

Both men walked side to side along the pavement each not sharing a word yet finding sync in their movements.

Alex's mind was preoccupied but that didn't stop his eyes from analyzing their surroundings, gazing pensively at what appeared to be a deserted street.

Not far up ahead was a building that looked as if it had seen better days. Smashed windows and dangling window panes, paint peeling so much it was next to nonexistent, a door which rattled with termites (most likely), was among the many things decorating the wreckage.

To a passing outsider, they would stick out like sore thumbs, two men in fine suits that looked as if they were attending a high scale function walking along slummy and very dusty delapidated zinc fences.

Mark was silent as death with his eyes following Alex's movements, flickering around the area.

Among all the places they could've picked to discuss their next call of action, this was the most low profile.

"Right now, there's at least six snipers pointed at us," Mark was the first to break the silence. Alex paid him no attention and kept looking around. The snipers he noticed, they seemed to be Mark's men so he never thought to be cautious.

"Seven," he corrected, eyes flickering to the adjacent building spotting the tiny crack in the dirt stained window, "And they're pointed at me, if we're being specific."

Mark barked out a laugh, slapping Alex on his shoulder, "Still sharp as ever Nick." He held up his palm, most likely signalling his men, obediently they bowed out of sight.

"Don't call me that," Alex spoke coldly, keeping his eyes straight forward.

"What's the harm." Alex could hear the smile in Marks tone as he spoke and his fists clenched reflexively.

"We'll find out if you were to say it again," They were close now, the broken door was only a few feet away.

Mark chuckled as they entered the building and veered o the straight path to a torn painting on the wall nearest to the corner.

Eortlessly, he brushed it away to reveal what looked like plain walling, he pressed his hand in that same spot and almost immediately a dim light lit up, turning green as it ran down the length of his palm.

Then, a er another minute of scanning each fingertip, the wall opened to reveal a tiny box-like compartment with a neat little slanted number pad.

Faster than the eye can keep up Mark typed in the code. Alex, already familiar with the process, moved just in time to not fall into the trapdoor which opened to reveal a flight of stairs leading down into darkness.

"A few of my accomplices showed up for the meeting, including Zander and Remy, they want to hear your side of the story that was spread among the cartel."

Alex, clearly taken aback, stared at Mark lucidly.

Remy and Zander?

It was surprising that Alonzo hadn't succeeding in acquiring them over on his side.

"And that story would be?" Alex asked as they descended down the stairs, quite curious now on what false news Alonzo had spread.

"That you found a whore on the outside that changed you and you were planning to take the chip and sell it o to ensure yours and her freedom," Mark spoke in one breath.

Alex felt his le eye twitch.

"I of course, never believed in the slightest and now that I've met that cute little mamiof yours, it's hard to believe that she were the one that corrupted you and not the other way around."

His right eye seemed to twitch as well.

"I mean, if I had a night with her I'd probably see heaven earl-" his words were cut o the moment Alex's hand curled around his neck, slamming him against the titanium wall.

His teeth grit against each other as mu led words slipped past his lips. "Continue Mark, I fuckingdare you."

Despite the darkness that overshadowed the room, Alex could feel Mark's face slowly split into a catlike grin. Evident playfulness in his tone. "I value my life too much to do so." He waited until Alex released him, before reaching a hand up to rub the marks.

He laughed, stepping down the final step, "but, I am curious on how such a nice piece of ass ended up with you of all people, and how did Bianca not find out about her?"

"Bianca?" Alex echoed, "How is she relevant to the current situation?"

Mark paused and stared at him as though he was a child, learning the alphabet. Finally with a short laugh, he turned shaking his head.

"God fucking dammit you're dim, Bianca has been killing any body you slept with for the past years without remorse, I'm surprised you're just finding this out now"

Alex blinked, "I only slept with her a few times, how...?"

"Don't fucking ask me, bitch is a crazy motherfucker."

Alex could do nothing but think, he tried to remember anything about back then, he was running on fumes and kept pining about Ameena not knowing of his existence ever since he le her, sleeping around was one of the things that kept him from marching into her university classes.

A shame how staying away had done more harm than good.

They entered the bright room, Alex's eyes took a little while to adjust to the white walls and florescent lights, in the middle of the wide room was a huge table with four persons sitting randomly around it, each stood as they entered.

"Alexander, meet Kyle and Roberto, you already know those two, Remy and Zander."

They all introduced themselves with handshakes before taking a seat around the table.

"I need to get the chip to The Godfather," Alex stated, "I don't know what you've heard about me from my brother nor do I care, I need a clear path to be brought forward for bargaining with the Godfather, All of which will be stunted by my brother."

"Alonzo, being just a bastard of my father, cannot take over the cartel because of rules in the code of conduct but, say if something were to happen to me, he'd have a loophole. This comes in the form of turning everyone against me with rumors in the hope that I won't be given the grounds to defend myself. Unfortunately, he has partially succeeded. The only reason I'm still alive talking to you right now is because he neither has the chip nor does he know it's specific location."

"And where would that be?" Roberto asked, an eyebrow raised.

"Highly confidential," Alex spoke in a clipped tone, "what I need to do is get the chip to the Godfather and clear my name before this spirals out of control, my brother has been eyeing my birthright for quite a while, it sure never bothered me then but, because of the circumstances, an innocent civilian has been drawn into the mix and I will not be responsible for her death. Not if I can help it."

"So what's the plan?" Remy asked.

"We will definitely have to avoid being caught, the main HQ is probably swarming with Alonzo's men to stop me from getting to the Godfather so we'll need to decide if we'll be going in head on or low profile."

"I happened to stumble upon some secret tunnels under the base which could be of some use," Zander spoke up earning a grunt of approval.

"Good then we'll need to draw up a blueprint if necessary. Xander work on mapping us through the tunnels and straight to the server room. One of the men can override the artificial security and turn it o, long enough for Remy's men to infiltrate."

"Mark, you'll work on taking out the front and back guards with your sniper pen. Quietly though, our presence should not be noticed-" Alex paused, his hand going to his phone which had vibrated only once.

The men around him looked at him expectantly, for him to continue. Alex held up a finger and dug his other hand into his pocket for the phone which vibrated once again.

"A moment," he voiced as he fished out his phone, eyes focusing on the screen.

This phone was linked to his safehouse security, in fact, the collection he had there was all synced to the security system. And now, he had a notification from said security system.

Security gate was opened. Designated keys: maid.

Alex's whole body froze, his eyes widening. He couldn't chance a person seeing Ameena. Without a word he got up, with a finger he gestured to Mark and was already speed walking out of the room.

His eyes never li ed from the screen, mind going to the worst case scenario as his eyes zeroed in on the "maid". Specified on the report.

Cold sweat washed over him in waves as he took steps two at a time.

The maid wasn't scheduled to be cleaning on weekdays.

The broken door almost came o its hinges as Alex bursted through the door, hoping and praying that maybe he was just overreacting. Maybe Ameena was fine as ever and was waiting to pounce on him the moment he came through the door.

His steps gradually broke out into a run, him struggling to focus on anything other than the scary images flashing behind his eyes.

Ameena being tortured. Ameena being stripped of her dignity, raped and beaten. The images came one before the other and now he felt like the world's unluckiest man.

Maybe karma had finally caught up with him. He'd known and saw what happened to women that was involved with dangerous men upon being captured.

Mark was talking to him, maybe, he wasn't sure, everything felt distorted around him and he was seeing through pinpricks. The dread too much to bare.

He was brought back to earth by a fist slamming into the side of his face. Alex blinked, his feet was hovering over the gas pedal and his hands were clenched sti ly around the steering wheels.

"You cannot drive like this! Are you trying to kill us?" Marks voice was finally decipherable.

"I'm fine and you don't know the way," Alex managed to mutter, a foot slamming on the gas.

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It was his fault.

It repeated over and over like a broken record inside his brain as he stared, stupified at the gate that was half open, the other one laying on the ground as if someone had rammed a truck through it in a hurry.

Futher along was even more worse, the door they didn't even bother to lock.

Alex used the tip of his boot to kick it open, then wished he hadn't.

His phone rang. The tone jarring through the silence. Alex gripped it with each ounce of rage he felt for the person on the other end.

Surprisingly, it didn't smash in his hand.

" Alexander or shall I say, Nickolai, How nice of you to answer."

Alex remained silent. How could he have been so careless.

"She's a pretty little thing, a shame really... what's in store for her."

"All of which can be avoided if you bring the lure to me, failure to do so will...I don't really need to explain do I...? Just listen."

What came a er was something that was buried into his mind and would be forever, the phone fell from his hands, he couldn't speak nor did he hear Mark who entered the house behind him.

It was the sound of her pained scream.