

Chapter 4

“Come on!” Sutton said with disbelief, “You can’t honestly believe that Hans Solo was a bigger bad ass than Clint Eastwood?”

“What are you talking about?” Murphy responded, “Let’s consider the enemies of each. Clint Eastwood was going up against 19th century gun toting rednecks. I’ll give him his due, he was pretty bad-ass, but Hans Solo was doing battle with laser armed storm troopers, a guy dressed in black carrying a light saber, and an Emperor that could shoot lightning bolts out of his fingertips. Seriously, who do you think had it rougher?”

“I’d like to point out that Hans Solo never actually faced the Emperor.”

“Alright, fine,” Murphy said, “you’re right: he didn’t do battle with the Emperor personally. But you’re missing the larger point here.”

“And what’s that?”

“The point is,” Murphy began, “while Hans Solo might not have personally done battle with the lightning from the Emperor’s fingertips, he had to deal with a universe that produced such cataclysmic evil.”

“Oh yeah,” Sutton rebutted, “and like Dirty Harry didn’t routinely do battle with the baddest men the Universe had ever seen.”

“Three words,” said Murphy, “Bridges of Madison County.”

“That’d be four words,” Toby interjected from his previously silent corner.

“Whatever,” Murphy said, “like I care what you think.”

“It’s not a matter of thinking,” Toby said, “it’s a matter of counting. Of course, they probably don’t teach that to you in bumble-fuck, Kentucky.”

“If we wanted your opinion in this conversation,” Murphy replied, “we’d have asked. So just keep quiet.” He turned back to Sutton, “Well, what do you say to that?”

She paused for a moment, smiled, and then said, “I seem to remember Hans Solo doing a side gig in ‘Regarding Henry’.”

“Ouch. That’s low,” Murphy said.

“Everyone, listen up.” It was Riley. He had just walked in the room. “Let’s get this thing started.” He looked around the room at the crew he had assembled. At the table in the corner sat Murphy, Sutton, and Toby.

Sutton was an attractive brunette that had first come to the city to try and make it as an actress. Now she scraped out a pretty good living as a con artist. Her favorite scam usually involved married men, a video camera, and blackmail. To accompany her physical charms, Sutton was sharp, had a quick wit, a disarming disposition, and an uncanny knack for telling people exactly what they wanted to hear about themselves.

Murphy was her male equivalent. A good looking guy that almost everyone, male and female alike, immediately took to. He was extremely well read and, as a result, could talk endlessly on almost any topic. However, the reason he was invited to join Riley’s crew was his knowledge of jewels. He had grown up the son of a wealthy Jewish diamond cutter in Europe and, after coming to America, Murphy found his cultured upbringing and British accent opened a lot of bedroom doors. He took that opportunity to satisfy his lusts as well as his pocketbook. Stealing out of the house with a couple thousand dollars in precious jewels and leaving the wealthy housewife too ashamed to report the robbery.

Then there was Toby. No question about his personality: No one could stand him. He was cruel, conceited, abrasive, insensitive, and didn’t give a damn for what anyone thought about him. This was fortunate for him as no one thought much of him. While he had a lousy personal reputation, he was renowned for being cool and collected in any situation that required a gun. This plan of Murphy’s required a couple of extra people, besides himself, to be armed and look dangerous.

The other man for this job was Will. He was sitting by himself watching TV at the moment Riley walked in. Will was 6’ 4” tall, weighed around 240 lbs, and had a completely shaved head. In short, he looked scary as hell, and that was exactly what Riley wanted. He was the kind of man that would get everyone in a room

thinking twice about defying orders. Of all the crewmembers assembled, he was the only one that Riley knew didn't mind killing. He didn't enjoy it, and Riley would never have allowed someone on his crew that did, but Will would do it if he had to and never regret it. There was great value in having a man like that around. If the need arose, he wouldn't hesitate to pull the trigger, but he wouldn't be looking for an excuse to do so, either. Between him and Toby, Riley knew there probably wasn't a better pair to have backing you up when committing felony armed robbery.

Lastly there was Sydney. She came highly recommended as a makeup artist. She'd worked with several of Riley's associates on other occasions but that was about all anyone knew of her. The woman never spoke. She listened well, did what she was told, and kept her mouth shut in most other cases. That was fine with Riley. Less chatter meant less chance for conflict and with Toby or any of the rest of the crew - that was a good thing.

"Before we get started," Riley began, "let's take a second to introduce ourselves shall we? Sutton, get it started."

"Hi, I'm Sutton. I like holding hands, long walks on the beach, and watching the sunset. I also like watching things blow up, hustling suckers out of their money, and I've always wanted to be a movie star." She then looked to her left, smiled, and nodded to Murphy.

Murphy smiled, nodded his head back to her and started his own introduction, "Hi, I'm Murphy and I'm an alcoholic."

"Hi Murphy." It was Sutton.

"Thank you. I like watching old movies, cuddling with that someone special, and long, deep conversation. I'm also a pretty talented jewel thief if I do say so myself." He then turned his head and looked at Toby. There was no nod or smile.

"I'm Toby and I can't stand the beach, holding hands, old movies, and the closest I get to a deep conversation with someone is my cock talking to her tonsils. But, I am a big fan of blowing shit up, stealing, killing, and mayhem in general."

"You're a dick," Sutton said.

"Well I've definitely got one for you, sweet cheeks."

“Knock it off!” Riley said in his most commanding voice. “After we’re done you never have to be near each other again if you don’t want to, but everyone of you is here because you’re good at what you do. You don’t have to like each other, but I expect some professional respect. When this is over, we’re all going to walk away with a good chunk of change. So grow up.”

He then looked at the offending three for a few seconds to make sure they understood. “Good. Now, let’s move on. Sydney?”

At the mention of her name, Sydney’s eyes darted left and right and gave her the appearance of a particularly high-strung rabbit. She then looked straight down at her feet and didn’t make a sound.

“Wow, you’re a talkative one, eh?” Toby said.

Completely ignoring Toby’s comment, Riley spoke again: “Sydney here is a miracle worker when it comes to makeup. When she’s done with each of you, not even your own mother will recognize you, let alone any witnesses. Will? You got anything to say about yourself?”

“Just that I don’t ever plan to go back to jail and if any of you fucks this up, I’ll cut your heart out.”

“Well...I can’t wait to get started,” Murphy said.

“Can I volunteer his heart first?” Toby said while looking at Will and jerking his head towards Murphy.

“Enough!” Riley was beginning to see some of the difficulties in running this crew. “If you guys can’t knock this shit off right now, we’re done. I’ll walk away and find five other people that can actually act like professionals. So this is your last chance: Speak up now if you don’t want to be here. Otherwise, keep your mouths shut or I’ll be the first one to cut hearts out.”

Once again, he looked around at each of them. Every one of them, with the exception of Sydney, looked straight back at him. All of them gave some sort sign that they understood. A genuine looking smile from Sutton, a sarcastic smile from Toby, a wink from Murphy, and a stoic stare from Will that indicated that he was all business.

“Alright then, let’s get started. This is how it’s going to work...”