

Chapter 23: Orson

”I’ve got ten hostages, and a LOT of guns! My demands are going to be met, or I’m going to start shooting them one at a time.” (“them” the hostages, that’s what “them” referred to, not the “demands”... drop it, man, keep with what’s important.)

They were in the science classroom of Woodrow Wilson High School built in 1958. Hardwood floors and cinderblock walls painted a weak pistachio. Formaldehyde and a faint static electric smell hung in the air as a constant reminder that science normally went on in this room. Long, black resin-topped tables, with Bunsen burner gas pipes, in rows. An aisle down the middle Orson was currently pacing.

“You know you don’t want to do that.” a tinny static voice said from the phone, “You’re only in minor trouble now, but if you start hurting people, Pete, then you’re going to be in real trouble.”

They had assigned him the name “Pete”. He didn’t like it. Didn’t feel like it really captured the character. If he got to choose, he would have picked something more dangerous sounding, more evocative of some other criminal. Dylan, or Norman, or maybe even Clyde. He wasn’t sure, those were the ones he was toying around with. Not that it would matter. His name was “Pete” and it was too late to change it now.

“You’ll call me “Sir!” ... or maybe it wasn’t too late.

He had to remember that he was supposed to act in charge of the situation. Which he wasn’t comfortable with, but that also played well--

“Pete.”

”SIR!”

“Sorry. Sir. We are working really hard on your demands, but you have to understand it takes time.

“Orson “ by Mike Eserkaln www.eserkaln.com

“TEN!” he yelled hoping to startle and confuse them. He slammed the phone down and stared at the wall of random sea creatures in glass jars filled with yellowish liquid

“Wow, you’re good. I don’t know what the hell you were talking about, but it sounded real to me.”

It was Brenda. She was playing Hostage #3, the “wounded” hostage. She was supposed to be laying on the floor next to the window, but she was leaning back in a chair and smoking a cigarette, which was something else she wasn’t supposed be doing, and seemed to be enjoying that fact immensely.

“You think their going to actually send us pizza, or is that just another pretend thing in all of this?”

“In a real scenario, they might give us a pizza, depending on how cooperative I’ve been and how long you’ve been in here. They’ll probably slide us a box that says ‘Pizza’ on it and call it good.”

“Jesus, I’m hungry.”

“Have a frog” sneered Hostage #1, Dan. Dan had wanted Orson's role, but didn’t get it. Orsen always got the main roles because he could think the fastest on his feet. Not the best performer, but a faster thinker than Dan.

While he was best suited for the job with his ability to make things up, he knew he wasn’t the best performer. He didn’t even like doing it. It made him irritable and angry for hours afterwards. Some nights, after a particularly rough night of hostage negotiation training, Orsen honestly felt that the world would be better off if no one ever talked to anyone ever again.

For a romantic, that’s a cold pill to swallow.