Sandy. She normally took a school bus home, and she was not on it. She had been in her home room until 8:45 AM and then vanished. The school had limited camera surveillance. Sandy was a minor, and the police had taken a report. CBI had filed an Amber Alert, but Gloria could not wait any longer. She had read too many reports of bad outcomes and wanted to get extra help, any-

thing to find her daughter. Andrew and Abbi asked more questions about cell phones, laptops, other friends, former husband's contact information, missing cash or credit cards, access to another car, boyfriends, and specific clothes that she was wearing yesterday morning. It had been 36 plus hours since she was last seen. Gloria signed both Carter's Services contract and the table of fees, and handed Abbi a check for \$1500 to engage her firm. Abbi committed to begin work by 1:00 PM the following day, and would call Mrs. Ernhart by noon daily with updates.

Andrew and Abbi returned to their home by 5:30. When they had left his offices to drive to Gloria's, Andrew called Esther to ask her if she would come into their home to start dinner. They felt they would be back no later

than 6:00 PM. Esther was happy to do so. As they walked up the stairs from the garage, the aromas of another excellent meal from Esther were mouth-watering. Abbi took notes at the table about Esther's cooking to add to her recipe file folder. Andrew cleaned up after dinner while Abbi sat with Esther and reviewed topics for her conversion. The process had to be completed by the end of January. Tomorrow, before she started, she would call Rabbi Marc and report where she was, and what more she needed. After the call, she still needed to prepare a proposal for the Governor. Even though the "foundation" she was establishing would not use any state money, she wanted it endorsed by the Governor and/or officially by the State. Andrew explained that he would have to draw

up a variety of legal documents because there were specific rules as to minimum distributions, articles of incorporation, EIN, IRS applications, Bylaws and other elements. That's why lawyers need to be involved.

By Tuesday morning, she had received replies from her female Troopers, and all were happy to reunite with Abbi. They could come in on Thursday at 5:30 PM. Abbi and Andrew both originally wanted this meeting to occur in the office conference room, but they now considered instead inviting the women to their condo. She put Andrew in charge of food and drinks. Abbi wrote back to each guest and gave them directions to their condo, explaining that they might all be more comfortable in the living room. This was going to be fun- not work.

On Wednesday after breakfast, Abbi called Esther to remind her that she and Andrew were leaving shortly to drive to the Governor's office for a meeting. She didn't disclose more details until they felt that Governor Molis was receptive to the Foundation's plans. Their training and expenses would be underwritten by the Foundation until the day they were hired by the state as Patrol Troopers.

They were escorted to Warren Haines' office. He thanked them both for coming in and offered everyone coffee. He asked Abbi how her mission was coming along so far, and at the same time acknowledged the difficulty of the job. He called The Governor's secretary to see if he was ready to have Abbi and Andrew come into his office. Then he walked with them over to see Governor Molis.

The Governor smiled warmly as everyone sat down, "Abigail, Andrew so nice to see again. Thank you for coming this morning. After you left, I realized that I had made a terrible mistake- not by asking you to take on the assignment, but by not clarifying the tools we gave you. First, with your permission I would like you to accept this active-duty Lieutenant's badge to replace the "retired" badge we gave you. If you work for the state of Colorado, even ten hours a week, you are a state employee during those hours. Therefore, I want you to accept this badge entitling you to all of the benefits of an officer in our state. I took the liberty of asking Warren to have the cards he had printed for you omit the "Retired" designation. You can retain that badge. One day you may retire, but if you and

I are working together you deserve more than that from us. Are you both all right with that?"

Abbi spoke first and said, "I appreciate your confidence in me. Yes, you're right, this is a big assignment, and not a one-person job, but at the moment it's a credible start until I get feedback from all of the districts."

The Governor replied, "I don't want to put you in harm's way, and I think I may have done that with our announcement. You will have the authority to use state resources to accomplish the mission and if security measures are needed for you or members of your family, you'll now have that. For tactical reasons you will be working under Colonel Packard, and he is aware of what we are doing. To get the job done you can't be a retired officer. Are you still, OK?"

Andrew was first to reply, " Governor, thank you for including me today. We discussed her job just a few days ago, and I told Abbi of my concerns for safety. I recognize that Abbi is a trained Trooper thanks to the great training the state offers. But, knowing that Colorado would like to put a lid on fentanyl business here, people on the other side will eventually not like it and will look for targets. I told Abbi I believe not only will Troopers and other state police officers become targets, but also Abbi's extended family could be at risk. That seriously frightens me."

"Yes, and I agree with you. Abbi will be authorized to use state resources as she sees fit for drug interdiction, as well as for security. I will make that clear when I notify Colonel Packard. Let's get the program rolling and see

what we can do. At the same time, I'll ask both of you to make the call whenever arrests are made as to the level of security that needs to be implemented."

It was Abbi's turn, and she added, "Governor, thank you again for this opportunity to help every resident of our state. I'm pledging to you to give it my all, and as our efforts develop, we will need to make changes. Until then, I believe that we're good. You remember when we met, I mentioned my desire to see more female Troopers. I am having Andrew file paperwork establishing a "Carter Foundation" for the purpose of supporting women considering joining the state's Academy by offering them a financial incentive. In sixty days, we would like to ask you for a PSA which would link Colorado and the Carter

Foundation to recruit new cadets. I would also like you to allow three female Troopers who graduated with my class to visit colleges and to recruit from our state's colleges. They would be off duty but in uniform. The Foundation would pledge a five-year minimum endowment of \$30,000 per year."

"Abigail, if I may, that is very generous of you, and I agree with your plan. Let me run this by our in-house counsel. If we can do it, I'll find a way to make it happen. I'll speak to the Colonel about having these Troopers join the recruitment campaigns."

Abbi continued, "Governor Molis, we are not trying to tie my working for the state to recruiting. You remember when we first met, I mentioned this to you. I have pledged to you to work with our Troopers on fentanyl

interdiction, and that is what we will do no matter how our Foundation offer works out. Thank you for inviting us here today." Abbi paused for a few seconds and said, " Oh, did I mention Andrew and I are getting married the first week of February?"

The Governor replied, "Abigail, Andrew, Congratulation! If you haven't selected your venue, you know our state offers the mansion in the spring and summer, but we also have "the Cottage" for smaller functions all year. If you are interested, I'll ask Warren to give you a tour. Since you are a State Trooper, I imagine we can wave rental fees, but let Warren show it to you, and thanks again." He used his phone to have Warren return and asked him to show them the Cottage. When they finished the tour, they asked Warren if it

was available on their date. He checked and confirmed "Yes" and gave them a state booklet on renting it. Abbi told him they would call him back in a few days to confirm that they wanted to reserve it for their wedding ceremony and party afterwards. Then Abbi took her new badge, business cards, her state credentials and left the capital complex with Andrew to head back to their offices. Abigail Carter, crime fighter was more than ready for action.