

## **Guardian Angel: Indoctrination**

By

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*To my wife, thank you for your patience and support. To my youngest daughter,  
thank you for the use of your wonderful editorial and graphic design skills. You are both  
greatly appreciated and loved.*

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## Prologue

The text message sounded on her cell phone as Stacy Brannigan sat propped up in bed studying for final exams. A freshman at the University of Connecticut, Stacy was a pathobiology major with plans to attend veterinary school, and her current course load was rigorous. She had been studying all day and well into the night. It was three in the morning, and the noise startled her, as she was just nodding off for the second time in the past hour. She picked up her cell phone, and the text read "FLASH MOB DANCE, MORRONE SOCCER STADIUM, 3:30 A.M., TAKE A BREAK FROM EXAMS, BYOB AND DANCE YOUR BRAINS OUT". Since she was living in the Hilltop Hall, a dormitory only a stone's throw from the soccer field, she decided to go. She heard her big sister's voice in her head warning her to stay home and be safe, but her sister was a cop and always looked for the dark side of everything. Besides, after studying all day, she deserved a break.

Since it could still be cool at night in June, she threw on a pair of jeans, a tee shirt and her UConn hoodie and headed out to the party. She passed through the kitchen and grabbed the last few beers from the fridge, even though they actually belonged to her roommate. She figured the beer was fair game since her roommate had already finished her finals and gone home for break.

The weather outside was cooler than Stacy expected; it was drizzling rain and there was a strong breeze that made it downright miserable. She almost went back to the comfort of her warm bed, but she was tired of studying and wanted desperately to blow off some steam. As she walked toward the soccer stadium, she began to wake up enough to notice that there was no one else out and about. "Probably a combination of

the rain and everyone studying for finals,” she thought to herself. As she approached the entrance to the soccer field, she still didn’t see anyone else in the area, which was strange considering the flash mob dance was set for 3:30 A.M. and according to her watch it was already 3:25 A.M. “What the hell?” she thought. “Where is everyone?”

Just then she saw two other girls headed in her direction, a tall brunette in blue sweat pants and matching shirt with the UConn logo on the front and an even taller African American girl wearing jeans and a zippered UConn jacket. Stacy walked towards them, and they all met at the edge of the campus road passing in front of the soccer stadium. She didn’t recognize either of the girls, but they both had similar looks of confusion on their faces. As they came within hearing range of one another, Stacy said, “You guys here for the flash mob? Did you get the text?” They both nodded in the affirmative.

The tall brunette responded, “So where the hell is everybody? It’s miserable as shit out here and I didn’t see a single person on my way over from the dorms. Are we in the wrong place?”

The other girl said, “The text said to come to the soccer stadium, and this is the only one I know of on campus. I almost didn’t come with this crappy weather, but I wanted a break from studying and the thought of a party got me here.”

They stood there for a couple of minutes staring at each other in confusion, before Stacy finally said, “This has got to be some sort of mistake. I’ve been to these things before, and there’re always lots of people, booze and loud music. There’s definitely something wrong here.”

Just as she got those words out of her mouth, they heard the roar of an engine and the squeal of tires as a large black panel van sped up the street and screeched to a halt next to them. The side door slid open and three men wearing jeans and black pilot jackets jumped out. Each man held a handgun, grabbed a girl, clasped a hand over her mouth and forced her into the van. No words were spoken, and it happened so fast that none of the girls could do anything but comply. The next thing they knew, they were sitting on the floor of the van at gunpoint, at the mercy of three armed strangers, speeding away from campus to God knows where. Stacy's final thought as they sped away was, "Oh shit, they aren't wearing masks. I've seen their faces. This is not going to end well."

## Chapter 1. The FBI

Agent Donald Cooper was forty-nine years old, six foot seven, muscular and reasonably well-proportioned at two hundred thirty pounds; he looked more like a linebacker than an FBI agent. But unlike most linebackers, he had no visible tattoos. His hair, once dark brown, was now equal parts brown and grey and he sported a small emerging bald spot on the back of his head. He had blue eyes, a slender and clean shaven face, an average mouth with full lips that seldom smiled, straight teeth, a once broken nose that made him look like a tough guy and a prominent chin. In his younger years, women thought he was tall, dark and ruggedly handsome, and he was aging fairly well. He usually dressed in a dark blue or black business suit, complete with dress shirt and conservative solid color tie. His clothing was always impeccable, with the exception of the few strands of cat hair that he could never completely remove from his pants courtesy of his cat, Spike, a large male orange tabby who insisted on rubbing against his legs when he left for work every morning. Agent Cooper was a driven and focused man, and he was aware that sometimes his large size and serious demeanor put people off. In fact, he had learned to use this to his advantage to avoid unnecessary or tiresome relationships with people that he had no interest in pursuing.

He'd had a traumatic childhood, abandoned by both parents, kidnapped from an orphanage and kept captive on a farm in Ohio until he escaped at ten. He had managed to get to Columbus, Ohio, where he lived on the streets for a short time before ending up in foster care. He was eventually adopted by a generous and loving family and lived with them until he was 18. With this kind of trauma in his past, he could have gone off the rails and turned to drugs and alcohol or a life of crime. Instead, he attended college,

excelled in school and after graduation he joined the FBI. He became an FBI agent so that he could eventually locate and wreak havoc on his kidnappers for what they had done to him as a child. Now that he had accomplished that, he was free to move on with his life. He still enjoyed catching bad guys and putting them in jail, or getting rid of them, depending on their crimes.

Thanks to his hard driving nature and success at closing cases, Agent Cooper was promoted to the head of an FBI anti-terrorism task force. He was a workaholic; he had always been that way. He avoided unwanted, painful feelings by diving headlong into a complicated case. He often felt insecure, probably because of his traumatic childhood, and work provided him with a sense of self-worth. Working with the anti-terrorism task force gave him purpose and an outlet for his endless drive; he was determined to succeed, to make a difference by relentlessly running down leads and catching the bad guys. From his childhood experience, he had developed a strong 'evil detector', which was fine-tuned by his law enforcement training and experience in the FBI and provided him with an uncanny ability to read people and quickly focus in on the perpetrators. He was mostly by-the-book, although he had to work to keep his temper in check. The trauma from his childhood and the things that he had seen as an FBI agent left him with a constant low level of anger, lurking just below the surface, that was always ready to burst. It was difficult to accept the evil that existed in the world: kidnapping, murder, serial killers, crimes against children. No wonder so many law enforcement officers spent their off hours at a bar or eventually swallowed the barrel of their service pistols.

He had a strong sense of right and wrong and his record was clean, but in this world filled with hatred, violence, and terrorism, he needed to be somewhat fluid with his ethical and moral code, depending on the severity of the crime. He had absolutely zero tolerance for violence against women and children, and he was sometimes flexible with the rules when dealing with that type of criminal.

He had passed all the required FBI self-defense courses and could defend himself when necessary, but because of his size, few ever challenged him to a fight. He was very good with his Sig 9mm handgun, his preferred means of self-defense, spending many joyful hours at the range. He was marginally OCD, handy when he needed to focus on the details of a case but not so much when he was compelled to waste considerable time checking the lights, stove, coffee maker, and door locks several times before leaving his condo. He also had a soft side; he had no problem hurting the bad guys, but he went out of his way to be gentle and caring with his best friend, Spike, the orange tabby that shared his condo.

Agent Cooper had once been married to Angie, a buxom blond with an outstanding ass. They had met in their thirties at a party held by a mutual friend, fell madly in love and been married within two months of their first date. However, as often happens in law enforcement his career advanced, he began working increasingly long hours and their marriage ultimately dissolved. She had gone to college to study psychology but was never really interested in working, so she became a housewife. Since Agent Cooper was always working, she got bored of being alone and started screwing the dentist that lived next door. Agent Cooper eventually found out about the dentist and her other affairs. He eventually had to accept the fact that she was sleeping

with half the men in their neighborhood and ended up divorcing her. They didn't have any children to worry about, so once she was gone he turned to his workaholic tendencies to avoid the pain of losing her. He had actually loved her, and if not for his work he would have probably gone insane. Instead, he focused all his time and energy on catching bad guys.

At this point in his life, Agent Cooper was currently the happiest he had ever been, happier than he could have ever imagined. While in pursuit of the I-81 serial killer, he had met the incredibly beautiful Deputy Debbie Johnson at the sheriff's office in Front Royal, Virginia. When they first met and shook hands, a spark of electricity had passed between them that was impossible to ignore, so they didn't. He and Deputy Johnson, Debbie, had known each other for a day and a half before they spent the night together, a night that he would never, ever forget.

Deputy Johnson was a tall woman at five feet nine inches, in her early thirties with long dark brown hair, dark brown eyes, and a beautiful, exotic face with full lips. She had a slim waist and full figure that had looked extremely enticing, even in a drab deputy police uniform. She was exotic in a way that he had never seen before. She was a mixture of Caucasian and African American, and her facial features suggested just a hint of Asian descent as well. The combination of her beauty and the shape of her body that so perfectly filled out her deputy's uniform had made Agent Cooper's knees feel a little weak when they first met.

Much to his surprise he had begun to fall in love with her after their first night together, and then he had almost lost her during their serial killer investigation. He was not about to let that happen again, so after that case was closed he had paid another

visit to Front Royal. They had repeated their dinner at her brother's restaurant, Jack's Shack, followed by a second night together at her place that had started out even wilder and more passionate than their first encounter. But this time the night had ended with their making love with a gentleness and intensity that was life changing for both of them. They realized that their first night of passion had been about extreme sexual attraction, while this time that same sexual attraction had led them to a much deeper and more emotional connection where they formed a bond, the type that made them as one, willing to give their lives for each other. They were both astounded at how fast that this had happened, and they understood that they needed to be together, no matter what the cost.

After that second night with her, he was not about to leave her in Front Royal without a plan that would ensure their being together, so they discussed their future. He wanted to remain an FBI agent, but he was willing to search for an assignment closer to Front Royal, Virginia. She had always wanted to work in law enforcement, but she was not adamant about remaining in the Front Royal sheriff's office. In fact, she had often thought about applying to the FBI.

After their discussion, Deputy Johnson put in an application to become an FBI agent. She was well qualified for the job, and her application was top notch. It also didn't hurt that Agent Cooper still had a couple of friends at the FBI academy in Quantico, Virginia. The combination of her excellent qualifications and his connections earned her a slot in the FBI training camp.

Agent Cooper missed her a lot during her twenty weeks of FBI training. The FBI training of new recruits was so intense that he was only allowed to visit her twice at

Quantico during that time, although thank the Lord these were conjugal visits; she was allowed to stay in his hotel room on the weekend. They had kept in contact through phone calls, speaking in the evenings at least once or twice a week.

She took joy in reporting her successes with training. She had done well on the shooting range, and when they compared scores, she had beaten Cooper's overall scores from his time at the academy. Even though shooting had been his best skill and he was an expert marksman, he put aside his male ego and congratulated her on her excellent performance. However, he had a little difficulty when he discovered that she had also beaten his time for completion of the famed 'Yellow Brick Road'. This was a 6.1-mile long obstacle course designed by U.S. marines and included as part of a new recruit's final exam. It required excellent physical conditioning just to survive, let along to pass the exam. When they compared times, he was tempted to shave a few minutes off of his own so that he could claim to have beaten her; he was a guy after all, and only human. But, his love for her even transcended this assault on his male ego, and in the end he told her the truth, that she had beaten his time by a little over three minutes. He consoled his injured ego by reminding himself that he was six foot seven, which added some difficulty to completion of the obstacle course. It had not been his best event while at the academy, but he had passed the test.

Agent Cooper attended Debbie's graduation ceremony from the FBI academy, and he was proud of her when she received an award for the best marksman scores on the pistol range. He was a little jealous when he saw how much attention that she received from two of her male classmates, one a tall blonde with striking blue eyes that

looked like a California lifeguard and the other a medium height muscular African American who could have been a wide receiver on a pro football team.

When Cooper asked about the two men during the graduation ceremony, she just laughed and introduced them, referring to Cooper as her 'close friend Don'. The tall blonde was named Lance Jordan. He had been a state cop from Georgia and was married with two children. The African American was named Charles Thompson, and his father had actually played in the NFL, a linebacker for the Washington Redskins. Charles wanted nothing to do with professional sports or the NFL after seeing all the damage that had been done to his father's body, so he had followed his passion for law enforcement, starting out as a D.C. cop and joining the FBI from there. He was also married, with three children. Apparently both of these men had daughters, and they were very supportive of Debbie as she competed with her mainly male classmates during her time at the FBI academy. It seemed that men with daughters were more aware and compassionate of difficulties faced by a woman competing in a male-dominated field. Don ended up being grateful that they had been there for her during her difficult twenty weeks of training, and, as an FBI agent himself, he knew that these two classmates would prove to be helpful to Debbie throughout her career with the agency.

After she graduated, Don had called in a few favors from an old buddy at FBI headquarters and lobbied Senior Agent in Charge Dave Morris at the Miami office, and, miraculously, he had managed to arrange for Debbie to be assigned to the FBI office in Miami. Don was even able to convince his Senior Agent in Charge to allow her to work

with him on his anti-terrorism task force when he needed help. All was right with the world.

Once she received her orders to report to the Miami office of the FBI, Debbie moved into Don's condo. Don took personal leave to help her to pack up her things in Front Royal to move, which required coordination and serious decision making. She had her own furniture, small appliances and throw rugs, and with duplicates of pretty much everything, they had to decide whose stuff to keep to furnish his condo. Since his stuff was mainly old and well-worn and hers was much newer and in better condition, they ended up getting rid of most of his things and replacing them with hers. The only things that he insisted on keeping were his 55-inch flat screen TV and Spike. Her cat had died several months ago, so Spike wouldn't have to deal with an intruder on his turf.

There was one problem that he had been putting off, and he finally decided to deal with it. He'd never told her the truth about the serial killer case. He'd let her believe that he had accidentally stumbled onto the serial killer, and that the case was resolved when he killed the man in what law enforcement referred to as a "good shooting." That is what his FBI report of the case had reflected, and so that was the information included in the FBI files. Truth be told, he had been part of what was basically a vigilante killing. He knew that he should have told Debbie the truth before she moved in with him, but he had been avoiding the issue because he was afraid that it would come between them and ruin everything. She was also a law enforcement officer, and she might not agree with his approach to resolving the serial killer case.

So, one night he took her out for a nice steak dinner, they drank some wine, and when they got home he told her what had really happened. At first she was shocked at

the idea that he might have taken the law into his own hands, but when he told her of the perpetrators' heinous crimes, including crimes against children, she seemed to become more accepting of his resolution of the case. He was tremendously relieved when she finally told him that she didn't blame him for what he had done, and that the information would remain between them forever. She did express her hope that he would never take this approach to law enforcement again.

This conversation led them to a discussion of vigilante justice, and she asked him about the female law enforcement officers and how they had worked with him to punish the evil perpetrators. The participation of these women in the case was reflected in the FBI file, but only as related to their part in the investigation itself. There was no mention of their being present at the final shootout between Agent Cooper and the serial killer or their participation in the killing. The truth of what had happened that night would have ruined all their careers.

Debbie had asked him if he was worried that one of them might eventually confess from a guilty conscience. He told her that he trusted them and was sure none of them would ever share their experience with anyone. They had all sworn to keep silent and never contact each other again, to minimize the chances of anyone ever finding out the truth of the case. Deep down inside, Don did have some doubts about how he had handled the case, although he was not sorry that these particular bad guys were gone. And he was fairly confident that these women would never again take the law into their own hands.

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