

Chapter 12

This is hell!

Who does this?

Who sits here watching people move about a villa and the grounds around it? Who can survive that kind of boredom?

I scream.

That's one good thing about being in the middle of nowhere with the only living beings being on the other side of a large lake. I can scream my heart out and not bother anyone.

And three days of sitting there, with my fishing line in the water, no hooks. Otherwise there's the chance I'd catch something and then I'd have to deal with that. Now that I think about that, why didn't I bring hooks for the line? Actual fishing would ease the boredom, right?

Motion in the distance, and I grab the binoculars. Another caravan of four armored SUVs. It's the second one today. The previous three days saw three of them each day, at the same time, so there's another one coming later. As with the others, I can make out women in the back of them. I follow them past the gate and onto the back of the property, where they are unloaded and marched into the stable. I see one fight back, get hit and carried in. The women and girls who are escorted out are much more docile.

It isn't horses they are training at this ranch.

I have my hand in the duffel bag at my side. The music wafting from it sings of the beauty of me running in, cutting everyone down until it's just and Juan.

I close my hand on the machine gun instead, but the temptation drive around the lake, through that gate and fire at everything and everyone in there as I drive to that stable and free the girl. The only problem with that plan is that without solid intel on the guards' movement, when the fewer of them there are and where the weak points in the security are, I'm not rescuing anyone. I'm just getting myself killed.

The problem with sitting here accumulating that intel is that the boredom is killing me!

At least I have coffee to keep me company.

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How the fuck did this happen?

How the fuck am I out of coffee? I brought like three tons of the stuff, enough to supply all of Mexico for a couple of years. How did I run out of it in five days?

No, that's a mistake. I must have lost track of a bag or six. The boredom has been *that* bad. I just have to look harder.

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I'm doomed.

I'm going to have to set my camp back up, but I'm doomed.

I've torn everything apart, emptied the pickup, and there is not one grain of coffee left. I wasn't even able to get one last drop out of the coffee maker.

And they claim that model is the best money can buy.

Where's my coffee! How dare you run out? If you're that good, you should have made me coffee until the end of time!

I'm going to die.

There's no two ways about it. This enterprise was doomed from the start, just because that fucking coffee machine didn't live up to my expectations.

I'll never get to shove my success in Tristan's face now.

Well, fuck that. I'm only a couple of hours out of Mexico City. I can get coffee there. It's not like Juan's going to notice my absence.

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This is heaven.

Just me, the peacefulness of the lake, the fishes ignoring my line and coffee on my tongue. I can almost forget that I'm here watching Juan until I can kill him. This is what heaven has to be like.

Not that a guy like me gets to go there, but hey, I have coffee, so who cares.

I bought myself five ten pound bags of coffee beans. I am not running out of coffee this time. Only a few more days of this at most, and I'll have all the intel I need to go in, kill the bastard, make my way to the stables, get the girls out and leave.

I really hope his wife and kid don't get in the way.

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The guy doesn't even try to be sneaky. I glance in the crate next to me as he speaks Spanish. An order by the tone of it. I turn in my chair, all smiles, and don't even acknowledge the machine gun he's holding.

He is so lucky I put the duffel back in the pickup. Once I had some coffee in me, sanity returned and I realized how dangerous having knives that close to me was.

"Hi! How are you doing?" I asked jovially, pulling a travel mug out of the crate, shaking it, and putting it back when there's no sloshing. "Can you say that again in English? I don't speak Mexican."

He orders me not to move in Spanish as I take another travel mug out. Come on, I'm not *that* ignorant of Spanish. I live in Phoenix. Do you have any idea how often I'm cursed at in Spanish and told to fucking stop whatever I'm doing at the time?

Really? Another empty mug?

"Do you want some coffee?" I ask, offering it to him. "Coffee," I repeat slowly, then motion to drink as I reach back for another mug. This one has more weight to it.

He looks at the ground around me.

Okay, so I might not have been as conscious of keeping my campsite as clean as I should, but come on, what animal's going to be bothered by half a dozen empty travel mugs littering the ground? Okay, a dozen.

Maybe two.

Definitely not three dozen, I'm sure of that.

He asks a question and the words I understand are cafe and tomato. Cafe means coffee and I have no idea what tomatoes have to do with this, but by the dismayed look on his face, I can tell he's impressed by my love of the godly nectar.

I beam. "Yes, coffee."

He shakes his head, and I put the mug back in the crate.

"Please don't," I say as he reaches for the radio at his belt. My hand goes to the bottom of the crate. He clearly understands English even less than I do Spanish, because he unclips the radio. My fingers close around the gun's grip and pull it up. I put three bullets in his heart before he realizes what I did. Even better, before he reported my presence, and the suppressor means the birds don't even react.

I look at the body, then the mess I made. Okay, yes. All my mugs are making a mess. And now I have to pack everything away. I'd be out of here in fifteen minutes if not for them, and having to do something about that body. Hopefully, I can make it appealing enough the local wildlife will dispose of it for me.

They have wolves and coyotes in Mexico, right?

Chapter 13

The storage locker is empty. I haven't had the time to set it up yet, so the Chevelle sits in there as Emil shoulders his pack.

"Why are we leaving your car here?"

"It isn't suited to cross the border in." Like his, my pack only had clothing and the amenities a father would take on a trip with his son, which includes proof he's my son. I lock the roll door behind me with a padlock. I also haven't had the time to install proper security on it.

"Are we walking there?" there is worry in his tone, but resolve too. He plans on living up to whatever my expectations of him are.

"We're only walking a few blocks. I have a vehicle stored specifically for when I need to cross the border."

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"Do you remember what I said?" I ask as we move another car's length. The Silverado I'm driving is now the next vehicle in line to reach the border control booth.

"I'm your son. You adopted me when I was ten. We're going on vacation for a few days."

"Good. Pay attention to what the officer says and answer the question he asks, not what you think he's asking."

I pull up to the booth before Emil can ask his question. The officer is young, with more Aztec in his heritage than colonial. He takes the passports and papers I had him.

"Mister?" he asks as he opens my passport.

"Jones," I reply.

He glances inside. "And this is?" a frown forms on his face.

"My son. I handed you the adoption papers along with the passports."

Emil waves to the officer.

"And why did you do that?" the tone is trained neutral.

I smile. "A black man traveling to Mexico with a boy more than twenty years younger than he is. During our first trip, we were held up for three hours answering questions. Handing the papers from the start has made things more expedient."

A man leads a dog around the Silverado and looks into the bed, reaches in. I can't see what he is looking at, but the only thing there is the bundle of basic tools to deal with road side emergencies velcroed to the side.

"Is that locked?" the officer at the booth asked, looking through the window of the smaller door behind me.

"No."

He opens it, motioned to the empty rifle racks. "Fan of hunting?"

"The rack came with the pickup when I bought it."

"So what's the reason for your trip into Mexico?" He doesn't touch anything as he looks in the footwell.

"Vacation trip."

"How long will you be staying?" he closes the door.

"Three days. He needs to be back in school on Wednesday."

Emil groans and the officer smiles as he looks the passports over again. He hands them back. "Have a good vacation."

"Thanks you."

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“Dad?” Emil cries out from inside the Silverado.

“Down here,” I reply from under it. I finish disconnecting the muffler and pull myself out.

“I thought something had happened to you,” he says accusingly.

“Sorry. I didn’t want to wake you.” I unscrew the muffler and remove the foil-wrapped bundles of cash from it.

“How is that being in there not shocking the engine?” Emil asks as I screw the muffler back together.

“I redesigned the inside to make the space. I lose on performance, but that isn’t the point of this pickup.”

“Why bother? Why not just hide it in the seat like you did with your car?”

I pull myself back under. “Custom’s dogs are trained to sniff out blocks of cash like this one. The exhaust masks the smell.”

“How much money is that?” Emil unwraps a bundle of hundred.

“A hundred grand. Enough to pay for the supplies we will pick up. When we find Bart, we’ll be able to help him with whatever trouble he got himself into.”

Emil looked under again. “You really think pop’s in trouble?”

His box shimmers at the use of pop to refer to Bart, and Bart’s box is among those which react. But the boxes *that* to causes to react leave me ill at ease. “He’s angry at me. And when Bart is angry, he needs to lash out. The person he picked is out of his league.”

Asyr confirmed he’s in Mexico, and that the pickup he purchased was in Mexico City after a stop I will attend to. They also confirmed Juan Manuel Fernan resides thirty miles out of the city.

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“That is a nice pickup,” the man says, eyeing the Silverado hungrily, as the smaller and leaner one counts the bundle I handed him. “Not as nice as the other one, but I like it.”

“What other one?” I ask in Spanish, which surprises him.

“No one,” the man before me says before the other can answer. Then he speaks in a dialect I don’t understand, but the tone is harsh. “It is all there.” He motions, and another man hands me a duffel bag.

I look through it, the boxes of ammo, the two Desert Eagle, a set of SRKs, Emil’s Beretta Nano and...

“Something is missing.”

“Yes, that last item you were quite insistent on. That is not an easy item to obtain.”

I take the Desert Eagle out of the holster, verify the magazine if full, and chamber a bullet as I turn. “I paid for the full order. You guaranteed me you could get everything in the short time it would take me to arrive. Did you lie to me?”

“No, but—”

I have the Desert Eagle in his face. Four men draw their weapons, but they don’t fire, as from their point of view, I have the advantage, and it seems they like the man they work for.

“You shouldn’t arm someone you plan on screwing over.” I flick the safety off. Now, I have the advantage. “What I paid for is not a difficult item to get. It is simply important to me. When we negotiated the price, you knew that already. If you wanted more for it, then was the time to increase the price. Not after we agreed to it.” I pull the hammer. “Do you, or do you not have the item I requested?”

“Bring it!” He yells fearfully, regains control of his voice. “Lower your guns. This man makes valid points about our agreement. I am sorry I mishandled the situation.”

A man exists a building holding a gun case as the others put their weapons away. I lower my hand, gently let the hammer back in place, and put the safety on. I take the case that is handed to me and get into the Silverado.

“You aren’t going to make sure it’s what you requested?” the leader of this gang asks,

surprised.

I lock eyes with him. “Do I need to?”

“No, of course not,” he hurries to say. “I am an honest businessman.”

Emil snorts.

I hand him the case, put the Eagle between the seat and drive off. “Open the case and show me the content.”

He does, and I smile at the Beretta APX it contains.

Knowing Bart, by the time we reach him, he’ll have lost his.