

# **Mandate**

**A Dystopian Novel**

**Prequel to the Unborn Universe**

**written and illustrated by**

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Second Edition

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## Chapter 1

Rick gently made his way through the crowd with Sarah, while holding his young pregnant wife's hand and making room for her. As people turned and saw the eight months pregnant 22-year-old, they smiled and made pleasant comments. The sight of an unborn baby that was treasured and wanted brought smiles to everyone. Except for the Homeland Security officers standing in a barricade line in front of the crowd behind their riot shields and holding batons. The second rank of officers behind them held military grade, fully automatic weapons at port arms. Ready to raise and fire at the slightest command, or provocation. Their faces remained set, hard, and angry.

The protesters were committed, firm, determined, but peaceful. The crowd was full of women, children, and the kind of men you love to have as next door neighbors when you need to borrow some tools. They carried signs, talked constantly, sang songs. These were law abiding citizens using their right to free speech to protest an unjust law they had only just found out about.

Only two weeks ago people had started to receive their first insurance bills under the new insurance law. The law that mandated that everyone had to have insurance, whether they wanted it or not. And there, buried in the list of fees, was a line item that read "Abortion Premium Mandate". The actual charge varied from insurance plan to insurance plan, but was never less than \$1 per person per month.

Shock and confusion reigned. Everyone knew about the individual mandate, and the corporate mandate, but hardly anyone knew what the individual Abortion Premium Mandate was.

Researchers and pundits delved into the mystery, which was quickly solved. Once again the politicians, in cahoots with the pro-abortion forces, had pulled another quick, sneaky one over the people. While everyone was focused on the corporate mandate that mandated employers pay for contraceptives and birth control, the pro-abortionists focused on their real goal, forcing everyone to directly pay for abortions.

There had been mass confusion as to why the politicians had suddenly backed down in the face of lawsuits and protests against the employer mandate. The employer mandate had been delayed to let opposition fade before the election. It was a fairly meaningless victory for the pro-lifers, but they didn't know it at the time. Not only was the employer mandate merely delayed, not repealed, but the individual Abortion Premium Mandate was still in place and no one had noticed it.

Whether or not the employers claimed to be exempt, all of the insurance plans offered by the insurance companies offered abortion procedures as an option. Even on the plans that did not include contraceptives and birth control. Of course it was just optional coverage, so many chose not to take it. Those who were pro-life and believed that everyone had a right to life. But the politicians expected this. In their infinite wisdom, because they know what's best for the people, even when the people don't, the politicians worked with the pro-abortionists and included the Abortion Premium Mandate in the healthcare law.

The Abortion Premium Mandate, or APM, mandated on every insurance plan that offered abortion procedures as an optional coverage, that if a single person on that plan selected the optional abortion coverage, then everyone on the plan would have to pay the APM to help subsidize that one person's abortion coverage.

The politicians were wily. As a practical matter, the mandate meant that almost everyone in the country would have that line item, "Abortion Premium Mandate" on their insurance bill, buried in the small print listing misc fees. It was like reading a phone bill. Only worse. Who knew what all of the small print meant? Most people didn't even read their bills. But a few did. They quickly told everyone they knew, and then it spread on the internet like wildfire. Everyone was being forced to pay for abortions.

This is what the regular, normal, people were protesting. Being forced to pay for the slaughter of babies against their will. These were people that would never drown puppies and kittens, and they would certainly never give money to support the violent ripping apart of a human life inside a mother's womb. These people cared.

They cared about unborn babies that they had never even met. They certainly were not going to pay for abortions under any circumstances. Life is too precious.

Rick and Sarah treasured the young life growing inside her huge, swollen belly. Sarah was eight months pregnant, and they had only gotten married eight months ago. Marriage and pregnancy was new to them. So was sex. They were part of a growing movement of young people who chose to be virgins until they were married. Young people who saved their innocence and purity for the person that they had chosen to spend the rest of their life with. Rick and Sarah were happy, joyful, and marveling at life and every day spent together. Marveling at the life that was growing inside of Sarah, and marveling that it was their responsibility.

Rick never stopped beaming at Sarah with pride and happiness. As they worked their way through the crowd, everyone could see their happiness, and shared it with them. This was one baby that would never have to worry about being torn out of its mother's womb and executed for the crime of not yet being born. They spread happiness and joy everywhere they went. Sarah even tried to share her happiness and smiles with the barricade of Homeland Security officers. As they made their way along the barricade, Sarah gave each of the officers the same friendly, pregnant smile that she was giving everyone else. The protesters responded to Sarah's smiles with beaming smiles of their own. The Homeland Security officers narrowed their eyes, set their faces, and pretended to ignore her. One or two even twitched their hands around their batons and thought about how they would like to put an end to that smile.

There was no tension on the part of the protesters. All of the tension was on the part of the Homeland Security riot troops facing them. But there was no riot. This was a peaceful protest, by peaceful people, who simply wanted everyone, especially the politicians, to know that they were refusing to pay for the abortion and slaughter of other human beings, even if they were still unborn.

## Chapter 2

People jostled and bumped into each other gently, quietly muttering “excuse me”, and making way for each other. Everyone was even more careful with Sarah since she was obviously so pregnant. Except for one young man who bumped into her hard, didn't yield, and didn't even appear to notice what he had done.

Rick caught Sarah as she stumbled. He glanced up to see who had almost knocked his wife over. All Rick saw was the back of a man's head in a hoodie. At least he thought it was a man. With the hoodie on, it was impossible to really see the man. But his jeans and stride were manly. He didn't even mutter “excuse me”, so there was no voice to go on. Rick turned away and held on to Sarah.

The entire event was captured in HiDef by the drone hovering fifteen feet over the crowd, almost directly over Sarah and Rick. In fact, there were several drones hovering over the crowd. Spaced out about fifty feet apart, they videotaped and recorded every move and sound of the protesters. Later, analysts would go over every single word and gesture looking for anything unpatriotic or threatening. Facial recognition software would identify every single person, and copies of the recordings and analyst summaries would be added to each of their files. By the end of the day, Homeland Security would know everything there was to know about each protester, including how many times they swatted at the pesky flies.

As the hard young man collided with Sarah and Rick, for an instant, all three of them shared the same space, in direct contact with each other. It was like a black hole colliding with the sun. Rick was caught in the middle. Then the black hole pulled away and moved purposefully towards the riot line of Homeland Security Officers. Sarah leaned on Rick and smiled gratefully. She whispered, “I'm getting tired. Maybe we should go.” Neither one of them noticed that the hard young man had been wearing the exact same clothes as Rick. Sarah was too busy looking at Rick's adoring eyes to notice such trivia.

The hard young man smiled grimly. There had been no accident. He had intended to bump into Rick and Sarah. The slight pause had

been aimed in a certain direction. The direction of the nearest drone. For that fraction of a second, the hard young man, and Rick had merged into one person on the flat video of the drone. That had not been an accident either.

Neither had been the choice of the hard young man's clothes. Rick had been picked out early in the day, and a scramble had been made to find the exact clothes that Rick had been wearing. Even the hoodie. Rick's shirt had a hoodie that Rick was wearing for the large pockets to carry water for Sarah, and just in case Sarah got cold. Then Rick could loan the hoodie to Sarah to keep her warm. The hard young man's shirt was the exact same brand, color and graphics as Rick's shirt. His hoodie was exactly the same as Rick's too. The hoodie was important.

Sarah squeezed Rick's hand. "Please go get me one of those wheel chairs. All of a sudden it's too much... the heat... I feel dizzy." Rick said "okay," and turned away. After a couple of feet, he turned back and was overwhelmed by the vision of his beautiful young wife standing there, smiling, pregnant, her hands clasped under her belly. She glowed like only a pregnant woman can, and Rick smiled back. She looked more beautiful than an angel radiating sunlight.

## Chapter 3

The riot line of officers stood unmoving, at attention, their eyes scanning back and forth, looking for the slightest provocation and danger. They had been warned. The crowd facing them was composed of the most dangerous people in the country. They were pro-lifers. People whose only goal in life was to enslave women. Fanatics dedicated to their cause. Fanatics who ignored the government's education and insisted that women should have no control over their own bodies. Fools. Dangerous fools who were number one on the list of terrorist groups.

It was getting hot. Behind the riot shields and sunglasses, sweat poured off the brows of the officers. But they couldn't wipe their faces. They had to stand still in a state of readiness. Showing their invincibility to the crowd by not appearing to move. Officers carefully flexed their muscles and bent their knees slightly so they wouldn't pass out. It was not only hot, it was also starting to get boring.

The hard young man fearlessly weaved his way up to the riot line. Reaching the line, he turned and slowly started to move along the line, edging closer and closer. The first couple of Homeland Security officers looked at him long and hard. But as he drifted to the side, they lost interest. The next officers didn't pay too much attention. The officers next to them had already looked the hard young man over, so he must be okay.

The hard young man was looking at the officers. But he was also looking behind them. Finally, he found what he was looking for. Behind the front line officer, was a small gap where one of the second row officers had stepped back for a moment. Behind the gap was one of the APC armored cars. The hard young man's hand tightened within the pocket of his hoodie.

The riot officer in the first row blinked hard trying to get the sweat out of his eyes. He wished something would happen. He had signed up for the excitement and the glory. If he had wanted boring, he could have gotten a job bagging groceries. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a young man in a hoodie moving along the line. The

young man moved slowly along the line. As he almost reached the officer, he looked up, right at the officer's sunglasses. The officer blinked again, and then saw hoodie's hand coming out of the hoodie. Something was in it. Slowly the officer realized it was a gun. The hand with the gun reached between the officers' riot shields and rose towards the officer's face.

The officer began to panic, but not quick enough. His body and brain were soggy with sweat, and his muscles were locked after standing still for so long. The gun rose quickly towards his face. He watched with growing horror as the gun barrel moved towards his sunglasses. The officer turned his head slightly, which was a mistake. The gun was now pointed right between his helmet and the sunglasses. There was a bright flash.

The hard young man pulled the trigger. The bullet moved between the riot officer's helmet and sunglasses, entering the temple of the officer's skull, instantly mushrooming out and shredding his brain. For an instant, his body stood still, then dropped like a rock.

The hard young man dropped with him. He curled up into a ball next to the dead officer and peered out of his hoodie.

The sound of the gunshot echoed throughout the demonstration. Protestors stood frozen, horrified, disbelieving, not knowing what was going on.

The second rank of riot officers, the officers holding the military grade, fully automatic weapons saw the shot officer go down, and heard the shot so close to them. They didn't see the shooter. The officers closest to the dead officer were the quickest. They raised their weapons to their shoulders and released the safeties without even thinking. Not knowing who the shooter was, they began firing into the crowd directly in front of the dead officer with short bursts. All they knew was that they were in danger. As promised, the profifiers were trying to kill them.

Like dominoes, within seconds, the entire second rank was firing into the crowd and reloading. The first rank began moving. They dropped their batons and pulled their handguns. Pushing forward, they began shooting around their shields at anything that moved.

The crowd panicked and tried to run, but the bullets were faster. Hollow point bullets, illegal in warfare, slammed into men, women, and children. Mushrooming out, the bullets killed instantly when hitting heads or chests. Hitting arms and legs, the mushrooming hollow points tore them off and maimed, killing more slowly, as their victims bled to death.

As soon as the first rank began moving, the hard young man started crawling forward through the gap. In the noise and the confusion, he made it under the APC without being noticed. He had left the gun behind, but he no longer needed it. The gun had done it's job. The gun had ignited the war between the pro-lifers and the government.

## Chapter 4

At the sound of the gunshot, Rick stood frozen, uncertain, still facing Sarah. Sarah was still smiling at him. He began to move back towards Sarah. He had to get to her. He had to keep her from getting trampled when the crowd panicked.

Rick had just reached Sarah when the second rank of Homeland Security officers opened up. The whine of bullets was everywhere. Rick grabbed Sarah, but then she stumbled. The bullet pushed Sarah hard into Rick. He caught her, but tripped over backwards. They went down hard, with Sarah landing on top of Rick.

Rick tried to roll Sarah to the side. Sarah was looking at him with panic in her eyes. The smile was gone. Rick was trying to be gentle, and tried to roll her over and lay her down on the concrete next to him. She didn't seem to be able to help him. Rick felt stuck underneath her and struggled to move Sarah without hurting her anymore.

Looking up, Rick suddenly saw behind Sarah one of the riot officers. The officer pointed his handgun at Sarah and pulled the trigger. The bullet caught her in the base of the skull, killing her instantly.

Still struggling, Rick tried to move his wife's body to the side. Rick wanted to protect her with his own body. Then the officer moved his handgun and pointed it at Rick.

Rick saw a bright flash, and then everything went dark.

A few minutes later, Rick started to regain consciousness. Unknown to him, the bullet had missed, impacting the asphalt next to his head. The impact had shredded the bullet, and the concussion had knocked him out. The shredded bullet had lacerated his face, covering it in blood.

Thinking Rick was dead, the riot officer had moved on, along with the rest of the riot line.

Rick stared at his wife's face lying on his chest. She looked so peaceful. Almost like she was sleeping. But she wasn't. She was

dead. Sarah was dead. The shock was almost too much for Rick. He didn't know what to do. Slowly, gently, he tried to edge out from under Sarah's body. He laid her on the ground and just held her, rocking back and forth.

A laugh penetrated his consciousness. He looked up. All he could see were dead and dying pro-life protestors. The sight of young children's bodies shredded by the bullets made him gag. Their dead mothers lay near their children, shredded as they tried to shield their children from the bullets.

Men lay on the ground where they had been savagely gunned down. Those who hadn't been killed outright had already bled to death. The hollow point bullets had done their job. Killing ruthlessly and efficiently, even the wounded. That's why they were outlawed in warfare.

Pro-life signs lay scattered and trampled throughout the dead crowd. The messages seemed to mock the crowd now. "Everyone has the Right to Live."

Rick seemed to be the only one left alive. Then he heard the laugh again. He looked around. A young man was standing over by one of the APCs. He looked directly at Rick and laughed. Then Rick recognized him. He was the young man who had bumped into Sarah and hadn't apologized.

The hard young man in a hoodie turned and walked around the front of the APC, back towards the Homeland Security command van, and the tables of coffee and donuts.

Rick didn't know why, but he felt compelled to follow the hard young man. Something was wrong. The hard young man didn't fit in with the rest of the pro-lifers. Had this young man been the shooter? In shock, Rick couldn't think straight, but he got to his knees, and then slowly stood up and began to follow the hard young man as he weaved his way past the parking lot of Homeland Security vehicles and away from the massacre.

On his way, the hoodie snagged a donut and coffee from the abandoned refreshment tables. All of the Homeland Security

officers had gone the other way. In the distance, gunshots still rang out and people could be heard screaming for mercy.

## Chapter 5

As Rick passed the refreshment table, full of donuts and coffee, he never noticed it. His heart was screaming and threatening to pop out of his chest. The pain was raw. His conscious mind focused only on watching the hoodie and following it. He didn't know why, but he knew that hoodie was important.

They weaved their way past the temporarily abandoned police cruisers, command vehicles, ambulances, and fire trucks. Everything was abandoned, just like “The Day After.” The troops were on the hunt. Blood was in the air, the gazelles were running for their lives, and Homeland Security was determined not to allow any of the pro-life terrorists to escape with their lives. The wave of officers, and any other law enforcement that could join them, could be heard moving further away, making every attempt to use up their entire stock of billions of bullets in just one day.

The echoes of the bullet shots from the buildings slowly faded as the two groups moved away from each other. Rick's ears were ringing. He couldn't hear very well, but he knew that he had to be quiet. It would be a mistake for the hoodie to notice him and then lose him. A little voice kept telling Rick, “Don't stop following him.”

They twisted and turned, following back roads and alleys. No one saw them. Everyone had cleared the streets. They were just two more citizens looking for a safe haven from the shooting.

Entering an alley, the hoodie's pace changed. Rick instinctively slowed down. The hoodie pulled his hoodie down. Standing still, looking around and listening, the hoodie was clearly checking to see if he was being followed. Rick stood behind the large trash dumpster and peered under the raised lid.

Then the hoodie shrugged his shoulders, turned to the side, and knocked on a plain steel door in the alley. After a couple of minutes, the door cracked open. When the person inside saw who it was, they threw the door open, and the hoodie walked in.

Rick reached up to the top of the trash dumpster, grabbed a couple of brochures that were lying there, and then raced down the alley as the

spring mechanism pulled the door closed. Reaching the wall next to the door, Rick shoved the brochures forward, and just barely managed to get them in between the door and the door frame as the door slammed shut. But the door didn't click. The brochures kept the lock bolt from entering the lock plate and locking the door.

Rick leaned against the wall, still grasping the end of the brochures. Slowly he caught his breath, the blood pounding in his ears subsided, and in spite of everything, he began to feel normal again.

Looking down, Rick read the top of the brochure upside down. "Women's Life Abortion Clinic" it read. Rick glanced up, and underneath a number, probably a unit number, were plain black initials WLAC.

Rick shuddered. Then it hit him. He could still smell blood. But it wasn't from his clothes, it was from the dumpster. Slowly letting go of the brochures, which stayed in place from the weight of the door, Rick turned back towards the dumpster and approached it with dread.

Lifting the lid higher, Rick saw dozens of tied trash bags mixed in with the office trash and brochures. The trash bags did nothing to stop the coppery smell of blood. Hesitantly, fearfully, Rick reached out and pushed against one of the bags. As the thin white plastic compressed around its contents, the unmistakable shape of a baby's head could be seen. Rick jumped, dropped the lid, ran across the alley, and retched uncontrollably. Seeing the baby in the bag had affected him worse than the massacre had.

Finally Rick gained control of himself again, pulled himself up using the wall of the alley, and then turned back towards the door he had propped open. Full of despair, still in shock, despising the very idea, Rick knew that he had to enter that house of horrors and continue following the hoodie. It was important.

Rick felt around in his pockets and found his cell phone. He sighed with relief, and then panicked, wondering if it still worked. Pulling it out, he powered it on, and found that it did indeed still work. Turning, he pressed record, then walked towards the dumpster, forced himself to raise the lid again, audibly gritted his teeth, and

even reached out to compress the white trash bag again so that the baby's head could be clearly seen on the video.

Without turning it off, Rick slowly backed away, made his way down the alley, and videoed the outside of the Women's Life Abortion Clinic. Then he slowly pulled the door open, and peered inside, with his phone leading the way. The brochures fell out and lay on the ground, revealing on the bottom half a photo of an obviously pregnant, smiling young woman standing with an abortion doctor. Rick didn't notice.

The hallway inside was dark and dingy. The single fluorescent light flickered, and something skittered down the hallway ahead of Rick. The stench of old dried blood overwhelmed his senses.

Moving slowly, Rick passed a couple of doorways, and glancing inside, saw they were just storerooms. As he came opposite another door, he heard sounds around the corner of the hallway. Voices were coming. Rick glanced back and knew he could never make it to the alley in time, so he slipped into the new door. It was a break room.

Searching frantically for a place to hide, Rick saw that the only place large enough for him was in the cabinets under the sink and counter. Crossing the room quickly, Rick opened the cabinet doors, saw they were half empty, and quickly climbed inside. Pulling the doors closed behind him, he tried to get settled as the break room door opened again.

Rick moved the phone around, and managed to get the small camera pointing out through the crack of the old cabinet doors.

Rick stopped breathing. The young man in the hoodie was in the middle of the group, laughing and joking like he had just come back from winning a pool game.

## Chapter 6

Rick watched the hoodie and tried to sort out the voices. The phone recorded everything

All Rick could do was listen to the celebration and fight the nausea in his throat that made him want to retch with disgust over what he was hearing. It didn't help that three fresh delivery pizzas had just been thrown on the table and were being chowed down on. The smell gagged Rick so much he had to pant through his mouth to keep from retching and being discovered.

“Tell us again... EVERYTHING! Right from the beginning!”

“Oh, yeah, this is so cool!”

“I'm sorry you guys couldn't stay and watch.”

“Well, we didn't want to get caught in the crossfire and killed, did we?”

“I'm surprised those pro-lifers didn't shoot you just for wearing that hoodie. You know how prejudiced they are against everyone that's not like them.”

“I wasn't worried. I can handle myself.”

“We really wish we could have stayed, though. TV was awesome, but in person it must have been freaky.”

“So come on! Tell it to us again, right from the start.”

“Okay! Okay... well first, Dave and I hung out this morning where they were parking their cars and looked for a young man that looked as much like me as possible. Finally, we found one. Same height, same build, but wrong clothes.”

“So you've got a doppelganger? Not cool!”

“You better lay low for a few days so that nobody thinks that you are him and they report YOU as the terrorist!”

“That would suck, big time.”

“So Dave took pictures of the guy, and we followed him and his pregnant wife around for awhile to be sure he was the one.”

“You've been busy. It wasn't enough just to find a guy, you had to find yourself a pregnant wife, too?”

“Naw, his wife wouldn't be pregnant. She'd get an abortion right away.”

“Well, she would be pregnant if he didn't know he had a wife until the last minute.”

“Was your wife pretty?”

“Anyway, then Dave and I headed over to the mall, and it took us forever to find clothes just like that kid. Especially the shirt and the hoodie. Can you believe that we actually had to enter a Christian bookstore to find matching clothes?”

“You are a good looking guy. Why would you want to hide your face?”

“Then I changed and we headed back to the crowd and wandered around until we found our little do-gooder and his wife again.”

“It must suck having an evil twin brother.”

“I couldn't stomach how nice these people were to each other. Or the singing. So I just kept my mouth shut and watched our boy and waited for him to get close to the front of the crowd near the cops.”

“Dave took off so he wouldn't get caught up in everything. There was just enough room in our plan for one person to make it out. I waited long enough for Dave to get back to the car and leave.”

“Then I stayed close to our boy, and at the right moment I bumped right into him and froze for just a second so that the cameras would mix us up.”

“This is so cool!”

“Then I made a beeline for the cops. It must suck being a cop. Having to stand there all rigid like they were, facing these cannibal

dog pro-lifers, and not able to do anything about it.”

“You sure took care of that for them!”

“Yeah! And it was good!”

“I slowly made my way down the line looking for just the right spot. Remember, I had to have an empty spot behind my cop, with hopefully a vehicle behind him.”

“When I got to the right spot, I didn't even hesitate. I just pulled that gun out of my hoodie, stuck it in that cop's face, and pulled the trigger!”

“Bang! He went down just like that! And just like we planned, I dropped too. I curled up in a ball and waited.”

“As soon as the cops started to move forward, I crawled back past them and under the APC behind them. Now I could sit up and watch!”

“Muy fantastico!”

“Hey! Is that the cop's blood on your hoodie?”

“Probably. It sure ain't my blood.”

“I want to taste it, man. It's got to be special!”

“We should frame your hoodie! It's a perfect trophy of your sacrifice to take the fight to the enemy.”

“Go on!”

“So it was the greatest experience of my life. Sitting there and watching the cops just move forward and mow down those evil pro-lifers. I could watch that every day and never grow tired of it.”

“Maybe you should become a cop, man!”

“Nah, then I'd have to wear a uniform. Besides, I killed more pro-lifers today by getting the cops to do it for me than if I had been a cop.”

“Did they shoot your boy?”

“Oh yeah, they did. What's really cool is that they shot his wife first. So he had to watch her die, then they shot him in the head.”

“That's one way to get divorced. You sure weren't married for long.”

“I'm glad we didn't let this opportunity to stop the pro-lifers go to waste.”

“They deserved to die, trying to take away our rights like that.”

“Obstruction of abortion... think they will make it a crime?”

“They will probably charge them as terrorists under the CCA.”

“Can't charge them, they are all dead.”

“Well, all those that went to this protest, but I'm sure there are more hiding around here somewhere....”

The speaker made a pretense of shading their eyes and peering into the corners of the room

Rick cringed and pulled further back into the cabinet, afraid he was about to be caught.

“Yeah man, every pro-lifer should be hunted down and aborted.”

“Time to put an end to this controversy. We are right and they are wrong.

If they can't accept that, then they should just die, just like the slaveowners were all killed off.”

“It's the only way to be free...”

The clinic abortion doctor finished polishing off his fourth piece of pizza and spoke up for the first time, “Good job, everyone! There will be a bonus in this week's paycheck! In the meantime, we've got more work to do. As long as people are having sex, there will be abortions to perform for the good of humankind and mother earth.”

Just then, there was a knock at the break room door, and an armed Homeland Security officer walked in.

“Excuse me, but you all left your front door unlocked. You may not

have heard, but there was an incident today, and the pro-lifers shot an officer and tried to start a riot. We had to put the riot down. Right now, I'm here checking on your safety. We are concerned that they will try and directly target the abortion clinics and abortion workers. You are all in danger.”

“How can that be? We thought you killed all of them today?”

“Well, we killed most of the ones at the riot. But we can guarantee that not all of them were at the riot. And one of the perps who started the riot, some guy named Rick, managed to escape.”

Hoodie's head jerked around, “Escaped? But I thought he was shot?”

“He was shot, but the officer who shot him isn't a very good shot. The drone cameras show this guy Rick lying there for awhile, but then he got up and walked away. We don't know where he went, but he could be anywhere in the city. Right now, we are locking down all of the abortion clinics, just in case he tries to come after you, too.”

“We have already posted armed guards out front.”

The clinic doctor asked, “Will we still be able to do business?”

The officer replied, “Of course. That is a top priority for us. We will escort any women that need abortions directly from their homes to the clinic and make sure they get the treatment they need. All you have to do is tell us where to go pick them up. We won't even charge for this. It will be a free government service. We must all work together to protect our rights and freedoms.”

The doctor nodded, “Well, I will have one of the girls give you the list of appointments we have so you can do that. But right now we need to get back to work.”

“Besides, the pizza is all gone.”

The officer walked back into the hallway and then stopped. He turned around and pointed down the hallway. “Is that a back door? Where does it lead?”

“It goes out into the alley. Where we get rid of the trash.” There was a snicker.

“Okay, I will post armed guards in the alley too.”

Everyone followed the officer out of the break room and back up to the front of the clinic.

Rick groaned aloud. This was a nightmare. It couldn't be real. Then reality hit him, and he knew he had to get moving before the back door was guarded.

Rick pulled himself out of the cabinet, spilling cleaners on the floor as he scooted along. He tried to stand up, but was doubled over with cramps. Time was running out. Rick hobbled over to the break room door and listened carefully.

Then Rick edged through the door and glanced around. The back door seemed so far away now, down the dark hallway. Rick put a hand against the wall and shuffled down the hallway as fast as he could.

Something scurried down the hallway ahead of Rick. But Rick was too tired and in shock to care. As they reached the end of the hallway, the scurrying ran back and forth in front of the door, frantically trying to avoid Rick.

Rick leaned over the scurrying, and popped the rear door open. A rat ran out into the alley with some kind of bone in it's teeth. The rat took off for freedom.

Rick shuddered, stopped to pick up the brochures, and glanced down the dark hallway. Then he pushed through the alley door and limped away as fast as he could without looking back.

Behind him, a Homeland Security car nudged into the alley and pulled up to the back door. The officer would have seen Rick, but he had been too busy trying not to scratch the paint on his car.

## Chapter 7

Rick was tired. The shock and the stress were overwhelming his brain. He couldn't think straight. Rick didn't know where he was headed, or what he was going to do. He just needed some time to sort his brain out.

Slowly he forced his eyes above the level of the sidewalk. It was getting dark. He had to get off of the street. He knew he couldn't go home. But he couldn't put any of his friends at risk by going to them. He knew he couldn't rent a hotel room. They would be on him instantly.

Why were they after him? He didn't understand. He was one of the victims. But the Homeland Security officer said he had started the whole thing. How was that even possible?

Rick stopped and leaned against an old car. One breath at a time, he thought. Just one breath at a time. His brain was screaming at him. Think! Think! Think! But Rick couldn't.

Rick happened to glance into the old car. He noticed a blanket on the back seat. Then he noticed that the car's wheels were missing and the car was up on blocks. Slowly, an idea came to him. He reached forward and tried the rear door handle. It was unlocked.

Rick sighed with relief. He pulled the door open, crawled into the car, and shut the door. Then he pulled the blanket over himself and hid under the blanket.

For a long time, Rick listened to his heartbeat and tried to breathe. He felt like he was trying to run on the bottom of a swimming pool. With every breath, his lungs filled with water. With every moment, he felt like he was drowning.

His heart was screaming inside his chest, but he uttered not a sound.

After awhile, Rick realized that the pain was not going to go away any time soon. His Sarah and baby were dead, and he was alive. How was that even possible?

Then the car door opened, and a drunk, homeless guy started to

climb in. He grabbed Rick's foot. Rick reflexively kicked at him. The drunk muttered back, "Okay... Okay... You don't have to kick me. I didn't know this was already taken." Then he shuffled off down the street.

Rick sat up. He reached over and pulled the car door shut again, and this time locked the doors. He looked around. It was dark and there were people on the street. Nobody seemed to be paying any attention to him. Apparently, they thought he was just another homeless guy.

Rick shuddered. Apparently, he was just another homeless guy. His wife and child were dead. The police were after him for something he didn't do. Could things get any worse?

Rick laid back down and slept fitfully all night. The car groaned on it's springs as he thrashed around, trying to save Sarah. Again and again he tried. Again and again it always ended the same way. Sarah dead in his arms.

The reality would shock him awake and he would lay there panting and sweating, trying desperately to close off the images of Sarah being shot. They wouldn't go away.

Rick tried to think, but he couldn't. He tried to plan. He tried to decide what he should do next. But he couldn't. His mind was aswirl with jumbled images and his lungs were full of water.

Rick screamed out to God. He didn't make a sound, but inside he just screamed and screamed to God. "What am I going to do? I can't handle this!"

Then a calming hand took hold of Rick, and a voice, but not a voice, spoke to Rick silently, "I will take care of you."

Rick laid there and pondered this for a long time. Then he fell back to sleep. After a few hours, he woke up. Rick climbed out of the car. Leaving it unlocked for the next homeless guy, Rick shuffled off down the street.

Rick avoided the 24 hour gas station. A block further down, the bank sign told him the temperature and time. It was almost 5am.

The sun would be up soon. It was time to put the nightmares away for awhile and face the day. It was time to start making some decisions.

## Chapter 8

Rick stopped at a vending truck outside a construction site. He paid cash for some coffee and a breakfast burrito. Nobody paid any attention to him. He was just another one of the scruffy homeless guys in that neighborhood. In this neighborhood, everybody wore hoodies.

He moved on and sat down on a low wall. He wolfed the burrito down. Then guilt overwhelmed him. How dare he sit there and eat breakfast when his Sarah was dead? How dare he be alive when she was gone?

Rick gagged, leaned forward, and puked the burrito all over the sidewalk. The coffee spilled. A passerby muttered, "Lousy drunk!"

He stared at the remains of his breakfast on the sidewalk. Then a little voice, but not a voice, spoke to Rick silently, "Walk."

Rick got up and started walking. He tried to pull himself together and look like a normal person. He passed a gas station that had the bathrooms on the outside. Someone was coming out with the key in their hands.

Rick grabbed the bathroom door before it could shut and lock, and then slipped inside. He couldn't even bear the thought of looking at himself in the mirror, but he used the sink and cleaned himself up. He did his best to make himself look presentable.

Rick's hoodie did not look presentable, though. He thought about it for a minute, then took it off and shoved it to the bottom of the trash can. Then he looked in the mirror. Not at his face, but at the rest of him. He didn't look so bad now.

He sighed. It was time to go. The privacy and safety of the locked bathroom had been nice. But now it was time to go.

But where should he go? Where could he go?

Then Rick remembered something that his father had told him a long time ago, before he died of a heart attack, when he was teaching him to drive. "Son, never, ever talk to the police directly. You must

always have a lawyer. Always carry this card in your wallet. This is the family lawyer. If you ever have a problem, the first thing you do is call the family lawyer.”

Rick reached into his wallet and pulled out the card. It was still there. He pulled out his cell phone, but the battery was dead. He put them away and left. Now he had to do the impossible. Find a pay phone.

Rick never did find a pay phone, but he slowly wandered across the city to the address for the lawyer printed on the business card.

He normally didn't like to think about his father. The pain of losing him to a heart attack two years ago was still fresh. But today, that pain was a comfortable pain he had come to terms with. Not like the raw pain of losing Sarah and his baby. So today, Rick thought about his father, and realized that it no longer hurt in a bad way. The thoughts of his big, strong, gentle father gave him comfort and guidance. He wished that his dad was with him now. His dad wasn't, but his father's words were.

Rick remembered his father talking about his mother. She had died from cancer when Rick was very young. Most of Rick's memories of his mother came from his father. But today he also remembered other things that his father had said.

“It never stops hurting. You will never stop missing someone you love after they die. If you do, then how could you have loved them? Love never dies. But you learn to live again. You learn to go on. You learn not to spend every day drowning in pain.”

“And you should feel pain. Death is wrong. Death is not a part of life. Death is the end of life. Anyone who doesn't feel pain over the death of others is a psychopath. And psychopaths enjoy causing death and pain. They enjoy hurting people and making them die.”

“Never, ever be ashamed to cry because someone you love dies. Never be ashamed to admit that it hurts. Never be ashamed to scream at the injustice of it all. Death is wrong. Death comes for us all because we are sinful creatures. But remember, when God created the world, there was no death. It was the sin of Adam that

brought death into the world. So ultimately, all death is caused by sin. Sin is wrong and death is wrong.”

“God created life, and life is sacred. Life is a sacred trust that God has given us. To protect life. Not just our life, but the lives of the ones we love, and the lives of people we don't know. To protect every life.”

Rick smiled. Boy, he missed his father. His father was the reason he was so strongly pro-life. Life is sacred and precious. The most precious thing on earth. Even more precious than money, or gold, or jewels. Those things could never be worth a single life.

Rick thought about the life he and Sarah had planned out. A happy home full of happy children. For a brief moment, Rick forgot that Sarah was dead. As that thought started to rise to the surface again, Rick forced his brain to think about his father.

“Son, sometimes in life, things happen. Accidents happen. When this occurs, you will have to deal with the police. But remember this, the police are not your friends. The police are not there to help you. The police have only one goal, and that is to imprison or fine the largest number of people that they can in order to protect their jobs and funding.”

“It wasn't always that way. The police used to be there to protect and to serve. But now the police protect their own first, and others only incidentally. Service? That went out with the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

“But most importantly, when you are dealing with a police officer, you have to remember that legally, police are professional liars.”

“The supreme court ruled that the police can lie to you, and trick you, to get you to say or admit or confess what they want, but that you are not allowed to lie to the police. If you lie to the police, then you are a criminal. If the police lie to you, then they are just doing their jobs.”

“There is something fundamentally wrong with that, and in a just society, it would never be allowed. The police would be required to always tell the truth, just like normal citizens are.”

“This is why you must always use one of the few rights that you do have, and that is the right to remain silent. Even if they take that right away from you, you can still keep your mouth shut. Never say anything to the police except through a lawyer.”

“The police are professional liars, and yes, while most lawyers are also liars, they are not required to be liars, and they do have legal protections when dealing with the police that you do not.”

“An innocent man needs a lawyer even more than a guilty man does. You have to tell the truth or remain silent. But unless you are confessing, the police will think that you are also a liar because that is all they know, lying. You must be an honest, truthful man no matter what. The police don't believe that honest men exist.”

“That is why our family has an attorney on retainer at all times. This is the business card. If something ever happens and you have to deal with the police, then you show them this card and tell them they will have to speak to your attorney. And don't forget to call your attorney.”

Rick's mind drifted to other moments with his dad. The look on his dad's face when his dad surprised him with a car as a birthday present. Scuba diving together. Building a fence together. Rick sighed.

Rick turned down a street and realized that he was on the block where the attorney's office was. He had never been here, but he had met the family attorney before.

Rick pulled out the business card and double checked the address number. He moved slowly along the long row of brownstones, and watched for the number.

Finally, he reached it. Rick stood outside the wrought iron gate and peered up at the well kept brownstone rowhouse. There was a small brass plaque next to the front door.

Henrietta B. Wibracht, Esquire, it said.

## Chapter 9

Rick opened the wrought iron gate and walked up the steps. At the top he casually glanced around, but nobody was paying any attention to him. He read the small brass plaque again:

Henrietta B. Wibracht, Esquire, it said.

There was a doorbell next to the plaque. Rick pushed it and waited. After a few minutes the front door opened and Henrietta stood in front of Rick.

She stared at Rick in astonishment. Then she reached forward and pulled him into the house. “Rick, what are you doing here? How did you get here? They are looking everywhere for you. Is your car out front?”

Rick shook his head, “No, I walked.”

“Oh, no wonder you made it. I'm several miles from the protest site. If you had been driving, the automatic license plate readers would have found you and you would be calling me from jail.”

“Aunt Henrietta,” Rick began, his voice cracking.

“Shhh, come in while I make some tea. Then you can tell me everything that has happened. I assume you are here to see me in an official capacity? Are you invoking my services as the family attorney?”

Rick nodded his head.

Henrietta clucked. “Out loud please, for the record. Are you invoking your family's retainer?”

Rick nodded again, “Yes, I am invoking the retainer. I need you to represent me as my attorney. The police are looking for me, but I've done nothing wrong.”

Henrietta nodded, “But the police say that you have, and you know that they never make mistakes.”

Rick shook his head no, “You know my father, he taught me to

always tell the truth or to hold my tongue and say nothing at all.”

“We used to call that, 'If you can't say anything nice, then don't say anything at all!’”

Rick sighed, “I don't understand. Sarah...” His voice petered out and he stared at Aunt Henrietta's empty fireplace. There was a photo of his dad and mom on the fireplace. Aunt Henrietta was his mom's aunt.

Henrietta watched Rick quietly for a few minutes. Rick was obviously still in shock. She sighed. He probably hadn't done anything at all. But innocence or guilt no longer mattered. The law was no longer a noble profession. Justice no longer existed. It was clear on the news that the system had already judged Rick guilty, and therefore he would be made to pay. But she would do her best to make that as painless as possible.

Rick sighed again. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. “There's a video on it.”

Henrietta looked panicked, but Rick didn't notice. She took the phone and saw that the battery was completely dead. With an exhalation of relief, she waved it at Rick, “It's a good thing your battery is dead. That's another reason they haven't been able to find you. We have to be careful how we turn this on. Come into my privacy room.”

She led Rick into another room that looked like a small computer server room. There were no comfortable chairs in here. She closed the door behind Rick and made sure it was firmly latched. Then Rick noticed that the entire room was covered in a fine metal mesh and they were standing on clear plexiglass with mesh on the floor, too. Rick looked at Aunt Henrietta in confusion.

“Us old people are not all ignorant of technology. This room is a small faraday cage. Nothing in this room is connected to the outside world. No internet, no power. All of the computers in here run on batteries, which I have now disconnected from the power grid. You know that they can read your computer now through the power cords? They don't even need an internet connection anymore. I

have to do this to protect my client's privacy. This is where I prepare all my legal documents.”

“Here, give me that phone.”

Henrietta plugged the phone in and powered it up. The phone gave an error, “No Network Available.” Henrietta smiled proudly. “They can't even ping the phone in here.” She handed the phone back to Rick, and he scrolled through until he found the video from the abortion clinic. He played it again for Henrietta, but he couldn't bear to watch it himself. He turned away as Henrietta watched it.

“Well, that does explain everything. To me, at least. But it's a long way from explaining it to me and proving to the government that you are innocent. They claim that the pro-lifers started the riot by shooting an officer, and then trying to rush the barricades and kill the rest of the officers. Apparently you were in the front of the protest, and one of the only ones who got away. So you are wanted on suspicion of terrorism.”

Rick shook his head violently. “But Aunt Henrietta, that's not what happened at all. You know me, I couldn't hurt anyone. And even if I did, I certainly wouldn't take Sarah, eight months pregnant, to be in the middle of violence.”

“We were just at the protest, and I turned around to look at Sarah, and there was a shot, and then the next thing I know the police are shooting at us. They shot her in the back, Auntie! Then they walked up and shot Sarah in the head. She didn't do anything to anyone. Then they tried to shoot me, but the bullet only knocked me out. I should be dead. Why am I not dead, too? Why couldn't I have died and Sarah lived? I don't understand! I don't understand!”

Rick broke down sobbing, and took a long time to pull himself together. Aunt Henrietta just held his hand. She didn't understand either, and she didn't have any answers for Rick. But she would help him. Rick was a fine young man. The kind that used to be common, but was hard to find now. Besides, he was her sister's grandson.

Rick shuddered and sat still, “What do I do?”

Henrietta spoke quietly, “I know you didn't do it; you know you

didn't do it; they know you didn't do it. It may not matter. They will have their own video of the protest and they can edit as they wish, but they will insist that theirs is the accurate unedited video, and yours has been edited and/or doctored for political gain. Your video isn't even of the protest, but of a group of people bragging afterwards. It won't even matter if your corroborating witnesses are a preacher, a nun, and a rabbi—they are going to believe the police. And you don't have any corroborating witnesses.”

Rick stared at the floor, “No, all of my corroborating witnesses are dead. The police shot them.”

“You are being set up here—you know it, I know it, and they know it, but that will not matter in court. All of the pro-lifers are being set up. This isn't about right and wrong, who did what. This is about politics. In the media, the pro-lifers have already been judged and the media are celebrating that most of them were killed. There are only a handful that escaped, and they are being hunted ruthlessly...lest they commit any more terrorist acts. You appear to be the only one from the front of the protest that survived. So they really want you. And the media wants you dead.”

Henrietta leaned forward, “This is going to be a tough case. I know you are right, Rick. I know you didn't do anything illegal or immoral. You are a good man who just lost his family and may lose his freedom. It will take a lot of research to get this right, but there is too much at stake to not get it right. I will do everything that I can for you. You are now the most important client I have ever had. The country deserves the truth, and you deserve your freedom.”

“But I have a lot of research to do, and if I get caught researching or reading the “wrong” publications, it will be the end of my license to practice law...and then I will not be able to help anybody, especially you. I will have to use a research system that will hide what I am reading and researching so that my work can not be tracked or traced.”

“It's going to take me some time to do that. And what am I going to do with you while I am researching and preparing? Once it comes out that I am your attorney, I will be under surveillance 24/7. There

used to be such a thing as a “safe house”, but I don't know if any still exist.”

“I'm going to contact another client—who is an 'underground' computer geek in hiding. An immigrant who still has a heavy accent. But I have to be cautious. They listen to all phone calls and electronic communications today. I don't want to jeopardize this contact or his freedom, or expose him to any charges of “kidnapping/disappearance” by the police. Or lead the police to where you are hiding.”

“But just like in the movies, he can't help playing chess every day. So I'm going to go out for awhile and play a little chess. I will bring you some blankets, and I want you to stay in this safe room until I get back. The police aren't above 'peeking' into the houses with their scanners as they drive by. But you can't be seen in this room.”

Aunt Henrietta gave Rick a big hug, “I'll be right back.”

## Chapter 10

Aunt Henrietta walked. It was impossible to drive anymore without your license plate being automatically logged and checked at every street corner. The government almost knew where you were driving before you did.

She wore a large, floppy sunhat and a pair of sunglasses. It was a real cliché as a disguise, but one that worked at making it difficult for the facial recognition cameras to track her. Besides, she always dressed like this when she went out in the summer, and it looked normal on a woman of her age.

Henrietta angled off and entered the park. She leisurely walked along, as she normally did, until she reached the alcove where all the chess players met to pass the time. Some days she played a couple of games, and some days she just watched. As she entered the alcove, she ignored the Homeland Security officer standing there scrutinizing everyone. It was normal. Any gathering of three or more people automatically attracted Homeland Security's presence. Since the chess people met every day, then Homeland Security was there every day.

The officer wore special glasses that automatically recorded everything the officer looked at. Even though he didn't get a direct look at Henrietta's face so that the cloud computer behind the glasses could run its facial recognition software, the officer recognized her since she was a regular. He muttered something to the computer and turned his attention elsewhere.

Henrietta slowly strolled down the line, and then picked an open spot opposite a chess player she had never seen before. The player she wanted to see was busy with another game, so she played for awhile. When she saw his game ending, Henrietta threw her game to end it, and then wandered down the line again and jumped into the seat in front of her target before he could start a game with anyone else.

“Hello, Henrietta, how are you today?” he said in heavily accented English.

Henrietta smiled, “Wonderful. Just out for some fresh air.”

“You and half the government today.”

They played a few moves silently.

“What's on your mind today, Henrietta? You aren't up to your normal quality.”

“I have a new client. And he's in a bit of a pickle. I may need to pay you for some help.”

“The only thing I help with is illegal immigrants. Smuggling them in and hiding them. Is your client an illegal immigrant?”

“No. He's a citizen, but I think you would have to help him in reverse. Hide him first, and maybe smuggling him out later.”

Blowing through his nose, the man moved only his eyes in the direction of the Homeland Security officer to make sure he wasn't paying attention. He wasn't. He looked bored.

“I don't like this. Whoever you are helping, it has to be related to current events, and we have been warned by the police not to aid these terrorists.”

“What do you mean you have been warned?”

“The police came here and warned me. What? You think they don't know who I am? Of course they know exactly who I am and what I do. But smuggling illegals into the country is politically approved, and the police leave me alone. But if I get involved in hiding and smuggling domestic terrorists, then I will go to jail. Maybe even disappeared. They are probably still watching me to see if whoever you are helping just shows up at my place. Remember, they know everything, and it's no secret what I do.”

Henrietta sighed and kept playing, “But he isn't a terrorist. He's just a good young man who was exercising his freedom of speech to protest a crime against humanity.”

He snorted, “Everything a government does is a crime against humanity. You've represented my people before. You know that.”

“Yes, but now we are talking about government sanctioned genocide.

And everyone, including you and me, being forced to pay for it.”

“Frankly, I don't even see why this is important. What they are protesting is only abortion and some mandate saying they have to pay a measly \$1 per month. Even poor people like me can afford that.”

“You aren't poor. It's not about the money. It's about being forced against your own will to pay for the murder of other human beings, even if they haven't been born yet.”

“Well, I don't see abortion as murder. That's just a point of view.”

“What about the baby's point of view?”

He was silent, and Henrietta went on, “If you can even call murder an individual choice, it's no longer that. Almost everyone is now being mandated to pay for this murder through the Abortion Premium Mandate. This is an involuntary mandate that forces us to pay for the slaughter of babies.”

“Where I come from, in my country, ALL taxes fund government genocide. Why do you think I'm here, and I do what I do?”

He went on, “There are three inevitable things in life: taxes, death, and taxes paying for death.”

He paused and fingered one of the pieces, “Governments have to control populations somehow. Better they do it through abortion, than with machine guns and machetes like they do in my country. From my point of view, I'm not going to risk losing everything over paying for some medical procedure.”

He moved his piece, “Checkmate. This game is over.”

Henrietta said thank you, and moved down the line, playing a couple more random games of chess, and losing both, so that if her contact was being watched, then she wouldn't be a high priority to surveil. Everything had to look normal.

Then she wandered over to the farmer's market and bought some fresh food to take home.

Everywhere she went in the park, there was a Homeland Security officer standing and watching everyone behind his or her large dark recording sunglasses.

One simply had to ignore them and pretend they didn't exist. If you noticed them, then you were acting suspiciously, and would be stopped and questioned.

Henrietta wandered aimlessly. She was lost. She didn't know how she was going to help Rick now.

## Chapter 11

At home, Henrietta slipped into the privacy room. Rick was sleeping on the floor and didn't notice her. He looked exhausted. She sighed. For the first time in her life, she felt old. She felt sorry for Rick and the young people. They had no bright future anymore, but only a future of enslavement and death. How had it even come to this? It wasn't like when she was growing up. Things had been good then. Life was bright and full of opportunities. Now everywhere you turned, there was just evil waiting to devour you. Especially young people like Rick and Sarah. No, worse. The evil was devouring entire generations of unborn babies before they got even one breath of life. She had already lived most of her life, and it was far too short. But to be cut off when only in your twenties, or before you got to breathe a single breath....

Henrietta shuddered and shook. It was just plain evil. How could one possibly fight such evil?

She sat and thought and watched Rick as he slept.

Eventually he stirred and started to wake up.

Henrietta got up. She turned off all of her computers, and then physically unplugged them from the room grid. Then she pulled out one lone computer that she didn't use except to go on the internet. She checked to make sure that it wasn't connected to anything else. She stepped out of the room, and then brought back in an internet cable. It was risky, but they didn't have any choice.

“This is what we are going to do. We are going to get your video out there and help it go viral. Once it's public, then the prosecution can't stop me from using it in your defense by simply classifying the video as a national secret. Even if we lose in court, then at least the public will know the truth about what happened.”

It frightened Henrietta that she was thinking in such pessimistic terms.

Rick pulled up a chair and sat next to her, “How do we do that?”

“We need to get this out before it is too late. Who would be the most receptive? Maybe we should take it to all the media...maybe hold a press conference. Maybe invite media from other countries, just like they invite us to get their news on ongoing problems in their countries. We could try that, but we can't even call anyone. Not a single reporter without the ASA instantly tracking our calls. Press conferences simply don't work anymore. Even if they allow us to hold the press conference, the news then has to get past the government censors that work in every news agency.”

“Who is the ASA? I've never heard of it before.”

“Sure you have. They renamed the Agency. It's now called the All Seeing Agency, and it's official logo is the all seeing eye. Ironic how they don't even try to hide it anymore.”

“Well, we will, of course, send copies to all of the mainstream media, but I don't expect much to come of that.”

“No, we will focus on the internet itself, and trying to make the video go viral. Before we start, we are going to compress the video so we can send it in short bursts.”

Henrietta played with the video file for awhile, and then finally leaned back, “I think we are ready now. I will do a quick batch transmission through this special press release website that automatically sends out your press release to every official media outlet.”

Rick watched with surprise. He would never have guessed that Aunt Henrietta knew so much about computers.

She smiled, “However, I'm not going to do this alone. I'm going to contact a hacker who specializes in making things go viral. We will send the video to him, and he will send out the press release and video, and then try other angles. He has written software that can make it all happen in mere minutes and with complete privacy. I don't have the processing power here to do it. Now just give me a couple of minutes to write a press release to go with the video, and then we will send him an email.”



Henrietta emailed her hacker friend. Like all friends, he asked for money up front. He didn't care what the message was about. Just how much it paid. Henrietta used an offshore wire transfer to settle up. She was past the point of trying to preserve her retirement funds. Some things in life just had to be done.

They sat and waited. Then there was a chime. The computer intoned, "You have mail. Shall I read it to you?" Henrietta laughed, "Why not? Yes."

"Okay Henrietta, I'm ready. I've got the money. Send me your file. I will start with the press releases like you said, and then put this on MEtube. After that, we will post it on as many GossipBook pages as possible. While the software is doing that, I will set up a dedicated website, and we will spread the file across all of the file share websites. Are you ready?"

Henrietta keyed in, "Go for it!"

Rick asked, "How many GossipBook pages does he have?"

"Oh, he doesn't have any. But he's written a nifty program that will post our video as a comment on tens of thousands of other people's pages. So many people will have it, that it won't be possible to put it back in the bottle. Watch. We will surf along and watch it all happen in real time."

The hacker's voice spoke from the computer, "Chat is not secure, but I'm sending you encrypted audio files that can't be broken or traced, except by the ASA."

"The press releases are gone, but you don't really expect results from that do you? Now on to the fun stuff."

"I'm using the key words 'Abortion Mandate Conspiracy' for everything, so you can find the urls by doing searches on the websites under those keywords as I do the uploads."

"MEtube is up!"

Henrietta went to MEtube and entered 'Abortion Mandate Conspiracy'. Instantly they went to a new page and the video started

to play. After 3 seconds the video disappeared. Then the whole page disappeared and was replaced with, 'Error – You have reached a page that does not exist.'"

Henrietta frowned and emailed it to her hacker friend.

"GossipBook is up and running, it's on 12,964 pages, no 34,752 pages... watch it go!"

Henrietta and Rick switched to GossipBook, and put in the search term. Instantly a list came up. "1,873,923 items found," it said. Henrietta smiled, "I told you he was good."

"I just reloaded MEtube. I don't know what happened. Try it again."

Henrietta switched back to MEtube and re-entered the search term, 'Abortion Mandate Conspiracy'. Instantly a page came back, "There are no matches for your search criteria. Would you like to try Cute Kitten Videos?"

Rick frowned, "What's going on?"

Henrietta sent another email, "I don't know. Let's check and see how GossipBook is doing."

She switched over to GossipBook and hit refresh on her search page. The results page came up. "Zero items found. Please enter an approved search term."

Henrietta and Rick gasped. It wasn't possible.

"Look, I don't know what it going on. ALL of the copies of the video I have uploaded everywhere on the net are gone. Just gone. I've never seen anything like this."

Henrietta was slowly turning gray as a sinking feeling filled her.

"Uh oh!"

"Look, this is my last message. I'm sending you a screenshot of a warning that just posted on all my computers. The ones taking everything down are government. The government only tolerates us

hackers as long as we don't oppose the government. I'm out. Sorry. Don't ever contact me again.”

Rick and Henrietta pulled up his screenshot.

“The content you are attempting to upload to the internet is in violation of the National Safety Act, and is considered incitement to terrorism. You are ordered to cease and desist immediately by order of the All Seeing Agency.”

Aunt Henrietta sat back and just looked at Rick, “I can't believe it. We've been shut down. It has to be them. Nobody else has that power. It has to be them. The only reason we didn't get caught is because we used a hacker to do the uploads. Otherwise they would be kicking in my door right now.”

## Chapter 12

Rick and Aunt Henrietta sat silently in the privacy room for a long time. The turn of events had been completely unexpected. Rick had no idea what to do next, and Henrietta B. Wibracht, Esquire, was thinking furiously, trying to work out a legal strategy that would protect Rick and get the truth out.

“They have issued warrants for your arrest, and the arrest of all of the other pro-lifers that got away. But they are asking for you by name. So far, they are only listing 'suspicion of terrorism', with no other specific charges. There is a time limit to how long I can keep you here without contacting the police before I cross a gray line into charges of 'harboring a fugitive'.”

“So I should just turn myself in and be done with it?”

“No, there is a specific way that we need to go about this. That's why you have an attorney. You cannot just walk into a police station, or even worse, get arrested on your way to the police station before you even get to turn yourself in. Those things don't go well unless a surrender deal has been worked out ahead of time by the attorney.”

Henrietta went on, “No, I'm going to have to go down to the police headquarters and negotiate a surrender deal on your behalf. There is no way to avoid it. After you have surrendered, then we will have to fight within the legal system to get you released based on the fact that you were not actually involved or committed any crimes.”

“What about that video I took at the abortion clinic?”

“That video may never see the light of day. Based on what just happened, I would say that even if I can use it in court as exonerating evidence, they will classify it, and it will be viewed only by myself, the prosecuting attorney, and the judge. I doubt that the jury will even be allowed to see it.”

“I don't understand what is going on. I thought that our justice system was about truth, honor, and finding out what really happened.”

“You mean justice? There is no longer any such thing as justice. Now it is only about the law, and who wins has nothing to do with truth, but with who has the better attorney and can influence the law to their favor. On top of that, the judges usually go with whatever is in the government's best interest, and juries are only allowed to hear what the judge lets them hear. There is no justice in this country anymore. The law has merely become another tool of coercion, used by whoever can swing the biggest law stick.”

Aunt Henrietta clasped her hands, “When I went into law, we, my father and I, thought that it was an honorable profession. A profession that sought to use a formalized system to seek the truth and avoid force, or the threat of force, to decide who was right and wrong. Ideas like justice and truth actually mattered. Now they don't. I was raised to believe that the purpose of the law was to find the truth, protect the innocent, and punish the guilty. In other words, justice.”

She went on, “Justice in the law ended when it became legal to murder unborn babies. The most basic right for everyone is the right to life. Life should never be deprived without due process of law. I am, of course, referring to the execution of criminals for heinous crimes. Even they have a right to life that must be carefully weighed and judged before it can be removed, and then only if there is overwhelming evidence that they have committed despicable crimes against others, usually multiple murders. Now the law says that little babies can be executed without any process of law, and without committing any crime of their own. If little babies do not have the most fundamental, basic human right, the right to life, then under our system of so-called justice, none of us have any rights at all. Everything comes down to whoever is carrying the biggest stick, and they can do whatever they want.”

“Now the law executes the innocent, rewards the guilty, and calls the truth evil.”

“If I had known what the legal profession would become today, I would never have become an attorney. But if I had not become an attorney, I could not have helped people. Now it is the law itself that prevents me from helping people. It is the law itself that perverts

justice.”

Henrietta sighed heavily, “After this is over, I’m going to retire. I can no longer stomach the hypocrisy of the legal system. I can no longer help people, but I will do my best to help you.”

## Chapter 13

Rick gave his Aunt Henrietta a big hug. She wiped tears from her eyes, and patted his cheek, “I may be gone for awhile. It will take some time to negotiate this deal. I will call you on this landline once everything is worked out, and the police and I will come directly back here to pick you up.”

“You mean to arrest me?”

With a sigh, “Yes, that is what I mean. But you have done nothing to deserve being arrested. You are a fine young man, and one day everything will work out for you. This is just a bump in the road.”

Rick looked at his aunt. Sarah's death was more than just a bump in the road, but he knew what she meant. Rick gave her another hug, and then stayed inside the privacy room while Aunt Henrietta went forth.

At the police station, Henrietta asked to speak to Carl, one of the detectives. As she was waiting, an old friend, Ron, the Jail Commander, walked by in uniform.

“Hey, Ron, how are you doing?”

“Henrietta! My favorite attorney! What's brings you down to our neck of the woods? Here to spring another one of our 'sources of federal funding'?” Ron joked.

“Actually, I'm going to try and keep you from getting your hands on him in the first place. He's a good kid with no priors. There's no reason to arrest him, but I've got to work that out with Carl. You can join us if you want?”

“Hmmm...okay. I've got a few minutes. I'll jump in with you and Carl and see what this is about. Why don't you go on down to interrogation room four, and I'll chase Carl down.”

Henrietta walked down to interrogation room four. Little did she know that these would be the last steps of freedom that she would ever take. The door was open and she comfortably arranged herself and waited for Carl and Ron.

She had gone to law school with Carl and worked with Carl before, and had great respect for him. Carl was an honest cop, which of course meant he was always having problems on the job. He had been fired by his previous police department for doing the right thing because it ruffled the feathers of some higher-ups and resulted in the arrest of someone's kid. It had been felt that if Carl had just stopped investigating when he had a perfectly bad scumbag looking good for the hit and run, then a scumbag would have been taken off the street, and the higher-up's kid wouldn't have gone to jail for the accident. They had taken all his perks away, including his department-issued car, and when that hadn't been enough to force him to quit, Carl had been fired at the first excuse. Being fired had permanently closed the door on Carl's dream of being hired by the federal police. Carl knew what it was like to be railroaded, and Henrietta was counting on that to help with Rick's situation.

They both came in, and settled in. Carl came straight to the point. "I've got to make this quick, Henrietta. We are overwhelmed right now working on these pro-life terrorism cases. We've been rounding up all of the pro-lifers in the city. Ron's jail is full, and we were lucky to get this interrogation room, as they have all been full. The feds want to transfer everyone over to their custody, but it's taking time because they are overwhelmed, too. So what is this about?"

"Well, it's about one of the pro-life kids. He was at the protest, but he didn't do anything. I want to arrange for him to be questioned so that everything can be cleared up, and he doesn't have to be afraid waiting for the police to knock on his door for something he had nothing to do with."

Carl slapped his hand on the table. "Hold that thought. We can't do anything related to the pro-life terrorists without the feds' approval. I'll be right back. Also, as of this moment, I'm going to have to turn the recording equipment on."

Carl left the room hurriedly. Ron and Henrietta chatted while they waited, which wasn't long.

Carl ushered a sharp-looking young woman into the room. "This is Federal Deputy District Attorney FDDA Margaret Hobbs. Because

of the subject matter, she is required to be in on this conversation. For the record this is being recorded. Let's start again.”

Henrietta drew a breath and started over, “I’m representing a young man that was at the protest, and we want to negotiate a surrender deal where he will be held for questioning, but not arrested, as we have exonerating evidence that proves his innocence. In my view of the facts, this young man didn't do anything wrong.”

The FDDA snorted, “If he is innocent, then why didn't he surrender to Homeland Security at the protest? The fact that he ran proves that he is guilty.”

Ron shifted in his chair, “Well, that's not completely true. It's common for innocent people to run at first, out of fear of an unknown situation when confronted by cops. They have no experience in how they are supposed to react or surrender properly.”

The FDDA glared at him, “I don't believe that. A compliant citizen never disobeys a lawful order by federal law enforcement. But anyway, who exactly are we talking about? What is his name?”

Henrietta gave her Rick's name and asked, “Do you have any charges against Rick? If not, then we want a non-arrest interview under controlled circumstances. In other words, we will do our own video recording, simultaneously with your video recording, and have a court reporter present. At the end, if you are not charging him, then he will be released into my supervisory custody as his attorney.”

The FDDA just stared at Henrietta, “What law school did you go to? Things don't work like that anymore. We don't make deals with terrorists. They don't have any rights. Not even the right to an attorney.”

Carl and Ron glanced at each other. They had been working with this FDDA for several shifts now, non-stop, and it had been the same way with every one of the pro-life terrorist suspects.

The FDDA went on, “What exactly is this exonerating evidence that you are talking about? Do you have it with you?”

Henrietta reached into her bag and pulled out a small tablet. “I have

a copy of it on this tablet. It's a video. Can I play it for you?"

The FDDA reached forward, took the tablet and held it so that no one else could see it, not even Carl or Ron, muted it, and watched the first few seconds of the video. Then she shut the tablet off and put it in her bag. "I'm confiscating this as evidence of terrorism. You said this is a copy? Where is the original? I am ordering you to surrender it or it's location right now."

Henrietta shook her head, "I'm sorry, but the original will remain in a protected location until it is necessary to produce it for a judge, because it is evidence exonerating my client of your baseless charges. You didn't even watch the video, so how do you know what is on it?"

The FDDA flared her nose, "I have seen the video. A terrorist group attempted to upload it to the internet earlier today, and believe me, this video is direct proof of the pro-lifers' terrorism. In fact, the video is so inflammatory that the government has classified this video as Top Secret under the National Safety Act, and I can guarantee that you will not be allowed to use this video in the representation of your 'client' because you do not have a Top Secret clearance."

Henrietta started to get hot, and struggled to control her voice. Speaking calming, "The video is nothing of the sort. I have already seen it in its entirety, several times. The video is proof that a group other than the pro-lifers is guilty of this terrorism."

The FDDA held up her hand, "Be silent. Carl and Ron do not have clearance to hear this information."

She turned to Carl and Ron, "I'm sorry, but you will have to leave the room now, and you are forbidden under the National Safety Act to discuss what you have heard in this room with anyone, even each other. Do I make myself clear?"

Carl and Ron both nodded their heads reluctantly. "I'm sorry, but I didn't hear you say 'Yes' for the record."

Carl and Ron both said yes, and turned and left the room.

Turning back to Henrietta, the FDDA said, “Okay, now let's stop playing games. There will be no surrender deal. There will be no deals of any kind. Your client is guilty of terrorism, and is, in fact, one of the ringleaders. If you do not tell me right this minute your client's location and the location of the original of this video, then you too will also be charged as a terrorist. This will be an unconditional surrender of your client, and if you cooperate, then you may go free, but you will no longer be representing this 'client', as terrorists have no right to an attorney, and no attorney will be present during our questioning of Rick. Neither will there be any time limit on our questions, nor any restrictions on the subject of questions, and most certainly there will be no independent recording of his questioning. You are being ordered to comply with my command to surrender your client and the evidence immediately.”

The FDDA looked expectantly at Henrietta, expecting full and complete compliance with her demands.

Henrietta said, “I can't do that. I can't divulge that information. As the attorney of record, I cannot compromise the legal defense of my client. I have fully complied with the ethical standards required of an attorney. I am sorry you feel this way about it. If you have me in custody, I cannot help arrange a meeting with Rick. Remember, we all work together to make the legal system work for all of society—we swore to do that when we were first admitted to practice law. ”

The FDDA shook her head, “I swore no such thing. My only loyalty is to the government.”

“Based on your refusal to comply with a lawful order by an officer of the court, I am charging you, Henrietta B. Wibracht, Esquire, with obstruction of justice, obstruction of a federal officer, aiding and abetting a fugitive, accessory after the fact to murder, incitement to riot, illegal protesting, conspiracy against the state, aiding and abetting a terrorist, and whatever else we can dig up.”

Henrietta interrupted her, “I'm sorry, but I'm not a state-paid defense attorney stooge who specializes in losing defense cases for the state.”

The FDDA glared back at Henrietta, “Furthermore, under the

National Safety Act, any act of non-compliance is an act of treason, and for refusing to comply with my orders, I am declaring you an enemy of the state and charging you with treason. Which case I will GLADLY prosecute myself.”

“I can guarantee that you will never take a free step again, that your bar license will be revoked, and that you will learn first hand what the law actually means. How someone like you ever made it through law school, I cannot even guess.”

“And best of all, your 'client' will still be without representation because you are under arrest, and he is an enemy of the state and not entitled to legal representation.”

With a very self-satisfied smile, the FDDA leaned back in her chair, crossed her legs, and snapped her fingers. Two homeland security officers entered the room, dragged Henrietta out of her chair, wrenched her arms behind her back, and frogmarched her out.

## Chapter 14

Rick sat in the easy chair that they had moved into the privacy room. He sipped a glass of juice and stared at the blank computer screens. Aunt Henrietta was going to a lot of trouble for him. Right now he didn't know if he even cared. The only thing that he cared about was the fact that his Sarah was dead. And their still unborn child.

Rick couldn't separate his grief for the two. How could anyone say that abortion didn't kill a child? His heart was screaming because his son or daughter was dead. He had expected one day, of course, hopefully not for 40 or 50 or 60 years, that he might have to watch Sarah die when she grew old. But he had never even considered the possibility that any of his children would die before he did. He had dreamed of having six or eight or whatever kids with Sarah. Now, not only was their first child dead, but also all of the others, too. Their eggs dead inside of Sarah, never to be born.

The images of the life they had planned together swept through Rick's mind. A happy family. Children and grandchildren one day. Life spent with each other, just doing normal, boring, routine things, but surrounded by the happiness of their children growing and learning.

It overwhelmed Rick, and he broke down sobbing and screaming. He found himself on the floor curled in a ball screaming, "Why me? Why me, God? Why didn't you take me and keep Sarah and our baby alive? Why me?"

Slowly, shock and exhaustion overcame him and he lay there trembling, afraid to think.

Then a voice, but not a voice, clear as a doorbell, interrupted Rick's grief.

"Leave. Leave now."

Rick sat up, disheveled. He stared around. He wasn't ready to leave. But he got to his knees and stood up uncertainly. He grabbed the clean clothes Henrietta gave him and ran out of the privacy room and down the steps to the front door.

At the front door, he stopped and looked out through the peephole. Everything looked normal. People were walking up and down the sidewalk, going about their normal business. He started to unlock the door, but then thought better of it.

Rick turned and mounted the flights of stairs two at a time. At the top, he came to an access door that was locked. His heart sank. But Aunt Henrietta, always careful about safety, had left the key in the lock. It wouldn't do to get trapped inside the house with a fire by a locked door when the key could be left where it could be reached.

Rick turned the key and opened the door. He stepped through, took the key out, and locked the door again from the outside. He put the key in his pocket. He walked over to the next house. It was a rowhouse, so there was no empty space he would have to jump over. He stepped over the upright parapet and walked down the entire row of houses. There were fire escapes on the back, but Rick stayed away from those.

At the end, Rick paused. He heard voices and radios in the alley below him. Rick crawled over and peered downwards, and was shocked to see black-clad shock troops fanning out from parked vehicles. He froze, uncertain what to do.

A door splintered open behind him and Rick turned his head. A two man team emerged from the broken roof access of the house that he was on. Their attention was down the row on Aunt Henrietta's house. They set up a sniper's perch and zeroed in on the access door that Rick had just come through.

A chill ran through Rick. Then an unfamiliar feeling. The desire to live. The desire to escape.

Adrenaline surged through Rick's body, and his energy levels came back up. He peered over the edge again. Everyone had run towards the house. The vehicles were unattended. He peeked back at the sniper team meant for him. They were still looking the other way.

Slowly, and as quietly as he could, he eased over the edge of the roof, and clung to the drainpipe. It was an old fashioned drainpipe, so it was strong and sturdy. Rick worked his way down and stood on

the ground.

He peeked around the corner into the street, then pulled back. There were Homeland Security troops everywhere. He smiled ironically. One would almost think that he was armed and dangerous. But he wasn't.

Rick looked around and tried to think, but didn't see any way out. Then he noticed the command vehicle step van sitting there. There were voices coming from inside. The door started to open. Rick went to the only place he could. He dropped down and scooted underneath the step van.

He watched one of the officers pace back and forth on his cell phone before he hung up and went back inside. The van rocked, and Rick's eyes followed the noise of his footsteps. Rick was now looking up at the floor of the step van and he was surprised at how much empty space there was in the center, behind the tool boxes at the bottom.

Rick remembered an old WWII movie he had seen. It just might work. Who would ever suspect their very own command vehicle. Quickly but quietly, confident that the men above were making so much noise that they couldn't hear him, Rick hoisted himself up into the cavity underneath the step van, and used his belt and extra clothes to tie himself in place. It wouldn't be a fun ride, but it should work. Now he just had to wait.

Rick's mind went back to Sarah, to the happy times.

## Chapter 15

The FDDA strode through Henrietta's house. She was angry. Couldn't these Homeland Security buffoons do anything right? A boy. Merely a boy, and he had slipped away again.

At the door to the privacy room, the FDDA stood and watched the techies work. "Ma'am, whoever set this up, did a really good job. They knew what they were doing. That's why we were unable to track them before."

The FDDA flared her nose, "Right. An old lady outsmarted you tech guys.... I think you were just being lazy."

She turned as someone called to her, and moved to the traditional study downstairs. The expensive woodwork had been ripped off the walls, and a hidden safe revealed. "Open it. Now."

This was a national security, National Safety Act matter, so they didn't need any pesky warrants.

The FDDA stood tapping her foot impatiently as another techie brought in a plasma cutter and cut the door off the safe. It fell heavily on the floor. Then she marched over to the safe and started to rummage through it. Almost on top was a cell phone. The FDDA turned it on and smiled grimly when she saw that it was Rick's. It only took a moment to verify that this was the one with the original video footage.

The FDDA muttered under her breath, "I will find you, Rick, and I will end this."

She pocketed the cell phone. At least one of her two main goals had been done. That extremely damaging video had been found. There was absolutely no way it could ever be allowed to see the light of day. Nothing must ever be allowed to mar the image of the pro-abortion, pro-freedom movement.

A thought occurred to her. She would need to have everyone on that video disappeared. If they could be so careless running their mouths over a pizza, just think what they would tell if someone bought them

a nice dinner. What they had done was admirable, and she wished she had thought of so devious a plan herself. But the mess was hers to cleanup, and they were part of the mess.

The FDDA turned to her assistant, “We need to have the shock squad redeploy immediately to a different address and take several people into secret custody. Here, let me show you.”

Quickly, the word went out. Underneath the step van, Rick saw a sudden change in tempo. Now everyone was running around, engines were starting. Then the step van popped into gear and drove off.

The drive shaft was rotating at a high rate of speed only six inches from Rick's face. He stared at it and resisted the incomprehensible urge to grab it and stop it from moving. He could only imagine what that would do to his hand. Rick hung on for dear life, and prayed out loud, confident that no one could hear him over the sirens, engine, and road noise.

They screeched to a stop at another location. There was the slamming of vehicle doors, and the pounding of boots. Clearly they were after someone else. Rick wondered who.

Then it occurred to Rick that they were no longer looking for him at the moment, and this might be his best chance. Rick untied himself and dropped numbly to the concrete. He scooted out from under the step van and then over to another vehicle. Staying under the vehicles, he slowly scooted back and away from the direction that the boots had gone.

Then Rick reached the end of the line of vehicles. He was close to the corner of the block. As he laid there trying to figure out what to do next, he noticed that someone had cut the welds off of the manhole cover. Slowly, he moved the manhole cover to the side, and then climbed down into the storm drain. He dragged the manhole cover back over him. Now he really couldn't hear much, but he could see small patches of light coming through the manhole cover finger holes.

Below him, Rick could hear rushing water. Above him, the traffic.

He knew he couldn't move down the tunnel. Most of the manholes would be welded shut. He would never get out. He would just have to wait until after dark and then crawl back out of this one. Hopefully Homeland Security would be gone, and he wouldn't get run over climbing out. He tried to make himself comfortable. As comfortable as one could be while clinging to an iron ladder in a storm drain.

## Chapter 16

Rick walked slowly down street after street. The neighborhoods changed, and gradually he moved into a more affluent area. As he passed one street, he could hear a loud party at the end of the cul-de-sac.

Rick wasn't into parties. He hadn't been raised that way. But parties meant lots of strangers, and most of them drunk or high. And food. He stood on the dark corner trying to think. The grumbling of his stomach made up his mind for him.

Rick moved down the street, and fell in pace with a group of young people moving towards the party. They didn't even notice Rick had joined them. At the door, the leader of the group was recognized by the pseudo bouncer, and they were all waved in.

Rick drifted around the house to find the food. There was plenty. The smell of weed was in the air, and in anticipation of the munchies, lots of munchies had been provided. Rick took an empty pizza box and filled it up. He decided to move upstairs and find a bedroom to get away from the weed smoke.

Some of the doors upstairs were open and some closed, but all of the rooms had people in them. At the end of the hall, Rick turned a corner and faced a small, narrow set of stairs that almost looked like an attic access. He hesitated, then remembered hanging onto the iron ladder rungs in the sewer. Even an attic would be better than that.

Rick climbed the stairs and listened at the door. It was hard to hear, but none of the noise seemed to be coming from inside the attic. He slipped inside. It was an attic. But a finished attic. It was someone's hideaway. There was a mattress on the floor and a tv.

Rick locked the attic door behind him and collapsed on the edge of the mattress. He set the pizza box on the floor, opened it up and began eating. Spying the remote control, he turned the tv on to help drown out the noise of the rest of the party.

Mindlessly, Rick flicked through the channels before settling on the

main news channel. Chowing down, Rick tried to make sense of his emotions. Grief, fear, worry, and uncertainty all swirled around through his brain and his gut in a confused jumble that swept away each emotion in turn as he tried to come to terms with it. He needed sleep. He was so tired, his mind was trying to make sense of things while he was still awake, what it normally did when he was asleep. But first he had to finish eating.

Then the top of the hour news came on. Rick tried to pay attention.

The pretty anchor launched into reading off the teleprompter. Of course she was pretty. Anchor and pretty automatically went together. But it was all make-up, and she obviously wasn't half as beautiful as Sarah. Shining, glowing, Sarah.

The anchor's words caught Rick's attention:

“Tonight, Homeland Security is continuing to search for the one single missing pro-life terrorist that is still at large.” A grainy photo of Rick, taken by one of the hovering drones, appeared on the screen next to the anchor. Rick had to admit that she was definitely prettier than he was. But it was shocking to see his face on the screen, with the bold letters, **TERRORIST**, imprinted across the photo.

“Tonight, Homeland Security is releasing some of the footage of the pro-life terrorist massacre and their attempt to massacre the police. This video was taken by security drones that were hovering over the protestors at the time of the terrorist incident. We are going to follow one of the pro-life terrorists as he starts the entire attack.”

Rick leaned forward. Finally, they were going to show the video of the hoodie guy, and everyone would know that he, and especially Sarah, hadn't done anything. The video started and the anchor disappeared out of sight.

“The man who has been highlighted has been identified by Homeland Security as the primary terrorist who started everything. You can see here that he even brought his pregnant wife with him as cover.”

“Now he is turning away from her and starting to walk towards the security line.”

Rick was stunned to see his face being shown under the hoodie. As he was shown walking away from Sarah, the video showed no one with Sarah, where he should have been. They had airbrushed him out next to Sarah, and airbrushed his face underneath the hoodie.

Rick watched in chilling shock as the hoodie weaved his way up to the line of security officers. Every chance it could, the video clearly showed Rick's face under the hoodie. The hoodie reached the line of officers and slowly moved along the line. Rick knew that hadn't been him in the hoodie, but on the video, it sure did look like him.

The hoodie was looking at the officers, but they were not treating him as a threat. Then the drone zoomed in on the hoodie taking his hand out of his hoodie pocket. In his hand was a gun. The hand with the gun reached between the officers' riot shields and rose towards a single officer's face. The officer started to turn his head, but the hoodie pointed the gun right at the officer's head between his helmet and sunglasses. There was a bright flash on the video. The officer stood still for a moment and then his body dropped like a sack of potatoes.

The video began to play over and over again while the anchor droned on. The drone video used had been taken from behind the officer and clearly showed the face of the shooter under the hoodie. The problem is that it was Rick's face under the hoodie. Rick watched himself murder the officer over and over again. He knew he hadn't done it. But the video was almost enough to convince even him.

The anchor broke into Rick's seriously shocked thoughts, "This is the terrorist War on Life. Our Life. Our Way of Life. Our Freedom of Life. The freedom to live our lives the way that we want to. The freedom to not have the government and the churches telling us what to do with our wombs. This is what these evil pro-lifers will do if we let them. They will either force us to do what they want or they will kill us. This is their War on Life."

"It is our job to stop them. They must not be allowed to take our freedom and our lives away from us. Homeland Security needs your help to find this terrorist, this murderer, and bring him to justice. We

must not live in fear of the pro-lifers' terroristic War on Life. We must band together. We must stop this threat to democracy.”

“The pro-lifers are the largest danger to freedom, democracy, and world peace today. Without abortion, there will be too many people in the world. Without abortion, the overflowing masses will destroy the economy, the ecology, and start endless wars with each other. The only path to peace and harmony with each other and Mother Earth is to hunt down and kill these terroristic pro-lifers, end their War on Life, and preserve the right and freedom to have abortion on demand.

“Help us help you. Find this young terrorist and turn him in to Homeland Security immediately.”

“On the screen is an 800 number you can call with any information you may have.”

The anchor droned on repetitively again and again, while the video played in a loop in a corner box. Behind everything was a large photo of Rick with the words now saying “Stop this Pro-Life Terrorist.” Underneath that was the 800 number. Rick lay back on the bed. Sleep was no longer possible.

The words over Rick's photo changed again, “World's Most Dangerous Man.” But Rick didn't even notice.

Their were voices outside the attic door, and the door began to jiggle. Rick stirred on the bed. Then a key turned in the lock, and the door popped open. A guy and three girls popped into the small attic room.

“Hey, darling, I didn't know you were going to be waiting for me!”

“Cool, Jim, you brought a friend. This is going to be more fun.”

One of the girls dropped onto the bed, and snuggled up to Rick. Jim seemed to be preoccupied with the other two girls. Rick struggled to sit up. He had to get out of there. It was no longer a quiet place to hide.

“Where are you going, darling? Someone needs to take care of me

while they take care of Jim.”

Rick muttered, “I've got to go.”

Jim joined in, “What? You come here, eat my food, sleep in my private attic, and won't even hang around for some fun?”

Another girl giggled, “You aren't some square, straight, mama's boy are you? How about I take care of both you and Jim at the same time?”

Rick shook his head and brushed the snuggler off his arm. It was more difficult than he thought. She acted like she was covered with velcro. “I'm sorry, but I've got to leave.”

The mood began to turn ugly. “You aren't one of those control freak pro-lifers, are you?”

“I didn't invite any pro-lifers to my party, so he better not be.”

“Are you here, honey, to make sure that we don't create any babies that have to be aborted?”

At first, Rick thought they knew who he was, but then realized that they were just pushing him. They didn't recognize him, but they sure had bought in to the propaganda. Sex at any cost. Even the life of a baby.

The snuggler crooned, “Don't worry darling, I'm already on the pill. It's safe, and I need you.”

Rick almost crawled out of the attic backwards, and finally shut the attic door behind him. Taking a deep breath, he worked his way past the other bedrooms full of young people doing their thing. He had to get out of there. It hadn't occurred to him how bad it would be. Now he understood why so many young people wanted abortion so much. Without abortion and birth control, this kind of party wouldn't be possible.

Rick snagged another piece of pizza, and then headed out the back door, past the full jacuzzi and pool with no bathing suits required. The darkness of the woods behind the house beckoned. The lights of the party were too much. Rick headed off, and as he slowly walked

through the woods, the noise of the party receded behind him. Ahead, he could see another neighborhood. Back on the street, he kept heading slowly out of town. The neighborhoods started deteriorating again, but that was okay, because now there were people just hanging out on the streets, and he wasn't so obvious.

Rick wondered where he was going and how long it would take him to get there.

## Chapter 17

Rick didn't know where he was going, but sooner or later, he had to get there. So he kept moving. The dawn began to seep through the darkness. People began to fill the street and cars were everywhere. He even passed some police officers and Homeland Security on patrol. Rick changed his pace to blend in. He now appeared to be just another commuter in a hurry to get to work. No one noticed him.

At an office building, everyone was funneling inside. Rick was jostled into line and pushed forward. He couldn't break free without causing a scene in front of the bored Homeland Security officer standing off in a corner. Rick went along. It was a low security building. There were no biometric scans and no ID checks. He was swept up the elevator and off onto an open floor full of cubicles with offices to the side.

The crush thinned out and Rick drifted along. He noticed a note on the door of an office, "Sorry, I'm on vacation until Monday." Rick tried the doorknob. It opened. He turned the lights on and sat down at the desk. Instinctively, he booted up the computer.

As he sat waiting for the computer to cycle on, someone opened the door and stuck their head in, "I thought Anne was on vacation?" Rick nodded, "She is. That's why I'm working on her computer."

"Sorry, didn't mean to bother you." The head turned away from the door and loudly announced, "It's just IT. Finally timing something right. Actually working on a computer when it's not needed." The door closed and everyone left Rick alone after that.

For awhile Rick just stared at the computer, unsure what, if anything, he could do. Aunt Henrietta and he had already tried to distribute the video, and that hadn't worked. Maybe he could make a video of his own? Protest his innocence and set the record straight?"

Rick looked, but there was no web camera on the computer. There wasn't much of anything on the computer. It was, in fact, over three years old. This company was cheap. But if the user only needed email and a word processor, then why keep buying the latest

computers? This one would certainly do the job. So email and writing it would be.

Rick thought some more, and then decided that Sarah's parents deserved to know the truth from him. Until he saw the altered video last night, it hadn't occurred to Rick that Sarah's parents would ever think that he was responsible for even a moment. He wondered if they had even been notified yet.

Rick signed up for a free email account. Then he wrote a quick note and sent it off to Sarah's mother. He wanted to see if she was online. Maybe they could have an email chat.

After a couple of minutes, Sarah's mother wrote back tersely, "What happened?"

Rick relaxed. This was good. He was going to be able to explain everything to Sarah's parents. He started writing.

In another office across the city, a real techie stuck his head in and urgently told the FDDA, "Come quickly, he's made contact. We are watching him on screen."

The FDDA followed the techie back to the tech room, and stood behind the techie watching on the screen as Rick fitfully composed his email to Sarah's mom.

The FDDA spoke to her assistant, "Alert the shock squad. I want all of the information relayed to them as soon as the techs tell us." Turning to the techie, "Have you traced it yet?"

"Partially. He's on a commercial computer at some company called CyberAware Systems. They route all of their server traffic through a central hub, but they have dozens of buildings that they feed. We are working back through the hub to figure out which building."

The FDDA snorted, "You are supposed to know everything." Turning back to her assistant, "Have all of CyberAware's buildings locked down, and everyone searched. I want Rick found. Dead or alive, I want him found."

Rick continued typing his explanatory note to Sarah's mom. It

sounded lame, but what was he supposed to say? The truth was blunt.

“I didn't have anything to do with Sarah's death. There was someone at the protest who wasn't one of the protestors, but he was dressed like me. Then the police airbrushed my face on to his. I'm being framed. You know that I would never hurt Sarah. But they shot her. She wasn't even looking at them and they shot her in the back. Sarah died in my arms. I tried to save her, but there was nothing I could do. I love Sarah. You know that. Don't believe what you see on tv. You must know that I would never do anything to hurt Sarah. I'm going to try and attach a video that I took afterwards. It should help explain everything. Get it to your family lawyer asap.

I love you, Rick”

Rick went off into the cloud and found an encrypted copy of the video he and Aunt Henrietta had hidden, and attached it to the email.

The FDDA was incensed. “I thought you told me that we got all the copies of that video? You said you could count how many times it had been copied. Stop that email and destroy that copy right now!”

Rick reached his mouse over to close the cloud window. Suddenly the encrypted copy in the cloud just disappeared. Rick blinked. Then he looked at the email to make sure that the attachment was still there. Before he could blink, the attachment also disappeared. Then the entire email disappeared. Rick never even got to press the send button.

A large red screen took over the computer monitor. The ASA logo was on the right hand side. To the left of it were large, white, bold letters:

**ASA is Watching YOU!**

**Stay Where You Are**

**Do Not Move**  
**You Are Under Arrest**  
**Fleeing Constitutes a Felony**



At first Rick was paralyzed. Then he remembered that there was no webcam on this computer. The computer was so old, they couldn't actually see him. Quickly, Rick pulled his stuff together, stood up, walked to the door, turned the light out, and then briskly, in a busy business like fashion, walked out the door and over to the stairs. Everyone else took the elevator, so Rick bounded down the stairs two at a time.

The FDDA was fuming mad, “Why did you send the warning

screens? Now he knows that we are coming. And we can't even see him. What kind of computer is he on?"

The techie protested, "But we always send the screens. Most of the time they stay put and wait for us. After all, we can watch them through the computer."

The FDDA didn't even try to calm down, "But not this time. There is evidently no camera and we can't see him. You don't even know which building he is in yet. That is unforgivable. This guy is not going to wait for us. He is probably already running, and you don't even have eyes on him yet."

The FDDA stomped out of the room with her assistant, "I want ALL of those buildings locked down now. Get me over there. Quickly." She began to run towards the elevator.

Rick ran down the stairs. He started jumping each half flight. Landing heavily and then two quick steps, swinging a 180, and another jump. Floor after floor. He reached the lobby. He reached for the door, and looked out through the window. There were Homeland Security shock troops in the lobby. Already. That didn't take long.

Rick turned and bounded down two more floors. The bottom floor opened up to the mailroom, loading dock, and other service areas. Trying hard to catch his breath while looking like he was breathing normally, Rick went through the door at a normal pace. Nobody noticed him. He moved towards the loading dock.

Rick heard a mailman ask, "Are these the mail carts going back to the post office?" Hearing an affirmative answer, Rick stopped and checked the mail carts. He expected them to be empty, but they were actually full. Looking around, Rick could see the mailman heading into the bathroom. Quickly, he pulled some mail sacks to the side, and found some empty ones on the bottom. Rick stacked some sacks on the floor, opened up an empty mail sack, and climbed inside. It was a very tight fit, but Rick managed to pull the top of the bag closed. He was lying on his side at the bottom of the cart, but the top of the bag was pointing towards a small gap in the side of the canvas cart. Rick could see out of the cart a tiny bit.

The mailman came back and started grumping about the mailbags still sitting next to the cart. He swung the heavy bags up and dropped them on top of Rick. Now it was hard to breathe, but he was well hidden. The carts were pushed out and onto the the mail truck. Rick's cart was the last cart onto the truck.

Rick lay quietly and worked hard at catching his breath. He was still breathing heavily. He must be crazy. The things he had been doing the last few days. But anyway, this was definitely better than hanging six inches away from a spinning driveshaft. He kept watch out of the gap in the cart and hoped they left quickly.

Too late. The red emergency lights in the building began to flash. The PA system started blaring.

“This building is being locked down by Homeland Security. Do not move! Stop where you are! Turn and face the wall and put both hands on the wall! Anyone who is moving will be shot on sight. We say again, this is a Homeland Security Safety Lockdown for your safety.”

“Stop where you are, turn and face the wall, and put both hands on the wall. This is your only warning! The officers will not warn you. You will be identified and searched one by one. This is for your safety. You will be shot if you are seen doing anything other than standing facing the wall with your hands against the wall. Do not move. This is your only warning!”

A female voice took over the PA system, “A compliant citizen is a happy citizen. If you have done nothing wrong, then you will obey the officer. Be a compliant citizen and you will be happy.” Then she began to repeat the earlier warnings about not moving and facing the wall.

Rick peered out the top of the mail bag and through the small cut in the canvas mail cart and then out the open back of the mail truck. His heart sank. They hadn't gotten out of there quick enough. The mailman was standing nearby, facing the wall with his hands up against the wall. Everyone else had dropped what they were doing, and were also standing with their hands on the walls.

One young guy was sneaking glances around at everyone. Rick watched him because he was the only thing moving. Then the young guy reached over and grabbed his coffee cup and took a few sips. He started to reach over to put it down when the double swing doors to the loading dock slammed open and the shock troops rushed in. Two shots rang out. The coffee cup smashed into the floor, and the young man fell, bleeding, right on top of the mess of coffee and broken ceramic.

Rick held his breath. One of the shock troops kicked the young man over, saw he was still moving, and shot him in the face. Then he pulled out the man's ID. "He's not the one. Keep looking."

Another officer started laughing, "Stupid idiot. Got himself shot over a cup of coffee. Too funny."

The first officer grinned, "I think I'm the one that had more fun, though. It was like shooting nerds in a coffee cup!"

All of the shock troops roared with laughter. Nobody else even flinched a muscle. Not even Rick, and they couldn't see him. Yet.

The Homeland Security troops searched the loading dock. They walked up onto the mail truck and searched through the mail carts, poking away inside the carts. A rifle barrel poked Rick in the guts, but he kept holding his breath. Then the troops moved off of the truck.

The leader yelled at the mailman, "Is that your truck? I want it out of here. We want to bring the command truck back here and back it up to the dock." Then he yelled at one of the other officers to go with the mailman and see him out through the lockdown lines. The back of the truck closed up, the engine started, and once again, Rick was being driven out of a locked down search area.

Rick finally let himself start breathing again, and tried hard not to fall asleep. He still had to get off the truck somehow without being seen.

The FDDA grudgingly moved out of the driveway to let the mail truck pass her. She didn't like to move out of anyone's way. It was a sign of weakness. She was yelling at the on-site commander, "I

thought you said he was in this building. Why can't you find him? I want Rick found right now! No more excuses!”

The FDDA snapped her fingers at her assistant, “Oh, and give orders to have Sarah's parents arrested. Aiding and abetting a terrorist.”

The assistant looked up, “How's that? What did they do?”

The assistant got a withering look in return, “They gave birth to a terrorist. Isn't that enough?”

## Chapter 18

The mail truck drove around haltingly, making stop after stop. Finally it pulled in somewhere, the mailman climbed out, and locked the doors. Rick cautiously climbed out of the mail cart. He peered through a window. They were parked at a fast food restaurant. It must be lunch time. Rick moved to the side of the truck away from the restaurant and carefully let himself out. He firmly latched the door behind him, then quietly walked away towards the rear of the parking lot. As he passed the restaurant dumpster, Rick shuddered with the memories.

Tired, exhausted, and in shock, Rick didn't know where to go, or what to do. He wandered aimlessly down one street after another, hour after hour. Rick had never been in trouble in his entire life. Not with the law, anyway. Police officers were something you saw at parades, and criminals on tv. Now Rick was the criminal, and the police were hunting him.

Rick wasn't even sure any of that mattered. Sarah's and their baby's deaths welled up in his heart, and were threatening to drown him again. The street felt like it was underwater. His feet felt like they had lead weights on them, holding him on the bottom of the sea. He leaned forward, pushing against the weight. The water rushed in and out of his lungs. Every breath was a struggle.

A voice interrupted Rick's drowning, "Hey, sugar, you okay? You need some company?"

Rick stopped. He found himself face to face with someone he had only ever seen on bad tv, a street prostitute. She was young, not any older than him. He blinked.

She asked him again, "Are you okay? You got any money? This is my last gig for the night. I'll even let you sleep. You got any money?"

Rick reached into his pocket. He still had money. There hadn't been the opportunity to buy anything with the money Aunt Henrietta had left for him. He croaked with a dry voice, "How much?" Why was

his voice so dry? He felt like he was drowning. His voice shouldn't have sounded dry.

She told him, and he nodded. Rick pulled it out of his pocket, and she took his hand, palming the cash. Nobody noticed. It was just another street transaction. She led him by the hand over a block and up a flight of stairs in an old tenement building. Rick followed along blindly.

Inside the single room apartment, she pointed to the bed, and Rick nodded. He walked over, and then fell headlong on the bed and was asleep before he even landed. She stared at him, walked over, and shoved him hard. He didn't respond. She shrugged her shoulders. Oh well. If he wanted something when he woke up, it would be extra now. But still, it was the easiest money she had made all night. It was ten in the morning, but those last minute businessmen hurrying to work were worth staying up for. They had usually showered, and didn't hang around long.

She took a shower and when she came out, Rick was still asleep, so she curled up on the bed next to him and went to bed for the night. They both slept for hours.

The noise of the tv news slowly droned into Rick's mind. It took hours for him to wake up. He didn't know where he was. Rick rolled over to look at the tv and collided with someone. For a brief moment Rick thought it was Sarah, but knew immediately that it wasn't. He pulled away and sat up. He stared at the young woman lounging casually in the bed next to him.

She laughed at him. “You should see the look on your face! You look like a saint who just saw the fires of hell. I'm not evil, you know. I'm just a ho working for a living.”

Rick nodded and looked around. It all came back to him now in a rush. He had been sleeping. That was all. Just sleeping. He sighed with relief. He hadn't cheated on Sarah.

She pointed to the tv, “You can't go anywhere. I can't go to work tonight. All because of you and your friends. The entire city is in lockdown. They are hunting for you house by house. Anyone on the

streets is being shot on sight. It's bad for business. Although I might have to charge you extra. Enough to cover what I lose tonight.”

She smiled and stuck her hand out. Rick pulled out some more money and didn't argue.

“You are so easy. But I won't charge you for dinner. There's mac-n-cheese in the cupboard, but you will have to make it yourself. I'm not your mother or your wife. Oh, and if you want sex, that's going to cost you extra. Tonight is a paid vacation for me.”

Rick sighed again, his head was still foggy, “I'm sorry. I just...I don't know.”

She studied him intently, “You don't look evil. You just look like some tired guy whose wife just left him.”

Rick looked at her, “You don't look evil, either. You look like a young woman who is just hanging out.” He turned his head, “And my wife is dead. She would never have left me.”

Rick got up and used the bathroom, and then busied himself in the kitchen. He made some mac-n-cheese, and a few other things and then served dinner at the table. “Dinner's ready.”

She was startled, “Nobody ever made me dinner before in my own apartment. Men feel like they are being nice to me if they just 'want to talk.’”

Rick grimaced. He still hadn't figured out what to make of the whole situation. He wondered what Sarah would think. Here he was sitting down to dinner with a prostitute in her own apartment.

“What's your name? You never told me.”

“I did. It's Candy.”

Rick shook his head. “Is that what's really on your birth certificate? Your mother named you Candy hoping you would be a prostitute when you grew up?”

She gave him a dirty look and started eating. “I know who you are. You are that terrorist Rick who killed that officer and started that

riot. That whole mess has been bad for business. Why did you kill him?"

Rick shook his head. "That wasn't me. They framed me. I was there, but I never had a gun, and I never shot anyone. My pregnant wife was with me. They shot her. The whole thing was a setup so they could kill the protestors."

She laughed, "That's what they all say. I'm innocent. I was framed. You should fit right in when you get to prison." She peered at him, "Although you really don't seem like an evil person."

Rick replied, "Would an evil person make you dinner?"

She smiled again, "Who knows? But usually they just want to do me. Some of the guys, killing really turns them on. So they come to me, and then they want me to lie there and listen to them boast about how they killed someone. But talking is extra. Not that I listen. I don't get paid enough to actually listen."

"But you, you look like someone whose wife has died. You are incredibly sad. Sometimes men, especially the businessmen, come to me to drown their sorrows. Like doing me is going to make them feel better. But what do I care? It's money."

Rick listened to her. It was surreal. One thing was for certain. He would never mix up 'Candy' and his wife Sarah. They were two entirely different people.

"How much of a refund do I get for listening to you?" He smiled.

She stopped with the fork halfway to her mouth. "Okay, smart-ass. Here's your refund. My real name is Janet." She watched him, waiting for his reaction.

"That's much nicer than Candy. The kind of real name that a husband would love."

She snorted, "There will never be a husband. I've slept with too many husbands. They are all liars and cheats. You can't trust them. I sure wouldn't want my husband out sleeping with some ho."

"Well, I never cheated on my wife."

“And you still won't, even if she is dead.”

That one hurt, and Rick just worked on his food. “Why haven't you turned me in to the police? Won't you get in trouble if they catch me here?”

She shrugged, “Why should I help the police? They aren't even offering a reward. Just demands. They treat me bad. Always harassing me or my johns. Chasing business away. What I do with my body is my choice, but they never leave us girls alone. I'm not helping them. They deserve what they got. I'm glad you stood up to them.”

Rick shook his head again, “I didn't do anything. We just went to a protest.”

She nodded, “Probably. Maybe not. Who cares? I don't. But if I was on your jury, I would vote not guilty.” She smiled. “Maybe I should hire you as my housemaid. Somehow, you made this food taste good.”

“What were you protesting about anyway? Not that anyone needs an excuse to protest the cops. They don't even pay when they take it. Cops are worse than the criminals anymore. But did you really do it?”

Rick thought for a moment, “We were protesting the new Abortion Premium Mandate.”

She looked at him blankly, “What's that?”

Rick sighed, “That's why we were protesting. Nobody knew anything about it. We were trying to get people's attention.”

She raised her eyebrows.

Rick went on, “The Abortion Premium Mandate is a fee added onto the new mandatory healthcare that requires everyone to pay at least a \$1 per month into a special abortion fund to pay for abortion if even only one person on that healthcare plan wants abortion coverage.”

“So you mean that my healthcare will start paying for my abortions?”

Rick nodded, “Yes. Everyone else will have to start paying for your abortions.”

“Good. That will reduce my business expenses. What's wrong with that?”

Rick struggled, “What if I don't want to pay your... 'business expenses'? What if I think that abortion is murder? What if I think that murdering a baby is wrong?”

“Well, I can see you not wanting to pay my business expenses unless you are the one responsible. But I don't see how it's murder. It's not a baby until it's born. It's just a bunch of tissues, a part of my body, that I don't want, or need, or can afford. How could I get business with a baby bouncing on my hip?”

“Sarah was eight months pregnant. She wasn't pregnant with a bunch of tissues. She was pregnant with my baby. Our baby. A real baby. But they killed the baby, too, when they killed her.”

Janet looked away, “I'm sorry about your baby. But I don't see the big deal about the mandate. It's just another tax. What other people choose to do with their bodies is their choice. Not yours. But it's nice that you and your wife were choosing to have the baby. Who knows, maybe you would have named her Candy and she would have grown up to be ho. If you knew that, would you have aborted her?”

Rick felt overwhelmed, “No. Even if she changed her name to Candy and became a ho, I wouldn't have aborted her. But what father ever dreams of that for his daughter?”

“We all have our dreams. But in the end, it's all up to us how we live our lives. Nobody should interfere with what we want to do. I'm a libertarian. It's my choices. I don't make men cheat on their wives by sleeping with me. They choose to do so, and I choose to let them pay me for the privilege. And if I don't want to raise their babies, then that's my choice, too.”

“So you think that everyone should be able to do whatever they want as long as they don't hurt anybody else?”

“Yup. I'm not a killer like you are.”

Rick shook his head again, “I didn't kill anyone. So you think that killing is wrong?”

“Yes, we should all just let each other live and stop telling each other what to do with our lives. I'm a real libertarian that way. The government should just leave everyone alone and let us choose what kind of life we want to live.”

Rick cocked his head to the side, “What about the baby's choice? Does the baby get to choose what kind of life it wants to live? Do you think that these babies would choose to be aborted?”

Janet stared at him, “Sometimes I wonder if my mother should have aborted me. Then I wouldn't be living in this dive letting men take advantage of me for money.”

She shrugged, “Let's go watch tv. I'm tired of talking.”

They leaned against the headboard of the bed and watched tv. But Janet couldn't leave it alone. “Abortion is a woman's only protection against the enslavement of men. It's always been that way. Men just use us, and then enslave us with their babies and make us serve them.”

“At least I'm mostly free. Men just use me, but they can't enslave me, and I won't raise their babies, or make them dinner.”

Rick grinned, “I know. I had to make my own dinner.”

Janet relaxed, “You know, I've had several abortions. I'm not even sure how many. It's not like I've kept track or anything. That would be morbid, writing on the wall how many abortions you've had.”

“But that's my only protection against being enslaved by you men. I can't stop you from using me. You married men, the johns, and the pimps. You take what you want. But at least with abortion I can protect myself from being stuck with your unwanted babies. I know you men don't want them, and I sure don't want them. But what is a girl to do? That is what women are for. Even the big business women have to sleep their way to the top. And your suburban wives

have to sleep their way to their houses and nice cars. When you get right down to it, all women have to sleep for money.”

Rick blinked, “Not all women sleep with their husbands for money. Some of them do it for love. Love of their husbands. And some women want to have babies. My Sarah loved me, and I know it wasn't for the money, because we didn't have any. And Sarah wanted our baby. She really did. She loved that baby. It made her glow, and she was happy. Just because you've never slept with a man you loved, and who loved you, doesn't mean that such a thing doesn't exist.”

Janet studied Rick, “How many women have you slept with?”

Rick looked at her, “Other than you, just Sarah, my wife.”

Janet laughed, “Real funny, all you did was sleep. Are you telling me the truth?”

He admitted, “Yes. Yes, I am.”

Janet looked troubled and wishful. “Anyway.... Sarah was still just your sex toy. Eventually you would have gotten tired of her and start coming to women like me.”

Rick shook his head sadly, “Not all men see women as sex objects. You aren't a sex object. You are a real person. You don't have to live this kind of life.”

“Do you really think that I could find someone like you and settle down to a nice little suburban life, have kids, and drive a mini-van? Are you trying to convert me? Even if I did, I would still be my husband's sex toy. Except I would also be his slave. At least this way I am free.”

“I know that women are nothing more than sex objects. That's what we are born to. But we can be free, or we can be slaves. Your wife, as much as you loved her, was still your sex slave. The wife does the husband to get the house, and I do the same husband to get the cash. What's the dif?”

Rick couldn't think of what else to say. Obviously, Janet had her

mind made up to defend her choices. How could he explain to her that it was abortion and free sex that enslaved women, and not marriage and children? He really didn't know how. Rick had never met anyone like Janet before.

She went on, "Who are you to tell me what I can do with my body?"

Rick looked Janet in the eye, "Who are you to tell a baby he can't live?"

They stared at each other. Then Janet muttered under her breath, "So I'm a murderer, so what? It's probably not the worst thing I've done. I don't want to talk anymore."

Now they stared at the tv, waiting for the lockdown to be lifted.

The news anchors were having a heyday. They continually blasted the pro-lifers and their War on Life. Numerous clips were shown of Homeland Security raids going on all over the city. Doors were being busted down, shots were being fired. Bodies were being dragged out of houses. Occasionally someone would be dragged out in handcuffs, but it appeared that the police were mostly just shooting the pro-life terrorists. The news anchors reported gleefully on the growing body count. Whatever it took to defend the lives and freedoms of normal citizens. Terrorists didn't have a right to life, or a trial, or anything else. Those pro-life terrorists just wanted to tell everyone else what to do.

Janet spoke up, "I'm having a hard time seeing you as one of those evil people. You are a pretty nice guy. A bit naive, but still nice. I just might believe that you didn't kill anyone."

Rick still didn't know what to say. The twisted news and outright lies on the tv were beyond belief. It was so surreal, that he didn't even feel like he was watching a movie. Who could dream up such lies about the pro-lifers, the very people who were trying to protect everyone's life, and call them killers?

How in the world could protesting for the life of unborn babies be relabeled the War on Life? Rick couldn't understand how these people thought, or how they could so deliberately twist everything around. It was beyond anything he had ever been raised to

understand. Rick winced as he watched helicopter footage of another woman, this one carrying a young child, get gunned down as she ran out the back door of her house. The news anchor made some kind of insane accusation that the woman was carrying a gun. It was obvious to anyone watching that she was unarmed. At least Rick thought so.

“Breaking News” flashed on the tv screen. Janet turned the volume up. “We have just been given some new footage by Homeland Security of the pro-life attempted massacre a few days ago of the Homeland Security troops who were out protecting our city. This footage starts with an overhead shot from a drone right before the most wanted man on the planet, Rick, brutally murders the Homeland Security officer by shooting him in the face. There! Watch! There's the shot! Now the Homeland Security officer is down. Now watch! Contrary to rumor, you can see in the crowd numerous flashes as the pro-lifers open fire en masse and try to mow down the Homeland Security officers. As you can see, it is several seconds before the officers are able to respond and defend themselves from this unprovoked attack.”

Rick violently shook his head back and forth, “I didn't do that. I didn't do that. It wasn't me.”

“Now we are going to switch to helmet cams of the officers as they advance under heavy fire and try to stop the terrorists. As you can see, all of the pro-lifers they are passing are armed to the teeth.”

Rick looked at a scene that was eerily familiar, but incredibly different from what he remembered. Rick remembered unarmed men, women, and children, lying dead and dying. Now on the tv, there were guns scattered everywhere, including in the hands of the same men, women, and children.

Then the camera moved forward and Sarah came into view. She was lying on her side with an assault rifle in her hands. Rick groaned in disbelief. Next to Sarah was a man whose face was covered in blood and couldn't be seen. Rick knew it was him. But in his arms was a compact machine gun. Rick was stunned. He muttered, “That's my wife Sarah.”

The news anchor went on. “This is so sad. Look at this pregnant woman. She was obviously lied to. Instead of having to fight and die for that man next to her, who enslaved her and made her a baby breeder, she could have been free if she had just had an abortion. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what Homeland is fighting for. Your right to be free. Your right to have an abortion so that you will never be enslaved. These people must be stopped. They must be.”

The other news anchor chimed in, “It is sad. Here the Homeland officers are, fighting to save this woman and her rights, and she was trying to kill them. They had no choice but to defend themselves.”

Rick rocked back and forth, groaning in agony. It was horrible. Not only was Sarah dead, but now they were lying about her, too.

Janet watched Rick, “You really didn't do it, did you? And Sarah, your wife, you loved her, didn't you?”

Rick just nodded.

Janet looked away. Maybe she had been wrong about Rick.

Rick kept whispering, “It's not true. It's not true.”

The news anchor broke in: “We have a new announcement from Homeland Security. The sweep of the city has been completed, and the lockdown is being lifted. Everyone is being asked to remain home as much as possible, but for those of you who need to go to your night jobs, you can go back to work now.”

The other news anchor chimed in, “We are not sure why the lockdown is being lifted, but apparently there is growing concern within law enforcement that if the night crew is not allowed to go to work, then there won't be any fresh donuts and coffee for them in the morning.”

Janet shrugged and started changing right in front of Rick. He looked away. “It's no skin off of my bones. You've been rather decent to me, but I'm not taking any more risks. Besides, it's time for me to go to work.”

Rick asked her, “But what if they had caught me here with you?”

She finished dressing, “Then I would have told them you were holding me hostage and I had no choice. Now it's time to go.”

Rick slowly pulled himself out the door and stood in the hallway. He was too tired to move quickly. Janet locked the door and turned to look at him. “Hey, I'm sorry about your wife,” she said gently, in a moment of weakness.

Then they walked down the stairs, and at the street, turned in opposite directions. Candy back to her work, and Rick had no idea where he was going.

## Chapter 19

As Rick walked, he slowly started to move faster and more determinedly. He knew he had to get out of the city. Every street he walked down had Homeland Security on it. Nobody noticed him, but sooner or later, that had to change. Rick was tired of running, but the alternative was unthinkable.

Rick came upon a group of kids gathered, waiting on the sidewalk. They were eating and drinking, and one of them offered Rick a piece of pizza. He accepted and stood with the group for a few moments while chowing down. They were talking about some rave party out in the country that they were going to. Rick groaned inwardly. Didn't normal people ever hang out on the sidewalk? Probably not. He took a second piece of pizza. The food was good.

For a few minutes more, Rick sheltered in the lee of the crowd. Homeland was on the street, but they ignored the partying crowd. There wouldn't be any pro-lifers in that crowd. They were looking for one person in particular. As long as he stood around eating pizza and making small talk, Rick was unnoticeable, just another face in the crowd.

Then a party bus pulled up. The kids began jostling to get on board. At first Rick tried to extricate himself, but then realized he would be noticed by the bored Homeland Security officers standing nearby. Rick turned and let himself get pulled up on the bus. He worked his way to the back, and sat in a corner, resting his head against the glass. The bus pulled away.

Rick ignored the full-blown party and watched the city zip past outside. They passed a number of checkpoints, and even though they slowed down, they were waved through all of them. Apparently this wasn't the bus' first trip that night. But a bus full of partying kids didn't pose a security threat.

Rick wondered about all of the checkpoints. He thought that the lockdown had been lifted. Maybe only partially. Maybe they had been trying to draw him out of hiding so they could catch him in their net. If he had stayed on foot, then he would have been caught.

At the last checkpoint going out of the city, the bus was stopped and a Homeland officer boarded the bus and spent a moment looking around. Rick slid down off the seat and onto the floor, and pretended to be asleep. The officer couldn't see him, and some of the others were also napping, saving up their energy for the party ahead. The bus moved on. Rick fell asleep.

Miles down the road, the bus slowed and pulled onto a dirt road leading up to a large metal barn. There were hundreds of kids, pulsing music, lights, and noise. As they filed off the bus, two very large bouncers collected the cover charge on each person. Rick dug into his dwindling supply of money from Aunt Henrietta. Then he was past the bouncers and the only security in the whole place. It was wild, but nobody cared. They weren't gathered to protest abortion or the government, so they were being ignored.

Rick moved towards the building and the noise with everyone else. Inside, his ears hurt, but he worked along the edge of the crowd. Eventually he came to a side door and stepped outside. It was only marginally better. As Rick stood, trying to think of what to do next, the dark woods beckoned him. Without looking back, Rick moved away.

Away from the building, Rick had to slow down, and walk with his arm in front of him. He was night blind and kept walking into trees. He stumbled along. Slowly the party faded behind him and his eyes adjusted. He still had to walk with his arm up.

Then there was a clearing. The trees faded away, and there were a few stars. The ground sloped up and had gravel on it. Rick tripped and fell heavily.

Rick just lay there, looking up at the stars. After a few minutes, he gathered himself together and rolled over, landing on a piece of steel. Slowly it dawned on Rick that he was lying on some railroad tracks. He sat up, his hand on the track. Looking around in the dark, there was no sign of any trains.

Railroad tracks meant a road for his feet. He wouldn't have to walk with his arms up, or worry about walking in circles. But which way should he go? Rick looked up at the stars. They didn't tell him

anything. He had never learned what any of the stars were, or even which one was the North Star. It sounded easy in books and movies, but to Rick's untrained eye, they were just hundreds of points of light.

Rick sighed, got to his feet, took a guess, and starting walking. He walked for hours, feeling his way along the tracks.

Dawn began to break, and Rick didn't even notice until it occurred to him he could see the tracks at his feet. He stopped and looked around. It was probably time to find a place to hide.

Down the tracks a little way, Rick saw a small bridge over a small gully or creek. He picked up his pace and headed off. At the edge of the bridge, Rick got off the tracks and walked down into the gully. There was a small stream. The water was running along and sounded like music to his ears.

He knew he shouldn't, but he was thirsty and needed to drink. Rick drank his fill, and then worked his way along the creek bed looking for a place to rest. He noticed some wild berries. He sighed. He had no idea which ones were poisonous or not. But there was one way to find out. Rick stopped and ate his fill of the berries, and then climbed up out of the creek bed.

Not far from the creek bed was a large jumble of fallen trees jammed together. Probably dumped there by a flash flood. Rick picked his way along, and saw a way in. He burrowed into the jumble of trees, and made a tight nest in the middle. Scraping the ground clean, Rick lay down and was soon fast asleep.

Rick slept for most of three days. Occasionally he sneaked out to get some water and wild berries. The thunder of the trains on the tracks made him feel safe, and rocked him back to sleep.

## Chapter 20

While Rick rested, the FDDA did not. Unknown to Rick, it was his exhausted break in the tree pile that saved him. The FDDA kept expanding the grid search. The search quickly caught up to Rick and moved past him. Helicopters, airplanes, troops, and dogs with all of the latest tracking equipment looked for him. Buried in the mass of rotting vegetation, Rick was invisible to the thermal scanners. Having walked up the creek bed, there was no scent for the dogs. By walking down the railroad tracks, Rick had left no visible tracks.

Rick had just disappeared, and the FDDA was slowly going ballistic. How could a single person escape from the government when the government knew everything, and nobody could do anything without the government knowing? It didn't make sense.

The FDDA became obsessed with Rick. If she couldn't find him, then it was going to hurt her career. She suggested, and it was accepted, that she head up a nation-wide task force to hunt down the pro-life terrorists, with Rick now listed as the Number One enemy of the state.

Others didn't so easily escape from the government's net. Records were checked. Anyone who had ever claimed a tax-free donation to a pro-life charity or pregnancy center was raided and arrested. All of the pro-life charities and pregnancy centers were raided and shut down. Computerized voting records were checked, and anyone who had ever voted for a pro-life candidate was arrested. The candidates themselves were arrested.

Pro-lifers who had been elected were arrested at their offices, along with their entire staffs, accused of treason and subversion, and thrown into National Safety Act detention camps outside of the judicial system.

The FDDA was determined to root out and destroy this cancer inside of the government and country. These pro-life terrorists had to be stopped. Only when they were all dead or in detention camps would the country be safe.

Every possible tracking tool and piece of data mining available was

used to hunt down the pro-lifers. If you were somehow associated with a pro-lifer, it was assumed that you were guilty. There were no trials, no defense attorneys, and no way out.

Interrogations had only one focus, finding the location of more pro-lifers. Since all of the interrogations were conducted under the National Safety Act, the Homeland Security officers used their imaginations to come up with ways to force the information out of the hated pro-lifers. Those who were not pro-lifers, but caught up in the net because a family member, co-worker, or friend was pro-life, did not escape punishment and torture either. Their protestations of innocence fell on deaf ears. People began making up names just to make the torture stop. The vicious cycle did not end. The detention camps filled up.

Still, the FDDA was not satisfied. She still did not have Rick. The more she boiled over at her failure, the more she thought of other ways to hunt down the pro-lifers. Then an idea occurred to her. A litmus test. A litmus test that could be applied to every single person in the country.

## Chapter 21

Rick woke up. He was finally feeling rested. The weariness had worked its way out of his bones. His nightmares over Sarah had subsided somewhat.

Rick moved out into the growing dusk. He had to hunt for awhile to find more berries. The food was almost gone. It was time to move on. Rick sighed and checked the direction of the setting sun. He at least knew which way the sun set. He would just have to follow the railroad tracks.

At the bridge, Rick climbed the embankment. As the last moments of dusk disappeared, Rick looked back in the direction of the wood pile. He felt like he was leaving home. It had felt safe there for a few days. With a wry smile, Rick turned and started walking.

Rick walked at a sharp pace, rested, alert, and finally ready. Once he had to jump down the embankment and hide as a train thundered past. But they were easy to hear coming. The tracks would start singing before the train could even be heard. There was plenty of time to get out of sight.

Towards morning, Rick saw a farmhouse up ahead with all of the lights on, and the tv blaring. He stepped off the tracks and quietly made his way up to the farmhouse. The window was open, and the smell of fresh bacon and eggs wafted out the open window. It smelled good. There was an old woman inside cooking, and an old man sitting in a recliner watching the news on tv. Rick moved so that he could see the tv, but stay out of sight.

A headline was across the bottom of the screen, “The War on Life.”

“We bring you the latest updates on the War on Life and our nation's war to stop the pro-life terrorists from destroying the very fabric of our society and preventing individual choice and freedom. The defacto head of this war has been the FDDA of the district where this all started. This morning we are interviewing her live, and she will be sharing some new information with us.”

“Hello, Miss FDDA, how are you doing today?”

“I prefer Miz. Please call me Miz. I'm not married. I don't have any of those horrid, parasitic children, and I don't plan on ever getting married. My identity has nothing to do with a man.”

“Well these days, your identity seems to be very tied up in your hunt for Rick, the Number One enemy of the state. How do you feel about your future being decided by this young man?”

The FDDA grimaced, “As you mentioned, Rick is the Number One enemy of the state, and the government will hunt him down and find him. Rick is not deciding my future. I am deciding his future. There is no future for anyone who will deny a woman her natural rights to abortion. I promise you that I will find Rick, and put an end to his sick brand of control freak terrorism.”

The FDDA went on, “Today, I have for you a video that we have decided to release showing this despicable terrorist gloating after the massacre of the Homeland Security troops that shows just how utterly depraved these people are.”

The FDDA turned towards the tv screen behind her and the anchor. A video started to play. Rick was shocked. It was his video. The one he took while hiding in the cabinet of the abortion clinic.

The FDDA commented, “This video was taken by one of our brave undercover officers by hiding under the kitchen cabinet of a pregnancy center. The terrorist and his friends are gloating and cheering their terrorist act, and then planning more acts. There is no discernible audio because it was overwhelmed by the noise of a refrigerator next to it, but we are still working on cleaning up the audio.”

Rick shook with shock. He stuck his fist in his mouth to keep from crying out. The face in the hoodie was his. They had airbrushed his face into the video. It must have taken a lot of work, but there he, Rick, was, boasting and partying. If Rick hadn't taken the video himself, he would have believed it, too.

The video ended before the Homeland Security officer walked into the room. The FDDA turned and faced the camera, “I can promise this nation and you, Rick, that I will find you. I will hunt you to the

ends of the earth, and I will make sure that you pay for what you have done. I will prosecute you myself.”

Rick reeled away from the window. He was finally beginning to understand that this had not been a big misunderstanding. These people were genuinely evil. They would do whatever they had to do, and say whatever they had to say, to protect what they wanted, the right to slaughter babies. All of the lies, everything they had done and said, was deliberate. They were deliberately accusing the pro-lifers of their crimes.

Rick stumbled away and made it back to the railroad tracks. Then he started running. He had to get away. It was all too much. It was all too much. He ran hard for a couple of miles, then started to slow down. The dawn began breaking, and Rick looked for a place to hide. He had to start being more careful. These people, that FDDA, were really serious. Far more serious than he had thought. The shock of events had protected him the first few days. Now reality was setting in.

Rick found another brush pile and crawled inside, hiding his tracks behind him. He lay on the ground thinking for a long time before drifting off to sleep.

Whatever they said on tv, he, at least, knew the truth. They had protested against being forced to pay for abortions. They had protested against death, murder, and terrorism against babies. He and the pro-lifers would never murder anyone, and how could you be pro-life and a terrorist at the same time? It didn't make any sense. Whatever the FDDA said about him, he at least knew the truth, he loved life. Everyone's life. Everyone deserved the chance to live. Even the FDDA, as evil as she was.

In his dreams, Rick kept trying to take Sarah's hand and drag her down the tracks with him, but he couldn't hold on. Sarah kept slipping away.

## Chapter 22

Rick walked for days without seeing anyone. Occasionally he dodged trains. He scrounged food a bit here and a bit there. Some of it wild, some of it from the edge of farmer's fields. Here on the tracks, out of touch with everyone and everything, the world didn't seem like such a bad place. The sun still came up everyday, the rain still fell, the stars still came out at night. The sun and the moon shone down on everyone, the good and the evil alike.

Evil stalked the countryside. Rick knew it was there. He knew that sooner or later it would catch up to him. But he just kept moving. Rain or shine, he kept walking. One foot in front of the other. When it was raining hard during the day, Rick would also walk during the day. The rain would hide him from anyone. It kept the farmers inside, and people from looking out the windows of their cars. The tracks wound through the countryside, and aside from the occasional train, or a distant car, there were no signs of any people at all.

Rick began to wonder if he was the last person alive in the world. After three days of non-stop rain, Rick was cold, wet, and miserable. He couldn't feel his feet or hands anymore. Another dawn began to break.

Rick climbed a small hill and looked ahead. He was right on the edge of a small town. There wouldn't be enough time to get past it before the sun was fully up. But he couldn't stay in this rain any longer. There was no shelter behind him, only open fields. Off to the side was a barn. Rick knew he shouldn't, but the barn beckoned, and Rick slogged his way through the mud over to the barn.

Inside it was full of hay, so Rick found a back corner, burrowed his way into the hay, and fell asleep.

Hours later, Rick jumped as the tines of a pitchfork poked him. The pitchfork kept poking him until he crawled out. A farmer stood there silently, watching him. Rick just stood and waited.

Finally the farmer nodded, and gestured for Rick to follow him. Rick followed him back to the farmhouse. The farmer gestured for him to sit at the kitchen table, and then disappeared. Then the

farmer's wife walked into the room, stood with her hands on her hips, and then turned and went out. They could be heard talking in the other room.

The front door banged as the farmer left, but his wife came back into the kitchen and cooked up a fresh meal for Rick. Rick fell upon the food. He hadn't had any cooked food for weeks now. It tasted so good. The farmer's wife kept filling his plate up until Rick was too full to eat anymore. He looked at her.

“I suppose the farmer has gone to get the police?”

“Why would he do that? You are Rick, that pro-lifer that caused all of these problems. My husband has gone to get the town council so we can find out why you have done what you have done. Then we will decide what to do with you.”

Rick nodded. It was better and worse than he thought. But they were going to hear his side of the story first. That was good.

After awhile, some other farmers and townsfolk began to file into the room. They silently gathered around Rick and studied him. At last the mayor arrived.

“Hi, I'm the mayor of our little town here, and you have some explaining to do. The entire country has been in an uproar for weeks because of some things you did. We want to know why you did them.”

Rick responded, “Can I start from the beginning?”

The mayor nodded, “Yes please. We are waiting.”

It was obvious that they were trying not to pre-judge him, but they clearly were not happy to see him there. His presence brought many problems. Rick looked around. He could tell by their faces that they were a simple, quiet, religious folk. But they wouldn't be fools either. Rick sighed. He just wanted to sleep, but they had just gotten up. It was going to be a long day.

“First, I want to categorically state that I did none of those things that they are talking about on the tv. I didn't do any of them. And

neither did my wife Sarah.”

“My wife Sarah was eight months pregnant. If she hadn't died, we would have a little baby now.”

Rick paused thinking about Sarah.

“Go on.”

“Well, we got our first bill for our new healthcare. The healthcare that we had applied for on the exchange. We wanted the healthcare so that Sarah could get anything she needed for the baby. Well... Sarah, she reads all of the fine print on the bills. She says that the phone companies are always trying to sneak things in and overcharge us. So Sarah read all of the fine print on the health insurance bill.”

“There on the bill was a line item. It was just a small item. A whole dollar for each of us, for one month. It was labeled Abortion Premium Mandate.”

“Sarah was very upset. We are pro-lifers. We would never pay for abortions, and we don't need abortion coverage. So Sarah called to have that canceled off of our bill, and the money refunded. She wasn't successful. Even though we carefully picked a health insurance policy that didn't include abortion coverage, it turns out that abortion coverage is optional on all of the policies. We declined the option. What we didn't know, was that the new healthcare law says that if even one person in an insurance group elects the abortion coverage, then everyone, absolutely everyone in the group, is then charged the Abortion Premium Mandate in order to pay for that person's optional abortion coverage.”

“They told Sarah it didn't matter if you were male or female, young or old, everyone would have to pay the Abortion Premium Mandate fee. Six year olds, 94 year old men, even our little baby after it was born. There was no way the fee could be removed or refunded. It was a federal mandate.”

“Of course Sarah was very upset about this. I was, too, but since I had to work, Sarah is the one that did something about it. She called everyone she knew, emailed them, posted on blogs, everything.

Sarah helped organized a peaceful protest so that we could let everyone know that we were not going to pay for abortions.”

“Everyone was so busy fighting the employer mandate that we completely missed the APM. It doesn't matter if your employer is exempt. ALL insurance company plans offer abortion coverage as optional, even to the employees of exempt organizations. The organization doesn't have to pay for the optional coverage if you choose it, but the individuals do. If, in each insurance plan group, just one person, one young college coed, does select the optional abortion coverage, then everyone on that plan, all tens of thousands of them, regardless of whether or not their employer is exempt, then they are required, mandated, to pay the Abortion Premium Mandate or be in violation of the law.”

“And that is why the Abortion Premium Mandate was on our insurance bill. That is why Sarah helped organize a PEACEFUL protest so that we wouldn't be mandated to pay for abortions.”

Rick stopped and stared at the wall. He didn't want to talk about what happened next.

“Go on,” the mayor prompted.

Rick drew a breath, “Sarah was eight months pregnant, and it became too much for her. We were starting to leave when there was a gunshot. I was ahead of Sarah, and I turned back for her. Then there was more shooting. Sarah was shot in the back and I caught her. We fell down. I was trying to help her when an officer walked up and shot Sarah point blank. Then he shot me. Except that he missed, and the bullet hit the concrete next to my head. The concussion knocked me out. He thought I was dead.”

Rick shuddered, “I wasn't dead, but Sarah was. As far as I know, none of the gunshots were fired by any of the pro-life protestors. But Homeland Security did a lot of shooting. They were shooting everyone. Men, women, children. I've never seen anything like it. Not even in a movie.”

The mayor interrupted, “Who fired the first shot?”

“I didn't see it happen. But there was an abortion infiltrator that

went up to the riot line and shot an officer to start the whole thing. I don't know how he survived, but after I regained consciousness, I saw him sneaking off, so I followed him.”

Rick then told the entire story of following the hoodie back to the abortion clinic, the video he shot, and everything that happened after that. A couple of hours later, they were all still sitting there listening to him.

“And here I am today. I have no evidence. All of my evidence has been stolen and corrupted. I can only tell you what I know to be the truth.”

One of the farmers cleared his throat, “What you say is very different from what they are telling us on tv. But then again, the government has been lying to us for years about everything. It would be hard to believe that they would suddenly start telling the truth. Especially when their version doesn't make any logical sense.”

The mayor nodded, “You look very tired. I think you should go upstairs and sleep while we talk about things.”

The farmer's wife led Rick upstairs and showed him where everything was, and gave him some clean, dry clothes to put on. “Don't worry. We are a God fearing people, and we will find the right thing to do. I'm sorry about your wife and baby.”

Rick nodded. He was all talked out. After changing his clothes, he fell into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 23

Rick woke up and didn't know where he was. It had been so long since he had been in a bed. The sheets were clean. He was clean. He stirred and went to the bathroom.

When he came out, the farmer was waiting for him.

Downstairs, dinner was being served, and he was invited to join in. Everyone was friendly but solemn. There were heavy things in the air.

After dinner, the mayor started talking, “Well, you've been out of touch, so we will bring you up to date on a few things. All of the videos you have talked about being on the news are still being played. They talk about you by name every day. That FDDA is constantly on the tv. Everything just seems to get worse. Let me show you a video from yesterday.”

The farmer's wife put a video on and everyone watched silently. The news anchor narrated excitedly, “We are in the local news helicopter over an abortion clinic. Some pro-life terrorists have taken over the clinic and are holding everyone inside hostage. They have been shooting at Homeland Security, which has been trying to rescue the hostages. Watch carefully, as you will see the final battle about to start.”

“Look there, Homeland is firing CS gas into the abortion clinic. There's an explosion. Now watch as the pro-life terrorists come running out of the clinic. They are armed to the teeth. Men, women, and children. We think they are trying to escape the fire they started. Now they are firing on the Homeland Security officers. Unfortunately, Homeland has to fire back so they can defend themselves.”

Rick watched as men, women, and children were gunned down and lay in the street dying. Even obviously pregnant women were gunned down. Then Homeland stormed the building. “Sadly, Homeland was not able to rescue any of the hostages as the pro-life terrorists had executed them before fleeing the building.”

The mayor clicked the video off. Everyone was grim. Rick looked around. One woman finally spoke up. “My sister worked at that ‘clinic’. It wasn’t a clinic. It was a pregnancy center. It’s about 200 miles from here. I was in the center ten minutes before the siege started. It didn’t last very long. I walked down the street to get lunch. When I came back, they had surrounded the building. I could only stand there and watch helplessly.”

She paused and started crying. Nobody said anything. Eventually she went on.

“The sign you see on the video was changed. It was not an abortion clinic. There were no hostages. They just fired that CS gas right into the building without warning. As near as we can figure, someone must have been cooking in the kitchen. The kitchen had natural gas, so an open flame would have ignited the CS gas.”

She shuddered, “Then everyone came running out, trying to escape the fire. They didn’t know what was going on. I stood there and watched them gun down those unarmed women and children. There were no guns at all, except for Homeland’s. I don’t know how they got them on the video. But they were unarmed. They were peaceful. I watched my own sister killed.”

She broke down crying again. The mayor nodded, “That is why we believe your story.”

Rick was shocked. He didn’t think he could be any more shocked than he had been by his own events. But what had happened to him had been a confluence of events. Homeland hadn’t pre-planned on killing Sarah and the rest of the protestors. It had just happened, and then they had taken advantage of the situation. But this new event showed that now they were pre-planning these events. It seemed like all they wanted to do was kill all of the pro-lifers.

Another farmer spoke up, “Countrywide martial law has been declared. The country is in a state of war, and they say on tv that martial law will not be lifted until you have been hunted down and arrested. It’s even been named ‘The War on Life.’”

Somebody snorted at that. “I fought in the war. This isn’t war. This

is genocide.”

Another voice spoke up, “There are mass arrests everywhere, and rumors of wholesale executions like the one we just showed you. But they are only rumors. The only news available is on approved news channels, and all websites on the internet now have to have a government license. All other websites have been shut down. All we have left is the good old grapevine.”

“We've even heard that all women who don't use birth control are assumed to be pro-life.”

The farmer's wife spoke up, “It's time for the nightly broadcast. We should watch and see what they have planned for us next.”

## Chapter 24

The tv clicked on, and everyone silently suffered through commercials offering a number of different over-the-counter abortion drugs.

Finally the news anchor came on, “Tonight we are honored to host, once again, the FDDA. Excuse me, I guess I can't call you the FDDA anymore, can I?”

“No, you can't. As of this morning, I have been promoted to the position of Federal Attorney.”

“So you are no longer a Federal Deputy District Attorney, but you are now our nation's number one lawyer.”

“That's correct. All of the Deputy District Attorneys now work for me.”

“And that is the way it should be. Our number one attorney to catch and prosecute our number one enemy of the state.”

“Yes, and with the new powers that have been granted to me, I will hunt down, arrest, and prosecute Rick the pro-lifer, enemy number one. But tonight, I have something even more important to talk about.”

“I've been wanting to do this for some time, but it was only with my appointment to the position of Federal Attorney this morning that I am able to do so. We have re-examined the laws, and the loopholes have been closed.”

She went on, “The Abortion Premium Mandate is no longer optional because all health insurance policies are now required to cover abortion. It is a mandate on all citizens that have health insurance coverage.”

The anchor interrupted, “Which would be everyone, since everyone is mandated to have health insurance. But isn't this changing the rules just a little bit? Wasn't there supposed to be an exception for those with 'moral objections'?”

The new Federal Attorney looked aghast, “We haven't changed any rules, just clarified them. The perception that there was a 'moral objection exemption' was a lie perpetrated by the pro-lifers who didn't want to fulfill their moral, civic, and legal duty to support abortion. This rule clarification makes it clear that the mandate applies to everyone. Period.”

“This is an individual mandate, so it doesn't apply to religious organizations that claim exemptions. Although, as the new Federal Attorney, I can promise you that we will be reviewing the tax-exempt status of all organizations, religious or not, and pulling the tax-exempt status of any organization that opposes the right of a woman to choose. Such discriminatory intolerance will not be tolerated under my enforcement of the law.”

“Back to the mandate. We will be instituting a system where everyone will have a national health identity card that shows they currently carry APM coverage. Anyone not carrying APM coverage will be subjected to arrest and prosecution.”

The new anchor broke in again, “Aren't you worried that someone will challenge this in the Supreme Court?”

“Not at all. All of the judges now sitting on the Supreme Court staunchly defend a woman's right to abortion. The last four judges who opposed this fundamental right to abortion were arrested last week for ties to pro-life terrorists, and will be held indefinitely in a federal detention camp. I have drawn up a list of recommended replacements. Replacements who all fervently believe that women's rights must be protected. I will be presenting that list in person to the President tomorrow.”

The news anchor couldn't help herself and gushed, “That is wonderful news, indeed. I take it we can look forward to seeing you on our show again tomorrow after you talk to the President?”

“Yes, you can. I will do my best to keep you updated. Now to make one last update on the new mandate rules, starting tomorrow, we will begin the process of verifying that everyone pays the Abortion Premium Mandate.”

The news anchor continued gushing, “That was our nation's new Federal Attorney, and she had nothing but good new for us.”

The farmer's wife reached over and shut the tv off.

Everyone was silent for awhile. The mayor announced, “Well, I'm officially adjourning this meeting. We all have work to do. We will gather again tomorrow night to discuss what we should do. Rick, you stay here and stay inside and get some sleep. Tomorrow will be another long day.”

For the second time, Rick went to sleep in a real bed, on clean sheets

## Chapter 25

The next morning Rick woke up in the bed and lay there unmoving for a long time. The sheets felt weird. He could smell breakfast being cooked downstairs. But all he could think about was Sarah. Memories of their bed, and Sarah cooking him breakfast. It was all so real, and yet all so very, very far away. With a sigh, Rick wiped his hand over his face and sat up. This, however, was reality, and it was time to get up.

Rick sat at the breakfast table with the silent farmer as his wife bustled around. Then she joined them, and for the first time, the farmer spoke to say grace. Hungrily, they wolfed the food down.

The farmer's wife told Rick, "We are going to take you down to the town hall in a bit." Rick nodded without speaking. He had gone so long without talking to anyone that the quiet habits of these people were quickly rubbing off on him.

In town, they took Rick to the small town hall. Several other people were also gathered there. Rick looked around and noticed that there were not very many people. Nor did he see any young people. Absolutely no children, and no one his age either. It was curious. "Where are all the children?"

"Don't worry, it will all be explained."

The town mayor addressed everyone, "We have some decisions to make today. I think we've already made them, but we still have to agree that this is the correct course of action. I think that after the FDDA's announcement yesterday, that we have run out of time."

He turned and looked at Rick, "You may have noticed that all of the young people and children are gone. We smuggled them out of the country. We are going to take a formal vote in a minute, but I do believe that it will be the consensus of those of us who are remaining to smuggle you out the same way. Except I think this time that all of us should go with you. There is no longer anything left for us in this country. What is the point of farming if the ground is soaked in the blood of martyrs by tyrants?"

Everyone's heads were nodding. Obviously this was not a new topic of conversation. Rick was surprised. The best he had hoped for was that they would not turn him in, but let him go at nighttime with a full meal. He looked around and met the eyes of these elders sitting quietly. It was real. They were really going to help him. He could see it in their eyes. Rick was stunned.

The mayor went on talking and took a formal vote. First to smuggle Rick out, and then for everyone to leave with him. The vote was unanimous. Everyone was going.

The walkie-talkie on the table crackled, "Heads up. There's a convoy coming in. It's about eight miles outside of town." Instantly the looks on everyone's faces turned from hope to resignation.

The mayor grabbed Rick's arm, "Quick, up the tree. It's the only place they won't search. Nobody ever looks up, and nobody ever looks inside a tree." Half a dozen men followed him, and they moved quickly over to the large overhanging tree in the middle of the town square. For a bunch of old men, they had no trouble lifting Rick up so that he could grab the first branch way up in the air. The trunk was over four feet around, and without a ladder, no one could ever climb to the first branch. "Keep climbing. Another twenty feet up there is a large animal hollow in the tree. You can fit into it. Just keep silent."

As Rick climbed, the men scattered below him. Rick reached the hollow, and turning around, he carefully fitted himself inside it. It wasn't uncomfortable, but it sure wasn't that bed up at the farmhouse. He moved the old bird's nest to the side so he wasn't sitting on it.

Within moments, a convoy of Homeland Security trucks and armored cars sped into the town square. The head of the convoy sped through town to block off the far side. Shock troops poured out and corralled all of the men still outside and then started searching house to house.

Some kind of commander stood on top of an armored car and used a very loud set of PA speakers, "This is Homeland Security. Everyone is ordered to come outside with their hands up. You will gather immediately in front of me. This is for your own safety. We are

searching for terrorists. Everyone come out with your hands up. Immediately.”

It didn't take long for the shock troops to find the few elderly people who had stayed behind. They kept searching building to building and house to house. There were some hurried discussions on the radio that Rick couldn't quite hear. He didn't move and just watched the townsfolk gathered in a rough line down below him. They stood silently.

The commander climbed down off of the armored car and picked up a portable bullhorn. “Where is everyone else? Where are your children? Where are your young people?” He looked perturbed, and angry. Rick did not have a good feeling about this.

“Who is in charge here?” The mayor stepped forward, but didn't say anything. The commander marched over and stuck his face in the mayor's face, trying to intimidate him. “I asked you a question, and you will give me an answer.” The mayor didn't say anything.

“What is wrong with you people? Is this some kind of monastery or convent and you've all taken a vow of silence? I asked you a question, and you will answer me.”

Only silence filled the air. The commander began to get really angry. He wasn't used to being disobeyed. He wasn't used to people who didn't cower in fear in front of him.

Struggling with his anger, he pulled out his sidearm and put the barrel on the forehead of the mayor. “You will answer me, and you will answer me right now. Where is everyone else? Where are your children?”

Silence.

A thunderous bang split the air. The mayor dropped.

The commander walked down to the next person and put his gun to the woman's forehead. Now he was spitting in his anger, “You will answer me, old woman. Tell me what I want to know. Where are you hiding your children? Where are you hiding the terrorists? Are the children with the terrorists?”

Silence.

Another thunderous bang split the air. The old woman dropped.

The commander moved on to the next person. “You must be helping them. Otherwise why are you silent? TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW! Where are you hiding everyone?”

A trooper came up to the commander and Rick could hear him tell the commander that they had searched the entire town, and except for the usual hidden food caches under floors, they had found nothing. The thermal scans were all blank, and the dogs didn't pick up any scents. “They must all be long gone. At least by a couple of weeks.”

Rick could see the commander's frustration. The commander raised the sidearm to another elder's forehead. Rick couldn't take anymore. He put his arms up and started to pull himself out of the hollow in order to surrender. As he did, Rick looked down, and the farmer's wife looked directly at him. She shook her head negatively. Then she mouthed, “Don't you dare. Stay put. Don't throw away what we are sacrificing for.”

Rick settled back into the hollow, feeling overwhelming guilt that these people would give their lives to save him. The commander was still yelling.

Then in a clear, strong voice, the farmer's wife began to sing “Amazing Grace.” All of the rest of the town joined in. Rick had never heard anything so beautiful, but haunting in his life.

The commander kept screaming, but the town elders ignored him. The singing grew stronger.

The commander started shooting. The singing continued. His gun clicked empty. Pointing at the elders he started yelling, “Kill them! Kill them!” His men opened up.

Quickly, the singing was stopped. Again, there was silence. All of the troopers just stood there and stared. Even these hardened men had been affected by what had just happened. Rick sat with his hand jammed into his mouth to keep from crying out.

Then the commander started barking out orders. An unusual truck pulled up next to the dead bodies. There was a large propane tank on the front, and some kind of furnace on the back. The crew climbed down and unfolded a conveyer belt that went up to the rear of the furnace.

Rick could feel the heat of the furnace even up in the tree. They had really cranked it up high. He watched as troopers dragged bodies over and threw them on the bottom of the conveyer belt. The conveyer belt moved the bodies up and then dumped them into the furnace. Rick suddenly realized that he was looking at a mobile gas crematorium. Now he really felt sick.

The smell of the burning bodies hung over the entire town. The shock troops searched the town for valuables, and stuffed what they wanted into backpacks. The commander paced impatiently. The cremation crew pulled out a portable incinerator/flame thrower and walked around and incinerated all of the remains and blood on the ground. After all, there was absolutely no point in allowing any diseases to spread, and these miserable vermin they were cleaning up town to town had to be disease laden.

Finally the commander picked up the bullhorn, "Let's go. We are behind schedule. We've got more towns we have to search today." He put the bullhorn down, but Rick heard him say to his sergeant, "I can't believe how many of these idiotic small towns there are. And they are all full of idiots. I'll be glad when this war is over. I can't wait to get back to the city."

The troops climbed into their trucks. The crew folded up the conveyer belt. Then the convoy drove off with the mobile incinerator still working and smoking.

Shaken and shaking, Rick sat in the tree for hours. Later in the afternoon, a woodpecker alighted on the branch in front of Rick and stared at him. Rick whispered, "Is this your home? Did I disturb you? I'm sorry."

Slowly and carefully, Rick climbed out of the hollow and moved the nest back to where it had been. The woodpecker just watched him. Then stiffly, Rick tried to climb down the tree. It didn't work and he

had to slide down the bark, which chewed him up and hurt.

On the ground there was almost no sign of the horror that had unfolded that day in front of his eyes, except for several burned patches on the grass and asphalt. The town was still standing, but eerily quiet. Empty. Dead.

The mayor had been correct. The ground was soaked in the blood of martyrs.

## Chapter 26

Stiffly, Rick walked over to the hardware store. The door was hanging open. Things were scattered on the floor, but most of it hadn't been touched. Except for the gun cases which had been broken open and emptied out. But Rick wasn't looking for a gun.

He found a rack of backpacks in the rear. Rick picked one out and then hesitated. It almost felt like stealing, but these people had sacrificed their lives to protect him. He was sure that they would want him to take what supplies he would need. With a sigh, he picked up the backpack and moved on around the store, looking for things he could use. A small hatchet, a good knife, string, hooks, a can opener, etc.

Then Rick walked over to the small grocery store. He filled the rest of the pack with canned food. The pack was heavy, but that would change quickly as he ate the food.

Slowly he wandered the town, but found little of any use. At the bicycle shop he looked at the bicycles for awhile. Maybe even a tricycle with it's large basket. But Rick wanted to stick to the railroad tracks, and a bicycle sure wasn't going to travel on the rough cross timbers very well. He moved on.

In an empty house, he stood in the living room and looked at the photos of entire generations of a family on the wall. The elders were right. Leaving the country was the only option. Now Rick knew where he was headed. He would leave the country, too, and go find the children of this town and tell them what had happened. They deserved to know that their grandparents had been heroes and heroines who had sacrificed their lives for all of them. That they had been right to flee. Rick took a small bible off the coffee table in front of the couch and put it in his pack.

Rick vowed to himself that he would not ask or accept help from anyone else. Helping him just seemed to get people killed. That wasn't fair. Not to them. The logical part of Rick tried to tell him that what happened today would have happened anyway, even if he had never stopped in this town. His heart didn't want to hear it,

though. Ultimately, all of this had happened because he had worn a hoodie to a protest. Logical Rick knew that wasn't true. Evil was evil, and Rick was just an excuse for what they were doing. Still, it hurt. But no matter what, he was done with asking people for help.

As dusk fell, Rick walked to the edge of town and started back down the familiar train tracks.

## Chapter 27

More days passed. Rick kept his pace up. The backpack grew lighter. Without having to stop to forage for food, Rick made relatively good time. For a man on foot walking train tracks, that is. Rick dodged all signs of civilization. Sometimes he had to circle around a town and then back to the railroad tracks. Other times he had to wait at crossings for all the cars to disappear. Still he moved forward.

Now Rick was crossing the mountains. The scenery was beautiful, but the track grade was killer. His body was growing leaner, stronger, and tougher. Nothing at all like his city body, used to sitting in front of computers. Night after night. Moonlight or darkness. Clear or rain. Just one foot in front of the other.

In the moonlight one night, moving at a fast pace, Rick was startled by the appearance of armed men right in front of him. He hadn't been paying enough attention. He had walked right into an ambush.

“Drop your weapons and don't move!”

Rick replied, “I'm unarmed.” He didn't think of the knife as a weapon. It was just a working knife.

Rough hands took the pack off his back. Other hands pulled his arms around and cable-tied his hands behind his back. He could hear them rummaging through his pack, but there was nothing to find.

All this way, and now to be captured in an ambush. He wondered how long Homeland Security had been waiting by these railroad tracks to catch him. Or anyone that had just been wandering by. Rick resigned himself to his fate.

The rough hands pulled him off the tracks, and pushed him through the woods. After awhile, it occurred to Rick that these probably weren't Homeland Security troops. They stayed quiet and moved furtively. Rick was pushed and nudged along the trail. After an hour, they finally moved into a clearing. Then Rick was pushed into a building of some kind. There were no lights anywhere. These

couldn't possibly be government troops.

The door closed behind Rick. Then the flair of an oil lamp blinded Rick. There were men standing around the room watching him silently.

“We want to know who you are and where you are going.”

Rick was silent. There was nothing to gain by telling them who he was.

Then one of the men walked forward, pulled out a paper, and studied it by the oil lamp. He moved close to Rick and looked him directly in the face, “I don't believe it! This is Rick, the one who started it all. Cut him loose. He's not only one of us, he's a hero!”

The room buzzed with excitement. Rough hands cut him loose, a chair was shoved behind him, a drink was placed in his hand.

The buzzing continued as everyone begged him to tell them all kinds of things. Rick cleared his throat. Everyone fell silent waiting to hear what he had to say. “May I please use the bathroom?” After a moment of silence, everyone started laughing.

They let Rick use the bathroom and brought him a hot meal. Now it was Rick's turn to talk. Rick decided to start at the beginning. There was no point hiding who he really was, so he just told them everything that had happened. All the way from the protest to walking down the tracks. Rick didn't tell them about the town that had sacrificed their lives for him. That was a special memory to save for their children alone.

The men listened intently to every word he said, interrupting only to ask a few questions here and there.

After Rick told them he thought he had been captured by Homeland Security, instead of them, everyone laughed, but one young man asked earnestly, “Where was your gun? Why didn't you fight back if you thought we were Homeland Security?”

Another chimed in, “You didn't have any trouble shooting that Homeland murderer at the protest, so why aren't you fighting now?”

Rick protested, "I've never shot anyone. I've never killed anyone or hurt anyone. That wasn't me. They doctored the video to make it look like me."

A different man spoke up, "But we've watched that video hundreds of times. Standing here looking at you in person, I can swear that the man on the video and you are the same person. You are a hero to us. You started this entire war against the abortionist murderers, and we are going to finish it. Without your brave actions that day, and your continued determination to avoid capture, we wouldn't have anyone to look up to. You are a hero."

There was a loud rumble of assent, and they all chimed in, one over the other. "We want you to join us and lead our fight. We will abolish abortion in this country, and you have been chosen as God's hand of wrath to lead the way."

"The Abortion Premium Mandate proves that peaceful resistance and peaceful efforts will never stop these abortionists and their determination to kill whoever they want whenever they want."

"You did the right thing standing up to them. Murderers deserve only one thing. Death. Capital punishment. What you did was capital punishment."

"It took a war to end slavery, and it is taking another war to end abortion."

"The pacifism of the pro-life movement will never stop abortion. It's all talk. Talk that never got us anywhere except that now everyone is required to pay for abortions through the Abortion Premium Mandate. We will not pay for others to murder babies."

"What we need is action. And you took action. Yes, a lot of people have died, but we, and other groups, are fighting back, and in the end we will stop them."

"Peaceful protests are ineffective. The only way to overthrow the evil institution of abortion is to put to death all of those who would dare to murder a baby."

"We are the instrument of God's wrath to punish men for the sin of

infanticide.”

Rick sat silently in the chair, trying to comprehend all of the voices around him and what they were advocating. He had been captured by an armed group of pro-lifers, determined to stop violence with violence.

## Chapter 28

The leader of the group held up his hand. The room quieted down. He earnestly asked Rick, “Will you join us? Will you be the symbol that we unite behind? Will you be our spokesman in our crusade to stop this evil?”

Rick sucked in a breath, “I can't. I'm not a killer. I've never killed anyone.”

One of the men snorted, “It's not killing, it's capital punishment for crimes against humanity.”

Rick shook his head, “Yes, they are crimes against humanity. But their crimes do not justify us taking up arms and committing crimes of our own to stop them.”

He went on, “The only way to stop the evil of abortion murder is by being 100% pro-life. We must respond to death and murder with life and love. We cannot become evil ourselves to stop another evil. In order to do good, we cannot become evil.”

One of the men said, “Jesus himself told us to buy swords and to fight.”

Rick disagreed, “Jesus never advocated that anyone fight the Roman empire with swords of metal. When Jesus said sell your cloak and buy a sword, he was referring to the sword of the word of God. The bible itself tells us that God's sword is the word of God, the bible. When the disciples misunderstood Jesus and started talking about metal swords, Jesus said, that is enough. Jesus meant, that was enough of that talk. Jesus made the point that the only thing they needed was the word of God, and that they should sell even their very cloaks to possess the word of God. Material possessions didn't matter. Do you really think that two swords was enough for 13 men to fight off the armed might of the entire Roman empire? No! Jesus was saying, that is enough of that talk. Jesus wanted us to arm ourselves with the word of God, not with the swords of men.”

The leader shook his head, “Well, I've never heard that interpretation before. I think you are wrong. God wants us to use everything,

including swords and guns to fight evil.”

“But what about where the apostle Paul clarified and said in Ephesians 6:12:

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD.”

The leader didn't answer, so Rick went on.

“The only answer to the abortion culture of death must be 100% pro-life.”

“We cannot show that we are serious about being pro-life until we also oppose capital punishment and war. Pro-life must mean pro-life 100% of the time.”

One of the men leaning back against the wall leaned forward, “Even if I were to agree with you on the use of armed force, and I don't, what about capital punishment? God himself handed down the sentence of capital punishment, even for sins as light as adultery. How can we go against God on that?”

Rick shook his head vigorously, “You are right. We can't go against God. It was Jesus himself that abolished capital punishment.”

“I never saw that in the bible.”

“It's right there in the story of the woman brought before Jesus for the crime of adultery. The Jews expected Jesus to sentence her to death. That was the punishment handed down by God. Nobody could dare disagree with God. Except that Jesus is God, and Jesus could change the law if he wanted to. But Jesus didn't change the

law, he just showed that there is no man that is qualified to deliver the punishments of the law.”

“Jesus fulfilled the law. What was it that Jesus said? Jesus said, 'Let he who is without sin, throw the first stone.' None of the men could because they all knew that they were sinners. All of us are sinners. We cannot sentence another man to death because under the law of God, we all deserve to be sentenced to death. There is no man, other than Jesus that is qualified to carry out the sentence of capital punishment. Jesus is the only man who has never sinned. And Jesus did not throw that first stone.”

Rick looked around at each of them men, “Let he who is without sin, throw the first stone.”

He continued, “I'm a sinner, and I am not qualified to ever execute capital punishment on anyone, even a murderer. War is just an extended form of capital punishment, or as Carl von Clausewitz put it, 'War is the extension of politics by other means'. If you can't persuade someone to agree with your position, then use force to coerce them, and if that doesn't work, then kill them. Therefore, I can never take up a gun, or other weapon to hurt another man, no matter how evil he is.”

“Even if you don't believe in Jesus, then science agrees with him completely.”

“Scientifically speaking, the only logical course is 100% pro-life. Anything else is an arbitrary line drawn by those in power. Science knows with absolute certainty that a unique human life begins at the moment of fertilization. At any moment after the moment of fertilization, any decision by any human to end the life of that unique human is murder, whether it be by abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, or war. They are all murder.”

“Science can only accept the position of 100% pro-life. Otherwise, there is merely one human with power deciding whether or not another human, who doesn't have any power, is going to live or die. The moral word for this is murder.”

“However, governments specialize in passing laws that legalize

murder and justify it under various guises. A power that governments jealously guard. But without the power to decide when other humans can live or die, then how could any government force its will upon the people? Power corrupts absolutely until the power itself becomes absolute and grants one group of people the power to murder others with impunity. Laws are supposed to protect the innocent and keep evil people from murdering others. Anymore, it is the law that sentences innocent people to death and sanctions the mass murder of populations. Abortion is murder. But so is any other kind of killing.”

“The law murders more people than criminals ever will. The only hope for stopping the murder is to become 100% pro-life.

There was a long silence. The leader finally spoke up, “You may be right, but we are an armed resistance group, and we know of no other way to fight this evil. They declared the War on Life, but we will finish it, with our own deaths if necessary. We will do what we have to do, and you do what you have to do. ”

The lamp went out and the men shuffled out of the room and left Rick sitting alone.

## Chapter 29

Rick sat quietly in the dark. He didn't know what to do. There was a world of difference between these people, and the farmers at that last town. It was amazing that both groups considered themselves pro-life. He suspected, though, that if he tried to leave, they wouldn't let him.

No matter what, he was not going to be their poster boy. You couldn't fight evil with evil. Unless the pro-lifers were 100% pro-life, in all situations, at all times, then they would never win the life/death argument with the pro-abortion people. The pro-abortionists wanted the power to decide when people should live and die. The pro-lifers couldn't genuinely argue with them if all they were arguing about was where to draw the line on who should live and die. Life, all human life, had to be protected at all times. No war. No capital punishment. No abortion. 100% no abortion with no exceptions. Only then would the argument be black and white. Only then could the argument be won.

Nobody could say that you were being logically inconsistent if you were 100% pro-life.

The door opened and someone shuffled inside. They grabbed Rick's arm and told him to follow. Outside, he was surrounded by a group of men. The leader spoke, "We have decided that you are not one of us. We don't understand your brand of pro-life, but we cannot stand by while these people murder babies and anyone else that they want to. At any rate, it's best if you move on down the valley. You are no use to us here, and we don't have enough food for everyone. When they capture and kill you, and they surely will one day, then you can help our cause by becoming a martyr. Maybe you don't want to be a martyr, but as far as they are concerned, you are one of us. You will be more help to our cause out there, then you will be here, eating our food."

A small group of men quietly led Rick back down the trail. It was still dark, and Rick couldn't see anything. As they neared the railroad tracks, the sun was starting to come up.

“There you go. There's your tracks. Just keep going down them and don't stop.”

Rick asked, “What about my backpack?”

One of the men mocked him, “You said you didn't need anything but a bible. So we kept your backpack.”

Rick asked, “What about my bible?”

Another hesitated, then pulled the bible out of his knapsack and handed it to Rick. Rick just stood there with the bible in his hand, and nothing else. He grinned. He was right, he really didn't need anything except a bible. God would provide. He turned and strode down the tracks trying to make some distance. He didn't like walking during the daylight, but the detour had cost him. For today, he didn't have any choice.

Rick made it down across the valley and was climbing the other side when he heard a loud explosion in the distance. He spun around and stared in astonishment. He had walked further than he thought.

Opposite him, probably about where he had spent the night with the armed pro-lifers, the sky was full of attack helicopters wheeling and diving. The sound of rockets and heavy machine gun fire floated up to him on the late morning breeze. Rick watched the explosions on the ground light up the trees as the helicopters danced their dance of death. The trees were too thick to see through, but now Rick could hear heavy gunfire on the ground. One of the helicopters suddenly keeled over and crashed into the ground. Down in the valley, Rick could see convoys of tanks and armored cars moving towards the fight.

After awhile, the helicopters stopped firing and merely flew in circles. The smoke drifted upwards, but the battle tapered out. Rick shook his head. It wasn't hard to figure out who had won.

Two swords would never have beaten the Roman empire, and a few dozen civilian assault rifles would never beat heavily armed federal troops with helicopters, tanks, armored cars, machine guns, and military grade assault rifles. Just another waste of life.

Rick turned and moved on down the track. He wanted to crest the mountain pass before he stopped to rest before nightfall.

## Chapter 30

One night Rick came to a cut through the hills that opened up and let the tracks lead down through the valley and over a vast, seemingly endless bridge over the mighty river that divided the country in half. It was almost daylight, so Rick moved up the hillside and burrowed in for the day.

During the day, he watched numerous foot and motor patrols along the paths to the bridge. An attack helicopter flew circles over the bridge all day, moving off only when it's relief came. Patrol boats roared around under the bridge. Trains came from all directions and lined up for the bridge. The traffic was unbelievably heavy.

Rick watched and pondered. These weren't the country tracks he had been walking down. He would never make it to the bridge, much less across the bridge.

At dusk, Rick turned and headed downstream along the river. Eventually he reached a point between two towns, and walked to the river's bank. The water was swift and flowing. He couldn't see the other side. Slowly he walked along, wondering what to do. He could swim, but had never tried swimming anything like this before.

Rick blundered into a pile of stacked up trash and flotsam in a curve of the river. The river had put it there. Maybe he could make a small raft or float. Without a knife, it was hard. He gathered plastic bottles and vines and light floating wood. He worked the rest of the night on his float. When daylight came, he crawled up the bank and hid.

His float was sitting on the river bank. There were no worries about getting discovered. His float looked like a pile of flotsam, not a raft. Rick groaned and fell asleep.

Towards evening, Rick ventured out to take a better look at the available resources before it was too dark to see. He found an old jar with the top still on. Rick checked, and it was dry inside. He put the bible inside. At least something would stay dry. Then he tweaked his float some and waited until full dark.

In the dark, he pushed off into the river. The current grabbed him and swung him around. He held onto the float and tried to swim clumsily, his face barely out of the water. Rick found an aviation light on a high tower across the river. He used that to keep him headed in the right direction. Slowly the light moved past him as he was swept downstream, but at least he knew where the next river bank should be.

After a couple of hours, a patrol boat started cruising up and down the river. Rick could see it's flashing searchlight. It seemed to be wandering around in a random pattern. No pattern at all, really. Now Rick had to keep his eyes on the tower and the boat at the same time.

Suddenly the boat turned and headed in his direction. Rick sank lower in the water. The light came close and then hovered over his float. Under the float, the water lit up for a few inches. Rick held his breath and tried to stay under. Then the light moved off again. The boat swung it's stern away from the floating trash so it wouldn't get caught in the prop.

Over the next hour, the boat came close enough a couple of more times to light up his float. Thankfully, the crew weren't paying too much attention, or they would have wondered how the same pile of trash was moving across the current towards the shore.

Eventually the tower light disappeared behind the trees on the far bank. He was nearing the bank. Rick's feet touched the bottom. He let the float go, and the current sucked it away. He moved through the shallows and climbed up the bank. He was exhausted. That was harder than walking.

Still dripping with water, Rick turned inland and walked for a couple of more hours before daylight.

## Chapter 31

The next night Rick struck out to the south and west. He was looking for a new set of railroad tracks. He crossed several roads, but was careful not to stay on any of them.

As he came to one small town, the unmistakable stink of the incinerator was in the air. Rick hesitated, and then instead of walking around the town, he cut straight through it. Nothing was moving except the vultures.

Rick passed a dead dog, surrounded by vultures, who eyed him balefully. He laughed, "You can't have me yet. I'm still walking. You have to wait until I lay down dead."

In town, he raided another store, found a new backpack, some zip top bags, and food. Rick stocked up and kept moving.

Finally he found some railroad tracks, and they were headed in the direction he wanted to go. Rick climbed the embankment and kept going on down the tracks.

## Chapter 32

Late one night, Rick came to another town straddling the tracks. As he normally did, Rick left the tracks and started to circle around the town. He was still working his way around the town when dawn broke, and with it came another Homeland Security convoy.

Rick covered himself up on a hillside and watched helplessly as the town's residents were gathered up. Everyone was rounded up and interrogated one at a time.

Rick could see that they were being asked to show some kind of papers. Those who had the papers were being lined up to the side. Those who had no papers were being interrogated some more.

Rick decided he had to know what was going on. It wasn't smart, but he moved towards the town and crept from building to building. After they were done searching, the troops all gathered back in the main square, in a loose cordon around the townsfolk. They seemed to be confident that there was nothing to fear. Nobody noticed how close Rick came. Rick crept through the side door of an old store. At the front, he was only twenty feet from the front of the line. He sat on the floor and opened the mailbox slot in the door so he could hear.

A fat bureaucrat, dressed up as a trooper, yelled at the small group, "This is your last chance. If you sign up to pay your Abortion Premium Mandate fee right now, you will be given your paperwork certifying compliance and will be allowed to return to your homes after we leave. If you refuse, then there is only one option left to you."

The bureaucrat pointed towards the incinerator that had been set up behind them. "Remember, this is your choice, not my choice. If you die today it's because you choose to die. All you have to do is sign the paper stating that you support abortion and pay the fee. After today, if it is not already being done, the fee will be automatically deducted from your paycheck every month. The fee is only \$1 per person per month. There really is no excuse for not signing the paper and paying the fee."

A couple of people hesitantly raised their hands and came forward. They signed the paperwork, paid their fee, and were directed over to the side. Relatives and friends called to others to sign the papers. A couple of more people wavered. Only 9 people were left.

The bureaucrat said, "I'm running out of patience. We have to get done here so that we can get home before overtime starts. We aren't allowed to have overtime anymore. I will call you up here one at a time. You come here."

The first man approached and the bureaucrat tried to shove the clipboard into the man's hand. He wouldn't take it. The bureaucrat shrugged and nodded to the troopers, who grabbed the man, dragged him over to the conveyor belt, and shot him in the head so that he fell onto the belt. The conveyor belt quickly whisked him up and dumped him into the furnace.

Rick's stomach knotted. He watched the small group of people grimace and blanch. Still their resolve held. The next was called forward and they refused. They were given a short walk to the conveyor belt, shot, and dumped.

One of the girls caught Rick's attention. From behind she looked like Sarah. His breath caught in his throat. Then her head turned and he saw that it wasn't Sarah.

Now the bureaucrat was moving faster. As each refused, they were led over to the conveyor belt. Those with papers were lined up to the side so that they all had a clear view of the events. Nothing like a little fear to keep everyone in line.

The girl Rick was watching was last. She was even the same age as Sarah. She held her head high and went to her death with dignity. Rick's heart broke. They would have killed Sarah sooner or later anyway. The girl could have been Sarah's sister. Rick knew that Sarah would have stood her ground just as firmly.

Rick sat on the floor and breathed through his mouth, trying not to smell the incinerator.

So this is what the mandate had come to. Pay for death or die. The logical use of the power of the state. Pay for what the state wants or

die. Resist the state and die. Pay your taxes or die.

There were only three sure things in life...taxes, death, and taxes paying for death.

Rick watched the convoy drive away, and realized that he had to get out of town fast, ahead of the rest of the townsfolk before they returned to their stores and homes. There was no doubt that they would turn him in.

The stink of the incinerator remained behind the convoy and hung over the town. A warning to those left behind. Only compliant citizens are allowed to live.

## Chapter 33

A few days later, Rick approached another town shortly after dark. All of the lights were on, and the people looked like they were having a party. Rick hesitated, then remembering that he had always managed to find food at parties, decided to walk into town.

The banner hanging over the main street proclaimed the town's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. People were wandering the streets, eating from food vendors, playing games, drinking, and carrying on. Rick bought some fresh, hot food from a vendor with the money he didn't get to use very often. The food was very good, and feeling fully satiated, Rick slowly wandered on, looking at the sites.

A group of people came along the sidewalk and caught Rick up in the press. He went along and listened for where they were going. They talked about an open house that was just “to die for.”

Rick didn't understand the pun until they were moving into an older building with a sign above it reading “Women's Freedom Clinic.” With a sick sense of dread, Rick tried to back out, but couldn't, and was pushed forward into the first waiting room. A nurse greeted them and welcomed them to the open house.

“I just want to thank all of you for coming to this open house today. It is because of our clinic that our town has thrived and been protected by the government during the recent 'unpleasantness'. Women have been coming to our town from all over this part of the state to find their freedom and exercise their right to choose. In fact, just the other day, a pregnant young woman came in here and told me, 'I want to abort this child because it is going to be too much to handle with another mouth to feed.' I told her we would be glad to help her and took the baby out of her arms. She stopped me and asked, 'What about the one in my belly?' I told her that we would be glad to take care of that one for her, too. No extra charge.”

The crowd roared with laughter. Rick was starting to feel sick. The good food didn't taste so good now.

The nurse went on, “We are going to give you a tour of some exhibits, and then every group, on the house, will be able to witness

first hand one of our late-term procedures and see just how our esteemed doctors remove these parasites from a woman's body and give her her freedom back. Just go into the next room and another nurse will answer any questions you have.”

Rick really had to get out of there, but the crowd pushed him forward into the next room. The walls were lined with jars of formaldehyde. In the jars were whole fetuses, or just feet or hands, or heads removed from their spines. It looked like the trophy room of a mad scientist. There were tools displayed on the table, and some blown up photos on the wall. The nurse told how the tools would be used in the abortion, but that first each woman would be given a cocktail of drugs that would cause strong and unpredictable uterine contractions which would start the delivery process. The rest of the process would continue with the doctor's help inside the surgical suite. The nurse ushered the group into the next room to witness the actual abortion procedure.

Rick couldn't believe that all of this was being openly displayed and boasted about. Things had definitely changed. They had used to try to hide the horrors of abortion, but now they openly boasted about their evil actions. Rick kept his teeth clamped tightly and tried to breath through his mouth. The smell of blood in the room was overwhelming.

A third nurse welcomed them to the surgical room. “Tonight we are pleased to share with you a late-term abortion procedure for a woman who is 26 to 28 weeks pregnant. She has already been given the drugs and is waiting on the table for the doctor. You are welcome to take photos or video if you want to share with your friends.”

The doctor gave an expansive bow and the fully naked woman smiled weakly from the table. Then the doctor began to use some of his tools to reach up inside the woman to grasp the fetus and pull it out the birth canal. The nurse blathered on, giving step by step details. Rick developed tunnel vision and was fighting hyper-ventilation.

The doctor pulled the feet out first, and grasped them. He kept

pulling with the tools. Then the entire baby emerged. The doctor held the baby up by the feet and triumphantly swung the baby around so everyone could see it.

The baby screamed while the doctor grinned like a vampire. “See, it even sounds like an alien! Definitely not human!”

The group began chanting, “Kill the parasite! Kill the parasite!”

Then the doctor released a clamp from the baby's arm and picked up a pair of snips. Still holding the baby high, he snipped the baby's spinal cord. As blood poured from the severed throat, the doctor then tossed the baby into a shallow cardboard box which he set on a table in front of the group.

Everyone gathered around to get a close look at the contents of the box as the nurse ushered them out the back door. “I'm sorry to push you along, but we have other groups waiting, and over twenty women waiting for their freedom tonight. Feel free to get back in line a second time if you want.”

The group filed out the back door and turned up the alley back towards the main street. They were laughing and joking. Some of them agreed to get in line a second time.

Rick turned the other way and slipped towards the dark street at the other end of the alley. Reaching the street, he turned the corner and then collapsed on his knees in the bushes and explosively puked up everything he had eaten. When there was nothing left, his stomach continued to heave uncontrollably, as if to puke up his very intestines.

Slowly, Rick got his body under control, and then turned and ran out of town towards the railroad tracks.

## Chapter 34

When he reached the railroad tracks, Rick didn't stop running. He pounded along the tracks on the outside edge of the cross timbers. His heart was screaming in his chest.

His voice was screaming out loud. He didn't care who heard him.

“Why, God? Why?”

“Where are you, God? How can this happen?”

“Has everyone gone mad? Is everyone evil?”

“Why do these people want to kill everyone?”

“It's not right! It's just not right!”

“Why don't you do something, God? Why don't you stop this slaughter of the babies?”

“Why, God? Why, oh, God?”

“Where are you?”

“I don't understand. I just don't understand.”

“I can't understand this evil. It's just so...evil.”

“I would stop this if I could, but how can I? I'm just one man.”

“You are God! You can do anything! Where are you, God?”

Rick screamed gutturally in anger, pain, anguish, and despair.

“Why? Why? Why?”

Rick didn't hear the train coming until it was only twenty feet away. The engineer had been blowing the horn for half a mile, but hadn't bothered to slow down. At that very last second, the train horn startled Rick. He half turned and started to fall backwards, away from the track. The wind cushion in front of the train caught him, picked him up, and tossed him to the bottom of the embankment.

Rick lay in the gravel sobbing as the train roared by overhead.

Eventually quiet came and the only noise was the heaving of Rick's breathing. He crawled back to his knees.

He asked in a plaintive voice, "Why, God? Why do you keep saving my life? Why didn't you save that baby's life? Why didn't you save Sarah's life? Why didn't you save my baby's life? Why?"

"I just want to die. I shouldn't be alive. They should be alive and I should be dead."

The silence of the night greeted Rick. He slowly stood up. Then a hand comforted Rick. He felt the peace of God.

He wasn't given any answers, but Rick knew that God had heard him. He turned and started walking down the tracks again. He had a long way to go.

## Chapter 35

Rick began to see individuals and small groups of people heading past him on the opposite side of the tracks. They were illegals heading north. At first, Rick dodged off of the tracks and waited until they were past. After a night of sitting in the bushes, Rick decided there were too many of them and he would never get anywhere, so he kept walking and just ignored them.

Mostly they ignored him, too. He wasn't dressed like a cop, didn't look like a cop, and didn't walk like a cop. Occasionally someone would shine a flashlight in his face to see who he was, but then they would turn it off and keep walking. Rick clearly looked just like they did. An illegal who had been living in the bush. They just thought he was headed in the wrong direction.

One took the time and energy to jeer at him, "Hey, amigo, freedom is the other way.... You are headed to my country. You won't like it."

Rick stopped and looked at him, "If you knew the tyranny ahead of you, you wouldn't think so."

The illegals walked night and day. Nobody paid any attention to them. They only moved out of the way for the trains. So Rick kept walking during the daylight, too. If he saw anything that looked like the police or Homeland Security, he would turn around and walk the other way for a bit. Nobody stopped him.

In the morning, Rick entered a border town and followed the illegals to the border crossing. He stood back and watched the border crossing for awhile. Homeland Security was just standing around. They seemed to ignore everyone. The tourists heading south, and the illegals heading north. They just chatted and talked until the end of their shift when they were replaced with new chatters.

Rick decided to change his clothes so he would look more like a tourist. He still had some money left as there weren't many stores along the railroad tracks.

Cleaned up, feeling confident, and nonchalant, Rick strode towards the border as if he was a student tourist going shopping. Homeland

Security ignored him. Only when he was too close to back away did Rick see the banks of cameras looking at everyone. Rick kept going.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the attitude of all the Homeland Security officers change as someone spoke over their radios. Their weapons snapped up to their shoulders and they converged on him from all directions. Tourists and illegals scattered, watching curiously.

Rick stopped walking. They were yelling at him. He was only fifty feet from the border. But he would never be able to make it. Hands grabbed him and threw him on the ground. He was cuffed.

One hand pulled him up. “Did you really think that we wouldn't have facial recognition cameras at our little backwater border station? You are the most wanted man in the country. Everyone's photo is checked against yours first. Ding! You're it!”

Rick was silent as illegals continued to walk across the border in a steady stream. The illegals walked around the knot of Homeland Security officers gathered around their prize, Rick, and kept going. Freedom was now their's. They didn't have time to see what another escaping criminal might have done.

Rick was dragged over to an SUV and tossed inside. They drove off.

One of the officers turned around and studied him, “I knew that guy you shot. We were in the academy together. You filthy piece of scum. I wish I could shoot you right now myself.”

He got up close and growled right in Rick's face, “We are a nation of freedom and free people, and we are not going to allow terrorists like you to take that away from us. I hope you die in prison. Terrorists do not have a right to life. Maybe they will let me be your executioner.”

## Chapter 36

Rick was chained to a desk in an interrogation room. They forced him to drink water, but refused to let him use the bathroom. A steady stream of Homeland Security and other law enforcement came and went from the interrogation room. All of them there to see and gloat over the great number one terrorist in the country. Rick was the biggest tourist attraction since chocolate was invented.

A tv crew was allowed to come inside the room and film him silently for a couple of minutes.

The door was left open, but finally a man in a suit came in and sat down in front of Rick. The others hung back and just listened. His interrogation was about to begin.

“Well, I don't know how you got the thousands of miles from where you started to our little section of the border, but now that you are here, let me assure you that your side has lost this war.”

“Your capture is all over the evening news. We provided copies of the surveillance tapes taken of your capture at the border, and that little footage they took of you awhile ago. The nation is celebrating tonight. It is finally over. With your capture, the rebellion has been crushed.”

“But let me tell you, your actions have cost the lives of over 20 million dead, and another 50 million have been detained and are serving life sentences for crimes against the state. But now that you pro-lifers have been purged from society, we can go back to living in peace without you telling us what to do. You are going to be tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Your death will purge the national consciousness of the evil of your kind. Of course, it will take years to try and execute the rest of the 50 million pro-life terrorists we have locked up.”

The man laughed, “I guess we can call that job security?”

Rick listened to the man. Apparently, he didn't stand a chance in the legal system. Remaining silent wasn't going to do him any good. So he decided he might as well say as much as he could whenever he

got the chance.

“If this is going to be an interrogation, then I should start answering questions.”

The man was surprised, but leaned forward and asked, “It bothers me deeply. Why do you think that it is wrong to kill a bunch of parasitic cells inside of a woman, but okay to murder people with terrorist acts?”

Rick smiled. It was his turn now. “I don't. I am 100% pro-life. No abortion. No capital punishment. No war. And definitely no terrorism. I have never killed anyone in my life, and I never will. There was another young man dressed just like me at the protest, but he was an abortionist, and he shot your fellow officer. I never hurt anyone, and I never could. Killing is murder 100% of the time. Whether you are killing a man, or an unborn baby.”

The man interrupted, “Of course you deny killing the officer. You terrorists and criminals always protest your innocence, but if you were innocent, then you wouldn't be arrested and sitting in my interrogation room, would you?”

“Just because you arrest someone, that doesn't make them guilty of what you have accused them of. Just because something is legal, that doesn't make it right, or stop it from being a crime against humanity.”

The man turned and addressed the crowd of officers, “He dares to lecture us on the law and morality? A man who has broken every law and morally violated the rights of every woman to choose what to do with her body.”

He continued, “You are not interested in saving the lives of the unborn, you are only interested in controlling women and their sexual lives for your own pleasure. Religion is the greatest evil invented by men to control women, and until religion has been wiped from the face of the earth, no woman can live in complete freedom. Religion has killed more people than anything else. The 20 million dead in this country is all because of religion. The religion that allows a man to tell a woman what to do with her body.

And to finish purging religion, another 50 million will have to die. All because of religion. We are not killing those people. Religion is.”

Rick replied, “Then I won't speak to you of religion. Do you at least believe in science?”

The man grunted. Rick continued, “Scientifically speaking, it is scientifically correct to state that each unique, individual human life begins at fertilization. Our laws should be based upon accurate scientific data, and not upon nebulous ideas like a woman's right to privacy.”

The man argued, “So you disagree that a woman has absolute control over her own body?”

Rick continued, “I am arguing that ALL humans should have absolute control over their own bodies. Since, scientifically speaking, each unique human starts at the moment of fertilization, then from that moment on, each one of us should have absolute control over our bodies, especially over the issue of whether or not we get to live or die.”

“A human mother has no more right to tell another unique human being that it must die simply because she is acting as a developmental host for that human as it grows and matures.”

The man argued, “Got you there. The unborn child is not human until it has been born and is viable. Until then it is just a potential human.”

Rick fought back, “The unborn child is not a potential human, but a human with great potential. At no time can that unborn child ever become a puppy, or a kitten, or a horse. From the moment of fertilization, the unborn is and will remain until it dies or is killed, a unique human individual.”

“It doesn't matter if the child is viable or not without it's mother. Are any of us really viable without other humans? How many of us can exist solely 100% on our own, abandoned on some desert island, void of all animals and plants? Or how about abandoned buck naked on the south pole? Without someone to provide food, heat, shelter,

and clothing for us, we would all die. We all help each other out. We all depend on other humans. None of us are truly viable without the help of other humans. Yes, the unborn baby needs it's mother. That just means that a woman's most important responsibility in life is to provide for the unborn human that is 100% dependent on her for less than a year of it's life.”

The man shook his head, “So you think that a woman should be required to sacrifice herself for a child that she doesn't want?”

Rick nodded, “Right. Whether or not the child is wanted has no bearing on whether or not, scientifically speaking, the child is a human being. The child is a human being, and it deserves the protection of the entire human race, and most especially it's mother. Sometimes that means that the mother will be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice.”

“The highest duty of a mother is to give her life for her child. Whether the child is born or unborn at the time that calling is made by circumstance is unimportant. A mother that chooses her own health over the life of her child is simply a murderer. Not all women are called upon to give their lives for the sake of their children, but when it happens, no woman should shirk her duty.”

“No human should shirk his or her duty to protect the life of every member of the human race. Without religion, all we have are each other. Scientifically speaking, a donkey will never be a human, and a baby whale will never be a baby human. We must protect the right to life of every human. Without the absolute right to life, there are no other rights.”

The man had had enough, “The constitution grants women the absolute right to privacy, and therefore the right to choose what she wants to do with the parasite growing inside of her. Until that parasite stops being a parasite, then she can do what she wants with it.”

Rick was not phased, “The constitution cannot grant rights that science itself does not give us. Science supports 100% the right of all unique humans to life, regardless of where they are in the developmental process. The constitution that you refer to gave some

men the right to own other humans as slaves simply because of the color of their skin. Science has proven that we are all human, regardless of the color of our skin, which is only a superficial difference. There is only a superficial difference between you now, a full grown man, and the moment when you were a brand new single-celled human. Without that single-celled human, you could not be sitting in front of me today. Without your mother's sacrifice to help you during your development, you would be dead. The constitution is a piece of paper that can never override that reality, and if it disagrees with science, and denies any human their right to freedom, such as the black man, or any human their right to life, then the constitution is wrong.”

The man interrupted, “We changed the constitution to give the black man his freedom.”

Rick nodded, “Yes, but only because the constitution first took his freedom away. The constitution now takes away human lives, and to change it to recognize the right to life of all humans, is not to grant a new right, but to bring the constitution into line with what science already knows is absolutely true. All humans, regardless of their stage of development, have the scientific right to live their entire lives without it being ended by another human.”

“The right to life is not dependent upon any constitutions or laws written by man. The right to life is a fundamental law written into our unique human DNA from the moment of fertilization. That right cannot be taken away from us, even if we are murdered. Even if our murder is sanctioned by the state. Even if our murder is desired by our mothers before we can live without her. Every other human right derives from the right to life, and any so-called right that disagrees with the right to life, is not a right at all, but tyranny and murder. All other rights, both individual and state, are limited by the absolutely fundamental right to life.”

The man felt like he was losing control, “I wouldn't want to be the host for any parasite, and if my mother had chosen to abort me, then I wouldn't have argued with her. It was her choice and her choice alone. Just like it is the state's choice to decide who gets to live and die once they are born. You are a freedom hating pro-lifer. We have

a mandate to abort all of the freedom hating pro-lifers. Soon it will be your turn.”

Standing up, the man cleared the room and gave orders that no one was allowed to talk to Rick. Rick's seditious talk couldn't be allowed to influence anyone.

As they left, one of the female officers met Rick's eye with a troubled look. Rick noticed. A seed of doubt had been planted. Regardless of the lies and propaganda, the truth would always win. Sometimes it would just take time. Rick had said everything that he could say. If he was to be murdered by the state, then so be it, but they could never take away his right to life.

## Chapter 37

The next day the Federal Attorney arrived and conducted her own interrogation.

“You have been a pain in my neck, Rick, but I always knew that sooner or later I would catch you and make you pay for your crimes.”

“I have committed no crimes.”

She snorted. “Yes you did. You started this by shooting a cop.”

Rick shook his head, “I did not shoot anyone. I have never killed anyone. I was airbrushed into that video, and you know it because you are the one that did it.”

She narrowed her eyes, “True, but if we hadn't, then you would have killed someone sooner or later. This way, that cop's death wasn't wasted, but was turned to a better purpose. Never let a good crisis go to waste, they say.”

“I would never have killed anyone. I am 100% pro-life.”

She snorted again, “Really? Then how can you support capital punishment and war?”

Rick answered, “I don't. Some pro-lifers do because they do not yet understand completely what it means to be genuinely, 100% pro-life. But I do not support capital punishment or war.”

“Well, you pro-lifers all look alike to me. Just a bunch of control freaks wanting to tell everyone how to live their lives. You can't have sex, you have to have that baby.... It never ends. We want our freedom to do as we wish. And that scares you pro-life freaks. You can't bear the thought that someone, somewhere is having fun and free sex.”

She went on, “You know that I oppose capital punishment and war. It's a shame that you pro-lifers forced us into this War on Life. At least it's almost over and we can go back to living peacefully soon.”

Rick was surprised. “It is illogical for a pro-abortionist to oppose capital punishment or war. If it is okay to end a human life before that human has committed any crimes, then why is it wrong to end that same human life after it has committed crimes, or has become a political opponent?”

Rick was emphatic, “The only purpose of war is to kill political opponents.”

He challenged her, “Drawing the line at capital punishment or war is an artificial line. You-- Miz FDDA mam-- do not practice what you preach as you clearly do believe in capital punishment and war. You are conducting a war and executing those you arrest. Your actions at least are completely logical since you believe that there are no limits to your power to decide who gets to live and die. You shouldn't pretend to be against capital punishment and war. You are the terrorist, as you live by terrorizing others. So how can you say that you oppose capital punishment and war when you practice both?”

Rick went on, “I have never shot or killed anyone. I am 100% pro-life. I have never, and never will hurt anyone.”

The Federal Attorney interrupted, “Only because we won't let you. You are a terrorist who wants to use political power to deny women the right to choose what to do with their own bodies.”

Rick replied, “You mean the right to choose what to do with their baby's bodies.”

She smiled, “The baby doesn't have any rights until we say it does.”

Rick spoke strongly, “Without the absolute right to life, then there are no other rights. There are just people like you, using political power at the point of a gun to decide who lives and dies, and you kill the people who disagree with you.”

The Federal Attorney began to get angry, “Look at you, you make people who disagree with you live with and put up with a child that they never wanted. That is terrorism. Forcing someone to do what they don't want to do.”

Rick was not to be backed down, “Calling upon everyone to respect

the right to life of everyone else is not terrorism. It is the opposite of terrorism. If everyone absolutely respected the right to life of every other human, then there would be no war, no capital punishment, no murder, not even any robberies or other actions where a human life is threatened, and certainly no unwanted children, and no abortions.”

“I don't want any children. Ever. You are living in a fantasy world. Evolution tells us that it is the fittest that survive. War, capital punishment, and abortion weed out those who are not fit to survive as part of the human race.”

Rick asked, “Why can't the entire human race survive?”

She narrowed her eyes, “Then we would have to live side by side with people we don't agree with.”

Rick asked, “Why does everyone have to agree on everything?”

She went on the attack, “You want everyone to agree with you on the right to life.”

Rick was not intimidated, “Without the right to life, there are no other rights, only the barrel of a gun forcing everyone to do what they don't want to do.”

Feeling safe, the Federal Attorney replied, “Not for the person holding the gun. We aren't being forced to do anything. We are free, and we have the guns, so we are going to tell you what to do and what to believe. That is our right. We don't want too many babies. We don't want people who disagree with us in our country and government. Purging everyone that is not wanted is our right so that the rest of us can live in utopia.”

Rick persisted, “The only utopia was the Garden of Eden, and you can see how badly that ended. All utopian attempts will end in tyranny and oppression. The only system that exists when force is used is a dystopia. A dysfunctional utopia.”

He went on, “What happens when you are no longer the one in power? When you are no longer young? Is the next generation going to put you to death, too? Or will they learn to respect life, and grant even an evil person like you the right to life?”

She drew herself up, “Soon I will be President. I will always be in power, and all the future generations of humankind will agree with me because we will abort anyone who disagrees.”

“I am right because I am the Federal Attorney, and you are a terrorist, and you will pay the price for your crimes. Tomorrow you go before the tribunal for sentencing.”

Rick asked, “Don't I get a trial first?”

“No. Pro-life terrorists do not get trials. Your own words condemn you. No trial is necessary. You will not be allowed to defend yourself or to make a statement. The useless things you have said in here to me today prove your guilt, and in order to protect society, there is no way we are going to allow you to spout your nonsense in public.”

She went on, “The tribunal will pronounce sentence on you to declare what your punishment shall be. As far as your guilt goes, you have already condemned yourself with your own words.”

Rick nodded, “Then so be it. It is only proper that the only person who will judge me fairly is God.”

Angrily, she slapped the table, “There is no God except me. I am God, and you are in my hands. Your fate has been decided, and God has nothing to do with it.”

Rick replied, “Certainly that is the fate that you handed down to the millions of babies that you have aborted. For you, the mother is God, and she can decide whether her baby gets to live or die. Since only God has the right to decide who gets to live and die, then you definitely see yourselves as Gods.”

The Federal Attorney flared her nostrils, “I would end your miserable existence right now, but we need to publicly show your sentencing before the tribunal in order to keep everyone else in line. Otherwise, your life would be over this instant.”

She spat out, “I win and you die. All of you pro-lifers will die. HOW EVER will you stop us?”

Rick looked at the Federal Attorney. He remembered asking God the same question. Then he understood.

Rick smiled, “We will stop you by refusing to do the evil that you do. Others will see our example and they will choose to stop doing evil also. Evil can never stop good. You can kill millions of people, but good will still win. Love does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth. Love never fails. Love will win, and evil will fail.”

## Chapter 38

The next day, Rick was dressed in an orange jumpsuit, put in chains, and dragged into a special tribunal chamber. These tribunal chambers had been specially built for dealing with the large numbers of pro-life terrorists. Under the National Safety Act, the terrorists were not criminals, but enemies of the state, and therefore they had no rights, and were not entitled to any legal rights such as the right to an attorney, or the right to defend themselves. By their very status they were pronounced guilty. The only purpose of the tribunals was to pronounce sentencing.

Three tribunals, who were attorneys and doctors, but not judges, sat upon raised daises in front of the enemy of the state to be sentenced. The condemned stood, chained to a post, in a lowered pit in the floor that emphasized the gulf between the condemned and the tribunals. No Homeland officers were in the room during the sentencing so that the sentencing could be filmed by the permanently mounted news cameras. Only approved state news agencies had access to the footage. For live sentencings, there was a ten minute delay that the public was not told about.

The center tribunal called the tribune to order and addressed Rick, “This sentencing is being broadcast live and preemptively on all channels. You have been found guilty of crimes against humanity and crimes against the state as a pro-life terrorist who seeks to deny freedom and rights to women. You are here today so that you can be sentenced. This tribunal has reviewed your file and found that there is no redeeming reason to keep you alive, and that you pose a serious flight risk, who will probably stop at nothing to attempt to escape and foment more war on women.”

“Therefore, we are sentencing you to be aborted by the state in the best interests of the state and it's citizens. Since you are the one that started this war, it has been decided that a new method of abortion will be introduced with you.”

“Listening to concerns that current methods used by Homeland Security are rather... ah... messy..., a new method that uses a cattle gun, or cattle thud will be introduced. The new method is not messy,

and it's cheaper than drugs. Not that we care what happens to you, but the cleaning crews have been complaining. This will allow us to speed up the turn time for the tribunal chamber also.”

“Anyway, we pronounce sentence on you, to be executed immediately, that you are to be aborted with a cattle thud in our presence.”

The tribunal peered over her glasses, “Do you have any last words to say?”

Rick nodded, “Yes, I do. All human rights are derived from the right to life, and are limited in scope by the absolute, fundamental right to life written into our DNA.”

One of the side tribunals muttered something. Then the center tribunal interrupted Rick, “Oh, there aren't supposed to be any statements from the defense. I just like to say that. We don't actually allow last words around here.”

The tribunal turned, “Please edit that from the broadcast, and we will resume.”

## Chapter 39

Still 'live' on national tv, a Homeland Security officer entered the tribunal carrying a cattle thud. He moved in front of Rick and stood at attention. Every move he made was deliberate so that the cameras could catch everything, and to prolong his brief moment of fame on tv.

Rick looked directly at the Homeland executioner. His time had come. The officer placed the barrel of the cattle thud against Rick's forehead and pushed it back.

Rick looked past the officer and smiled at what he saw. He could no longer see the officer. But he could see Jesus standing there waiting for him, smiling, with his arms open wide, waiting to give him a hug. Sarah was standing next to Jesus smiling, and there were his parents and Aunt Henrietta, and the farmer and the farmer's wife, and a host of others.

Rick was going home and he couldn't help smiling with joy.

Rick's smile enraged the Homeland officer, and the officer snarled as he pulled the trigger of the cattle thud, driving the captive bolt against Rick's forehead, killing him instantly.

Rick never noticed. For Rick, life was just beginning and he was now in the arms of Jesus and hugging his precious wife Sarah again.

## Chapter 40

The news anchor narrated the live events from the tribunal, “And there you have it. The number one pro-life terrorist enemy of the state has now been aborted. The war on women is over. The War on Life is over. We can now all get back to a life of freedom and peace.”

“We now go to the Federal Attorney making her remarks on the steps of the tribunal:”

Smiling widely, the Federal Attorney took over the camera, “The pro-life terrorists forced the government to declare a War on Life to stop the terrorism. The war is now over. Mission accomplished! The pro-lifers have been exterminated or imprisoned. Everyone is now free. No longer will women be slaves in our great land of the free and home of the brave. A woman's absolute right to control her own body will now be respected and protected. We have entered a new phase in our history where the right to abortion is no longer disputed, but is funded and paid for by every single citizen through their health insurance policy.”

“We are now truly a country of the free and the brave. We can now all live in peace and harmony, united in our support for a woman's choice over her own body. May God Bless Our Great Country!”

“Furthermore, I want to take this opportunity to announce that I will be running for President in the next election. I look forward to receiving your vote! Have a good day, and enjoy your freedom!”

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