

Tristan didn't return directly to the Luminex building. He wanted to give his brother ample time to learn he was coming. The more terrified he became, the more predictable he was. He used the time to make arrangements for when he met Miranda again. He was certain she would be informed of what he was doing.

When he reached the building, it was on high alert. Tristan smiled. Good, let them be prepared for him. Let them be armed and ready to kill him. Let them try to defend his brother. He was in the mood for some sport.

He went to a side entrance. There was one guard by it. The man was in full-body armor, armed with a Gartherim rifle. He was shaking as he yelled for Tristan to stop. When the man did raise the gun, it was shaking, and the shot went wide. They should have instructed him to shoot first. Tristan didn't give him another chance. He lifted his Kytron and shot the guard in the throat, where the joint weakened the armor.

He didn't bother searching him. The only thing he might have had which would have been useful was a key card for the building, but he had the one given to him. He dropped his gun and took the law-enforcement model of the Cyrial out of the guard's holster, removed the safety, set it at maximum beam strength, and placed it in one of the empty holsters on his chest harness. He picked up the rifle and unlocked the door.

The card worked as promised. He entered, ready to shoot, but there was no one on the other side. There weren't any alarms either, but they had to know the guard was dead.

A group of guards rounded the corner at that moment. They were surprised to see him, and that hesitation cost three of them their lives. Their rifles had still been pointed at the floor.

Tristan was running before the bodies hit the ground. The fourth man raised his rifle, but Tristan was already too close. He grabbed the gun and swung his own on the arm holding it. The sound of bones snapping was satisfying. He kept hold of the man's weapon and kicked him, wrenching it out of his hand as he flew back.

The man landed on his back, quickly got to his feet, and ran away. Tristan shook his head, a wry smile on his lips. He dropped one rifle, aimed the other, and shot the man's knee out.

The man was screaming for help in his radio. Tristan went back to the dead and took their Cyrials. One went in the other front holster, and the other two in the back ones. He didn't bother with the rifles anymore. He was going to be too close to his targets for them to be all that useful now.

He walked to the screaming man and crouched next to him. He

pointed a gun in his face, and that shut him up. The radio kept going on about how reinforcements were coming. Tristan unclasped the man's helmet and took it off. He wasn't great at judging a human's ages, but he looked young.

"Didn't they bother teaching you anything before handing you weapons and sending you in?" The man was too scared to say anything. "You should never turn your back on the enemy, especially if you don't have any cover fire." He gave the human a sad smile, as he saw a glimmer of hope in his eyes. "I wish I could tell you that you'll do better next time, but you won't get that chance." He shot him.

He took the communicator.

"My name is Tristan. I have already killed five of your men. Any who get in my way will also die. I don't normally give warnings like this, so count yourself fortunate. Leave, right now. This is between your president and me."

He didn't warn them to be generous. He wanted this to be fun, so he needed them to be properly agitated. Experienced warriors would keep their emotions in check, but he didn't expect many of those after him in this building to be experienced. Now, they would be afraid; they would want to run, but they wouldn't be allowed to.

He made his way up slowly, crossing each floor from the stairwell on one side to the one on the other and killing any guards he saw. When the charge on a gun ran out, he dropped it. He didn't have to wait for them to recharge, he just picked up a new one off a body. He also acquired grenades, which he put to good use in the stairs.

He didn't keep track of the dead. He didn't care how many bodies he left behind, only that Justin got the message he shouldn't have messed with him again. He wondered if his brother would ever learn.

If he hadn't told the ex-president he'd get his company back, Tristan might have blown it up. Not that it had taught his brother anything the last time he'd done that as far as he could tell.

The corridors were thick with smoke, and the smell of burnt bodies was overpowering by the time he reached the top floor. They hadn't planned on him making it this far because the force protecting the office was laughable. A dozen men he quickly gunned down.

The card opened the door, and he threw a grenade in. The explosion sent a few bodies flying out. He looked into the reception area and shot whoever was still alive.

The door on the other side of the room also obeyed the key card. Tristan entered it.

As he'd expected, it was empty. Justin had run. Probably the moment he'd found out Tristan was on his way. He closed the door and disabled

the lock. He didn't expect anyone would try to get in, but he wanted to make sure he'd have some peace and quiet while he did what he was here to do. He placed a small package on the floor, next to the door.

The office was neat. Justin liked things to be in their place and just so. He didn't like getting dirty, and he didn't like disorder. He had to be livid right now, knowing Tristan was here, and that he'd destroy everything, just to spite him.

The walls were filled with shelves, all of them lined with antique books, made of paper. Tristan never understood his brother's fascination with those things. They wasted space and were easily damaged. He preferred data chips.

He looked around, locating the camera. He picked up one of the books, held it for the camera, and ripped it in half along the spine. He gave it his widest smile before smashing it. He then broke the other two cameras, the ones his brother must have thought were well-hidden.

One bookshelf hid a closet filled with black suits. This was another thing that baffled Tristan. Why did his brother love to dress as a human so much? He even wore shoes, modified for their slightly different-shaped feet. What was wrong with just going in the fur? Feeling the ground against the sole of your feet? Pants, to avoid those indecency laws, were the extent Tristan accepted when he had to be out of his workshop.

He took out one of the suits and put it in a bag. He and Justin were about the same size. Justin was a little taller, and Tristan a little wider. It wouldn't be a comfortable fit, but he didn't need it to be.

Justin's computer was a Kadary, unsurprisingly a model Tristan wasn't familiar with. Justin liked having the best, and most recent, of everything. It made him feel like he was on top of things, even when he knew nothing about this stuff.

This computer was a perfect example. Sure, Tristan wasn't familiar with this particular model, but he'd taken apart many Kadarys over the years.

So, when nothing happened as he turned it on, he wasn't surprised. Justin had used an infection to erase everything in it, in effect murdering it. But he also wasn't worried. If Justin had bothered learning even the basics of Kadary computers, he'd have known they were designed to ensure their deaths weren't final.

He took off the casing and had to search; the switch he wanted wasn't at the same place as on the last model he'd studied. He flicked it, and the protected backup resurrected the computer.

Tristan sat and leaned back as he watched it come to life. Justin

should have physically destroyed it after the wipe or used a lower-quality computer.

The security on the computer was big, flashy, and ultimately worthless. It took him a moment to bypass it, then he was in the company's system with access to everything. The first thing he located was Justin's contact number.

He used the company's comm to call it.

"This had better be important," came a voice Tristan remembered well. "I thought I made it clear I didn't want to be disturbed." Tristan remained silent. "Well?" Justin asked, annoyance dripping from his tone.

"Hello, little brother." Tristan was completely calm. He was going to make his brother pay, but he couldn't get angry at him. In the silence that followed, he launched a program to locate Justin.

"Tristan." The hate his brother felt for him was palpable in his voice.

"Didn't you pay attention to anything father taught us?"

"You mean taught you," Justin snarled. "I was just the tag along, remember? The second born, the weak one, the one who could never measure up to you. Father put me through Gerinian's Hell because of you."

Tristan started looking through the files, keeping an eye on the location program. "You know very well father treated me the same. He put us through all that so we would learn to survive, at any cost."

"I survived, so I did learn. And I don't have to go around killing to do it."

"No, you just trick others into doing it for you. I have to commend you on that, but if you really paid attention to Father, you would have known better than to leave anyone alive who could point me back to you. Actually, you would have known better than to attempt anything against me at all."

"You're just pissed because I got to you before you got to me. You think I was going to give you the time to find and kill me? You hate me as much as I hate you."

Tristan sighed. It wasn't the first time Justin accused him of that. It shouldn't surprise him anymore, yet it did. "I don't hate you, little brother. I never have." He found Justin's hidden files. He sent a program into his brother's accounts. It would disperse that money through the multiple accounts Tristan had. "I don't feel anything toward you at all." He started compiling the files for Emerill. "You're too insignificant for me to bother with. Everything I've ever done to you was in retaliation for something you initiated. If you'd simply learn to set your paranoia aside, you and I would live lives uncomplicated by

the other.”

Justin snorted. “You killed Father, so don’t tell me about not caring about me. It was always just a question of time before you would come kill me too.”

“Father died because he stood in my way,” Tristan explained calmly. He sent the files. “He didn’t have anything left to teach me, so I was leaving. He tried to force me to stay. I did what he taught me: I removed the obstacle to what I wanted.” The memory still saddened him. He would have preferred not to kill him, but his father hadn’t left him any choice. He wouldn’t stand aside.

“I don’t care about your lies. I know the truth, and you’ll never find me.”

Tristan smiled. “Really, little brother? Then you shouldn’t have talked with me for so long.”

“What?”

Tristan sighed. “You really need to learn what technology can do. You have to stop relying on others to provide that information. While we talked, I had a program find your location. Your comm is on the planetary network, so it was just a question of time, which you were kind enough to provide me with. There’s nowhere on this planet where you can hide from me, Justin. Run, Justin. Run as fast as you want, but I will find you. I will make you pay. You shouldn’t have forced me to miss those years. For that, destroying your company won’t be enough.”

The connection died.

“Run, little brother, run to the only place you think you can escape me.”

He had him moving, now to set up the next part. He used Justin’s latest medical file and wrote a quick infection program around it. He composed a short message for the Sayatoga, informing them Tristan had been captured, and he routed it to them through Miranda’s number. When they opened it, the infection would locate his medical files and replace them with Justin’s.

Now, all he had to do was ensure Miranda would be there to catch Justin.

He opened the door, and Miranda stood there, holding a military-grade Pisteron.