

## BOOK THREE

# MOVING ON

MEL BERNETT

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE ABBI & ANDREW TEAM

Abbi's phone buzzed with a call from Judith at the answering service for Carter Private Investigations. Once Abbi had pulled to the shoulder of the roadway, she listened as Judith relayed that a Denver resident's wife had disappeared on her way home from her job north of Castle Rock. Judith continued, "Miss Carter, I'm sorry to disturb you, but he seemed to be getting nowhere with the Denver Police and panicked. He wants to hire your firm to help locate his wife. Can I give you his name and cell phone number?" Abbi replied, "Let me take out my tablet first, Okay continue". A minute later she had given Abbi the caller's name, "Ronald Greene, age 38. His wife, Francine, age 33. His phone number is 720-387-6862."

Abbi called Greene after Judith hung up, explaining that she was currently enroute from Greeley and could see him at 3:30 - 4:00 p.m. today. Ronald gave her his exact address. Abbi thought for a moment and asked, if possible, could he instead come to her offices in Boulder to save time. She also requested a recent photograph of Francine, her cell phone number, the make, model and plate number of her car, and the location, name and phone number of her employer. Once Ronald Greene agreed to meet by 3:00 PM in her Boulder office, Abbi gave him her exact address, as well as the name of Andrew's law office, Wolf-Block-Rome PC, since she was Andrew's subtenant.

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

"I'm good, I'll tell you about my visit tonight at dinner; remember we are eating at Jane's. I have a client for Carter Investigations coming in

at 3:00 today whose wife has disappeared. I need to spend a few minutes preparing an agreement. Would you mind sitting with me when he comes in?” Andrew agreed, and Abbi quickly printed out a contract for Ronald Greene to sign. She put together a check list of what details she had so far and what she still needed from him.

Greene arrived at their offices a few minutes early, and Andrew escorted him to the conference room. He offered coffee, sat with the client and explained his presence. Abbi entered and introduced herself and asked how the driving was coming in from Denver. She also explained that when she spoke to him earlier, she was on her way home from a meeting at Northeast District headquarters of the State Patrol. Abbi explained that she had recently been appointed as Assistant to the Governor to help Colorado contain rising fentanyl deaths. But she explained that it was not a full-time position, enabling her to maintain Carter Private Investigations specifically to help resolve cases like the one Greene had brought to them today. Abbi then went through a checklist of questions which Greene quickly, yet calmly, answered. Andrew asked a few questions to allow Abbi to keep transcribing his responses. Abbi gave Greene a table of fees for services, a service contract and several releases giving Carter access to both his and his wife’s cell phone accounts, as well as access to view all their credit cards accounts to assess any recent activity. Today the retainer was \$1,500, plus her hourly rate of \$150. He signed the set of documents and gave Abbi a credit card. She excused herself and used her laptop as a virtual terminal, processed his payment and returned with his card.

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

Andrew thought for a moment and then looked up. “Abbi, it is definitely a mystery, and he looks legit so far. Are you going to do phone taps now that you have his releases and look at card activity? He mentioned the last time he spoke with Francine was about 7:30 a.m. yesterday, so what about her employer? Did he seem nervous to you?”

Abbi went into her office and opened her computer. She found that Francine worked for Arrow, a huge electronics firm with world headquarters in Centennial CO, 30 minutes south of Denver. She was an executive at Arrow despite her young age. Ronald had explained that they were in the defense industry business, and she had been there six years. When Greene married her, Francine was already employed by Arrow. Ronald was an attorney with a small practice in Denver with four other attorneys. They all handled negligence and typical small dollar cases, primarily for private Individuals suing companies. Francine drove a late model BMW 5 series which was provided to her as a company car. Her husband did not have the plate number but knew that it was a 2023 blue metallic BMW M550i. “Nice car,” Abbi muttered to Andrew, “probably over \$100K.”

Abbi created a timeline: wife Francine leaves her home in Denver at 7:30 a.m. driving the BMW M550i. She drives down I-25 to Centennial CO and presumably arrives at Arrow Electronics. She returns home usually before 6:00 p.m. No text messages either. At 4:39 p.m. yesterday there is a credit card transaction at a Philips 66 fuel stop at mile marker 98.4. Amount charged was \$76.84 on an American Express card. The transaction cleared the card processing company. A second charge appeared one hour later, but this one is at another fuel station 38 miles south of the first. Greene’s car was being driven away from Denver, not towards it. Abbi was puzzled. Her search would begin with these queries:

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

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

These were questions that Abbi couldn’t answer. She asked Andrew if he would take a road trip with her the next morning. Abbi wanted to head in that direction, and Andrew agreed. Francine’s BMW would be easy to spot if it was still along I-25. She suggested that they take a change of clothes. If they end up staying out overnight, they should grab road food, especially if they needed to sit in their car to observe. She said that tomorrow she would drive her Jeep. Heidi was built for anything. She left

their office without Andrew who said he would be home right behind her. She reminded Andrew not to be late; they were having dinner at Jane's.

They picked up dinners to take over to Jane's, and arrived by 5:30 p.m.. Jane was finally looking very pregnant, and she and Bryant were clearly excited. The babies' room was ready, although there would be no crib assembled until their births. Andrew pulled Bryant aside and explained, "You both knew Abbi started her part-time assignment as Assistant to the Governor. I think we naively assumed the Governor simply gave Abbi a nice gold "Retired Lieutenant's badge" and a car. It turned out to be her old, unmarked Dodge Charger. We wanted to talk to you first Bryant, and then to Jane. I talked to Abbi about my concerns not just about her safety going forward, but about everyone's safety as she oversees the state effort to go after fentanyl distribution. The Governor's got his Troopers protecting him, but what about us, you and Jane, my mom, Jane and Abbi's parents? I think there is a serious risk for all of us; I wanted to get your take on this. Oh, I also wanted to tell you Abbi has a new real case for her agency, and we will be on the road, both of us, starting early tomorrow morning, probably just one or two nights, but you can always reach us by cell."

Bryant took a deep breath before responding: "That's a lot to process. You're not wrong. The risk scale just went up, all the way up. Probably not tonight, but after a couple of busts or seizures, Abbi's name will be widely-known. If she gets lucky, the drug cartels or distributors are not going to be happy, and they could retaliate somehow. What they will do is anyone's guess. Jesus, look at the shotgun that got Abbi in the chest; she was very lucky." Bryant paused, "OK, I think for starters, Judge Wilson and Erica can get a State Police driver when they go out. That should be easily approved. Because of her training, someone is going to tell us that Abbi can handle herself, which is probably true for her and for me. That leaves Jane, Esther and you. For the time being, I will volunteer to speak to Esther, and discuss this with Jane. Andrew, you are in Abbi's very capable hands, but you need to plan ahead when making commitments. Let's start there and when you get back, we'll discuss a plan for you alone. I'll call Judge Wilson and explain our concerns. How about some coffee, Andrew, Abbi?"

The next morning after her jog, Abbi showered and dressed in jeans

and a flannel shirt. She found a warm jacket, gloves and boots in their hall closet, and retrieved her Sig Sauer 716i Tread rifle, a box of 308 cartridges and her handgun from the basement gun safe. Abbi had been given the scoped rifle by her father years ago when they hunted on their property near Pike's Peak. She hadn't touched in years but, just in case, she put it into a canvas carrying case. She also grabbed a set of binoculars that were probably 25 years old, but fine for this assignment. Being armed was in Abbi's makeup since she became a Trooper. When she decided to go out on her own as a private detective, carrying a pistol also became her norm. She went up to their bedroom to find a second pair of jeans, another heavy shirt, a sweatshirt from the Academy, and a change of underwear. Her phone and laptop were next. Abbi went to the kitchen and took out 6 bottles of water and 6 power bars. Now she felt she was ready to track down Francine Greene or anyone holding her. Andrew came into the kitchen a minute later, and Abbi explained what he should take and wear. She handed Andrew a duffle bag to pack his clothing while she moved her Charger inside the garage and backed her Jeep out. While Andrew was dressing, Abbi called Esther and explained that she had taken on a case of a missing wife, and that Andrew was joining her on the drive to be another set of eyes for her. By 7:30 a.m., they were ready to leave, stopping once to purchase two subs for lunch that they could eat while sitting in the Jeep observing. Abbi planned to drive first to the Phillips station and ask about the video of Francine's time there, before driving to the second gas station. They also took \$250 in cash, plus a few credit cards.

They reached the first station by 8:45 a.m.. Because Trooper Jason Reynolds, whom Abbi had worked with previously, happened to walk in after them, the attendant was more amenable to showing them the previous day's video when Francine had purchased her fuel. They watched Francine swipe her card at the pump and fill the tank, but when she returned to her car, there was a person in the back seat. They had missed the driver's side door opening while Francine was pumping gas. Apparently someone had hopped over the front seat and hidden in the back. This happened at 4:41 p.m. yesterday.

They then watched the BMW as it drove off the property. Abbi then spoke to Trooper Reynolds and asked for his assistance; he called into his Post and they agreed to lend support. The Troop office would notify both

Reynolds and Abbi via her cell if the car was spotted. Based on the video, Abbi watched as the car was driven south on I-25 toward the scene of the second gas station purchase. They and the Trooper headed that way, with the Trooper leading. At Trooper speed, just under 90 miles per hour with his strobe lights flashing, the drive would only take fifteen minutes. The southbound road was virtually empty. Again, the Trooper convinced the attendant to review the tape from yesterday, and they spotted the white BMW. This time it didn't drive to the pump island, but instead just parked. The station's cameras revealed the driver to be a male, approximately 30 years old, exiting from the driver's side, but there was no one else visible in the car. Francine had vanished. Trooper Reynolds took notes: a Colorado tag was visible on the front bumper, DT-8504, which traced back to Arrow Electronics in Centennial CO. thirty minutes south of Denver .

Abbi phoned Arrow Electronics, and after some explaining, she was connected to Human Resources. Again, she identified who she was, "You appear to have an employee driving a car, registered to your company, that looks like it has been stolen and the driver possibly abducted."

Abbi then asked if the car had a GPS tracker, explaining that she was an investigator for the husband of the employee, but also had a Colorado State Patrol officer now with her trying to catch up to this vehicle. She was employed by Francine Greene's husband. Abbi waited for a response from the HR staffer. Because he knew of her law enforcement experience, Trooper Reynolds was willing to have Abbi take the lead. She also explained to the Trooper that she was recently hired by the Governor as "Assistant to the Governor" and showed her gold badge. She hadn't yet received her state issued ID and business card with the red seal of Colorado. The Trooper was satisfied that Abbi knew what she was doing. While she waited on the phone, he again called into his commander to explain what was happening. They confirmed who Abigail Carter was. Arrow's Human Resources staffer came back on the line and gave her the location of the BMW. According to the GPS coordinates, It was now stationary off of I-25, south of Pueblo. Reynolds headed out first, followed by Abigail and Andrew as they sped down I-25 toward the last GPS location. The Trooper had asked his office to review active cameras along I-25 and learned he might have access to a live feed shortly. While

they drove, Abbi asked Andrew to phone Ronald Greene and provide an update. He put the phone on speaker so they could both hear Greene speaking. Andrew inquired if Ronald had heard from his wife or from anyone. Then Andrew reported to him what they were doing, and that Abigail and the State Patrol were working together. He was with Abigail, and they were near Pueblo CO where Francine's car had been spotted.

The car was parked at a Days Inn just off the Interstate. The Trooper entered the registration office and explained an abduction had occurred, and they believed that the perpetrator was located there. He asked the front-desk manager to take them to his office to show them the recent video of both the outside arrivals and the check-in counter. Within five minutes, both the Trooper and Carter spotted the car, with Francine and a male in the front seat. Then the driver opened the door and entered the motel's registration desk, requesting a room for two nights under the name Brad Foster. He had left Francine in the car, but her wrists may have been taped; they weren't sure.

Reynolds called for backup, and they waited ten minutes for a second Trooper to arrive. The video camera from inside showed them entering Room 223 on the second floor as their destination, but that was hours ago. Carter and Reynolds sprinted toward the room while the second officer located the BMW in the lot and examined it for any signs of a struggle or blood. Andrew stepped forward again, and asked the registration clerk to confirm who had signed for the room. He repeated what he told the Trooper and Abbi: a Brad Foster. Before Abbi and Reynolds had made their approach to the door, Andrew called Ronald Greene to ask if the name "Brad Foster" meant anything.

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

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

door in. Francine weakly screamed, “Help!” Abigail stormed into the room, screaming to Brad Foster, “Don’t move an inch or I will shoot you!”

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

Before Francine could answer, Abbi walked into the bathroom and spotted a plastic glass and two plastic water bottles. She brought them over to Francine, encouraging her to drink one full bottle of water. After she finished the water, Francine wanted to talk. She explained that Brad was an old boyfriend, who started out kind, but after six months, she wanted to break up with him, and he became hostile; that was five years ago. He was unstable, started stalking and verbally accosting her whenever he saw her. That’s when she got a restraining order. She thought that he eventually gave up on her. But somehow, his fixation became alive again and he caught up with her and grabbed her two nights ago. She explained that he had a fantasy that they were going to live together somewhere. She thought if she played along, she could stay stay safe. However, this time when she didn’t show interest or agree with whatever he said, he became violent and had struck her several times. Abbi could see the bruising on her face, arms and wrists. Abbi called Andrew and asked if he could come to the room and bring some ice. Abbi introduced Andrew, and she stepped outside.

She found Reynolds by his cruiser. Abbi asked him if he needed anything further from them since she wanted to drive Francine back to Denver, about 3 hours away. Francine declined to go to the local hospital, but Reynolds had called for an ambulance and paramedic to examine her regardless. When the EMT arrived, Reynolds escorted him up to the

hotel room when Abbi and Andrew were still tending to Francine, The medic examined her, and convinced her to let him to apply antiseptic POLYSPORIN® ointment for her wounds. He also gave her two cold packs to use until she got home, off and on for 20 minutes to reduce any latent swelling. Francine agreed, promising to do as he asked, before signing a release declining further treatment.

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

Then Reynolds approached Francine, Abbi and Andrew. "My commander approved my request to see you safely back to your home in Denver if that is Okay with you Mrs. Greene. It's a long drive and I suggest we get dinner and fuel up? We can have your car towed back to Denver." Andrew spoke first and said to the officer, "If Francine and the state are Okay with it, I can drive her BMW and follow you two." They all agreed. Abbi had already retrieved the BMW car key before Brad Foster was taken away, and handed it to Andrew. Reynolds said there was a decent diner less than one mile up the road. From there it would be a straight drive up the Interstate to Denver.

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

The three cars arrived at Ronald Greene's home at 7:30 PM. He was standing outside when the Trooper pulled up and turned off his emergency light. Francine embraced her husband and Trooper Reynolds interrupted and asked that they all enter Greene's home to finish up some releases that he needed. He first gave Francine his card with his direct number, as well as his Troop's phone and its location. He took a detailed statement which he asked Francine to sign and Andrew to witness. While Francine was taking with Reynolds, Ronald walked into the kitchen and came back with

a large carafe of coffee and cups for everyone. It had been a long day.

Now back at home, Andrew realized that he had never actually seen Abbi at work in a non-violent police role. Yes, he had seen her dressed in her Trooper uniform each morning, but when she came home carrying her patrol rifle and other weapons, Andrew's mind was imagining dangerous scenarios as he watched her lock up her guns. Andrew just heard about her cases, but never actually participated with her. But now he had to admit that today had shown Andrew why the Governor and other superiors were so impressed by Abbi. Her problem-solving skills and quick instincts circumvented possible dire outcomes- not just for Francine, but likely for other victims in the future. For Andrew, he was secure saying that Abbi was his fiancée and soon to be his wife, but he was now impressed and comforted by what he had experienced today, seeing Abbi in this role.

Tomorrow would be a new day for Abbi and Andrew, but a significant chapter had been written today in the life they were sharing, and would continue to share. Even if Andrew wasn't physically with Abbi on cases, he now better understood who Abigail Carter, Private Detective was becoming- and in so doing, Andrew could be at peace with the notion of her being his fiancée, his future wife AND a competent law enforcement officer.

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*Thank you for reading this chapter!*

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