

949

"Just checked. I remain the only one unarmed in my personal carnival of carnage..." my words trailed up to an unintelligible mumble.

I was mumbling because suddenly four handguns were casually offered up for my use (Tiger Lily was holding one over her shoulder as she drove), in the same way you'd offer up some Nicolette to a man jonesing for a smoke. Rachel was kind enough to hand me my familiar Glock-22 and Ruger .38 with their accompanying holsters. Two spare clips followed, then I stashed the lot. I scratched my calf. It took me a second to realize I was reaching for my pistol.

No, not the one at my hip, or my ankle, but the one... in my boot?

"Now that you've been handed firearms of dubious origin, can I get back to questioning you," the FBI agent intruded upon my ruminations. "We were discussing that list of people that are visiting a morgue instead of a court room. What can you tell me?"

"Bye Nicole. Miss you. Being interrogated by a blonde FBI lady with a whips scar on her eyebrow and eyes that could scare a badger back into its hole. Later," I cut of my lawyer's fierce demand that I keep my mouth shut. "Nothing useful that wouldn't implicate myself and others in a criminal conspiracy," I answered her.

"There is no way I'd name anyone else I suspect of involvement. I feel no guilt over what has happened, so no remorseful confession, and that is based on my belief that cosmic justice has been achieved."

"You can't create lists of people for execution," Maddox persisted. "That negates the whole justice system and the principle of innocent until proven guilty."

Wow! Except for the two of us, every other person in the car snorted their derision of Maddox's presumptive naïveté.

"Do you even believe the tripe spilling from your pie-hole?" Delilah mocked Maddox.

"I'm in law enforcement. That means I enforce the laws, not interpret them, or choose which ones I want to obey and which ones to ignore," Virginia fought back.

"Love, that's crap and you know it. You are an agent of the US government. You bomb, drone-strike, overthrow lawfully elected governments and assassinate in your nation's best interests," Delilah countered. "You selectively enforce your Constitution when it suits you."

"I'm law enforcement, not the military or foreign affairs. Know the difference," Maddox glared.

"The pay master is the same ... you willingly collect your thirty pieces of silver; get off your high horse because you are in the shat now, Agent Maddox. I haven't known this crowd an hour and I know for a fact that you are the only US citizen onboard," Delilah chortled. "I don't know their bleeding nationality, but I doubt it is on the UN Charter." Maddox turned to me.

"That was succinct and rather accurate," I murmured. "Special Agent Maddox, I have the sneaking suspicion that you are with us because FP (federal prosecutor) Castello feels you can handle this... ummm... unusual set of circumstance. I promise you this – it is going to get worse."

"Why don't we test this quaint theory?" FBI Lass challenged us.

"Jail – bail – and I'm waking up in Rio de Janeiro in two days," I sighed. "I have a few thousand in the bank, live in a hole and own my father's home... when it clears probate. Only you know I'm flight risk. A dozen people will vouch/lie about my character and that's that. All you've succeeding in doing is making enemies when you need friends."

"There is still a matter of multiple people dead under suspicious circumstance," she said.

"Imagine for a second that Cael admits to creating a hit list," Pamela began. "He would never give up the names of the other people involved. He didn't kill anyone, or say 'kill them'. Now what? You still have an abysmal case to put before a judge. Add to that, the mitigating factor of a raped girl.

You get to break her down until she's a cooperating witness because she's the only one who can provide you with Cael's motive," my mentor continued. "Good for you and your team. She gets to betray the man who tried to save her. Cael promised horrific retribution if any of those in the now-dead crowd hurt her. That is rather unlike him – he normally forgives when given the least excuse.

I don't give a damn about women's rights, or the rights of rape victims. I really could give a shit about human rights for that matter. Wronging me is the surest way to early retirement. It is not a matter of strong versus weak, or right versus wrong. What matters to me is who I can trust. I don't know you, thus I don't trust you. I trust your government to be so much chicken shit.

I base this on the lack of public torture and execution. I want the families of dying criminals paraded in front of those cock-suckers before the condemned finally perish in agony. I want to see thieves get their forearms hacked off, trial by combat, and respect for your elders. I want to see public officials being sacrificed upon the altar of Jehovah when they leave office.

I want to see a system of justice with a soul, not law books thicker than an aircraft carrier's hull. A government 'of the People, by the People, for the People' should be the sole guiding force for your culture and we both know that's never going to happen. I admire your soldiers; not because they are brave and combat effective – they are.

I admire them because they are fighting and dying for elected officials and a population that can't locate Afghanistan, or Iraq on a map. can't tell the difference between a Sikh and a Muslim, and thinks 'Pashtun' is an exotic piece of furniture. I admire them because they are better human beings despite you, not because of you," Pamela was coming to her crescendo.

"Basically you people – by that I mean most of the human race – are dangerous in your idiocy, arrogance and pride in your ignorance. Not one of you should be allowed to use weapons, or play with fire. For you, unrestricted voting is a crime right up there with inventing, disease prevention, bilingualism and anything that perpetuates your educational system."

"Lady, why are you so angry with the world?" Maddox studied Pamela intensely. I wished her luck with divining and then unwrapping that lady's mind.

"I hold dear to my heart anyone's hunger to learn, honesty when it hurts and love no matter what the cost, so I find myself alone most of the time," Pamela grinned. "Above even those, I adore humor in the face of ridicule, condemnation and adversity.

You can dodge bullets and parry knives. Humor always strikes home," she finished. "It is the perfect weapon."*www.WordsOfM.com*

"Liar," I smiled. "You like high performance automobiles too." Did she? I didn't know.

"Only with a 2X4 pressing the accelerator as it races toward the lip of a canyon," Pamela bantered back, "with Ursula K. Le Guin strapped in the back seat."

"Who?" I inquired.

"She's an author. I take exception to some of her work and unwillingness to appreciate the fusion of exceptional feminine characteristics with power positions," Pamela answered.

"And your critique of her life's work is an exploding car at the bottom of a cliff?" I smiled.*www.WordsOfM.com*

"Starting uncontrolled wildfires and littering – two of my favorite activities," she laughed.

"I'll stick with blondes and brunettes... and red- and raven-haired... bald has its own appeal... green and purple have their own kink going on..." I joked.

"Wait! We were talking about people being murdered and you two are cracking jokes?" Maddox rumbled.

"I had a dream about tying them together with nylon cord and tossing them off the back ramp of a transport aircraft... and watching them fall... and fall," Rachel sighed dreamily.

"Atta girl," I play-punched Rachel's shoulder.

"What is your part in all of this?" Maddox turned to Rachel.

"I'm the head of his bodyguard detail," Rachel gave her confession of the damned.

"And you want to kill him..." Virginia struggled to keep up.

"Given time, you will too," Rachel promised. "According to his pre-employment records, only one woman he's had a sexual relationship with hasn't wanted to at least hurt him," glaring at me, "badly."

"The nun doesn't want me dead!" I vocally protested.

"It is so wrong that you are proud that of over 200 women you've slept with – TWO have not, at some point in knowing you, wanted to maul you and one of those is in the 'forgiving' business," Rachel chastised me. Virginia had an answer for my madness. Her phone came out and she hit speed-dial – work.

"Ms. Castello, this is Special Agent Maddox, do you have a moment?" Virginia calmly asked when she finally wrangled my current-favorite fed's attention. "You do now? Thank you. I'd like to know what the fuck have you done to me? This assignment is nuts. Either I'm part of some elaborate prank, or I'm in an SUV with escapees from the looney bin." Ten seconds later Maddox gave me the phone.

"Stop it. I've upheld my end of the bargain, so behave," Javiera ordered. Man, she'd shot me straight to the core and we hadn't even slept together yet. Clever, clever girl.

"Yes Ma'am," I swore. "I'll do my best to buffer Special Agent Maddox from the truth."*www.wordsOfM.com*

"I'll have to accept that," Javiera conceded. "Give Maddox the phone back."

A brief conversation later and Maddox was no better off than when she started. Thankfully we parked in front of the Kazakhstan Consulate in New York, giving us all an excuse to face facts. Maddox was feeling compelled to ask questions she didn't want the answers to, and that we didn't want to answer. Saved by work.*www.WordsOfM.com*

"Kazakhstan Consulate? Why are we here?" both Virginia and Rachel asked.

"Oh! This is going to be good," Pamela leaned forward excitedly.

"Change the course of human history," I answered with a great deal of confidence I didn't feel. See, I had knowledge critical to the Earth & Sky.

That knowledge was also something they wanted kept compartmentalized, so they might take exception to it being possessed by an outsider. Oh... so that's why Pamela earlier insisted on four ladies being with me – so we could shoot our way out if things turned ugly. I hugged my mentor.

"Thank you, Pamela."

"You are coming along nicely. Mr. Potter," Pamela patted my cheek.

"Your praise leaves me suspicious, Professor Snape. Besides, if I'm going to die, it helps me to know you'll go first."

"That was uncalled for," Pamela chided me. It was the 'Snape' role she rejected.

"Snape gave up his life for Harry, Dumbledore died for Draco," I countered.

"Well, let's hope it doesn't come to that," Pamela shone with joy and pride.

"You act like I have a choice," I sighed.

"Touché," Pamela nodded.

"I see what you mean about these two," Maddox addressed Rachel.