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"Care to enlighten me?" Baker inquired. He had gauged his medical expert's reactions as well and he didn't like what the biological warfare specialist was not saying.

"Mr. Baker," the Captain decided to go first. "Roughly fifty-five hours ago, we got wind that there was a massive Anthrax outbreak in Western China. Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia and Nei Mongol administrative regions have all reported outbreaks.

"Holy Shit!" Riki Martin gasped. Her dark, whip-like, Hispanic features noticeably paled.

"That sounds suspiciously like bio-terrorism," Jonas Baker turned on me.

"You'd be right about that," I refused to evade. "It is and it is about to get a whole lot worse."

"The PRC has a robust vaccine program," the Captain stated. "That is why they aren't making a public stink about it. They have the problem well under control."

"Damn..." I closed my eyes and lowered my head. In some deep section of my mind, I had fanned the feeble flames of hope that somehow, the Earth & Sky program had derailed. "That is the 'whole lot worse' I was talking about. The terrorists aren't terrorists. They..."

"What do you mean they are not terrorists," Baker snapped. "They..."

"Shut up and let the man speak," Katrina said calmly.

"Who are you again?" he glared at Katrina. "If you aren't part of the solution, you are part of the problem and I'm here to make sure this problem is dealt with. I am not here to play footsie with you. I am going to be asking some tough questions and you had better answer them."

"I'm C  el's boss," Katrina smiled. "Since we came here to help you and you don't want to let us speak, we are leaving. C  el."

The Amazons didn't turn and leave. No, we backed up toward the door.

"You can't start talking about an ongoing terrorist threat and then walk out the door," Baker argued.

"Javiera, I apologize," I looked her way. "Mr. Baker, Javiera's a smart cookie. I'm sure she's given you every bit of information that has come across her desk. That means you know we consider ourselves an independent nation-state without borders. You can't intimidate us. We feel no obligation to obey your legal system and we operate internationally," I kept going.

"Now, as we are trying to repay Javiera's kindness in our time of need, you are treating us like criminals currying favors. Blow it out your ass, you pompous bureaucrat" I concluded. "We aren't the problem here."

"If that's the way you want it," he shrugged. "Javiera, arrest them." Pause.

"Sir, you do realize that if I give that order, there is a good likelihood they will resist with force?" Javiera replied calmly. Baker looked around the room.

"We outnumber them and these are law enforcement officers," he insisted. "Now..."

"I wouldn't count on that 'outnumbered' thing," Delilah chimed in.

Chaz and MI-6 dude didn't seem to be onboard with his plan. "I have reason to believe C  el has information on a highly virulent weaponized Anthrax program. If our US allies aren't interested, Her Majesty's government certainly will be." That did interest the MI-6 senior officer.

"That is all the more reason to put these people into federal custody," Baker stated.

"Then what, Mr. Associate Deputy?" Chaz said. "Are you going to torture them for time sensitive data? In my military service, I've met some truly hard characters. Some people you can put a gun to their child's head and they'll tell you what you want to know. Not this group. They'll memorize your face and wait for a chance to make you pay ... whether you kill the kid, or not."

"That's my read on them as well," Agent Vincent Loire added.

"Mr. Baker, I worked under you when we were both in Counter-terrorism," Virginia spoke up. "I think you are mishandling this. Invoke the Patriot Act and all we get is a roomful of statues. I've fought beside these... Amazons and I'm reaffirming my report to Ms. Castello (Javiera) - they do not believe their behavior is wrong.

At some point in their fifties, they commit ritual suicide. They make their twelve year old daughters fight for their lives. They murder their male infants. Sir, they are an alien society, indoctrinated at birth to believe they are spiritual inheritors of the ancient Amazons mentioned by Homer during the time of the Iliad.

They fanatically believe in a pantheon of goddesses and possess very little inclination for integration. They think they are superior to everyone in this room - except for C  el - he's an oddity," Virginia pleaded.

"That legion of crimes is yet another reason to arrest them," Baker just wouldn't give up.

"What you have described, Agent Maddox is a right wing nut cult, like the Branch-Davidians at Waco. Arrest them."

"What are the charges?" Javiera's face blanked out.

"Conspiracy to commit terrorist acts; aiding and abetting an international terrorist organization," Baker snapped.

"Everyone, put down your firearms and blades," Katrina ordered. I didn't have the status to give that order except to my own. For that matter...

"Team - disarm," Elsa commanded her Security Detail people. Technically, Katrina couldn't order those girls to forego their primary mission - defend the Host. Out came the guns.

The group of us went over to one wall, put our backs to it and sat down. Pro forma, Virginia, Vincent and the ATF guy drew their firearms. By this time, both Riki and the Captain looked ready to explode.

"Tell us what you know about this terrorist conspiracy and..." Baker said.

"We invoke our Right to Council," I raised my hand.

"You are being charged under the Patriot Act, smart-ass," Baker sneered. "We can hold you indefinitely if we can show a risk to National Security - such as a terrorist attack in China."

"I apologize for dragging you into this," I turned to Katrina. "You too, Saku." Saku shrugged.

"I told you there is no benefit in helping 'these people'," Katrina comforted me. She meant non-Amazons and it was rather sad that it was looking like she was right and I was wrong.

"Unless you want to grow old and grey in Guantanamo, I suggest you start talking now," Baker threatened.

There was no bravado on our part. We didn't zone out, or ignore him. We looked at him the same way we would a yappy dog while continuing to scan the room. Being disarmed didn't make us defenseless. It merely limited our options.

"Sir," Riki tapped Baker.

"If the People's Republic of China finds out we withheld details of a terrorist attack on their soil... that would be BAD - with a capital 'B'."www.N  (∅)lW  rm.  m

"I have to call this in," the Captain shook his head.

"Wait until we have active intelligence," Baker said. The Captain completed his call.www..N  (∅)e( )W  rm.com

"I don't work for you, Sir. I work for the Department of Defense and that man," the Captain pointed at me, "strung two words together he shouldn't have. Now, I don't know any of you people. I was told to come here, so here I am. I do know - Sir - that you are ignoring the advice from your experts about the expected results of standard interrogation techniques.

You are acting on two assumptions which I find to be fictitious," the Captain was clearly furious. "First, you seem to think this won't get out ... and you are wrong. Why? We have no idea who these people have talked with. We can only believe that any person outside of their organization can use that revelation for their own ends. Secondly, you haven't grasped the extent of the emergency.

Chinese citizens are already starting to drop dead as we speak. This variant of Anthrax is highly contagious, fast-acting, and appears to be incredibly fatal. No nation on Earth has enough Anthrax vaccine on hand to protect their entire population... and that still implies that the vaccines we currently have will work on this new bacteria. Need I go on?"

Then Captain Mistriano went back to talking softly with his companions back at Ft. Detrick. The MI-6 chief made his own call. This was his job after all. Before Baker could even start to threaten the Brit, Delilah and Chaz had their guns out, though pointed down. The US law enforcement operatives were far more leery of challenging agents of a friendly foreign power.

"I will make sure to tack on charges for all those deaths you are facilitating," Baker piled it on. "The US government might find it necessary to send you to the People's Republic of China to face charges there. After all, you claim to not be US citizens." None of us responded verbally. We looked at him. We certainly heard him speak, but his 'words' now meant nothing.

Highly annoyed, Baker started the handcuffing process. Nikita and Skylar came in with four more NYPD. The bracelets went on behind our back. Javiera made one more stab at it.

"Katrina - C  el, please help us," she pleaded. She knew far more than Baker about the cost of this meeting.

The Amazons would withdraw and this war would play out with the US government blind to the key players. Hell, we had been repaying her favor and were ending up in chains. Virginia shared that distress. All the headway she'd made in helping the camp whisk their young to safety was being undone. Both ladies had come to appreciate the risks I had taken to bring our two sides together.W    .n  (∅)lW  rm.(m).  ( )  

I looked to Katrina for approval before speaking.

"We still respect you, Javiera," I grinned. "You know that once we exit this place, Havenstone is going to implode. I wish it wasn't so, but now we have to look out for ourselves."

"We will see about that as well," Baker grumbled. We had nothing to say.

"Have you lost your FUCKING MIND?" Javiera turned and screamed at him. "I brought these people to you because they said they had vital intelligence to share. They didn't have to - they volunteered because this taskforce has been trying to cultivate them as a source of information on other underground groups."