

The Price of Peace

Von chelle76

Kapitel 15: Just Another Day In Paradise

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Chapter 14: Just Another Day In Paradise

"Amanda, did you ever charge your phone?" Saber asks as he heads into the kitchen.

She looks up from the stove, "Oops. I never did find my charger. I think I left it at your place."

He chuckles as he comes over and kisses her cheek. "I left my phone charging on my dresser, so I bet we get yelled at when we return," he says amused.

Amanda leans against him, "I'm sorry. I can go and put it in the car to charge. I have a car charger."

"I can do that for you. You finish cooking, it smells rather good," he replies.

She hands him the phone from her pocket, "Thank you. It should only take a couple of hours to charge."

He heads out and finds the charger in the car and connects the phone, placing it in the console before heading back in, just as she places the food on the table, "What are we having?"

"Potato soup and fresh bread," she says as she pulls a loaf from the oven.

"You spoil me, you know that?" he replies with a smile.

"I try," she replies back grinning.

Later that evening they are changing for bed. Amanda comes out of the bathroom and sits on the bed beside Saber. "Oh damn. I forgot the phone," she says with a sigh

and starts to get up.

Saber laughs. "They can wait another day. But we'd better call first thing in the morning, and be ready to be lectured," he says amused, pulling her against him.

She snuggles against him and nods, "The yelling I can handle. The hardest thing for me is going to be sleeping in my own room again. When we go back."

He holds her tighter and kisses her lightly, "Why would you have to? I'd dare anyone to raise an objection. You are welcome to share a room with me when we return, if you wish," he says quietly, brushing a hand through her hair.

She looks up to him and smiles, "Seriously?"

He nods. "I'm completely serious, Amanda," he leans down and kisses her again then she snuggles her head against his chest. "Good night, Amanda," he says into her hair.

"Goodnight, Saber," she replies sleepily.

A sound downstairs jolts Saber awake. He jostles Amanda gently. "Wake up, Love, I think someone is in the house," he whispers as she stirs. She's instantly awake and slips out of bed, grabbing her sword. He does the same. They meet at the foot of the bed. "Go to the door and open it slowly. Keep the light off," he says quietly.

"Okay," she replies in a low whisper. They get to the door and she opens it slowly. Making their way to the stairs, she holds a hand out to stop him, leaning close to his ear, "Try to step on the third step against the railing. Otherwise, it'll squeak," she mouths. He nods and they make their way down slowly.

They get to the door to the kitchen and hear movement. Gripping his sword, he pushes the door open quietly. Amanda enters first, slinking in behind the intruder. Saber comes up to the intruder, placing his sword to his throat. "Turn around arms extended," he says firmly.

The intruder stops and turns around slowly, arms in the air. "You can still sneak up on me, even blind, eh Saber?" Colt replies amused.

"Colt?" Saber and Amanda say simultaneously.

"Sorry for the intrusion. But you two are hard to get a hold of," he says grinning.

Saber and Amanda lower their swords. "Let's move to the living room, where we can sit more comfortably," Amanda says quietly.

"So how did you find this place?" Amanda asks as they sit down.

"Well, I got the address from Commander Eagle. I came here yesterday, but you weren't here. I could tell that you had been here. April tracked your cell phone to the town about an half an hour out, so I went snooping for you. From what I discovered,

you two have been busy. To the bank, to buy a sword, a few restaurants, groceries, oh, and some kid tried to rob you," Colt says with a chuckle. "I heard you scared him off, Amanda."

"And this is a crime?" Saber asks annoyed. "You wake us in the middle of the night for this?"

Colt looks between them a smile growing on his face, "Did...did I get the two of you from something?"

Saber sighs, "Yeah, a good night's sleep, Cowboy. Now, could you please call the others and tell them we're fine. You can sleep on the couch tonight. We'll talk more in the morning." Colt starts to make a comment. "After daylight, Colt. Now make the bloody call."

Colt grins and nods and activates his Com-link. Fireball replies. "What you got for me, Cowboy?"

"I've found them. They are safe and armed," he adds with a chuckle. "Not too happy that I woke them up in the middle of the night, but-"

"Can we please talk in the morning?" Saber interrupts annoyed.

"Yes, if you promise not to run off during the night, I'm amenable to that. I want the two of you to return here first thing, Captain Rider., Commander Eagle says firmly over the com-link.

Saber sighs, "Yes sir. We will head out after breakfast. Thank you," Saber replies a little less hostile.

"Very good. Eagle out."

The connection terminates and Colt looks back to Saber and Amanda. "Got any blankets?" he asks with a smile.

"I'll get them," Amanda says and heads up the stairs, coming back a few minutes later carrying an armload of blankets and a pillow. She tosses it to him. "Good night, Colt," she says as she turns back to the stairs, Saber getting up to follow.

"Try not to make too much noise. I hear everything," Saber says.

"Where are you sleeping, Saber?" Colt asks.

"Upstairs," he replies as he makes his way up the stairs. He enters the bedroom and heads to the bed, resting his sword on the floor against the side of the bed before stretching out on the bed.

Amanda slips into bed and snuggles against him. "Guess we're going back tomorrow, huh?" she asks sounding disappointed.

He wraps his arms around her and sighs, "So it appears. I was hoping we'd get a chance to return to the bank before we returned to my place. I wanted you to get your coat of arms. I was going to have it cleaned so you could wear it, as I do mine."

"Not likely they'll let us out of their sights now," Amanda says quietly.

"I know," he replies with a sigh. "I get the feeling something is off. Why would they go to all of that trouble to find us after only a couple of days?"

"I guess we'll find out in a couple of hours," Amanda replies. "Good night, Saber," she says barely awake.

"Good night, Amanda," he replies barely a whisper, kissing her head before falling asleep.

The next morning they wake to the smell of food cooking. "Colt must be in a hurry to leave," Amanda groans pressing her head firmly against Saber's chest..

"I suppose we should head down there," Saber says with a sigh.

"We could make him come and get us," Amanda suggests with a smirk.

"I'm sure that would go over well," Saber says smiling.

"True." Amanda sighs, "Let's get dressed before he comes in here," she says as she reluctantly gets up.

A few minutes later they head downstairs to the kitchen. "I was just about to come and get you two, sleep well?" Colt asks.

"Yes, very well," Amanda says. "And you Colt?"

"I'll sleep better tonight," he replies.

"I'm sure you will," Saber mutters and they all sit and eat.

"Colt," Amanda says. "We have some unfinished business in town."

"No way, we have to get back to Saber's place," he says interrupting her.

"Colt, what's going on?" Saber asks.

"Look, someone heard Sean and his lawyer talking, and it sounds like they may have something planned. They're trying to have a retrial, and trying to get Sean out until the next trial. Also, it turns out that the lawyer is his uncle, so we got worried about you, especially after we couldn't get a hold of you."

Amanda gasps, "That explains why my place was ransacked when we arrived."

"What?" Colt says surprised.

"When we got here my place had been turned over, stuff was everywhere," Amanda replies.

"And you didn't think that was a bit odd?" Colt asks.

"I thought maybe some city kids came out here looking for something valuable to sell," Amanda says.

"Happen before?" Colt asks.

Amanda nods, "Last time was when my dad was alive. He loaded some buckshot into his 12-gauge and shot near them," she chuckles. "Hadn't had a problem since."

"Well, after what it took for me to find you, I'm not letting you two go into town alone," Colt says between bites.

"Then you can come with us and play bodyguard," Amanda says.

"That's not what I meant," Colt says.

"Well, we're going into town, Colt," Saber says, "If you don't want us to go alone, you'd better get moving." Saber and Amanda head toward the car.

"Dagnabit!" Colt says, tossing his hat to the ground in frustration, then hearing the car start up grabs his hat and runs out after them. "Wait up!" he yells at the car as it's backing out.

Amanda stops and he jumps into the back. "He told you to get moving," she says after he's in and shuts the door. She then backs out and starts towards town.

"So what y'all need in town?" Colt asks. "You two goin' to elope?" he says teasingly.

"You know," Amanda says. "I honestly hadn't thought about that."

"Certainly not the worst idea you've come up with, Cowboy," Saber says with a smirk.

"I believe we need a witness to elope," Amanda says fighting the urge to smile.

"We just happen to have one in the back of the car," Saber states, pointing towards Colt.

"Hey, wait I was just kidding," Colt says quickly.

"I believe the courthouse opens at eight," Amanda says.

"Yes, and what time does the bank open?" Saber asks.

"Nine," Amanda says. "We should arrive right after opening and get what we need, then we can go to the courthouse, and elope. We can use your place for the honeymoon, since I'm sure we won't be allowed to leave for a couple weeks anyways," Amanda says as she pulls up to the bank. "See, just like I said, right after nine."

"Guard the car, Cowboy, and don't go far, we're going to need you as a witness," Saber says as he gets out of the car and he and Amanda enter the bank.

"You know he's going to call the other's and tell them what we said," Amanda says grinning.

"Do you think they'll believe a word of it?" Saber asks.

"Not a chance," Amanda replies laughing.

"April, Fireball, Commander Eagle, somebody come in," Colt says frantically into his com-link.

"Colt?" Fireball says through the com. "What's the matter? Why aren't you back here with them yet?"

"I have a bit of a situation here," he replies.

"What's the matter?" Fireball replies worried. "Is something wrong?"

"I think Amanda and Saber are going to elope!" Colt says and then he hears nothing on the com-link. "Fireball, do you read me?"

"Yeah," Fireballs says, trying not to laugh. "I'm going to get April."

"Fireball!" Colt screams. "Oh come on, I don't have all day here!"

Saber and Amanda come back out of the bank, and get into the car. "We need to go to the jewelery store now," Amanda says as she backs out of her spot.

"What?" Colt says shocked. "Why?"

"Why else would we go to a jewelery store, Colt?" Saber asks nonchalantly.

"But... but... but," Colt stammers.

"Here we are," Amanda says as they park at the jewelery store.

"We'll be right back, Cowboy, stay put," Saber says as they head inside.

"You know, we're being really mean," Amanda says.

"Nothing that he doesn't deserve," Saber says with a smirk.

"Colt?" April says over the com. "Are you there?"

"Oh thank goodness," Colt says "I'm here April, you have to help me!"

"What's the matter Colt?" April asks.

"Saber and Amanda, I think they're going to elope. They're in a jewelery store now," Colt says practically in a panic.

"A jewelery store?" April asks. "What are you talking about?"

"They said they had some errands they had to run in town, so I came with them. On the way, I jokingly asked if they were going to elope, and they seemed to like the idea, said they needed a witness, and that it was me. Then they went to the bank and then they went to the jewelery store, what do you think is going on?" he replies exasperated.

"I hardly think that Amanda and Saber are going to elope, Colt." April says over the com. Elaine is walking past and hears the last part of the conversation.

"What's that you say?" Elaine asks. "Saber and Amanda are going to elope?"

"That's what Colt claims," April replies.

"Saber's father would roll over in his grave if he did," Elaine states quietly. "If they wish to marry, they should do so properly."

"Wouldn't the thought of that make Saber do it anyway?" April asks.

"I didn't think about that. I suppose it's possible," Elaine says.

"Listen Colt," April says over the com. "You have to stop them if they try to elope, you hear me?"

"Roger that, April," Colt says as he closes the connection. He looks up and sees Saber and Amanda exit the jewelery store and bump into someone that looks sort of familiar to him.

"Richard?" Sincia says. "Is that you?" she asks surprised.

"Sincia?" Saber asks hesitantly.

"So you remember me now?" Sincia asks coldly.

"Yes, most of my memory has returned," he replies simply.

"And what of your vision?" She asks looking him over.

Saber shakes his head, "Still not very good."

"Who is this?" Sincia asks eyeing Amanda as if she were diseased.

"My name is Amanda Kelly, nice to meet you, ma'am." Amanda says flashing a polite smile. Saber tightens his grip on Amanda's arm, pulling her a bit closer to him.

"I see. So Sean was telling the truth," Sincia mutters looking between Saber and Amanda. "Well, I'd like you to meet Sven Swadjen, my fiance."

"Swadjen?" Saber says. "The descendants of the Swiss Royalty?" he asks surprised.

"Ja," Sven says.

"Congratulations. I wish the best for you, Sincia," Saber says civilly.

"I'm sorry Richard, but we are in a hurry, perhaps some other time we could catch up more?" Sincia asks.

"Of course, I'll look forward to it," Saber says trying to remain civil.

"So will I," Sincia says. "Good meeting you, Ms. Kelly."

"Good meeting you too," Amanda says and she and Saber head to the car and get in.

"Was that Sincia?" Colt asks.

"Yes it was," Saber answers.

"Well, nobody's dead, so I guess it went well," Colt says.

"Come on, let's go," Amanda says and they head off.

"You guys aren't really goin' to elope are you?" Colt asks worried.

"Don't worry Colt," Amanda says. "If we elope we won't include you."

"That's good," Colt says relieved. "Hey wait a minute!"

Saber and Amanda both laugh. "Don't worry, Colt. We aren't eloping...today," Saber says taking a breath. "We don't want someone to come after you for not being able to stop us."

"You two had me going. That's not very nice, ya know," Colt says a bit dejected.

"I'm sorry we drug you along for such a long time, Cowboy. It wasn't fair to you. But it was funny as Hell watching you squirm," Amanda says, flashing a mischievous grin.

Colt shakes his head, "You two deserve each other."

They arrive back at Amanda's and she pulls into the garage. "I thought we were going back to Saber's?" Colt asks.

"We will. After we get a few things from the house. We have to take Steed back anyways," Saber replies as he gets out of the car.

They head into the house and Saber starts to head upstairs.

"Where do you think you're going?" Colt asks.

"To get my bag. Amanda didn't really bring anything, since this is her place," Saber replies.

"I'll go and get it for you. I don't think going up and down the stairs after all of the walking you did is such a good idea. What room is it in?" Colt says.

"The bedroom at the top of the stairs on the left," Saber says and goes to sit down on the couch. "Everything is packed, just need to bring it down."

Colt nods and heads up the stairs.

"Where's Colt?" Amanda asks coming from the kitchen.

"He went to get my bag. He was rather insistent," Saber replies.

"Ah. I wonder if he'll notice that we both have been in the same room?" She asks amused.

Saber shrugs, "I don't care if he does. I dare him to make an issue of it. I'm not ashamed of being with you."

"I know that, Saber," she says, sitting down beside him.

Colt enters the bedroom and looks around. He sees that Amanda's bed clothes are tossed onto a chair and then he spots Saber's bag on the bed. "Looks like two people were sleeping here," he says with a smirk. He shakes his head and grabs the bag, and heads down the stairs. "Is this everything?" he asks holding up the bag.

"Yes, that's all I brought, Colt," Saber replies as he and Amanda stand up. "Would you mind loading it into your Bronco Buster? It would make it easier to travel without it."

"Sure thing," he says with a smirk, eyeing them closely. "You two go on and mount up, I'll load up and follow you."

About an hour later, they arrive back at the Rider's estate. Everyone is finishing lunch when they arrive. "I'm glad you're both back safe, sir," Thomas says as he takes Steed to the stables.

"I'm sorry if we worried you. It was not our intention," Saber replies.

Elaine comes over and looks both Saber and Amanda over carefully, "I must admit that you both do look a bit more relaxed, although a little tired. Come inside and have some lunch. I saved you some." She leads them inside, Saber limping a bit more and leaning on the cane.

They reach the dining room and he plops down into a chair. "I think riding may not have been the best thing to do. I'm really sore now," Saber says the fatigue obvious in his voice.

Elaine comes over to him, setting a plate down of sandwiches and two empty plates for him and Amanda, who just enters the kitchen, her arm back in the sling and sits down beside him. "So, did you two manage to get some rest?" Elaine asks casually

"Yes, we did, Elaine," Saber replies sounding a bit irritable.

Amanda places a hand on his arm, "Are you all right?"

"I'm hurting more than I have the last couple of days. It makes me a bit annoyed," Saber replies.

"Do you want to take something?" Elaine asks.

"After I eat. I may take something and lay down," Saber replies.

"I suppose I spoiled you with the car. I'm feeling all of the driving now that I've stopped," Amanda says as she finishes her sandwich.

"Why don't you both go and rest. I'll bring your pills to you," Elaine offers.

"I've got some in my dresser, Elaine. I'll just take one of those," Saber says. "Perhaps you could wake one of us a little before dinner?"

"I took one just before I came down, so I'll be fine once I rest for a little. I do think I'll take an ice pack with me though, if that's okay," Amanda says.

Elaine looks between them a moment and nods, "Of course. Both of you go and rest. I'll make sure no one bothers you."

"Thank you," they reply in unison.

Amanda stands up and offers her hand to Saber, "Want me to help you upstairs?"

He stands up and takes her hand, "Sure. Thank you."

They make their way upstairs and she stops at his door. "Here's your room, Saber," Amanda says quietly.

"My offer stands, Amanda. You may join me here if you wish. I don't care what anyone thinks or says," Saber says, still gripping her hand.

Amanda nods, "If you're sure," he nods and they both enter his room and kick off their shoes before climbing into bed. She snuggles against him and he kisses her lightly, "Sleep well." They both quickly drift to sleep.

Commander Eagle is just coming up the stairs when he sees both Saber and Amanda enter Saber's room. Curious, he walks to the door and listens for a moment. He hears soft talking, then nothing after about a minute. He looks around and heads towards the kitchen, looking for Elaine.

Elaine is cleaning the kitchen when Commander Eagle walks in. "Ah Elaine, I see that Saber and Ms. Kelly have made it back safely," he states as he walks in.

"Oh, have you spoken to them, Commander?" she asks as she finishes washing the dishes.

"No, but I just saw them head to Saber's room," he replies.

She stops and looks up. "Both of them?" she asks.

He nods, "Yes. They were just entering the room and closing the door when I reached the top of the stairs. I don't think they even saw me."

"Perhaps there was some truth to what the Cowboy said earlier," she mumbles to herself more than to him.

"What truth would that be?" the commander asks curious.

"That Saber intends to marry Ms. Kelly," she replies.

"I know they slept together at her place," Colt says as he enters the kitchen.

"For a fact?" the commander asks.

Colt nods, "Yep. I went to retrieve Saber's bag and it was in Amanda's room. There was only one bed and it was obvious that they both had been in the bed."

Elaine shakes her head, "I know he loves her, and I want him to be happy. I just know his father would be so mad right now at him," she says quietly.

"His parent's aren't here now. I say let him run his own life," Colt says looking between the Commander and Elaine.

"I'm inclined to go with your opinion on this, Mr. Wilcox," the commander says. "However, Saber is from a different culture, sometimes here things are different," he adds looking to Elaine.

Elaine nods, "But as you said, his parents are gone, and the one he was betrothed to broke off their contract by no fault of his, so I guess if his parents were alive they might allow the relationship."

"That Sincia lady ran into him today. When they were coming out of the jewelry store," Colt says.

"Oh?" Elaine asks looking over to him.

Colt nods, "Yeah. She was with some other man. They seemed to be very cozy. She seemed to grab onto him tighter when she realized Saber was there. I wish I had been where I could have heard what was said. I asked him if it was her when they got back in the car. All he replied was 'Yeah.' So I guess she's with someone else."

"So perhaps he's doing this out of spite," Commander Eagle says.

"I don't think so, commander. He and Amanda were already sharing that room before they met up with her. It was a totally by chance meeting," Colt replies. "Besides, I think he really cares for Amanda, I don't see him as the type to sleep with someone unless he loved them."

Elaine nods, "I'm rather fond of her myself. She seems to have a good head on her shoulders, and as you said, seems to be genuinely concerned for his welfare. Perhaps after while I will go and try to talk to him. I don't want them running off and doing something either one of them would later regret."

"Would you rather I talk with him, Elaine? It might come better from me, as a superior. Rather than you as a sort of mother figure to him," Commander Eagle offers.

Elaine thinks for a minute. "Let me try first. If he seems resistant to talking with me, I'll let you know. I'm not going to tell him they can't be together, I think it's well past that. I just want them to go about things properly." Commander Eagle nods. "I'll finish the dishes and a couple other things, then see if he's awake," Elaine says as she heads off.

Colt looks to Commander Eagle, "Any news on Sean?"

"Not a thing," he replies as they head into the sitting room where April and Robin are talking. They sit down. "I am glad that they are back here where we can offer them some protection."

"They seemed to be fine at her place. They both had swords," Colt replies.

"Both of them?" April asks. "I thought Amanda had never touched one before."

"I think Saber had it made for her. They went to a shop and picked one up. The owner told me it was a custom order, but wouldn't say anything else about it," Colt replies.

April laughs, "I guess he does love her. I don't see him buying something so personal

unless he was serious about her. A sword instead of a ring," she laughs.

Colt laughs, "I could see that. More his style."

April laughs, "If we find out that it is the case, I am so going to tease him."

Elaine takes the back stairway to Saber's door and knocks softly. "Saber?" she says waiting for a reply. After a minute, she hears some sort of reply and tries the handle. It's unlocked so she enters the darkened room, closing the door behind her, "Saber?"

"Elaine?" he responds sleepily. "Is it dinner time already?"

"No, but I wanted to talk to you." she says heading towards the window.

He can tell she's headed for the window, seeing her shadow, "Elaine, can we talk like this?"

She stops and turns towards him, "Are you all right? Is the light bothering you more?"

"Well, somewhat. But I don't want you to wake Amanda. She's sleeping peacefully finally," he replies quietly. "Can you just pull a chair up and we'll talk. I already have a good idea what this is about."

"Um, sure," she says hesitantly as she pulls a chair up to the bed beside him. "Are you..."

"Dressed?" he offers, "Yes, Elaine. It's not like that. We are not...physically intimate, if that is what you want to know. We share a bed, but that is all. At this point anyways," he adds as an afterthought.

Elaine nods, "I know things have been happening fast, but I don't want you to make a choice that could hurt either of you. I am fond of Ms. Kelly and do not want her to be hurt more than she has been already."

Saber sighs, "I don't intend to do anything to hurt her, Elaine. And I'm well aware of the objection you have but you won't voice to me."

"And what is it you think I object to?" Elaine asks.

"Her social status," he replies quietly.

"I honestly want you to be happy, Saber. I'm not sure what your parents would think of the past year's events, but perhaps they would have understood. You had every intention of fulfilling your duty. I know that."

"Yes, I would have tried, Elaine. But this is different. Also there are some things that I want you to know. But I want you, Thomas, Amanda and myself to discuss them, and not while we're like this." Amanda stirs a bit and Saber whispers to her, "Amanda, Elaine is here. How are you feeling?"

Amanda moves a bit more and looks around, "Huh?" she asks half awake.

"How is your shoulder?" Saber asks.

"Still sore, but I'm not throwing up from the pain now," she replies weakly.

Saber nods, "Do you think you're up to that conversation we knew was coming?"

Amanda sighs, "It really is unavoidable, isn't it?"

"Yes," Saber says.

"I'm ready as I'm going to be then," Amanda says.

"Are we going to have this discussion here?" Elaine asks.

"Let's go to the study," Saber says. "That way we can all be comfortable. Would you mind getting Thomas and

Commander Eagle too? I'd like to get this over with as quickly as possible."

"Of course," Elaine goes to get the others. A while later they are all sitting in the Study.

"Saber, I want you to know that I don't object to you and Ms. Kelly having a relationship, which I'm sure is what you are thinking." Elaine begins.

"Okay. I want you to speak freely here," he replies hesitantly, waiting to see where the conversation goes.

"What I object to is that you keep taking off alone together. We know so little about you, Ms. Kelly that we need to know about your family, your background, your education, just more than we know now. I know that you are not here with the intent of improving your social status. I saw the records you submitted at the trial. But because of who Saber is, an unfortunate problem is that he must choose wisely who he is to spend his life with."

"It is how his family has survived for so many centuries," Thomas adds quietly. "It is why most are betrothed as children. To insure the integrity of the family lines."

Saber sighs in thought, trying to decide how to begin, "Amanda is a good person. She has more than proven her loyalty to me and this family. If my parents were still living, and I had been injured as I was in the fighting and released from my betrothal from Sincia, as I am now, I think they would understand my choice." Elaine goes to speak and he holds up a hand to stop her, "That having been said, you are correct, you know very little about Amanda. Amanda has learned some things about herself these past few months and in the past week. One of your...objections is that she is not of noble blood, correct?"

"Actually, since she is financially independent that doesn't really become an issue. But not knowing her background could become a problem for future generations," Thomas replies.

Amanda looks to Saber, tugging at her chain giving him a look. He nods and she pulls out the necklace from under her shirt. "Perhaps this will help shed some light on my background," she says as she removes the necklace and hands it to Thomas.

He takes the necklace and studies the pendant, "This looks...authentic. I thought that family had died out years ago." He passes the necklace to Elaine who looks between Thomas, Saber and Amanda after studying the pendant.

"We had it inspected, it is authentic," Saber says.

"Wh... Where did this come from?" Elaine asks as she returns the necklace to Amanda.

"It was my mother's ma'am. Evidently that necklace has been passed down between firstborn daughters for several generations. My mother died when I was an infant. I was raised by my father. He had stowed the necklace in a safety deposit box along with a letter explaining it's significance with the intent on me finding it when the time was right. I had no idea. I never knew my mother's family. He said they lost contact with them after they married. My father taught me a lot of things. So yes, I am rather self-sufficient. Financially and otherwise. As for my intentions with Saber, I hope we end up together, but I will not force the issue. I am willing to leave if that is what everyone feels is best. It is not my desire to complicate matters."

Saber places a hand on her arm, "My desire is to be with you, Amanda. Regardless of what they say. I do respect each of your opinions, but as it is my life, I am free to decide my fate. And since circumstances are what they are, and I have fallen in love with you, my desire is to hopefully make a life with you, Amanda." There is a stunned silence in the room for several minutes.

"Saber, are you proposing to her?" Elaine asks after finding her voice.

Saber nods slightly, "I suppose I am."

"Seriously Saber?" Amanda asks taken aback.

"I'm afraid that I don't have a ring or anything right now," Saber says quietly, "But I'm quite serious."

"Saber..." Amanda says "Of course I'll marry you," she kisses his cheek.

"If you two are going to insist on following through with this, then you'll need to retrieve the ancestral engagement ring," Elaine says.

Saber looks confused, "Ancestral engagement ring?"

"It has been used for the official engagement of your family for generations," Elaine says.

Saber nods, "Of course, tradition should be upheld when it can be. Where can I find this ring?"

Elaine looks down at her hands, "Well, sir, um..."

Saber sighs, "Sincia has it, doesn't she?"

"Yes sir," Elaine says quietly.

"We'll just ask her to return it, right?" Saber says.

"I'm afraid that I'm not letting either of you leave the grounds until we know more about Mr. McCully's situation. I have reports of his lawyer talking to some shady people, none of which are known clients of his," Commander Eagle says.

"I understand," Saber says. "We'll remain here, sir."

"What about the ring?" Elaine asks.

"I'm not letting it go that easy," Saber says. "Thomas, you would be able to recognize the ring if you saw it, right?"

"Of course sir," Thomas says. "I was there when your parents gave it to Sincia's parents to make the betrothal official."

"Could you go to Sincia's in my place and get the ring?" Saber asks.

"I'd be honored, sir," Thomas says standing up.

"Sending him out would not be the best idea, Saber," Commander Eagle says. "Mr. McCully's associates might be waiting for an opportunity like that."

"I was going to ask one of the others to escort him," Saber says.

"I suppose that would be all right," Commander Eagle says.

"Where are the others?" Saber asks.

"I believe Colt and Robin went out to the range, and that Fireball and April went to training room to try some of their exercises," Elaine answers.

"So I take it you have no further issues with this?" Saber asks.

"I don't like the fact that you two are sharing a room, and not married," Elaine says and sees the look Saber gives her. "But, she's good for you, so as long as you're willing to go about everything else properly I'll ignore it."

"Thank you, Elaine," Saber says as he gets up. "Amanda, would you like to come with me to talk to the others?"

"Of course," Amanda says as she gets up and they head out. "So who are you going to ask first?"

Saber sighs, "Colt. From what I gather he's in the best shape."

"Let's see how that goes," she says wryly.

They walk to the firing range where Robin has just finished setting up some target's for Colt, who is blindfolded. She walks over to him and removes the blindfold, holds up a stopwatch "Go!" she starts the stopwatch as she says the word. Colt turns around, drawing his gun as he does and fires off six shots in rapid succession, knocking down the targets. "Fifteen seconds," Robin says.

"I'm back up to par," Colt says with a grin. "Thanks for the help," he kisses her.

Saber claps, "Well done, Cowboy."

"Well, if it isn't the two practical jokers," Colt says mockingly. "To what do we owe this visit?"

"I've come to ask you a favor," Saber says hesitantly.

"Excuse me?" Colt says shocked. "I don't believe I heard that quite right."

Saber sighs, "I said I need a favor."

"Okay, what is this favor?" Colt asks looking between the two of them.

"I need someone to escort Thomas to retrieve something from Sincia," Saber replies.

"What is he retrieving?" Colt asks suspiciously.

"A family heirloom of mine that she has," Saber states.

"I'm sure it can wait." Colt says.

"Please Colt?" Amanda asks.

"It can't be so important that it can't wait a few weeks. You've gone without it for this long," Colt says

Robin sees the look that passes between Saber and Amanda and gasps quietly and whispers, "It's an engagement ring."

Colt looks at his wife and quietly says, "You've got to be kidding me."

Robin shakes her head and whispers, "What else could Sincia have that Saber would care about so much?"

Colt shakes his head, "I need to know exactly what I would be going after, Saber."

"When our parents made the arrangements for our betrothal, her parents were given an ancestral engagement ring. I need you and Thomas to retrieve it," he replies.

"You plannin' on putting it on someone more deserving?" Colt asks. Saber nods and Colt looks between the two of them.

"I've already said yes, Colt," Amanda says seeing the look.

"I just don't know," Colt says. "How do I know you two aren't yanking my chain again?"

"Colt, I wouldn't ask you to leave the safety of the estate for a joke, you know that," Saber says.

"Then why don't you two tell me what you were doing at the jewelery store?" Colt retorts.

"We found an old piece of jewelery in a safety deposit box that my dad had left for me," Amanda says. "We went to get it cleaned."

Colt scoffs, "Sure, like I'd believe that."

Amanda pulls the necklace out from under her shirt, "The jeweler did a wonderful job on it."

Colt looks at the necklace and whistles, "Wow, you weren't kiddin' they don't make necklaces like that anymore. It was tough getting the gold for our rings, getting gold for a necklace would be near impossible."

"Colt, go and escort Thomas," Robin says. "Make sure he's safe, that's what you do, right?"

"But I just got back, baby," Colt says pitifully.

"I'm sure you won't be leaving til tomorrow." Robin says with a smirk.

Colt grins, "Alright Saber, I'll escort Thomas for you."

"Thank you, Colt. Thank you, Robin," Saber says and he and Amanda go back inside.

Later that evening everyone has finished dinner and has moved to the sitting room. They have gathered and are talking about the unofficial announcement of Saber and Amanda's engagement. "I can't say that I'm surprised," April says smiling. "After the prank you pulled on Colt, I figured it was only a matter of time."

"He set himself up for it," Saber says laughing. "The snide comments, and then when he asked us outright, it just sort of came out. He reacted, so we kept it going for a while."

"He really did make it too easy. The more he squirmed, the more fun it was to play it out," Amanda says.

April laughs, "You two sure did have him stirred up. I thought he was going to have a panic attack. He almost had me convinced that you two were eloping."

Saber shakes his head, "I had no idea he'd take it so seriously. But the errands we needed to do just worked out to fuel the plot. It was too convenient, I suppose."

"So why didn't you just ask for the ring when you saw Sincia the other day?" Colt asks suddenly.

Saber looks at him blankly for a moment, "Oh, to be perfectly honest, I had forgotten about the ring. I had only been told about it. I've never actually seen it. It has been in her family's possession since we were children. Besides, I was in a bit of shock from running into her. I also hadn't thought about asking Amanda to marry me at that point. I was only trying to live in the present. I had not given much thought to the future."

Colt nods, "I suppose that was a bit of a shock. And a bit awkward for you, eh?" he asks looking to Amanda.

She shrugs, "A bit strange, but she was with someone else, it's not like I felt threatened by her or anything."

"Not much does threaten you, does it?" Colt asks grinning.

"Not really. Especially now that I'm armed," she adds with a smirk.

Colt laughs, "Yeah, I've met the business end of that sword of yours. Nice piece. Not a traditional engagement gift."

"It wasn't intended as an engagement gift, Colt. I actually intended to give it to her in about a month for her birthday," Saber replies.

Colt looks at him with a blank look for a moment, confused, "You seriously hadn't planned on asking her to marry you before today?"

Saber shakes his head, "I suppose subconsciously I knew that I wanted to be with her, but until we were talking with Thomas and Elaine, I had never actually consciously thought about it."

"So why are you going through with it if it's something you just blurted out?" April asks confused.

"Because it is what I want," Saber replies simply. "If I had taken my time and thought it out, I think I could have planned a little better, and I could have come up with a more formal way of asking Amanda to marry me." He turns and faces Amanda, "And for that, I do apologize."

Amanda shakes her head, "No need to, Saber. You made your intention clear, that's all that matters, isn't it?"

"I suppose you're correct," Saber says.

Early the next morning Colt and Thomas go to set out. "See y'all in about a week," Colt says.

"You stay safe, Cowboy," Saber says shaking his hand. "and thank you," he adds sincerely.

"You can thank me when we return," Colt says.

"You take care of yourself," Robin says as she kisses Colt on the cheek then looks a little pale.

"You okay?" Colt asks concerned.

"Yeah, just think breakfast isn't sitting so well," Robin responds.

"Go lay down, baby," Colt says. "Take care of yourself, I'll be fine."

Robin nods and goes to lay down. Elaine comes up to them. "You'll watch out for Thomas, won't you Colt?" she asks.

"Of course," Colt says "And you'll keep an eye on Robin for me, right?"

"Of course," Elaine says with a nod.

"Come on Thomas, let's go," Colt says and he and Thomas get into the car and head off.

A couple of hours later, a call comes in over the com-link. "Saber, you there?" Colt asks.

"Yeah, I'm here," Saber answers. "What's up?"

"We're just passing Amanda's place, and I don't know how to say this partner, but uh..."

"What is it Colt?"

"It's been torched, the entire estate from the looks of it, you want us to stop and

investigate?"

"No, you continue with your mission," Saber says. "We'll get someone to check it out."

"Roger that, Colt out."

Saber sighs and heads to his room, "Amanda?"

Amanda groans, "Is it my turn to listen to the com-link already?"

"No, I'm afraid I have some bad news," he starts hesitantly.

"What?" Amanda asks, suddenly more awake as she sits up.

"Colt and Thomas just passed your property and Colt said..." Saber stops and sighs, "he said it looked like it had been torched."

Amanda sighs "Of course," she just breaks down in tears and Saber sits down beside her and holds her.

At that point Commander Eagle just happens to walk past Saber's room and sees them, "Saber? Is everything okay?"

"No, sir." Saber responds, "Colt just radioed in with some disturbing news."

"Were they attacked?" Commander Eagle asks, obviously concerned.

"No, they were making their way past Amanda's property, and Colt said it appeared like it had been torched," Saber answers.

"No!" Commander Eagle says astonished. "I'll contact Calvary Command, have them send someone to investigate."

"Commander Eagle, sir," Amanda manages between sobs. "I need to go, to see if there's anything left."

Commander Eagle looks conflicted then says, "I'm coming with you."

"No disrespect sir," Saber says. "But when's the last time you used a weapon?"

"Why would you ask that?"

"I figure you want to come with us because you're expecting trouble."

"After you're last expedition, I more just want to make sure that you safe," Commander Eagle says. "And to answer your other question, I still go to the range every week."

"Fine," Saber says. "Get us a car, so that we're all comfortable, and we'll leave in the

morning."

Commander Eagle nods, "I'll take the next com shift. You two get some rest. I will contact Calvary Command to see about having a forensic team come to see if they can ascertain a definite cause of the fire. Hopefully, we can get them there tonight, with instructions to set aside anything that could possibly be of any value for you to go through."

"Thank you, sir," Amanda says weakly.

"I'm truly sorry, Ms. Kelly. If we can pin this to anyone even remotely having to do with Mr. McCully, we will prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law," Commander Eagle replies, then heads downstairs.

April looks up to see her father descending the stairs, "What happened to Saber? It's his watch isn't it?"

"Saber is upstairs with Ms. Kelly. Colt called in and said that it appears that her house has burned down. She is rather upset, so he is with her trying to calm her," the commander replies.

"Arson?" she asks.

He nods, "That would be my guess, in light of recent events."

"Thank God they weren't still there," April says.

"I am going to send for a forensic team to investigate the fire. In the morning, Saber, Ms. Kelly, and myself will be going to her place to see if there is anything she can salvage. I am hoping that there will already be a team working when we arrive. I want to get to the cause of it as quickly as possible."

"Would you like us to come along as well?" April asks.

The commander shakes his head, "No. I think you and Shinji should remain here to protect the grounds here as well as Ms. Elaine and Robin. This might just be a ploy to draw Ms. Kelly out in an attempt to harm her. Having you here as back up seems to be a safe plan."

April nods, "We'll do our best to keep this place secure, father."