

Chapter 786

I gave that some thought. Havenstone knew their male hires had academic success. Given twenty-four hours, we could memorize anything. The Amazons, being a militant culture, were testing us to see how quickly we thought on our feet. It was still mean. As we pulled up to our Brownstone destination, I was given our mission.

Desiree was to go into the house, retrieve three schoolgirls, Aya (9), Europa (13) and Loraine (16), and bring them into the car. I was to wait on the stoop, hold the car door for them and keep my yap shut. By insisting I not use flippancy, Desiree had cut off my conversation at the knees.

"Woman, grey coat at the North corner," Desiree muttered to me as we started up the stairs. She went inside; I stayed on the stoop. Thankfully, my sojourn into Amazon politics had strengthened my ability to ignore the obvious and appreciate the benign. Two women were meandering up from the South and the woman to the North had gained a companion before Desiree returned. The girls came out first.

At the bottom step I caught sight of movement. I turned and stopped the children from advancing.

"Hey," the Loraine squawked.

"Cáel..." Desiree got out.

"Two to the North and two to the South - closing in," I whispered.

She did a casual scan.

"Take them to the car," Desiree ordered. I thought that was pretty stupid. If a murder/kidnapping was in the offing, getting the kids back inside seemed more prudent. I hesitated. She glared. I swallowed my instincts and began sheparding the girls down the stairs.

w(w)w.nOveℓwo(†)M̄.©Om

The moment the third child's feet hit the sidewalk, both groups of women began speeding up. I was trying to hustle the girls to the car's back door when a van came speeding up out of nowhere. I wasn't going to get door open in time.

"Down!" I shouted as I used my superior size to press my three wards down and against the car. The van screeched to a halt and the sliding door opened.

I drew, aimed over the top of the car and fired the pistol twice without even thinking that I was murdering somebody. I heard Desiree firing to the North. The woman in the van door slumped back. A second one tried to untangle herself so I put two bullets in her as well. I took a step and a half South, kneeled to shelter the girls with my body and began firing at the two southern women running my way.

I put two bullets into each of them - missing every shot. Crap. Suddenly, as I was shoving a new clip into my semi-automatic pistol, the eldest child broke and ran for the stairs. I looked over my shoulder. Desiree was down. One woman remained coming from the North. I hurled my body at Loraine, taking her down. I landed us on my shoulder then rolled to cover her.

I brought up the pistol and fired twice at the northern woman.

"Cease fire!" an unfamiliar female voice commanded. The northern woman stopped. As I swung my pistol South, I noticed Desiree sitting up. The two women in the van were coming back to life too. Three women I didn't recognize were coming down the Brownstone steps.

The lead female was clearly in charge. She approached me and extended a hand.

"Male - pistol," she demanded. I rose to me knees, pulling away from her and yanking Loraine behind me.

"Lady, I don't know you," I growled. "I'm not giving you my gun, or the girls, until someone tells me what's going on."

I was contemplating how bad her punch/slap/kick was going to be when Loraine laughed.

"That was fun," she exulted. "He tackled me and everything."

"Cáel," Desiree ordered, "give her the gun." I wasn't happy, but I did hand over the weapon.

"It was loaded with blanks, Moron," the leader smirked. "We would never let a man with a loaded weapon around our children."

"Thank God," I mused. "I couldn't understand how I missed those two down South."

"What makes you think you would have hit them?" she sneered. I pulled Loraine up with me as I resumed my feet then put her behind me.

"What makes you think your brain isn't as blank as the bullets you gave me?" I glared.

"Watch your tongue, Male," she glared right back *Ŵw̄w̄.m̄ove(†)Ŵorm.Cô©*

"You threatened three children under my care," I grumbled. "Be happy I don't plant you on your ass." She looked more than happy to throw down.

"They were never your children to protect," Desiree spoke up. "This was a training exercise."

I looked over my shoulder at the other two girls. They were smiling at me. This had been fun for them. The only one who didn't know this was fake was me. I groaned.

"Clip," the leader snapped. I handed it over without protest. I'd used the other spare. She turned to Desiree. "Take them to school."

The five of us piled into the car and drove away. It was less than stunning that I didn't get a new firearm. I was sitting in the front passenger seat, feeling morose and angry when Europa spoke.

"That was really brave," she commented. "You did much better than the lady last spring. She went nuts."

"Really", I swiveled so I could see their faces and make sure they weren't pulling something on me.

"Oh, yeah," Loraine chuckled. "She ran right at the two down the street, firing as she went. Totally missed the van rolling up. Forgot she was supposed to protect us."

"She got high marks for marksmanship," Europa told me, "but we never saw her again."

"You smell nice," Aya beamed little kittens my way.

"He smells like sex," Loraine giggled.

"Starting with the fact that you are underage, add my desire to live and we end up with us not having his conversation," I winked.

"I've never seen a man as pretty as you even at school. The boys in my class are such jerks. They say I'm a freak because I have no Daddy," Aya went from happy to a frown.

"When I was in grade school, they called me a freak too, Aya," I met her gaze. "The difference is, I deserved it. I was a rude, mean person."

"Not having a Daddy doesn't determine if you are a freak; how you behave does. You are a very nice woman so they should be nicer to you. You are not a freak. Trust me, I'd know it if you were," I gave Aya a warm smile and tapped her nose playfully.

"Whoever controls you did a good job," Europa observed.

"No," Desiree snapped. The children must have been briefed on my status as well as spent a lifetime disguising their true culture.

"Europa, I am controlled by Katrina. I'll relay your compliment. She has delegated me to Desiree for the day, which means I'm with you three this morning," I answered despite Desiree's disapproval.

The private academy was for the wealthy; gender was not an issue. Security checked our ID's before they let us disgorge our precious cargo.

w(w)w̄.n̄ôp̄eℓw̄orm̄.©̄m̄

w̄w̄w̄.ñóv̄©|@ô̄r̄(m̄).c̄m̄