

# Prologue

The Freedom Uprising was coming.

John Peters had waited a long time for this. He could feel the anticipation building inside him, and he wished he could share it with someone other than Bobby Durham.

John glanced at his partner, perched silently in the passenger seat of the truck, arms crossed over his chest, supplies packed in at his feet. Bobby was okay, as partners went. Not exactly a strategic thinker, but he was a die-hard believer. He'd do whatever was necessary to complete the mission.

Still, John wished his half brother was here, the man who'd brought purpose to his life.

He lowered the window, let the familiar scents of dirt and pine and fresh snow creep into his nostrils as he drove. It was so close now. One more day in this place, and then he could move on, begin the mission.

If only he could be the one to end it, be there for the final target and see it with his own eyes, instead of just on the news. But he'd be the one to start things off. And they'd start off with a bang.

He smiled at the thought and felt Bobby's curious gaze.

"Are you ready for this?" John asked.

"Damn right I am," Bobby replied, his young voice full of boastful confidence.

"When we get back you'll need to clear out your bunk. Everything goes."

"I know. The maps, the guns, the supplies." Bobby repeated John's words from earlier. "I'll get rid of everything. We'll be set as soon as we've got the go-ahead."

"Good." Before they left, John would double-check, of course, and he'd empty his own bunk, too, although he never wrote anything down. He kept it all where it belonged, locked in his mind, where no one could accidentally discover it.

*Never leave behind anything they can use.*

The reminder ran through his head, but he didn't need reminding. He'd been training for this mission all his life. He just hadn't realized his true purpose until recently.

And his purpose was great. The lesson he would help teach this country was crucial.

"No one will suspect a thing till we get back." Bobby's words interrupted his thoughts.

John grunted noncommittally. Bobby was willing to die for the cause, but John knew the kid imagined himself returning a hero.

John was resigned to the truth. They'd never be coming back here. If they made it through their mission alive, they'd spend the rest of their days in hiding. But it would all be worth the sacrifice.

He pictured the final target, the one he'd never get to personally see, and he felt his anticipation shift into something hard and powerful and bigger than any one person.

He'd seen a video of the target once, from a long time ago, taken with a shaky old video camera. An elite group of men, so cocky and righteous. Standing on land that wasn't theirs, using bullets to enforce their pretend authority.

He could almost see them now, still thinking they were untouchable. Thinking their bloody hands had somehow come clean.

They were wrong.

And soon, very soon, the whole world would know it.

# 1

Lee Cartwright wanted to kill her.

Evelyn Baine didn't need to be a profiler with the FBI's elite Behavioral Analysis Unit—BAU—to know it. All she needed to do was stare into Cartwright's angry, narrowed eyes and look at the snarl quivering on his lips, the thrust of his jaw as he leaned toward her across the table.

The bare bulb flickered overhead, deep in the bowels of the Montana State Prison. The distant chorus of prisoners' voices reached her ears, but it was just the two of them in the tiny, dingy interview room. Just her and the convicted bomber. They were separated only by a flimsy table and a pair of standard-issue handcuffs. Those were bolted to the table, but looked as if they'd barely closed around Cartwright's meaty wrists.

His eyes skimmed over her once more and she knew exactly what he saw—a perfect victim.

She gave him steady eye contact, refusing to react as he flexed his hands. He seemed to be testing the strength of those cuffs. The fact that Cartwright wanted to kill her was one of the reasons she'd been chosen for this interview. Lee Cartwright had been convicted of bombing two black churches and one mosque. Two people had died, and dozens more were injured. It was his way of sowing fear; like a lot of bombers, he wasn't just targeting a specific group, but also seeking notoriety. He'd wanted people to fear *him*, the man who'd been dubbed the "Nail Bomber" because of the materials he used.

He was antifederalist and anti-anyone-who-wasn't-white. Sending her—a biracial federal agent—was her boss's way of telling Cartwright that he didn't call all the shots. The idea was to piss him off enough to get him to brag. He'd told prison officials that he had a copycat, and the FBI wanted to find out if it was true.

The other reason the head of BAU, Dan Moore, had sent her was that she was on his shit list.

Interviewing felons, even felons who claimed a copycat was contacting them, wasn't usually a BAU job. But the file had crossed Dan Moore's desk and apparently it looked like yet another suitable punishment for her refusal to follow orders three months ago.

She'd never been his favorite person; she was too young, too female and too poor a team player. He'd always treated her like the newbie who needed babysitting, but lately, it had gotten much worse. Lately, she felt as if she wasn't even on the team anymore.

Worse, she wasn't sure she wanted to be. And that was something she'd never questioned, not since the time she was twelve years old and her best friend, Cassie, had gone missing.

"I have nothing to say to you," Cartwright muttered for the third time in the half hour they'd been having this little staring contest.

"You told two guards you had a copycat, Lee. You said you wanted to talk to someone about it. I'm here. Talk to me," Evelyn pressed, trying to sound earnest.

The truth was, she felt discouraged. She'd already asked the warden about Cartwright's incoming mail and his visitors. Since the only person who visited him was his mom, and his mail had never been flagged as suspicious, she was pretty sure his request was more about attention than a real threat.

But someone *had* been setting off explosions in the Montana wilderness about an hour away. There was no indication these had anything to do with Cartwright—he used a distinct method for creating his bombs, as telling as a signature, that local law enforcement hadn't found this time.

The current explosions were a nuisance, but they'd happened far from anyone. And the reality was, this area had several groups with fringe militia ties, and explosions like the ones in the wilderness had happened before. Cartwright's claim of a copycat was unlikely.

Still, he'd been convicted of hate crimes and murder. If there was even a tiny chance he was telling the truth, someone had to check it out.

That someone shouldn't have been her. There was no reason to fly her across the country when there were perfectly capable agents here, and the case didn't need a profiler at all.

And she was tired of the bullshit assignments when there were plenty of real cases she could be profiling.

Maybe, if she could ever get back to those legitimate cases, she could figure out whether she still belonged. Maybe it would tell her if, after finally unraveling what had happened to her best friend when she was twelve, she had any drive left for profiling. Cartwright did nothing but snarl back at her, the muscles flexing in his prison-pumped arms.

Evelyn held in a sigh and leaned forward. "Who's been contacting you, Lee?"

"I'm not telling you shit."

Frustration built up. He should've seen her—exactly the kind of person he'd love to target at one of his bomb sites—and wanted to brag about the copycat. They hadn't expected him to hand over a name, but they *had* expected him to taunt her with whatever he might know. Assuming the threat was real, which seemed more and more unlikely.

This complete refusal to talk was surprising.

"What's your copycat planning to target? If he's really copying you, he doesn't seem to be doing a good job." She tried to appeal to his vanity and his need to prove himself at the same time.

Cartwright scowled at her. "Forget about it."

"Did you teach someone how to make a bomb?" she asked, leaning back in her chair. She tried another route. "It's not like you used the most sophisticated method we've ever seen."

"Yeah?" he barked. "Have you tried it? Packed in all those nails...?" He cut himself off and smirked at her. "My method was just fine."

"But not so complicated that you'd need to teach someone else to do it, right? I mean, they could just figure it out on their own?" It probably wasn't true. Cartwright had used easily accessible materials to create his bombs, but they'd been sophisticated in the detonation. The FBI hadn't seen anything quite like them before—or since.

"Whatever," he said. "I didn't ask for you. I got nothing to tell you."

"Why? Because there is no copycat?"

"Believe what you want."

"I believe you're wasting my time," she snapped, bracing her hands on the table and leaning forward again so she could glare at him.

In that instant, he lunged toward her, shooting out of his chair and driving his elbow at her face.

She leaped back, cursing herself for not properly gauging the distance he could move while tethered to the table. But she wasn't fast enough and his elbow clipped her cheek. It sent her flying backward.

She slammed against her chair, then tripped over it, falling onto the ground, her head slamming the concrete floor.

Behind her, she heard the guard wrestling with the locked door. Cartwright's grating laugh sent fury racing through her veins.

She should've expected it. Cartwright had nothing left to lose. Thanks to a lenient judge, he'd avoided the death penalty, but he was never leaving this place.

She got to her feet before the guard had the door open, and resisted the urge to react. Instead, she righted her chair and sat back down as though everything was fine, waving the guard

off. "Does it bother you that this is the worst you can do? Is that why you're making up claims of a copycat?"

His face flushed an angry red and a vein in the center of his forehead popped up. "Get out."

"If you're not making it up," she challenged, ignoring the way her cheek throbbed, "then prove it."

"I didn't make any damn claim to the Zionist..." He cut himself off again, blew out a noisy breath.

But she knew what he was going to say. *Zionist Occupational Government*. It was what a lot of fervent antigovernment groups called the federal government. She tried not to roll her eyes.

"I have nothing to say to you," Cartwright finally finished.

She stared at him a minute longer, but a year and a half as a profiler—or behavioral analyst as they were officially called—told her she didn't have anything to gain here. Her six years before that as a regular special agent told her she needed to find a real case.

"Nice talking to you, Cartwright," she said, the sarcastic response so different from the way she would've handled an interview like that three months ago.

Cartwright just sat there, jaw and arm muscles flexing in unison, and Evelyn stood and motioned for the guard.

The keys jangled in the lock again for so long Evelyn was glad Cartwright had only winged her with his elbow. Eventually the door opened and the guard beckoned her forward.

She moved to his far side, practically sliding along the wall as he led her down the hallway, past a row of cells. They were in the supermax portion of the prison, filled with lifers, which made them especially dangerous. But the inmates were a lot less likely to lodge spit—or other bodily fluids—at a guard they had to deal with every day than a visiting federal agent.

Luckily for her, the guard was six feet tall and as broad as a small car, making her five-foot-two, one-hundred-and-ten-pound frame virtually invisible. Still, the catcalls and obscene comments trailed behind her, leaving an imaginary layer of filth under her loosely tailored suit.

"You get anything good from Cartwright?" the guard asked, sounding completely uninterested in the answer as they reached the front of the prison.

He was slow getting her weapon out of the locked box where she'd had to leave it when she entered, and Evelyn shifted her weight impatiently. Less than two hours in this building and already she felt desperate to breathe fresh air.

How must Cartwright, who'd been locked up for three years of a life sentence, feel? Was that why he'd claimed he had a copycat? To waste the government's time and amuse himself? With someone like him, it was entirely possible.

Evelyn hooked her holster back onto her belt and tugged her jacket down over it. "Thanks. Nothing useful from Cartwright."

She checked her watch. A few hours to grab a late dinner, pack up and catch her flight. She'd follow up with the warden when she was back in Virginia.

As soon as she stepped outside, Evelyn drew in a lungful of fresh, clean air, shivering in her wool suit. It was twenty degrees colder in Montana than in Virginia, and a light dusting of snow covered her rental car. The sun had begun to sink while she was inside, and the parking lot looked eerie in the semidarkness.

As she hurried toward her car, her fingers seemed to drain of warmth as fast as her breath puffed clouds of white into the November air. She strode away from the fenced area around the prison, anxious for the heater in her rental—and saw someone standing beside her car.

She could tell from twenty feet away that person was in law enforcement, probably FBI. It was the way she stood, angled to see any approaching threat, the way she held her hand near her hip, where her weapon would be holstered.

Evelyn glanced down at her watch again as she reached her car. The Montana State Prison wasn't exactly a short jaunt from the closest FBI office. Which meant this agent wanted something. Evelyn's stomach grumbled as she sensed her chance for dinner slipping away.

"Evelyn Baine?" the woman asked. She stuck out a hand and shook with the precision of a military officer and the force of someone used to working in a predominantly male profession. "I'm Jen Martinez. Salt Lake City office."

She flashed a set of FBI credentials and Evelyn squinted at them. "Good to meet you."

Jen frowned as she dropped Evelyn's hand. "What happened to your eye?"

Evelyn gingerly touched the tender spot high on her cheek where Cartwright had winged her. It was swelling underneath her eye. "An accident. What can I do for you?" She tried not to shiver outwardly as she crossed her arms over her chest to preserve whatever warmth she could.

Jen must have lived in the area long enough to be used to the cold, because she looked comfortable, even with her blazer unbuttoned. She was a few inches taller than Evelyn, with white-streaked blond hair pulled into a bun nearly as severe as the way Evelyn wore her own dark hair. She probably had fifteen years on Evelyn, and everything about her, from the laser-sharp gaze to the polyester-blend suit, screamed longtime law enforcement.

"When I heard BAU was sending a profiler to talk to Lee Cartwright, I had to come and get your input."

"You have some insight into Cartwright's copycat?"

Jen waved her hand dismissively. "No. But I do have another situation where I'd like a profiler's take."

Evelyn looked pointedly at her watch. "My flight takes off in a few hours." Actually, it was four, but that wasn't a lot of time to fully review a case and give case agents a profile of their perpetrator.

Not to mention the fact that she wasn't supposed to review a case at all until it was vetted at the BAU office and brought to her officially. Then again, maybe Jen had a case that would allow Evelyn to use her profiling abilities for a change. "Did you bring the file with you?"

"Not exactly," Jen hedged. "I was hoping we could take a ride."

Evelyn moved from one foot to the other, trying to generate more warmth. "Where?"

"Ever heard of the Butler Compound?"

"No."

Jen's lips tightened. "Figures. I've tried to get BAU to look more closely at it a couple of times, but I keep getting denied."

Probably for good reason—but Evelyn didn't say that. The BAU office received hundreds of requests every single week, from federal, state and local law enforcement offices all over the country, plus the occasional international request. There was simply no way to take them all on. And many of them genuinely didn't require a profiler.

"If..." Evelyn started.

"You're here." Jen cut her off, hands on her hips. "Just take a look, would you? There's something there. I know it, and I need help."

The desire to follow procedure, to do things by the book, rose up hard. Once upon a time, she'd been a stringent rule-follower. But the desire to contribute again as a real profiler—to get out of limbo—was stronger.

"Tell me what you want," Evelyn said. "And where's your partner?" As a profiler, Evelyn didn't have one, but that was rare. Like most law enforcement, the FBI liked to pair up their agents.

Relief rushed over Jen's face. "I'm between partners. Mine just transferred to another office. But I heard you were here, and I couldn't miss this chance." She suddenly seemed to notice Evelyn shivering. "Want to get out of the cold?"

"Yes."



Jen laughed and nodded at the battered SUV next to Evelyn's rental. She beeped open the doors and climbed inside, turning on the engine. "Hop in."

As Evelyn got into the passenger seat of what was obviously Jen's Bureau-issued vehicle, she flipped the heat up to high, then said, "Give me the basics."

"I can do better than that." Jen buckled up, gunning it out of the parking lot.

A bad feeling came over Evelyn—the strong, sudden certainty that she was heading into something she shouldn't. It mingled with annoyance that Jen had tried to trick her, instead of just asking Evelyn to go somewhere.

"Where precisely are we going?" she demanded, buckling up even as she debated asking Jen to turn around.

"Butler Compound," Jen replied.

"How far is it?"

"About an hour," she answered, but from the way she said it, Evelyn could tell it was actually longer. "And then I'll drive you right back."

Evelyn frowned down at her watch. If she missed her plane, she'd be even higher on Dan's shit list. Which hardly seemed possible.

And if she was going to leave BAU, she wanted it to be her choice, not because Dan Moore had kicked her out.

Jen must have seen her annoyance. "I want you to see the place for yourself," she blurted. "Maybe then BAU will finally believe it's not just some harmless cult."

"What do you think it is?"

Jen glanced at her, intensity in her eyes, then back at the road. "A threat."

"This is remote," Evelyn said, staring out her window at the woods. The trees were thinning as they climbed in elevation, but it was still wilderness. The sun had fully set now, so she found it hard to see much beyond the headlights of Jen's SUV.

They'd been driving just over an hour, and Evelyn had seen nothing more than the occasional lean-to or shack. Snowcapped mountains rose up in the distance. The view was beautiful, but she couldn't imagine anyone living out here.

"Yeah," Jen agreed. "Very remote. Good place to hide out, away from prying neighbors. Away from law enforcement, too."

Jen had finally hung up the call she'd taken almost as soon as they'd gotten in the car, which had prevented Evelyn from getting any more information about why they were going to the Butler Compound. But she'd learned plenty about Jen from her half of that conversation.

"That was your supervisor, huh?"

"Yes," Jen said. "And before you ask, no, I'm not supposed to be doing this. He thinks I'm running down a lead on another case. Which was probably obvious from that call. He has no idea I tracked you out to the prison."

Evelyn nodded. "He may not know about me, but he knows what you're doing."

"What?" Jen whipped her head toward Evelyn, and the SUV jerked. She corrected quickly on the poorly maintained road. "Why do you say that?"

"I could tell from your call."

"You could hear him? What do you have, bat ears?" Jen asked. She'd taken the call on her Bluetooth, instead of putting it on speaker.

"No. But that's what makes me a profiler," Evelyn replied. "Trust me, Martinez. He knows."

It had been obvious from the way Martinez had kept repeating answers to the same questions about her location. Detailed questions, as though her boss didn't believe a word she was saying.

"Shit," Jen muttered. "He warned me to stay away from this."

"Want to tell me what I'm getting into here?"

"Okay. So, the compound is pretty isolated, as you can tell. This group is cut from the same cloth as Cartwright." She glanced over at Evelyn. "Which reminds me, while we're there, call me Jen. Not Martinez. Just Jen. That's how they know me."

Evelyn shot her a disbelieving look. "They know you?"

"Yeah, I've been out there a couple of times. Kind of unofficial, doing the rounds, that sort of thing. They come out and meet me, talk for a while. Usually Butler himself, sometimes with a few of his followers."

"And they bought your reason for visiting?"

"Oh, yeah. Salt Lake City is a big field office, but this area is sparsely populated. People around here are used to law enforcement periodically making goodwill calls."

Evelyn frowned, but didn't argue.

"You ever work at an RA?" Jen asked.

Evelyn shook her head. Most agents now started at one of the bigger field offices, but back when Jen had begun her FBI career, they were still sending a lot of newbies to resident agencies, smaller satellite offices.

"Well, I have. Place quite a bit like this actually, out in Nevada. And it was par for the course, law enforcement checking in on everyone now and then."

Evelyn nodded, still not sure it was a good idea for Jen to be making these visits. On the other hand, direct contact was the best way to get information on a potential problem group.

"Anyhow," Jen continued, "my last partner and I introduced ourselves as FBI, but with first names only. No reason to tell a bunch of racists that I'm married to a Hispanic man."

"They're going to love me," Evelyn muttered. Her mother was of Irish-English descent, but her father had been Zimbabwean. There was no hiding her heritage.

"Yeah, well, the profiler who showed up being a big, white, Aryan-looking guy was probably too much to hope for. Don't worry. The most they'll do is glare at you."

"That'll be fun," Evelyn said, already regretting that she'd agreed to this as she glanced at the dashboard clock. She didn't really mind the animosity of suspects—that was pretty common—but this visit was sounding more and more like a bad idea.

And if the most she had to fear from them was the evil eye, what kind of threat were they?

"The leader, Ward Butler, was friends with Lee Cartwright when they were kids," Jen explained as she sped along the barely paved roads.

Evelyn stared at her. "You know Cartwright's claiming he's got a copycat, right?"

"Yeah, I heard. I wouldn't take anything that guy says at face value, though. He's not exactly the type who'd warn the government. He's more likely to watch the news from prison and cheer when it happens. Or taunt law enforcement, acting like he knows who's copying him, just to get a rise out of us."

"Okay," Evelyn said. "I can see that. But if Butler and Cartwright are friends..."

"Were friends," Jen corrected her. "Like twenty years ago. They grew up together, but there's no indication they've been in contact in a long time. Then they had a complete falling-out when Cartwright went violent, and Butler started his compound."

"So you're saying Butler's group isn't violent," Evelyn said, getting frustrated. "Why are they a threat?"

"They haven't been violent yet," Jen replied. "But I think they're going to be."

"Why? And how long have they been nonviolent?"

Jen slowed the SUV and turned off onto a dirt path. "Just because they've been quiet for a few years doesn't mean they plan to stay that way. Butler refers to the place as a 'refuge' for other survivalists. And we have a lot of those—people who want to live off the land, with no interference from anyone. Most of them wish they'd been born a couple of centuries ago, with no law except maybe a local sheriff, and the chance to be as isolated as they want."

"I know about survivalists," Evelyn said. "And sure, some of them are a problem, but plenty of them just want to be off the grid. Leave them alone and they leave everyone else alone."

The SUV bounced along the potholed trail, and Jen's silence dragged on until she said, "You know the Unabomber's cabin was only about twenty miles from here? His neighbors probably thought he was harmless and just wanted to be left alone."

Evelyn held in a sigh. "You still haven't told me why you think this particular group is more dangerous than any of the dozens of other cults we've got."

Jen's knuckles whitened on the steering wheel. "You're too young to remember some of the crap from the nineties, but..."

"I know enough." Evelyn could see where this was going. "And yes, there's been an uptick in homegrown terrorism chatter over the past few years, but..."

"Officially, the Butler Compound is a low threat," Jen broke in. "The FBI thinks Butler is more likely to feed his followers Kool-Aid than plan an attack against anyone. But I've been around cults. One of my very first assignments was in Waco, Texas." She gave Evelyn a meaningful look.

"The Koresh disaster? You were there?" David Koresh and his followers had been in a fifty-one-day siege after Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agents tried and failed to deliver a warrant. Koresh and his followers had fired on the ATF agents and barricaded themselves in the Apocalypse Ranch—a name that should've set off warning bells from the start. The FBI's Hostage Rescue Team had eventually surrounded the place. In the end, Koresh and the cultists had set their own compound on fire, and most of them died.

"Yeah, I was there. Mostly getting senior agents coffee, but trust me, I have experience with cults. I heard the crazy ranting, I saw the few cultists who came out, I saw the place burn. Hell, I even walked through crowds of protesters and had egg thrown at my face. But this compound is different. It's got some of that same creepy vibe, but I'm telling you, this is more than a simple cult. There's just something *off* about the place. I know there's more happening. And I'm not going to be the FBI agent who overlooks it."

No wonder BAU had refused to take on the file. The Butler Compound had already been evaluated and Jen had nothing but her gut to say there was a genuine threat.

Evelyn was probably going to find a group of survivalists who wanted nothing to do with her or Jen. She'd come home with nothing useful from Cartwright, and an unsanctioned side trip that would make her miss her flight.

Jen must have sensed her frustration, because she said defensively, "See for yourself."

The SUV rounded another bend and the compound seemed to appear out of nowhere. It was a larger building than she'd expected in such a remote place, and much more sophisticated, too. Usually

survivalists built small, and used the materials they found in their immediate vicinity. Not this group.

The compound looked more like an aboveground bunker than a house. Windows were barred as if they lived in the city instead of the wilderness, and there was a tower at the center, rising high in the air, that Evelyn hadn't seen until they'd gotten close. But if anyone was up there, they would've seen her and Jen coming for miles—a single set of headlights approaching through the darkness.

Evelyn peered through the windshield, squinting at the rooftop. "Are those...?"

"Solar panels," Jen broke in. "Yeah. Judging from the chimneys, they have a couple of fireplaces. And I know they've got some massive generators, but they're not hooked up to the grid at all. As far as we can tell, they have no electricity and no internet. They've even rigged their own system to bring in water. They're *totally* off grid."

What a way to live, Evelyn thought but didn't say. Then again, there were plenty of cultists who lived without electricity while their leader had excessive luxuries.

And this group was supposedly made up of survivalists, so maybe they really didn't need modern comforts.

The compound was nestled at the base of a steep, curved peak that would prevent anyone from approaching on either side. The rest of it was surrounded by a tall, chain-link fence, topped with barbed wire. But the gate at the entrance hung open.

"Well, this is kind of weird," Jen said as she drove in.

"What is?" Evelyn asked, sitting straighter.

The group had cut down trees to put up the fence and to keep anyone from scaling a tree to hop over it; inside they'd left the environment alone. There wasn't much more than a few scraggly pines, but they were still big enough for someone to hide behind. No one emerged. She didn't see anyone at all. A nervous shiver crept up Evelyn's spine.

"Usually they meet me at the gate," Jen said, her tone wary.

"How often have you come here?" And how clearly had she advertised her suspicions?

"Just three times."

That would make her interest obvious, Evelyn figured. But where was everyone?

"Maybe BAU was right about the Kool-Aid," Jen joked. Her voice held no humor.

She parked close to the compound, took out her cell phone and started to call someone. She had her door open and was hopping out of the vehicle before Evelyn could suggest they wait.

Swearing, Evelyn followed. Even if Jen had made her suspicions obvious, she knew the people better than Evelyn did. They'd

talked peacefully with her in the past, so theoretically they wouldn't overreact to having her return.

Regardless, Evelyn didn't like it. Not the open gate, not the stillness of the place, not Jen's stubborn insistence that there was danger here.

Cold air stung her throat as soon as she slammed the car door behind her. Either because it was later now, or because of their elevation, it felt another twenty degrees cooler up here. In the Montana wilderness, she needed more than a wool suit and a pair of low heels. She'd taken barely five steps when her fingers started to throb from the cold.

Still, she unbuttoned her suit coat for quicker access to the SIG Sauer P226 strapped at her hip.

Jen followed the set of thick tire tracks that ran off the hard-packed trail and into the looser dirt. As she stepped around the corner of the building, she called out, "Hello?"

Evelyn picked up her pace to follow when she heard Jen exclaim, "Hey, I know you!"

Then Jen walked around the corner again, this time backward, with her hands up and held out to her sides.

Evelyn reached for her weapon, but before she could unholster it, a man came into view.

He was nothing more than a big blur of angry features and camo, because all she could focus on was the modified AK-47 aimed directly at Jen.