

2017-01-01

Babel Underground

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BABEL UNDERGROUND

JOYCE Y. BUTLER

MASTER'S PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING

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BABEL UNDERGROUND

BY

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Creative Writing

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 2017

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BABEL UNDERGROUND

Critical Introduction

Section I: Introduction

During the last two years of undergrad, fall 2010 through spring 2012, I became aware that Americans of African descent were not the only people in the United States who struggle for a place in society. I was not sheltered, I saw other nationalities and ethnic cultures, but I believed that there was a racial dichotomy and if you were not black or of African descent, then you were white – which included Mexicans or those of the Mexican / Latino ethnic group. I came to realize, however, that my understanding of racial dichotomy was incorrect. I found that each ethnic group has its own struggle within the dominant culture. It seems that as the ethnic population increases, the more the dominant culture attempts to stifle its growth. Throughout history the dominant culture in the United States has invited, encouraged, and forced other ethnic groups to come to the United States to serve its own agenda. As a result, these groups have helped make a nation of not just one group, but of many, each with its own language and dialects. And, in the case of the Mexican Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, many were settled on this land long before the territory became part of the United States.

In one undergrad class, we used the text *Language: Introductory Readings* in which we explored the importance of language in different cultures, and the importance of language to individual and cultural identity. While doing a project in the Language class, I ran across an article on a website concerning America adopting English as its official language. It was then

that I decided to write a work of fiction which would explore the conflict this country might find itself in if only one language, in a country of many languages, was forced upon its citizens.

For decades I have heard the cliché that the United States of America is a melting pot, and I believed it. However, the phrase is a metaphor for a diverse society morphing into a society in which the different cultures become one harmonious whole. The problem with the melting pot culture is that the minority nationalities, cultures and ethnicities are assimilated (melted, so to speak) into the dominant Anglo culture, and in doing so they lose their own cultural identities.

Those that support multiculturalism, versus assimilation and the melting pot idea, have suggested other metaphors to describe our society in which our diverse cultures mix, but remain distinct in some facet, such as mosaic, salad bowl, or kaleidoscope. Yet, some still support cultural assimilation, arguing that it maintains national unity. Of course, in promoting cultural assimilation, the issue of language assimilation – the use of English only, or English as the national language – is promoted as well. Through this period of assimilation, however, one culture is basically annihilated and its language becomes extinct. Its entire being is not just changed, but in some cases completely obscured, its properties no longer distinguishable. With time, the individual's cultural identity ceases to exist, and a void is created in the individual's own psyche because the sense of identity and cultural pride is stifled or lost.

James Crawford, the author of “Endangered Native American Language,” a chapter in *Language: Introductory Readings* says that “We appear to have entered a period of mass extinctions – a threat to diversity in our natural ecology and also in what might be called our cultural ecology” (427). Crawford wrote this in 2008, and yet, here we are nine years later – a nation of approximately 327 million individuals who speak almost one language for every million people – who cannot accept that we are who we are because of whom we are. In other

words, some cannot accept that United States is beautiful because of its diversity, not in spite of it. Our nation is beautiful and great because of the 327 million people of different colors, cultures, nationalities, and races that make up the country, and the over 300 different languages that are spoken here.

Among the worst example of cultural annihilation and extinguishment of languages, of course, is the kidnapping of the Africans from various parts of their home continent. My ancestors were forced to learn and speak a language most had never heard prior to the kidnappings. They were forced to denounce all aspects of their culture. They were forced to assimilate into a culture that for centuries did not accept them as equal citizens – and the struggle still exists. However, the assimilation began with the extinguishment of the language. Instead of the dominant culture making an effort to learn the language of other groups and cultures, it forced those people to learn its language and accept its culture; thus, minimizing the importance of the other culture's place in the United States' society.

Jamie Utt wrote an article, “‘Speak American’ – Multilingualism and the English-Only Movement,” published on his website, *Change from Within*. In it he quotes Cesar Chavez who says, “Our language is the reflection of ourselves. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.” If this is true, and I agree with the sentiment of the quote, then multiculturalism and diversity is a must in America. We should not minimize the importance of any culture. We cannot grow as a country if we stifle the growth of our speakers.

Utt states that there is no official language for the United States and that the adoption of an official language was intentionally left out of the constitution. Utt references Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as proof of such non-action in that the government requires public entities

receiving federal funds to provide or offer vital documents in *every language* that their clients speak. Utt's article substantiates my opinion that multilingualism is a natural fit for our nation.

Utt also writes:

While English-Only campaigns have targeted just about every non-English-speaking group of immigrants in the history of the U. S., the vitriol is largely targeted at Spanish-speaking Latino immigrants. As a result, the English-Only movement, as has often been the case in our history, is inextricably tied to racism against those who do not speak English (or don't speak it in the white vernacular that is prized by our dominant culture). Spanish is often described as a "dirty" language, one spoken by those who are lesser-than, who are other, who are not American. As a result, "the 50 million Latinos in the country – 16.3 percent of the population . . . are not accepted or seen as real Americans, regardless of [their] legal or professional status" or their ability to speak English fluently.

The complexity of the language situation in the United States with regard to the Spanish language and culture is that Spanish is spoken by cultures other than Mexican or Mexican-Americans. According to Martin Marger in *Race and Ethnic Relations*, "There are more people of Mexican origin in Los Angeles than in all but one city in Mexico; in New York City, there are more Puerto Ricans than in San Juan; and only in Havana are there more Cubans than in Miami" (209). Although all speak Spanish, it is not the same Spanish that is spoken by every Hispanic culture. In 2016, Hispanic Americans (which include Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Latino / Hispanic ethnic cultures) constituted 17.8% of the United States population, making it the largest ethnic minority. It seems that many English speaking Americans lump all Spanish speaking persons into the one Mexican / Mexican American ethnic group, and it is not always the correct assumption.

Long before I ran across Mr. Utt's article on his website, *Change from Within*, I realized that language is an excuse for many, who do not share Mr. Utt's sentiments, to force individuals whose first language is Spanish, those mostly with a Mexican origin, into a cultural submission of sorts. It is a form of oppression in which a culture is forced to suppress its growth. None of us should stand by and watch it happen.

The conundrum we find ourselves faced with is that the oppression, or threatened oppression, is a part of our present society. As recently as January of 2017, Fox News U.S. published on its website that the President made several changes to the White House website, including that the site was now an "English only" site. The article goes on to say that prior to becoming President, Mr. Trump said of Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, that he should "set an example and speak English while in the United States." Mr. Bush speaks Spanish fluently. When we have a government that encourages abolishing the language of millions of its citizens, we face a difficult task of changing the status quo.

Section II: *Borderlands* Perspective

As a whole, for many years, our society has stood by and watched the Mexican / Latino individuals in this country struggle against the cultural submission that Utt discussed. The border towns between the United States and Mexico are the best examples of this oppression. Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands: La Frontera*, shares a vast knowledge of the trials and frustrations the Mexican immigrants and citizens endure because of the difference in language and culture. Even though Anzaldúa received her master's degree in English and Education at the University of Texas, Austin, and was accepted to the doctoral program, she was not allowed to pursue Chicana literature as a legitimate subject of study. This not so subtle discrimination against a

culture is not a new element in our society. Anzaldúa completed her master's degree in 1972. Although, it is now possible to obtain a Ph.D. in Literature with a focus on Chican@ Literature, as well as study Chican@ Literature in most public schools grades K through 12, such prejudice and oppression continues. The English only attitude targeted at Mexican Americans / Latinos has been ongoing and is escalating.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa speaks of the “dominant white culture” taking away the self-determination of the Mexican / Chicano. She says, “As a people we have resisted and we have taken expedient positions, but we have never been allowed to develop unencumbered – we have never been allowed to be fully ourselves” (108). In essence, Ms. Anzaldúa is saying that the culture of her people is being stifled. It is my thought that this stifling is a form of psychological imprisonment.

Borderlands was written in 1987, and in 2012 it was banned by the Tucson United School System in Arizona. The ban was the enforcement of a law banning Mexican American Studies in public schools; an example of attempted forced assimilation, the future annihilation of a language, and the annihilation of a culture. But, the language of the brown people of color will not be totally annihilated. There are many like Anzaldúa who will use their words, their language, to bolster the very determination she accuses the dominant culture of attempting to take away. They will use both languages – the dominant language and their own.

Anzaldúa, in her Preface to the First Edition of *Borderlands* tells us that the “switching of ‘codes’ in [*Borderlands*] . . . reflects my language, a new language – the language of the *Borderlands*. There, at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized” (19). Whether an individual speaks one language or a combination of languages, the language is representative of the culture of the speaker and integral part of the speaker's identity.

In *Borderlands / La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa shares firsthand the physical struggle of the brown people of color along the United States / Mexico border endure and the inner struggle of retaining, or possibly attaining, a true identity. In the Introduction to the Fourth Edition of *Borderland / La Frontera*, Norma E. Cantú and Aida Hurtado state that Anzaldúa asserts that “living in the borderlands produces knowledge by being within a system while also retaining the knowledge of an outsider who comes from outside the system” (7). By standing on either side of the border, they see home, but neither home accepts them as family.

Many of those living in the borderlands live in poverty and are tempted by promises of a better life for them and their families, and many cross the border for that reason, but are shunned by those that stay. When they cross the border, they find that the very ones, the dominant culture, who enticed them to come to the United States, now treat them as a subordinate culture willing to assimilate them as a whole, but not accept the culture they bring with them. The borderlands are not just those poverty-stricken villages south of the border, but also the border towns on the United States side. Anzaldúa identified with the border people having grown up in poverty in South Texas. She writes:

Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders

Because I, a *mestiza*,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me Zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me bablan
simultáneamente.

A *mestiza* is a woman of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry. A woman of mixed cultures. A woman who struggles with not the physical borders between America and Mexico, but the inner borders built by the circumstances of birth and beliefs. In this struggle of borders, Anzaldúa tells

us that her soul is between two worlds, three, four. The cultures – borders – are contradictory. She is disoriented with all the voices (cultures) that speak to her. While the *mestiza* struggles with the identity within the culture(s), she, along with other members of her ethnic culture, must also struggle with the prejudices and discrimination received from the dominant majority.

Borderlands sets forth that the white culture attack the “commonly held beliefs” of the Mexican culture and both cultures “attack commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture” (100). The result of this duel is that those of the non-dominant culture see the attacks as not just attacks on their beliefs, but on them as individuals. A decision is made to act instead of react to the attack.

This duel of cultures is expressed in my novel, *Babel Underground*. The novel is set in 2095, in a future version of the United States, now called the United Regions of America, in which the country's "Unity Council" has passed an English-only law, and is actively targeting Spanish speaking people. Because of her belief in multiculturalism, Professor Dayna Thomas encourages her Spanish speaking students to take a counter stance and claim their culture; to embrace their culture within the dominant culture. However, as Anzaldúa states, the counter stance “locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed” (100). Those being oppressed must make a decision: Take a stance and claim their culture, or give up their culture, “disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory” (Anzaldúa 101). Targeted by government harassment, and by violence from those sympathetic to the English-Only law, Spanish speaking citizens are forced to decide between submitting to the law's dictates, or to escape to an underground sanctuary. The story of *Babel Underground* is one of seeking sanctuary in order to separate instead of

assimilate. It is a story that asks the question concerning the quality of life in the United States if in the present we allow the oppression of non-English speaking citizens to continue.

Section III: Format of *Babel Underground* – Speculative Fiction

Given the United States' history, the government's oppression of an ethnic group living within its boundaries is not speculative at all. However, oppression and discrimination exacted upon any group until many of its members feel they have no choice but to flee to an underground city, could be considered science fiction. Speculative fiction is a broad literary genre encompassing any fiction with supernatural, fantastical, or futuristic elements and it includes science fiction. *Babel Underground* falls into this somewhat unique genre in that it employs futuristic events, and somewhat fantastical technology. *Babel* is set in a future that has come about as a result of choices made in the twentieth century and the first half of the twenty-first century. However, *Babel Underground* is not science fiction. Ursula K. Le Guin, the author of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, says in her Introduction that “[s]cience fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative. . . . ‘If this goes on, this is what will happen’” (xi). Since speculative fiction encompasses science fiction, extrapolation is also an element of speculative fiction. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is science fiction under the umbrella of speculative fiction. Although *Babel Underground* is not a work of science fiction, per se, it is extrapolative. Do I believe without a doubt that if a law is passed in Congress making English the official language of the United States of America that non-English speaking citizens will find themselves enduring more racial persecution? I hope not. Using the formula for speculative fiction, I pose the following: If this (the English Only movement) goes on, then this (the future for non-English

speakers, specifically the Spanish-speaking Latino / Mexican immigrants could be dire) could happen.

When a situation escalates to dystopian proportions, extreme measures are taken to resolve the matter. An example of this is shown in Sutton E. Griggs' novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, written in 1899. In *Imperium*, black men formed a secret organization and purchased land in Texas with plans to secede from the American government and set up its own government – a nation within a nation. It was to be a sanctuary where those of African descent, whether freed slaves or those born free could live without the stigma attributed to skin color.

The online *Oxford Reference* described *Imperium* as “a visionary work positing the establishment of an underground organization of educated and militant African Americans bent on either an elimination of injustice in America or the establishment of an autonomous state.” Although the Oxford Reference described *Imperium* as a “visionary work,” *Imperium*'s genre can also be categorized as speculative fiction, not because of any science fiction element, but because of the extrapolative element – if this [racial prejudices and atrocities] continues to go on, then this [a new nation will be formed] is what could happen. As in *Imperium in Imperio*, *Babel* also posits the establishment of an underground organization and city which acts as a sanctuary for any non-English speakers as well any sympathizers to the cause. Both *Imperium in Imperio* and my novel, *Babel Underground*, contain elements of extrapolation. However, while *Babel* is somewhat futuristic, *Imperium* is not. Yet, both novels could be considered speculative fiction.

Another novel which is considered speculative fiction is *The Man in the High Castle* written by Philip K. Dick. During the time Dick wrote *The Man in the High Castle*, America was in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, and U. S. and Russia were engaged in what was called the cold war. The story Dick wrote is not a futuristic America. It is an alternate America

based on a “what if” scenario. What if the United States had lost the war? What if Germany and Japan, as allies, had won the war and now they both occupy the United States? *The Man in the High Castle* causes the reader to meditate on those questions and speculate as to the answer. Philip K. Dick goes a bit farther, he not only causes his readers to think about those questions, his characters are afforded the same opportunity – to think about the questions and speculate as to the answers: What if America really did win war? The same question is set before Dick’s characters by way of the book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, written by the fictional author, Hawthorne Abendsen, a character in *The Man in the High Castle*.

Questions which may be asked after reading my novel, *Babel Underground*, are, “What if the government does pass a law making English the official language of the United States? How far will the people let such a law reach? Will the country rescind some of its statutes and laws and procedures currently in place with regard to the publishing of federal documents, education, and/or or citizenship?” These questions are speculative, and as such, by a strict definition of the word “speculative,” *Babel Underground* would fall within the genre of speculative fiction.

One online dictionary used speculative in the sentence, “a writer with a speculative mind.” I would suggest that all fiction writers have speculative minds. We take a subject and from pure curiosity extrapolate it – predict by projecting past experience. In the case of *Babel*, the past experience projected is the history of the U. S. with regard to Spanish speaking and other minority citizens.

Section IV: Critical Examination of *Babel Underground*

In *Babel Underground*, Dr. Dayna Thomas is an advocate for cultural diversity and a multi-lingual society in a time when the English only law is, after decades of attempts, finally

being implemented. To enforce the new law, the Agency, a new policing arm of the government, is harassing, arresting, and sometimes causing the disappearance of Spanish speakers in an effort to force submission to the new law. The law not only makes English the national language, but makes it illegal for all other languages to be spoken in public. This concept is somewhat extreme, and will probably never come to pass. However, a stance and counter-stance between the government and the proponents of the English only law and the non-English speakers, specifically Spanish speakers, is inevitable. The non-English speakers have a choice to make: Assimilate or separate and go underground. If the non-English speakers make the choice to separate, then that choice entails joining the Unity Through Diversity organization and moving underground – literally. The dream of Janssen Heard, whose ancestors were African, Anglo, and Mexican, the underground community was inspired by the secret kept by many slaves and their sympathizers, the Underground Railroad. Janssen Heard handed down his dream and plans to build an underground city to his descendants. A century later, under the leadership of Janssen Heard IV, many underground communities exist and the Unity Through Diversity organization is known throughout the country – but illegal in light of the English only law.

Babel Underground is written 75 years into the future. In the year 2095, technology has advanced, but human nature and society have not. Americans of African descent have assimilated into the dominant society and the now United Regions of America, is focusing on the Latino/Hispanic culture.

The discrimination and prejudice targeting the Latino/Hispanic language, and its culture is not a new thing. The border towns of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas have long been in the news media with regard to conflicts of one variety or another. However, despite the conflicts, people are willing to die, risking their lives, to come to the United States. Although

most are natural citizens, they too, endure the same discrimination and prejudice just because of the language. Many Spanish speaking citizens have been tempted and tantalized by the promise of higher wages and a better way of living, only to find that in order to truly obtain higher wages and a higher social class, they must sacrifice their culture and eventually their language. What choices do they have in order to freely exercise their cultural heritage?

The decision to move underground is one that Dr. Dayna Thomas in *Babel* is hesitant to make. She understands wanting to live in an atmosphere of freedom from persecution and discrimination – to be free of the constraints of the English only law, but struggles with the idea of forfeiting one freedom for another. Forfeiting one's freedom, whether it is the freedom of speech or the freedom of movement, is not a choice any human makes without weighing the cost. In the end, Dayna and her group decide not to assimilate or separate, but to take a stand before the governmental council. The story ends before Dayna and her group confront the government with their request for change. However, long before the end, *Babel* evidences that it is also a story of differences and how different cultures can work together for a positive change.

Of course, *Babel Underground* is not the first novel, and not the first speculative fiction novel to address issues of cultural difference. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Ursula K. Le Guin tells of a bond created between two people of different worlds – different galaxies. One, a human, Genly Ai, and the other, an alien, Therem Harth rem ir Estraven. They form a friendship as they journey across the frozen world of Gethen. During the journey, Genly begins to understand a little of the culture of Gethen, which he also calls Winter. Therem and Genly's friendship, in spite of their differences, is the material that eventually builds the bridge between the two alien cultures. But, before they were friends, each was xenophobic of the other, yet drawn to each other by curiosity – or possibly, an unexplainable attraction. As they began their

journey across the frozen expanse, called the “Gobrin Ice,” Therem Harth rem ir Estraven referred to Genly Ai, as “Mr. Ai.” A conversation ensued in which they decided to call each other by more the casual names of Ai and Harth, their respective surnames.

When Ai asked, “Who uses first names?”

Harth replied, “Hearth-brothers, or friends.”

Ai mused to himself, “[No] friend to Therem Harth, or any other of his race. . . . no love between us” (Le Guinn 213, 214).

To say that Ai had difficulty understanding the culture of the Gethenians is an understatement. The two cultures were so different that Ai is tempted to give up on his mission to facilitate the inclusion of Winter in the Ekumen, the galactic alliance of human worlds. He did not like Harth, or “any of his race” purely because of the cultural differences. It is the same between some members of various cultures even in our present society: We are not the same as the others. We do not speak the same language. We will not be friends. There will be no love between us and them.

Yet, as Ai and Harth traveled, worked hard to survive the icy terrain during the day, and shared openly their thoughts as they lie in their tent at night, each learned about the other. At one point, Harth reflected on Ai’s change and thought to himself, “Maybe we have learned to pull together” (222). That is, perhaps, the essence of multiculturalism and a multi-lingual society: learning to pull together.

I do not need to speak the same language to understand the struggle – to know that the goal of every human, every culture, is basically the same – survival. Some Americans have forgotten, and many do not know, that the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence states that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are

endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” No person can exercise his or her unalienable rights, if the right to speak the language of their culture is taken away, or, in the course of pursuing life, liberty and happiness, the dominant culture exacts prejudices and discrimination against anyone who doesn’t speak its language.

While Hispanic Americans were not kidnapped and enslaved into American society, as those of African descent, for the most part they do have the heritage of having been absorbed into this society as a conquered group. The Mexicans were in the United States before the forty-eight contiguous states became united. I find it interesting to note that the groups that have been conquered and coerced into American society throughout history are the same whose culture and language are being targeted for annihilation. This process of minority inclusion into the United States’ society is parallel to the involuntary inclusion of those of African descent. Once slavery was abolished, the freed slaves and for over a hundred years their descendants, had to fight for a foothold and a place in American society – and in some respects, the fight continues. After the emancipation, the black community could not agree on the best possible means of making a place for itself in society.

In *Imperium in Imperio*, one main character wanted the black population to be totally separate from American society, the other wanted to assimilate and work at becoming a part of American society. The American society and its government, as a whole, wanted neither. Or, maybe it is more correct to say that it wanted both – assimilation into the dominant society, and separate but not equal with the dominant society.

The situations in *Imperium* and in *Babel* are parallel in that both groups are denied total freedom to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in ways conducive to their culture.

As a result, men and women attempt to find a refuge – a sanctuary – within the nation, but without the limitations placed on them by the government.

In *Babel*, the political and social atmosphere is the result of governmental changes made and laws passed during the first half of the 21st century. A national council is formed and the 48 contiguous states no longer exist. The country is divided into four regions aligned with the respective time zones: Pacific, Mountain, Central, and Eastern. In order to decrease the number of representatives on the national council, each region is governed by a director of Northern Region and a director for the Southern Region each of who report to the main director for that region. Both the northern and southern borders of Regional America have been closed and a wall has been erected along the southern border of the country. After over a century, the government, in an attempt to legalize its racial prejudices and discrimination, passes the law setting forth English as the official language of Regional America. The new law rescinds all prior governmental edicts with regard to printing and posting all public notices in multiple languages, especially Spanish. Manufacturers are not permitted to print instructions for goods in any language other than English. All public instructions and signs, including traffic signs, are only in English. Most importantly, the educational system from elementary through government funded colleges and universities are forced to remove all foreign languages from their curricula. Private schools can teach and speak whatever language they choose. However, only English can be spoken in public places – even if speaking to a family member.

As such, *Babel Underground* takes a look at what could happen should English not only become the official language, but the only language allowed in America. Its view is from the lens of a non-Spanish speaking professor of cultural diversity, Dayna Thomas. She sees the conflict and the struggle her Spanish speaking students endure. She is empathetic to the situation in

which the Spanish speaking community finds itself because of the similar situation the Americans of African descent endured in earlier decades of the country's history. She encourages her students and their families to take pride in their culture and to make a stand for their right to speak their own language, anytime and anywhere they choose. As the persecution against the Spanish speaking community intensifies, threats against Dayna also intensify. However, she continues to speak out for the cause, in spite of the subtle warnings from her friend, Caryn Giordano.

To counter the new law and to defend the ethnic minorities targeted by the law, a private organization, Unity Through Diversity, surfaces. Founded by the great-grandfather of Janssen Heard IV, the current leader of the organization, the UTD has been in existence for centuries. The first Janssen Heard was of mixed race – white, African, and Mexican. He moved his family and workers to an underground compound with secret exits and entrances, in order to separate himself and his family from the persecution and discrimination of the late 1860s. They lived underground and used extended tunnels with entrances in basements of the homes of sympathizers. By the time Dayna becomes aware of the UTD, at least one underground city is in each region of Regional America, with many smaller sanctuaries, below and above ground. These communities are inhabited by non-English speaking citizens and English speaking sympathizers. However, as in today's society, not everyone agrees with UTD. When Grigg's wrote *Imperium in Imperio*, not everyone agreed on the path the black race should take within America.

There was no answer to the social and political dilemma for the black race then, nor is there one now for the brown race. If in *Borderlands*, we see Anzaldúa's inner struggle, in *Babel*

Underground we see the struggle and those inner conflicts rise to the surface. My novel questions society's responsibility toward all citizens, not just the dominant majority.

What if America votes to have English as its official language and refuses to continue to accommodate other languages by removing the choices on ATMs, on instructions for the use and assembly of consumer goods, on public documents, etc.? What if we refuse to teach other languages in schools, and force non-English speaking children to speak English? What if we close borders? What if we allow the government to do to the Spanish speaking people what it did to the Native Americans? What if we force assimilation of the many non-Anglo cultures in America? The novel parallels history and projects the current political atmosphere into the future with regard to language and the diverse cultures in America, specifically the Mexican American community. The English only law has been in the making for many years. Our current President's comments about a wall and closing borders and the general negative atmosphere in which some Spanish speaking people find themselves are all elements of our present political and social atmosphere. This attitude with regard to the brown people of color could extend to a future as set before the reader in *Babel Underground*. *Babel* does not attempt to give an answer, but proposes to the reader the situation of the Spanish speaking Americans of Mexican / Latino descent by imagining a possible future in which our current political reality has led to a world of legalized discrimination and oppression.

As shown in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, this discrimination and oppression has long been a part of life for those of Mexican / Latino descent in the United States and is thus the real foundation for the conflict in *Babel Underground*. Likewise, Griggs' *Imperium in Imperio* becomes a model for *Babel Underground's* idea of the underground city – the sanctuary. However, as the novel progressed, I found that I became conflicted in my own opinion with

regard to a resolution to the dilemma. As my characters grew and evolved, so did I. I saw the struggle and I empathized.

V. Conclusion

I understand wanting to live in a society that does not make judgments based on the color of my skin, or the language I speak before the merits of who I am are even considered. But, is the conflict severe enough, or the prejudices and discrimination more than I can tolerate? Is living separate without ever trying to make a peaceful change in society worth forfeiting certain inalienable freedoms? In *Babel*, living underground is a physical move, but it is also an emotional, psychological choice. When we separate ourselves from society in general, even as a group, there are sacrifices we have to make.

Dayna realized that while living underground was tempting, at first, it would only be a temporary fix. The underground residents would have the ability to voice their language of choice, but they would not be able to move about above ground. They would essentially be prisoners. Would underground imprisonment be worth the sacrifice?

The promise of the United States is freedom for its citizens. Yet, when we look at our current social and political atmosphere with regard to those citizens who are counted in the minority, what do we see? We see those with the power to do so, creating subtle ways in which to further marginalize certain cultures in the United States, in order to increase the power and insure the majority position of the dominant culture.

However, there are many who do not agree with the idea of English as America's official language, or as an English only mandate, as set out in *Babel*, and *Babel* evidences this sentiment.

The characters who join the Unity Through Diversity group are representative of various cultures, including the dominant culture.

There are also Spanish speaking citizens, in today's society, as mirrored in *Babel*, who agree with the dominant culture. These citizens are bi-lingual and they choose to speak English, and that is their choice. We all have that choice and no one group should deny any individual the freedom to make it. However, should walls ever be built, or borders closed, or English become our official language, will we retain the freedom to make the choice?

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BABEL UNDERGROUND

Joyce Y. Butler

*Now the whole earth had one language and one speech ...
and God then scattered the people and scrambled the language.*

Genesis, Chapter 11 – The Holy Bible

Chapter 1

Dayna decided to take the shortcut across the high school campus along the tree-lined roadway. She pulled the hood of her jacket over her head and put her hands in her pockets. She really enjoyed walking in the fall evenings. The cool air, the smell of the fallen leaves as she crunched over them all brought a sense of peace. She looked at her watch. She was four or five blocks from her house and was planning to take a warm shower and get into bed early. She was a little hungry after stopping at her friend Caryn Giordano's house. Caryn had been cooking and the smell was just enough to make Dayna hungry. It was 7 p.m. The street was quiet. The few cars that passed were turning into driveways ahead of her. Everyone was going home. It was shadowy in places, but Dayna felt safe on the school campus. When she rounded the curve she passed a group of students in a parking lot talking loud, bouncing a basketball between them as they talked and pushed and played around. They didn't see Dayna at first. She heard one of the boys say something in Spanish to one of the girls. Dayna didn't understand, but both were smiling so she smiled at them as she passed. The group of about eight or nine teenagers, some Anglo, some Latino, and a couple of Blacks, girls and boys, all stopped talking and stood still.

The Latino girl said in English, "It's okay. It's Dr. Thomas." A couple in the group smiled and looked relieved. Others didn't know Dayna.

"He didn't mean anything." The girl continued, "We were just playing around. It was a joke and a dare. You know, about speaking Spanish in public. We didn't expect to see anyone and didn't know you, or any one was here. You won't tell anyone you heard him speaking Spanish will you, Dr. Thomas?" The girl looked concerned.

"No. No, of course not. How do you know me? I apologize, but you don't look familiar to me. You aren't at the university, are you?"

“No, but I plan to attend there in next fall. I’m Estrella. I was with my parents, and Mario, the jokester here, and Lillian over there, at a, um, house party last month. That was a crowded party, we didn’t get a chance to meet, but we heard your talk.”

“I see.” Dayna wasn’t concerned about Estrella or the Latino students, but she wasn’t sure how much they could trust the White kids, or the Black ones for that matter.

“I’m sorry we didn’t get a chance to visit at the party. Hopefully, next time. We’d all better hurry home.” Dayna looked at the diverse group of teenagers.

“Always be aware of your surroundings – and, your friends. These are difficult times, Estella. Be safe and hurry home you guys.” Dayna gave a quick wave and continued on the campus roadway as it curved along toward the public street. She walked along the roadway and thought about her Cultural Diversity class at the university and the English Only mandates which were to be implemented by the end of the school year. Dayna felt the English Only Law would polarize friendships such as the group she had just encountered. Deep in her thoughts and concerns, Dayna didn’t notice the black SUV slowly following her. When she passed the Bus Loading Zone sign, the SUV sped up and Dayna noticed it was behind her. She jumped onto the grass, but stumbled and fell. Before she could stand up, a large guy grabbed her, slammed a heavy gloved hand with a dirty cloth into her face and knocked her to the ground. She hit her head on a rock and passed out.

Dayna woke up to the sound of men’s voices. She was in a cage on an old dirty mattress on a concrete floor, in what looked to be a basement. She had a strange chemical taste in her mouth. She was disoriented. As she tried to clear her head, she strained to hear what was being said.

"They told us not to hurt her, just scare her. Why did you bring her here? We can't let her go because she'll be able to identify us."

"Naw, she won't. She hasn't seen our faces, just the truck – maybe. Anyway, we can get rid of it. We need to find out what she knows before we dispose of her."

Dayna could hear the conversation, but she didn't recognize the two male voices. *What? Dispose of me?* She slowly stood and dusted herself and straightened her clothes. She was a little unsteady.

"So, Dr. Thomas, you're awake. I apologize for the mess. We were not exactly expecting you. It doesn't matter." The man standing in front of Dayna was looking at her with the eyes of a predator. In spite of the nausea and headache, she managed to stare back with a steady gaze through the bars. "Why are you so important to the Agency? Hmmm?" Dayna continued to size him up. She didn't answer. "Look, we really don't want to do anything that would – umm -- cause pain, Dr. Thomas," Jason Graham said with a sneer, "But you've got to cooperate. Just answer a few questions." Dayna continued to stare. As her head cleared, her determination to show no fear crept in.

"Come on, Jason. The Agency knows what they're doing. We aren't supposed to interrogate her. We weren't even supposed to take her – just scare her, remember? That witch of a director won't like it at all, when she finds out that we actually kidnapped her instead of just running her off the road," said Lenny Markovic. He was standing a little behind Jason and watching Dayna as Jason tried to get her to talk. Jason was intimidating when he wasn't angry, but now for some reason, he seemed to really want to hurt the woman, half his size, and standing her ground – although she was barely standing. Lenny began to feel sorry for her. He didn't know

what Jason would do, but he knew what he was capable of doing. He had seen his work a couple of months earlier when an entire family was first interrogated and then disappeared.

“Well, she’s been threatened and now I’ll bet she’s scared. Aren’t you, doctor?” He spit out “doctor” as if it was a sour and nasty taste in his mouth. Lenny turned to leave the room, as Jason began to unlock the small cage. Dayna stood backed against the back bars. Her eyes never left Jason.

“What are you doing?” Lenny asked.

“Nicely asking the professor why the boss wants her out of our hair isn't working. Maybe if I get a little closer, she'll loosen up and be more eager to share information.” Jason's voice had an edge to it that caused Lenny to change his mind about leaving. Dayna watched Jason unlock the cage. It was barely tall enough for Jason to stand up to his full height of 6' 3". Once inside the cage with Dayna, Jason grabbed her arm. Dayna let out a scream and kneed Jason as hard as she could in the groin. She jumped through the cage door while he was doubled up. She ran out of the cage and into Lenny who grabbed her. She began to kick and beat him on the chest with her fist. Dayna continued to kick and scream as Lenny slammed the cage door and locked it with Jason inside. He changed his hold on her, threw her over his shoulder and carried her up the stairs out into the night. All the time Dayna was screaming, kicking and flailing her arms. Lenny was taller and bigger than Jason. Dayna's 5'4" inch, 110 pound body was no match for him. Dayna's beating on his back and kicking him in his stomach had no effect on Lenny. By the time they got to the top of the stairs she was in a full fit of hysteria. When he finally got her outside, he let her down, but held her and growled that he wouldn't hurt her. He did feel sorry for her — but he didn't want her to run away either. He had to figure out a way to get both he and this woman out of the mess he impulsively put them in. Dayna continued to sob although she was no

longer trying to get away. Lenny held her tightly against his chest until she calmed down. He could feel Dayna's heart beating fast and hard.

"Okay. Now. Stop. Crying. You need to see where you're going!" Lenny's stern but quiet voice surprised Dayna. She immediately stopped crying. She closed her eyes, wiped her face on his jacket sleeve, and tried to focus on his words. "We've got to get out of here. I didn't have time to take Jason's phone so he'll be calling for backup. We can't use the Jeep because they'll be looking for it. Can you walk - fast?" Lenny eyed Dayna, assessing her physical condition. The ether Jason held to her face in the car seemed to be wearing off sooner than they thought it would.

"Well. . . ?" Dayna nodded. "I think so, but where?"

"Let me think about that." Lenny paused. "If we could get to your house, they might not think to look for you at home."

"My house? You – you know where I live?" Bewildered and afraid, Dayna silently said a prayer for help and courage.

"Yeah – about. Not close to here. About seven or eight miles," Lenny replied.

"Where are we? I don't recognize this place." Dayna stuttered. The building Lenny had just carried her out of looked like one of the old highway rest stops she had seen pictures of in the city's historical archives, but this one had an underground room. She could hear the faraway sound of the highway.

"We are about five miles from the east side of town. Actually, this place was once under water – under the river. When the city rerouted the river a while back, this place appeared. Not sure what it was used for before then, or why it is below ground level, but the Agency uses it to,

umm, interrogate their guests,” Lenny stuttered. He took off his ball cap and ran his hand through his hair. He watched Dayna catch her breath

“The Agency? The Agency had me kidnapped. Why?” Dayna took another deep breath, and eyed Lenny with mistrust.

Dayna lived about three miles from the old industry section located on the east side of town. Now she had an idea of where they were, and knew that to keep under cover of trees and brush they would have to walk about five miles out of the way. She was glad that she jogged and worked out, and that she had taken that self-protection class last month. She was in pretty good shape for sixty. She cleared her throat.

Lenny had put her down, but was still holding her arm. He let her go and nudged her to start walking. He stayed close, ready to run if she did. He was surprised that she kneed Jason so hard. He didn't know how fast she could run. He knew he could handle her once he caught her – but he wasn't sure he could catch her. They started out of the clearing. It was cloudy and both were wearing dark clothes. Jason and Lenny had not removed Dayna's coat when they grabbed her. She pulled up the hood. Lenny walked next to Dayna. He hoped he had made the right decision. As they walked at a steady pace through the underbrush, Dayna watched Lenny out of the corner of her eye.

"Why?"

"Why what?"

Why me? Why kidnap me?"

“Jason did it on an impulse. You are very important to the boss lady. I hear you've been on her grid for a while now. You know the Agency is cracking down on this whole Spanish speaking thing – the people and those who agree with them. You’ve been very vocal about

rejecting the EOL. The Director hates that.” Lenny had not liked the idea of kidnapping Dayna, and sure didn't like Jason's idea of harming her just to get on the director's good side. “I'm for following the rules, and we were *not* to kidnap you. Just scare you. You know, intimidate you.” They walked along in silence. He heard a noise behind him and smiled.

“You hungry?” He laughed a little and pulled out a granola bar from his jacket pocket, and tossed it to Dayna. She caught it with one hand.

“Thanks. How'd you know?” She asked, sheepishly.

“Well, I don't think there are any critters out here that sounded like what I just heard!” Dayna noticed the jesting in his voice. She wondered what sort of guy he was when he wasn't kidnapping defenseless women.

“So, how did you get into this line of work?” She asked sarcastically. Dayna slowed her pace as she opened the snack and began to eat. Lenny paused and let her catch up.

“I didn't want to kidnap you,” he said.

“That's not what I asked.” She looked at his eyes, waiting for him to answer, as she chewed slowly on the much appreciated granola bar.

“Well, let me think.” They began walking again, a little slower, and Lenny continued, “I guess I've always been 'in this line of work'. I spent thirty years in the military – Army, and I loved it. I served through two wars, although the government would want us to say “conflicts,” but it was war. I finally retired at fifty, ten years ago. I realized that we are in a war, so to speak, here at home. Everybody is against everybody else for some reason or another. You could, and can, pick almost any subject and there is conflict. The biggest one right now, as you obviously know, has to do with enforcing the English Only Law. The government has initiated more violence because of the EOL than many realize. Anyway, until about five years ago, I just

collected my retirement pay and sat back and shook my head – and did nothing. I received a letter saying that my government needed experienced people for a special project, and that because of my valiant and honorable service, I had been chosen for a special task force. I accepted, and here I am, kidnapping 110 pound college professors,” he said in a sarcastic tone. “And a black one, at that!” He mumbled.

“What did you say?” Dayna asked.

“Nothing. Anyway, when I was first recruited, my job was to simply investigate and intimidate – I and I: Interrogate Spanish speakers that the Agency had arrested for infractions, or members of the UTD, or sympathizers to the Spanish speakers, and then use the Agency’s imaginative methods to persuade the sympathizers or members to publicly denounce membership in UTD, and recruit those that did to the Agency. The problem with that was that we are never sure who was sincere and who just wanted us to stop the interrogation. I, personally, hadn’t come across any confirmed or confessed UTD member or sympathizers – until you. I was told that the South Central Division of the Agency quietly began recruiting a year after the states were realigned into regions, before I was recruited. We just held the Spanish speakers in undisclosed locations. Undisclosed to even some Agency operatives.”

“Why haven’t you come across any members or sympathizers until me? It’s a known fact that the Agency has been antagonizing the Spanish speaking community,” Dayna retorted with a tone of anger. “Actually, I hear that not all of the antagonizers are government agents. Some are vigilantes causing the problems, but the government doesn’t stop them. Do you know if that is true?”

“I don’t know about any vigilantes.”

“How long do you hold the Spanish speakers? It’s hard to believe you can do all you do to the Spanish speakers, and not find their friends.” Dayna sped up her pace and walked in front of Lenny.

“We hold them indefinitely. They don’t talk. They don’t give info on friends, or family,” Lenny said quietly and slowed his pace so that he was a few steps behind Dayna.

Lenny stood back in the shadows in the corner of the abandoned warehouse and watched while two other ex-military agency operatives screamed in face of an older Mexican woman tied to a chair. They repeatedly asked her the location of her husband. Each time she answered in Spanish. Each time both hit her with their fist in her abdomen or her face. The two operatives didn’t speak Spanish. Lenny understood, but would not tell the operatives he spoke a limited amount of Spanish. She repeatedly said she didn’t know. He watched the interrogation until the old woman passed out.

“Come on. Let’s go. She won’t tell us,” said one. The other just slapped her one more time and walked to the door.

“You just going to leave her here?” Lenny stepped out of the shadows and also headed to the door.

“Yeah. Maybe her husband will miss her and come looking for her. Maybe.” The first operative laughed and left the warehouse. Lenny walked behind him. He left the warehouse door open.

The second operative was sitting behind the wheel of the black SUV. “Hurry up, guys. I am starving. This work makes me hungry.” He rubbed his hands together, then rubbed his stomach.

Lenny and the remaining operative climbed in the vehicle and the three drove away. Later that night, Lenny drove back to the warehouse. The old woman wasn't there. The next day he heard that the body of an elderly Mexican woman was found on a road near the abandoned warehouse. It looked like a hit and run.

"What about you? How did you end up being chased by a guy like me?" Lenny caught up with Dayna who was just finishing the granola bar.

Dayna balled up the empty granola bar wrapper and put it in her pocket. "You don't happen to have a bottle of water in the other pocket, do you?"

"As a matter of fact," Lenny pulled a small bottle half full of water out of the other pocket, "I do," and he handed it to her.

Dayna, who wouldn't even drink after her children or grandchildren, paused a moment and looked at the bottle, then at Lenny, and emptied the bottle.

"Didn't know I was being chased – by you or any other man." She held up the empty bottle as if to make a toast, and said "Thanks." She then put the empty bottle in her pocket. It was not quite midnight. There was no moon, and it was cloudy. Dayna wasn't really sure where they were, and though Lenny had been kind, she still wasn't sure about his motive for helping.

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"How did you get yourself in this predicament?"

"Oh, yeah. I --" Dayna tripped and fell. As Lenny bent down to help her up, they noticed a flashlight on the hill above them. Lenny motioned for her to be quiet and still. Dayna froze, but ready to do whatever was necessary to get away from danger. They watched as the small stream

of light moved back and forth above their heads. It stopped once and focused on the area just ahead of where they hid themselves under some brush. Dayna closed her eyes for the few seconds when the light stopped ahead of them. Until Lenny slightly moved, Dayna hadn't realized he had shielded her body with his own. They stayed in that position until everything was dark again. They never heard a sound. Whoever was attached to the light was extremely quiet. Equally as quiet, Lenny changed positions and squatted next to Dayna. She was still facing into the brush with her back to the path. He was facing the path so that when Dayna slightly raised her head and looked up, they were face to face. He motioned for her to stay still. Her knees were starting to ache, but she obeyed. She felt a little shaky from being knocked out and her head hurt, but she was not going to let Lenny know. As they squatted in that position, a breeze began to slightly move the trees and bushes and the clouds began to thin out a little. Dayna at first thought there was no moon, but there was a half moon, just enough to give them a little light. It gave whoever had the flashlight a little more light as well. They stayed in the squatting position under the brush until Lenny felt sure that the searcher was no longer in the area. He motioned for Dayna to get up quietly and not to talk. They began to walk fast and quiet. After a couple of miles, Lenny felt a tug on his sleeve. Dayna mouthed if they could talk.

“Yeah,” he whispered. “I think we're safe, but we don't want to make too much noise. As they slowed, Lenny asked, “Well?”

“Well, what?”

“How did you get into this predicament?”

Dayna didn't answer for a few seconds. *How did I get into this predicament?* She looked around her. They were walking through the trees that lined the road. The trees hid them and the old part of town – the old abandoned industrial area – from view of those on the road. At one

time, the area was the center of the city, but when the expressway was constructed in the West Quad, the East Quad became the industrial area. Eventually, that was abandoned, too.

Dayna seldom found herself in the East Quad, although many of her Spanish speaking friends lived in the East Quad on the south side, in the residential area. When she did drive through the East Quad, it made her sad. *So much has changed in the last decade!*

“Smells like it’s going to rain. I love that smell, but it smells a little different over here, doesn’t it? Like clean water against dirty laundry. Not dirty, but not clean either.” Dayna said in a quiet voice

“I read a paper, ” she said louder.

“A paper, huh?”

“Yes. Well, just part of one. Years ago there was what was called the Civil Rights Movement. This was back in the 1960’s – about 75 years before I was born – and you. This was even before the country was realigned into regions. They were called states then. Did you know that most of the Southern Central region was one state? Texas!” Lenny looked at her in disbelief, shook his head, and kept walking.

“Anyway, a couple of years after I began my career as a Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Literature instructor at a little community college in what used to be North Texas, I ran across this speech given by a man of African descent, Martin Luther King, Jr. During this time, he and many people of color lost their lives in the fight against prejudice and discrimination just because of the color of their skin. Some Anglos lost their lives also. They were sympathizers.

“About the same time I found that book in the Museum archives, I started hearing rumors that after a hundred years of trying, they were going to put the English Only Law into effect. That was about twenty years ago, and now they are finally doing it – legalizing prejudice and

discrimination just because of a person's culture and ethnicity – especially those of Mexican descent. Did you know that before the borders were closed and the realignment, people could actually vacation in Mexico easier than we can travel to the next region?" Dayna let out a long sigh.

Lenny shrugged his shoulders. "Where did you say you got all this information? What does that have to do with now? Why can't everybody just make it easy and don't even learn another language. Just speak English."

"Man, I wish I hadn't drunk all of that water!" Dayna grimaced. "What it has to do with now is that I managed to get my hands on a few really old books written by Americans of Mexican descent and some by Americans of African descent, and I realized the parallel this English Only Law has with the civil rights movement when Americans of African descent were struggling to be seen as equals. Why should the language we speak matter? America, no matter how it is divided, was never an English only country. One day, I spoke out about it."

"Guess you're one of those women whose mouths always get'em in trouble!" Lenny laughed. "Doesn't sound like enough to get you in trouble with the Agency to me, though. Little and loud. Probably more annoying than threatening – like a mosquito! Maybe, I should've let Jason squash you." Lenny clapped his hands together loudly. Dayna jumped.

I didn't think so, either, until that first threat. "You're not the first to try," she said under her breath. Dayna remembered the first impromptu speech.

Chapter 2

“Dr. Thomas! I didn’t think you would come!” Alexandra Gonzales squealed as she grabbed and hugged Dayna.

“Of course, I’m here. I wouldn’t pass up your kind invitation for anything in the world. I’ve never attended this celebration for anyone before. I’ve been excited about it since the day I received the invitation!” Dayna returned the hug with mirrored enthusiasm.

“I have a gift for Maria. I hope it is appropriate.” Dayna handed Alexandra a silver wrapped box with a pink silk ribbon and bow. A silver “15” was perched in the middle of the bow.

Alexandra took the gift to a table filled with other gifts and introduced Dayna to other guests as they made their way to a table not far from the main table where Maria, Alexandra’s sister, was seated, along with their parents, and Maria’s Quinceañera court.

Dayna sat at the table and smiled, enjoying the festivities around her. Others at the table assumed she understood what was being said because of her smile. Alexandra returned to Dayna’s table with her cousin, Luis, who also attended Southern Central Regional University, although was not a student of Dayna’s.

“Luis is multi-lingual, so he will interpret for you. When I invited you, I completely forgot you did not speak Spanish,” Alexandra said. “Luis did not bring a date, so he will be happy to give you his full attention,” she winked at Luis and hurried to her sister’s table.

“Thank you, Luis! I am enjoying watching everyone have such a great time, but there have been a few times, I didn’t quite understand the questions I’ve been asked. I think my table partners think I’m rude,” Dayna whispered to Luis.

Luis laughed and then told the others around the table that Dayna apologized for not being able to speak with them in Spanish. He told them he would interpret.

The man to the right of Dayna asked in Spanish, “How do you know Maria? Have you known her long?”

Luis repeated to Dayna in English. Dayna explained that she didn’t know Maria, but her sister, and that Alexandria was a student of hers. Then everyone at the table became interested in Dayna, what she taught, and her views on the English Only Law. They had heard of her through Alexandria.

In a quiet voice, Dayna began to share. “First of all, although I am of mixed heritage, and the greatest percentage is that of African, twenty-five percent of that heritage is Mexican.”

“I can see that,” one of the men at the table commented and nodded.

Dayna smiled and continued, “I became aware of the conflict that was growing in the Mexican community because of the English Only Law, when I heard that the market down on Center Street was closed and the owners had been arrested because they allowed their customers to speak Spanish. I have also heard that a couple of homes in the East Quad were vandalized. We all have to band together to get the Council to change this law. Everyone has the right to speak his or her cultural language – anywhere, anytime! The law is a burden on the Spanish speaking citizens and it brings prejudices and discrimination to the surface. I’m afraid there will be more violence because of the EOL.” She took her digital tablet out of her purse and spoke to it. “King paragraph 20.”

Dayna began to read, “This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning, “My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim’s pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring.” And if this

country is to return to the greatness it once was, then we should be able to sing the song in our native tongue – with no repercussions.” Dayna returned the tablet to her purse.

“This man, the man that wrote this, Dr. Martin Luther King, was an American of African descent. He was talking about the equality for which the Americans of African descent fought for over one hundred years ago. Fighting against discrimination because of the color of our skin. Now the discrimination is against anyone who does not speak English . It just isn’t fair. Everyone has the freedom to speak their native language and to be proud. We have to communicate, but we must work with each other to do so.” As she spoke, her eyes glistened with a sadness she had not realized she possessed. Dayna apologized for being so serious at such a joyous occasion.

“Can I come by and talk with you more, Dr. Thomas?” Luis whispered. Dayna smiled and nodded, as she wiped her eyes. Then everyone turned their attention to the head table where Maria’s father was telling a humorous story about Maria’s childhood.

The next day, when Dayna returned home from shopping, she found a note taped to her front door. It read, “Don’t encourage them. You’ll just make it harder on them – and you!” When she got inside, Dayna balled up the note and threw in the waste bin, but quickly retrieved it, pressed it out and put it into a desk drawer.

Chapter 3

“There have been reports of three families being forced from their homes and taken to Agency headquarters for questioning. This reporter has been informed that the questioning concerns the families attending a wedding held at Forest Park. The three families taken in for questioning were overheard speaking Spanish to each other. Although the families did not live in the same area, the bride and groom were related to the three families.” Dayna was watching the Language News Network. There was a knock on the door.

“Luis! How are you? Come in.” Dayna invited Luis in.

“Dr. Thomas, is this a bad time? I know I should have called first,” Luis looked at the street as he spoke.

“Come in. I was just looking at LNN. Have you heard? They just reported that three more families were taken in for questioning. Last week that family of five was questioned. The mother and kids were let go, but the father hasn’t been released. They won’t even let his wife visit him or call. This is crazy!” Dayna exclaimed.

Luis hurriedly moved past Dayna and stepped back out of the doorway. “Yes, I heard about the families. It is coincidental, I guess, but it is one family from the East, South and West Quads. Each family lived in the section of the quads that was mostly Anglo residents. It is as if the Anglos are trying to send a message or get our people to move. But, that is not why I came. I’ve been thinking a lot about you and what you said at Maria’s Quinceañera celebration. You know the only reason we could speak Spanish is because it was a private event. Did you know that even some of our family and a few friends were afraid to speak Spanish. They were afraid we would be turned in to the authorities. I don’t think it is true, but they say there are spies – Mexican spies – telling the authorities which people to watch for breaking this stupid law.” Luis

took a deep breath and shook his head. “You seemed – I don’t know the word to use, but you seemed sad and angry about a situation that doesn’t really concern you. Why?”

“Please sit down, Luis. And calm down. Would you like something to drink?” Luis shook his head. Dayna felt sorry for him. He seemed so depressed, as if he was the one that had to solve a problem that was unsolvable.

“Well, it is sort of difficult to determine exactly when it happened, but a few years ago, while doing research for a university project on cultural diversity in America, I ran across some early media documents concerning the English only situation. This law has been in the making for a long time, but in my heart, it just isn’t right. Every time I hear of a family being fined or a business closing, or homes being invaded and people missing, I cringe – and I don’t even speak Spanish. I don’t know how, but I want to help.”

“That’s why I wanted to talk to you. Although, they are making these arrests at the homes, it is for infractions outside of the home. Hopefully, they aren’t listening in our homes. We can still speak our language at home. It is just so hard to not speak it in a public place – like Maria’s Quinceañera. That was in the Church meeting room, so as a part of the Church, it is safe. If she had held it at one of the event centers, we would not have been so relaxed. Anyway, some of us get together at each other’s homes. Would you be willing to use your home for meetings to discuss the situation, let us speak in Spanish? I want to hear more about the ideas of that Mr. King. Please?” Luis’ voice was quiet and pleading.

“Luis, of course, I’d be happy to help, but you must know that anything I say and the ideas of Dr. King, are not what the authorities want to hear right now. We have to be careful. Are there any other non-Spanish speakers involved? About how many do you think will come?”

Dayna's mind had already begun to get in organizational mode. She didn't tell Luis about the note placed on her door after the Quinceañera.

"I have heard of about three homes that usually have about twenty people attend. Many are English speakers only – like you, who sympathize with the situation. We need another home so that we don't have so many in one place. We don't want to call attention to the homeowners. We had four homes, but the Juarez's home was vandalized. We think it was because someone turned them in for having a public meeting in a home and did not speak English. Maybe, I shouldn't have asked you, but you speak English and you're of African descent. Surely, they won't bother you."

"You can use my home, but give me a few days. I have a basement and I will clean it up. We will meet down there. I'll put up those room darkening drapes up here. It will be fine."

Dayna reached over and patted Luis on the arm.

He gave her a smile, then said, "One more favor. Would you be willing to read the entire speech of Dr. King, and maybe just a quick talk about your opinion on the new law? Our community needs encouragement from another English speaking person. Just to let them know not everyone feels the same way about our culture and language. We can have it at our Church, and I will interpret for you."

"Yes, I would be glad to, just tell me when and where."

Luis stood up and offered Dayna his hand. "Gracias, Dr. Thomas. Thank you so much."

Luis left Dayna's house and hurried to tell his friends about their new ally.

It was still early in the evening, so Dayna went down to her basement. She sat on the steps and planned how she would arrange it so that she could accommodate twenty people.

A month passed before Dayna gave her talk at Luis' church. Two weeks later, the first meeting was held in her basement. Six people attended, none were from Dayna's neighborhood, and except for Luis, all of them spoke very little English. Dayna was the only non-Spanish speaking person. Again, Luis interpreted for her. They mostly just socialized. They brought their own snacks and drinks. The conversation finally turned to the English Only Law. A couple of teenagers, a brother and a sister, had been arrested for speaking Spanish in front of the high school while waiting for their ride home. They spent the night in jail before their parents were allowed to pay the \$1,000.00 fine and take them home. They were told they were lucky it was Saturday morning, or they would have to go straight to school. They had not been allowed to keep their books in the cell, nor did either of them get any sleep, not only because they were so frightened, but because the lights were never dimmed or turned off and there was loud noise or music to keep them awake. Everyone agreed that the law needed to be repealed, but no one knew how or what could be done to accomplish that. The meeting ended with everyone, including, Dayna feeling discouraged.

Chapter 4

A couple of days after the meeting, Dayna was watching television and turned to the Language News Network. The Agency had closed one of the Mexican markets in the South Quad and now the owners were missing. The Agency admitted closing the market, but denied any involvement in the disappearance of the owners.

"Since the United Council passed the Unity Law, there has been little unity, I know, but, how can we change it? It is the same as a couple of centuries ago when they outlawed prayer in schools. the citizens finally found loopholes around that in some schools, but eventually they started enforcing it to the point now no prayers are allowed anywhere but in the churches and in the privacy of homes. It was total chaos until people just caved in and stopped fighting.

"It's also the same as when this country went through what was called the Civil Rights Movement with those of African descent. In some part of the country there was unprecedented violence and the murdering of not only those of African descent, but of Anglo men and women who helped their cause. Over the last 200 years, the Anglos totally assimilated the natural born citizens of African descent into the race purely because most only spoke English. Few, if any, knew the area of Africa from which their ancestors originated, or their original language or dialect. We don't want that to happen again to anyone in this country – especially those who *chose* to be in this country and whose ancestors were here before the Anglos. Over a century ago, my grandfather foresaw the violence between the English speakers and the Spanish speakers. It is becoming a reality. We have to have a safe place to live and raise our children. We must preserve the cultural identity of every ethnic group in this country!"

The taped interview of Dr. somebody – she hadn't heard the name – followed the news, but Dayna had not paid attention when it first came on.

"What's he talking about?" She questioned the screen. "Cultural identity? Don't get me started about cultural identity – or the lack thereof!" Dayna talked to herself often. She blamed it on exhaustion. The Fall Semester had kept Dayna moving at a constant fast pace, lesson plans and projects and papers for 120 students, but she loved it, and her students seemed to love her classes as well. She used her Christmas break to put the finishing touches on the special project for her Spring Semester Diversity and American Ethnic Lit classes. Her plan involved combining the lessons for her American Ethnic Lit and her Cultural Diversity classes during the first eight weeks of the Spring semester, host a week's symposium with as many of the authors as possible of the texts and novels they had studied during the 10th week, and then split the class information the last weeks of class so that the students could use the information gained during the symposium in their final semester project, if they cared to do so. Dayna had gotten approval from the University for the symposium at the beginning of the fall semester. The Council had announced they were voting on the English Only Law, but had not announced that it passed, or when it would be effective. Dayna put in a lot of time and effort on the symposium, only to find out that the EOL was in effect as of January 1st and that her classes were being cancelled at the end of the Spring Semester. She kept the classes but had to cancel the symposium.

"If you want to help, contact us. Use the code on the screen. The television announcer ended the commentary.

Dayna grabbed her phone and entered in the code. She would get more information. *This guy is right. We have to preserve the identities of all cultures. Why should it be illegal to speak whatever language God gave? How ironic.* Dayna remembered the story of the tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis in Bible.

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. . . . God then scattered the

people and scrambled the languages.

“We are *supposed* to have different languages!” Dayna, once again, talked aloud to herself. “Wonder where this safe place is supposed to be located?” She listened to the recorded information in amazement.

Chapter 5

“Caryn, did you see LNN the other night? They said this guy founded an underground city, and the Agency is looking for the entrance.” Dayna and Caryn were in their shared office eating lunch and working. Caryn was reading and grading papers for her freshman composition class. Dayna was re-working her lesson plans since the symposium was cancelled. The office was filled with shelves that covered three of the walls on which were books and photos. The only window was on the fourth wall. A couple of file cabinets, one worn dark brown tweed upholstered armchair, a large desk, and a 1920’s type oak office chair also occupied the room. Although the room only had a trail to walk around, the two women managed to share with no problem.

“Yeah. I don’t think I could live underground,” Caryn absent-mindedly answered Dayna as she continued to read papers.

“I might. If they pass the law that we have to speak English,” Dayna replied.

Caryn looked up. “You only speak English anyway. What do you care? Going underground might not be a good idea. If there is an underground city, if the Agency finds it, they’ll just dismantle it. You said they were looking for the entrance, right? They don’t want the non-English speakers to leave. They want them to assimilate. They want complete control. They can’t get that if the people go underground.”

“Esteban, one of my students in my diversity class, said that some guys were calling him and his girlfriend names and said that they had better hurry and sneak across the border into Mexico before the date is set to execute all non-English speakers. Esteban said that they were in

line at the movies and speaking Spanish to each other when the incident happened. Have you heard that they are executing non-English speakers?”

Caryn kept grading papers and didn't look up.

“Did you know that the Dinner and a Movie Theater on the parkway has removed their language choice buttons from all of the ticket kiosks and the snack kiosk, as well? Even though the waiter was of Mexican descent, he would not speak Spanish to Esteban and his girlfriend. He told them he didn't want to get in trouble.” Dayna huffed. “People are being threatened and hurt and possibly killed – by our own government, Caryn!”

“Well, it is sad that such stuff is happening, but you can't do anything about it.” Caryn continued her grading.

“Hundreds of years ago a guy wrote a book about a group of Americans of African descent, some former slaves, who wanted to form their own government somewhere here in the South Central Region. It was Texas then. It didn't work out, but there might be something to this underground city,” Dayna mused.

Chapter 6

“I guess multiculturalism and language diversity are in my blood. I just can’t agree with this EOL. So many different people speak so many different languages. How can you work for the government to enforce, or force, people to assimilate, to give up their culture? How would you feel if it was the other way around?” Dayna stopped walking. Lenny stopped and they just stared at each other.

“Look, I admit, I am for *my* culture 100%. I think since we are in the majority, everybody needs to speak what we speak – English! Since *you* speak English, and I’ve seen what Agency operatives can do to non-English speaking little old ladies, I just couldn’t watch Jason use his form of interrogation on you. By the way, it will *never* be the “other way around.” Lenny started walking.

“What do you mean you’ve seen what the Agency does to non-English speaking little old ladies? Is the Agency condoning *murder*?” Dayna looked at Lenny in disbelief.

Lenny knew that his experience and success in covert operations for the military was one reason his name had been pulled for work with the Agency, but what he didn't know was that his family history and background were another reason Gene Morrison, the South Central Region Agency Director, had personally chosen him for the job. Lenny's parents raised him to believe that only Anglos were the entitled people, and that all other cultures were to be tolerated, but were never quite equal to the status of Anglos. They belonged to a group that decades earlier had been called anti-government militia. Although Lenny had served in the military and considered himself a non-racist, his parents' views had rubbed off on him. He knew many non-Anglo people, but had no non-Anglo friends, and he didn't keep it a secret when the English-only issue

came up, he was all for it. Unfortunately, his stance on the EOL was one of the issues that helped end his forty year marriage. His son married a girl whose parents were from Mexico and didn't speak English. Lenny's son took Spanish lessons and informed his parents that if and when they had children they, Lenny's grandchildren, would be bi-lingual. Lenny was totally opposed, but Lenny's wife agreed with their son. Lenny was forced to learn Spanish while in the military and stationed at an Army post close to the Mexico border. He hated it. He hated having to compromise by using it in conversation with the Spanish speaking soldiers. He never spoke Spanish again after he left that post. He was relieved when the English Only Law was brought before the council for passage.

To get his mind off of his divorce, he focused on his work with the Agency. He didn't seem to miss his wife as much as he did at first. As the Agency's efforts increased in tracking down and arresting non-English speaking citizens – especially Spanish speaking - he wondered about the safety of his son and his family. He hoped he would never have to "I and I" his son or any member of his family.

“So, you think this multiculturalism stuff is just in your blood, huh? Well, it sure as heck is not in mine!” Lenny sputtered. “But, I’ve been put in it.”

“You’ve been put in it? I think you put yourself in it, when you decided to help me escape the ape.” Dayna chuckled.

“You? No, I was talking about. Forget it. Long story.” Lenny began to walk a little ahead of Dayna. Dayna watched Lenny’s back.

“You don’t seem that bad to me, you know, even though you try to be. It’s apparent, you don’t like black people, which makes me wonder why you saved me.” Dayna talked to Lenny’s back.

“It isn’t exactly that I don’t like black people, or brown people. I just like white people more! My culture! And, I want to be able to understand every single word said to me. As far as saving you, I guess I’m getting old or mellowing or something. If it comes down to an army versus another army, I’m ready for the battle. I don’t care for this two men against one woman type thing. Jason likes hurting people – individuals – just for the sake of it. I am committed to my government. I am for the EOL. I am not for killing defenseless women. And, he would have killed you.” Lenny was out of breath when he stopped talking. Then he slowed down again. “I was about to tell you that I think we are getting close to town, but because we took the long way, instead of being close to your house, we are on the opposite side. It will be dawn in about an hour. We need to speed it up.”

“Okay, but I have another idea. Let’s not go to my house.” Dayna said with hesitance. “If we go past town, another five or six miles, there is a park with a pool area that has been filled in. There’s an abandoned pool house. If we can get there, we can get to a safe place. We can figure out what to do then. By the way, do you have any money on you? I only have a dollar in quarters.”

“Why do you want to know if I have money?”

“Well, where I am taking you has some vending machines, and I don’t know about you, but I’m hungry – real hungry. I haven’t had a full meal in three days. We old people can’t keep up

the pace you and I have been on and not eat.” She laughed and Lenny wondered how she could even find anything to laugh about in her position.

“Oh. I know the park you mentioned. I used to take my son there when he was little. That pool is where I taught him to swim....” Lenny's voice faded as he thought about the good times. He pulled his phone out of his pocket, put his earphones in, and began to listen to LNN. As soon as he heard the words, “The U. S. Agency for Assimilation in all regions is cracking down on usage of non-English languages,” he realized that he was using his phone. He angrily tore it apart and threw the pieces in different directions.

“The Agency is probably tracking us. I had the phone off until just now, so just maybe they didn’t catch the signal.” He angrily muttered under his breath. He grabbed Dayna's arm. “We are going to jog across town – on the side roads – to that park. We have to take our chances. I turned my phone on without thinking. They can track my GPS.”

“What were you thinking? Even *I* know that!” Dayna was just as angry about the fact that she had to jog on an empty stomach as she was about being tracked by the Agency. She didn't have to worry about her phone because Jason had taken it when they grabbed her. They began to jog through the wooded area and soon came to the edge of the East Quad. The sun hadn’t shown itself. An edge of light was peeking over the horizon. The sky was neither light nor dark. Lenny led the way along the side roads. Neither hiker spoke. There was a quietness about the still town that made Dayna shudder. The past few months flooded her mind.

Chapter 7

It had been months since Dayna contacted the Unity Through Diversity group and had become a member. She had no responsibilities within the organization, but she supported the efforts the UTD was making in helping those who encountered the Agency's unorthodox methods of forced assimilation. She accepted more invitations to speak at church events and gatherings in homes other than her own. Whenever she had a chance, she also spoke to non-Spanish speaking citizens, hoping to change the atmosphere at least in her region. Luis had become her official translator when she spoke to many non-English speaking groups. While many who heard her were encouraged and agreed with her position and sentiments, there were some who did not agree.

The more Dayna heard about the atrocities carried out against the Spanish speaking citizens, by the Agency, as well as those who supported the Agency, the more she wondered if Spanish speakers would be safer underground. The bodies of sixty people, children included, were found in a cargo transport truck parked on the South Central Region side of the Mexican border. LNN reported that the driver had not been located. However, there were rumors that men were offering to take those who had family in Mexico to the border and get them into Mexico by way of an underground tunnel for \$5,000.00 per adult and \$2,500.00 per child – payable in advance. There were no windows in the area where the bodies were found. It appeared that the driver drove to the border, locked the truck and left the passengers to die. Someone paid the driver to kill his passengers. They paid to go to their homeland.

“Were you and your friend in the group that set the meat market on fire last month?” Dayna asked Lenny in a quiet voice. “You know they found eight people, five were family

members, in the meat freezer. They went in there to get away from the fire and froze to death. The entire family. The father. The mother. Three children. One a small baby. The other three were employees. Why are they doing these horrible things to these people?" Dayna's voice cracked.

"I wasn't in on that. I don't know that the Agency had anything to do with it." Lenny replied.

"But, the Agency influences those that agree with them to act alone to harass the non-English speakers. You *know* that!"

"This English only thing started long before I joined the Agency – and it's not just against the Spanish speakers."

Dayna huffed. "Don't I know it!"

Lenny continued. "While I was deployed in Europe I heard that one of the ads for a cola drink got a lot of criticism because the company is for diversity and was trying to cover all of its customer bases with the ad. It showed all these so-called Americans. All different races and nationalities singing *our* National Anthem in all different languages."

"I saw that. It was great!" Dayna smiled.

"Well, did you know that those that are for English Only sold stock in that company and it lost money instead of gaining customers?"

Dayna kept walking, but looked over at Lenny.

"The nation is being divided on the point of language, which is resulting in race division – again. I thought this country was past that. I thought I was safe because I only speak English. Apparently, even if you sympathize with the Spanish speakers, you are a target."

As she and Lenny continued their trek, Dayna's mind whirled through all that had happened.

Chapter 8

"Caryn, I found another one!" Dayna whispered to her friend Caryn Giordano. Dayna buttoned her coat as she spoke. Caryn almost ran over her as she headed out of her classroom, arms filled with student folders, textbooks, a bag with pens, notebooks, water bottles, a Diet Coke, and a bag with her laptop.

"When? Dayna, you should report these incidents to the police. We both know it has to do with your classes here. What did you find this time?"

"Well, this one probably has more to do with the lecture I gave at Iglesia Bautista Camino Real in Midtown."

"What? I didn't know you gave a lecture there. At the Hispanic Church? Are you crazy? – Wait a minute. You don't speak Spanish." Caryn looked confused.

"Luis, one of Alexandria Gonzales' friends, interpreted for me. It was great! I met him at Maria's Quinceañera. Anyway, I found a glass skull on my car Saturday. It was wrapped in a note that says, 'Yours is more fragile than this one. Be careful!'"

"Dayna! Aren't you even a little frightened?" Caryn watched Dayna button her coat and adjust her tote bag. "You found that other note in your car a couple of weeks ago threatening your life if you continued to teach the classes. Now this."

"Well, that note in my car doesn't make sense. It is up to the university whether or not I continue to teach the classes. I am not going to just voluntarily stop teaching. Until SCU tells me they are cutting my classes, I will teach diversity and encourage embracing multi-culture," Dayna said, as she took part of Caryn's armload of books and folders. "You speak several

languages, including Spanish, how can you just give it up?" She slow jogged one step behind Caryn as they entered the small office. Dayna noticed that the picture of her first Ethnic Lit and Diversity class at Southern Central University was missing. The novels Dayna had collected by authors of Mexican descent, Haitian, Japanese, and Native American descent – classics like *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, along with her signed copy of *And Yet We Stand*, by Colton Brokaw, a contemporary Native American author – were all missing from the stack.

She watched Caryn bite the left side of her bottom lip. Dayna's eyes followed Caryn as she paced along the trail between stacks of books and around the desk and constantly pulled back her hair and looked for a place to drop the books, bags, and notepads that Dayna hadn't taken from her. Caryn finally dropped everything, and fell in the armchair they jokingly called the "hot seat." Dayna raised her eyebrows.

"Okay. Where's my favorite photo? And our books – my books?" Dayna had her back to Caryn as she sorted through the eight remaining books. Dayna frowned as she fingered the books.

"Yeah, I need to talk to you about that. Dayna, you know due to the new immigration laws, the country closing all of its borders, and the English only situation, we are not to speak any other language. Well, I got the notice yesterday afternoon that SCU is cutting all the foreign languages and diversity classes, effective the end of this semester."

"Oh. I didn't get that notice. Hmmm. I was hoping for at least another year." Dayna walked from the diminished stack of books to the window. It was early spring and a chill was still in the air. Looking out of the window, Dayna remembered holding a class on cultural diversity the previous fall around the big oak tree outside the window. It had been a simple

discussion about the beauty of the multicolored leaves.

“It just isn’t right and I don’t know how to fight this.” Her voice broke.

“I know. I *know!*” Caryn looked away from her friend and picked up one of her books from the floor. “But this is a state funded school and if we don’t adhere to the mandates, we lose our jobs. I can’t afford that. Anyway, yesterday after you left, Dr. Ross came by and I had to give him the books and your photographs. I asked him why the photos and he said that the letter he received instructed him to collect anything and everything that would encourage resistance to the new mandates. He thought the pictures would be an encouragement to disobey the mandates. He knows you, Dayna.”

“All I’ve done is teach my classes and given a few lectures. I haven’t tried to hide that. It’s about respect for all people. Do you realize how many of our college students, young and non-traditional, come from school systems that have already phased out foreign languages and don’t support cultural pride – unless it’s American/English pride. Many of the classrooms in this area have more English as a second language than first language students. Yet, the Council is forcing them to speak the second language *everywhere*. I’m sick of it. But I can’t afford to lose my job either.” Dayna sighed heavily and sat down behind the desk.

“Dr. Ross heard how you got into that heated discussion with Glenn the other day.”

“Oh Caryn, what was I supposed to do? Glenn teaches sociology and he had the nerve to make a comment in front of a Spanish speaking student that it just grates on his nerves to be in line at Country Market and have to listen to a language other than English. Why should it bother him, or anyone? I asked him that and he got on the defensive. I told him he needed to apologize. It just went downhill from there.”

“Dayna, there’s nothing you can do. Just ignore those sorts of remarks. You don’t even

speak Spanish. Please just go along with whatever they ask us to do. At least your diversity classes will get to finish the semester. I just don't know what classes will take their place in the fall."

"Oh, I know! There will be more classes on the old dead white guys, and the contribution they've made to American society. As if they did it alone!" Dayna spit out.

"Dr. Dayna Thomas! That is the most racist thing I've ever heard you say." Caryn said in a pseudo-shocked tone.

"I know, right? But you know how I feel. It is just so infuriating when I hear people use language as an excuse to exhibit prejudices. I thought, as a country, we were better than that. I guess I will have to apologize to the old white guys, though. They have been kind and have included us Americans of African descent in the American Lit classes. Most of us don't know or speak the native language of our African ancestors. Everyone else will have to watch out!"

Dayna made a wry smile, trying to make light of the situation.

Dayna Thomas had lived in the South Central Region of America in one city or another all of her life. She studied history at a community college in her home town of Big City (which wasn't big at all – only about 25,000 residents). From what her parents told her, some of the history she studied wasn't even true. None of it told of the magnitude of suffering the government placed on those who did not wholly assimilate into the Anglo – the dominant – culture. Those of African descent, like Dayna, were considered part of the dominant culture because most spoke only English. But, it had not always been that way. It wasn't talked about often, and when it was many whispered the tales the Ancestors told of racial atrocities heaped on them in earlier centuries. In Dayna's family, as in other families, over the centuries the different races inter-married. Now, in Regional America, it was difficult to discern the races from the

color of the skin unless one was Anglo.

“You know, if you need help getting all the paper work done switching your students over to the English and American lit and culture classes, let me know. Have you started preparing to teach those classes yet?”

“I can get the paperwork done. I just don’t *want* to do it. I love teaching – or I did. I love teaching cultural diversity. I’ve been checking out other colleges and universities in other Regions.”

“What? Dayna! You can’t move. You just have to adjust. There is no running from this law.” There was an unusual edge to Caryn’s voice.

“I’ve been thinking about moving to another region since that last department meeting concerning the changes. I found a few private schools in this region that have openings – but I doubt if they will be able to offer cultural diversity if they can’t offer any foreign language.”

“Well, be careful, my friend. You really don’t want to get cross-ways with the administration. You know, those colleges will have to change their curricula as well.”

Chapter 9

Dayna's time outside of the university became very busy as she had more and more invitations to speak at the Hispanic churches in the South Central Region. She spoke and taught on cultural diversity not only in the churches, at the house parties – as the attendees called the gatherings. She encouraged the non-English speakers to be proud of their culture, to obey the law while above ground, but to get as much information about moving underground, if they felt it might be better. Moving underground was a decision only made by each family, and while Dayna thought it might be a good idea, she had not decided to do so herself. Above ground, the Agency had operatives everywhere; even children were being targeted for speaking Spanish. The Spanish-speaking students were being expelled for minor infractions. They were bullied without any consequences being exacted on the bullies, and disciplined if they defended themselves. Employers were docking the pay of workers who even greeted each other in Spanish. The non-English speaking citizens were divided as to what steps should be taken to combat the law. There were skirmishes and acts of violence throughout the country, but more so in the South Central Region.

Chapter 10

“Dr. Thomas, is it true that this is your last semester? That this is the last semester for cultural diversity and ethnic lit classes at SCU?” One of Dayna’s students asked her as she walked into her Wednesday 8 a.m. class.

Dayna walked to the front of the class. As she looked over the room, she smiled. All of her students were present. It was rare that more than one or two were ever absent.

“Yes, Carlos, I understand that as of the May 5th, SCU will no longer offer Cultural Diversity and American Ethnic Literature classes. I wasn’t aware that the information had been officially announced.”

“Aw, Dr. T, you know there are no secrets here.” another student said. The class laughed.

“So, what are you going to do about it, Dr. Thomas? You can’t just let them pull your classes. What will you do?”

“Well, we may have a chance to change things if enough people realize the problem, and if we are able to get a spokesperson in front of the council. The government is behind this; not the university. We must remember that the government cannot define us or tell us who we are or what language we speak. These things are inherent. We must be unified in our diversity. As usual, I will be available to discuss the matter after class. You all have my code. Also, anyone who wants to come by my home Friday evening for a friendly chat is invited to do so.

“Now, tell me, who said, ‘If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. But if you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart’?” Dayna asked.

George, a foreign exchange student from South Africa, quickly answered, “Nelson Mandela!”

“Let’s discuss why Mr. Mandela’s thoughts here can be apropos to our study of diversity,” Dayna challenged her class to share their own thoughts about communication and diversity. The class was very diverse with many cultures represented. She encouraged those who agreed with the English only law to share why they agreed. Sometimes the discussions were very heated.

“The Ancestors intended for English only to be spoken here,” Raymond Carey, one of Dayna’s more vocal students, smugly replied. “Why should we even discuss the opinions of Mandela?”

“Why did you take this class, Mr. Carey, if you are not interested in diversity? It is what makes up this country.”

“Really, I just needed the hours, *and*, I wanted to hear just what *you* are teaching. I heard about your class last fall and decided to check you out. Shouldn’t you be playing this diversity stuff down instead of pushing it? It’s the law!” He sat back and folded his arms. Dayna thought she saw a glint of dare in his eyes. Raymond had been known to harass some of the Americans of Mexican descent. Dayna confronted him earlier in the semester when he was berating a student for talking on his phone in Spanish.

“It’s a stupid law! No one even knew it was *law* until we started seeing the notices on public monitors and the announcements on the info monitor. It’s crazy! In the last two months, my uncle and aunt have had to close their cantina. They worked hard to get here, and now they want to leave, but they can’t. Tía and Tío always spoke English when their English speaking customers came in, but they could not control their employees, or their customers – even with the notices posted. An Agency enforcer came in. He really looked like a non-English speaker, you know. Next thing they knew, my uncle was being taken to jail for allowing the crime to take

place, along with the customers who were speaking Spanish to each other. My tío did not commit a crime! Now no one wants to go there. Tía had to close it. And they made the best tortas!”

Krista said in tears.

“Well, I don’t agree with the law – but *I* don’t have a problem with it either,” said a soft spoken girl from El Salvador. “My ancestors sacrificed more than many to come here many years ago. My parents still speak Spanish to other family members, but I refuse to.”

“Why don’t you agree with it, Marisol?” Dayna was curious.

“It forces people to assimilate. It promotes secrecy among families. It’s created a bloody conflict. But – I speak perfect English and will always, so I don’t worry about it.”

“Well, you should. You just admitted in front of all of us that *your* parents speak Spanish with other family members. If they slip – they’re gone. It would serve them right!” Raymond nodded and made a motion of cutting his throat. Dayna frowned.

Chapter 11

Dr. Galen Ross, the President of the university, walked in Caryn and Dayna's office just as Caryn was about to leave.

"Dr. Giordano, this is our South Central Regional Director who oversees the new language law, Ms. Gene Morrison. We need to discuss a matter with you. Do you know if Dr. Thomas has left the campus yet?"

"Yes, Dayna's last class was about an hour ago, and she just left the building. Do you need me to call her? She probably hasn't gotten off the campus." Caryn answered.

"Actually, Dr. Giordano, I needed to talk to you in private. Thank you for introducing us, Galen," Gene Morrison said, her tone clearly dismissing Dr. Ross. Both of Caryn's eyebrows shot up as the man left the room. Gene Morrison sat down behind the desk and motioned for Caryn to sit in the remaining chair. Caryn did so and waited for her to speak.

"Dr. Giordano, it has come to my attention that your friend and fellow professor is encouraging the Spanish speaking community to, quote, stand up for their culture, or something silly like that. Basically, encouraging disobedience of the law. I have intel that she is holding meetings against the government in her home – but we don't have solid evidence of that. I want you to find out for me."

"What? Sounds like you want me to spy on my friend. What she does in her home is her business – in any language." Caryn said in a quiet, but determined tone. Her hand went to her hair, and she immediately put it down.

"Dr. Giordano, I am not asking you to spy – just gather information for your government."

"I respectfully decline."

“No. You have no choice. You have been drafted into the Agency. Your main mission is to provide evidence that Dr. Thomas is a dissident.”

“A what? Dayna is no dissident. She loves her country. She just doesn’t --.” Caryn stopped.

“Doesn’t what, Dr. Giordano?” Gene Morrison smirked. “While you will report any information you have only to me, you will have a supervising operative. I will contact you through Dr. Ross’ office in the administration building, which also serves as my headquarters when I am in town. Your training begins tomorrow. Report to this address at seven in the morning. ” She handed a card with only an address on it to Caryn. Caryn dropped it back on the desk.

“I am married. My husband is a detective with the police department here. He will not go along with this. I will not do this.”

“We know all about you and Detective Frank Giordano. He’s Italian, isn’t he? Does he ever speak his native tongue? I would hate for him to slip in public. Or, even worse, have an accident in the line of duty. But, I’m sure he is a very smart man, and knows how to handle himself. You don’t have anything to worry about, right?

“Also, we will make sure that your work with the Agency will correspond with your husband’s duty schedule. You don’t have to tell him anything. You will receive your cover information whenever you will be away from home; which, by the way, tomorrow is a symposium on the English only situation and how it affects higher education. Leave the house early enough to cover being in Central City at 8:30 for registration.” Gene Morrison smiled. “If you leave your home by 6:30, you will be at that address by 7 a.m. Frank will not suspect you aren’t headed to a symposium. He will be leaving about the same time, so he can stop for coffee

before work. It will work out.

As Gene stood to leave, she said, “Oh, yes, if you don’t report at that address in the morning, don’t report here for classes. You will not have any students waiting for you, and by the end of the day, Frank may have had some unforeseen problems, as well.” She didn’t wait for Caryn to reply. She strode out of the office. It was an hour before Caryn moved from the chair and went home.

Chapter 12

“Thank you for shopping here, Dr. Thomas,” the cashier said in a heavy Spanish accent.

“Your store has wonderful prices and great fresh produce and meat. I’m glad I was told about it. It is worth the cross town drive to get here.” Dayna handed the cashier her card for payment. “By the way, how do you know me? Have you been in any of my classes? I apologize if I don’t remember.”

“Oh no, I’m not a college student,” the cashier laughed. “I was,” she whispered, “at the house party at 9th Street a couple of weeks ago. You were there and you talked about how we need to stick together as a unified culture and voice our disagreement about the English only law. It was – um – inspiring. But you should be careful. I heard –,” the cashier stopped speaking and quickly completed the transaction with Dayna’s card. When Dayna looked at the spot the cashier had glanced, she saw a couple of men, one Anglo and one Mexican, watching her and the cashier.

“Thank you, come again.” The cashier kept her head down until the next customer walked up.

Dayna nodded at the cashier, and walked past the two men to the exit. When she got to her car, she saw that both tires on the driver’s side of the car were flat. Wondering how she managed to get two flats, she put her bags in the car. She turned around to return to the store to ask for help, but the two men that had been watching her were standing behind her blocking her way.

“I’m sure there are markets on your side of town, Dr. Thomas. You might try one of them next time,” the Mexican said, in perfect English. They both walked to a black SUV parked down the row from Dayna and drove away.

Dayna returned to the store and asked the same cashier if one of the other workers might help her with her tires. The cashier would not speak to Dayna, but just shook her head. Dayna stood outside of the market for a few minutes until she saw a man getting out of a truck parked next to her car. She ran to him and asked if he could help. She told him she had one spare tire and a can of air. If he would change out the tire, she could air up the other and get the car to a repair shop. The man changed the tire and put the air in the other tire. The only word he said was “Sí” when she asked for help. He pointed to slashes in the tire he changed out, which frightened Dayna and made her angry. The other tire had just been deflated. When Dayna offered to pay for his help, he shook his head and walked into the market.

“Caryn, why do people have to be so mean and hateful?” Dayna walked into the office, put her bag down and walked to the window, her favorite place to think.

“What are you talking about? What happened?” Caryn turned from her laptop.

“My tires were slashed while I was at the Mexican Market on the East side. Well, one was slashed, the other one was just deflated.”

“What? When?”

“Saturday morning. You know, I’ve been thinking. Those guys had to have followed me. How else would they have known I was going there Saturday morning? And, they knew my car. They knew me!”

Caryn lowered her head, “So, who do you think it was that did it – and why?”

“I’m beginning to think it has something to do with the result of my talk with a few people at a, uh, party a few weeks ago. I heard that there are plans for a cultural diversity rally at the Hispanic church on Katy Lane.”

“Dayna, you have to stop fueling the fire. You could get in serious trouble.” Caryn warned.

“Look, I can’t teach my cultural diversity classes. I may as well support the culturally diverse citizens outside the classroom. This prejudice and discrimination is just plain wrong. They are targeting the Spanish speaking population now, but it’s all non-English speakers. What will happen when the Agency turns its eye to one of the other non-English speaking cultures in the country? What happens when Frank’s mother – who was granted her visa weeks before the borders closed – is overheard when she slips into Italian in public? She did just that last week when the service at the restaurant was horrible and she told Frank – in Italian – what she thought. We thought it was amusing, but it won’t be when they turn on the other language speakers.”

“That won’t happen,” Caryn shook her head when she replied.

“Why not? Because they are only looking at non-English speakers whose skin is other than white? Well, don’t bet on it! I am an English speaker and it looks as if I am being targeted.” Dayna took a deep breath. She continued to look out of the window.

“Yes, Dayna, but you are encouraging these people! It won’t matter what color your skin is, or if you only speak English. If you go against the Agency, they will come after you. Please be careful. You really are getting too deep into this EOL thing. Just leave it alone,” Caryn pleaded.

Chapter 13

"Thank you for coming Mrs. Olivares. Did Lauren tell you that I don't speak Spanish – but I'm learning?" Dayna greeted Mrs. Olivares.

"She told me, but I speak English, so there is no problem. I am just happy that you are giving us a place where we can get together. And, please, call me Eva." Mrs. Olivares whispered as she entered Dayna's home. Looking around the dimly lit room, she asked, "Where are the others?" It was the first time Mrs. Olivares had attended a cultural diversity meeting at Dayna's home.

"Oh, they're in the basement. I was able to fix it up like a den so that if I am ever investigated, it will look like any other home, not like a meeting place," Dayna whispered back.

As the two women headed down the stairs, they heard the sound of children playing games and speaking different languages. It amazed Dayna that the children were multi-lingual and yet could communicate as if they spoke only one.

"Are we ready to get started?" One of the adults asked. Everyone got quiet and began to recite the prayer they said at every meeting, each in his or her own language: "Lord, protect us. Keep us safe."

Ted Durand sat with half a dozen or so adults. He was Anglo, but, like Dayna, was sympathetic to those who suffered under the English only law. He lived in a small apartment, so he met whenever he could with the others at Dayna's house. Ted spoke fluent Spanish but only voiced it during these get-togethers. He joined a young man named Estevan and his wife, Lynda, who were telling the latest about the Mexican Market on South Park Street. Dayna took the children aside to keep them occupied while their parents were discussing the latest news and mapping out what steps they might take to protect themselves from the increasing discrimination

and violence escalating toward those speaking anything other than English. Dayna learned Spanish just listening to the children play.

As she ushered the children into a corner of the basement to put together a floor puzzle, she asked in English, “What were you saying about the market?”

Estevan answered in Spanish, and Lynda interpreted. “They closed. That’s the third Mexican business in as many weeks. The problem is that many of the customers don’t speak English or don’t speak it very well, so they *have* to speak their own language. I think there must be hidden listening devices everywhere. The authorities *hear* everything!”

The doorbell rang. Everyone stopped talking. Everyone stopped breathing. Dayna took a deep breath and bounded up the stairs two at a time. She closed the door to the basement. She took a couple of deep breaths. Her heart pounded as she opened the door.

"Caryn! What are you doing here?"

"Since when have either of us had to have an excuse to visit the other?" Caryn asked. She walked into the house and began to take off her jacket.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude." Dayna stammered. "I think I may be getting a migraine. Uh. Have a seat. What's up?" Dayna fumbled around and finally sat on the arm of the couch while Caryn headed to the fridge.

"Do you have a Diet Coke or anything? I desperately need some caffeine!"

"At 8 o'clock at night?" Dayna laughed a little, remembering Caryn's roller-coaster fight with her caffeine addiction. That was the thing that they both laughed about – both were trying to kick the habit and neither was making any progress. One day one or both had made a commitment to cut down or cut out caffeine, and the next, one was treating the other to either some sort of coffee drink or a Diet Coke. Just as Dayna reached the kitchen, Caryn was headed

back to the living room with a bottle of Diet Coke in her hand.

"Remember when it was a rarity to find these little bottles of Diet Coke sold in the grocery stores because they were only sold in cans in the stores, but in the bottles in the machines? Now, they are all individual small bottles. You can't even find them in the big bottles they used to sell."

"Yeah, a lot of things are changing, aren't they?"

"Mmmm. Now I feel better," Caryn said as she gulped down her drink. "You know," she said, "you, my friend, are the reason I needed this."

"Me? How's that?"

"Well, I've heard that you're teaching an underground Ethnic Lit class – or some such craziness." Caryn looked intently at Dayna, and Dayna stared back at Caryn, trying to decide whether she should lie or tell Caryn the truth; tell her that she was practically sitting on top of that "underground Ethnic Lit class."

"What if I were? How would you feel about that, Caryn? Tell me exactly, what would you do about it?" Dayna's voice cracked as if she would break into tears, but her face took on the look of defiance, anger, and a darkness that Caryn had never witnessed before.

"To be honest with you, I really don't know. But I don't know why I don't know. I consider you a friend – a sister – and I don't know if I'd be upset because you would really be going left on me, or if you *failed to tell me* you were going left on me. I would think that you would want my and Frank's support or opinion. Or, at least talk about whatever is going on with you." Caryn fidgeted with her Diet Coke bottle. Caryn jumped up from the chair she had plopped down on. She put on her jacket. "You know, I think we should talk about this when both of us are in a better mood. I'm exhausted and you look tired, too, my friend." Caryn stopped at the

door, turned to Dayna and gave her a big hug. "Be careful and be safe. I'm praying for you," she whispered, barely audible in Dayna's ear. Before Dayna could reply, Caryn was backing out of the driveway. Neither woman noticed the truck parked a few houses down the block. It finally moved an hour later, slowly passing the house minutes before Mrs. Olivares and a couple of members of the group in the basement left and walked quickly and quietly to their cars which were parked in places around the neighborhood.

Chapter 14

After the group in the basement left the house, Dayna showered, brushed her teeth, and changed into sweats. She turned down the thermostat and turned on the fan she used for the white noise. She disguised her bed to look as if she was in it and headed toward the basement. Half way down the stairs, she headed back up, checked all the doors, packed a couple of bottles of water and a couple of sandwiches in a small backpack, and then went down into the basement. She closed the door to the basement and almost locked it, but decided against it. She would just have to trust in all the precautions the group had taken in camouflaging all the houses and their city. She pushed the button on the antique portable stereo sitting on the top shelf of the bookcase located in the back corner of the basement. The soft whirring going on underneath her could not be heard. She always listened for it just in case someone tried the buttons on the box. She was told that even with a high powered listening device in the room the mechanism could not be heard. Dayna walked over to the antique Coke box under the stairs, which was surrounded by other collectibles and junk, opened the top and climbed in closing the lid behind her.

Chapter 15

The bottom of the Coke box collapsed into a wide stairway that descended ten floors below ground level. A soft light came on guiding the way down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs was a small room with five doors that led into tunnels going in various directions. Eva Olivares' husband, Tomás, met her in the tunnel.

"¿ Por lo tanto, usted ha estado trabajando muy duro hoy, ¿eh?" He asked jokingly.

"(No) comprendo," she replied, smiling. He always asked the same thing every time he met her in the tunnels: "So, you've been working really hard today, huh?" It was one of the few phrases she did understand in Spanish, but she always told him she didn't, and still wondered why that was the question he asked. It was a private joke – one she didn't understand. She followed him down the tunnel. It was more of an art museum than a tunnel. Lighting was provided by sconces every few feet and between the sconces were prints of various ancient artists – Monét, DaVinci, Rembrandt, Picasso and others that Dayna did not know. As she walked through the tunnels and admired the prints, as she always did, she wondered for the umpteenth time why she needed to be a part of the UTD organization.

Dayna's heritage was African, Mexican, and Anglo. Like most other citizens of the country who were of African descent, Dayna had no idea of the original language of her African heritage. She never felt the need to learn Spanish – until she began teaching cultural diversity. She could easily ignore the conflict, but she knew that eventually it would affect every individual, whether through economics or personally.

Dayna was born after her Mexican great-grandfather died. Although her mother knew him, she never offered much information about him or Dayna's grandmother, his daughter. Growing up, Dayna never questioned her mother about her Mexican heritage, and now that that

very culture was being discriminated against, she felt a connection and wished she knew more about her great grandfather's culture. The situation reminded her of the history of the people of African descent centuries before when the country was forty-eight contiguous united states. The land mass may be united – either by regions or states, but it seems the people rarely were – at least not for long. Dayna wondered when it would end.

Such thoughts were always with her as she made the hike through the tunnels. Even though Mr. Olivares spoke English, she never engaged him in conversation, and he never volunteered. Dayna thought it was the same paranoia for both of them. They were ten floors underground, under the protection of technology that she never imagined existed, and yet they rarely ever spoke above a whisper, even in the community room where they were headed.

The underground facility had been in place long before Dayna was aware of the UTD organization. Dayna was amazed that such a huge project as an entire city could be kept secret. Of course, she didn't speak of it to anyone above ground, not even those she saw at the meetings.

The community room was located about three miles through the tunnels from Dayna's entrance into the underground maze. Each member of the UTD group had an entrance to the tunnels or access through someone else's home or property. As Dayna and Mr. Olivares walked through the tunnels/hallways, other members joined them in the various little hubs similar to the one under Dayna's house. The group did not talk much other than polite quiet greetings. A few looked really tired and walked slow. The last hub was located about a mile from the community room. As they entered the last hub, the door farthest from Dayna opened and Frank Giordano, Caryn's husband, entered the group. There were fifteen or twenty people in the group when Frank joined them. He didn't seem to notice Dayna. She slipped to the far side of the group. She started feeling a bit nauseated and shaky. Frank was a detective with the local police department.

Why is Frank here? Why didn't Caryn tell me he was part of the UTD? Or is he? The more she thought about seeing Frank, the more anxious she became. Was he a spy for the Agency?

The community room was filling from all entrances, and Dayna lost sight of Frank. The room was about the size of a sports arena. While many people walked, many took advantage of the small carts and ATV's that were provided for use in the tunnels. There was always an eerie hush as the members gathered. Everyone brought their own set of earphones, but had to leave all communication devices at home or disabled. The room had ports for the earphones in each seat so that everyone could hear once seated. The speakers were in the glassed-in boxes located around the room. The technology was such that no matter who was speaking or what language was spoken, the listener could understand. This was a general meeting and anyone interested could attend, and from the looks of it, everyone did – even people with small children and babies. There were teachers available to help with homework and nursery workers to watch the babies. Dayna wondered how these people managed to keep their day jobs and take on this responsibility in the middle of the night. She knew that she would barely be able to be on top of her class tomorrow. She settled into her seat, put in her earphones, and watched the others as they all waited for the speakers to begin. She looked around but didn't see Frank. The meeting began.

After the initial greetings and welcome, Dr. Janssen Heard announced that the smaller group leaders would have a meeting to discuss the feasibility of building homes that would branch off the main tunnels. There were a few families already living underground and if those families had help, they were willing to be the first permanent residents of the underground community. Dayna wondered if any of the families mentioned were those that had been fined and imprisoned for a short length of time for speaking Spanish. She had also heard that those

same people had had their homes foreclosed and/or lost their jobs. No one had had contact with the families for weeks. *Would I be able to live down here? How would I make the transition? I don't have to worry about it. I only speak English.* Her family had already expressed concern that she might make the wrong decision about her job. They didn't understand. Ron, her husband, died several years earlier, and since all six kids had their own families and lives, she only had herself to take care of and worry about. *What? What did he say?*

"It has further come to our attention that certain areas are being monitored by governmental officials. Be especially aware of any unmarked vehicles in the vicinity of your homes. If you can, start a daily walk or walk at least two or three times a week around your neighborhood. If you don't have one, and can afford the extra expense, buy a dog and walk it. Keep your eyes and ears open. We are in the process of setting up underground communication stations. You are already able to enter the tunnels at any time. Now, you will be able to connect your earphones to any working communication station that will be located in the tunnels, and contact those in the system, especially the Unity Protection Agency. You should have a micro-disc with all the information and instructions on it located in the compartment on the right of your earphone jack on your seats."

A bright green light at one of the seats across from Dayna came on indicating that the occupant of the seat wished to speak or ask a question. The seats also had wireless microphones built in, but were only active once Dr. Heard was made aware of the request and the microphone was activated.

"I noticed a strange truck parked three blocks north of our fifth quad about two weeks ago. You know, near the new bank. It sort of shook me up. How will we know what and what not to report?"

The new bank? The fifth quad? That's where I live." A small group had met at Dayna's house on the evening in question. She had shared her concerns about losing her position at the university. They were brainstorming about what she would do if she lost her job.

"We really don't," replied Dr. Heard. "We don't want to bring attention to ourselves, so each of us has to be extremely careful. Just report anything you feel is suspect to the Protection Agency, and they will take it from there."

The Protection Agency had been formed as a clearinghouse for the law enforcement agencies. Suspect activities were reported to the P. A. The investigators would check out the report before calling in the police to take care of the matter.

Dayna began to wonder exactly who told Caryn that she may be entertaining the diversity groups in her home. Now, she really did have a headache and was beginning to feel extremely nauseated. She hoped it was just low blood sugar. Although she had her water and sandwiches, she didn't want to eat them during the meeting. Dayna tried to relax and focus on the meeting and not her friends, Caryn and Frank. As she tried to relax, the question and answer period continued, but Dayna heard very little of it. She finally removed the headphones.

Chapter 16

"Come on, Dayna, it's time to trek back home." It was the first time she had heard Mr. Olivares speak an entire sentence in English.

She stuttered. "Is the meeting over already?"

"Yes, about an hour ago. I thought I'd let you rest and then walk back with you through the tunnels. Or, I can see if there is an ATV available so that you can ride. You don't look well, *mi amiga*," he answered.

She rose from her seat and began walking toward the nearest exit. Mr. Olivares trailed after her. They were the last people in the gigantic room. Dayna zipped her jacket and put her hands in her pockets. She followed behind Mr. Olivares. She glanced behind her as they exited into the tunnels.

As they trudged through the now empty tunnels, headed toward her hub, Dayna tried to imagine the life that was going on above her. If she were one of the members that decided to literally go underground, would she be able to convince any of her family to join her, or would she have to give up her family?

Mr. Olivares walked in silence. It was the first time she had been in the tunnels when they were empty. She felt relieved that he was with her. She hoped to be able to return his kindness. When they entered her hub, the automatic light did not engage — the embedded lights in the concrete ceiling were gently twinkling like stars. She had never seen them before and was in awe. However, Mr. Olivares grabbed her arm and drew her back into the tunnel, quietly closed the door and hit the button above it.

"Do you feel well enough to walk a little farther?" he whispered in English.

She nodded yes, unable to make a sound. She remembered that the twinkling stars were

an alarm. *Someone is in my house!* She prayed silently as they walked quickly through the tunnel to his hub. The embedded lights in the ceiling of the tunnel were twinkling and Dayna thought about stars. When they arrived at the hub Mr. Olivares used, the entrance was a door to an elevator. When they stepped in, the door closed and immediately the elevator moved silently upward. It stopped and opened in the sub-basement of one of the condemned buildings on the outskirts of the city.

"Where are we?" Dayna whispered.

"About three blocks from my house, but we have to be extremely quiet and cautious. We will be on the surface, but hopefully not noticeable. We will have to walk through brush most of the way to my backyard."

When they stepped out of the elevator, the doors silently closed and a wall immediately rose from the floor in front of it. The wall was indistinguishable from the old walls of the rest of the building. Mr. Olivares pointed the way and had Dayna walk in front of him. He then took a spray can out of his pocket and began to spray dust on the floor covering their footsteps as they walked. They crawled through a hole in the back wall which opened onto a concrete parking lot. To their good fortune, it was raining steadily. There would be no evidence of them leaving the building. Mr. Olivares hurriedly walked into the middle of some dense bushes and brush and beckoned for her to follow. Dayna did not even see the opening. Once inside the brush and bushes, she could not see anything or feel the rain. Mr. Olivares reached back and took her hand. They walked hurriedly in silence. Sooner than Dayna expected, they were getting wet again and Dayna saw that they were in a backyard. Mr. Olivares motioned for her to sit down in the black solar screened gazebo. He ran to a screened patio and slipped into the house. A few minutes later, Dayna felt a gentle vibration below her and her seat in the gazebo began to descend. As

soon as the top of the seat was below the surface, the bottom of the gazebo slid into place. The elevator stopped at what Dayna calculated to be about two floors below ground level. Elizabeth Olivares was waiting for her.

"What happened? Tomás only told me that he had brought you here because you couldn't go home. Are you ill?"

"No, I don't think so. Just nerves. Someone was in my house when we got to my hub." Dayna could barely speak. "I think I just need to rest and get my head together. May I have a glass of water? I took a backpack with water and sandwiches with me to the meeting, but I must have left it in the community room."

"Of course. Are you hungry? How about a sandwich?" As she looked at her watch, she shook her head and asked, "Better yet, how about an early breakfast? It is already 4:30. I don't know how Tomás will make it at work today?"

"Oh my God, work! I have to get to my house and get ready for work. If I don't make it, they'll know something is up." Dayna was frantic. Her mind was in chaos. She needed to go to work, but if she did, she knew she would see Caryn. If she didn't, Caryn would be the first to ask questions. Dayna began to cry. Embarrassed at crying in Eva's presence, she tried to hold back tears.

As if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, Eva took control of the situation. "We are about the same size. Let's go upstairs and let you pick out an outfit for work. Then you can shower and lie down in the guest bedroom for a couple of hours. When you get up, you can eat and get dressed for your classes today." She was talking as she walked Dayna down a short passageway, up some stairs to the basement, and finally to the main floor of the Olivares' home. As they walked through the house toward the bedrooms, Dayna didn't notice that the windows

were tinted and had blackout drapes on them. From the outside someone looking at the house would never know when lights were on at night or if anyone was moving around inside. Dayna was too tired to care, but she managed to pick out a pair of slacks and a sweater. When she finally completed her shower and dressed in a pair of pajamas which had been placed in the bathroom, she practically stumbled across the hall to the designated bedroom and fell on the bed instead of in it. She didn't hear Eva tell her that her husband would walk her through the tunnels to an exit a couple of houses from her own house so that she could get her car and drive to work. When Eva realized Dayna was sleeping, she silently said a prayer and closed the door. She slipped into her own bed next to Tomás who had fallen asleep while Eva took care of Dayna. Eva set the alarm for two hours later and turned off the lamp.

Dayna awoke abruptly feeling as if a heavy weight was on her chest and a heavy sense of fear and foreboding. The more she tried to shake off the cloud of sleep, the more she was afraid. At first she couldn't remember where she was – then she remembered seeing Frank in the tunnel and the alarm at her entrance. She curled into a fetal position and began to cry. *What have I done by getting involved in UTD? I'm not anything – just a member. I can't be that much of a threat because of this language thing – can I? What were they looking for? What am I going to do?*

"My God, tell me what to do," she prayed. "You tell me I should not fear, that you are my strength and my salvation and the strength of my life, and that I should not fear or be afraid of anyone. Well, Lord, I am! I am frightened to my very core. I am sick with fear, and even worse, I don't know what to do about it." Dayna continue to talk to God in this manner — crying and asking for divine help in one sob and angry with herself in the next because she couldn't help but be afraid.

Eva carefully opened the door to check on her. When she realized that Dayna was praying, she sat down on the foot of the bed and silently prayed with her.

Chapter 17

The Agency operative pointed his weapon at the figure lying in the bed and was ready to fire when the companion of the shooter motioned for him not to follow through with his intentions. Except for the fan blowing in the bedroom, there was no other sound in the house. The blackout drapes and blinds made the house so opaque that the couple could not be seen except for the faint green lights located on each chest and back and on each hand. Had anyone been watching the house from outside, they would have assumed that the occupant was sleeping, as was the rest of the neighborhood. They glided quietly through the house like shadows, never making a sound.

The two, who had been ordered to search Dayna's house, were unequally matched in covert affairs. Although both worked for the Agency, until this assignment, they had not worked together. Jason Graham was six feet three inches and in perfect physical shape. He worked as a fitness trainer when he wasn't carrying out the Agency's business. Prior to being recruited, he served twenty years in the military as a member of Delta force, one of the most covert divisions of the United Military. He was sure the Agency recruited him because of his military background. It didn't take much for the Agency to convince him to work for them. He could do the covert operations such as the current assignment, and do on the ground surveillance at the university. He would have voluntarily applied for the job had he known such position was available. He wasn't so sure about his female partner. During briefing, she seemed hesitant to accept the assignment — but then, she didn't have much of a choice. One of the reasons for them being paired was for Jason to evaluate Caryn Giordano.

The pair checked out every room. They expertly investigated every drawer and closet without moving one object, or, if they had to move something, they put it back in the exact spot.

Dayna would never know they had been there. Jason motioned for Caryn to follow him downstairs into the room that had been used for Dayna's culture group meetings. It looked like any other basement that had been turned into a recreation room or den, with all the extra junk stored around the edge of the room. Caryn poked here and there. She had been in this room many times. She thought she knew what to expect. She wanted to hurry and get out of the house. Jason was in the corner by the old Coke box. Caryn had been with Dayna when she bought it. Dayna hired a Latino man and his brother to deliver it from the antique shop. She never understood why Dayna bought it. Jason lifted the lid but found nothing inside and gently closed it so as not to make any noise. He didn't hear or detect the alarm that was activated in the tunnels below the house when he opened the box without turning the right knobs on the old boom box sitting on the shelf above it.

Caryn got Jason's attention by pointing her pen light at him and then pointing it at her watch. They went upstairs and out of the house noiselessly. It was 3:00 a.m.

Caryn arrived home to an empty house. She sighed deeply in relief as she walked into the bedroom. As she dressed for bed, she mentally reviewed the night's escapade. She wasn't afraid that Jason would have killed her friend because she knew Dayna wasn't in the bed. Dayna had once confided that although she had to have the fan blowing on her when she slept, she could not sleep with anything over her head because she got claustrophobic, even under the covers. They had laughed about that little idiosyncrasy. It was a crazy stunt for Dayna to pull. Although, the wig on the pillow with just a tuft of hair showing from under the covers was pretty convincing, Caryn wondered if Jason was astute enough to realize that it really wasn't Dayna. They hadn't talked at all in the car on the way to the operations headquarters. She felt certain that Dayna was at one of her meetings. As she climbed into bed, she reached over and set her alarm for 7:30 a.m.

She went to sleep with images of dark figures with faint green lights on their chests and hands floating behind her eyelids, and wishing her husband was home.

Chapter 18

Frank Giordano received a text from Caryn that she had forgotten to tell him about a symposium for English professors at a hotel in a city 100 miles away and that she would probably not be home until sometime the next day. When he got the message, he texted her back, but didn't get a reply. Since his shift at the police department was over at 10:00 p.m., he decided to attend the UTD meeting. As he changed into jeans and a hooded sweatshirt, he thought about Caryn's increasing activities away from home – and from him. It wasn't really cold enough for the sweatshirt, but he still wasn't comfortable with being openly associated with the group. He didn't know how his membership would affect his career, and, Caryn seemed to be more and more against language diversity, even though she spoke several languages herself. In fact, that was one of the reasons he had been drawn to her twenty years ago. He was Italian and she said that her bloodline was so diverse that she was probably a bit of everything except African, and because her hair curled in humidity, she wasn't even sure about that. She had been worried at first that he might look down on her because he came from a pure Italian bloodline and could trace his family back to a little village not far from Rome. She never indicated that she was prejudiced or harbored any negative thoughts or feelings about other races or cultures. Her best friend was Dayna. Recently, Frank was finding it extremely agitating to listen to her talk about how English had to be the only language, and that all people should adhere to the language and laws of the dominant group in America; that people should be prosecuted if those laws were broken. As Frank thought and wrestled with his wife's change of attitude, he walked five blocks to a city park and entered a building which in earlier days had housed showers and restrooms for use by swimmers. The pool had been filled many years earlier, and now the building was in decay. The city had planted bushes and trees around it until they could get enough votes to tear it

down. The UTD group had installed a secret entrance in the far back corner. Frank hoped the city would not decide to demolish the building because it was the closest entrance to his home. Right now there were enough secret UTD members on the city council that the shower building and many other buildings were safe. Before Frank knew it, he had walked another mile or so and was entering the last hub before the community room. Just as he stepped into the tunnels, he noticed Dayna. He wondered if Dayna had seen him. He stayed close to the wall and tried to stay inconspicuous.

Chapter 19

Dayna didn't know how long Eva had been sitting on the bed, but she felt peace knowing that she had not been alone.

"Thanks, Eva. I really appreciate you and Tomás' help and care. I really don't think I could have made it back here alone. I saw a friend in the tunnels that is a detective with the police department. I don't know if he is truly sympathetic to the cause or undercover for the government."

"Who was it?"

"Frank Giordano. He's married to Caryn, a friend -- I think. We also work together."

"You *think*?"

"Well, she's the one who came to the house last night. Also, she's been acting strange towards me lately. Asking questions about our meetings and stuff. Oh well. I guess I need to get dressed and figure out what I'm going to say and do about work today."

Eva told Dayna that since her car had never left her house, everyone would think she was still at home. Tomás and a couple of other men had checked out her house and reset the alarm. Tomás would walk her home.

"How do you feel, Dayna? Can you make it home okay, and drive to work?"

"I feel – I feel well. Better than I expected. I am a little nervous about seeing Caryn, but I'll be okay. Being with you and knowing you were praying really helped. Thanks," Dayna said. After they ate a quick breakfast, Dayna felt as if the previous night had just been a very tiring nightmare.

Later, as they walked through the tunnels to her hub, Tomás asked Dayna if she would be willing to look at some surveillance pictures taken in her house.

"My house? What are you doing with surveillance pictures of inside my house?"

Tomás calmly explained that in retrofitting her home, as with all homes of UTD members, the UTD had installed tiny cameras all over the house, in the walls, ceilings, and even in some parts of the floors, that would only activate when the alarm was tripped. It was for the members' protection, and to try and identify the intruder. Dayna nodded, trying to absorb the additional information, and comprehend just how deep the fight between UTD and the government really was.

Dayna and Tomás Olivares entered the basement to her home through the Coke box stairway she had descended less than twenty-four hours earlier. Tomás had her sit down while he checked the rest of the house, doors and window again.

This just cannot be happening. This is too surreal. I just can't be going through all of this. Oh, God, what is going on?

When Tomás returned, he sat next to her on the couch and pulled out a small digital tablet and showed Dayna a video of the agency operatives searching her house. At first, all Dayna could tell was that one was a man and the other a woman.

"Wait. Go back to that last frame." Dayna stared at the scene on the tablet. "That's my friend. That's Caryn. Caryn works for the Agency? How can she do that to me?" Dayna began to cry. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"What did you see, ¿Qué? "

"My friend, *mi amiga*!" Dayna said slowly. When she had regained her composure, she turned and looked at Tomás. "I refuse to be intimidated, violated, spied on, and have my rights denied by these people. I am going to work, and make a stand – and confront Caryn!"

"No. You can't do that – not yet. You've made it to the Agency's sympathizer list. From

now on, you have to be careful. What is interesting is that this husband and wife seem to be on different teams. Eva told me you saw Frank Giordano. He has been a part of UTD even before Eva and I. I have never met his wife, but I know she works with you. I think you should just go to work as usual. Also, Dayna, don't resign. Agree to teach English. Do as they ask. Just as they seem to have an operative in the university, we will have eyes and ears as well – you.

Caryn entered the office she and Dayna shared just as Dayna was leaving. "I missed you at coffee this morning. You get a late start this morning?" Caryn asked.

"Yes and no. I dropped by the Dean's Office. I've decided to stay, Caryn. If you can't beat'em – join'em." She didn't smile when she said it.

"You don't have a class for another hour. Do you want to have a cup of coffee with me?" Caryn asked. Dayna walked to the door.

"Hey, where are you going?"

"For a walk," Dayna said. Her voice sounded tired. Caryn watched her friend walk slowly down the hallway.

Chapter 20

"You trying to make up for staying out all night, woman?" Frank walked up behind Caryn and hugged her while she was stirring in a pot on the stove. "That smells really, really good! I am starving. How soon before we eat?"

"Me? Why didn't you come home after your shift?"

Frank slightly frowned. He let go of Caryn and leaned against the counter. "When I got your text that you wouldn't be home until sometime today, I came home and changed clothes, and sat with Matheson and Parker at a stakeout across town."

"I didn't... I mean, when I got home this morning, you weren't here. I just wondered where you were." It dawned on Caryn that the Agency had sent the text to cover for her snooping at Dayna's.

"Well, how was it?"

"How was what?"

"The English professors thing-a-jiggy. I thought you would be gone longer, so I slept at the station. Since I worked the double, they let me off early." Frank had gotten pretty good at quick excuses over the last year, and he hated it.

"Oh, uh, it was okay. I got home about noon."

The doorbell rang and almost simultaneously, they heard Dayna, "Hello! Smells like I am just in time for supper!"

Caryn glanced at Frank. His expression puzzled Caryn.

"Come on in. I'm just finishing up. You're welcome to stay. Frank *says* he is starving, so we had better get started." She handed some plates to Frank. Without speaking, Frank began putting them on the table.

"I was kidding. I'm not going to eat. I just wanted to apologize for my abruptness this morning. There was no cause for me to be mean to you because I feel the university is giving in to the government. You know how I feel about people and languages, Caryn. I just don't want to compromise."

"This morning? I thought -." Frank began.

"Frank, we will talk about that later. Let's just have a nice supper, okay?"

"No, guys, I really can't stay. I am very tired and still a little upset. I also walked all over this town this afternoon just thinking. Caryn, I'm trying to clear my mind and get a firm idea of what's happening. You know, I even felt like I was being followed a couple of times. What's with that?" She looked at Frank and he looked down, as he placed only two plates on the table. "See you tomorrow, Caryn. Bye guys!"

As the door closed, Frank asked, "Okay, Caryn. What's up? I thought you were at that symposium thing this morning?"

"Frank, it's no big deal. I was. I just left early and went straight in to the university without coming home. That's all. What was that look Dayna gave *you*? I noticed you didn't speak to her at all. For that matter, *she* didn't really speak to you. What's up with *that*?"

"I don't know. Why was she upset with you?" Frank quizzed Caryn.

"Dayna decided to stay at the university and teach only English. Apparently, she isn't happy with her decision. She made that choice just to keep her job. She's really upset about that and she took it out on me a little. That's all. Really. She'll get over it and in a few days, we will all be laughing and having fun over Diet Cokes and Italian chicken wings and pasta!" Caryn tried to sound more upbeat and joyful than she really felt.

The couple sat down to eat. Neither spoke during the meal. Frank wanted to go to Dayna

and discuss their seeing each other in the tunnels and to encourage her not to give in to the university. Caryn just wanted to get things back to the way they were a year ago. She wanted out of the Agency.

Chapter 21

"Tomás, do you really think it wise that Dayna spy for us?" asked Eva. "She has a good heart and a passion for the welfare of people, but she is no undercover operative by any means!"

"That just makes it perfect for her. She will believe in what she is doing. She is quiet and kind. And she's smart. We need someone inside at the university. Dayna is the only member there. She has to be the one. Anyway, she will only be eyes and ears. Just report what she sees and hears. I'll forward the information to Dr. Heard. That's all."

"I hope you are right. I will pray for Dayna's safety." Eva was tired. They had had a long twenty-four hours. She went to bed, but Tomás stayed in the small living room with its blackout drapes, and locked windows and doors, and wondered how and when he would tell Eva that they would be moving underground soon. He knew she would not be happy. Eva loved their backyard and the outside. She loved their children and grandchildren. He had never discussed the issue with their children, so he really didn't know how they would feel. Although they had taken family trips to Mexico to see his and Eva's parents and other relatives, their four children had been born in America, and none of them spoke Spanish, but they understood it. Tomás sighed as he turned off the light and followed Eva to bed.

Chapter 22

When Dayna and Lenny approached K Street, they ran straight for the park and through it to the abandoned pool house. They made their way around the bushes and shrubs hiding the building, and sprinted into the building.

"Now, what, Dr. Thomas?" Lenny asked sarcastically, as he brushed broken twigs and leaves off his clothes.

Dayna didn't know for sure. She knew that there was a tunnel from this building. She just didn't know how to get in. UTD gave verbal instructions during the meeting as to how to get to the tunnels, but she hadn't used any entrance other than her own home, or the one from the condemned building she entered with Tomás. She didn't want to use that one because it was too close to the Olivares' home. Now, she regretted her decision to use this entrance. She and Lenny walked to the far end of the building into one of the areas that had an open shower behind a wall of lockers. She realized she was in the "Men's" area because there was also a row of urinals on the side wall.

"Well?"

"Well, what?" Dayna snapped, pulling twigs out of her hair. "Let me get my breath," she gasped. Not only could she not find the entrance to the tunnels, when and if she did, she was about to take an Agency operative into them. While she had begun to realize what the Agency was capable of, she didn't know what UTD would do to Lenny – or to her – for revealing one of their entrances and their underground facilities.

Lenny leaned against a shower wall and eyed Dayna as she brushed herself off, pulled twigs from her hair, and took deep breaths. Dayna slowly stood and began to walk about the shower area.

"Where is this safe place? This can't be it. What are you looking for?"

Dayna didn't answer. She just kept looking. She knew she would know it when she saw it. She turned quickly and went to the side marked "Women." She went in the shower area. This shower area had shower stalls instead of being open. She went to the last stall farthest from the entrance. It looked as old and rusty and dirty as the others. "What *are* you looking for?" Lenny asked again, following her into the stall.

"Why do you want to know?" A man's voice asked in a loud whisper. Startled, Dayna and Lenny turned, and Lenny's hand quickly went behind his back for the gun he had concealed.

"Don't do that!" Dayna and Lenny realized that Frank Giordano already had his police revolver pointed at them.

"Dayna, who is this guy? What are you doing here?" Frank asked. He still had the gun pointed at both of them.

"What are you doing here?" Dayna asked Frank. "Have you been following me ... us?"

"No. You didn't answer my question." Frank was average height – not quite six feet tall, and had all the features of a handsome Italian – black wavy hair, dark eyes - which seemed darker now that he was confronting Dayna and Lenny. "Dayna, are you okay? Why are you using this entrance?"

"Entrance? Entrance to what? What are you talking about?" Lenny looked confused.

"Frank, we need to get safe. If you weren't tracking us, someone else is. We need to get underground now!" Dayna looked frightened but in control.

"Underground? This is the entrance to the UTD underground facility? You're kidding me!" Lenny looked around the shower stall in disbelief.

"Okay, guy, let me have your weapon." Lenny reluctantly gave Frank his gun.

"All this time you had a gun? What were you going to do, kill me when you found the entrance?" Dayna began to pummel Lenny again, and she kicked him as hard as she could, and then, on instinct, Lenny slapped her – hard! Dayna stumbled backward, but didn't fall. Frank punched Lenny hard enough to stun him and get him off balance.

"What is wrong with you, Dayna?" He angrily asked. Frank held Dayna by one arm with one hand, and grabbed Lenny by the arm with the other hand. He stepped on the drain in the center of the stall and turned the shower faucet with his elbow. As the entire floor began to descend, the faucet went back to its original position and another shower floor slid into place. When they finally stopped they were in the tunnels. Frank let Dayna go, but held onto Lenny. He used one of the emergency phones located on the wall by the elevator. Within a few minutes two uniformed security guards drove up in an ATV.

Chapter 23

Dayna just glared at Lenny as the guards loaded him onto the ATV. She had never been struck by a man. She wiped her mouth on the back of her sleeve. When she saw the blood, she made a step toward Lenny, fist balled up. Frank jerked her back

"What is it with you and beating up on men?" Frank said, frustrated and confused at Dayna's actions.

"Take this guy to the station," Frank instructed, "I'll be there in a few. I need to talk to Dr. Thomas for a minute." The men drove away, and Frank turned to Dayna. He just looked at her for a few seconds and then led her down another tunnel. They entered a room which had a television, wall to ceiling bookcases, plants located around the room, and leather couches and chairs. "Are you okay? Do you want anything to drink?"

Dayna nodded that she was okay. She sat on the edge of the couch and looked around. After a couple of minutes, she asked for water.

"Okay, Dayna, what's going on? Who's your companion? I know he is not a UTD member – at least not a member from here." Frank walked across the room to the bar and took a bottle of water from the refrigerator. He handed her the bottled water and paced the room as he talked. He kept running his hand through his hair. Dayna smiled because she remembered Caryn played with her hair when she was nervous or anxious. Dayna wondered if Frank was nervous or angry.

Dayna leaned back on the couch and closed her eyes and told Frank how she came to be with Lenny.

"Frank, how long have you been a UTD member? Does Caryn know?"

"About three or four years. It's been the longest three years of my life because I have

kept it a secret from Caryn. When I first started, they already had the tunnels, and most of city infrastructure. They wanted more than just security guards, they also needed a police force. It seems that even though people may agree about the language/culture thing, humans are humans and they still need law enforcement. I just didn't think you, or anybody, would bring the criminals with you. He could have killed you anywhere along the way. You do know that don't you?"

"I do now. I didn't even know he *had* a gun until you were there asking him for it. Frank, like you said, he could have killed me, but he *didn't*. Someone was tracking us when we were back in the woods outside of town. We saw the light, but Lenny actually shielded me and took care of me. He could have called for help or just given me to whoever it was. We were both pretty sure it was the Agency. I'm sure that Jason guy will be mad for a long time at both Lenny and me." She laughed. "You know, I got him pretty good for an old woman. He didn't expect it, that's for sure. Anyway, tell me, do you know why they want me?"

"Well, from what I hear, according to Tomás . . ."

"You know the Olivares?"

"Yes." Frank continued, "From what he told me, the Agency has been watching you since your second year teaching at the University. It seems the Agency has been a covert operation for some time. You've gotten on the director's radar."

"Really? Why?"

"You. Your teaching methods. Students talk about their instructors just as much as the instructors talk about the students. Anyway, it seems that some of your students who come from different cultures, especially the ones from Mexico, and even some of your African students – are spreading the word about how you are an advocate of cultural diversity. One student said that

you love the fact that we are all so different. As a result of your popularity, the UTD group has been able to recruit young adults, as well as their families, from all walks of life into the membership. This region or cell has been growing so fast, that we already have housing down here. Plus the larger and stronger the group – which you've helped – the sooner the city will be complete."

"Really? I knew that the plan had been mentioned in the last few community meetings, but I didn't know it had already been put into place. Seems as if in the future America, and maybe the world, will be separated not by race or color but by language – English speakers against everybody else. Man! But, Frank, why isn't Caryn in on this? I could tell that she didn't have a clue what you have been doing. How can you keep something this big –" Dayna stopped. She remembered that Jason had not been alone in her house, her best friend and mentor, and Frank's wife, had been with him. Frank didn't know Caryn had become a part of the "I & I" group Lenny had told her about. The investigate part anyway.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. I can't believe that I would make that much of a difference to upset the Agency. Surely, there is another reason they would want me hurt."

"We hope to find that out from your friend."

"You know, he mentioned his boss being a woman, but I can't remember if he gave me a name. Where is Lenny anyway? What will happen to him? He wanted us to go to my house, but I didn't think it was a good idea. I know I took a chance, but I also know that my house has cameras and that people from the Agency have been inside. They were there the night I first saw you in the tunnel. So the next best thing was to tell him I knew where we could be safe. He didn't know that it was underground — that is until you came. But, I'm glad you did because I couldn't

figure out how to get down here. I just knew it was in the pool house. What will you do with him?"

"Well, I guess we'll just have to kill him!" Frank shook his head as he said it.

"What? You can't do that! He *helped* me get away!" She glared at Frank. Frank started to smile. "You are just messing with me, aren't you?" The memory of her, Frank, and Caryn sitting outside on their patio one evening after dinner, flitted across her mind. Frank was telling tall tales about what they did to lawbreakers on his shift. He had thought it amusing when he could get her all worked up over nothing. She was glad to see even a little hint of that humor since she knew that of late he and Caryn must have been going opposite directions. She wondered how Caryn was really getting along – and how in the world did she get mixed up with the Agency?

"I'm sorry, what were you saying?"

"I *said* that as usual you tuned me out. What is going on with you, Dayna? Why didn't you tell me and Caryn you were a part of UTD?"

"I'm not sure. I think part of it was because the University was pressuring me to either change to English only, or to resign. I wasn't sure I wanted to compromise my beliefs. You know, my stance all stems from faith and belief that as equals, we have to be able to speak our individual languages.

"At the same time, I needed to work and I love teaching and the people and everything at the University. With Caryn being tenured and teaching English, she didn't have to worry about her job. If I resigned, we would be on opposite sides. I didn't like that. But, then, you know about being on opposite sides, don't you? Don't answer that. Anyway, I was afraid of what you and Caryn would think. Tell me, why doesn't Caryn know *you* are a UTD member? It was pretty obvious that you didn't want me to mention seeing you the other night."

"You know how tenacious Caryn can be when she gets her mind wrapped around something. If she is for it, she is for it! I guess because she's been with the University so long, she will go along with whatever that they support, but, she is one of the last people I would have thought would agree with all of that. When I first joined, it was really just to see what it was all about, and I never told Caryn because I wasn't sure how I really felt about it and I didn't want her to try and convince me to her way of thinking. As time went by, I realized that I really did agree with UTD. I haven't really agreed with all of the underground stuff and secrecy, but I was lead detective on that case where that whole family disappeared."

"I remember. That was one of the first cases when people began to wonder if the government had anything to do with their disappearance. The family had become very vocal about not speaking only English. Yeah, that was also when Caryn became a little more vocal about speaking English only." Donna nodded her head as she spoke.

"Well, now, it doesn't really matter what got us involved, does it? We are, and it is getting really bad. It's crazy.

"Did I tell you that there is a section of residential housing down here?" Frank continued, "Apparently, UTD has been planning this for decades. We don't have much of a retail structure down here, so there aren't many underground businesses. Those of us who travel back and forth above ground bring in supplies. I'm telling you this because you and your savior are going to have to stay down here. I can't let you go back up top after they kidnapped you and he helped you escape."

"No! You can't make me stay here. I am not going to just disappear! I will go back home to my own house. I need to think about this and contact my kids. I think I can convince the university that I will do whatever it takes to keep my job. Mr. Olivares said that UTD needed my

ears and eyes at the university. I'm going to do it. Besides, I think there is more going on here than just language differences. It has to be. I feel it." Dayna stood and began to pace.

Frank smiled as he remembered the first time he met Dayna. She had been friendly but shy. Although she was in her late forties at the time, she was as excited about landing a teaching job as if she was in her twenties. She was adamant about following rules and keeping the peace. He and Caryn often laughed that they wished they had her enthusiasm and energy – and her peacemaking abilities. Dayna had taken to Caryn, and Caryn had returned the friendship. They were as close as sisters.

"I know, Dayna, but the way to take care of it is not by espionage and kidnapping or threatening people's lives. We have a few supporters in the Council. In a few months there is going to be a hearing before the Council. Who knows what might come of that? The problem I'm afraid we might have is that there are so many supporters of the underground diversity cities, that many won't care if the law is repealed or not. They won't vote – if it comes to a vote – they'll just go underground."

"Is it that big? I had no idea. But it doesn't matter. What matters is that an arm of the government, the Agency, has taken it upon itself to kidnap, threaten, and possibly kill people. Frank, they were in my house. Ask Mr. Olivares. He has the video to prove it. Even worse, and which also bothers me as much, is that *UTD* has pictures from inside my house. There are cameras in all of the members' homes."

"There are no cameras in my house – I don't think. Since Caryn is not a member, I wouldn't think they would do that. I'm going to check that out," Frank said.

"Frank, there is one more thing." Dayna hesitated. "I'm sorry. I hate to tell you, but Caryn was also in the video. She was in my house. The other Agency operative." Frank hung his head.

Chapter 24

"Do you feel up to a little hike?" Frank abruptly stood and offered his hand to Dayna.

"Where?"

"Admin. I think we need to have a meeting with Dr. Heard." Frank helped Dayna up and led her back into the tunnels. They walked for a couple of miles through the tunnels until they came to the hub leading into the Administration Area. As Frank led the way, Dayna noticed that the area looked more like a small town square. The hub was huge. There were people all over the place. The sound of power tools was coming from several buildings. Dayna was amazed. Construction was going on everywhere. Although she had been to the Community Room, she hadn't seen any other underground area. In fact, every time she had attended a meeting, it had been at night and the areas other than the walkways had been dark. She never even thought to look up, which she now did, because she noticed it was brighter than when she had been in the tunnels.

"It seems brighter, more light down here than when I've been here for meetings," she commented to Frank.

"Yeah, it is. You see, the lighting is controlled so that we have the same type of atmosphere as day and night. At night, we keep the lights low. During the day, we make it brighter by using lighting that simulates the sun. It will not only aid in the health of the people that move here, but in growing the vegetation needed to sustain life. This area was designed to look like a town square. The landscaping still needs to be added. It will be just like living above ground." Frank explained all of it to Dayna as if he were the proud owner of a magnificent home.

"We? You sound as if you live here or you planned this, Frank. Just how deep into UTD are *you*?"

"Dayna, I really want to move down here. I know that the more we have people come underground, the more we will have the need for law enforcement. This will not be a Utopian city. Dr. Heard is trying his best to form rules and regulations that will support the "Life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" we all strive for. Oh well." Frank led her into an office located to the left of the entrance of the Administration building.

"Hi, Denise. Is Dr. Heard available? We need to visit with him as soon as possible." Frank addressed the secretary sitting behind the desk. Dayna walked around the office and looked at the paintings, furniture, and furnishings. It was all beautiful. The secretary used a cell phone to contact Dr. Heard. Dayna had been looking for telephone jacks and electricity. The office was furnished with comfortable arm chairs, potted plants, magazines, and a flat screen television on the wall. Dayna was amazed. The television was on an infomercial about the "City of Babel: The New Place to Be!"

"Oh, my God." Turning to the secretary, Dayna asked, "Do *you* live down here? Do you have a family? Do you work down here every day? How did you get involved?"

"Hold on, Partner." Frank said in a mock Old West accent. He put his hand on Dayna's shoulder. "Come up for air. You are asking just a tad too many questions. They'll all get answered soon."

"Now, Sheriff Frank, she wasn't doing no harm!" Denise Palmer said in the same mock western accent. Both she and Frank laughed. Dayna just stared at both of them. Frank made a motion as if to close her mouth.

"Dayna, I have been appointed the head of the UTD City's law enforcement. This entire endeavor is a new frontier. Denise and Dr. Heard insist on calling me "Sheriff Frank."

"Speak of the devil, and I will appear! Hello, Dayna, I am Dr. Janssen Heard." Dr. Heard

held out his hand as he introduced himself. As Dayna shook his hand, a muscle spasm and a tingle ran down her spine. She stared into his glassy bluish gray eyes. They were like blue diamonds – cold, blue diamonds.

"I see you are quite in awe with the accomplishments we have achieved down here. What do you think of your new home?" Dr. Heard asked, still holding her hand.

"I'm sorry. What did you say?" Dayna closed her eyes for a minute trying to mentally get herself together. She instantly knew she did not like this man. She had a strange sense of fear and of intense curiosity. She wanted to know more about him, but was afraid of what she would find out.

"I asked what you thought of your new home?"

Dayna looked at Frank. "What does he mean my new home?"

"Frank, why don't you go top side and see if you can make arrangements to take a few days off? Tell Caryn you are going to a police conference or something. I think we will need you to keep Dayna company for a few days and explain everything to her. Denise, give Dayna the grand tour. Take one of the mini-cars. I think she will especially like the park at the end of Corridor 51." Dr. Heard dictated directions in a polite and kind voice, but with a firmness that made Dayna uncomfortable.

Chapter 25

Caryn Giordano sat at the large dark table in the executive conference room of the administration building on the university campus. The large table was of dark mahogany. She could see her reflection on the surface. Caryn watched herself fidget with the tip of her collar. Twenty other people sat around the table in upholstered chairs. She didn't know any of the people at the table.

Caryn was still watching her fingers twist the tip of her collar when Jason Graham and three other people entered the room. Caryn knew by the sneer on Jason's face, he could tell she was uncomfortable. With the air of authority that he didn't possess, Jason strode to the chair next to Caryn and sat down. Leaning close to her, he whispered, "This is all for you, my friend. All for you."

Following Jason into the room were Dr. Gaylen Ross, the university president, Carlisle Woo, Gene Morrison's executive assistant and bodyguard, and Gene Morrison. Gene Morrison sat at the head of the table with Dr. Ross and Woo on each side.

"I only have an hour, so I will just begin. Caryn, have you seen your husband lately?" Gene Morrison's question made Caryn jump. Jason looked down and began to admire himself in the table surface. His smirk was evident that he was enjoying Caryn's distress.

"Not since the day before yesterday," Caryn stuttered. "Why?"

"Hmm. Have you seen your friend, Dr. Dayna Thomas, lately?"

"Why?"

"I am the inquisitor here. Please, just tell me what you know about the whereabouts of your husband and your friend." The quietness of her voice belied the anger behind her words. She continued, "Jason saw Dr. Thomas for a brief time two days ago and your husband hasn't

been seen since that time either."

"I don't know where they are. Dayna dropped by my house day before yesterday. I haven't seen Frank since" Caryn realized that she hadn't seen Frank since the morning after Dayna dropped by the house. They had gone to bed at the same time, but Frank was gone when she woke up. It was not unusual for him to leave without waking her. As they often went for a day or two without seeing each other, because of their schedules, she hadn't thought about it.

"Look, I don't know where either of them are! You guys are running the sneak and peek show around here. Why don't *you* know where they are? When you find out, tell me!" Caryn jumped up to leave the meeting. Jason grabbed her arm and yanked her back into her seat.

"Let her go, Jason. Dr. Giordano's presence is no longer required." Gene Morrison watched Caryn slowly rise from her chair. The two women eyed each other as Caryn passed Gene's chair. As Caryn reached for the handle on the door, Gene hissed, "Dr. Giordano, be careful. You belong to the Agency, and, members are members for life – long or ... short!"

Caryn walked out of the room without comment. Once out of the building, she ran to her car. Not wanting to get a speeding ticket from campus police, she made sure she didn't speed. As soon as she exited the campus, Caryn increased her speed. As she hurried home, she decided she would leave town, but she didn't know where to go, or what she would tell Frank.

Chapter 26

When Caryn drove into her driveway, Frank's Jeep was in the garage. He walked around the front of the Jeep when he heard Caryn's car.

"Caryn, what are you doing home so early? Are you alright?"

"Frank, we have to talk and now!" Caryn began to cry. "I quit my job. I just walked out. And, and, there's more."

"Honey, come on in the house and we can talk and get things straightened out, we have a lot to talk about." Frank walked into the kitchen ahead of Caryn, got her a bottle of water from the fridge, and picked up an envelope he had left on the counter earlier. He opened the bottle of water, put it on the table, and put the envelope in his jacket pocket. He turned to face Caryn. He opened his arms and she practically fell into them.

"Now, tell me what happened." Frank held Caryn tighter and closer than he had in months. Although they had shared a bed, they had been no more than polite roommates going through the practical motions of married life for almost a year. He didn't want to let her go, but Caryn moved out of his embrace and sat at the table with her head in her hands.

"Frank, I want a divorce."

"What? You quit your job *and* you want a divorce?" The chair made a scraping noise as Frank pulled it from the table to place it next to Caryn. Pulling her hands from her face, he questioned her, "Caryn, what on earth is going on with you? What's going on at that university?"

"It's not the university, Frank. Well, not exactly – it's the Agency," Caryn whispered.

"What the! The Agency?" Frank practically spat the name. Dayna had mentioned that one of the intruders in her house had been Caryn, but he hadn't seen the picture and he didn't want to believe that Caryn was a part of the Agency. He jumped up and knocked over the water but

neither he nor Caryn paid any attention to it. Caryn just sat and let the water run across the table and drip into her lap. Frank began to pace the kitchen.

"How in the world did you get mixed up with the Agency? Caryn, why didn't you tell me? Do you *know* what the Agency represents? Caryn, the Agency promotes *everything* I thought you *didn't* believe in. Did you break into Dayna's house?" Frank stopped pacing long enough to stare at Caryn who just sat and listened to him rant. She didn't move. Her tears mixed with the spilled water on the table.

"Is the Agency forcing you to get a divorce? Why, Caryn?" Frank remembered the envelope he had hidden from Caryn. He thought she could see it through his jacket.

Looking up at him, Caryn said, "Because I thought you wanted one. Are you having an affair with Dayna?"

"Dayna? Oh, Lord, no! I mean, I love Dayna to death – but as a sister – as if she were *your* sister. You should know better. It's more than that, though, isn't it. Caryn, we have been married for twenty years. Tell me the – ."

Something whizzed though the kitchen and hit the microwave and it exploded. Then in rapid succession the cabinets started to explode as bullets began tearing through the room. Frank grabbed Caryn and pulled her to the floor. He pulled out his police revolver and told her to crawl behind him. The bullets were coming from the back of the house and not from the area of the garage. Frank and Caryn crawled to the door to the garage and ran for Frank's Jeep.

"Thank God, you didn't park in front of me!" Frank's Jeep practically flew out of the drive-way. As he sped out of the neighborhood, he looked behind him more than he looked in front. He never saw who was shooting at them. When they made it to the freeway, Caryn was still trying to get her breath. Finally, she spoke.

"Frank, they are after me. I not only walked out on the university, I walked out on the Agency today. Gene Morrison practically threatened my life." She screamed the details of the meeting.

"Calm down, Caryn. Take some deep breaths." Frank patted her leg as they sped down the freeway.

After calming down a bit, Caryn continued, "By the way, since I know now where you are, do you know where Dayna is? The Agency lost track of her a couple of days ago. Is she safe?" Caryn was looking in the side mirror and behind her as she spoke.

"Are we safe?" Caryn slid down in her seat.

Frank drove in silence. He wondered if Caryn was telling him the truth. The Agency could have put her up to this. If she was telling the truth, the Agency had some pretty sorry snipers. He felt as if they had let them get away. He didn't know if he should tell her about him and Dayna and the UTD group. He decided to trust her. *After all, I love Caryn and we have been married for twenty year.* Frank remembered the "for better or worse" and "until death do us part" portion of their vows. *I never dreamed in a million years it would be like this.* He began to tell Caryn at least a portion of what had transpired over the last few days.

"Dayna is fine for now, but, she wants to go back to the university and be the ears for the UTD group, which is not a good idea. I hope to be able to talk her out of it when I see her again."

"How do you know *that*?" Caryn's left eyebrow shot up as she turned to look at Frank. When she turned, she noticed that the Jeep was packed as if Frank was going camping, and, he had a suitcase and travel bag in the backseat. "Are you going somewhere, Frank? Were you planning to meet Dayna?"

"Yes, and yes, but not for the reason you think. Caryn, Dayna and I are both members of

the Unity Through Diversity group. We didn't know we were both members until a few days ago – after Dayna was kidnapped."

"Kidnapped! What do you mean?" *Who* kidnapped Dayna?" Before the question left her mouth, Caryn knew the answer. What had she done to her friend?

"It's a long story, but apparently the Agency had a couple of its special agents pick Dayna up the evening she left our house. She managed to get away with the help of one of the guys that grabbed her. Anyway, my first goal is for us to drive as far away as we can from here and hopefully get the Agency off our tails. We need to get you some clothes and things you might need for a prolonged camping trip. By the way, I withdrew all but \$5,000.00 from all of the accounts. I closed out all but your household checking account – sorry. I thought since you would be getting a paycheck in a few days and that you could manage on that until then. I was going to contact you and explain this letter." Frank handed her the envelope he had picked up from the table.

Caryn read it aloud. "Caryn, first of all, I love you so much. I always have, but, I'm not sure where our marriage is headed. I am leaving for a while. I have an extended vacation leave from the department and I am going off the grid, so to speak, for I don't know how long. I emptied all but \$5,000.00 of our accounts, but if things go as planned, I will replace the money and/or send for you or come get you, if you aren't too angry with me to come. Trust me, Frank." Caryn put the letter back in the envelope and watched the scenery pass in a blur.

They had driven for hours in silence when Frank turned into a convenience store service station for gas and food. He felt safe as he walked into the store to pay for the gas and pick up water, soft drinks, and sandwiches. As he walked back to the Jeep, he mentally went over his list of how to stay under the radar. He had left his regular cell phone at the house. He had his UTD

phone that was only linked to the UTD network. It could be used underground and above ground and it was not GPS equipped. When he looked at Caryn sitting in the car, he wondered why the Agency had shot at them. He was glad she didn't have a chance to grab her purse or cell phone. No one should be able to trace her. Then he remembered that Dayna mentioned that the UTD group had cameras in her house. He wondered if they had cameras or bugs in his.

"Water or Diet Coke?"

"Diet Coke, of course!" As Frank pulled out of the parking lot, Caryn began to slowly eat her sandwich. "How long have we been driving? What time is it?"

"About four hours, and it's only 7:30. I feel like it is midnight. I think I will try and make it further North before we call it a night. By the way, we will probably sleep in the car. Also, we are going back, but we are going back by way of the underground!"

"Underground? What do you mean?" Caryn took a swallow of her Diet Coke and stared at the little bottle. "Frank, do you know where Dayna is?"

"She's underground. If she stays underground, she will be fine. But your friend is stubborn and tough – a lot tougher than I gave her credit – but still too stubborn for her own good when she's decided to do things her way."

"Yeah," Caryn agreed. "She's always so laid back, but can really get passionate about her beliefs. These last few months have brought out a determination I've never seen in her before."

As Frank continued to drive North, Caryn settled into her seat, watched the sun set, and hoped that her friend was indeed safe.

Chapter 27

"I know Dr. Heard instructed us to take the carts, but let's walk – if you don't mind," Dayna said.

"Fine," Denise nonchalantly replied. "It's a long walk, but a nice one."

Denise and Dayna walked through what Dayna could only describe as a quiet little town. She was in awe. When she and Denise left the UTD administrative offices they walked through the tunnels for about ten minutes. Dayna couldn't tell which direction they were headed, but had checked her watch to see how long they had been walking. At the end of the tunnel, they approached a pair of gates that were exquisitely built. Each door of the gate was about twelve feet high and the same width. *I'm entering a Gate of Heaven!* Dayna was amazed. Each door was glass glazed to simulate pearl. It was more beautiful than any picture she had ever seen. Denise pressed a button on the wall by the gate and it slowly opened. The instant that Denise and Dayna walked through the gate, Dayna could hear birds chirping (although she saw no birds) and she could hear the soft flow of a fountain. They entered an immense park. The flowers and trees were gorgeous and expanded for as far as Dayna could see. There were benches and gazebos spotted throughout. The temperature was perfect. Every now and then a slight breeze blew through the trees.

"Oh, my! This is how I expect Heaven will be," breathed Dayna, "except, I don't see Jesus!" She laughed. "In fact, I don't see anyone. Are there any other people here – other than the construction workers and those in the area around the administration section?"

"We are at the end of Corridor 51. Dr. Heard wanted you to see it first. And, yes, there are others here. Dr. Heard had the park finished first to prove that something beautiful could be accomplished underground. Let's walk through the park and you can tell me how you became

interested in Unity Through Diversity, and about you and your family."

They walked quietly for a while as Dayna tried to comprehend all that the UTD group had accomplished.

"You know, I knew that the underground community was large, not only member-wise, but also geographically, when I attended my first community meeting a little over a year ago, but I never dreamed that they could build such a large city infrastructure underground. Apparently, the plans have been in progress for years. How long has UTD been in existence, Denise?" Dayna changed the subject. She didn't feel comfortable discussing something she felt Denise already knew. UTD and the Agency probably knew more about her than she cared to think about.

"From what I understand, the *idea* has been floating around for longer than you or I have!" Denise laughed. "I think that the actual building of the underground system began under your town about twenty years ago. There are other underground facilities all across the country. Dr. Heard's ancestors began it centuries ago.

"This park area is located in the section labeled Area 28. It is said to be the largest of any of the other underground system parks. I've only seen pictures of the others, and to me, it is also the prettiest. The residential areas are not yet completed. The residents who have already relocated here are living in campgrounds until their homes are completed. The advantage of camping out in our underground environment is that it is climate controlled. We don't have the overhead weather system online yet, so, just like when the earth was first created, there is no rain. We water all the plants from a sprinkler system."

Dayna just nodded and walked along with Denise. She was still having a tough time taking it all in. It was so surreal to her.

"How many people are camping right now? How many different languages are spoken?"

Dayna asked, her mind whirring with ideas for multi-lingual education and cultural diversity classes.

"We have about one hundred families and a few singles, both men and women, already in the campgrounds. Mainly, we have only English and Spanish languages here in Area 28, but there are a few Native American dialects, and a few French-Americans that chose to stay even though they had a chance to defect to Quebec before all the borders were closed. In case you are wondering, the English-speaking residents are those that are sympathetic to "the cause," as they call it. However, you, my dear, are the only English-speaking cultural diversity professor here."

"You know, Denise, cultural diversity, while based maybe on the language, really has nothing to do with what language you speak. It has to do with *attitudes* toward people *in spite* of what language is spoken or the color of the skin or the nationality. I am still baffled by this fight against diversity. All of this," Dayna spread her hands out, "is crazy. We should all be trying to make living conditions better above ground instead of trying to build another global community *underground*."

As they talked, Denise led Dayna through the park and by the fountain Dayna had heard when they first entered the gates. The fountain was a pair of gigantic hands coming up from the ground that held the Earth. From the seas of the Earth water flowed out and into the basin of the fountain. The water was pumped up the arms and into the Earth again through the palms of the hands. Around the base of the fountain were all sorts of tropical plants and flowers. Dayna was speechless. There was a message written around the base of the fountain: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. But if you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

"Nelson Mandela's words. I'm impressed!" Dayna said under her breath. They passed the

fountain and followed a path that led to another pair of gates. This pair was identical to the pair that they entered, but led into another tunnel.

"How many entrances are there to the park area? I noticed that the gates look identical, but I know we're not where we entered," Dayna said.

"There are twelve gates. Each gate leads to a different tunnel that then leads to the hubs that serve as entrances to other parts of the system. If you are not careful and know where you are going, you can easily get lost." Denise gave Dayna a look that Dayna interpreted as a warning, but then she smiled and Dayna wasn't sure if she was just joking. At any rate, Dayna decided to always be alert as to her whereabouts when she was underground.

"Okay, Dayna, here we are." They entered a hub and Denise pointed to a street sign that read, "Residential Area No. 4." When Dayna stepped through the door she stepped onto a sidewalk that was part of a condominium complex. There were streets but no cars. Several buildings were completed and the landscaping was in place. Trees and shrubs were placed throughout the area.

"This is where we lodge our important guests. You don't have to camp out with the regulars. Dr. Heard, a couple of medical doctors, a psychologist (to help people adjust to underground living), and I live in this building. You will be staying in the condo next door to me. We are neighbors but the building is so soundproof, we will never hear each other. We may not see much of each other as the entrances are on opposite sides of the building. We are on the second floor. There are no elevators, so, we get our exercise," Denise explained as they climbed a short flight of steps. At one of the doors overlooking a small court-yard, Denise opened the door to Dayna's condo, and allowed Dayna to enter first. "Here is your new home until you decide in which residential area you want to live and have your home built. I just assume you

want a house here, since you live in a house above ground. Anyway, how do you like this place?"

Dayna slowly walked around the condo and was again unable to say anything. She just nodded. She looked in the refrigerator and the cabinets in the kitchen and saw that she didn't have to worry about eating for days. The fridge and pantry were well stocked. She could even have guests – if there were anyone else to invite. There were three bedrooms and two full baths with all of the necessary amenities – and many unnecessary ones.

"It looks like one of those high-priced places you'd see on the real estate infomercials, Denise. It is perfect, but I don't plan to stay."

Denise shrugged her shoulders, and said, "I'm sure you will change your mind. I will see you in the morning." She looked at her watch. "I didn't realize it was so late. The night lights will come on in the tunnels in about ten minutes. If you look out of your windows, you will see the moon and stars. It is really pretty. However, don't go exploring. The park area gates are locked and can't be opened until morning and there are no lights anywhere other than the night lights in the tunnels and the lights in the residential areas. If you leave the residential areas, you could get lost – for who knows how long. Get some rest, Dayna. You have toiletries and towels in the bath, and clothes in your closet. Good night." Denise quietly closed the door.

After Dayna explored the spacious rooms, she showered and tried on a couple of outfits she found in the huge walk-in closet. "I wonder how they knew my size," she murmured to herself, as she changed into pajamas. Dayna also wondered about Frank's whereabouts. *Oh well, I'm too tired to worry about him it tonight. He's a big boy and a policeman. He can and will take care of himself.* Dayna opened the drapes at the bedroom window and marveled at the beautiful starry night sky – a sky she knew did not exist.

Chapter 28

Dayna woke up to the sound of morning birds and a light that could almost be mistaken for the morning sun. She looked at her watch and realized it was later than she had slept in days – 9:30 a.m. About the time she sat up in bed, Denise peeked into her bedroom door.

"Rise and shine! You are scheduled for a meeting at 10:30 with Dr. Heard concerning just what we are going to do with you."

"Is there no privacy here?" Dayna did not smile. "And what do you mean by what you are going to do with me?"

"Sorry. Didn't I tell you? There are no locks on these doors – except for Dr. Heard's private office and living quarters. And, you will discuss the details when you get to the meeting."

"Well," Dayna said coldly, "I think that is one of the things I might have to talk to him about when we have our meeting. I don't particularly care to have people walk in and out of my private quarters – no matter how temporary they may be. Also, only I will decide what my future will be – above or underground!" Dayna stared at Denise. "Now, please leave while I get dressed. I will be at Dr. Heard's office by 10:30."

Denise started to say something, but changed her mind. She walked out of the condo.

Chapter 29

"Come, come in, Tomás. You and your men did a great job at the Giordano house the other day. Do you know where the Giordanos are?" Dr. Heard asked as he invited Tomás Olivares into his office. "I apologize for the early meeting, but as you probably know, Dayna Thomas spent the night here last night and I have a meeting with her at 10:30. I wanted to give you and I plenty of time to talk and catch up on things."

Dr. Heard's smile seemed as fake to Tomás as it had to Dayna. However, Tomás smiled back, entered the room and sat in a chair across from Dr. Heard.

"No, I don't know where they are. We had placed an RFID chip in Frank's UTD cell phone, but we have not gotten a signal yet. Maybe, he checked it. He has been pretty suspicious lately – of everyone," Tomás replied.

Dr. Heard's expression changed from congenial to almost sinister. "What do you mean, no signal? We have the most up to date technology available. Why can't our tech team place one chip in an untraceable cell phone?" He got up from his place behind his desk and walked to the window that looked out onto a small private park which housed a smaller version of the hands holding the Earth fountain located in the 12-gated park. He marveled at what they had accomplished underground. The scene calmed him a little, but he was still concerned that he didn't know Frank Giordano's whereabouts.

"I can't answer that question. Anyway, they will think it was the Agency trying to get to them and not us."

"That is what we want them to think, but we want them to come back here! Now, we don't know *where* they are. For all we know, Caryn Giordano could be persuading her husband to team up with the Agency."

Tomás thought a moment. "No, I don't think so. Frank Giordano is our strongest ally in this quadrant. If he weren't, he would not have brought that guy from the Agency here for questioning when he brought in Dayna Thomas."

Dr. Heard whirled from the calming scene. "What? There is an Agency operative here? Underground? Where?"

"At our newly completed police station, of course! Frank said he would take care of him when he got back, so we are holding him in custody until Frank gets back." Dr. Heard's reaction to the news concerned Tomás.

Dr. Heard turned back to the courtyard scene. "No problem. Let's just make sure that no one talks to him but Frank. Let's give Frank a few days to return before we alert other UTD policing personnel of his absence. Now, tell me, what is your estimated date of arrival with that lovely wife of yours? Have you decided on your house plans and which residential circle you are going to build in?" Dr. Heard returned to his seat and he and Tomás spent the remainder of the time discussing permanent living arrangements for the Olivares, as well as the various other tasks Dr. Heard required of Tomás as the underground Project Manager.

Chapter 30

At exactly 10:30 a.m., Dayna entered UTD's underground administration offices. She was dressed in a pair of jeans and a long sleeve white shirt she found in the closet, but wore her own walking shoes, not risking sore feet from trying new shoes or sandals which she also found in the closet.

"Hello, Dayna, you're right on time. I'll tell Dr. Heard you're here." The greeting was polite, but Dayna detected a coolness in Denise's voice. Dayna returned the greeting with a nod and sat down in a chair facing the flat screen on the wall. It was still showing the information about UTD's underground community that was on when she and Frank first visited with Dr. Heard.

I wonder when they will change the show? Dayna absent mindedly shook her head.

"Dr. Thomas! How are you? Feeling better?" Tomás Olivares noticed Dayna as he exited Dr. Heard's office.

"Tomás, hello! Yes, I am doing great. I *am* happy to see you. How is Eva? Tell her that we will have to get together as soon as I get back top-side." Dayna was genuinely glad to see Tomás Olivares and really wanted to visit with Eva. She felt that over the last few days, they were her only true and trust-worthy friends.

Tomás quickly lowered his eyes in reply and quietly told Dayna that he would tell Eva when he saw her. Dr. Heard and Denise had heard the exchange between the two and noticed Tomás' quick change in attitude when Dayna mentioned going "top-side." Dayna had noticed it also. Dayna watched Tomás enter the hallway outside of the office and head in the direction of Area 28 where the park Denise had shown her yesterday was located.

"Come in, Dr. Thomas – Dayna, if I may." Dr. Heard ushered Dayna into his office.

"Dr. Thomas is fine." She replied coolly. Dayna walked into the office and once again was amazed that there was no indication that they were many levels below the surface. The window that looked into the courtyard was breathtaking. But, there was something that nagged at her; something she felt was not right. Whatever she was feeling, she seemed to feel it more around Dr. Heard. Both she and Dr. Heard sat down at his desk across from each other. Before he could speak, Dayna asked, "Dr. Heard, are you the original founder of UTD? You seem a little young to have accomplished so much. All of this must have taken decades to plan and to build."

Surprised, Dr. Heard paused before answering.

"Why, no, I am not. An ancestor actually came up with the idea centuries ago. The first facility was a small underground cave. The idea grew as the country grew. As the country grew the prejudices and discrimination grew against others. My father was the original founder of the UTD organization, but not the concept. Why do you ask?"

"Just curious. When Denise took me on the tour, I saw quite a few construction workers, but not many families, or children – not even in the park area. Is there an educational system set up yet? Are you going to allow cultural diversity classes and language freedoms here?" Dayna tilted her head to the side and watched Dr. Heard's expressions change from amiable to confusion.

"Day ... Dr. Thomas," Dr. Heard began slowly, "I am not sure where you are going with this. Many of the families live in our temporary residential section. A few have retail businesses. We don't have any schools, but the families with children are home schooling."

"How is that possible, if they didn't home school above ground, they are not equipped to do so here," Dayna interjected.

“Well, a few are allowed to go top-side and we procure books, food, supplies, and all the necessities for living. I’m sure your condo was well-stocked, even with appropriate clothing, was it not?

“As you well know, because of the problems that the top-side government is giving people who prefer to retain their cultural language, many have decided to join us here in the City of Babel. Many cannot take the risk of being seen. We have people such as Frank Giordano and Tomás who can come and go as they please to help supply our underground needs.” Dr. Heard folded his hands and sat back in his chair.

“Babel? Quite a play on the situation, Dr. Heard. In the Bible, the incomplete tower was named Babel when God confused the languages. The people were of one language and became very prideful. They decided to build a tower to Heaven so the surroundings nations would see how great they were,” Dayna replied.

“I know the story, Dr. Thomas. However, I asked that you visit with me so that we could discuss your future living arrangements and position here. You, of course, could be instrumental in setting up our educational system. Is that your concern?”

"To be honest with you, I really don't know. But, somehow, I think. . . I don't know. I do know that you really don't have a say over *my future* here or above ground. I haven't made up my mind what I am going to do – yet." Dayna decided not to share her thoughts with a man she did not fully trust.

"Do you know if Frank is back yet?" Dayna asked.

"I have not been informed that he has returned. It may take longer than he thought to get things straightened out so that *he* can move here permanently."

"Well, once I speak with Frank, I will let you know what I decide about my move here. In

the meantime, I think I will take a walk. Is that okay?" Dayna rose from her seat. Dr. Heard waved toward the door without rising. Dayna walked out with an attitude far from what she actually felt.

Dayna walked toward the end of the tunnel that led to Area 28. *Maybe I can catch up with Tomás and talk with him.*

Chapter 31

"Caryn, wake up." Frank gently nudged his wife. "Honey, are you awake enough to walk for a little bit?"

"Where are we? Gosh, Frank, how long did we drive? I feel like I've been sleeping for hours." Caryn stretched, ran her hand through her hair, and climbed out of the Jeep.

"Oh my, I think my age is finally starting to tell on me! I can barely get out of the car." Caryn laughed for the first time in days as she slowly climbed from the Jeep. Frank offered her his hand and helped her out of the vehicle.

"Hey, you aren't as old as Dayna, and look at her. She has more energy than most older people. I'm a little stiff myself from driving all night.

"Don't let her hear you call her an older person. She is only eight years older than I am," Caryn said as she stretched. "Where *are* we?" Caryn looked around to see where they were, expecting to see a convenience store or some sort of travel plaza. What she saw was – brown. In the distance she saw mountains of brown nothing.

"Well, at first, I thought I'd drive until about midnight and find us a place to stay, but after I realized you seemed to be sleeping pretty well, I just kept on driving. I'm not entirely sure, where, but somewhere in Northeast New Mexico. I've only heard about the place and seen it on the UTD planning map and blue prints, but I *think* that about five or six miles from here are some caves and an entrance to tunnels that will lead us to a UTD underground community. It will have tunnels and exits which will get us above ground where we can get a change of clothes for you and some food for both of us. But now the hard part starts – we have to walk." Frank gave Caryn an apologetic smile.

"Help me reorganize some of this stuff and decide what we have to keep and have to

leave.”

Caryn could tell by Frank's expression that he was worried and maybe a little angry.

"Are you angry at me, Frank?"

"Yes! No. Not really. I am angry at myself for not talking to you when I first became interested in UTD. I am angry at myself for not being more in tune to your feelings. I should have known something was going on with you. I guess I really did, but Anyway, now we're both mixed up in something neither of us needs to be involved in, nor wants to be involved in. I just want to be a police detective until I retire in eight years and then sit back with my then retired, I hope, college professor wife and enjoy life – maybe travel a little, see the world! If, we can get past the borders." Frank had walked to the back of the Jeep as he talked and threw bags and camping gear to the ground. He began to talk more to himself than to Caryn. She watched him for a while, then walked up behind him and put her arms around his waist – between throws.

"Frank Giordano, you are forgiven! You know I love you. I should have talked to you, too. For both of us to be so well educated, and to have been married for so long, we sure are dummies when it comes to communication!" Caryn buried her face in the middle of Frank's back and began to cry.

"Hey, woman, why are you crying?" Frank turned in Caryn's arms and looked down at her.

"I don't know. I think that I am happy again. I have been living a lie to you, to the Agency, and to Dayna for so long that my life has been miserable. I haven't even prayed in ages. Frank, we haven't been to Church in over a year. What happened?"

"How were you living a lie to Dayna and the Agency?"

"Well, the Agency recruited me. I didn't look them up. The real objective at the time was

to crush Dayna's enthusiasm and her growing popularity at the university without actually firing her. Her classes and her ability to persuade the students that they *needed* to know about their culture and to learn and speak their languages of origin just flew in the face of what the Agency is trying to do. At first the Agency just wanted her to stop pushing against their agenda, but Gene Morrison became obsessed with just plain getting rid of Dayna. Instead of standing by my friend when I found out what was going on, I gave in to fear of the Agency and spied on her for the Agency. Frank, I even went in her house! I could have gotten her killed!" The enormity of the entire situation caused Caryn to cry again. Frank just held her in his arms and let her cry. When she settled down and wiped her eyes on his shirt, Frank told her that Dayna knew she had been in her house.

"I think Dayna is more sad than angry, though. Right now, she just wants to live in her house above ground and infiltrate the Agency so that she can act as an agent for UTD." Frank shook his head in disagreement and let Caryn go.

"What? She can't do that. She will never be able to convince the Agency that she wants to work for them. They'll kill her for sure. Frank, we have got to get back and get to Dayna!"

"Look, I know that the Agency is targeting Spanish speakers, but do you really think they'd kill Dayna?" Frank asked.

"Gene Morrison is out for Dayna's blood. I'm not sure why, other than Gene thinks Dayna is a hindrance to somehow her completely controlling the South Central Region. I do know that Jason pointed a gun at what he thought was Dayna's head. He was going to kill her."

Caryn eyed the back of the Jeep and then Frank. "Just how long were you planning to be gone, Mr. Giordano? Looks like you packed for a year!"

"I packed to move underground. Until this whole English only thing is over, that's where

you will be living now, too." Frank started digging through the Jeep and assessing the gear he had thrown from the vehicle. "Come on, my love, let's get re-packed for walking. We need to be in the caves before night – not only because of wild critters, but because it will get cold. At least we're in the Northern part of the region and won't burn up while we walk in the middle of the day." Frank and Caryn began their tedious work of re-packing the gear in silence, with Dayna on both of their minds.

Chapter 32

Okay, now. Let me see. I think we turned down this tunnel. I remember seeing that sign above the door that said "Maintenance Personnel Only." Dayna walked slowly through the tunnels hoping that she was headed in the right direction toward the park – and that she would see Tomás. *I wonder if he went in the "Maintenance Personnel Only" door? Now, why would I assume that? Just because he is Mexican American doesn't mean the only thing he can do is maintenance work.* Dayna chided herself on her thoughts. She hated stereotyping people and being stereotyped. One of the reasons she had looked into UTD was because their Mission Statement had stressed cultural diversity and equality.

As a child, she had always been interested in people of other nationalities and races. She remembered her mother often telling her about her background of Mexican, African, and Native American. Over the years, Dayna had learned that sometimes it was more of attitude than skin color and blood origins that caused the conflict. *I wonder what Dr. Heard's family's reason was for founding UTD. He definitely looks Anglo. No matter what the reasoning, I'm here.* She retraced her steps and decided to try the "Maintenance Personnel Only" door anyway.

Dayna stood in front of the entrance debating on whether she should try the door. Just as she placed her hand on the knob, Tomás opened it. Dayna jumped and let out a little scream.

"Oh my gosh, Tomás, you startled me!"

"I am sorry, *mi amiga*. I did not expect anyone to be at the door. Only maintenance personnel and Dr. Heard are authorized to enter this area." He smiled and pointed to the sign.

"You haven't signed on as part of the maintenance staff have you?" He smiled.

"No. No, I was just taking a walk. I thought I would spend time in that lovely park Denise showed me yesterday. After I saw you earlier, I decided to try and catch up with you and maybe

visit. I was, uh, just being nosy when I saw this entrance. I do want us to have a talk. I have so many questions, Tomás. With Frank not back from above yet, I feel like you are the only one who will tell me the truth. After all that has gone on – ."

"Dr. Thomas, why don't we have a picnic in the park? Let me get my lunch. I have plenty to share. Wait here." Tomás went back into the maintenance area and within a few minutes returned carrying a large backpack.

"Eva makes sure that I don't go hungry." He smiled shyly and nodded toward the direction of the park.

"I remembered Denise and me walking in this direction, but I don't remember seeing the entrance to the maintenance personnel area. I must have zigged when I should have zagged when I entered a tunnel out of the hub by Dr. Heard's office. This place is like a maze. There should be signs for directions. How in the world do you find your way around here?"

"It's just like being topside, once you get acquainted with your surroundings."

Tomás led Dayna through the tunnels and a couple of hubs before they finally made it to the park.

"This isn't the same entrance Denise and I came in yesterday. We walked through the town and then tunnels. The first thing I saw when we entered the gates was the huge fountain. I don't see that."

"The Administration area is really located in the center of town and is to be eventually surrounded by residential areas. The tunnels loop around so that each residential area will be connected to an area of the park without going through the town and administration area. You probably entered through Area 28 because it is closest to Dr. Heard's office. We are at Area 35. We are not that far from the administration and maintenance area, but we are not within the

surveillance area. The microphones and camera's haven't been installed here yet."

"What?" Surprise showed in Dayna's voice and on her face. "Are there cameras in the residential areas as well? Like in my house?"

"Yes and no. We don't have much expectation of privacy here, but at the same time we have more freedom of speech. There are to be cameras in the general residential areas but no microphones. There are no cameras or microphones in the condo area where you stayed last night. But, there are locks and Dr. Heard has a master key to the condo."

"Really? Denise said there are no locks. Hmm. I don't know, Tomás. I am starting to feel a little less, shall we say, comfortable about all of this. I really wish I could talk to Frank, and I am getting more and more concerned about what Caryn has gotten herself into with the Agency."

Tomás sat down at one of the picnic tables and began to empty his back pack. Eva had packed enough for four people, and had even included napkins and forks. Tomás handed Dayna a bottle of water that had ice in it.

"She freezes the water and juices so that when I finally get around to eating they are still cold. I'm eating a little earlier than usual, so the water hasn't quite thawed yet."

"Please, don't apologize. This is great. I love cold drinks. How many sandwiches did she make – and, how long did she think you would be here?" Dayna laughed as she looked at the pile of sandwiches Tomás had set out on the table.

"I never know when I will get back top-side. One time I ended up down here for a couple of days and it frightened Eva. Since then she has started packing lunches like I was going on a week-long camping trip!"

Dayna smiled as she bit into one of the chicken salad sandwiches. "Man! This is good. Mine never tastes like this." She chewed and thought awhile. "Tell me your story. How did you

come to be involved in UTD?"

"Well, obviously, I speak Spanish. None of our kids or their kids do. They refuse. Eva and I do at home all of the time. Sometimes we even slip when we are at restaurants or out together. I saw an interview with Dr. Heard offering an alternate way of life. This was after ten families – about sixty people, men, women and children – infants even, were found dead inside of a transporter near the South Central Region southern border. The rumor is that the families were told that for a certain amount of money they would be taken to Mexico. The transporter stopped this side of the border. The driver got out and locked them inside. Although, the officials know who the driver is, they have not taken action against him. I don't think they ever will – and this happened before the law became law." Tomás stopped talking for a moment. He continued, "You know, Dayna, your supporting language freedom is dangerous. I hear that the South Central division of the agency is targeting all English speakers that help Spanish speakers. Apparently, that is true. You are here."

"I know, now, but I have to do something. This law and these acts of persecution have to stop. I got involved after I watched Dr. Heard on an interview on LNN," Dayna said.

"You women are so soft-hearted. Eva was the one who contacted Dr. Heard. Before we knew it, our house had been retrofitted for entrance to the tunnels and I had agreed to be Dr. Heard's project manager to build our community. Being down here makes the language thing easier, but Eva does not want to make it permanent. She is trusting that the same God that confused the languages, will also protect those that trust in Him, no matter what language they speak. I have not told Dr. Heard that yet." Tomás looked out across in front of him and seemed to be thinking about more than he was telling Dayna.

"Tomás, for some reason, I get a strange feeling – or vibe – when I am around Dr. Heard.

You've known him longer than I have. Is he sincere?

Tomás stared at his sandwich a few seconds and slowly said, "I do not know. But, Dayna, Eva told me that she gets nervous around him also." Then Tomás smiled, "What is it with you two – women's intuition?"

Dayna laughed and shook her head. "I don't know what it is, but I know that I will not commit to living here or to anything else that he suggests, unless I know for sure that it is right for me. You know when I was at your house, the only time I seemed to have peace was after I prayed and when I realized Eva had been praying with me. I had been so intent on voicing my opinion about cultural diversity and equality and being active in UTD, that I didn't even think about the part my faith and beliefs played in all of it. Since that time, I've tried to understand just what I'm *really* supposed to be doing. Is any of this *God's* plan and purpose for my life? I need to know that." Dayna set down her bottle of water and stared in Tomás' eyes willing him to tell her the answer.

"*Mi amiga*, I do not have the answers that only the Lord can give you. But – I do know that you need to be careful. Even here, within the Twelve Gates Park, things are not as all of us would want them to be."

"Tomás, this place is so beautiful – almost like Heaven." Dayna's eyes were moist as she wished for a perfect place to live. "You know, in the Archives of History, there is a speech made by an American of African descent entitled "I have a Dream." He wanted a place that all people of all colors, races, and creeds could live in harmony. I can see this place being very close to the place he described. I'm sure Martin Luther King never imagined it would be underground. "

"*Si*. But, there is so much for you to learn about our underground world. Not just the layout of the community, but also the politics. You also need to learn exactly *why* you are

involved in UTD."

Dayna looked out over the park and listened as her friend's words delved deep into her thoughts. "I thought that it was all about upholding the rights of people to speak their cultural language freely. After all our culture and our language make us who we are – doesn't it?

"Oh, I don't know. The more I learn, the more I'm confused. I wish Frank and Caryn and I could talk. We –."

Tomás held up one finger. "Excuse me," he said. He reached into his pocket and pulled out what looked to Dayna to be a miniature cell phone. He frowned as he read what must have been the tiniest print text ever. Tomás stood and picked up the lunch trash.

"I am sorry, Dayna, but I have to go. I hate we have to cut our lunch short. I will tell Eva you want to see her. It is not safe for you to go above ground, but Eva can come and go as she chooses – when she chooses, which is not often. I will try and get her to come see you soon."

"Is there anything wrong? Can I help?" Tomás' change in attitude had alarmed Dayna.

"No, nothing you can help with, but, please do not tell anyone you saw my mini-cell, or that you even know that one exists, okay?"

"Sure, no problem. I have one question, I have been meaning to ask. Do you by any chance know the percentages of different languages that have committed to living underground? Are there any other Americans of African descent? And, where is all the funding to build down here coming from? It can't be free or inexpensive. Well, I guess that is more than one." Dayna smiled a little.

"These are questions that –." Tomás looked at the mini cell again. "I have to go, Dayna. I will contact you later. Please do not contact me or tell *anyone* we had lunch together. Okay?"

"Yes, but why the secrecy?"

"I have to go. Just take the path here that goes to the left. It is a good walk but it will take you to the fountain. Stay on the walk way and circle around the fountain until you are on the side of the world that has the Mediterranean Sea. When you get there take the walk way to the right. Stay on that walk way until you get to a set of gates. Through those gates is what will soon be one of the proposed retail areas. A couple of restaurants have already been opened. Ask any one you see how to get to your residence from there. I just ask that you tell them that you walked from the administration area to the Fountain Park and got confused getting back to your residence. I must go."

With a wave of his hand over his shoulder, Tomás headed in the opposite direction that he had given Dayna. Dayna watched him until he got out of sight and realized that she had more questions now than she did before their lunch.

Chapter 33

"I'm glad I wore my Earth Shoes." Caryn looked behind her trying to gauge how far she and Frank had walked since the morning. They had slept in the jeep the first night after being shot at, had driven all day the next day, stopped for gas and food at some antiquated General Store, slept in the jeep last night, and now had been walking since about 6 a.m. They stopped only long enough to eat.

"I wished I had worn a sweater or a jacket. But, at the time I had no idea I'd be shot at and on the run to only God knows where." She continued sarcastically.

"Hey, I thought you were happy again. What's with this complaining? What's better than a hiking trip with the man of your dreams?" Frank stopped and took one of his quilted flannel shirts from one of the two large backpacks he was carrying and handed it to Caryn. She held it up and stared at it.

"I didn't know you still had this shirt. I thought I washed it after that time in the mountains, and put it in" She slowly put down the backpack she was carrying and began to put on the shirt. Frank helped her into it and wrapped his arms around her as he wrapped the shirt around her.

"I really didn't push you into that icy stream on purpose and there really was a snake in the shirt and it really was and is my favorite shirt. You just never believed me. But, when I saw you in this shirt all wet and beautiful and even a little innocent looking, I wanted you more than I ever had before – but you were so mad at me that you wouldn't let me touch you for weeks. That night that you showed up for bed wearing it, I decided to take it with me on camping trips, but not ever wear it again. I grabbed it the next morning and hid it in the back of my closet and only took it out when I knew I'd be sleeping away from home. Sounds goofy and mushy

doesn't it?" Frank shyly hung his head realizing that after twenty years of marriage, he still wanted Caryn's approval more than ever and wanted her to know how much he loved her.

"No, it is not goofy or mushy. It's that romantic Italian coming out in you – the part I love you for. I am so sorry that I didn't talk to you about this mess with the Agency and that you didn't trust me enough to let me know about UTD. Which by the way, where exactly did you say we were headed?"

"North. Out of the Central Region's jurisdiction. I need to think. I'm not sure what is going on, but . . . I just need to get somewhere that I can make some serious decisions without having to worry about surveillance, or my life – or my wife's life."

"Or, our friends' lives. Okay, I don't want to get into politics with you about this English only thing right now – we just made up – but why North. How far north are you talking about?"

"Well, not officially." Frank gave Caryn the quirky grin that said more than his words. "Somewhere near the Canadian border. We've a long way to go."

"Stop, it. Not now." She laughed. "But," she paused, "Canada hasn't outlawed speaking any language, have they? Why would they want to go underground?"

"There are many sympathizers to the UTD cause. Plus, many Canadian Natives and Native Americans are reviving their dialects, and hopefully their culture, are also joining the Northern UTD group." Frank pointed up and in front of him. "Look, see that ridge that looks like a finger pointing up? Somewhere about middle should be a cave, and in the cave is an entrance to a UTD underground community. Someone there will tell us where to get you a change of clothes. Let's stop a minute and rest and I need to contact a friend in UTD and let him know where we are and tell him about our mishap at the house."

Chapter 34

Tomás walked to the set of gates opposite the direction Dayna headed. The gates that he exited led to a portion of the community that had not been fully excavated. In fact it looked like an old mine shaft. Workers seldom went in unless authorized by Tomás or Dr. Heard, and neither had done so in weeks. Tomás felt safe. He put a tiny earbud into his ear, punched a code into his cell phone and waited.

"I wondered if you would be able to call soon. Where are you, my friend?" Frank said in Italian. Caryn raised her eyebrows when she heard Frank speaking Italian but saw no phone. He just smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Tomás answered in Spanish, "In the shaft on the side of the world opposite the Mediterranean Sea. Where are you? You were to be back here two days ago. Heard is getting more than, how do you say, antsy, and that guy you brought in is the same way. We cannot let him go and yet if we do not the Agency will start looking for him. Plus, your friend, Dayna, is also starting to get upset about being held here. We need you back here, pronto, Sheriff Frank!" He changed his voice on the last part to try and sound like Denise. Frank burst out laughing and Caryn stared at him with a look that stopped the laughing abruptly.

"I have Caryn with me," Frank said soberly. "We were shot at while at our house. The sniper must have used a M82A1 rifle. Didn't hear a thing -- just all our kitchen appliances and cabinets exploding! We got out of there and headed north. Just about to go to the underground UTD group near the Canadian border and regroup."

"Frank, that was us doing the shooting. You were not hurt were you? I do not know why Heard could not just tell you to grab your wife and come back. I think he wants to make sure you stay here and underground and he wants your wife with you."

"What? Why? No. No, we weren't hurt. But, now I'm not sure we should head back to that community with our friends shooting at us. What's going on Tomás?"

"I am not really sure what Heard has in mind, but, I will keep my ears open. In the meantime, you have to come back because he wants you to interrogate the guy that we are holding – the one you brought in with Dayna. Also, he is upset that we have not been able to locate you with the chip we were supposed to put in your phone."

"Chip? In my UTD phone?"

"No worries, *mia amigo*, I did not. Just come on in. I will tell Heard we are having technical difficulties with your chip."

"We really need to get to a town so that Caryn can get what all women eventually want - a new wardrobe!" He winked at Caryn and smiled. "She didn't have time to pick up clothes when the shooting started. I thought we would go north and contact the Upper States UTD group I've heard about."

"Well, that is not necessary. Please turn around and go to the extreme northern entrance to our region --".

"The extreme northern entrance? The tunnels haven't been completed yet."

"They were completed last week, but Dr. Heard did not want anyone to know. When you come back, you will find everything you need here -- including clothes for Dr. Giordano."

"How is that possible?" Frank asked quietly, as if trying to solve a puzzle.

"We will talk when you get back. I need to go. *Adiós, mi amigo.*"

"*Arrivederci!*" Frank ended the call.

"Looks like we are going to have to postpone our Canadian second honeymoon! We are headed back to our local UTD." Frank tried to sound matter of fact.

"Why?" Caryn tilted her head to the side, "What was that_call all about?"

"I'll have to talk with Tomás when we get back. I'm not sure what's going on with Heard," Frank mumbled to himself. "I guess we'd better start walking back to the Jeep. I hope it's still there and okay."

Chapter 35

As Dayna walked in the direction Tomás had given her, she prayed and thought about the big picture of the crazy predicament in which she found herself. She tried to remember everything she had heard about Unity Through Diversity and about the Agency. What did either have to gain by succeeding in their objectives?

Dayna finally spotted the retail area being constructed. Just as Tomás had told her, there were two restaurants already opened, one Mexican and the other Italian. *Frank and Caryn will love that one!* Then Dayna remembered that Frank said there were no retail businesses underground. *Apparently, Dr. Heard wasn't telling Frank everything.* She headed to the Mexican restaurant. She noticed a young woman wiping tables on the patio front of the building.

“May I help you?” The woman asked her in Spanish.

“I’m sorry, I only speak a little Spanish, but I am glad you do.” Dayna answered her with a smile. “I just need directions right now to the condo residential area.”

Returning the smile, the woman answered in English, “You are headed in the right direction. There is a sign at the end of this walk-way with directions to the condos. You must be new here – and important – otherwise, I would know you – and, you’d be living in the campgrounds – not the condos.”

“I am new, but I’m not important. I should properly introduce myself. I am Dayna Thomas. And you are ?”

“Camila. Dayna Thomas? *Dr.* Dayna Thomas? Yes, yes, you are important. You are the reason my family and I are living here and have opened this wonderful business.”

“How am I the reason? I haven’t made up my mind to move here myself.”

“Well, you see, my cousin was in one of your Cultural Diversity classes at the University

and was so inspired that she shared everything you taught to the family. We met on Sundays and she spent all afternoon teaching us what you taught her. At first, it was funny how pumped up she was, then we started listening to what she was saying. About the same time, we started hearing about UTD, and here we are.” Camila spread her arms wide and spoke with such enthusiasm, that Dayna was amazed.

“I don’t know what to say. I didn’t know I had made such an impact.”

“You gave us courage to choose. We chose to separate. The government is not protecting those that do not speak English only. The week before we moved, a family in our quad was found dead. The authorities said it was from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. Friends of the family said it was because the teenage boy was teaching his English speaking girlfriend Spanish.” Camila began to cry. “I knew both of those kids. I haven’t heard what happened, if anything to the girl. I am sure it was not an accidental death. There is no safety for Spanish speakers above ground.”

Dayna remembered the group of teenagers she met right before her kidnapping. Both women were quiet.

Finally, Dayna spoke, “I’d love to try your place, but I don’t have any money with me. Is there a banking system set up down here yet?”

“We don’t need money. When we all decided to move, we sold everything we owned, except for some personal items, and deposited it with UTD. In turn, they furnish everything we need to set up a life here. They bring in the food and supplies. We work as a part of our livelihood and we share with each other in order to make sure that we all have what we need. Right now, we use vouchers at the restaurants to keep up with everything.”

“That all sounds ... too, too Utopian, or maybe Unitarian, to me. Is there a governing

body or committee that sets up the rules or standards for the commercial system?”

Helida shrugged her shoulders. “Dr. Heard is the only one that I know of. He is the one who signs the letters and makes the announcements about how we are to run the businesses, and our residences.”

“Hmmm. Well, I think I’ll try and find my way back to my quarters. I’m glad we had a chance to talk. You have helped me a lot. I’ll come back for a meal. I promise.”

The women said their goodbyes.

Chapter 36

When Frank and Caryn returned to the Jeep they found that it and all of their possessions had been rummaged through, but nothing was damaged or stolen.

“I wonder if this is just random curiosity or if someone has been following us,” Frank murmured as he repacked the Jeep.

Caryn just stood aside in silence and let Frank work. They had walked until after sunset, and though she knew Frank was as tired as she was, he rearranged the contents of the Jeep with speed and energy while she watched and prayed that the Agency had not followed them. Finally, with a sigh, Caryn climbed in the passenger side of the Jeep. As she turned to grab one of the blankets in the back seat, she noticed that Frank was leaning against the Jeep. He had his head bowed and arms crossed. He was either sleeping or praying. Caryn hoped he was praying.

Chapter 37

“Dr. Heard, come in, come in.” Gene smiled her most charming smile for Janssen Heard, and he returned it with more enthusiasm than he would have, had they been with others.

“Gene, you are so very adventurous – and so am I!” The couple kissed and made themselves quite at home in the office of the president of the university.

“Yes, you are! Are you sure you weren’t followed?” Gene asked.

“I’m sure. Plus, I didn’t drive my own car. I *borrowed* one from one of my underground residents. If anyone even notices the car, they will think that Dr. Thomas is having a meeting on campus. Which brings to mind, how did you manage to commandeer the *president’s* office?”

“I have him and the entire university administration under my complete control. Until we get the rest of this region under my authority, I need a place to set up headquarters, and the university seems as good a place as any.” Gene’s smile made her more attractive to Janssen, and also made him a little uneasy.

“So, you’ve gotten Dayna Thomas underground for good?” Gene murmured as she nuzzled Janssen’s neck and ear.

“I believe so, but I can tell she’s resisting. Plus, she isn’t exactly hiding the fact that she doesn’t trust me. But that’s a mutual mistrust. There’s something about that woman that *I* don’t trust.”

“Oh, for God’s sake, Janssen!” Gene sat up abruptly, patted her hair, then stood up, and straightened her clothes. She began pacing.

“Dayna Thomas is a nobody. Nobody cares whether she lives or dies. You should just make an accident happen. It will be just like any other so-called professor around here. They’ll have a memorial, put her picture on the wall for a few weeks, and keep on rolling. Have one of

your precious underground maintenance workers take care of her.”

“You know, Gene, had your boys not fouled up the kidnapping, and if Jason had just taken care of her, neither of us would have to worry about Dayna Thomas. Speaking of which, I haven’t had a chance to inform you that Lenny is in our underground detention facility awaiting the return of Sheriff Frank so that he can handle the matter.”

“Sheriff Frank? Caryn Giordano’s husband? Where is he?”

Janssen Heard cleared his throat as he sat up. “We are not sure. We had a sniper scare him and all we know is that he and his wife started traveling North. We think they might have headed for the underground facilities near the Canadian border. Our intention was to scare him enough to get him and his wife, to come underground permanently.”

“Idiot! You should have talked to me about your plans first.” Gene practically screamed. “How do you know he had his wife? She walked out of a meeting with me three days ago. We haven’t heard from her. I should have had her followed when she left.” Gene paced as she talked.

“That would be the same day the sniper shot up their kitchen. They were there together. The sniper watched them through his scope. He didn’t try to follow them because he thought we would be tracking him from our headquarters. Unfortunately, there was a glitch in our system and we don’t know where they are,” Janssen replied quietly.

“Well, you need to get that situation under control immediately. And, you need to get my operative out of your detention facility. He is one of my best men. His mindset is almost perfect. He hates, but tolerates, everyone that does not speak English, and many that do speak it – if you know what I mean. He would make a great chief in command of the Agency, once I step up, of course.” Gene smoothed her tone and nuzzled Janssen’s neck leaving just a speck of her lipstick on his collar.

“Of course.” Janssen embraced Gene, but for once he was not completely enthralled in her charms.

Chapter 38

Dayna walked and prayed for a solution to her present situation. As she neared the end of the retail area, she came to a wooded park area. She was amazed that it resembled the park area above ground where the pool house entrance to the underground was located. There was a dirt path to her left that looked as if someone had tried to conceal it. Dayna decided to see where it led. As she walked she realized that she no longer heard the artificial sounds of birds nor did she feel the slight breeze she had felt in the park. There was a stillness and quietness that unnerved her.

I should turn around and get back on the main path. This doesn't feel right. Dayna stopped walking when she heard a rustling of leaves ahead of her.

“Dr. Thomas?” Standing a few feet in front of Dayna was one of her students, Paul Lansing. A tall, blond-headed young man about twenty-four or twenty-five. Paul was not exactly the type of person Dayna had thought she would meet underground.

“Paul? How did you get here? I mean, what are you doing here?” Dayna was as visibly shaken to see Paul as he was to see her.

Although Paul had actually been one of Dayna's best students, and she knew he spoke Spanish, French, and some German, she always felt that he would be a member of one of the groups that believed only the Anglos should rule. *I wonder if he's a spy?* Dayna smiled to herself. *Get his story first, then make a judgment call.*

“I, uh, I...” Paul's voice trailed off as if he was trying to make up an excuse for being in that place.

“Paul, where does this path lead?”

“Oh, um, it leads to the temporary living quarters. Actually, it's a glorified RV park.”

“Really? How in the world did they manage *that*? Do you live down here?”

“No, Ma’am.” Dayna smiled at Paul’s reply. She remembered he always said “No, Ma’am” or “Yes, Ma’am” to her, even though he may have been less respectful to the other students, and even some of the faculty.

“Is there a place we can sit and talk?”

“Since it’s you, I guess we can go to my girlfriend’s place. She and *her* family live here in the temporary quarters. It’s right through that shrubbery.” Paul turned and led Dayna to another part of the underground she hadn’t seen.

The path they were on ended at a row of thick shrubbery. Once they made their way through the tangle foliage, Dayna and Paul entered the RV area and stepped onto the asphalt walk-way surrounding the area. At first glance, the area looked expansive.

“How large is this place?”

“I think about 200 RV’s are here, but only about half are occupied. My girlfriend and her family live in one in the inner circle. It looks like they started with a few and provided pads and living space extending out from the first ones they installed. The asphalt walk-way surrounds the area. Apparently, they did not intend for the temporary quarters to accommodate very many. The RV’s closest to the perimeter of the park are the newest and the smallest. Adriana and her family moved down here last year and are in one of the older ones.”

“Do you live here, Paul?” Dayna’s left eyebrow shot up and she gave him the ‘Don’t lie to me’ look he’d seen when she would quiz her students.

“Let’s get to Adriana’s place and I’ll tell you the whole story.” They walked through the RV park to Adriana’s family’s area in silence.

They walked to the center of the park. Each RV was self-contained. In the center was a

large building which looked like a small Wal-Mart. Before Dayna and Paul reached the center building, they made a right turn, passed a couple of RV's and stood in front of an RV which was identical to the others, except this one had a small fence around it with a miniature flower garden to the right of the walk-way and a water fountain and seating on the left. The door to the RV opened and a young woman, about twenty years old, whispered, "Paul, what are you doing back here. Hurry, come in!"

The young woman then noticed Dayna standing a little behind Paul. "Dr. Thomas! Paul, why did you bring her here, you could get her in trouble!"

Walking up the walk-way to the door, Dayna replied, "Don't be alarmed, I'm temporarily living down here. I won't get in trouble – I don't think. But, I don't know you, do I? I mean, you haven't been in any of my classes, have you?"

"No, no ma'am. Paul told me about you. You are the reason – well, part of the reason, my family and I live here." Dayna and Paul walked into the RV as Adriana was speaking. An American woman of African descent, as Dayna liked to describe her own nationality, walked into the room. She was the only other person of African descent Dayna had seen since being underground.

"Mother, this is Dr. Thomas. Dr. Thomas, this is my mother, Wyvonne James Cuellar." Adriana spoke to her mother in Spanish.

"Hello, Mrs. Cuellar. I apologize for just dropping in on you like this, but I ran into Paul on the path in the woods, and he suggested we come here to talk. I hope it isn't an inconvenience. I'm sure we can talk outside." Dayna looked at Paul who didn't respond or reply.

"Please, my friends call me 'Jamie'. No need to apologize at all. You are welcome here anytime. Do you speak any Spanish, or any other language?" Dayna shook her head. "No? Well,

then we will speak English for Dr. Thomas' benefit, okay?"

"My friends call me 'Dayna'," Dayna said as she let her smile include not only Jamie, but Paul and Adriana as well.

"Great. Now that we have the introductions taken care of, let's talk." Paul walked around the room as he talked. He took two small battery operated mini-fans and placed one near the air vent, and the other on one of the blades of the ceiling fan, which he had turned off. Dayna's expression was one of questioning, but before she could ask the question, Jamie motioned for her to be quiet.

"We know they have cameras around here. It is only a matter of time before I am either caught above-ground and banned from coming here, or I am caught here and not allowed to go above ground again. The fans are to keep them from understanding our conversation. They just get white noise right now. But we can't talk loud, so listen closely, okay?" Paul's demeanor was totally different than in class. Dayna was impressed. She just nodded as a reply and waited for Paul to begin his story.

Chapter 39

“I worked at a bank whose customers first languages were other than English. It was a small bank owned by one man, an Italian. He, like you, Dr. Thomas – Dayna, encouraged language diversity. We were allowed to speak to our customers in whatever language they were comfortable – if we spoke it as well.”

“Weren’t you afraid there would be Agency spies, or at least someone who did not share your boss’ stand on the language?” Dayna asked.

“Not at first. He did thorough checks on the prospective employees. I became a little nervous when he hired a guy named Evan Hanes. Evan had an attitude from the beginning. He didn’t like it at all. He became almost irate every time he had to wait on a non-English speaking person – even when it was a language other than Spanish.

“One Saturday, Evan didn’t show up for work. Even though he was obnoxious, he rarely missed work. This particular morning, it seemed that there were more Spanish speaking customers. When I mentioned it to a co-worker, Monica, she told me about an incident in the East Quad. Several members of a non-English family had been injured or killed at a ball park. Someone had set a bomb at a concession stand.”

“I think I heard about that.” Dayna sighed.

“Yeah. Well, that morning we had more withdrawals than deposits.”

“The East Quad is where we lived. My nephew was killed in that blast. His father was working and couldn’t make it to the game. His mom arrived just as the bomb went off. She was injured. Fernando, my nephew, was at the concessions when it . . .” Jamie began to cry.

Paul continued, “Mr. Cuellar drove through and made a withdrawal, but would not talk to me.”

“Yes, he was afraid someone would hear that we were moving here,” Jamie said.

“Right after Mr. Cuellar drove away from the bank; Evan drove in in his mother’s car. When the tube came into my teller section, it took me a few seconds to realize it contained an explosive device. I threw the tube back in the chute, grabbed Monica and threw her to the floor. The last thing I remembered was a laugh coming through the drive-thru intercom.

“When I woke up, I was in the hospital with a concussion and a couple of bruised ribs. Monica had a broken arm and a mild concussion. I’ve heard that the elderly lady Monica had waited on was turning out of the drive-thru when the blast happened and it startled her so that she accelerated, drove across the parkway, and hit a building. The last I heard she was in pretty bad shape.”

“What about this Evan guy? What happened to him?” Dayna asked Paul.

“That onery piece of – well, I won’t call him what I want to call him – he just plain disappeared.”

“What? How’s that?”

“It seems that by the time I’d sent back the tube, Evan had driven off. When the fire trucks and the other authorities got to the bank, realized that it was not a robbery attempt, and who actually owned the bank, they stopped looking for Evan. I even told them who had sent the bomb through the tube.

“At any rate, when I got out of the hospital, Mr. Cuellar came to my house late one night and let me know that he and his family had moved down here. He let me in on how to get back and forth and I’ve been trying to help them with supplies and such, as well as keep them informed about what is going on topside.”

“Hmm. Sounds like Evan might be an operative for the Agency. What about the owner

and his family? Is the bank still open? That bank is in the quad where I live, but my life these last few weeks has been so chaotic that I hadn't noticed or heard anything about the bank blast."

"Yeah, that's another odd thing. The news didn't mention anything at all about the bomb. There was some talk on the street that the bank had a structural problem that caused the drive-thru area to collapse. The bank is closed until the repairs are made. I haven't been able to contact Mr. Carosella, the owner."

"Paul, is Carosella an Italian name?"

"I think so. I know that his wife speaks Italian and no English. He told me once that he and their six kids are multi-lingual, Italian, French, Spanish, and, of course, English, but his wife refused to speak anything other than her native Italian. I've actually been trying to find out if maybe they came underground, but with the money they had, they may have all just packed up and gone to Italy."

"How are you making it with the bank being closed?"

"Well, being the blue-eyed, sandy-haired Anglo that I am, I just went out and found another bank job in another quad. We don't have *any* non-English speaking customers, so I'm safe, for now." Paul laughed a little, but Dayna noticed that Adriana and her mother looked a little nervous.

"You know, I have a friend who is being held in the detention facilities here – long story, don't ask." Dayna laughed. "Anyway, I might be able to find out from him if this Evan person is a part of the Agency, or just a rogue getting back at you and the bank. Of course, Lenny might not be very cooperative, and Heard might not let me see him. But -- ." Dayna was interrupted by a chime that corresponded with the lighting starting to dim.

"You must hurry if you are going to find your way to the residential condos before the

lights in the tunnels and walk ways are switched to night. We aren't supposed to be in the tunnels or outside of our assigned living quarters once the lights are out." Mrs. Cuellar nervously told Dayna.

"Well, that is going to be a problem because I'm already lost. I don't have any idea as to how to get to my quarters."

"I have to leave now anyway. I'll show you to your condo, Ma'am." Paul stood up, pretty much filling up the area with his 6'5" frame. As Dayna watched Paul stand up, her mind went to Lenny. Paul was larger than Lenny, but not as muscular or as physically in shape. He definitely wasn't as old. She wondered how Lenny was managing. She'd have to find a way to see him.

As they quickly made their way from the RV park through the wooded area and to the back side of the retail area, Dayna and Paul didn't speak at all. Dayna just followed Paul and tried to take note of their path.

"I don't think we should go in the open area of the retail part of this place, so we will take the back roads, so to speak, to the tunnels that lead to the condo area."

Dayna nodded and made mental note of where they were. She wanted to make sure she was able to visit the Cuellars again even when Paul may not be available to guide her.

They made it to the tunnel that led to the condos, just as the main lights went off. There were tiny lights embedded into the walls that gave some semblance of a walkway, but no overhead lights at all.

"We are here. Once inside, you should be able to see your way to your residence. The residential areas have overhead lights that make an artificial night. Sometimes they even have a full moon."

Although, Dayna couldn't really see Paul, she could hear the smile in his voice. She was

glad she had had this young man in one of her classes.

“How will you get ho--?” She realized Paul wasn’t with her. She hurried into the condo area, found her building, and rushed inside. Once inside, she leaned against her door. She wished they locked. She turned on the light, fully intending to put a dining chair under the knob. As she turned toward the living room, a gasp escaped. Lying on the couch, curled in each other’s arms sound asleep, were Frank and Caryn Giordano.

At the sound of Dayna’s gasp, Frank jumped and almost rolled Caryn onto the floor.

“It’s about time you got home! Where in the world could you have possibly been in this place?” Frank scolded.

“And hello to you, too! Caryn, are you okay. You look horrible.” Dayna pushed Frank out of the way as she sat down beside her friend, and possibly her enemy. At that moment, Dayna didn’t care, she just wanted to make sure Caryn was okay. Caryn fell into Dayna’s arms.

“Please, please, forgive me! I didn’t want to harm you. I’ve been so confused and misled.” She pushed Dayna away and held her at arms’ length. “Are *you* okay?” She asked as she peered into Dayna’s eyes. Dayna return the deep inspection - wanting to confirm that Caryn was sincere. After a long pause, and quite a few silent tears, the women hugged, dried their tears, and looked at Frank.

In unison, they asked, “Now what?”

Frank looked somewhat bewildered, “Well, -- it looks like. . .” Dayna held up her hand and motioned for them to follow her to the kitchen sink.

She turned on the water and whispered, “They may have microphones in here, and I wouldn’t put it past them to have cameras, as well. They probably know you are both here.”

Frank laughed as he turned off the water. “I planted jamming devices for both sound and

video on the way here. If they *do* have devices in here, they will be jammed here and in about a dozen other places. Hopefully, they will think it is a systems error, and not intentional sabotage.”

“You did? Where? When?” Caryn looked at Frank with total amazement.

“If I told you, I’d have to kill Dayna!”

“Frank Giordano, that is so corny. Besides, it’s “*kill you*.” Man! I thought you were my friend.” Dayna replied, feigning hurt and anger.

Frank took on a more serious attitude when he answered her, “I did too, until you brought that Agency operative underground.”

“Lenny. Yeah, we need — no, *I* need, to talk to him. Do you think you could get me an audience?”

Frank immediately started shaking his head in the negative.

“Please Frank?” Dayna begged. “I need to talk to him about something. Plus, I really don’t think he wants to be a part of the Agency any longer.”

Frank looked at Caryn, then back at Dayna. “What gives you that idea?”

“Well, I don’t really know. We talked – a little – while we ran. Yeah, he really could have turned me in or killed me. There was something there, Frank. He is not as loyal to the Agency as maybe he once was. I really think I could get him to talk to me. Let me try. Please?”

“We need to think about our situation, and the situation of many others. There may be something going on here we don’t understand. Let’s get some much needed rest and talk about this tomorrow. Do you mind if Caryn and I camp out here. We will leave early and come back through one of the tunnels as if we just got back. We will come by tomorrow afternoon. Why don’t you stay in all day. Pretend to be tired or something.” He smiled at Dayna when he spoke.

“Pretend? I *am* tired! Yeah, that sounds like a plan to me.”

“Yeah, me too,” Caryn piped in. She hadn’t said much and hadn’t offered any suggestions about the Agency or what she knew of Lenny. She decided she would fill them in on what little she did know when they talked the next day. After their impromptu camping trip, she was ready to finally sleep in a comfortable bed with her husband.

Chapter 40

Lenny Markovic paced the eight by eight cell, sat on the cot, got up and paced some more; dropped and did 75 one-handed push-ups, jumped up from the floor and lost count doing pull-ups on the cell door frame. When he finally dropped from the door frame, he paused and started the pacing and exercises all over again. *Still in pretty good shape for an old man. How did I end up being the detainee? Didn't even get caught during the conflicts in Europe, and get caught at home. At home, the great Regional America!* Lenny couldn't decide if he was angrier at himself or the Agency for his situation.

Lenny had been in the new detention facilities for almost a week. No one, except the Hispanic woman that delivered his meals, had visited him – and she wouldn't talk to him. He didn't know if she spoke English, or was instructed not to speak to him. He hadn't seen any other person since Frank had had him detained. *What was that all about? When did these facilities get built? And underground at that. I didn't sign on for all of this. I'm 60 years old! I've never gotten even a traffic ticket. I sign up with the Agency and they have me kidnapping college professors and now I'm in an underground prison. All because those people don't want to learn English. Wow.* He shook his head in disbelief and began repeating the workout. He hadn't slept well and was past anxiety. His workouts were the only thing that was keeping him from going crazy.

“Hi.”

Lenny was so engrossed in his push-ups he hadn't heard anyone come into the cell area. Startled, he missed a rep and instead of pushing up, he fell.

“Man, you're the last person I expected to see here.” He growled at Dayna, as he stood up.

“I didn’t think you would be happy to see me, but, I need to talk to you.” Dayna was relieved that there were bars between them. She mused that although all other underground facilities were beautiful and high-tech, the detention area reminded her of pictures she had seen of European prisons for prisoners of war. It wasn’t very comfy or large. Lenny reminded her of a bull in a china closet, without the china.

“You think this is funny? Woman, I tried to save your life, and *I* end up in a cell barely larger than my bed!”

“Look, Lenny, I was only trying to get the both of us to safety. I had no idea Frank would be there or that he would see you as an enemy – which you are by the way. And, if I remember correctly, *you hit me!*” Dayna rubbed her face as she talked. She would never let him know that he hurt her pride more than her body when he hit her.

“Instinct.”

“Well, your instinct almost got you killed. Frank Giordano is not only my friend, he’s the Sheriff around here,” Dayna said as she made quotation gestures with her hands. “Apparently, he brought his above ground work ethic underground. Anyway, that is part of what I want to talk to you about.”

Lenny interrupted Dayna, “Your friend? You and that ???”

“What? Uh, no. Not like that, you idiot. He, his wife, Caryn Giordano, and I are friends. Anyway, we need to talk about --”

“Caryn? Caryn Giordano?”

“Do you always interrupt when a lady is talking? I came here to talk to you and ask *you* questions, not get asked. I guess you know Caryn from the Agency?”

“Yeah. I saw her at the HQ right before she was going out on a mission with Jason. You

remember him – the one that I saved you from.”

“Look, Mr. Facetious, you haven’t told me anything I don’t already know. I don’t have much time, and you need to hush and let me talk.”

Dayna took a deep breath.

Chapter 41

Janssen Heard didn't socialize much. He never married. He appreciated the beauty of women, but would not allow himself to become involved with anyone, other than a casual lunch with Denise, until Gene Morrison introduced herself at one of the UTD conferences held on the Southern Central University campus. Janssen remembered that day vividly. It was before the UTD Student Club was forced to disband. Before he could walk the half block to his car from the Student Cultural Center, Gene was calling and inviting herself to coffee at his home. It was only after she left, several hours later, that he wondered how she managed to get his personal contact info.

Janssen's father, Janssen III, had warned him about women like Gene Morrison, selfish, ambitious to the point of no compassion, conniving, and cold-blooded. Until UTD conference, he had heeded this father's warning. Janssen III had a dream and groomed his son and only child to one day make the dream a reality. Neither contemplated the nightmare that Gene Morrison would bring into Janssen Heard IV's life.

During the 1800's William Janssen Heard was a ward of his uncle, Albert Ulysses Heard. William's parents died within a week of each other when he was ten years old and, having no other relatives or siblings, Albert took William in to help with the work on his land. Albert was a wealthy man. He owned four hundred acres of land in South Carolina and 100 or so slaves. William was never mistreated by Albert. He was given all he needed, but was reminded daily that he had to work hard to continue to receive the benefits of Albert's table. William was grateful for the care, for he witnessed on a daily basis the abuse Albert's slaves, male, female,

and children alike, endured under the strict eye of the overseer, even though they worked harder and longer than was expected of William.

In 1840, when William was twenty years old, Albert made the decision to move his family and his slaves to Texas. The move was long and treacherous. A few of the slaves managed to escape, three of the women who were pregnant died during childbirth, along with their babies. Albert's oldest son was bitten by a snake and had to have his leg amputated. William, however, made it to Texas in good physical shape and health – and in love.

One day, as William traveled between the wagons, relaying orders and instructions given by the overseer and Albert, he noticed a young slave girl about his age. Her skin was a smooth dark tan, her eyes were green, and her hair was thick black curly ringlets that reached below her shoulders. The girl, Cordia, usually kept her hair tied up in a bandana, but that evening as William was making his rounds, she was combing it out while sitting on a large rock next to one of the wagons the slaves occupied.

He rode slowly by her, trying not to stare. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. William made his round. He made sure that the white overseer had camped near the slaves' wagons and that he was awake and keeping guard. When William passed back by the rock, the girl was gone.

A week later, Albert Heard made camp along the east banks of the Mississippi River. William decided to ride along the river. Just as he turned to head back to camp, he heard screams. William jumped from his horse and ran up the bank along the river and saw four female slaves screaming and pointing to the river. One woman was running along the edge of the fast flowing river with a small tree branch screaming at the girl in the river to grab the branch. William saw at once that it was Cordia. He ran into the river and grabbed her, but the river's

current carried them downstream for several yards before he could get them to shore. Still holding Cordia in his arms and exhausted from fighting against the Mississippi, William rolled onto the bank and collapsed. He laid there holding her until the other women ran to them.

“You are beautiful,” he whispered in her ear.

Cordia’s green eyes snapped open. William could see the fear in them. He couldn’t tell if it was because of her near death experience, or if it was because a white man told her she was beautiful. When he heard the women running to them, he let her go.

“Go on, girl! Get yourself dried. You’ll be okay. No need to sluff off your chores!”

Cordia slowly stood up. The women looked from Cordia to William, and guided Cordia back to the spot where they had been washing clothes and bathing themselves.

William got on his horse, but took his time getting back to camp. By the time he returned, he was dry and his body no worse for his unexpected dip in the river. He couldn’t rid himself of the fear he had when he realized it was the green-eyed slave girl being carried down river, or the sensation he had as he held her in his arms on the bank.

At daybreak the next morning, Albert Janssen headed down river, and crossed the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. After many weeks traveling through Louisiana, the group landed in East Texas. It took two years for the group to travel from the east coast of South Carolina to East Texas. Much of the way they were cutting their own trails. They entered the Republic of Texas a year before Texas became a part of the United States, and two years before the beginning of the Mexican-American War.

Trying to stay inconspicuous, William kept an eye on Cordia. He never approached her or spoke to her until after his uncle Albert had claimed his land and the family and slaves set up their homes in the newly formed Lamar County of the Republic of Texas.

Late one night after every one in the main house had gone to bed, William, not being able to sleep for thinking about Cordia, slipped out of the house and walked to the stream which ran through Albert's land. Sitting in the moonlight, on the ground under a tree was Cordia. When she heard William approach, she jumped up and began to run away.

"Please, stop! I promise not to hurt you or tell anyone you were here," William called after her in a loud whisper. She stopped, but did not turn around.

In that moment, his future as a white man with a black woman was engraved on her back. He wanted her to turn around. He wanted to hold her again in his arms. He wanted the world to be different. He wanted Cordia.

"What's your name?" He asked.

"Cordia." She said without turning to him.

"You are beautiful."

"You told me that at the river." She answered.

William slowly walked up behind her and put his hands on her shoulders. She trembled as if overcome with a violent chill.

"My uncle owes me a month's pay. I own four horses. I have money saved. I plan to buy a wagon and supplies soon. I want . . ." His voice trailed off as he whispered in her ear.

William knew that his uncle would not let him take the girl. She was Albert's property. He didn't want to take her as his property. If she would agree to marry him, he'd move to Mexico. .

William Janssen Heard's stomach knotted every time he rode along his uncle's land and saw slaves working in the fields and being whipped to work harder. He prayed that he would never see Cordia being abused – in any way. Every time he saw a pregnant slave, he wondered if

his own flesh and blood would be working in the fields with the other slaves as soon as the child could walk. He watched for her to make sure the overseer, or any other man, never went near her or abused her. It was a long two months. He told Albert that he wanted to go to the southern part of the Republic; that he had heard there was land to be claimed, and that he wanted to be his own man. Albert was reluctant to help him make the move, but offered to sell him three slaves, if he'd work two months. He agreed to let William pick the three he wanted. He chose Cordia and her uncle and aunt, Jim and Arthur Mae. Albert really wanted Cordia, but Jim and Arthur Mae were older, and he knew they would not have many years left, so he let them go.

Two months after he whispered in her ear, with William driving one wagon and Jim driving the other with Arthur Mae and Cordia, the foursome headed south to Mexico.

Chapter 42

Dayna stared at Lenny for a minute before speaking. “I get vibes that you don’t really care for me, but you saved me. I know you’re mad as all get out because you’re in an underground jail cell. I understand that, but, what I don’t understand is why. Why me? Why kidnap me?”

“You’re only partially correct. I was following orders. We were ordered to kidnap you. We were ordered to “cut off the head” of the snake. I don’t dislike you. I just don’t like . . .” realizing how rude and mean it sounded, Lenny stopped talking. He was angry that he had been caught and put in UTD’s underground jail. He swore under his breath.

“What do you mean, ‘cut off the head’? I’m not head of anything. What are you talking about?” Dayna’s left eyebrow shot up.

“Look lady, all I know is that Gene Morrison feels that you are a threat to her progress in this region. So, she wants you turned to work for her, out of *her* region, incapacitated, or – dead.” Lenny wouldn’t look Dayna in the eye when he said it.

“She wanted to know where the rumored underground facilities were located and we were to hold you until she, or someone she appointed, arrived to interrogate you. Jason got a little aggressive. I think he was still angry that he didn’t get to take care of you when he and his partner were in your house. Seems his partner stopped him.” This time Lenny’s eyebrow shot up in query.

“Looks as if Jason needs to screen his partners a little closer. One saves my life, and the other steals me from him. Well, I hope I know why the one saved me, but I don’t know why she is even a part of the Agency. Why did you help me escape?”

“I don’t know. If you’d been a black or Mexican man, I probably wouldn’t have. It was

just something about the whole thing. Something about *you*!” This time he did look straight into Dayna’s eyes, until she looked down.

“Well. What about me?” Dayna stood up and began to pace.

“I don’t know. I’ve just seen so much violence. I know what Jason can do. I’ve seen other operatives hurt older women, frail women. I didn’t need to see him do that to you.” The words came out slow and almost in a whisper.

“Oh, so now I’m an older and a frail woman. It wasn’t because it was just the wrong thing to let Jason hurt me. It was because I wasn’t a black or Mexican man? Wow. I guess I should be grateful for not being a man. Anyway, what I really came to ask you is if I can talk Heard into letting you out of here, will you agree to stay here and help me find out what’s going on down here, as well as top-side?”

“Have you not been listening to the news, to me? What’s going on top-side is that the government wants all the Spanish speaking people under their control, like they did the Native Americans. They don’t want any language spoken except English anywhere. They want sympathizers, people like you, out of the way. You cause trouble. You instigate resistance. The director of the South Central Region wants you particularly out of her way. How many Churches and organizations did you talk to before the Council passed the EOL? I saw you. I heard you. You basically told people to defy the government. You are going to get yourself killed. As far as down here? How would I know? This is your territory.” Lenny walked from one wall to the other as he talked, clinching and unclenching his fist.

“I only know that this place is here. I don’t know why. Something just doesn’t seem . . . I don’t know. I can’t put my finger on it. It’s right, but it isn’t.” Dayna’s voice trailed off.

“I caught the part about you may not have helped if I had been a black or Mexican man.

You really don't like me or anyone whose ancestors weren't Anglo? So why don't you like the brown people? Don't you know any people that aren't white that you like?" Dayna looked at him with disbelief.

"My grandson, but I haven't seen him. I just know I have a grandson," he said after a minute had passed.

"Black or brown?" Dayna asked.

"Brown. He's half Mexican. My son married a Mexican girl. I gave him the blues about it, and my wife left me because of it. I don't know where they are. They could be down here." Lenny shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a donkey." Dayna put her hands on her hips and shook her head. "It is hard for me to comprehend your train of thought. You are just a donkey."

"What? Woman!" Lenny's tone was threatening.

"Don't get upset. You'll knock yourself out on the ceiling." Dayna laughed. "If you promise to help, I promise to help get you out of this tiny cell and into a pretty nice condo."

"Down here?"

"Yep. Down here!" Dayna replied. "Tell me, since the government is removing all Spanish signs, websites, instructions, and other written communication from all areas of society, how do you think Spanish speaking people will fare top-side? Children will be forced to speak English without the help of speaking Spanish. If they are allowed to attend school, they will have such a huge learning curve that most will not do well. Families may be separated. People are dying, Lenny, just because of the language they speak. Is this what you want for your son and his family?"

"Doesn't matter what I want for my son. He made his decision. But that is different, he's

Anglo.”

“Yes, Lenny, but his children are not. His wife is not. What happens when they want to send him and his family to a detainment center, because they spoke to their children in Spanish? Lenny, think about what’s going on topside.” Dayna paced around the small cell. Lenny sat on the cot and watched her.

“They won’t send my son to a detainment center.” Lenny replied.

“What makes you think that? They ordered you to kidnap me. Shake me up. Jason would have killed me. You know Gene Morrison wants me dead. What make you think they will not put your son in a detainment center?”

“They won’t. He’s Anglo. They may take his family, but not him. That’s not how Gene Morrison works. He may have to work for the Agency in order to keep his family safe, but he won’t go.”

“Lenny,” Dayna sat on the cot next to him, “They have fined Anglos for helping the Spanish speaking community. As we have already discussed, they want me dead. I speak nothing but English. You probably know more Spanish than I do.”

“How do you know I speak Spanish?” Lenny whispered.

“I didn’t – until now. I was just making a point. Do you know why Gene Morrison isn’t after Janssen Heard? He’s an Anglo, and is obviously a sympathizer. He built this city. So, why isn’t she after him?”

Lenny shook his head. “I don’t know, but the word around the operative headquarters is that Heard’s ancestors are not all Anglo – by choice.”

“Oh. Then, like you, he may have family somewhere he wants to protect. He may be easier to persuade to let you stay, if he knows about your family. Will you help us?” Dayna stood

to leave.

“Let me think about it. The food here is pretty good. I may not want to move from this place.” Lenny smirked. Dayna sat back down on the end of the cot and thought a moment.

Chapter 43

William, Cordia, and her aunt and uncle made it to Mexico in August 1848, six months after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, ending the U. S. – Mexican War. For the first few years, William felt as if he had made a grave mistake. Not only was it tremendously difficult to set up a home for himself and Cordia, the language was hard to learn, and the culture was totally different. The Mexicans were not friendly with many white men, but many along the border areas accepted William because he was married to a black woman, and because he was sympathetic to their situation. William was more concerned for his safety because of threats from men of his own color than he was the Mexicans. They settled on a rancho on the Mexico side of the new U. S. – Mexican border. Their twins, a boy and a girl, Janssen Albert and Oleta Iona, were born a year later. When the twins were eight years old, a year after Jim and Arthur Mae were both killed in an isolated skirmish between whites and Mexicans along the border, Cordia had another son, Willie Delgado. Two years later Otis Castillo was born. Willie Delgado and Otis Castillo were named after men whose families had helped them learn the language and settle into Mexico. As they grew into adulthood, each of the Heard children married Mexican spouses. The families lived on the ranch, along with several Mexican families William hired to help run the place.

William was killed when renegade white men attacked the ranch. Cordia died eighteen months later. The children felt that she lost her will to live when William was killed. With both of their parents gone, all four children, and their spouses and children, returned to the United States. Otis and Willie settled in California, but Janssen and Oleta and their families returned to the land in East Texas owned by their uncle Albert, who died during the war. His wife died before the war. Albert's sons inherited everything he owned, including the ranch and the slaves.

When Janssen and Oleta offered to buy the land and the slaves, they accepted. Except what they needed for their trip back to South Carolina, Albert's sons sold everything. Janssen immediately freed all of the slaves in 1864, the year prior to the news of emancipation in Texas. He allowed those that wanted to leave to do so. He offered paying jobs to those that wanted to stay.

Because Janssen and Oleta were half white, and both had sandy brown hair and blue eyes, they decided to pass as whites. They were still concerned for their Mexican spouses, however, because the atmosphere in Texas was tense toward both blacks and Mexicans. There were rumors of lynchings of both Mexicans and blacks. Although the lynchings were farther south, close to the Rio Grande border towns, Janssen decided to prepare a place of safety for his family.

Chapter 44

“What are you doing, *mi amour*?” Janssen’s wife, Camila queried, looking over his shoulder. Janssen sat at a desk in their large bedroom.

“I’m drawing a dream,” he murmured.

“A what? Looks like a maze to me.” Camila turned to leave him at his dream.

“No, wait. Let me tell you what I want to do, but you have to keep it just between us right now.” Janssen’s voice was pleading and serious and mysterious. Camila sat on the foot of their bed. Janssen joined her and held both her hands in his.

“Camila, I love this land and this country. I love you. I love the people that work with us to make this home. But, there are those, the whites that took part of your homeland, who do not like free black men, and they may find ways to make our lives hell. We know of the things that have happened in the borderlands to your people, and all over the south to mine.

“You heard of the underground railroad, right? Where many slaves were able to go north to live? Well, I want an underground home, if we should ever need it. We will have all we need and be able to go back and forth between it and above ground at secret places. We can let our workers stay here. McGilvery is sympathetic to both the Mexicans and the blacks, so he will still run the place for us and keep an open entry to help with getting any supplies we need.

“Camila, say something. What do you think?”

“Where did you come up with such an idea? This is – this is crazy.”

“The “underground” part of the underground railroad of course. If they have rooms in tunnels and basements along the way, why can’t we?”

“Janssen, why don’t we just move up north? All of us – Oleta and her family, our workers, everybody. It is as dangerous to live underground as it is to live here.”

He let her hands go and moved back to the desk. “I have to finish this. When I get it all done, we’ll talk again. Please don’t tell anyone about it.” He began writing and drawing on the large sheet of paper.

Janssen worked on his plans for months. He stock-piled materials to build. Even before he began the drawings, he planted groves of trees that would hide the underground entrances. He ordered extra wood when repairing his and Camila’s house, along with the houses the farm hands lived in. He had the cook preserve extra vegetables and store them in the basement. Any household item needed above ground, he had the servants and farm hands obtain and store extras for underground.

A year after Janssen Albert Heard showed Camila the plans for his underground safe house, he, Camila, their two children, Janssen, Jr. and Maria, and six members of one of the freed slave families walked a mile into a thick grove of trees located on the ranch and disappeared.

Chapter 45

Dayna was candid with Lenny and told him all that she knew about the underground facility – which wasn't much. She told him she had met a family of Mexican descent and that they knew the families were being monitored in certain areas. Although, the underground facility was considered a safe haven, it was also becoming prison.

“Okay. So UTD has been in existence for a long time?” Lenny queried.

“Well, not like this, and not in this same spot, but in some form. Apparently, Heard's great-great grandparents or someone actually went underground to run from the persecution and prejudice that probably some of your ancestors were dishing out.” Dayna smirked when she said it. “Over the years, the Heard descendants moved about and established secret underground facilities just for Spanish speaking people, but now the facilities are for any non-English speaking citizens and English speaking sympathizers, like me and the Giordanos. Heard wants me to stay here. I want to go back top-side, work my way back into the university and spy for UTD. See what Gene Morrison is up to.”

“I know for a fact, if you go top-side Gene Morrison will be waiting for you. If you don't get me out of here, I won't be able to save you next time,” Lenny laughed.

Dayna didn't laugh. “Do you want me to check and see if your son and his family are here? Whether he is here or not, would you consider changing sides – secretly?”

“Yes, and – what do you mean?”

“My friends also agree that it isn't a good idea for me to return top-side, but we do need eyes and ears on Morrison. If you can convince Frank Giordano and Heard that you will spy for them, they will let you out of here to do your thing. There aren't that many families here. I'll ask

around. I'm not sure I trust Janssen Heard, so I won't just come out and ask him, if – what's your son's name?"

"Robert."

"Robert. Okay, if Robert Markovic and family are here. If he is aware of the connection between you two, he may force them to leave. He was angry as everything when he found out you were here," Dayna replied. "That's why we have to convince him you will work for UTD."

"I don't know. I know I saved you, and I want to know my son is safe – but work for UTD? I don't know. I am not a freedom fighter for the non-English speakers. If they can't or won't learn English, then –"

"Then why didn't you just let Jason carry out the mission, and let me take my chances with him? I will not speak on your behalf. I will try and find Robert. I'll talk with Frank Giordano and let him know about the conversation he didn't want me to have with you, and see what his thoughts are about you. I know Heard isn't going to want to let you go back top-side. You may be here a while – and not in a nice condo!"

Dayna pressed the button by the door. Momentarily, the door made a clicking sound and opened. Dayna left the cell and thanked the guard. As she left the facility, she met Frank.

"I thought you were . . . ," Dayna began. Frank interrupted.

"What are you doing down here? I thought I told you that you were not to visit the prisoner!"

"I just wanted to make sure he was okay. I'm leaving."

Frank grabbed her arm. "I'll escort you."

Frank led Dayna out of the holding facility and they walked in silence until they reached an area that was deserted and entered a tunnel that had not been completed. Once they had walked a few feet into the tunnel, Frank began to speak.

“Dayna, you have to let me handle this thing with Lenny. We think it’s best that Lenny goes back to the Agency, but as an operative – but not for UTD, for us. There will be a meeting here in this tunnel tonight at 11 o’clock. Caryn and I have a condo in the building next to yours. We will visit you tonight before the lights go down and bring you special clothing. Later when the day cycle is switched, we’ll come here.”

“For us? Is there another group here? Are you telling me that the secret underground has a secret underground?” Dayna sounded puzzled.

“Sort of. You see, Tomás overheard a conversation between Heard and Gene Morrison. It seems the two are working together. We’re just not sure what their end-game is. It will all be discussed and you will know as much as we know tonight. Come on, let me get you back to an area you know. Can you get back to your condo from the park area where you and Tomás had lunch?”

“I think so. I did get lost last time. You know about that also?”

“Yep!” Frank laughed. “I’m the Sheriff. I know everything!”

“Apparently so. No privacy in any language. Is it worth it? Frank, I haven’t been in this very long, but I’m already having my doubts.”

“Where’s your faith in what you have taught these last few years? Wait and hear what a few of us have to say tonight, okay?”

“I know where I am. I can make it from here.” Dayna saw the Tex-Mex restaurant patio. “I think I’ll get something to eat and take it with me. Sounds like a long night.”

Frank nodded and watched her walk into the little store front.

Chapter 46

At 10:00 p.m., Frank and Caryn entered Dayna's condo without making a noise. Dayna was sitting on the couch waiting for them. Dayna had a night light on so as not to be in complete darkness. Caryn motioned for her to change into the black polyester and spandex body suit. After she was dressed, Frank handed her night vision glasses, and they left the condo.

Frank led the way through the UTD corridors and tunnels staying as close to walls as they could until they found the tunnel Frank had shown Dayna earlier that day. They walked another mile into the tunnel until they came to what looked like a rock slide. Frank picked up one of the small boulders and several other boulders moved just wide enough for them to crawl through. Once in the cavern, the opening closed and lights came on.

"Ouch! I'm sorry Dayna, I forgot to tell you to take off the glasses. Wow, that hurts a little," Caryn said as she quickly removed her own glasses."

When her vision adjusted to the light, she saw that Tomás, Elizabeth, Paul, and Lenny were already there.

"Paul? Lenny? What . . . ? How . . . ?" Dayna looked around the room in complete confusion.

Tomás began, "As Elizabeth was leaving one of the meetings at your house, she noticed a couple walking slowly past your house. She didn't think too much about it, until she saw them following one of the other members. She told me about it, and of course I told Dr. Heard. That's when he had us put the cameras in your house – but only for use when you were not home. When I reported to Dr. Heard that two operatives of the Agency had entered your home, and that one of them had been Dr. Giordano, he seemed agitated, but not too upset. I'm not sure why but that is

when I began to agree with Elizabeth that maybe Dr. Heard was not being totally honest with us about being here.”

“Dayna, you talk too much!” Caryn said teasingly. “But seriously, you do. The bad part is that you don’t know how persuasive you are – and you are not easily swayed.”

“In other words, I’m opinionated and stubborn,” Dayna replied. “But what has that have to do with the Agency and UTD and the Agency following members from my house?”

“Okay, it’s like this,” Frank explained, “For the last three years, you have taught the diversity classes at the University, you’ve given lectures at different cultural functions and churches regarding the diversity of cultures and languages. You hosted many meetings in your home. When you held that first meeting, how many did you say attended?”

“I don’t know, five or six. Maybe seven.”

“How many were there – with some of their family members – at the very last meeting?”

“Kids and all, about thirty. It was wall to wall people in the basement,” Dayna slowly nodded her head agreeing that more people than she realized were attending the meetings.

“You see, you are one of the English speakers who encourage the non-English speakers. They listen to you. You encourage resisting the law – that law that gives the Agency Directors more power than ever. And that’s the problem. Gene Morrison sees you as a threat. She wants to insure that all people speak English, and if they don’t it’s a fine first, imprisonment next, and execution for multiple offenders. Or, they can move underground – forever. For most of us, moving underground is fine, as long as we can come and go freely. This could be another country, but I don’t want the borders closed,” Frank had been standing, but sat down next to Caryn and patted her knee.

“When she held meetings with the operatives, she spoke of the UTD underground facility as if she knew nothing about it, but she does. And, she wants you dead because she thinks you will gain more followers and eventually cause more non-speakers to rebel against the English only law. You are capable of doing just that. I haven’t seen a professor at the University captivate students, and even some that aren’t your students, the way you have.” Caryn quietly told Dayna. “You have become somewhat of a splinter in the side of Gene Morrison, and she doesn’t want you to grow into a spear.”

“It’s difficult for me to comprehend all of this,” Dayna said, shaking her head as if to clear it. “It just is.” Turning to Tomás, Dayna asked, “Why do you think Dr. Heard and Gene Morrison are working together.”

“Well,” looking a little embarrassed, Tomás continued, “I just happened to see Dr. Heard leaving the University one day and he was driving Dayna’s car.”

“My car? What? How did he get my car?” Dayna stuttered.

“It was sitting at your house. We have your voice data on file.”

“Yes, but how did he know my code to start it?” Dayna asked, somewhat amazed that Heard would go to such lengths as to steal her car, but not surprised that he did.

Tomás continued, “He has people that can take care of those things, Dayna. He has people for everything. I don’t know when he did it, but it was after you and Lenny showed up. After I saw him, I managed to put a micro-dot in his phone. I told him it needed upgrading and I did a little maintenance on it and inserted the dot. I can now use his phone as a monitoring device. I record everything – video and audio. I haven’t had a chance to view any of it, except a meeting they had in the office of the President of the University. Dr. Heard told Ms. Morrison that Lenny is here and that he didn’t know where Sheriff Frank was. She was very upset. And

she for sure wants Dayna killed. Considering how controlling and powerful Dr. Heard is, it was a little uncomfortable to hear Ms. Morrison screaming at him because he had not told her about Lenny and Frank.”

The small group discussed theories as to why Gene Morrison and Janssen Heard would be partners, but nothing they came up with made sense. Tomás said that he would review the information he found on the dot and share what he found when they met the next time. The discussion turned to the problem of the surveillance in the residential area.

Paul said, “Adriana’s family and neighbors are really getting upset about it. They came because of the bank incident and the increasing violence against Spanish speakers. It is a bit unnerving to think you are being watched.”

“One thing is for sure, we can’t do anything if we can’t get back top-side. As much as we want to have freedom of culture and language, we don’t want to sacrifice other freedoms. Plus, if we aren’t careful, we will have a dictatorship down here. We either have to take over government, or leave, or at least find a way to get rid of Gene Morrison so that we can come and go as we please.” Dayna’s voice was quiet, but hard.

“How close do you think Dr. Heard watches you, Tomás?” Frank asked.

“As far as I can tell, he seems to trust me completely. Why”

“Are there any unfinished tunnels, other than this one that we may be able to open into another exit without him being aware of it?”

“I had been thinking of that recently. We closed a tunnel north of the city after we found that the land over it belonged to the United Council. I later heard that it is being used by the Regional Agency.”

Lenny piped in, “You mean that old building where we . . .,” his voice trailed off.

“Where you took me when you and your friend kidnapped me? I know the place – now,” Dayna said. “That might be a good a place. Who would expect us to use the Agency’s own real estate? How do we find out if they are still using it?”

“Now that we know that Dr. Heard and Gene Morrison may be working together, the first thing we need to do is find out how deep they are, or if one is trying to play the other. Tomás, I think you, and you Dayna, need to send word to your families that you are here. Since Tomás and Elizabeth are still allowed to come and go – secretly, of course, they can contact Dayna’s family. See if any or all will join you here. Tomás, are you sure you can trust your crew down here?” Frank asked, and Tomás nodded. “Then see if you hear anything on the dot that will let us know if they are still using the building. They may not since Lenny ran away with their captive. If not, see about getting it opened.”

Tomás agreed. “We have five laser vehicles to cut tunnels. I will tell Dr. Heard that one is out of service and that we are trying to repair it. We can use it to cut our tunnel – if the building is available.”

“That’s just great,” Lenny mumbled. All heads turned to him. “Listening and thinking here. I can’t go back to the Agency since I helped Dayna escape. Even though I agreed to tell Heard all I know, he already knows it – if he really is working with Gene Morrison. If I was allowed to go back, Dayna would be killed – accidentally, of course. You guys may trust me, but will Heard? Plus, I really want to find my son and his family before anything happens to them. J.R. is so much like me – except he married a girl of Mexican descent – that he may get them all killed by being stubborn about not adhering to the law.”

Frank looked at his watch. “We’d better head back to our quarters. I’ll take Lenny to see Dr. Heard tomorrow. Lenny can tell him just enough to let him know he knows about the

Agency, but also be sympathetic to the cause because of his son and his family – who aren't here by the way, but we'll find them and try to get them here. Dayna, I think you need to talk to the residents in the temporary housing. See if any, other than Paul's fiancée's family would be willing to leave?"

"Leave? What are you talking about? You want to get our families here, but then leave?"

Dayna raised her eyebrow as she questioned Frank.

"I just think that this area is not as safe as Heard would have us think it is. He is sharing pillow talk with the enemy."

They all agreed, but let the conversation end at that point. They left the tunnel and hurried to their respective living quarters. Two hours later, the morning lights were coming on and there was a knock on Dayna's door.

Chapter 47

When Gene Morrison introduced herself to Janssen Heard, she already had enough information on him to have him imprisoned and/or heavily fined for hindering prosecution of those who disobeyed the EOL law. The Agency, and therefore the Council, was aware of the underground facility, but did not know the locations of the entrances, or the names of any of the members, except for Janssen Heard. The interviews and broadcasts on LNN always gave contact information, but, the UTD communications network was such that incoming communications could be traced and the UTD would know if it was an Agency signal or signal from a legitimate interested party. Gene decided that it would be to her advantage to get to know Janssen and perhaps find favor with the Council when she brought Janssen under her control. If she could just get Dayna Thomas out of the way, or under Janssen's control. Fortunately, Dayna had been forced underground and under Janssen Heard's control. However, Gene lost one of her best operatives when Lenny helped Dayna escape, and now she hated both Dayna and Lenny.

"I think it is time we really closed the borders." Gene propped herself up on the pillows of the hotel king-size bed she shared with Janssen.

"I thought we were taking a break from business, Gene. You promised we would not talk about the Agency or UTD," Janssen sighed as he sat up and put his head on her shoulder. "We didn't take all the precautions – expensive ones by the way – to drive into another region incognito just to talk business. We could have done that at the university."

"I mean really close the borders – the inner borders, Janssen," Gene continued.

"What are you talking about?" Janssen sat up and stared at her.

"Close up Underground UTD – except for your private exit. By the way, when are you going to tell me where it is? Or, when are you going to take me underground for a visit?"

“No! I thought you were just being facetious. Why would we permanently close the entrances? The underground was started centuries ago by my ancestors as a haven, not a prison.

“While we have those traitors underground, let’s keep them there. They won’t be able to come back top-side and stir up the people. I get to submit my name to the Council for the appointment as Presidential Director over all the Regional Directors. Just think, one day I could be Council President and everybody will have to speak English – no exceptions. I can’t have people like Dayna Thomas speaking against it! I won’t!”

“I want that woman out of my life!” Gene continued to rant. “Her disappearance is causing too big of a stir. It will be harder to reach my goal if there is a wide-scale resistance. I want her dead, not missing. If she’s permanently gone, then her influence will subside.” She took a drink from the glass on the table, set her glass down and lit a cigar.

“Well, I can’t just kill her for you while she’s underground. It might cause all of my citizens to take their chances above ground with you,” Janssen said quietly. He sat up on the edge of the bed with his head bent and his hands clasped hanging between his legs. “Besides, Gene,” Janssen paused.

“Besides, what?”

“Killing is not what my City is about. Plus, you promised she would not be hurt, just out of your way. As long as she is in my City, she is out of your way.”

“Not if she can come and go as she pleases.” Gene Morrison sneered as she spoke.

“I’ll take care of it.” Janssen slowly stood. When Gene Morrison contacted him shortly after she was appointed as Director of the Central Agency, he thought her proposition was the answer for both of their worlds. Enforcement of the EOL would eventually lead to everyone living topside speaking English, and anyone who wanted to live within a cultural diverse

community to move underground. There would be total cultural freedom underground, and Janssen would be their “savior,” their Monarch. The City was his. He had made a pact with Gene that he would take underground all of those who refused to adhere to the EOL. She promised that as long as an appointed few would speak English only above ground, they would be allowed to purchase supplies above ground until their retail system, monetary system, and their agricultural system were in place – which could take years. Dayna Thomas had become the proverbial thorn in both their sides. He had heard her talking to one of the families. Because she wasn’t totally on board to move underground, she was causing others to question their decision to do so. He really didn’t want to terminate her, but neither he nor the Agency could risk her remaining alive.

Gene got up and turned on the wall monitor to the Council news. The monitor was live streaming the arrest of an entire family at an entertainment plaza in the Southern Central Region. Agency operatives were screaming at the family and threatening them with metal clubs and guns, including three children ages 3, 7 and 9.

The three year old asked his Anglo father, in Spanish, “What did we do, daddy?” The father placed his hand over the child’s mouth and shook his head, indicating that the child should not talk. One of the operatives punched the father’s hand with the end of a metal club so hard that it broke a bone in the hand and burst the child’s lips, breaking his teeth. He began to scream.

“Turn it off, Gene. Everyone who sees that knows that it is in your region. How can you allow your people to be so cruel?” Janssen got up. “I’m leaving.” Gene stared at the monitor with a smile. She didn’t hear the door close.

Chapter 48

As Janssen Heard neared the ancient and abandoned power plant, he knew he would never see Gene Morrison again. He glanced up at the moonlight filtering through the tree branches and wondered if he would ever see the real sky again. He stood still and listened to night noises trying to discern them from any sound of unwanted company. Satisfied that he had not been followed, he entered an area of thick trees, high weeds, and vines. Stepping carefully down a slope, he made his way to the heavy door that was rusted and slightly open. It had been like that since Janssen found the place and he left it as such so anyone who happened upon the place would not notice it was being used. Few residents knew the power plant ever existed, and those that knew of it had no desire to be exposed to any pollution that was rumored to still be floating around – a rumor Janssen had started when he decided to install his private entrance to the UTD underground facility.

He could barely slide through the narrow opening. Once inside, he made his way along the side of the wall until he came to steps that led down into the plant. At the bottom of the steps was a corridor that ended at a locked door. Janssen inserted the only key, and the door opened into a small area large enough to admit two people. He pressed his eye to the retina scanner and the wall slid back to admit him to a wider corridor. The corridor was lit by motion lights so that only three feet of the corridor was lit at a time as Janssen walked through.

It was twelve miles from the underground power plant corridor to the entrance below the North Gate Fountain at the UTD facility. It took Janssen four hours and twenty-two minutes to make the walk – give or take a minute. As usual, he commended himself on being in great shape, but this time, he also chastised himself for allowing Gene Morrison into his life. He had been hesitant to get involved. Gene had been more than insistent on their involvement – and he was

ready to spar with a woman as controlling and calculating as he. However, he was not about to give up his own dominion to her or anyone.

Janssen's walk ended at another door with a retina scanner. He scanned his eye, the door slid noiselessly open into a circular glass underwater elevator. The elevator ascended two floors and opened in the wrist of one of the hands that held up the world in the North Gate Fountain. One would have to look for the opening, even if it had not been camouflaged by the plants and rocks at the bottom of the fountain. The elevator light turned off when it stopped. Janssen walked along a rock formation and stepped out of the fountain. The fountain was on a timer with the lights and stopped flowing when the lights were dimmed. Janssen never worried about being seen when entering the facility from the fountain because he always entered at night. He put on his night vision glasses and walked through the dark to his condo.

Tomás saw Janssen step out of the fountain. Fortunately for him, he also had on his night vision glasses and was behind Janssen. He immediately stopped and pressed a button on his watch to alert the others that they should halt. Each one had a watch and earbuds. Tomás, using the ancient form of Morse Code, tapped out on the watch that Janssen Heard was out at the North Gate Fountain and was headed to the condo area. When Janssen exited the park area, Tomás alerted the others to proceed, but hurry to their living quarters. The Giordanos, Dayna, and Lenny took an alternate route to condo housing area. Tomás and Elizabeth took the corridors and went home top-side through the maintenance area.

Chapter 49

Dayna, Lenny, Frank and Caryn Giordano were eating supper with the monitor sound turned low.

“Dayna, replay that stream!” Lenny stood up and walked to the monitor. “When was this?”

“Monitor dates the stream day before yesterday,” Dayna answered.

“No. No. That can’t be!” The others stood in front of the monitor and watched the family being arrested. “That’s my son and wife. I -- have – three – grandchildren. Oh, God. I didn’t know about the two little ones.”

“That’s this region, Lenny. Gene Morrison has sanctioned this sort of treatment. This has to stop!” Dayna started to pace and to pray.

“What can we do?” Caryn asked. “You know Gene Morrison, Lenny. You know how she operates. She’s mean and evil!”

“I know that I can’t leave this region until I know that my son is safe and my grandchildren will not be punished for voicing their mother’s language.” Lenny replied.

Everyone but Dayna sat back down around the table. No one ate. Dayna continued to pace.

Finally, Frank stopped Dayna’s pacing by putting a hand on her shoulder. “What’s going through your mind, Dayna?”

Through tears, Dayna said, “By the time I started teaching at SCU, there were rumors about the country changing to one language, or an official language, but that rumor had been around for decades. The country is so diverse, it seemed incomprehensible for us to stifle that diversity. I don’t have a language other than English and, in my stupidity, I never even dreamed I

would need to learn another. Then, I began to research my ancestry and found that I am so much more than I realized. I have a diverse identity and each little part has its own language. As years passed, I also realized how important that little identity is to who I am, and that Regional America was taking that very diverse identity away. I know that it wasn't being taken from me specifically, but from every other person who spoke their language and voiced pride in their culture. I feel that to some extent the escalation of assaults on families like Lenny's is my fault."

Lenny shook his head in disagreement. "How so? Gene does her homework. She knows exactly whose family she is persecuting. She's angry because she's found out I helped you escape."

"That too, but that's not what I meant. If I hadn't been so outspoken and stubborn about cultural pride and diversity – knowing the government wanted either total assimilation or the non-Anglos to leave – maybe some of the violence and persecution Gene Morrison has inflicted on innocent people would not have happened. I shouldn't have encouraged the meetings in my home. I shouldn't have given the lectures. Your son and his family would not be in this predicament. I'd be with my own family – or at least able to move about freely. Instead, we are planning to escape to another region – and we can't tell . . . anyone." Dayna sat down on the edge of the chair looking out of a window at the simulated night sky, and shook her head. "You know, guys, I don't think I'm leaving."

"You *have* to, Dayna. I know you don't want to stay here. Who knows what Gene Morrison will persuade Heard to do. You may not be safe either place." Caryn replied.

"No. I have to stay in this region and try and make things right. I don't know how – but I know I can't leave. Maybe we could talk to some of the residents here. They might be ready to move back topside. Maybe one of them would present the situation to the United Council.

Frank shook his head in disagreement. “That might take some doing. You have to apply for an appointment before the Council, and then only within a certain time period. The Central Regions can only apply for an appointment in the third quarter of the year – July through September – and then if the application is approved, the date you are allowed to voice your presentation is one month from the date of approval. You would have over six before you could apply and – if you’re approved – it may be October 30th before you would be allowed to appear before the Council. That’s almost a year. What will you do . . . ?” Frank was interrupted by a light knock on the door. Lenny quickly looked out of the small peep-hole that he had installed at Dayna’s request. It blended in with the door’s veneer on the outside. Dayna had hung a cross on the inside. He unlocked the deadlock which he had also installed at Dayna’s request. Tomás slipped quietly inside.

“When did you add the security features?” With one eyebrow raised, Frank asked Dayna. “I didn’t even notice the lock on the door or know about the peep-hole. More important, how did Lenny know about them?”

“Later. Tomás, come in. What are you doing here?” Dayna asked in a concerned voice.

“I finally listened to the audio with Dr. Heard and Ms. Morrison. She wants to close all of the entrances to topside, except Dr. Heard’s private entrance. She doesn’t know where it is – and he didn’t tell. Also, it seems her main plan is to control all of the top-side regions with Dr. Heard in control underground. No one in and no one out – except Dr. Heard – secretly. But, it sounded to me like he is not truly happy with that. He left her upset the other night. The same night the Agency enforcers arrested that family when the child was speaking Spanish in the Entertainment Plaza.”

“Yes, we just saw a replay on the monitor,” Dayna whispered. “That was Lenny’s son and his family.” Dayna nodded toward Lenny.

“Oh. Poor man!” Tomás whispered. “The other night when I saw Dr. Heard at the North Gate fountain, he was stepping out of the fountain. I knew that the fountain had a room in it, but I did not oversee or work on that entrance. I don’t know who did or where it exits. It must be the secret one they were talking about. We may be able to access it, if we ever need to.”

“Well, maybe so, but I’m not leaving. I have to find a way to get rid of Gene Morrison, and then get back up top-side. Tomás, can you gather a group of residents for a meeting in the temporary housing area? Can you manage to scramble the audio so that the meeting is not being monitored?”

“Yes . . . , but why? How did you know the audio in the temporary housing area is monitored?”

“I think we need to storm the United Council and not apply for, or wait for an appointment. I think if enough of us go at the next meeting, they’ll have to listen to us.”

“Us? Dayna, what are you talking about?” Frank asked.

“Well, suppose we do leave this region. Let’s take as many as are willing to go to the United Council in the North Eastern Region. Then we just make ourselves heard – but only the English speakers will present. We don’t want anyone arrested or detained for not speaking English. We have to obey the law first, then persuade the Council to rescind the law. But first, we have to persuade them to remove Gene Morrison as Director over this region. Hold tight to that dot, Tomás. It’s evidence. Also, we need to get our hands on a copy of the stream indicating the cruelty and abuse being used in arrests. And, we need to get Robert Markovic and his family here for safety.”

“And just how do you propose we get all of that done, lady?” Lenny piped in. “You’ve got a lot of stuff on your to do list, but not a lot of ideas as to how to do them.”

“That’s where your ingenuity comes in, my friend. You and Caryn can get together and set up an escape plan for your son. You guys know the Agency. Tomás can get us more audio evidence and get a dot on Heard – maybe. He may be able to find out where Heard enters the tunnels top-side. Frank, we need the shortest route through the tunnels to the Eastern Regional headquarters and the Council.”

“It may not be the shortest, but we need the safest way,” Frank replied.

“Wow! Now, that’s the Dayna I know. Forming a plan on the run and pulling everyone along with her.” Caryn laughed and patted Dayna on the shoulder.

The group talked until the lighting changed to dawn, then Lenny and the Giordanos quietly and quickly made their way to their own living quarters. Tomás stayed behind.

“Dayna, you know some people that aren’t Anglo don’t care about the English only law. They speak English. They want to assimilate. My children are like that. If Elizabeth and I get trapped underground for good, we will never see our children or grandchildren. I will help, but I cannot take the risk of getting arrested or living here forever. Elizabeth would not survive.”

“I understand, Tomás. I do. You do what you have to do. You and Elizabeth can come with us. You and Frank can contact your children and let them know where you are, when it’s safe. Are you going top-side now?”

“No, I have a sleeping corner in the staff area. If anyone asks, I was just walking. I have a light with me, so no questions. I will sleep a couple of hours and start my day. I will check in with you in a couple of days and let you know what I heard and found out about the entrance. By the way, although I know the audio monitor was on, it was scrambled so that this meeting was

undetected. I made sure that very little noise, other than your monitor streaming or water running, that sort of thing is ever detected in your condo. You're covered." Tomás walked to the door, pointed to the lock to remind Dayna to lock it and left. Dayna locked the door and sat in the chair by the window, watched the artificial sun rise, and prayed for guidance.

Chapter 50

Janssen Heard paced for an hour in his condo. When he finally went to bed, his body reminded him of his age and that he had just walked for about five hours, including the pacing. He wondered how his ancestor had done it, when the first underground city was established. A lot of people died to get the city in its present form. *I will not let Gene Morrison or Dayna Thomas destroy my dream – my ancestor's dream. My heritage! This is my City.* Janssen drifted to sleep thinking of ways to get both women out of his life.

By 9:30 the next morning, Janssen was telling Diane to get Tomás in his office immediately. By 10 o'clock, Tomás was sitting across from Janssen wondering why the emergency meeting.

"We have a bit of a problem, Tomás. Our city is being threatened from within, and from the outside."

"How so, sir?"

"Dr. Dayna Thomas, I fear is not at all who she says she is. I think she may be working against us. She may be an Agency spy."

"The Agency? No, sir, she isn't. I know her." Tomás replied in a shocked tone.

"I see she's fooled you, as well. I have it on good authority that she is working for the Agency. Many people have sacrificed to build this city, you being one of them. I don't think we need to let one person destroy it all."

"What are you going to do? Are you sending her back above ground?"

“She works for the Agency, so I would be just sending her home . . .” Janssen paused, as if in deep thought. “That’s what I’ll do. I’ll send her home. At first, I thought I’d have you take care of her, but I’ll send her home.”

“Me? Take care of her? What do you mean?” Tomás knew exactly what Janssen meant, and he knew he would not follow through.

“Don’t worry. That may have to be a Plan B – if necessary. Here’s what we’ll do. You won’t have to do anything direct, but you will need to do a little re-wiring of Dr. Thomas’ home.”

Tomás settled in the chair, as if listening to plans concerning some phase of the city. As Janssen talked Tomás was forming his own ideas to deceive Janssen and to inform the group of this new development.

“Tomás, are you listening to me?”

“Yes, sir. I am already getting the most trustworthy and efficient crew together in my mind.” Tomás tapped his temple. “I will take care of it.”

“I want this taken care of as soon as possible. End of the week?”

“I will try sir.” Tomás said as he stood to leave.

“Are you going to be okay in here by yourself?” Caryn asked Dayna. Caryn turned to Frank.

“Does she have to stay here?” Caryn was combing her fingers through her hair as she watched Dayna arrange and re-arrange her new sleeping quarters. A small portable monitor was reporting that the home belonging to Dr. Dayna Thomas had been bombed two days earlier.

“An anonymous tip has informed authorities that Gene Morrison authorized the bombing. Ms. Morrison denies that she would authorize such action against an English only speaking citizen. However, she has admitted that the Agency has been looking for Dr. Thomas and that it is investigating what part Dr. Thomas may have played in many non-English speaking citizens not adhering to the new law. Ms. Morrison is being detained for questioning by the local authorities. In the meantime, investigators are combing through the rubble looking for Dr. Thomas’ body.”

Dayna looked at the monitor just as it showed the remains of her home.

“How could Heard do that? Just destroy my home. My memories. Pictures of my children and grandchildren. Years of anniversary gifts from Ron. Gone.” For the first time since Tomás told the group of Janssen Heard’s plan to kill Dayna, she broke down into tears.

Caryn held Dayna. “But you weren’t in the rubble, Dayna. Frank was able to make contact with your family, and they know you are okay. They are going to hold a memorial service for you so that everyone will believe that you are dead. Looks like Heard has taken care of our problem where Gene Morrison is concerned.”

“Maybe,” Frank said. “We have to see what the Council does. If it believes the anonymous tip and can find enough evidence to implicate the Agency, it might work. If an emergency meeting is called, and if they replace Gene Morrison, we will not have to storm the Council, but what about Heard?”

“See what the council does? Frank, that may take months. Dayna can’t stay down here that long, alone. I’ll stay with her,” Caryn told Frank.

“I’ll be just fine. You guys need to find Paul. He can talk with his fiancé and her family about who is not as enthusiastic about living here as they thought they would be. We need to have a meeting with some of the others. Where should it be?”

Tomás entered the tunnel. “Ladies, Frank, Dayna cannot stay here long, Dr. Heard wants to customize this tunnel. The workers will be here in a couple of days to get their instructions.”

“Tomás, we need to know what’s going on. Why was the tunnel to Dayna’s entrance disabled? Are there other’s closed? What’s going on?” Frank leaned against the same wall he leaned against when he and Dayna had talked just a few days earlier. Dayna and Caryn were further inside the tunnel, but within hearing distance.

“Dr. Heard is having you watched by way of the various surveillance cameras throughout the City. He had your home bombed so that you couldn’t go back. He wants to force you to try to escape here by another entrance. When you get to one that is accessible, the elevator to go topside will fail, possibly collapse. I was told to make it look like an accident. I have been working at a very slow pace so that the fake and faulty tunnel entrance will not be completed soon. I am trying to get Elizabeth to convince our children to move here, even though they speak perfect English, she doesn’t want to move. She believes there has to be a better way.”

“There is, but I don’t know what it is.” Caryn said as she and Dayna moved closer to the men.

“Where does *this* tunnel lead, Tomás?” Dayna pointed her flashlight into the dark tunnel.

“Nowhere right now. This is the one to be completed but faulty. Eventually, it is to lead Dayna to her death,” Tomás answered as he made the sign of the cross on his body. His eyes reflected the beams from the flashlight. Dayna thought he was about to cry.

“Well, we are near the Mountain Region. I heard that although the EOL is being enforced, that director is giving people time to adjust and learn. Some are coming underground, but they have to travel here to get to the tunnel entrances, or go further North to get to another underground community. Do you know if there are any connecting tunnels to another underground City, Tomás? Frank looked up from the map on his phone. Tomás shook his head.

“We have to get Dayna to safety, and I – we – want out,” Frank announced looking at Caryn and Dayna. Caryn nodded, but Dayna stared at the ceiling of the tunnel. “Don’t you, Dayna?”

“It’s not about me. It’s about all the people. How do we stop both Heard and Morrison? How do we get the EOL repealed?”

“We can’t. Not from here. So, I suggest that we let the workers complete the faulty tunnel and the faulty elevator to nowhere. We can continue to tunnel west to the Mountain Zone. Then, we go north into Canada, and back down into the Eastern Region to the Council. Those above ground can still travel freely between the zones as long as they speak English. We can’t because Caryn, Dayna, and Lenny are on Morrison’s radar,” Frank said.

I think Tomás should get two groups of workers. One group can finish up the faulty tunnel and elevator, while the other group builds a wall that will hide the tunnel that they will also build. Can they do that with in the same time frame, but quietly?”

“Oh yes, we have had to build this city with the machines that make no noise, and in a short period of time. We can complete the tunnel in Hobbs, New Mexico, on the Zone border.” Tomás became animated and excited. “I will talk to Elizabeth to be ready to travel on my notice. She and I can meet you there.” Tomás was making notes on his electronic pad, and making a map for the tunnel.

“Dayna, we can do this. We can then travel north to Canada. We can contact your family from there. We can move down the East Coast. When we get out of here, we can find others to listen and work to repeal the EOL. First, I’ll go talk to Lenny. We may need him. Dayna trusts him. He’ll have to go with us.”

When Frank finished speaking, Dayna bowed her head. They could tell she was praying. Tomás made the sign of the cross. Caryn reached for Frank’s hand and bowed her head.

“Okay,” Dayna said a little louder than she intended, “Well, I guess that means I don’t have to stay in the tunnel. I’m going to the condo and try to act natural.” She laughed. “Tomás and Frank can keep in touch and let Caryn and I know about the progress. Otherwise, it will look weird. I hope Lenny agrees to come with us. Be nice to him, Frank.

At 3 a.m., while the city was still dark, thirty days after the day of the meeting in tunnel, Frank, Caryn, and Lenny made their way to that same tunnel. Using night vision goggles they silently made their way along the walkways. When they reached the tunnel, Frank pressed the hidden panel which opened up the camouflaged wall. They waited on the opposite side for Dayna. Along with them were Paul and the Cuellar family.

Dayna was pacing her condo, packing and unpacking her backpack. She packed extra protein bars and an extra bottle of water. She left out the third set of clothes. She checked her phone for the umpteenth time, waiting for 5:15 a.m. When the time finally arrived, she quietly exited her condo, and headed toward the tunnel. She walked fast. She looked behind her several times. When she got to the tunnel, she pressed in the code to open the elevator. As Janssen Heard had instructed, Tomás had given Dayna the code. Although surveillance cameras had caught

Dayna heading to the tunnel, once she began punching in the code, the cameras were disabled. Tomás personally made sure of that. Dayna punched in the last digit. When the panel opened, she reached in, punched the button, and sprinted to the wall, which opened immediately.

“About time you got here, little woman!” Lenny grabbed her and pulled her in. At the same time, he pushed her further into the roughed out tunnel and then covered her body with his own at the explosion in the elevator. It shook the tunnel, but it did not collapse it. Tomás’ crew had done their job well.

“Um, Lenny? You can get off me now,” Dayna struggled to stand. Lenny stood up blushing.

“Well, seems I’m getting in the habit of keeping you covered,” he said dusting himself, and remembering when he helped her escape from Jason.

“Yeah, you are. I think I’m glad you’re traveling with us. It’s going to be a long walk to New Mexico. You might need to carry me, as well.” Dayna smiled as she looked down the tunnel and wondered what Canada was like.

CURRICULUM VITA

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