



Four Years Later

“**O**kay, let’s just all take it easy.”
Focused on the terrified girl, Jeff Powers stood still as her attacker held her shoulders.

“He ... he tried to kill me,” the man stuttered as sweat beaded along his brow, his gaze at the body on the floor.

Jeff nodded. “I saw that he tried to hurt you. What’s your name?”

The man’s voice quivered. “Randal.”

“Okay, Randal. Can you hand me the knife? I think that girl is scared, can you release her?”

“I ... I ...” Randal stammered as his arms shook.

“Randal?” Jeff pleaded to get Randal focused. “Look at me.”

The man’s red-rimmed eyes finally found Jeff.

“I know he attacked you, but I don’t want him to die. And I want you to try and keep calm. Can you do that for me?” Jeff glanced at the girl in Randal’s grasp. Her sobs echoed in the quiet room as tears streamed down her cheeks. Randal’s shaky hand held a knife close to her shoulder.

Once Randal nodded, Jeff scanned the ER. “I need someone to help this man so Randal doesn’t get in more trouble.”

“I’ve got it.” A woman in a white coat pushed forward and knelt next to the bleeding victim on the floor.

“Okay, good. Randal, this doctor is going to work on him, okay? Because if he dies, you’re going to be in a lot of trouble, even more than you’re in now.”

Randal nodded, his eyes bulging.

“If you could let that girl go, we could go talk to the police.”

“You ... you’re not the police?” Randal spoke, but his focus was once more on the body on the floor.

“No, I’m not. I work with the police.”

The doctor suddenly rushed past Jeff and to the other side of the room, rummaging through boxes and then jogging back to her patient.

You’ve got to be kidding me.

Jeff rolled his eyes and took a breath. “Look at me, Randal.”

“What’s she doin’?”

“I’m going to see if I can help, okay?”

Randal nodded emphatically. Taking one last look at the girl in his arms, Jeff frowned. She stood stiffly next to Randal, her sobs silent. Randal’s left arm wrapped around her shoulders, his right holding a knife in front of both of them.

“What’s going on here?” Jeff whispered as he knelt on the other side of the bleeding body, trying to ease his temper with the doctor.

“This man is about to die. His brachial artery was nicked. It’s a slow bleed, but if I don’t get him into surgery in the next few minutes, I’ll be trying to help a dead man.” Her amber eyes glared up at him as she shifted her weight to the injured arm. “You better hurry this up.”

Jeff nodded and stood, taking a slow breath. “Okay, Randal, this is what we’re going to do.” He smiled, pushing out a casual tone. “I’m going to take the knife, and then we’re going to walk outside to the officers waiting to talk to you, okay?” He paused

only a foot in front of Randal, who was still focused on the floor.

In one quick move, Jeff had Randal's right arm pulled up and twisted, making him drop the knife. A woman rushed forward, yanking the still-frozen girl away as he put Randal on the floor, crying and screaming.

"He tried to kill me!"

"Randal, calm down. I know that." Jeff frowned as he noticed the Semper Fidelis tattoo on his forearm. "Easy, man, we'll get you some help." He quickly pulled some zip ties from his back pocket and used them on Randal's wrists.

Easing the man to his feet, Jeff escorted him to the officers outside, noticing Haiden waiting at the police perimeter. A few officers came forward, snatching Randal from his grip.

"Easy, guys."

"What do you mean easy?" The officer gritted out.

"Someone tried to kill him. I saw the attack. Randal relieved the man of his weapon and then he—"

"Tried to kill a little girl. Yeah, we got that part."

Jeff pushed forward, barely containing his frustration at the officer. "That knife never got close enough to hurt her."

"Jeff."

Haiden's stern voice made Jeff step back and head for the perimeter.

"You, okay?" Haiden stood at attention, rifle across his chest, his face void of emotion.

"Not really, but I'll be fine." He looked around. "Where's everyone else?" His team, the Dallas Tactical Response Team, consisted of former military and police to assist when authorities were spread thin.

"Buck, Evan, and Sergio headed downtown for a supposed shooting rampage. They just radioed in and said it was some kid with a BB gun."

"Where's Danica?"

"She's on the phone with Kyra."

“Everything okay?”

“I guess we’ll find out.” Haiden frowned, looking over his shoulder for his teammate and fiancé.

“Did you have line of sight?”

Haiden nodded. “Once I heard yelling, I set up across the street. But I wasn’t going to shoot a man that wasn’t going to do nothing.”

“How could you possibly know that?”

“Just like you said to the officers. If he were going to hurt her, that knife would’ve actually been close enough to do damage. Besides, there were a lot of bodies in that room. My shot would’ve compromised more people.”

Jeff nodded. If Haiden didn’t see a reason to end the man’s life, he wasn’t going to argue. He flexed his hands, then opened up his jacket, letting the mid-morning breeze cool his body.

What a way to start the week. First, the hit and run that pulled him out of church, and now this. If he hadn’t shown up to check on the victim from this morning, he wouldn’t have been here to help.

How could being at one crime scene so easily lead him to another?

“Mr. Powers?”

Jeff turned to see a few officers motioning for him. Giving a wave, he tuned back to Haiden. “Go ahead and leave. I’ll be here for a while.”

Haiden nodded and Jeff headed toward the officers, ready to answer more questions.