

Chapter 95

The doorbell jerked Sush out of her shock and a deep sense of protectiveness took over Greg, who instructed, "Get your gun loaded and ready. Don't come out until I say otherwise."

Head whirled to him, she protested, "What? N—"

"Don't come out until I say otherwise," Greg repeated, his deepened voice and partially onyx eyes cut her off sternly, though as gently as he could.

Greg strode away before she could argue, and was relieved to hear her releasing the safety off her weapon. The moment Greg disappeared from the kitchen, Sush hopped off her seat and moved swiftly to the wall partitioning the kitchen from the living room, making sure she had a good angle to fire in case whoever was behind the door decided to attack.

Greg, however, blocked most of the door when he opened it, so she couldn't see who it was. He sighed, then impatiently said, "I don't recall organizing a bonding pity party."

"Your Grace, we came with important leads." Sush recognized it as Kenji's hushed voice.

We?

She came out of her hiding spot, approaching the door confidently as Greg replied, "There is something called conveying messages through texts or..."

"Greg, c'mon. Let them in," Sush urged, a hand on his bicep.

Greg heaved another sigh before turning to her and said, "What did I say about not coming out here until I say otherwise? What if they're here to kill you?"

Patterson's and Kenji's brows rose simultaneously. The Chief

Chameleon blinked repeatedly and said, "Excuse me?"

Kenji followed suit. "We're not the ones prepared with a gun." His chin gestured toward the weapon in Sush's hand.

Patterson's sights went to the weapon in her hand before meeting her eyes with a narrowed set of his own. "Really, Sush? Really?"

"We weren't expecting company and took precautions when we heard the bell," Sush defended, then turned to Greg, once again urging, "Greg, let them in."

Greg turned to the men and put out a hand, demanding, "Weapons."

Patterson and Kenji surrendered their pistols, but right before they stepped through, Greg held a hand up, grabbed a dome-shaped gadget made to look like a keychain hung from the keyholder, and he stuck the flat, adhesive side on the doorframe. "Metal detector," he explained, then stepped aside and waved them through, gesturing them to enter.

Patterson stepped through with no issues.

Kenji stayed outside, marveling at yet another thing he guessed wasn't for sale, then asked, "Why didn't you say that before you stuck it there? I'm wearing a belt and have coins in my wallet."

"Belt and wallet comes through first then," Greg chimed, holding out his hand again, taking Kenji's wallet and belt as it came.

The midway line on dome gadget glowed in faint yellow before it opened to both sides and fired a bullet, which - fortunately - shot directly at the opposite side of the doorframe, making a Kenji - who looked betrayed and frantic - whisper-yell, "What the fuck?"

As much as Greg wanted to remain serious, he couldn't help but feel amused. "It only fires in a straight line. If you're worried, you could always come through underneath it. The detector would still scan for metal but it won't be able to kill you."

After Kenji patted himself, checking again that he had no metal on him, he lowered his head and entered below the invisible threshold that the

gadget had set, relieved to see that it didn't go off.

"Congratulations, Sophisticated. You came out alive," Greg chimed as he extracted the dome off the wall and hung it back on the keyholder, shutting the door behind him.

As they made their way to the kitchen, Kenji wasn't even subtle in complaining to Sush that her boyfriend secretly wanted to kill him, which she denied, saying he'd kill whoever he wanted without waiting around for anyone to speculate, which didn't make the eastern octopus feel any safer.

Turning to Patterson, Kenji questioned, "How did your belt not set it off?"

"I'm not wearing one. Left it at the sadistic bitch's house. I don't plan on going back for it." Patterson spared his colleagues the details of how Larissa wanted to "spice up" their session by having her hands tied to the bed frame and his belt tied over her mouth. When it was over and Larissa was about to slide the end of the belt - infected with the dried up bacteria from her mouth - through the first belt loop of his pants, he stopped her by her hand, whispering alluringly, "You keep it. For next time."

Though she seemed turned on, he was internally disgusted. He never wanted the belt back.

At the kitchen counter, they got into the high stools and spent the next hour exchanging information. Greg and Sush went first, Kenji next after they'd come down from the shock of the Monica Upshaw revelation, digesting the fact that she killed six of her fellow archers. Patterson, who went last, treaded carefully when he concluded by holding Sush's hard gaze with a wary one of his own and saying, "She said the woman she killed looked a lot like... you."

In the pocket of silence, each dove into their thoughts. Sush tried to think but suddenly didn't know how to.

Greg was momentarily shocked before his first meeting with Ferdinand flashed into mind and the befuddlement from the other day clicked - why

he found the minister familiar yet unfamiliar at the same time - the slope of his nose and the thickness of his brows. He took another good look at Sush, and ultimately realized - with dread - why that was.

Chapter Comments



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