

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE PLAZA, STAYS AT THE PLAZA.

(OR, HOW THE SCHNEIDER GOT HER GROOVE BACK.)

I sit on the small roof of the building, watching as the troll and my cousin run down the street to join in what I can only assume is Ricardo and the other getting their asses handed to them in a firefight. Good for them. I take out a ration bar and start eating it, deciding against joining them. This roof isn't actually all bad, it's sheltered enough, out of immediate line of sight, and the sand covering the insulation is soft enough that it's fairly comfortable to sit down in. As I sit there, eating, a small vibration in my ear notifies me that someone's calling me. Checking my palm monitor, I briefly smile as Mr. Vore's name and portrait blinks at me. Mr. Vore means money, and while I'm not exactly low at the moment, it never hurts to have a stash somewhere. Especially when you're crewing, like I seem to be doing of late.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Vore?"

"I have need for you. I understand you're located in shithole county?"

"Yeah... I'm kinda crewing with some dudes and my cousin."

"There's a car on the way. Be ready to get picked up."

"How'd you..."

"Just be ready."



Seven minutes later, a car pulls up, resembling some sick hybrid between an SUV and a sleek sports car. I can't help but chuckle to myself as I jump down, both at how out of place it looks here among the junkies and gangers, as well as how stupid it looks trying to be badass when even an amateur can see it's all flash and no steel. Car would break in half if a bloke with a bat even looked at it the wrong way. Even before I get in, I know that one of Vore's cronies is going to be behind the wheel, some wannabe tough guy with a mouth full of promises he

couldn't cash with his ass if put on the spot. The car is just so perfectly HIM - him being the generic, nameless gangster, sucking up to Vore in some deluded hope that one day he'll actually get made. I open the door, seeing the expensive suit and the custom gun in the belt, pointing at his pecker, trying to look all hot, coming across like someone standing on the corner of the road with a sign saying "Free boners" and expecting to be thanked for it.

Guys like him is the reason I freelance. He opens his mouth, and even before the first word, I know what he's about to say.

"You're late."

"You're driving, dickhead."

And like a chump, he shuts up. Me outgunning him seven to one probably doesn't hurt my odds either. He knows I'm not toying around. He probably knows I know he is, too. So he shuts up. Suits me just fine. I lean back and buckle up the safety belt, making a big deal of it, seeing how he's not wearing his.

"What's the job?"

"Wet. Some old lady needs to be taken out."

"Doesn't sound too hard."

"She's holed up in the top suite of the Plaza."

"Oh."

And that's why I'm in and not chump-for-brains here. Fucking Plaza, the problem isn't getting in. It's getting out. I've done enough drooling over their security systems over the years to have a rough idea of what I'm facing, but need to be sure.

"Just pop her?"

"If you get a gun inside that suite, you're better than you look."

"Fuck you too."

"No, seriously. Forget about it. No weapons. Drop her with what's on site."



I look out the blackened glass of the window, watching the crew as we drive by, taking in the scene and praising whatever deity that listens to someone like me that I wasn't in the middle of whatever the hell Ricardo and his guys got themselves into. I close my eyes and

start thinking about how to get this done, imagining the Plaza main hallway, the elevators and stairwells, the architecture, the façade... until it hits me.

“I need some cash. And a confectionery store.”

“You asking me for cash, girl?”

“And a confectionery store. High end one.”

“Not happening.”

“And a wig.”

“Not happening.”

“Want me to call Vore and tell him you’re fucking up my job?”

Forty minutes later, I come out of the store, looking like a fucking goddess in a smart couture minidress, sunglasses, a stupid handbag that wouldn’t fit a gun even if I wanted to, and high-heeled pumps, which are hell on earth to walk on. In a paper bag, I’m carrying a wig, and as I enter the car, I start braiding up my hair into close cornrows, to fit it underneath. Even chump-for-brains look stunned, and he should - I might be a gutter runner, but I know class when I see it. Especially when someone else is paying.

As we arrive at the Plaza, I tell him to simply drop me off and park by the main entrance. He almost snorts out at this, the smug look of derisory contempt on his face making me fairly intent that I’ll wipe it off him before the day is over. I fit the wig and recheck my make-up in the mirror, thinking yeah, I’d fuck me, then open the door, and head towards the main entrance, giving the doorman my most seducing smile as I disappear inside and take the elevator upstairs.



Twenty-three minutes later, I walk out of the downstairs elevator, stepping back into the lobby. Calm, normal. Nothing out of the ordinary. The security guy seems enthralled by his lunch. The plants and furniture haven’t moved. The receptionist behind the front desk doesn’t change his area of observation, remaining focused on the discerning customer trying to get access where he doesn’t belong. Good. He’s doing his job to perfection, and it’s providing me with the perfect cover. Lucky. I start walking, casually, across the polished marble floor, my stiletto heels echoing loudly through the room, before they drown as they hit the soft, velvet carpet carrying the Plaza’s logo, woven into the elegant fabric with expensive, golden thread.

The place reeks of the privileged and sophisticated, and in my exquisite designer dress, posh shoes and delicate, yet subtle jewelry, I fit right in.

I feel like an absolute idiot.

As I exit the building, casually throwing a final glance at the security guy, handsomely tipping the doorman as I put on the pair of large, black couturier sunglasses that goes splendidly with my shoes, carefully making sure his eyes are on my money and my cleavage. I take a step down the stairs, stopping to light a cigarette while I scan the pavement and take in the clean, upper class air. I see chump-for-brains standing next to the car, tripping lightly, hands in his pockets, idly watching around, trying to act casual but failing. Drawing attention to himself. I stand calmly at the stairs, watching him as I inhale the fumes from my cigarette, somewhat amused that it takes him a good two minutes to spot me. When he does, his eyes starts flickering wildly, and even with the distance between us, I can spot his discomfort. I revel in it, and let him stand for the duration of my smoke, watching him with a flirtatious smile from behind my shades. As I finish my cigarette, the doorman behind me rushing to hand me a small ashtray to butt it in, I slowly start walking towards him, still smiling.



To give him his fair due, he's not half bad. His suit looks expensive enough to fit into the area without question, yet anonymous enough to not draw unwanted attention. His face is well made up, the tattoo on his neck and the scar across his nose ridge well covered. If he wasn't so damned fidgety, he would probably be able to even enter the resort without anyone noticing. As I approach, the discomfort turns into anticipation, which in turn grows into annoyance as he sees my hands still wearing unstained gloves. I remain calm, my expression a trained imitation of a posh and sophisticated smile; in itself, it's a tool worth more than any disguise, but the added effect of visibly winding him up makes it priceless.

"Is the job done?"

He speaks with the same annoyance as his expression, impatience radiating from his voice. I'd be amused, if I didn't feel the sting of my professionalism being questioned.

"Not yet."

“Then why the hell are you down here?”

I don't immediately answer him. Instead, I glance up, then turn ever so slightly to the right, facing my hip towards his vehicle, covering my lower face with my small (yet ridiculously expensive) clutch. His eyes just about picks up on my movements with a questioning gaze, half a second before the ear-splitting smash of a human body hitting the roof of the car vehemently draws the attention of the entire street towards us. Millions of tiny glass splinters shoot out from the windows like a hailstorm, piercing through the air with the power of a full blown shockwave, blood and gore spattering at us with the second wave. The vehicle screeches as the axles gives out from the impact, the force of the body falling from the roof of the resort shattering its delicate frame, hammering it to the ground. All of this happens within the space of two seconds.

I remove my sunglasses, and dry the blood off my face with a gloved hand, watching panic in his eyes as he's bleeding from a hundred tiny cuts across his face. I face him, and give him my most humiliating expression before I calmly open my mouth to talk.

“Job's done.”

Then I turn on my (still ridiculously uncomfortable) high heels, and walk off to find a taxi to take me to Dirty Nelly's.



THE WONDERFUL END.