

1017

"Now I know why you are on the task force," I gave him false praise. "Are you going to do it?"

"Are you breaking any laws? In Hungary?" he asked.

"Of course I'm breaking the fucking law. I've been engaged in a firefight, at least three people are dead, several more are wounded, two cars and one historic moment/inn has been blown up, set on fire and demolished. I'm pretty sure the authorities aren't happy about the truck load of people we killed yesterday getting off the Metro and last night outside a club either," I informed him. "Anything else you need to know?"

"Is Riki okay?" George kept trying my patience.

"You want to bang Riki Martin?" I reposted. He hesitated - probably looking over at his sleeping wife.

"Yes."

"I swear to God, I'll put in a good word for you," I promised. I was lying because I was a letch, not a pimp. He was blackmailing me over Riki because he was a cheating swine, not because worked for the CIA.

"I'll call it in," he replied. "Good luck." The connection ended. I called Javiera next.

"Hey Javiera," I began.

"Cáel? What's gone wrong now?" she perked up. Ah, she knew me so well... already.

"I just got off the phone with George and I asked him to call in a bomb threat for me. Could you call him in five minutes to make sure he did it?" I begged.

"Oh God... are my people okay?" she worried.

"Virginia and Chaz got clipped. Mona says they don't need to go to the hospital. Right now, I hope they've made it to Romania while Pamela and me are trying not to die at the hands of Ajax and his buddies," I told her.

"They are all heavily armed - explosions - dead bodies - a Library of Congress-sized number of criminal violations."

"Oh... are you okay?" she sounded sincere.

"An unhealthy array of new bruises, but no actual bodily penetrations," I gave my health status update.

"The fight isn't over yet though. There is still at least fifty of them out there and they are all walking advertisements for Heckler & Koch," I reminded her. "If George doesn't make that call, I'm a goner. If he does, I have to explain to Riki that George physically desires her. I'm not sure which is worse."*www.no(v)e(Wor(n).com*

"I will take care of George. You and Pamela stay alive. I'll be in touch... and whose phone are you using?" Javiera inquired.

"After the rustic inn caught on fire, Pamela and I ran to the river Tisza. A house boat was cruising by and they gave us a ride," I answered.

"Jolan is a girl's name," she prodded.

"Why yes it is and she and her five bikini clad college friends are cruising the Upper Danube basin for their summer break," I said. "They are all very nice young ladies."

"I bet they are," she joked. "Keep your eyes on the goal. By that, I mean 'staying alive', in case you become confused about your priorities. Take care."

She was off to let the US government know I was associated with another calamity. Thirty minutes later, we received our first confirmation that George hadn't let me down. 'Red' appeared on the western shore. The ladies' watercraft kept scraping over submerged branches, we were traveling so close to the eastern bank. This time we really had to yell at one another.

"Did you draw the short straw?" I called out while I kept him in the sight of my P-90. At 80 meters, I'd cut him in two if I felt like it. Pamela had disappeared, probably to a hidden spot near the bow.

"No," he laughed. "I chose to come. I salute you," he declared as he pumped his weapon over his head twice. "We salute your quick wit and clever nature, Cáel Wakko Ishara," he added.

"My little diversion cost me a case of Taiwanese-made tequila, the number of a clap-free whorehouse in Budapest's Red Light district and a pair of Hitler Youth goulashes. We will see if it was worth it," I joked.

"You must have friends in high places and with questionable tastes," "Red" responded.

"Is Teucer okay?"

"He will live. Fortunately, he's ambidextries," Eruthros informed me.

"Good for him. Tell Ajax that if I see him, or his brother, and am in a position to, I shall kill them both," I told my foe.

"I count his family to be unworthy in my sight and beneath the contempt of my people - no more than maddened beasts in the field," I proclaimed.

"Why aren't you shooting at me?" Red shouted.

"I judge each person by their merits and flaws, not by whatever misfortune places them in another's company," I replied.

"Very well, Basilópais," 'Red' proclaimed loudly. "We will meet again," and he was dodging back into the undergrowth. Great... now the Mycenaean's were calling me a prince. Yet another worthless title with no paycheck attached.

"Why didn't you shoot him?" Orsi questioned. I was so used to being the novice combatant that I was momentarily stymied by her request.

"If I shot him, I'd have killed him. His companions would have then been obliged to shoot back at your boat. I would have shoved you down and the rest of your friends would have hit the deck, so they would have to put several hundred rounds into the boat itself. A few of us would have been wounded by splinters, but been okay," I explained, "until..."

"Until?" Jolan seemed completely engaged with my speculation.

"Until they decided to unleash a hail of grenades at us, blowing this boat to pieces. If we were lucky, we'd have jumped overboard and made it to the far shore in the confusion. Most likely, some of us would have died," I continued.

"Why didn't they do that anyway?" Orsi wondered.

"I saw them with grenade launchers, but their problem was the low silhouette of your wonderful vessel makes a damaging, direct-fire hit hard to make at this range ~ 90 to 100 meters. They could air-burst a few above us, except the pilot house and the massive cabin all have thick wooden roofs.

Even your solar panels would help protect us. Their problem is that to efficiently shoot at us, they pretty much have to expose themselves to being shot at by us. Even if they sink the vessel, we could still escape. Then they've expended a ton of ordinance, made a hell of a racket and still failed in their objective."*www.NoV(e)l(w)om.com*

It was not at all lost on me that this talk about imminent death was making them horny.

"Why did you go over there in the first place?" Orsi mused. Now to make hay on all my silly, romantic displays from earlier. Kissing them on the foreheads meant I was a 'good' guy. Now, I was going to show them I was a romantic too.

I had the muscular, battle-scarred physique down pat.

"A girl," I sighed in personal disappointment. "She's caught up with the wrong guy. We are related and I can't sit back and let the guy she has fallen in with ruin her life. I had to show her that he's a complete bastard. If that means I have to put my life on the line, so be it.

I'm not sure I reached her though." See, I was a hero in need of some serious positive reinforcement. If there was any doubt, that meant sex. I felt like the old me for a while. I was being an idiot and I could (hopefully) live with that. A few more tense minutes and we heard a helicopter coming in from the north.

My sniper scope identified it as a small, unarmed MD 500 helicopter. As it raced by overhead, I could make out the Hungarian National Police markings. The billowing smoke of the inn-turned-pyre was drawing their attention. We were on our final approach to Mindszent.

"Do you want us to smuggle you past the docks?" Jolan whispered unnecessarily*www.no(v)l(w)om.com*

"No," I stroked her shoulder. "The police are probably going to want to stop us and ask some questions. Are you okay with that?"

"Sure," Orsi nodded. "I'll make sure we have our stories straight... unless you want us say we picked you up in a firefight?" she joked.

"Grandmother and I have to slip over the side now," I informed them. "Is there a place in Mindszent where we can meet up?"

"Go to the Seven Fishermen's Guest House on Damjanich u. 16th," she recommended. "We'll catch up with you there."

(Scenic Mindszent)

One more round of kisses, then Pamela and I were down to our skivvies and jumping into chest-deep water. We held our duffels over our head. The girls gave us a final wave as the barge kept chugging upstream. Me and Pamela waded ashore, got inside the overgrowth and began shedding our underwear for a fresh set of clothing*www.NoV(e)l(w)om.c()*

"Yes, that would make things awkward, wouldn't it?" Pamela chortled. She'd caught me scoping her out at the same time I caught her doing the same. Pamela was lean, like a cheetah. She was tall, very thin, yet not anorexic. She took exceptional care of herself, so I attributed the thinness to genes, not diet.

"Hell ya," I snorted. "Fun and definitely changing our relationship," I added with a sigh. We finished getting dressed in silence, placed our wet articles in plastic bags (so the dampness wouldn't be evident in the duffel bags) and started trekking to the north-east. A rural highway presented itself, so we checked to see that no one saw us exiting the woods and then we casually began walking into Mindszent from the south.

Now we looked like two people hiking across Europe, baggage slung over our shoulders and hair rapidly drying in the Hungarian summer heat. The inhabitants of this fine town happily showed us to the Seven Fishermen's. The places was partially filled with people superficially like us - people biking, hitch-hiking, and/or walking across the region.

Pamela rented us the remaining ten bunks in the larger (13 person occupancy) guest room. The smaller (8 person) one was already filled up. The 'good' news was I had a message waiting for me when I arrived. I had to call my 'Cousin George'. It was urgent. The two ladies managing the place showed a suitably kind level of concern.

I borrowed their land line and called my 'cousin' in the CIA. The message was pre-recorded. I was to meet with an agent at a place called the 'Both st. Brewery' at 4 pm - in an hour. In case you were wondering, Both st. was another designation for Mindszent and the Brewery was actually a brewery and a pub/drinking hole.