



Party Crashers

Trisha Wooldridge & Christy Tohara

YOU'RE DRESSED NOW?" LCPL CAMERON FAIREWEATHER ARCHED a blond eyebrow as an evening gown-clad Monica arrived in the helicopter bay.

"Well, we'll be arriving in San Diego just short of the party..." Monica protested, glancing at the uniformed Cameron with the rest of Shadow Guard Alpha 2 before the chopper. "What are you going to do, dress in the helicopter?"

"That was the plan." He tapped a dry-cleaner bag.

"Oh." Her face reddened at the thought of the lance corporal changing in front of her, more so when she considered herself dressing in front of him.

LCPL Michaela Tyler glared at Cameron. "You try putting on pantyhose and a strapless gown in a moving chopper!" Her dark skin and uniform stood out against Monica's bare, porcelain shoulders as she helped her friend into the helicopter.

"Thanks, Mike," Monica replied. "I would prefer uniform—"

Private 1st Class Roy Fletcher, a strapping male doppelganger of Monica's fairness, piped, "I would prefer my little sister not going on this mission at all."

Monica huffed past her brother. "Really, Royal—"

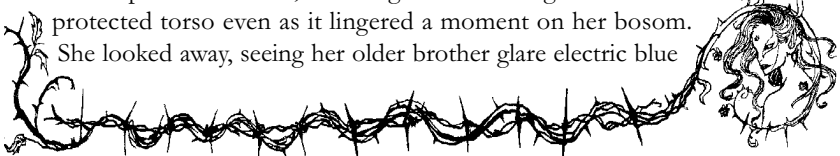
"You've only been on a few missions," Roy argued. "In the background, on a mic!"

"I'll be fine!"

"Fine? You certainly aren't wearing armor under that gown! What if this monster goes all blazing guns? He's a Dark One! Unpredictable!"

Monica peeked at Cam, catching his worried glance at her unprotected torso even as it lingered a moment on her bosom.

She looked away, seeing her older brother glare electric blue



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daggers at their commanding officer. Her heart pounded, but she spoke up, “I’m the one with the information. I HAVE to be undercover...right, Cam—I mean...sir?”

“Right,” Cameron replied firmly, face growing harder. “Everything stands as is. Now, lock yourselves in.” Roy scowled silently as Cam adjusted his headset and addressed the team, “Okay, ETA 20:10. Police are on-call for possible disturbance, but it’s our job to make sure it doesn’t come to that.”

“The cops are involved?” Roy asked, temper cooled with business.

Cameron replied, “This guy’s been on their radar for a while.”

“Greeeat. Nutter Dark One with a fuzz stake out.” Roy rolled his eyes.

Cameron narrowed his brown eyes and continued, “We’ve only just learned that this is our jurisdiction. We’re intercepting so the cops don’t get themselves killed. Monica’s research points to this guy being at the San Diego Museum of Natural History’s gala lecture tonight. Monica, floor’s yours.”

“Um, yes...” Monica passed out folders. “You’ll find additional info here. After speaking with Cam, I believe our mark is faerie. He’s a Sidhe—”

“He’s a she?” Michaela asked. “A trannie faerie?”

“S-i-d-h-e, not s-h-e,” Monica replied. “It’s...like a race of faerie.” She looked to Cameron who nodded in affirmation.

“There ain’t anything in the Shadow Guard books on shee-faeries,” Michaela frowned. “What exactly are we up against?”

“Cam and I...” Monica cleared her throat, looking at the commanding lance corporal. “We’ve met a few...well, I’ve met one—”

“What was it like?” Roy turned wide-eyed to his sister.

Monica was relieved when Cameron answered. Perhaps he sensed her discomfort; he always could. “Sidhe have extensive telepathy and telekinesis,” he explained. “Direct eye contact allows them to breach thoughts. From there, they can plant suggestions, false memories. They can get into heads insomuch that victims are little more than marionettes. Depending on how strong they are, they can, literally, kill with a thought.”

“Wait a minute!” Roy looked at Monica. “If he can kill with just eye-contact—”

“He’d be at least a thousand years old,” Cameron said firmly. “And if he could, he’d have done it in prior cases, which he didn’t.”

Monica nodded. “So far, he’s only made others kill for him. Like having guards open fire on guests—”

Roy coughed, “*Bulletproofest!*”

Michaela socked him in the arm. “They have any weaknesses?”

Monica nodded again. “They’re mortal, but iron hurts them most. It causes...” She looked to Cameron.

“Ferrous poisoning,” he explained. “It’s like...a deadly allergy. It breaks down blood, hinders magic. Hurts like hell—for them. One this powerful can regenerate from regular bullets. Not as fast as a vamp or a lyke, but still damn hard to kill.”

“That would have been a good FYI while I was packing,” Roy quipped.