

Prologue

“It's better to be good than evil, but one achieves goodness at a terrific cost.”
Stephen King

“No!” John watched in horror as his left running shoe flew off his foot and tumbled down the steep ravine. Panting heavily, and with no time to spare, he frantically squatted down, ripped off his other sneaker and doubled the sock on his shoeless foot in an attempt to protect its tender skin from the rocky terrain. Quickly jamming his naked foot back into the remaining shoe, he scrambled up the steep hill as if his life depended upon it...because it did.

Desperate, he stole a glance over his shoulder, dismayed to see that his young pursuer was catching up. Between labored breaths, he kept asking himself how in the world this could be happening. A week ago he was a well-respected member of the community, a successful businessman, and an admired father. Now he was none of those things, and the Feds were chasing him.

He could hear the agent's grunts echo as he gasped for air. Damn! The distance was closing between them, and closing fast. John continued to fight his way through the dense forest undergrowth, wildly thrashing his hands in front of him in a futile attempt to push aside the branches which were searing his cheeks like whips. The sweat pouring down his face ignited when it reached the open wounds. His lungs were on fire and strained mightily to feed his starved organs the oxygen required to continue - giving up wasn't an option.

Suddenly, a shot rang out. Time seemed to stop as he felt himself falling. Before he hit the hard dirt, he had only one terrifying thought: “What will happen to my daughter when I'm gone?”