

BOOK ONE

REMAKING ABBI

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CHAPTER TEN

PROTECT & SERVE

Wednesday morning, as planned, Abbi had Jane drive her to Troop 1A/1E in Golden. She arrived in full uniform ready for work at 7:30 a.m. Her shift would start at 8:30 after she was assigned her Ford Utility with Colorado Trooper markings.

Trooper Dan Hodges, her Field Training Officer, greeted Trooper Carter and explained that they would start their tour this day with Abbi following in her new car. Normally, a new Trooper would be a passenger in a Field Training Officer's (FTO) car for the first two weeks. Colorado had started a test program for the highest-ranked Cadets which changed the field training protocol. The change put Trooper Carter alone in her unit. Her assignment was to follow every action the training officer made but observe from her own unit, while listening to each other's radios. Their radios were set to the same channel. Hodges would lead and Carter would observe.

They planned to head for Starkville, near the New Mexico border, right off Interstate 25, a known drug route. Hodges explained he would be making some stops on their way south so that Trooper Carter could familiarize herself with her new territory.

By 9:00 a.m., they were on their way south on I-25. They stopped at various highway intersections so that Carter could observe. Hodges asked Carter to describe what she had seen, explaining that she needed to train herself to focus on looking for what was wrong. The drive took several hours, and Hodges spoke to Carter every few minutes, asking her what she was observing. They continued before Hodges said he might make another stop at the southernmost part of I-25,

Trooper Hodges caught up to a late-model Mercedes-Benz CLS that had been speeding, weaving between lanes, and failing to signal. He and

Trooper Carter turned on their lightbars, and after hearing the siren, the driver pulled over. Trooper Carter parked behind Hodges's vehicle on the far right so that she could listen to her radio and observe. This was not a random stop, but one with serious violations.

Hodges put their position into his console-mounted computer, as well as the make, model, and plate number of the vehicle they stopped. Nothing came back on his screen. Several minutes later, Trooper Hodges exited his car and started to approach the Benz. As he stepped forward, there was a loud blast and flash, and Trooper Carter saw Hodges fall backward. He had been shot!.

Although barely out of the Academy, Trooper Abigail Carter knew her training and immediately changed frequencies on her radio, For the first time as a Trooper, she shouted, "10-13" several times until she received a reply.

"My Partner Trooper Dan Hodges has been shot. Off I-25, mile marker 18 north bound. Send Backup and Medical."

Abigail exited her car, but stood behind her door as she drew her newly issued XR920 Glock 19. The sun was to her right, but she had a clear view of the car and saw the barrel of a gun pointed at her. She yelled a command for the driver to drop his weapon, just before a second gunshot came from the Benz. Trooper Carter returned fire twice. Less than a minute had elapsed between Hodges being shot and Carter returning fire. The first shot struck the glass window of the Benz, shattering it. Carter fired a second shot toward the driver as she looked toward Hodges. Carter called out to Hodges and thought she heard him say "Go!!", but her hearing was off from the shock wave produced by the gunshots.

Carter advanced toward the Benz, keeping herself, at first, behind Hodges's unit and then behind his right front door which was still open. Again, Carter ordered the driver to drop his weapon. There was no reply. She moved again, and this time could see the driver's head slumped forward onto the steering wheel. Carter advanced cautiously and verified no one else was in the Benz. She reached inside and removed the car keys and weapon from the driver and checked for a pulse. Carter rushed back to her partner who lay on his back, reeling in pain and having trouble breathing. Carter used her belt radio and again called for backup. Her

base barracks radio operator replied that an ambulance crew was on the way, but was still about seven minutes out from Trinidad, Colorado, the nearest level IV trauma center. Additional help was also being dispatched to her location.

Trooper Carter was now in charge and needed to focus on her partner. Carter bent down and saw that Hodges was breathing but in pain; Carter didn't see any blood.

Carter realized that her partner may have been saved by his Ballistic vest. It did its job. The vest would stop most rounds fired, but broken or cracked ribs and some internal bleeding were to be expected. She removed a spare jacket from the back of her car and lifted Hodges' head. She found her spare water bottle and asked him if he could sit up and drink; he nodded yes.

As her partner drank, Carter returned to her radio and called her Troop district barracks in Golden. They said units were en route and a helicopter had been dispatched. Carter's training kicked in and guided her next moves. She returned to her car and removed the box of flares. She needed to place them back on the highway to move traffic away from their cars to avoid more injuries.

Just then, a pickup stopped on the opposite side of I-25, and a driver with an orange reflective vest ran to her.

"What can I do?" he yelled. He said his name was Matt, and readily took the flares. Carter asked him to place them fifty yards back to direct cars away from them. They both turned, hearing a siren in the distance. Trooper Carter returned to her partner.

Along with Matt, she kept talking to Hodges, asking if he was in pain anywhere else. He closed his eyes, but added, "Thanks Carter, I need ...".

That was the thing that Trooper Abigail Carter would always remember. She was needed and appreciated.

The Trinidad ambulance arrived a moment later, and placed Hodges on a gurney to transport him to their trauma center. By the time they had Hodges strapped in, the CSP helicopter landed on the median and additional officers started to arrive.

After a brief discussion, it was decided to first transport Hodges, as well as a "Companion Officer" by ambulance to their local hospital. Additional Troopers were en route, and Carter was directed to stay behind. The

Trinidad Hospital would communicate directly with his Golden Colorado barracks which kept medical files on all CSP Troopers.

It was barely noon when Trooper Carter was released from the scene and allowed to visit her partner.

Trooper Carter's mind wandered as she said to herself, "What the hell just happened?"

She would face a panel of investigators, first for discharging her weapon and for causing the death of a civilian. A second-by-second review of each action by both Hodges and Carter would need to be documented before clearing her of any wrongdoing.

Trooper Abigail Carter would have hours of paperwork, interviews and counselling ahead.

She had killed someone.

Day One had not ended as planned.

Thank you for reading this chapter!

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