

LETTING GO

by

O.R. "TEX" GRAVES



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A novel about the promise of fusion power, it's affect on the environment, and the conspiracy to keep it hidden.

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DEDICATIONS

For Amanda

Thanks to my wonderful family for all the help and support in putting together this project.

Thank you Mrs. Hanneman for the gracious "D" in senior year high school literature. "Surely, you jest!" It took 40 years but I finally got it! Ha Ha

Chapter 19

Vasquez's Interrogation

The plane trip from Albuquerque, took just a little more than an hour. By then Rachael had received replies back from the teams in Chicago. The intel group that Wilkens described all panned out.

"I think we have everything we need to cook Vasquez," Rachael said.

Jack chuckled, "Yeah, I can't wait to see his face when you play that for him."

As the plane landed at a little private strip in Sonora, Texas, Rachael looked over at Jack, "How are you holding up on clothes?"

"I'm good for another day, after that I might start to get a little ripe," Jack said.

"I know what you mean. If this lasts another day I may need to get to a local store just for a little underwear."

"We have Vasquez under wraps, right?" Jack asked.

"Yeah. He's tight as a snare drum. He thinks there's a contract out on his life so he's assuming the people around his house are there to protect him from an assassin," Rachael replied.

"So is he moving around, making phone calls and such?"

"I'm not so sure of that. We'll need to ask the agent in charge when we get there," Rachael replied.

"It would be great if he had been making phone calls to some key people and we were able to get them on record."

"Well, if he's making any phone calls, we have them recorded. In fact, we're recording

his wife and anyone else who makes a phone call. If he peeps a word to anyone, we'll have it, and we'll use it to fry his ass."

There wasn't even a hangar at the air strip. When they landed, the jet taxied to the end of the runway, turned into an apron area and stopped.

Rachael and Jack transferred to the waiting FBI car and headed for the Vasquez ranch. While in route, Rachael got the driver's attention. "Has he been making any kind of phone calls?"

"Just routine stuff, his staff at his district headquarters and in DC. Wife and kids just talked to family and friends."

The ranch was just under a thousand acres, very secluded, in a lot of hills. The hacienda style house was built in an area with hills on the back and both sides. A dry creek bed crossed about 300 yards in front of it. Scrub mesquite and the odd scrub oak tree filled the area around the sides and back of the house. There was just enough of a clearing in front to land the two helicopters that were used to deliver the security detail.

When Jack saw the two helicopters and all the support trucks, he said, "He had to be thinking he was being invaded or something."

The car pulled up to the front door of the house. Jack and Rachael got out and walked toward the door. Rachael had the scene all worked out in her head and she was ready. As they approached, the guard at the front opened the door and they walked in. Immediately, Vasquez's wife strode toward Jack. "Are you the agent in charge of all this? I demand to know what's going on! Nobody's told us anything and—"

"Stop right there!" Rachael said. "I'm Senior Agent Rachael Lancaster of the FBI. I'm the one who will be asking questions and demanding answers. This man is Assistant Chief of

Police for the City of Chicago, Jack Anderson. We're working this case together."

"Chicago?" Mrs. Vasquez looked from Rachael to Jack, then back. "I don't understand. What's going on?"

"All in due time, Mrs. Vasquez," Rachael said, as she looked around.

Hector Vasquez was coming out of the living room to see who had arrived.

"Now see here, Agent, I am—"

"Wait, Senator! Don't say a word!" She looked at Mrs. Vasquez. "Those children over there... please have someone take them out of the room. What I have to say will not be for their ears." Then she looked at Hector, "I just want you and Mrs. Vasquez present. We have a lot to talk about."

Mrs. Vasquez was indignant. "Who are you, to be ordering us around in our own house?"

"As I said before, Mrs. Vasquez, I'm the agent in charge. Now get the children out of here!"

Mrs. Vasquez signaled to her maid, and the woman removed the children.

Rachael forced a smile. "Now, let's go sit in the living room, shall we?"

Hector and Mrs. Vasquez followed and situated themselves on the couch. Hector said, "Now, I need to know—"

"Wait." Again, Rachael held up her hand. She pulled a recorder out of her purse, turned it on, and set it near Hector. Then she pulled a card from her purse. "Hector Vasquez, you are under arrest for murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and drug trafficking for starters." She began reading his Miranda rights from the card as his eyes grew wide. When he stood up, she raised one hand and continued reading. She finished with, "Do you understand your rights as I've read them to you?"

He glared at her. “Who do you think you’re talking to? I’m a sitting senator!”

Mrs. Vasquez looked at Rachael. “What are you doing? My husband is no criminal!”

Rachael gave Mrs. Vasquez a stern look then returned her gaze to Hector. “All this falls under the auspices of the Patriot Act. Those rules will apply to the conduct of these proceedings and your rights from here on out. Do you understand that?” Rachael asked.

Vasquez was still in shock. He couldn’t respond.

Rachael pulled a folded letter from her purse. “This is a search warrant for your entire house and all its contents; everyone in the house; everyone’s computer; and everyone’s cell phone... in short, everything!”

Mrs. Vasquez was livid. She stood up. “We don’t have to take this! We have rights in this nation! You can’t just—”

“Please stop,” Rachael said calmly. “Okay, Mrs. Vasquez, this is why we’re here. You’re aware of the assassination of John Maynard, right?”

“Yes, of course,” Mrs. Vasquez replied.

“Okay.” Rachael reached into her pocket and pulled out a second recorder. She turned it on, set it on the table, and sat back and watched the faces of Hector and Mrs. Vasquez turn from indignant rage to pale disbelief.

Mrs. Vasquez knew immediately the voice on the recorder was her husband’s. She listened intently. About halfway through the recording when Viscado confirmed that Maynard would be shot, Mrs. Vasquez turned to Hector and slapped him so hard that even Jack winced. “You are *not* the man I married!”

After the recording finished, Rachael turned it off and looked at Vasquez. “Before you say a word, you need to know I was the agent who knelt in Maynard’s blood in an effort to

console Mrs. Maynard. It was a horrible scene. Mrs. Maynard had blood on both her hands, her knees and all over her chest where she cradled his shattered head. She's been sedated ever since and is still under a doctor's care. Now, do you understand that you have the right to remain silent?"

Hector was in shock. He just sat there, head hanging low, trying to figure out how this all came about. He was unable to reply.

Incensed, Rachael slapped the coffee table. "Damn you, bastard! Answer the question!"

Hector snapped his head up. "Yes... yes, I understand. That's all I can say."

Then Rachael continued, "I am being civil to you only out of courtesy for your family and respect for your title, which you do not deserve and will soon no longer have. You are isolated now, alone. No one will stand with you except your wife, maybe, and your lawyer.

"What you did demands the death penalty. I will push the prosecution to make sure that the death penalty stays on the table. If you want to avoid that fate, and if you have an ounce of decency left, you will tell us everything, especially who you are working for and who else is involved."

Rachael didn't wait for Hector's reply. She looked up at the lead agent who was standing behind Hector. "Start the search. First clear the house of any weapons. Then gather up all the cell phones and computers in the house, even the ones that belong to the kids. I want it all processed for possible communications to his fellow conspirators. If you find anything, I want it transcribed immediately."

Then Rachael looked over at Mrs. Vasquez, who was a quivering mess. "Mrs. Vasquez, you need to pull yourself together for your children. They're going to need you more than ever right now. Please go with this agent and assist him by pointing out any weapons and then help

him gather all the cell phones and computers. It will be easier if you get all those items rather than the agent having to confiscate them.”

Mrs. Vasquez nodded. She got up and left the room with the agent.

When she left, Rachael turned her attention back to Hector. “I’m going to ask you a lot of questions. Do you want your lawyer here?”

Hector lifted his head as if he wanted to say something, but his voice seemed frozen.

Jack glared at him. “Senator, I’m trying very hard to be civil. Now the agent asked you a question. Are you going to respond or are you going to die by lethal injection?”

With a look of resignation, he whimpered, “I’ll talk.”

“Louder, for the recorder,” Rachael yelled.

“I’ll talk!”

Rachel said, “Do you need to go to the bathroom or anything?”

“No,” Hector replied.

“Okay, then let’s begin,” Rachael said. “Hector Vasquez, how long have you been taking bribes from Jessie Viscado?”

Hector looked up, surprised at how direct the questions were. He hesitated.

Rachael said, “Don’t test me on this, Vasquez! One lie, one incomplete answer, anything misleading, and I’ll be pushing the prosecutor to put you in the death chamber!”

Hector looked at the floor. “Five years.”

“What were the arrangements for your bribes?”

“I got a base of \$100,000 per year. For each vote, I got another \$20,000.”

“Vote for what?”

“All Viscado was interested in was the border fence. Every time a vote for the border

fence came up, in committee or on the floor, I was supposed to vote no.”

“How many times did a vote come up?” Rachael asked.

Hector shrugged. “About 20 or 25 times... I can't be sure.”

“So over the course of the five years that you were taking bribes you got about \$1 million. Is that right?”

“About,” Hector replied.

“Where's that money now?”

“A lot of it is here. You're looking at it.” He gestured with his arms. “This ranch, this house.”

“And what's not here? Where's that money?”

“Viscado gave me the name of a very secure offshore bank. I opened an account there.”

“How much is there?” Rachael asked.

“About a million two.”

“What?” Rachael shot back. “You said that there was a total of about one million and that a lot of it was in the property. Where did the other money come from?” Rachael demanded.

“There were other bribes,” Hector said matter-of-factly.

“Give me the name of the bank, the routing numbers, the bank account number and anything else I need to get into the account,” Rachael said as she slapped a note pad and pen on to the table.

“Only I can get into the account. Part of the security is a voice recognition system.”

“Well, we have your voice, don't we Hector?” Rachael shot back sarcastically.

He scribbled the bank information on the pad.

When he was finished, Rachael picked up the pad and gave it to one of the agents

standing behind Vasquez. "Have this checked out. If you can get in, transfer the money to a secure U.S. bank. If he's lying, come back and tell me." Rachael looked at Hector. "The longer you talk, the longer you live. Do not doubt me! Now, who else is giving you bribes?"

"Blue Skies Forever," Hector replied.

"Who?"

"It's a lobbying group in Washington. They front as being tree huggers and doing everything environmental, but they wanted me to vote no on every environmental vote that came up."

Jack asked, "How much did you take from them?"

"About \$ 700,000 in all," Hector replied.

"And is that money in the same account that you gave us before?" Rachael asked.

"Yes."

Jack asked, "And who leads that group?"

"Jackson Price. He's a real scum bag. Actually, he's the one who blackmailed me into doing this with Viscado. Since I was taking bribes from him, he threatened to expose me if I refused to cooperate."

"And who does Price work for?" Rachael asked.

"I don't know. That was always kept secret," Hector replied.

"Back to Viscado," Jack said. "Whose idea was it to get Blanchard?"

"Who's Blanchard?" Hector replied.

"He's the guy who shot Maynard."

"Must have been Viscado. I have no knowledge of Blanchard. I don't have those types of contacts. I wouldn't have been able to execute that type of thing. I just put pressure on Viscado

to have it done," Hector replied.

Rachael asked, "So Viscado had no axe to grind with Maynard either? He was just forced to do this job?"

"Right."

Jack asked, "So it was Price who told you to get Viscado to execute Maynard?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"As best as I can tell, Maynard represented some kind of threat to someone up the line. I couldn't tell what the threat was though," Hector replied.

"Do you have a business card for Jackson Price?" Rachael asked.

"Yes. It's in my briefcase in the study," Hector replied.

Rachael glanced at one of the agents and in an instant he was gone. A moment later, he returned with the briefcase and handed it to Rachael. She opened Hector's brief case and found a portable Rolodex. She opened it and found Price's business card.

"Okay. I need to make a phone call. When I get back, we'll pick up where we left off." Rachael said. She looked at one of the agents. "I want him in cuffs all the time."

By this time, Mrs. Vasquez had returned with the agent who was executing the search warrant. Rachael turned to her. "You can't have any further contact with your husband for now, and I would advise that you keep your children away also. It's not my intent to traumatize them. We'll be keeping your husband in the study while we're here. There will be two guards in the room and a guard at the door leading to the room. No one will be allowed to enter except those involved in the investigation."

Mrs. Vasquez nodded then said, "I have family nearby. Can I take my children and go to

them?”

“I wish I could let you do that, but I can’t afford any leaks. You and your children will remain in protective custody for right now. If everything goes well, I’ll be finished in two or three days. Then you can go wherever you want. Until then you’ll have to make do with being in or around the house.”

Mrs. Vasquez nodded again then left to be with her children.

Jack asked, “Can Bill have Price picked up in DC?”

“That’s just who I’m calling right now,” Rachael said as she pushed a number on her speed dial.

“Bill Weston here.”

“Boss, Hector gave up an accomplice in DC.”

“Who is he?”

“Jackson Price. He runs a PAC in DC called Blue Skies Forever,” Rachael said. “I’d like the full package on this guy. He’s the one who ordered Hector to get Viscado to hit Maynard.”

“Okay. Do you have a recording that you can send me, something I can show the judge for probable cause?”

“Sure. It’ll be there as soon as I hang up.”

Weston said, “I have to wonder who’s funding Blue Skies and what kind of clout they have to want to pull off something like this.”

“I’ll bet you’re just the guy to find all that out,” Rachael said. “I scanned his business card and will include it in the package I send to you.”

“Thanks, Rachael, and good work,” Weston said.

“Thanks, Boss. You’ll keep me posted, right?” Rachael asked.

"Hey, it's your case. I have to go now. Talk to you later." Weston hung up the phone.

"There are two more people involved that we need to get," Jack said.

"Who's that?"

"The guy who's fronting Price the money for Blue Skies, and Blanchard," Jack replied.

"And I sure would like to hear from Homeland Security."

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