Andrew continued very lightly to the training office.

Arnold said, “How many telegrams are in the building?”

Skip was in deep thought.

He did not answer.

Harold said, “Two. One in here and the other in one…”

Skip said said,“In the training office.”

Commander O’Hara said, “Where is Andrew?”

Arnold said, “I’ll go. But look at these names on the contract to build the temporary housing for the governor. I took them right to him. God have mercy.”

Skip said, “Andrew can take care of himself.”

The telegram machine started again all the commanders were still.

The office soldier ripped the paper from the telegram and ran and gave it to Skip.

Skip read the telegram and handed the telegram to Harold.

Harold read the telegram and Commanders Vincent, Johnson and Bronson read the telegram.

Arnold was standing and getting ready to go to the training office and look for Andrew.

Skip said, “The sentries got the fifteen contractors and arrested them. The search of their tents yielded three battery guns and a number of weapons of ammunition.

Commander Smythe said, “You know that assassin that was at Commander Harold’s house trial has been delayed unto the day after tomorrow to see if you Skip will do a plea deal.”

Skip looked at Commander Smythe and said, “You and commander Adams go and interrogate him. If he doesn’t give you a name beside Donovan. No deal.”

Skip said, “Donovan figured we won’t send the armed guards because they are tired. Commanders Johnson, Percy, Vincent, Montgomery. Go and cut off Donovan. Arrest him and his wife and take them to the prison. “

The office soldier was very nervous and said, “Sir.”

Skip heard the nervousness in the office soldier’s voice.

He did not hear the telegram machine for him to be calling Skip to give him another telegram.

All the commanders turned and looked at the office soldier.

Skip said, “Step in here and speak.”

Arnold closed the door.

The office soldier said, “Sir about three weeks when the new protocol books were received. Commander Harold opened the window there and was hollering after commander and called him a damn bad ass boy.”

The office soldier stopped and looked at Harold.

The office soldier said, “I left my desk to look out the window to see where was Commander Andrew.”

Skip said, “Commander Harold has always called him that. What is your point?”

The office soldier said, “I didn’t think anything of it until now.”

Skip looked at the office soldier.

The office soldier swallowed hard and said, “Will I go to jail or be court martial?”

Commander O’Hara head started hurting and he put his elbow on the cabinet and rubbed his head.”

Commander Greene said, “Spill it boy.” And reached at his gun.

Skip slightly looked at Commander Greene.

The office soldier said, “Commander…”

Skip’s heart skipped a few beats.

The commanders were quiet because one of them was about to name.

Arnold and Harold unhooked their guns and put their hands on the triggers.

Skip stood and moved from his desk.

Commander Greene pulled out his gun and cocked the trigger.

The office soldier turned his head and said, “Commanders Vincent…”

All the commanders turned their guns on Commander Vincent.

Commander Vincent put his hands in the air.

Skip said, “Who else?”

The office soldier said, ”Commander Malcolm.”

Skip said, “So while I was in the hospital Malcolm came back here and got the protocol books so he can learn the process and see how to sabotage it so the head assassins can be ahead of us.“

Skip looked at the office soldier and said, “You will not go to jail or court martial. We all missed that.”

The office soldier said, “They did not sign for the book. The rest of the books were just dropped off. By the printing company. I don’t know how they knew the books just arrived.”

Commander Greene said, “The printing company belongs to the woman that is running this show.”

Skip said, “Vincent you are under arrest for the assassination attempt on the governor and the first lady. You will be tried and executed this week.”

Commander Vincent closed his eyes.

Skip said, “Is there anymore of you bastards hiding amongst us?”

No one said anything.

The office soldiers stood and looked.

Skip said, “Alright, Commanders Greene, Harold and Adams interrogate Vincent. Commanders Percy, Johnson, Montgomery, Adams, Bronson and O’Hara find Donovan arrest he and his wife. Take them to the prison. Defend yourselves at all cost and do not count his wife out…”

Shots began to be fired.

Skip turned and looked and thought, “Andrew.”

Skip shouted, “Lockdown.”

Skip yelled at his commanders, “Move.

He ran down the steps to go to the training area.

Followed by Commanders Wallace and Porter.

The six commanders ran out the building and split into two groups of three. They flew out the headquarters just at the moment the lights were being lit.

No one was able to see them.

Commanders Johnson, Percy and Montgomery was a group and the second group was Adams, Bronson and O’Hara.

The commanders did not say anything. They rode very fast.

They were embarrassed and O’Hara was thinking he should retire with Arnold. And open a restaurant with his wife and daughters. But he truly loved the military.

O’Hara had to bring his mind back to his assignment which was not to be killed by a traitor and have a shoot out with Donovan and arrest him and his wife.

Skip, Wallace and Porter ran into the guard soldiers running to the training office.

The guard soldiers saw Skip and the other two commanders and circled them.

Andrew taught them that technique.

Skip did not like it.

As they ran to the training office the door flung open and Commander Malcolm was thrown out.

Skip broke through the circle and saw Andrew exiting the building.

Malcolm sat up on the ground.

Andrew tied Malcolm’s hands and taken his gun.

Andrew and Malcolm were fist fighting at first and then Andrew got tired and started shooting at Malcolm.

Commanders and Porter and Wallace ran and put their guns on Malcolm.

Malcolm being very sarcastic looked at Andrew and said, “You did not now to keep fist fighting.”

Skip was looking at Andrew.

He and Andrew turned and looked at the sarcastic Malcolm sitting his dignified self on the dirt road with his hands tied behind his back yelling at Andrew.

Skip yelled, “Shut up Malcolm!

Malcolm turned his head and began to mumble.

Skip said, “You deceived us.!”

Malcolm shook his head and said, “Well kind of.”

Skip said, “Kind of.”

Malcolm said, “You don’t understand I have to send that telegram to the person I named in my letter to you. I have to show them they can trust me to give me some information. If they don’t get that telegram from me, I can’t meet them and get more information.”

Andrew said, “Daddy can I shoot him?”

Skip thought.

Andrew said, “Wallace you and Porter did not see anything did you?”

Malcolm turned and looked up at Wallace and Porter.

Porter said, “No.”

Wallace stood and said, “I want to know who got my son.”

Skip looked at Wallace.

Malcolm on the ground said, “That’s where I am at.”

Skip was looking at Malcolm.

Malcolm said, “Skip I did not lie to you. You all were moving to slow. These people are fast. Skip this is so much bigger than what we think. They are smart and moving fast. I heard another state mentioned when I was having a secret meeting with Donovan not far from the capitol. The first lady walked in and walked to the back and sat across from us. I was sure she knew who we were. Donovan looked at the table in front of us and I am absolutely positive the first lady recognized the people at that table…”

Malcolm was kicking his feet in the dirt.

He said, “That is who they are.”

Wallace stood and said, “Is the first lady conscious?”

Malcolm said, “Not for long.”

Skip looked at Malcolm.

Malcolm started whistling.

Skip said, “Send the telegram.”

Malcolm tried to stand.

The soldiers helped him up.

Malcolm looked at Andrew and said, “Bad ass boy. You don’t know to fight to the end? And you teach training.”

Andrew looked at Malcolm and said, “My dinner was getting cold.”

Wallace and Porter and two soldiers walked Malcolm into the training office.

Malcolm stopped and said, “Hey bad ass boy did you send armed soldiers or not?”

Skip said, “No.”

Malcolm was fussing.

Malcolm just shooting like he did not have any sense.

Andrew became angry and jumped to run behind Malcolm.

Malcolm stuck out his tongue at Andrew.

The soldiers looked at Andrew.

Andrew said, “Dad!”

Skip said, “Leave him alone. Why didn’t you fight him to you wore him down.”

The soldiers were looking at Andrew waiting for an answer since he was over hand to hand combat training.

Andrew squirmed and leaned back to Skip, who was thinking, and said, “I have a date.”

One of the soldiers said, “Damn. For a woman.”

Andrew looked at the soldiers.

Andrew stood by his daddy and he looked at Skip.

Skip was thinking.

Andrew walked to the other side of Skip and peeped in his face.

The soldiers were watching Andrew.

Andrew looked at Skip and said, “Daddy …”

The soldiers snickered.

Andrew said, “Can I go now?”

Skip said, “What? Yeah.”

Andrew ran as fast as he could.

He turned the corner of the building and nearly fell trying to get to his horse.

The soldiers snickered.

Skip heard the soldiers snickering and he saw Andrew.

He was still trying to put pieces together.

In his mind there was something that was not fitting together.

Andrew got on his horse and flew out the headquarters.

Skip could hear the horse and knew it had to be Andrew.

Andrew did not look back.

He was off duty.

He stopped by the flower shop and picked up the flowers he ordered the week before.

He picked up the flowers and he went to the pastry shop as they were locking their doors.

Andrew pleaded with the owner.

The owner unlocked the doors and allowed Andrew to come in.

Andrew bought several cakes and balanced them as he rode to his girlfriend’s house.

The biracial girl was dressed nicely and waiting for Andrew.

Her father a local physician and her mother a freed slave.

Her mother died a year ago.

Her white father came to their small town and got his daughter and brought her to the capitol and sent her to the state college.

The capitol was a buzzed because she was quite pretty.

Her white father had married and had three boys with his white wife.

He caught Andrew’s attention at the capitol dance for the college students.

She saw him again at the registration of the new college as he represented the military.

All the female students were running to his table, because he was very attractive with the thick long hair.

Skip was at the table with Andrew to weed all those that did not fit.

Skip was use to women swooning over Andrew and all the college girls running to Andrew did not bother Skip.

Harold looked at all the college girls.

His thoughts went to Vivian and said to Skip, “Can I go home?”

Skip said, “You can’t contain until you get off?”

Harold looked at Skip and said, “Does that mean no.”

Skip just stared at Harold.

A group of three college boys walked up to the table.

Harold and Skip stood with great pride and dignity.

The boys saw all the girls swooning over Andrew.

One of the boys pointed and said, “Are you taking them now?”

Harold said, “If they use correct grammar?”

The boys were trying to figure out how the boy grammar was not correct.

One of the boys said, “I know I am in. Every male in my family are in the military.”

Skip said, “What is your family’s name?”

Andrew looked at Skip then the boys.

He turned around and Chelsea was standing sideways and slightly twisting and smiling at Andrew.

Andrew said, “How lovely.”

Harold peeped around Skip to look at the girl and said,”Huh.”

Skip could not believe Andrew said that, he looked at Andrew then the light skinned girl with hazel eyes.

Skip said, “I have to teach these men to keep their minds on their jobs.”

Andrew took Chelsea’s hand and kissed it.

Harold saw Andrew kiss Chelsea’s hand.

Skip said, “Damn.”

He was trying to pretend he did not see Andrew kiss Chelsea’s hand, because he would have to hear Harold’s mouth about going home to Vivian.

The college girls said, “Whoa.”

Chelesa walked away with a group of girls.

Andrew stood and lusted behind the girl.

He felt Skip’s eyes burning a hole in his head.

Skip was thinking, ”I wish I had a brick now Shirley, I would knock him out. I know now not to let him go out recruiting any more. Embarrassing me like this.”

Andrew dismounted his horse and stood for a moment and fixed his uniform.

The doctor and his white wife were peeping out the window at Chelsea’s date.

Chelsea was nervous and in the parlor waiting for Andrew.

She did not know to stand or sit.

She was jumping up and down and biting her lips.

She said,”Papa?”

He looked at her and said, “I’ll get the door.”

His wife looked at him and ran into the hallway and looked in the mirror to be presentable and tried to walk back to her husband with dignity.

Chelsea covered her mouth and giggled.

Her parents grinned.

Chelsea wanted a new dress and begged her father for a new dress for her date with Andrew.

He finally gave in and went into debt to get his daughter a new dress.

He was proud of how she was adjusting to her new life.

Andrew had been there in the past when her parents were not home.

The word was through out the city that a young military officer was dating the mixed girl.

No one knew it was the richest boy in the state.

Andrew saw Chelsea’s parents watching him from the window.

He picked up the flowers.

Then the three boxes of sweets from the bakery.

Andrew took his time and walked with pride and dignity to Chelsea’s house and up the steps.

Chelsea was nervous and jumping up and down in the parlor.

Her father was standing behind the door telling her to calm down.

His wife was standing behind him and was as nervous as Chelsea.

Andrew knocked on the door with his hand that held the flowers.

Chelsea’s half brothers were standing on the top stairwell looking down.

Chelsea’s father opened the door.

Andrew said, “Good evening is Chelsea at home?”

The wife was trying to peep around her husband to get a good look at Andrew.

Chelsea’s father stuttered and said, “Yes. Come in.”

Chelsea was in the parlor nervous with her balled fists to her chin.

Andrew walked in the house.

He was striking with his commander’s uniform and his thick long hair.

Chelsea’s father was stunned at Andrew and closed the front door.

Andrew knew he had to impress Chelsea’s parents and said, “I am Commander Andrew Stith Simons Costner.”

The wife fainted.

The husband looked down at his wife.

Chelsea ra out the parlor.

The boys were seat at the top of stairwell looking down.

Chelsea ran to Andrew and they nearly kissed.

Andrew saw the boys on the stairs and Chelsea’s father was bring his wife to.

Chelsea’s father picked up his wife and she said, “Oh he is gorgeous.”

Chelsea’s father said, “What?”

He left her on the floor and stood.

He pointed to the parlor for Andrew to go.

Andrew was looking back at Chelsea’s stepmother on the floor.

Chelsea ran to help her step mother up.

Chelsea was grinning and the stepmother grabbed Chelsea by the arm and winked.

The boys yelled, “Daddy the pastry boxes.”

The father looked at the boys on the steps and Andrew said, “They are referring to these.”

The father took the pastry boxes and tossed them to the boys.

The mother looked at her husband who walked back to the parlor with Andrew.

Chelsea was holding her stepmother and they walked into the parlor.

Andrew was standing.

Chelsea’s father pointed for Andrew to sit.

Andrew was waiting for Chelsea to enter the parlor and sit so he could sit by her.

Chelsea’s father, Seymour, waved his hand at his wife and said, “Thy are alright.”

Andrew took Chelsea’s hand and gently sat her on the sofa.

They stared into each other’s eyes.

Andrew gave Chelsea’s the flowers.

Chelsea smelled the flowers and said, “My favorite. They are out of season.”

Andrew said, “I special ordered them.”

The stepmother touched her chest and said, “Oh.”

Chelsea reached the flowers to her daddy who was standing near Andrew. He took the flowers and slung them to his wife.

The boys were opening the pastry boxes and eating the crème puffs, whoopie pies and raspberry cake with their hands.

She rolled her eyes at him and tried to smile and took the flowers into the kitchen and ran back through the hall and checked her image in the mirror.

The mother heard her boys and yelled at them, “You are acting like savages stop.”

Andrew looked towards the hallway.

The father was stunned by Andrew.

His wife walked back and stood by her husband.

Andrew pointed to the chair.

The wife was embarrassed and her face turned red.

She sat down.

Her husband stood and stared at Andrew.

Chelsea lifted her eyebrows at her father.

He said, “Your name sounds familiar. Might I know your father or mother.

Andrew was very proud of his parents’ heritage.

Andrew said, “Sir I am the youngest son of Shirley Stith Simons and Head of the military Skip Costner.”

Chelsea’s father said, “I am a doctor I work at Simons Hospital. That’s like the name of our hospital.”

He giggled and looked at his wife.

She looked at her husband and smirked but did not understand why he said that.

Andrew said, “Yes the hospital was built and named after my mother Shirley Simons.”

Chelsea did not know that.

Her stepmother looked at Andrew.

Chelsea’s father stopped giggling and looked at Andrew.

Andrew smiled and shook his head.

Seymour said, “Simons, Stith. The richest railroad and shipping magnates in this country.”

He passed out.

Andrew stood to help him up.

Chelsea jumped and bent over Andrew and said, “Daddy.”

The wife waved her hand and said, “He’ll come to later.”

Andrew looked at her and Chelsea said, “Eva.”

Eva looked down at Seymour and said, “See.”

Andrew bent down and helped Seymour up.

Eva said,”See he is ok. Your family have a ball once per year to benefit the hospital in the big city.”

Chelsea was helping hold her father up.

Andrew looked at Eva and back to Seymour.

Andrew sat Seymour in his place on the sofa.

Seymour was shaking his head to become conscious.

Andrew reached in his chest pocket and reached Eva an invitation to the ball.

Eva looked at the invitation and said,”You had this for us. This is a real invitation. You are just a boy and you have accomplished all of these things. You are gorgeous…”

Seymour rolled his eyes at Eva.

Chelsea seemed confused and sat next to her father.

Eva said,”…You are a college graduate and you are a commander of the military forces.”

Andrew was gushing.

Eva said, “Do you have a brother?”

Andrew smiled, because he knew he had his hook in them.

Seymour looked at Chelsea.

Chelsea had been in a sexual relationship with Andrew for mouths.

The mother heard her sons on the steps throwing up.

Andrew made a disgusted face.

Eva leaned back to look at the stairwell and yelled,”You puppies better clean that up.”

Seymour said, “Eva, don’t call them out of their names.”

Eva looked at her husband and sat up and leaned forward and said, “Tell me Andrew is it true?”

Andrew learned not to say anything until he heard the question.

Andrew said,”And what is that ma am?”

Eva said, “Is it as grand as I hear. The pastry, fruits and the games and the gowns and gloves.”

Andrew smiled and said, “And then some.”

He ran over to Eva and kneeled down and said, “My best memory is the grand staircase decorated with all types of exotic flowers. Did I mentioned the grand birds and performers.”

Chelsea smirked and said, “Memory?’

Seymour said, “Chelsea be quiet.”

Andrew stood up and looked at Chelsea, because he wanted to know why she was being sarcastic.

He said, “Chelsea what disturbs you about who I am? I haven’t been to the ball in ten years, because my mother died. She would be the planner each year. For months we tasted and delighted in the treats from around the world. Some were good and some were bad. After all of these years I decided to go back to my family big event and honor my mother. I wanted to introduced you to my family. And you are being ugly. I did not know you had that type of ugliness in your heart. I am paying all the expenses for you and father and mother to attend, all of this as a tribute to my mother. You have destroyed that Chelsea.”

Andrew took a deep breath and picked up his hat and said, “Good evening.”

He walked out the front door.

The mother stood and walked Andrew to the front door and closed it.

She stood and looked at Andrew.

He stood by his horse for a minute and mounted his horse and did not look back at Chelsea’s house.

But got on his horse and rode away.

Chelsea’s father stood behind his wife and watched Andrew.

The boys were sitting on the steps and belched and burped.

Eva walked from the door and Seymour followed her.

They stood in the parlor doorway and looked at Chelsea.

Eva stared at Chelsea and said, “Fix this I am going to that ball.”

Seymour said, “We can’t afford to go. We have to mortgage the house and sell the boys.”

Eva was about to go upstairs and looked at her boys and said, “Sell the damn boys.”

Her husband stepped back in the foyer and said, “Eva what’s wrong with you?”

Eva held her hand up and did a whop to do and went into her bedroom and locked the door.

Her boys stood and ran to her bedroom and she had locked the door.

Seymour smelled the vomit on the stairs and saw the empty boxes. He could not believe his sons.

He saw their legs at his bedroom door and knew they would be sleep in a few minutes and he had to clean up that mess. I clean that mess up at work.

He turned and looked at Chelsea as she was about to pass him.

She touched her father shoulder.

Seymour said, “Go and sit down.”

Chelsea said, “Daddy I am tired and want to go to bed.”

Seymour said very hard, “Sit down.”

Chelsea looked at him and went and sat down on the sofa.”

Seymour sat next to her and said, “Are you expecting?”

Chelsea smirked and tried to act coy.

Seymour said, “I am a man and I am a father. You act pregnant.”

Chelsea could not catch her breath.

Seymour said, “Is it Andrew’s baby?”

Chelsea had her mouth opened.

Seymour said, “Several neighbors said they saw two different white men coming in and out of my house when me and my wife were not home. “

Chelsea looked in front of her said,”Daddy.”

Seymour touched his daughter’s hand and said, “I’m not angry. Disappointed, but not angry. I knew to bring you out of that environment that white men would want to use you for their benefit. That is my fault I should have watched you more.”

Chelsea started crying.

Seymour held her.

Seymour said, “No way the baby is Andrew?”

Chelsea held onto her father and cried out and said, “No.”

Seymour said, “Eva will be disappointed. She is looking towards that ball. I did not tell her about the grand Christmas party and the Christmas dinners.”

Chelsea held onto her daddy and cried for a good while.

Seymour said, “You are small, when is the baby due?”

Chelsea began to cry more.

Seymour was still holding his daughter and said, “Shoo. Ok. We’ll talk later.”