

Book 2

Chapter One **Things improve, a bit**

Jim Timble aka Grandpa sat at his desk not even pretending to work. He sat staring out at the crushed shell drive that wandered up to his old home on Sanibel Island, Florida. He almost wished for another black FBI SUV to break his melancholy. He knew he should be down in the garden transplanting green beans, tomatoes, and squash seedlings. Plants he'd started three weeks ago and were now root bound in the small starter containers. Grandpa was late getting his garden in this season, he usually had green beans by Thanksgiving and it was already after the New Year. The small plants were still sitting just outside the Florida room at the back of his house. He knew he'd have to plant them soon but just couldn't find the motivation.

He had been a little busy since the goons with guns caper as his grandkids had dubbed the video. Video that had been shot during a confrontation between Grandpa, his friend Wadda and three criminal types. The goons that were sent to steal a Timble lock box table that was believed to have belonged to the fifth president of the United States, John Quincy Adams. The video had gone viral on YouTube getting over four hundred and fifty thousand hits the first month but now it was old news.

Grandpa had been in the dumps since his grandchildren had gone back to Springfield with their mother. She had shown up the very next day after the goons with guns caper hit the internet. She had the opportunity to claim money from the government but only if she had physical custody of J.W. and Katie. And just to make it look good to outsiders her attorney threw in a restraining order on Grandpa which legally prohibited him from seeing or contacting his grandchildren.

Of course very few people had the excuse Grandpa did for ignoring the garden for two weeks of that time. Grandpa had unexpected visitors. A black SUV pulled into the drive with DC plates. Grandpa thinking it was the FBI comeback to hassle him over the Adams Timble table, which had turned out to be a fake,

had stomped down the stairs, thrown open his front door with a loud voice exclaimed “What the hell do you want with me now?” issuing from his mouth only to be confronted by the former President of the United States standing on his front porch.

In his anger Grandpa had abandoned his post at the window a little too quickly to see the gold Lincoln Navigator which followed the black SUV into his drive a half minute later or the second black SUV which followed it. If he had, he might have been a little friendlier when he opened the door.

However the President said, after his own situations of the last few months. “I totally understand, I often felt like swearing at people when I was in the White House. Then in explanation for his presence on Grandpa’s door step “I’ve been down visiting my brother Jeb at his place in Tallahassee. I told Jeb I knew the guy on YouTube. The Goons with Guns thing that everyone’s talking about. Jeb thought I was pulling his leg when I told him about the Timble Tables and your pirate treasure. So we just drove down to take a gander and to prove I know you, then my little brother will have to pay up on the bet we made.” said the former President.

Grandpa thought that this was the height of irony, the former President making a bet that he knew Grandpa and not the other way around.

Grandpa took the brothers fossil hunting in the Peace River and the former President found a very respectable two and one-half inch ancient Megalodon shark tooth while standing in waist deep water. Jeb sat in a custom folding chair on the bank of the river pitching rocks and talking on his cell phone or yelling on it might have been a more accurate description. Arcadia Florida really is almost the middle of nowhere and the signal strength...well you get the picture. Grandpa offered to wire the Meg tooth so GW could wear it as a pendant, but he decided he was going to have his jeweler make it up as a string tie, something that was still popular in Texas.

During their visit Grandpa found the former President was a chili buff. He’d even judged a local Texas chili cooking contest for several years running. Of course this was prior to his White House days. One evening he made Chili for everyone. So GW, Jeb, Lea and Grandpa sat in the Florida room eating chili cooked by the former President. The experience had certainly lifted Grandpa’s

spirits. Grandpa was especially proud that he was able to show them the copies of some of the Timble journals. The journals illustrated the part his family played in the American Revolution. Even the President was impressed by the Washington letter.

Jeb was more impressed when Grandpa showed them the glass replicas of the jewels found in the Pirate chest. After Grandpa showed them the real pirate trunk, GW returned the gesture by showing Grandpa the lock box under the arm rest in the back seat of the Golden Eagle. This was the hidden compartment in his SUV where he carried the nuclear football.

GW even spent a night at Grandpa's house. After enjoying some of Fred's Chevis Regal from the top of the fridge, GW told Grandpa about the Golden Eagle, his SUV.

"It has a double carbon fiber shell reinforced with Kevlar one inside the other and in-between it has a special electrolytic polymer gel that reacts to spread the energy of a weapon discharge..." said GW "It's the latest technology, pretty cool huh?" Grandpa had to agree.

They spent the rest of the evening with G.W., slowly sipping scotch, and watching *You can't Take it with You*, Grandpa's favorite old black and white movie. About midnight GW went up and slept in J.W.'s bed, Jeb had gone back to a motel on interstate 75. The Secret Service agents were camped out in the Florida room and two more were on duty in an SUV in the drive. The brothers said they'd be sure to check the attic of their old house in Texas when they got home and left with a smile and a promise to come again. Grandpa had enjoyed their company.

Another ray of sunshine had come just a couple days ago, lifting his mood a little further. J.W., being the clever boy he was, wanted to find some way to communicate with his grandfather. Without of course getting his Grandfather jailed for breaking the restraining order. So when he was enrolling in school and they ask him on the form he was filling out, who his teacher had been in Florida the previous year. He had filled in Lea's name and made a request that he be allowed to email and call her for review when he needed it. Since he'd become a model student his request was granted. So Lea received a cell phone in the mail and now Grandpa while legally still not allowed to speak to J.W. he could relay messages through Lea.

He now knew both kids were doing well in school and according to the latest, hoping to spend the summer with him again this year. Seems the kids' mother wanted to take some of the money she'd received from the Feds and go to Vegas. However her mother was ill and scheduled for a small surgical procedure. So she was not available to babysit JW and his sister while her daughter was in Vegas.

The kids said she was talking. She was saying things like *I might have been too hasty blaming everything on your Grandfather. And, You know, I think you kids are right, it was the FBI's fault setting him up like that. And finally I think I should call the attorney and maybe get that restraining order lifted.*

JW and Katie weren't fooled for a minute they knew as soon as school was out she'd dump them somewhere. And the cheapest solution was Grandpa. She knew he'd even buy their plane tickets.

Katie still refused to speak to her mother since she betrayed Grandpa this way. She would only nod or shake her head when questioned. But finally said yes out-loud when her mother had asked her if she would feel comfortable spending the summer with Grandpa. But yes was ALL she said to her mother and then turned away. Mainly to hide the huge smile she had on her face. When Katie had told JW, he actually jumped in the air,

There was only one problem, Grandpa was not sure he should allow them to come this summer. Since the Hattie Lewiston thing hadn't really ever been cleared up, could he, in good conscience have them near him? Was the danger still there?

Nothing new had happened since she had been arrested. Except that the seventy year old woman in a wheel chair had escaped from custody. *She*, it turned out was a *he* who had been impersonating Hattie Lewiston when he was arrested by the FBI. He, whoever he is, was the person actually found at the location revealed by the E.T. virus program. The FBI had two theories they tried to sell. The first was that the guy they had arrested was an employee paid to double for Lewiston.

The second theory was that he was a nephew who had taken over the family business and the real Hattie Lewiston was dead, which is what the DNA evidence later suggested. Grandpa thought both plausible but without any evidence at the time

nothing could be proved one way or the other. Besides it made no difference since he had escaped FBI custody.

Now, once again, no one had a clue as to who was behind the theft at the Franklin Museum or the attempt at the White House or the attempted abduction of the Timble's in Washington and in Florida.

Could I in good conscience? He thought "Yes I can" he said out loud "they're as safe with me as anywhere." *In fact they're safer with me than they would be with their mother if someone truly decides to make another attempt.* He thought to himself.

"I'd better check the cupboards and get busy on the garden if I'm going to feed those two. I always forget how much they eat until they show up." He told Lea the next day when she came by to check on him

"You seem a lot happier today, now that you know the kids will be here this summer" said Lea "Oh I got a new student. He's Asian of some kind I think his parents are Vietnamese or Cambodian, maybe immigrated after the Viet Nam war but he was born here. He's a typical American kid. He a senior in high school and will be going to college locally. His father came in and spoke with me about what he'd be learning. When I told him we were strictly self-defense, no competition or other kid stuff, he signed him right up."

"Great that makes seven private lesson students for you now. It's not the hundred students we used to have but I'm really pleased the dojo is serving the purpose we built it for instead of just rusting away like it was."

"I really appreciate having the use of it and also the place to stay. You can't believe what an apartment costs these days" said Lea "I'd never be able to finish my masters if it wasn't for you helping me this way."

"It's worked well for both of us...and I like having you around...and so do the kids he followed quickly when she turned to look at him "You will be around for the kids this summer won't you?" he said and then looked away a little disconcerted. Was he imagining things or...nonsense I'm old enough to be her father he thought. But the way she had looked at him when he'd said he liked having her around. He quickly dismissed the thought.

"Hey, how about helping me cook up some tomato soup

today? I have all the tomatoes frozen from the fall crop” asked Grandpa

“Sorry I have to finish a paper. I’ve been putting it off for a week and it has to be in by tonight. I’ve got the research done I just have to organize my notes and type it. I’ll have to take a rain check on the soup making but I’d share a bowl of chili with you for dinner on that new fancy table of yours.” Grandpa kept the fake Adam’s Timble table. The table, fabricated by the FBI, had been used as bait. It was a beautiful piece of furniture with the rose compass on top. But it had no secret compartment, it was just a mockup made to look like the real thing. Grandpa thought the only reason he’d been allowed to keep it was that no one wanted the task of confronting an angry Grandpa to pick it up. Also the FBI would have to admit things they had no intention of admitting.

“Great, I’ll make up a fresh batch of chili after the soups done” said Grandpa “That’ll be two things to stock the freezer.”

“It’s a date then...about six? And she walked over and gave Grandpa a kiss on the corner of his mouth “Huh...it does...Katie said your beard tickles” and she turned and walked out the back toward the Dojo.

Chapter Two

We got a buyer boss

“Hey boss we got a lead on a buyer for that Franklin Table. He says he’s willing to go a million. More if we can show it works and there is something inside besides dust.” said Jeff, the boss’s number one.

“Who is he?”

“His name is ah...Alfred J. Miller Jr.” Jeff said looking at his iPad. “He’s a private collector of rare antiques and antique documents, one of White’s contacts. We haven’t shown him anything we got from old man Timble yet. I thought I should discuss this with you first”

“White? I wouldn’t trust him to...well I don’t trust him or any of his contacts they’re too well watched. Put Jimmy on a search; let’s make sure who we’re dealing with before we discuss anything with him. Could be an FBI setup, I’m not getting arrested again. You make damn sure Jimmy does his job good this time”.

Say when was the last time we heard from that Jonnie girl down on Sarasota? What’s going on with our ears inside? How many new hires this week?”

“I’ll check on it boss and get back with you later today, since you were away for a while things kind’a got left...” he let his voice drift away as the glare he was receiving from the boss could have given him a sunburn. “I’ll get right on it boss” and Jeff turned to leave the room.

“Hey! Send in...ah...who we got work’n the outside on the Timble stuff now?”

“That’s Russell I think, you want I should have him pull the file.”

“Yeah, send him in I want to know how they found me, how many guys did we loose on this fiasco, the guys in D.C., the two guys...well what you stand’n there for get him in here.”

After about five minutes a tall blond kid with too much frizzy blond hair came slouching in and dropped into a chair and dropped one leg over the side.

“You wanted to see me?” said Russell.

“Where are we on the Timble project?” Russell brought up

a screen on his iPad.

“Ahhhh...No new intel from the host since the onsite went down. The Jonnie girl is still in place, as far as I know she was never arrested or even spotted by the Feds, she’s still in the clear. The three we lost on that field project were deleted, so no trace back.

We stopped that virus they uploaded into our system in less than three minutes. I have to admit that was a clever bit of code...ah sorry boss. But we saved most of the system. They only got twenty percent or less, not enough to get a clear picture of our operations” said Russell

“Yeah but I was part of the twenty percent, you idiot! How’d they get past our firewall. I thought we had the best talent.”

“We do boss but this one was brand new and we haven’t updated our software in almost six months, you said they...”

“Never mind what I said, you get it fixed and no more screw ups. What’s the latest on the table thing? Do any of the techs have any ideas?”

“No boss, not their thing, too old. They said it was too low tech. I still think we should just dump it, it’s too recognizable to sell.”

“I was just told we have a bid...we’re checking into it, so I don’t think we need to be so hasty about dumping the thing. Besides you’ve seen the files on some of the stuff they’ve found in em, Millions of dollars’ worth of antique documents. But you tell the boys to back check this buyer forever. Get goin, Get goin, you think my office is Dunkin Donuts or what?”

He unfolded himself from the chair stood and left.

“Yeah boss?” said Jeff who walked back into the office.

“Did you get the numbers I asked for?”

“Yeah, we got six new hires this week, two really good hackers, a researcher, three street guys...and...it looks like at least one new project from their research. Nothing as rich as the Timble deal though.”

“You tell em to get busy we should have twice that many.”

“I told you boss while you were away...”

“The mice will play...yeah I know but the cat’s back and you let em know I won’t put up with any slack’n. What do I have to do shoot somebody?” he said and opened his desk drawer and

pulled out a Desert Eagle pistol.

“No boss...I promise I’ll slap a few of em around and let em know to get to work’n serious like.”

Chapter Three

Tomato soup

Grandpa sat thinking for a few more minutes after Lea left then coming out of his reverie, he groaned as he rose from his chair. "I need a new back" he muttered.

Well...I'd better get off my duff and get some work done; the kids will be here in less than a month. He said to himself. So he went into the kitchen, stuck his head in the freezer and started picking plastic freezer bags full of tomatoes, peppers, sweet onions, celery and garlic that he had packaged and frozen fresh from his garden. He put them into a stainless steel soup pot once it was almost full he slowly brought everything to a boil then lowered the heat to a simmer to soften everything further. He put the veggies through the blender then set the soup back on the stove. Next he took a large wire strainer and strained out all the seeds and skin that hadn't softened sufficiently to be pushed through with a rubber spatula. Once complete he put up twelve quarts of fresh tomato soup in four serving portions. Along with a grilled cheese sandwich Grandpa's homegrown homemade tomato soup was fabulous. Next batch of veggies would go for pizza and spaghetti sauce. He would use some of the sauce to make up a large batch of lasagna to portion out and freeze. He had a plan and he'd be ready to feed the kids when they showed up in a few weeks.

After he finished the soup and had it in containers he placed it in the freezer. He began to brown the ground beef for chili...he started grinding his own hamburger from large top round roasts he bought. It had a better flavor and texture and it saved him money. As the meat browned he added chili powder and then green chilies. The aroma became fantastic. He remembered Lea's comment about his chili and thought he might just enjoy his evening after all. At least he wouldn't have to spend it alone.