

1001

The ICE agent was playing phone tag with his brethren in Arizona. They were trying to figure out who all those dead Chinese guys were and how they had gotten into the country... with all their freaking armory. With old Jonas still waiting for his bail hearing, the ICE guy was also juggling the Homeland Security inquiries that Javiera couldn't deal with at the moment.www.novelsRM.com

"George," I shrugged. "I'm not going to threaten you. It is pointless. You think you are the smartest man in the room. I think you are the fifth smartest and that's only because I've recently experienced a lobotomy that gifted me with five thousand years of life experiences. My money is on Katrina being smarter than Javiera, but I don't really know her yet."

"Who do you think is fourth?" George scoffed.

"Riki, of course, moron. I only rate her below Javiera and Katrina because she even remotely believes I might be Irish," I chuckled.

"No, I don't," Riki corrected me in a brief interlude in her phone conversation.

"What about me?" Delilah mused.

"If you were smarter than me, you would be halfway to Heathrow by now," I pointed out.

"Damn it!" Delilah snapped her fingers, conceding me this round.

"Agent Loire, I see you aren't arguing with him," Virginia prodded her colleague.www.novelsRM.com

"I learned some time ago that I don't need to possess the highest IQ to get the job done. Smart people screw up just as often as dumb ones," Vincent related. "I'm a big believer in common sense and the remarkable ability for most people to ignore it."

"Thank you for that wisdom, Sir," I bowed to Vincent. "I'm glad today hasn't been a total waste."

"You are saving lives," Virginia brought up. By the looks I was getting from the 'talkers', they agreed with her. I didn't.

"By all means, when I've actually saved a single soul, let me know," I countered unhappily.

"Wakko Ishara," Wieslawa got my attention, "we need to be going."

Making it to Hana on time was on my wish list, so I gave the various female authorities a quick acknowledgement, grabbed the box, and then made for the door. For a split second, I almost made it out the door with only two bodyguards (Wieslawa and Saku)... almost.

"Cael? Where do you think you are going?" Buffy inquired.

I was head of a First House of the Amazon Host, a Prince of Hungary, a diplomat from the Pugnacious Nation of Ireland and... a prospective sex toy to the Illuminati.

"Run for it!" I urged my two companions as I raced past them.

"Son of a Bitch!" Buffy yelled after me. "Get him!"

I really am a bad influence on most of the people I meet. And the three of us were safely ahead of the pack until I had to stop to pound on the elevator button. The reactions of Nikita and Skylar saved me. Nikita put her hand on her piece and took two steps my way. Skylar turned the other way, trying to figure out what we were running from.

Buffy collided with her, became tangled up and they fell over together. Helena, coming right behind Buffy, leapt over those two and ended up impacting with Nikita. Helena landed face-first on Nikita's back. Wieslawa, Sakuniyas and I fled into the elevator and hit a button for a lower floor.

"What are we doing?" Wieslawa inquired in a nervous tone.

"I don't want to walk around with a freaking army, Wieslawa," I confided. "I want to have a bit of intimacy when I meet with Hana."

"Why didn't you tell our sisters that?" she reposed.

"Would they have listened?" Saku snorted. "Amazon, would you have listened if he insisted you stay away?"

"... Wieslawa looked from Saku to me then back to me. "No, but why are we running away from his 'First'?"

"Child, this oddity I understand," Saku studied me. "Before battle, we would kick the heads of dead enemy scouts around to ease the tension. It was a nonsensical thing to do before facing death. Whatever else I dislike about this one," she gave me a sign of her approval, "he does not shy away from the fight, nor deludes himself into thinking a fight is not coming."

"He is easing his nerves," she concluded.

"That is the nicest thing you've ever said about me," I gave her a respectful nod.

"I was wrong to doubt you were the grandson of Alai," she explained. "That was one of the things that drew me to him - I loved battle too much and he loved it not at all. We complimented each other."

The elevator opened up on the tenth floor and off I ran. The Odd Couple was on my heels.

"Where are we going?" Wieslawa asked.

"The service elevator. There must be fifty people in the lobby waiting for us and I'm not pulling a Butch and Sundance," I huffed. Those two didn't get it. Pamela would have.

Not only did I have to find the service elevator, but I had to find someone in Facilities or Housekeeping because this elevator wasn't for guests and had its own key code. I found the elevator first. The doors opened. It was Pamela.

"How the?" I huffed as I jumped on board.

"Rachel fitted you with a tracking device, Chumley," Pamela joked. The four of us were heading down into the bowels of the hotel and, hopefully, an unguarded exit.

"Damn it!" I groused. "Tennessee, you need to keep me abreast of such things."

"Don't Tux your tail between your flippers and waddle away," Pamela chortled.

"This isn't nearly as much fun when they don't get it," I reminded her.www.novelsRM.com

"Be patient," Pamela snickered. "I'm sure their curiosity is eating them alive."

"You would be mistaken," Saku frowned.

"What are you two talking about?" Wieslawa added.

"We are in the land of the Philistines," Pamela nudged me.

"Does that make me David, or Saul?" I bantered.

"Oh!" Wieslawa blurted out excitedly. "I know this one. You two are talking about that little boy versus the giant Geronimo myth, right?"

The elevator doors opened just in time to surprise a man pushing a room service cart.www.novelsRM.com

"Excuse us," I gave him a tip of my invisible hat. We were past him before he could put forth a coherent complaint. There was no way we could all fit in a taxi. Pamela had an answer for that too.

(The Doom of All Mankind)

Pamela walked up to a Soccer Mom in her mini-van, tapped the window and showed her a Homeland Security ID... I found it best not to ask. Reluctantly the woman hit the 'power lock', allowing Pamela to open the door.

"Hello Gracious citizen," Pamela greeted the woman.

"We are part of a Justice Department special group and we need you to drive us to an expensive restaurant," Pamela began.

"A restaurant?" the woman was cautious and confused.

"Yes, Miss," I interjected myself. I put on my 'sexy, yet passionately political' smile.

You can tell a whole bunch about a person by the bumper stickers they put on their car.

"At that restaurant there will be a clandestine meeting of representatives from certain insidious corporate interests and radical right-wing political power-brokers bent on disrupting a Hillary Clinton run on the White House in 2016," I punched up the intensity. Pause.

"Oh my God!" she squealed. "I knew it - I knew it. They are going after Hillary! What can I do to help you?"

"We suspect that they will have some of their NRA goons hanging around, so we can't simply roll up in government vehicles," I explained. She unlocked the panel door.

As Pamela, Wieslawa, and Saku climbed into the back... with two young teenage girls, I got into the passenger seat. The doors shut, the light changed to green and off we went.

"If you could drop us off at the Osteria al Doge," I balanced my grin with the grim.

"Oh, that's a lovely place. I've never actually eaten there, but..." the driver began rambling.

"Hey, why don't you and your two beautiful daughters join us?" I suggested. "It will help with our cover."

"Oh... will it be safe?" she murmured. I nodded. "Okay... to help Hillary '16." We got her name, the name of her daughter and her daughter's friend.

They had recently finished up a Day Swim Camp and had been heading to their fashionable West Side condo when we appeared on their horizon. Now she was calling her husband, Wilbur, to let him know she'd run across an old friend (my insertion into her lie), so she'd be getting home. It wasn't that the Soccer Mom was stupid, it was the political climate.

Elements of every angle of the political spectrum wanted to believe they were the Champions of the Truth and that the other side was cheating. If this woman had 'Abortion is Murder' and 'Mit Romney 2012' as her bumper stickers, I would have been pedaling the Communist/Progressive Axis of Evil as her bumper stickers. Not only was she getting to live out her fantasy, she and her little angels were getting \$80 meals out of the deal.

We dropped Pamela off in front of the establishment while the rest of us went parking lot shopping. Five minutes later, our little group was filing in. Pamela had a table for the six of them, had a rough 24 hours and the look she gave me was one of fatigue and worry.

I walked over as casually as I could, then in one quick flourish, pulled out the box I had hidden in my jacket and held it in place by my arm pressing in. The box turned on my palm. I opened it as I went to one knee.