

Chapter 1

Sabino Canyon, Arizona; January 26, 1987

The water revived him. His consciousness returned slowly but steadily. He realized he lay in water – shallow but cold, soaking the lower portion of his body. He felt discomfort in his right shoulder and his midsection. Later on, he saw that he sprawled in a small run-off pool, near a stream, beneath some trees. He was on his left side, mostly hidden in the shadow of the trees. People were all around him. He could hear them talking, moving.

With awareness came pain. The pain was intense, and flowed over him in waves. He tested the movement of his right arm and heard bones scrape. Broken collarbone, he decided, if not worse. The ballooning agony in his gut was the result of gunshots, not fatal yet. To save himself, he had to stop the bleeding. Could he sit up?

He could, although the movement sent even greater pain shooting through him, leaving him dizzy and faint for what seemed like several minutes. He blinked to focus his vision, then carefully looked around. To his front left, the small arbor that hid him ended at the edge of a paved road. More trees, bigger trees, stood behind him and to his right. Several branches lay nearby. He surmised he had hit them as he fell, roughly cushioning his descent.

All at once he knew his name and what had happened. He was Karl Thibault, and he had fallen from the cliffs above after being shot. His shoulder was severely damaged by one bullet. Another two were lodged in his stomach. He looked down at the bloody result. He needed help soon, or he would die. Using his good arm, he removed his tattered shirt and fashioned it into a rough bandage, which he tightened around his midsection as much as he could. Not much help, but it would have to do. Even the smallest movements were excruciating. He willed himself to withstand them. Somehow, he had to get out of this place.

Judy waited for him in the parking lot, he remembered. If he could somehow get to her, they could escape. But she was miles away. The alternatives were stark. Karl could give himself up, right now. They'd have him in a hospital quickly. Once healed, he'd be back in a place like Benniston or worse. Or he could lay here and—eventually—die. He refused to consider surrender, and did not choose to die. That left only escape.

Just then, the big blue tram that carried people up and down the base of Sabino Canyon came huffing up the road. A plan formed in Karl's mind. It would require all of his meager reserves of strength and a lot of luck ... but if it worked he might have a chance to escape. Slowly, painfully, Karl crawled on his good side to the edge of the thicket. The tram sat less than ten feet away, waiting for passengers to leave and board.

Willing himself to stand the pain, Karl rolled himself under the tram, looking frantically for a place to attach himself below the vehicle. He found a strut below the passenger compartment after a desperate grabbing search. Quickly—as fast as he could—Karl lashed his waist to the strut using his belt. Then, pushing his feet against the tram's body, he used his good arm to hold on for dear life.

The tram began to move, down the road to complete another tour of the canyon. On the way, it stopped several times to pick up passengers. Every stop was torture for Karl. He lost consciousness several times, awakened by the pain of his head hitting the pavement below. Luckily, the tram travelled slowly. After what seemed like a century the tram came to a stop, travelled a short distance, then stopped again. Its trip around the canyon was over.

This tram would remain out of service for an hour or so, Karl knew. He had that long to free himself from it and somehow get to Judy in the old Wagoneer. Between stood several buildings, at least a few park rangers, and scores of visitors. To a wounded, bleeding, semi-conscious fugitive, it was a formidable gauntlet. He disengaged his belt from the strut, relaxed his legs and allowed himself to fall to the ground beneath the tram. There he lay for precious minutes, only slightly conscious, regaining what strength he could.

Karl noticed an indentation in the lawn beside the tram, there for run-off from a culvert. He crawled into it, aware that people seldom look down, and are often oblivious to anything that goes on below waist level as they walk. Calling on all his reserves of strength, he got to his knees, then stumbled to his feet. With a lurching, crabwise gait he made his way to the nearest wall, and pressed closely against it for support. From there, he made his way along the side of the building, away from the sidewalk, to the parking lot.

Standing in shadow, facing the parked cars, Karl looked for Judy's old red Wagoneer. He had told her to park at the lot's edge, but could not see the car. There was commotion. The whine of sirens multiplied as police vehicles filled the parking lot. Uniformed men with guns and dogs emerged from their cruisers and

walked quickly beyond his field of vision. Looking for him, Karl realized. If he'd remained in the canyon, he'd have soon been captured.

He waited until his hunters had moved on, then lurched into the lot, still looking for Judy's car. He still couldn't find it. As he stumbled further into the parking area, a hand touched his shoulder. Karl froze.

"Let's get you to the car, Ken," Judy whispered. "You look half dead. What have they done to you?"

Karl almost fainted in relief. "Shot," he muttered. "Got to ... get out of here."

"Car's over here, to your left," Judy said, guiding him by his good arm, keeping him steady. She opened the Wagoneer's rear hatch and pushed Karl in. He crawled into a semi-fetal position. "Sleep back here," she said. "That's what's good for you now. We'll sort things out in Maslo."

Slowly, carefully, the old red Jeep backed from its spot and drove from the parking lot.

Chapter 21

Maslo, Nevada; January 28, 1987

Judy was serving lunch when the cars arrived. There were six of them: two enormous SUVs (probably federal, she thought) and five smaller cars with state police markings. Eight state police, in uniform, got out and formed a perimeter around the diner and surrounding buildings. They were armed with ugly looking long guns.

Six men in suits left the SUVs and walked into the diner. Seeing Judy, they moved toward her. "I'm looking for Judy Carnover," said the one in front, flashing a badge.

"You've found her," Judy replied, keeping her voice steady. "What can I do for you?"

"Ms. Carnover, my name is Jim DeWall. I am an agent with the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We have evidence that calls from a phone at this address were made by an escaped felon named Karl Thibault. Is that true?"

Judy called for Archie to mind the register, removed her apron, and faced the FBI agent. "Not to my knowledge," she said. "Would you and the others like to sit down? I'd be happy to get you all coffee, or even lunch. It must have been a long drive here from wherever you started." She nodded to some large tables in the back of the room.

"I'll take you up on the coffee, ma'am," DeWall answered with a tight smile. "Let's sit down and talk."

The men walked to the back table and sat. Several took out note pads. One turned on a small tape recorder. Judy found a seat next to DeWall, after asking a waitress to pour coffee all around. "OK, agent DeWall, let's talk," she said.

"First of all, ma'am, I have to advise you of your rights. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to consult an attorney ..."

"Wait just a minute," Judy interrupted. "You're frightening me. Have I done something wrong?"

"We don't know," DeWall answered. "Probably not, Judy. If you have, whatever you tell us can be evidence, once we're sure you know what your rights are. We have to make sure you're aware of them before we can ask you any questions."

“Well, in that case, go right ahead,” Judy said. “I’ve got nothing to hide. Start where you left off. I’ve still got a memory.”

“OK then, you have the right to consult an attorney, and to have one present now or any time you’re questioned in the future. If you can’t afford an attorney, one can be appointed for you before you’re questioned if you choose. Now, even if you decide to answer my questions without a lawyer present, you can decide to stop at any time until you can consult one. Do you understand these rights?”

“I do,” Judy said.

“Now Judy, knowing these rights as I’ve explained them, are you willing to answer the questions I’m going to ask you without an attorney present?”

“Sure. I’d like to help you as much as I can.”

DeWall removed a picture from his briefcase. It was Ken, younger and paler – the way he’d looked when they first met, but without any moustache. “Have you ever seen this man?” he asked her.

“Yes, I have,” Judy answered, stiffening in her chair. “That’s Ken Talley, but without his moustache. He’s an industrial salesman who rented an apartment from me about six months back. Sure helped with the bills.”

“In fact, Judy, this is Karl Thibault, a serial killer who escaped from a federal facility for the criminally insane last year. He’s responsible for more than twenty murders since then.”

Judy’s hand flew to her mouth. Her breath caught in her throat. This was worse than she had ever imagined. She was genuinely shocked. DeWall handed her a glass of water, which she eventually sipped. “My God,” she gasped. “I never knew. He’s so polite ... so quiet.”

“When was the last time you saw him?”

“About five days back. He goes on trips this long fairly often. Business trips, I always thought. He should be back any time now. Am I in danger?”

DeWall slowly shook his head. “I don’t think so, Judy. Karl was killed by police in Tucson two days ago. He won’t be coming back.”

Now Judy could see how this would go. She would tell them everything. She really had nothing to hide about Ken. They could hear it all.

“We’ll need to see that apartment,” DeWall said. “Do we need to wait for a search warrant?”

“Of course not,” Judy replied. “Come on, I’ll take you up there now.”

The men trooped after her as she climbed the stairway to the apartment above the garage. She stopped by the apartment door, unlocked it, then handed the key to DeWall. "Here's the key," she said. "Give it back when you're done, and let me know what else you need. I still can't believe he's gone."

"He is," said DeWall. "He's lying dead, somewhere in Sabino Canyon. They haven't found the body yet, but they will." He turned and walked into the apartment, followed by his team.

Judy followed as well. It was as though she was in a dream. "I'll be in the diner if you need me," she said.

"We'll need to talk to you more later on," DeWall said. "You'll have to come back to Vegas with us, to finish up your testimony. That will wrap things up."

She went with them when they were done. The interviews took two days, including a polygraph exam. Judy held nothing back. She told them of her love for the man she still called Ken, how she thought he would remain in her life, now a shattered dream. The authorities were satisfied, even saddened. They thanked her for her cooperation and transported her back to Maslo. Judy shivered as she watched the black SUV leave the diner on its way back to Las Vegas. It was finally over, she hoped.

The FBI had thoroughly searched Ken's apartment, her quarters, the diner, and everyplace else in the area. They took with them all of Ken's belongings – his clothing, his toiletries, even the bed linens and towels. Only one place had not been searched. It was designed to remain hidden.

Her husband, Jerry, had been sure that nuclear war was coming when he moved Judy to Maslo in the '70's. "It's not a matter of whether," He told Judy, "just when."

But he, Judy, and Nori would survive. It became his grim hobby to build them a shelter, painfully carved from the rock-hard soil beneath the garage. The excess dirt was carted away by trailer on weekends. This had to be a secret place. "Otherwise, we'll end up shooting some neighbors, when the time comes," he explained.

When it was finally finished, the result was a fairly large room, furnished with three beds, a table, chairs, and a very expensive radio. Jerry stocked it with water and a large supply of non-perishable Army rations. "They're not tasty," he said, "but they'll keep us alive." To that, he added stacks of randomly purchased books, air filtration equipment, a primitive shower, some lanterns, and two

shotguns with plenty of ammunition. “We’ll need to keep our heads down for a week or two,” Jerry said. “After that, we can come up for air.” The circular staircase to the shelter was in the garage, immediately below the parking spot for Jerry’s truck, covered by a thick rubber mat. Unless the truck was moved, it was invisible.

After Jerry’s death, Judy used the space for storing old business records and tax returns. The rations were given away to charity. She’d decided she didn’t really want to survive a nuclear war. Now the secret room was finally proving its worth, shielding her lover from the wolves seeking him.

Ken hadn’t moved during the drive back to Maslo that night, hadn’t uttered a sound. He had lost a lot of blood, and the trauma to his system from both his wounds and his exertions to escape was severe. His rest was nearer coma than exhausted sleep. Even with her untrained eye, Judy knew that without professional medical help he would die soon.

Some help existed in the little town, even now. A few people with the knowledge to save Ken’s life had stayed in Maslo, even after the big clinic had burned to the ground. One of those, Sarah Burns, was a close friend of Judy’s. They had known each other for more than a decade. Sarah’s husband had passed away not long after Jerry, forming a bond between the two widows that grew stronger as the years passed.

Judy pulled the Wagoneer into the garage, then moved Jerry’s old truck out of its parking spot. She opened the bomb shelter’s circular door, then the Jeep’s hatch. She gently shook Ken’s good arm, trying to coax him to awareness. “Come on, Ken,” she pleaded. “You have to do this to save your life.”

At first there was no response. Judy feared Ken had already died, but sensed a tremor of life still in him. After several minutes he moaned deeply, then rolled on his back. “Judy,” he mumbled weakly, “I ... hurt ... so much.”

“I know, Ken. I know you do,” she implored. “But you must get up, just this one time. You must. You’re too heavy for me to carry. You must get up, to save your life.”

He groaned and managed to sit up. “Where ...?” he murmured.

“We’re back in Maslo, Ken,” she told him, as she put his good arm over her shoulder. “Now you must stand up with me and walk. Walk. Just a little way, Ken. That’s it.”

Judy half dragged, half walked Ken down the steps to the shelter. There were fifteen. He fell the last five. She knew he was too heavy to drag any further, and even the attempt would only damage him more. She put a pillow under his head and left him there on the floor, while she went to get the help she had to have.

Sarah Burns was watching television when she heard the tap on her living room window. She went to the window, pulled back the curtains. There was Judy, standing in her backyard, trying to avoid the light. She pulled back the sliding door to let her friend in. “Judy,” she said, “why not just ring the doorbell?”

“Sarah, I need your help,” a breathless Judy told her, still standing in the dark beyond her patio. “Please, come with me now.”

“Why won’t you come in?” Sarah asked. She was very concerned. Her friend had never acted like this before.

“I can’t,” Judy said, her anxiety printed on her face. “There isn’t time. Please, please come with me!”

Sarah put on her shoes and followed her friend two blocks to the garage behind the diner. Judy pulled her most of the way, not speaking a word. Finally, inside the garage, she stopped—shuddering with obvious anxiety. “Sarah,” she said. “I will never ask you to be a part of this. What I’m about to show you is part of a crime. If you follow me, you could be prosecuted. I need your help, but I can’t ask you to go any further.”

Do you need my help?” Sarah asked her friend.

“Oh, yes, Sarah, I do!”

“Then show me what you need.”

Judy went to a truck—Jerry’s old truck, Sarah saw—and backed it away from a large rubber mat. She pulled the mat away, revealing what looked to be a kind of depressed circular hatch. Judy ran to the hatch and pulled it open, then beckoned Sarah to follow her within. Sarah followed, still puzzled.

They walked down a circular staircase of several steps, to what looked to be a large basement. As she reached the bottom step, Judy grabbed Sarah’s arm. “Jerry built this,” she whispered. “In case there was some kind of war.”

Judy led Sarah a little further, to the body of a man, curled into a fetal position. He looked dead.

“Sarah,” Judy said, “this is the man I love. He’s been shot. He’s nearly dead. Can you help him?”

Sarah looked more closely at the man who lay at her feet. She could see now that he was breathing, but only barely. He had what looked like a bullet wound in his right shoulder, and more bleeding from his abdomen, probably from bullet wounds as well. He was unconscious, and he continued to lose blood from his stomach. Her initial diagnosis was that he was dying.

“Let’s get him off the floor,” she said. She helped Judy move the man from the floor to a nearby cot, a few feet away. Then, the two women gently straightened his body so his wounds could be more thoroughly examined. He remained unconscious while this went on.

Once the man was on his back, Sarah examined his wounds more carefully. It was obvious to her that he had been shot. “His shoulder wound has stopped bleeding for the most part, Judy,” she said, “but it will still need treatment. The bullet will have to be removed, and it looks like his collar bone has been broken—maybe shattered. The abdominal wounds are more serious. The bullets need to be removed, and the wounds need bandaging, but that’s just the start. Without surgery, he’s going to die.”

“Is this something you can do?” Judy asked.

“No, this is beyond what I can do,” Sarah said, shaking her head. “I can take the bullets out, and I can bind the wounds. That’s as far as I can go. This man needs blood, drugs, and the care of a skilled surgeon. Without them he’ll die—probably in a few days. He needs to be in a hospital, Judy, as quick as you can pick up the phone.”

“Sarah, I can’t call a doc,” Judy said. Her face was a mirror of her despair. “I can’t. Please. Do what you can, and we’ll have to see what happens.”

Sarah sighed. Judy was her best friend. She nodded. “O.K.,” she said. “Boil me some water and get me some sterile towels. We’ll need lots of them. I’ll need some knives as well. I’ll try my best.”

The primitive surgery took the rest of the night. In the end, three bullets were removed from the man, and all of his wounds were bound and bandaged. His abdominal bleeding had slowed dramatically, though some seepage through his dressing still occurred. Exhausted from their exertions, the two women slept in cots near the wounded man for several hours. Judy rose to get both of them a cursory breakfast and some coffee, as the sun climbed the Nevada sky the next day.

When the women looked at their patient that morning, he seemed to have improved. His abdominal bleeding had nearly stopped, and his breathing was

deeper and steadier. Sarah said his pulse rate was better as well. “He won’t die today,” she told Judy, “nor tomorrow, I think. Still, I can’t do any more for him. He needs a real doctor.”

Their patient must have heard them. He spoke, but only in the faintest of whispers. “Get ... wallet ...” he breathed.

Quickly, Judy reached into the dark green shorts he still wore from his Sabino Canyon scout leader disguise. She pulled his wallet from the back pocket and held it, as she leaned close to her lover’s ear. “I’ve got it, Ken,” she said.

Thibault writhed in agony as he willed himself to speak. “Call ... Band-Aid ...” he muttered, “he ... help ...” his consciousness faded, then ceased. He fell back into motionless silence.

Judy riffled through the slim wallet, looking for any card or document her Ken might have described. Nothing pertinent was there, except a creased, roughly torn scrap of paper. On that paper, in Thibault’s precise script, was written, “Xavier Bandera 701-999-5559.”

“Do you think this is what he meant?” Judy asked.

“I don’t know,” Sarah said, “and I don’t care. Judy, you’ve been my friend for a long time, and you know I will help you however I can. I can’t help you anymore. I have to go home now, feed my cats, and get some rest. Let’s never speak of this again, no matter what happens.”

Judy nodded. She walked to the cot where her friend still sat, and hugged her. “You’ve been more than a friend, Sarah,” she said. “You’ve saved the life of the man I love. That’s much more than anyone could ask. God bless you. I’ll do what I must from here. You’re right. Let’s never talk about this anymore.” With that, Sarah rose and climbed the staircase from the shelter. She left the garage above it and never visited that place again, although she and Judy would remain the closest of friends throughout their lives. Many years would pass before they ever discussed their night together in Jerry’s old bomb shelter again.

The FBI raid intervened. After she returned from Las Vegas, Judy hurried to look in on her hidden patient. He still clung to life. She changed his dressings, carefully stroked his face with a cool damp towel, and placed fresh water by his cot. Afterwards, sitting in her apartment, she tried to think of a phone she could use to call the “Bandera” number. The FBI could be tapping every line nearby, she knew.