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"Bikini bimbos, or studious college types?" Pamela snickered. It was a given that there would be women onboard. I really do have that kind of luck. We broke out of the woods and narrowly avoided getting stuck in the muddy river bank. Sure enough, a wooden, nine meter long barge rebuilt as a house boat was gently working its way north. Four women were in barely-clad evidence.

I didn't waste a minute. My FN P-90 went to Pamela and my clothes were shed in true horn-dog fashion. Two of the women noticed me by the time I was down to my white boy shorts underwear. My dive was graceful, my strokes strong and my welcome very promising. One girl remained piloting this beast while the other three gained two more friendswww.nov(e)lworM.C@®

[Hungarian] "What happened to you?" the leader, a girl with thin blonde hair, large sunglasses and a petite build asked. Three of them helped me on board, despite my blade strapped to my forearm. Goddess, you have to love what water does to white fabric and combat arouses me.

[Hungarian] "I'm a contract killer in training," I began weaving my tale.

[Hungarian] "My maternal Grandmother, who I thought was dead since I was a small boy, has come back to teach me the family trade," I embellished. "The people who murdered my family tracked us down to an inn a few kilometer away and they are hot on our trail." The sane response was to call the cops and let me fend for myself.

To counteract that, I was presenting my nearly naked, obviously bruised and scarred body for their feminine perusal. I had also bolstered my masculinity score (I was a hunter of men - hopefully bad men). My concern for a non-threatening (from a sexual standpoint) female friend (thus proving I embraced the concept of loyalty) further elevated my desirability. The hormonal response was to save my life with the near guarantee of some righteous dicking to come.

The women exchanged some hurried glances and came to a consensus.

[Hungarian] "We will help," the leader offered.

[Hungarian] "I need to go back to the bank and get my Grandmother and our gear," I said. Four of the women had on khaki shorts and bikini topswww.nov(e)lworM.C@®

Two dropped their shorts to reveal bikini bottoms and the three of us swam back to the shore. Pamela had secured out weapons in the duffels and stripped down to her bra and panties. The four of us divided up the weight and made for the boat. The dogs were getting louder. The girls took our body armor while Pamela and I carried our luggage.

Despite our ironmongery, I could tell the girls weren't totally invested in my story until the first armed men and dogs appeared along the bank. Pamela took a sniper's perch on top of the cabin compartment, concealed by solar panels. I was positioned by pilot's station in the stern. This boat was never designed for speed, plus it was chugging against the weak current, so our progress to the far side of the river was achingly slow.

In our favor was the shape and flora of the banks. The riverside had thick undergrowth right to the water's edge. The first meter into the water was slimy algae over slick mud. The heavy undergrowth went inland over three meters which made nice cover, except that once you fired, we would pin the shooter to that spot because the land was molasses-like muck, which made quick movement difficult.

In contrast to their dubious concealment, Pamela and I had thick, multi-planked wood as hard cover. It was a stalemate - we would catch glimpses of Ajax's troops on the west bank of the river. Well, it was a stalemate until they brought up some machineguns. Those, with a good deal of small arms fire and a few grenades, would chip the boat to splinters and we'd risk being sunk.

Our Hungarian Captain, Jolan, had gone full throttle, which equated to a lightning speed of 13 kph (8 mph). Pamela judged our pursuers could, at best, do 17 kph (10. 5 mph) over the rough terrain.

[Hungarian] "How much farther is the west bank covered in forest?" I asked the Skipper. Orsi, the spokeswoman for this college set, answered instead.

[Hungarian] "There is thick woods all the way to Mindszent," she informed me. Since I appeared lost, she added, "Mindszent is on the east bank and it has a ferry, not a bridge."

I kissed - really kissed her. The 'get her heatedly moaning, chest pressed against me while she grinds her crotch into my lap' kind of kiss - I was still kneeling out of fear of being shot.

Katalin, the third Hungarian on the crew, cleared her throat. The crew were college friends who had made the refurbishment of this old barge a group project. Monika, the German, was the architect. Anya, the Bulgarian, was the mechanical engineer who had rebuilt the twin inboard engines that were now propelling us northward against the sluggish current.

Magdalena was a Slovakian Jewish girl and artist; she had been the one to find this old barge. She had also ponied up half the money to make this restoration possible. Hungarian Orsi was the other financier of this project, and a practical electrical engineer, the type that could keep the generators and appliances functioning.

Skipper Jolan, the only seasoned sailor, was familiar with the Danube and many of its tributaries - including the Tisza, plus she was an economics major and the team book-keeper. Katalin was the interior designer, and if she was anything like her friends, a damn good one. I hadn't made it inside yet to verify that.

[Hungarian] "I think someone is trying to signal you," Katalin pointed.

Pamela hadn't put a bullet in them yet to avoid reciprocal fire. I looked over the gunwale and there was this one guy holding his gun aloft.

"It is one of those people from last night," Pamela identified him for me. Sure enough, it was that guy, except he had camo paint on his face, high-tech camouflage clothing, body armor, an assault rifle held over his head plus a few other secondary weapons.

I took a chance, stood up and held my P90 over my head.

[OKH] "Pamela, don't forget, Ajax was historically accompanied by his half-brother, Teucer, who was renowned as an archer," I cautioned her. That probably translated over to a modern sniper, or so I feared.

[OKH] "Oh... I hadn't recalled that," Pamela snorted. "The pansy probably uses a DSR-50." That was the modern German equivalent of the tiny .50 BMG caliber, direct-fire cannon.

[Mycenaean Greek] "Hey guy," I shouted. "How are you doing?"

[Mycenaean Greek] "Better than Augewas," he replied (Augewas must have been the machine gunner). "Ajax wishes a parlay."

[Mycenaean Greek] "Sorry about your friend. Such is war. How about we speak a current language? I don't want my hosts to be left out of this conversation."

"English appears to be your native tongue. It will do. Do you agree to the parlay?" the man asked. I looked to Jolan and Orsi.

"We speak okay English," Orsi confirmed.

"I agree to your parlay. Tell Ajax he can swim on over and we'll help him onboard," I said.

"Since we hold the upper hand, I suggest you come to us," the man countered.

"What is your name?" I requested.

"Eruthros," he answered. That meant 'red' in his native tongue.

"Okay, Red, I'm coming over. I'll keep my personal blade," I replied.

Having just re-dressed, I undressed. I rummaged through my duffel for my 'Hail Mary' weapon. It was worth a shot.

"Cael, normally I accept you doing infantile crap. This time, I'd like to know what you've got planned... beyond defeating the purpose of getting on this boat in the first place," Pamela insisted.

"I'm operating on my pathetic knowledge of Greek hospitality and how this parlay-shit works," I replied. "I'm seeing if I can buy us some time."

"Cael... I'd take it as a personal favor if you'd come back in one piece," she told me. That was unusual, considering the number of times I'd faced death since we first met.

[met.wwww.Nov(e)lWorm.com] "I got this covered," I jibed. "After all, I passed every on-line course in the 'Mortal Kombat Conflict Resolution' curriculum, so what could possibly go wrong? By the way, do you think Ajax took that 'bull testicle' thing seriously?"

"I love you," was all Pamela could reply.

I finished stripping down, but before I could dive over the side, both Jolan and Orsi hugged me tightly.

"If I make it back alive, will you two consent to have sex with me? I need something to live for," I grinned pleasantly at them. The 'sexy' would come later.

They looked at one another, over to the other three companions currently visible and finally back to me. They were teary-eyed.

"Yes, if you make it back Cael, we will ALL have sex with you, if you think that promise will help you stay alive?" Orsi offered.

"Cool. I'll definitely find a way to keep those fifty guys at bay," I kissed Jolan and Orsi on the forehead. Downplay the erotic - elevate my sincerity in the 'life and death' struggle to get back to there. I have to fight the currents of the Tisza and make it to the hostile shore. Red and buddy were there to help me out. I declined and they didn't seem to mind.