

## Chapter 48

Greg stepped onto the chameleon's floor and wondered whether he'd entered the wrong place. When the mavericks mentioned the chameleons' workfloors had an interior equivalent of some of the most exquisite hotels they'd seen or broken into, Greg simply assumed his followers just hadn't seen enough exquisite hotels.

Being here now, he wondered if he'd seen enough exquisite hotels. The place was a far cry from the mundane interior of the trenches.

The floor here was tiled with marble for Goddess knew why. The left side opened to a huge gym partitioned from the rest of the floor by glass walls, its interior was Moroccan-themed with vibrant red and yellow. Every treadmill and bike was occupied, two of whom were running had almost lost their momentum at the sight of the duke, almost slipping off the machines. At the far end, even though there were about twenty chameleons at the dumbbell rack that stretched across the wall, the area was spacious enough that it didn't look overcrowded.

Greg plodded past the gym and came to the adjacent section - an iceland-themed lecture room. A hologram floated like an aurora in the middle of the room, where an instructor was delivering what seemed to be a lecture on disguises, showing the class a picture of herself in two very different disguises that one who didn't look carefully enough would think they were two different people.

The next dimly-lit room had flagstone flooring and plants all around the edges, wisterias hanging from the ceiling. A small, round table was set up in the middle with a candlelight at its center, two chairs positioned facing each other. A small class of ten stood by the far side, observing and taking notes. A pair of chameleons dressed like they were on a date

sat facing each other - one looked controlled and attentive; the other was smiley and looked in love.

As the beaming one shifted in her seat, leaned in, blinked, smiled and pushed her hair back and laughed in a way that reminded Greg of Izabella, he realized immediately why his former mate never wanted to show him her workflow. He was her test subject, probably for her final exam, and she passed with flying colors... before she was killed, that is.

Repelling from the room and blinking away the sight like the Forest of Oderem had just dropped dirt into his eyes, Greg turned to the next room that offered him a source of comfort - the simulator. Finally, something logical in a workplace. Arms crossed, he waited for something to happen with more enthusiasm than he'd expected.

A male chameleon stood at the far end, wearing simulation contact lenses. Upon the signal from the control room, the chameleon was shown a vastly different surroundings. There was an exterior screen not far from Greg, showing the observers the simulation, which was a crowded day market with clamorous chattering and bargaining.

In the simulation, the chameleon spotted a fictitious intelligence officer who had her phone in her side pocket shielded by a tote bag as the green grocer showed her the day's best deals. The chameleon's eyes scanned the crowd before he bumped into the green grocer, making both the vendor and customer fall. The chameleon apologized frantically and helped the grocer back on his feet as another person helped the intelligence officer, whom he conveyed another apology to and offered her a surprise hug - brief enough to be innocuous, long enough for him to pick her device that was already jutting out.

"Your Grace, how can I help you?" Patterson called out from the end of the corridor with a smile so fake that Greg would rather he wore Ferdinand's frown or Abbott's straight face.

Patterson was only here because - when the chameleons who sighted Greg notified the chief - the chief and deputy argued about who was to attend to the duke, Patterson ultimately losing the coin flip and now had to play pleasant, but not before clarifying with his deputy that it would be her turn next time around.

"Hush," Greg admonished, making Patterson instinctively hold his tongue, his senses not forgetting the injuries inflicted by the king and this duke's willingness to help that day.

The chameleon in the simulator didn't turn back when the intelligence officer realized her phone was gone. He walked brusquely to a few clothes racks and took off the cap and wig, dumped it into his camera bag. Shrugged off the jacket and shoved it in there as well, then casually browsed through the belt section as he swiftly got out a pair of sunshades from the side pocket and slipped them on. When he reached the end of the simulator, a sound blared and he extracted the contacts, smiling at the room beaming in green indicating that he passed. Red digital figures at the wall ahead showed the number nineteen.

"He's one of our best," Patterson pointed out. "A nineteen-second quick change in public places is high-tier. The majority is closer to the thirty-second mark."

"Too bad personality changes take longer than thirty seconds," Greg murmured.

Patterson bit the inner walls of his mouth and decided to stay quiet for the time being, not speak unless spoken to.

"Impressive decor," Greg noted after a quiet moment.

Patterson looked around even though he'd seen everything countless times throughout the years. "We have my predecessor to thank for that. Seni was very particular about the... suitability of the rooms we train in, needing it to be conducive and encouraging. And she was relatively...

persuasive with Valor.”

Greg scoffed. “I can imagine. If a graduate could pull off one of the most notable conspiracies in inter-species history, imagine the level of skill of the one who had a hand in teaching her.”

Patterson didn't imagine this interaction to be easy, but this was getting harder than his final exam. “Your Grace, none of us condone the... subterfuge of Seni, Delilah and the others. I hope that's an understood fact.” Despite the steady tone, his right leg had begun to fidget, so he placed his full weight on it to keep it still.

“That'd better be a fact or the chameleons will face a sudden extinction,” Greg muttered as he watched the next candidate step into the simulator. This was so much duller than the one on the archers' floor, which had more hand combat than all this game of... dress-up. He particularly missed seeing a certain octopus behind those walls. He wondered if he would be able to do it again: watch her, wait for her to come out, then have a decent conversation with her with perfect restraint over his urge to kiss her.

“Anyway,” Patterson interrupted his thoughts. “How about you make yourself at home and let me know if you need anything, Your Grace. No need to call or punch a button. Just give my name a shout. One of the chameleons will notify me.”

The click-clack of Patterson's footsteps gave away how much he wanted to leave the situation. For a chameleon - the Chief Chameleon - he wasn't putting in a lot of effort to hide his emotions, Greg thought.

Out of spite, Greg decided to burst Patterson's bubble of relief by asking, “How was the conversation with Ferdinand the other day?”

Patterson cursed internally and regretted not walking faster, turned to the duke, and admitted, “If I am to summarize, Your Grace, it was awful.”

“And if you are not summarizing?” Greg pressed, more than eager to

force him down the memory lane that Patterson clearly did not want to walk through.

Patterson sighed, getting more wrinkles just by recalling the defense minister's phone call. "He sounded upset. And was definitely enraged, questioning why we'd never submit requests to have soldiers stationed at her location."

The word "upset" rang alarm bells. "He knew Carter?" Greg questioned, brows drawing in.

Patterson's face crimped. "I'm not sure if he 'knew' her per se. Professionally, they met once or twice when Ferdinand visits our headquarters once a year. I wouldn't say he knew her, but she probably... left an impression on him."

"The groin-stimulating kind of impression?"

Patterson's lips curled into a smirk. "Perhaps."

"Were they fucking?"

The chief shook his head slightly and shrugged a shoulder. "Your Grace, I'd be slammed with a lawsuit if I answered anything but no."

The words combined with his body language was a strong 'maybe'. "You've never cared enough to find out?" Greg asked.

"Nope."

Taking that in, Greg then asked, "You and Carter were once an item, I hear?"

Patterson snickered, knowing where he was going with things. "If I wanted to kill her, Your Grace, I wouldn't have waited this long. It's been years since things ended. And let me just say, the last time I cared enough to do anything for and with the chameleon's top seductress, I found myself used and betrayed - a sentiment you can surely relate to. I've never given a damn of what she did after our breakup."


"Did she care about what you did?"



Send Gift



Comments

 Watch Ads to Get 8 Vouchers