

Chapter 1



Jake Woods climbed into his truck. He headed to Springfield. The summer air was cool and fresh. But Jake knew it was going to get hot.

Jake had come a long way since his youth. As a teenager in Florida, he got into a lot of trouble. He'd made his living selling exotic swamp animals. It wasn't legal or right. But it was the only thing Jake

knew how to do. Then he had some really bad luck.

Jake was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was convicted of a crime he didn't commit. He went to prison. During work detail, he escaped into the Everglades.

Jake stole an airboat. It was the airboat the Silvas had rented for a tour that day. Pretending to be their tour guide, he took them through the swamp. The wild ride ended in a crash. Antonio Silva got pinned under the airboat.

But Jake didn't run. Risking being caught, he saved Antonio's life. It turned out to be the luckiest day of Jake's life. He and Rafael became

friends. Rafael helped Jake get out of jail. The judge agreed. Jake was innocent.

Once Jake was free, Rafael got him a job. It was the second chance Jake Woods needed.

All that had happened years ago. Jake left Florida and moved north. He wanted to be closer to the Silvas. Now he was part of the family.

Jake had a small construction business. His company was hired to help drywall a five-story building. It would keep Jake and his crew busy for the next year.

The new building was called the Fargo Building. It was in downtown Springfield. The Springfield Bank

was next door. It was a great location.

Jake drove his truck down the ramp into the basement. It was being used as a garage for the workers. Armed guards were watching. Jake thought it was strange. But he didn't ask why. He just went to work.

At noon everyone stopped for lunch. Jake sat with his foreman, Rob Torres.

"Rob, why does the first floor look bigger than the basement?" Jake asked.

"I never noticed," Rob answered. "Is it really bigger?"

"It looks bigger," Jake replied. "Maybe it's just an illusion."