

El Dorado Covered with Clouds Chapter 4

The guys tailing us from behind started to shoot at us. The cars they were in bumbled over the uneven road so there was no way they would have hit us. Not that I really paid any mind to being shot though. It felt as if they were just firing in our general direction and hoping for the best.

Even still, I shouldn't have been so confident. With Billy on my back, I stood out a ton and it was hard to move. If someone were watching us, it would look like one of those Benny Hill chase scenes. It was so embarrassing. Though, it was better than dying with a boring ol' stern look on my face.

No matter how shit their aim was, they did have cars and I was on foot. I'd be at a huge disadvantage if they caught up to me. So, we ran from street to street, alleyway to alleyway. We ran like our lives depended on it turning from corner to corner.

"Brooo! Do you have any idea where you're going?!" Jim said exhaustedly

"We'll see when I get there!"

Just as I responded to Jim, I made it out of an alley and onto the main road again.

In front of me was an unfriendly-looking bungalow with its beams exposed. The billboard on top of it had the same old star design that the sheriff wore on his chest. It was the only part of the billboard that shone like the morning sun.

It was the sheriff's office.

Despite the building's sturdy construction, the door had been left wide open. A young man who looked to be an assistant of some sort was casually rocking in a wooden rocking chair outside of the building.

These country bumpkin police rub me the wrong way. They're way too casual.

But it had been a perfect opportunity for us. My biggest worry was how we'd get them to open the door, but with the door standing open it made things a bit anticlimactic.

With Jim and the others following close behind me, I ran past the guy in the rocking chair and made a beeline for the interior of the sheriff's office.

I threw Billy, who had the audacity to yawn like a wee babe, on the floor and yelled out to Jim to shut the door.

"Okay!" he replied as he started to close it.

Before it could close all the way, the young man from out front dove inside.

"Wh-what-what do you think you're doing?!"

I ignored his question and closed the shutters on the windows. Not a moment too soon, Mel and Suzuka joined in to help me.

“I thought you’d choose the sheriff’s office” Suzuka said without an ounce of sentiment in her voice.

“I thought that the toughest buildings to get into would be either here or a bank. But this isn’t a stick-up nor do banks have cells.”

“I’m surprised you knew this was here, Gene,” said Melfina in amazement.

“I saw it on the map in the elevator boarding zone.”

“Hey! Stop talking and answer me!”

I grabbed the guy by the neck and thrust him onto the floor.

A second later, a laser beam flitted above his head and left a mark on the wall. Must’ve come in through one of the shutters that we hadn’t closed yet.

“They’ve arrived,” said Suzuka calmly.

I crawled along the floor towards the window. By stretching out my arm I just barely managed to close the shutter.

“Look at this place. It’s just like one of those sheriff’s offices you’d see in a western. The desk and stuff must be made from real wood.”

“You’re quite the western fanatic,” Suzuka said gleefully as she rubbed a cushion-less wooden seat that looked none too pleasing to sit in.

Did they think we were in some kind of museum?

We could hear the laser beams and bullets outside, like a Fourth of July fireworks display. Didn’t think they’d attack a sheriff’s office, but I guess I mistook who I was dealing with a little bit.

“There a backdoor?”

“Huh?” the man said as he laid there on the floor, his eyes still as round as saucers.

“Where’s the backdoor?”

“There’s none. You can only get in through the front,” the man answered to my menacing glare.

Kind of rude of me to say this, being the one who asked, but some assistant this guy is.

Getting a good look at him, he seemed to be about my age which meant that he was little too young to be involved the gritty world of sheriff work, even if he was just an assistant. Somehow, they always tend to pick up these little greenhorns.

“... Any windows then?”

“There’s one in the detention cell, but there’s reinforced resin and steel bars in it.”

“Any other exits?”

“You can get out onto the roof, but you can’t open it from the inside. J-just wait a second! What the hell is going on here?”

I see. There’s only one way to get in. If you close the front door and the shutters, you can’t get in with a tiny little handgun even through the front.

Just like the sheriff, the building itself ain’t nothing to shake a stick at, even if the assistant on guard duty is a dumbass. Looks like I wasn’t wrong about that at least.

“Where’s the sheriff?”

“If you have any business with him, you can tell it to me.”

“I don’t have to tell you anything when we’re in the middle of this lovely hail of bullets. If we were the bad guys, you’d be long dead, kid. Now, I’ll ask you again...where’s the sheriff?”

He opened his mouth in response:

“He went to go check out the disturbance at that bar... and then he went to go check out the explosion at the elevator, but now I can’t reach him...”

“He’s too far out, huh? Fine. Our defense ain’t looking too shabby anymore so I guess it’s time for a little payback.”

Jim opened the trunk and started to hand out the heavy artillery that we had brought from the ship.

“Pick your poison, bro.”

“I am not fond of such... boorish arms...”

“Then drop the fucking bazooka, Suzuka.”

“I am willing to bend my principles a bit in order to teach those ruffians a lesson,” she said as she readied the bazooka on her shoulder.

“I’ll... take this one then! I’ve always wanted to give this one a shot or two,” Mel said as she started to assemble the grenade launcher.

Don’t mess with women, man. Sometimes I need to remind myself of that.

Anyway, we decided to give those fuckers a show.

But then the gunfire outside stopped all of a sudden.

“Oh, they’ve stopped,” Melfina whispered as she lifted the grenade launcher along with Jim’s help, her hands coming to a stop.

“Yeah...”

“There any cameras?” Jim asked the young assistant.

“Cameras?”

“Cameras to surveil the outside of this office.”

“Nope, don’t got those.”

“How stone age is this place!?”

“Looks like you’re gonna have to see for yourself, Jim. This place just keeps becoming more and more like a Western.”

“Gene, you mustn’t make light of Westerns and historical dramas. Such things are part of humanity’s spectacular cultural heritage” quipped Suzuka.

I ignored Suzuka as she went on her tirade about Westerns and opened the tiny gun port on one of the window shutters, peeking outside.

“Oof.”

“What’s up?” I heard Jim ask from behind me.

“The hero’s here.”

From the porthole I could see the street in front of the office. The road was filled with the parked cars of the guys who followed us. They had gotten out of their cars with their guns in hand and were aiming at the office from the cover of their vehicles.

Not for long anyway.

The men were in a stooped position and surprisingly, were facing *away* from the office. They were staring right down the barrel of a rifle aimed at their asses they had left wide open while shooting up the sheriff’s office.

Because who else would be behind them but that slightly-aged sheriff standing beside his motorbike, with rifle in hand and a posture so pretty that it looked torn straight from a police academy textbook.

“Got some balls to be shooting at a sheriff’s office, Jeff” the sheriff said in his deep, reverberating voice.

One of the men gingerly raised his gun in the air and spoke as if trying to pacify the sheriff.

“This ain’t got nothing to do with you, sheriff. I was chasin’ the bastards that took my boy an’ they’d gone and holed themselves up in this ‘ere building of yours.”

“Yeah you’re sittin’ around here with your thumb up your ass, so we’ve taken the liberty of doing your job for you,” chided one of the guys piggybacking off Jeff. He was bearded and sordid looking.

“Shut up idjit” Jeff scolded, but he kept going.

“Heh. If you call yourself a sheriff, then beat it and-“

The high-pitched sound of the rifle cut him off.

The charged energy beam hit the heckler's gun and ricocheted off.

His legs quaked for an instant and he fell to the floor on his behind.

"I'm the sheriff in this here town. I don't need the help of some amateurs to do my job."

"I know. I know. Bud's just a little ticked off is all. But, the low-lives that gone and kidnapped my boy are really in there! Gotta do somethin'!"

"Your 'boy' is a wanted criminal in the FTS. I don't got the rights to arrest your boy Billy, but I also don't got the rights to interfere with them there people that came to arrest him."

"Hey, Hawkes. You know what happens in this town when you cross the head of the McLaughlins," Jeff said in a voice that sounded like he was restraining his anger.

"I just wanna go about my job the right way. Might be a good thing for the McLaughlin family."

"You can act like a big shot all you want, but you're outnumbered. That cheap little badge of yours ain't gonna be enough to deflect a bullet."

Jeff's voice had lost all of the soothing tone that had been there before.

The sheriff used this thumb to flick a switch next to the trigger on his rifle, then spoke softly:

"I set my rifle here to scatter shot mode. See how close we are? With one shot, I could take three, maybe four people's bits clean off. Wanna test how many shots I can get off before you can kill me?"

Everyone froze; it seemed like all time had stopped at that moment.

I stuck out the barrel of my ray gun through the porthole of the window and pulled the trigger slowly. The laser hit one of the cars taking off its side-view mirror.

Surprised, all of the men turned back to face the sheriff's office. The sheriff didn't even flinch.

"Don't forget about us, now!" I yelled playfully.

After looking back and forth between the sheriff and the office a couple times, the guys all looked at Jeff in silence. Probably why the sheriff took to talking to him first. After deliberating with himself for a few minutes with an annoyed expression plastered on his face, he gave a signal to the men and jumped into the passenger seat of the car in front of him. The other guys all scurried to their cars as well.

"Don't think this is the end!" Jeff yelled out as he made the driver pull out. They all left southward down the street with Jeff's car taking the lead, and his retinue of ruffians trailing behind him.

Without so much as a glance or backward gaze, the sheriff set his rifle back on the side of his bike and pushed it to the front of the building.

“Bravo, bravo. Way to go Superman” I said as I opened the door and greeted the sheriff with a handshake.

“I ain’t gonna thank you” he practically spat at me as he walked past me and entered the building.

He doesn’t have to say it; We both know. He was talking about that shot I fired toward the end just before.

“Oh, I know. You’re just doing your civil duty and whatnot,” I said in jest which earned me a frown.

“Cut the shit. You’re gettin’ other people involved in your mess. They think I’m on your side now.”

“Well, it looks like you kind of are, so why don’t you just give up and help us?”

Ignoring me, the sheriff walked right up to his assistant.

“Victor, why the hell did you let these fools in here?”

“It all happened so fast, and they looked like they were bein’ followed and…” he blathered, his face as red as a beet.

“I don’t care! You can’t just let people come in here off the street like they own the place. What if they wanted to hurt you? Your body’d be cold by now, lying right there on the floor.”

“I know… but Dad.”

“I’m not your dad during work. It’s Sheriff. How many times do I gotta say it?”

Oh, so they’re father/son. That explains why he’s so young. They did look quite similar once he mentioned it. That said, there wasn’t a hint of the sheriff’s steadfastness or grit in Victor’s calm face, which spoke to his good upbringing. His blonde locks fit his country boy aesthetic.

“So, what are you gonna do? I don’t think those guys are gonna let you slide, even if you throw us out.”

The sheriff clicked his tongue and turned to me.

“Being a smart-ass when your young ain’t gonna land you anywhere good, kid.”

“Before that, though, you gotta survive and whoever has the most men around here wins. We’re both in a hole, aren’t we?”

“… Shit. What a sonuvabitch of a situation. Fine. First, throw Billy in the hold and then we’ll talk.”

“That’s what I like to hear” I smiled at the sheriff who was very obviously pissed. I went over and picked up Billy who was still counting sheep.

“Victor, show ‘em where it is.”

“O-okay!”

Victor opened a door that led deeper into the building.

Through the door there were cells on the left and to the right a room sectioned off by walls and a door.

“What’s on the right?” asked Jim catching up behind Victor.

“Those are the quarters for whoever’s on night shift. There’s a bedroom, bath, toilet, and even a simple kitchen.”

“Just perfect! If that’s the case, which should we throw Billy in?” I asked Victor, who was twirling a key ring (no electric locks here folks!!).

“I think the one further in. There’s already someone in the frontmost one anyway.”

“Someone?”

I looked into the cell and there was someone wrapped in blanket asleep on the bed.

“Yeah. They’re not human so we’re not sure how to handle the case.”

Just as Victor said that the figure threw off the blanket and crawled up to the bars.

“What took you so long!?! Food! Food! Where’s the food! I’m hungry!”

Yeah. That wasn’t a human alright. In Earth terms, it looked like someone had crossed a human girl and a cat. In other words, it was a Ctarl Ctarl. For some reason, she was wearing a delivery person’s uniform.

... and she seemed super familiar for some reason.

“It’s Aisha...” Jim said dumbfounded.

“What are you doing here?”

“Oh! It’s Aishaaa!”

“Whoa! It’s Gene, Jim, Melfina, and even Suzukat.”

“Don’t call me that.”

Hearing Aisha’s loud mouth, Melfina and Suzuka came over to the hold. Melfina was lost in innocent Joy but Suzuka was holding her head with her left hand. I mean, yeah, I’d bet that hardboiled hitwoman wouldn’t wanna stoop to being called ‘Suzukat’.

“A friend of yours?” asked a puzzled Victor.

Not just a friend. Aisha ClanClan was a part of our group in the search for the Galactic Leyline, just like Suzuka. But recently she’d been saying that she was too busy with part-time jobs, though I couldn’t have imagined this.

“I’d like to remain as separate from this matter as possible, but can I ask why you arrested her?” asked Suzuka, making her best effort to look uninterested in Aisha’s plight.

“Dining and dashing”

“... wow” sighed Suzuka as she looked up toward the ceiling.

“Where’s your ‘pride of a CtarlCtarl’ or whatever?” I instinctively barked at Aisha through the iron bars.

“Well, I came to deliver something, but I was sooo hungry. I stepped into one of the restaurants that caught my eye and it just so happened that my eyes were too big for my wallet...” she said plainly with a face that suggested she was innocent.

“No one just happens to put away 20 plates of food!” snapped Victor.

“You humans just have small stomachs.”

“Hey now!”

What good’s being rude gonna do you?

“Ah, wasn’t I the one that said *we* were in a hole?”

Jim and Suzuka nodded

“What nyeow?” Aisha innocently tilted her head.

Hey now.