

### Storyboard-13

The storage building is three hundred feet long, a hundred wide. The sides are concrete, with an access door on the south side and a loading dock on the north one. Their website indicates a variety of individual lockers are available, from enough to store one room's worth of furniture to an entire house's worth. The fence surrounding the building is ten feet tall with barbed wire at the top, but not electrified; that is to my advantage.

The access gate is a hybrid. The keypad is from Liftmaster; the ELISS, but two keycard readers have been added. I can't study them up close at the moment. One of the few cameras on the property is pointed at the gate and the lock is in view of it. This early on a Saturday morning it probably isn't monitored, but the longer I spend in sight of it, the higher the odds become someone will notice and alert the owner.

I consider putting Asyr on taking over the feed, but I am not in a position to deal with the uncertainty of when they will get to it. I'm down to a little over twenty-four hours before withdrawal kicks in.

Studying the assembly with the binoculars, I can tell the card readers are different models. The only reason to have two is that they want the added security of needing two people to unlock it. One will have a master key and the other will be the locker's owner's own. I only have the one lock cracker from the Locksmith on me. There is a second one in my locker, currently disassembled as part of studying how it works. The Locksmith uses specialty processors and flash memories I haven't been able to connect to a computer without causing them to erase themselves, yet. I can go back, reassemble that lock breaker and come back, but that will cost me time.

I did two circuits, looking for another, easier, way through the fence, but this gate is the only way short of cutting the chain links. That leaves climbing it, but that means I need to deal with cleaning the blood afterward.

A car in the distance revs its engine and a box shivers: it's a Camaro. Bart drives a Camaro. The cracks in that box illuminate others and I smile, recalling his smooth flesh, the taste of his blood. His cries, the look of fear in his eyes; how comfortable he felt in my arms.

I silence the boxes and go back to studying the lock. I don't know this particular model, but I have taken apart many from Liftmaster. The question is how much do the two card readers that have been added change how it behaves and how easily I can get through.

The Camaro revs again, closer, and I can make out the red color as it slows to take the turn to the street I am standing on. I step back into the deeper shadows of the alley. It speeds up to the posted thirty miles an hour, drives by without slowing, and turns at the end of the block.

Boxes rattle and I have difficulties quieting them. The top was down and I had a perfect view of the driver. The handsome driver was Bart. By the time I can quiet the boxes, I am painfully hard and that takes longer to bring under control. Now is not the time to want him. What happened between us was a onetime thing.

I told him to stay away from me. Now, I may have to kill him to keep him from getting in my way. Maybe he needs to leave to get the equipment he needs to break in. That

will give me the time needed to do what I am here to do.

The engine grows softer with the distance, then goes low enough I know he is stopped. I estimate where he is based on the speed he drove and the length of that road until the stop. It revs up, and the sound is steady instead of diminishing more. When it comes to a stop again and restarts, the sound is what I initially heard when he approached.

I preemptively take hold of the boxes as I wait, but I can't keep the cracks in that one box from blowing when I see him again. His arm's out the window, his head is bobbing to music the engine masks. When he glances at the gate, he gestures looks like nothing other than a casual driver looking around while enjoying a relaxing drive.

He turns right again. He will be back. He is doing his own recognizance.

His method has a major flaw. The back fence is hidden from the road by another building, so he will not see what security is there if he doesn't stop and check on foot. An unexpected box vibrates, and I am annoyed at his carelessness when the car only pauses at both turns and heads back this way.

He will not survive long being this careless.

As he makes the turn, I walk across the street and toward the gate. He will either heed my warning and leave because I am here, or at a minimum, show him he needs to be more attentive to his surroundings. He should have at least looked at my side of the street.

I fix my gaze on him as I reach the sidewalk and glower.

He smiles and turns to the gate, where I stopped before reaching the camera's field of view. He stops by the keypad that opens the gate.

"Hey Ben," he calls. "How much for a go at it in the back of my car?"

The concentration silencing the boxes his offer wake keeps me from replying immediately or with the anger such a comment deserves. The back seat is far too small for us to do anything worthwhile in it. I catch where my thoughts are going at the same time as my cock straining in my pants registers.

"This isn't the time or place, Bart," I growl with a heavier French accent and directing the anger at how difficult it is to control myself at him. I can see the goosebumps hearing my voice causes him.

"I know." He pats his suit jacket, grinning at me. "But fuck would it be hot. You think that camera is wired for sound? How loud do you think I'd have to get before everyone, wherever it's connected to, would hear me?"

I glower harder, but the damns boxes won't still. Can I make him scream that loud? Could he survive how much that would take? And why does he look interested in finding out? That smile adds a crack in that box, but at least it doesn't explode this time. I want to touch him, run my hands through his hair, grab it, yank him out of the car. Kiss him hard, taste him again.

I growl; need and anger.

How does he do this, erode my control? Why do I want him so badly? I should kill him, just for that. I won't. I will kill him if I have to; if he impedes what I am here to do, but I will not kill him simply because I desire him. Desire him more than I have ever desired someone. I control my wants, not the reverse. When I leave here, he will stay behind. He

will pine for all the things I could do to him, but I will forget him. I will forget this desire I have for him.

“What are you doing here?” I demand.

He doesn't hide the disappointment as he takes out a card from the inside of his suit jacket. He hoped for sex. In spite of where we are, that we are in public, that he came here to accomplish something else. Now that he has seen me, he wants sex.

Bart has little control.

“I'm taking down a human traffic ring. you?” He hands the card to me. It's an RFID card and the wires go to a box in his hand. “That goes in the top reader. Do you have that one you used at Liaison? I have a second one in here somewhere, but if you do, it'll save me having to look for it.” He looked to the passenger seat, where I count six travel mugs, then at the back. “Actually, I can't remember if I took that one out of the car last time.”

I take out the Locksmith's cracker and put it in the bottom reader as I place his in the top one. A trafficking ring explains the number of locations the ledgers held. This one was the only one that made sense to hold the number of people an organization like Liaison uses, but the closeness to the airport makes sense now.

“You were ready for this lock?” I ask as he swiped the front of the box active. It used to be a cell phone I can now tell.

“That one specifically? No, but I have something on here that can get into just about any lock in existence.” He brings up a command window and quickly types. I see enough to tell it's a programming language. “You're going to want to turn yours on while I do this. And to answer your next question. If the lock is physical, I have bolt cutters in the trunk.”

“Where did you get that?” the Locksmith may have competition from whoever provided Bart with it.

“This? I made it myself. It's nothing more than an interface, really.” He continues to type. “It's the fifteenth generation, and it looks like I'm going to have to up my game after this. It should have an easier time with that ever that is than it does. I swear; criminals have no respect for hackers like me.”

I swallow hard as that box cracks again. He built this. He knows how to fight, how to build what he needs. He doesn't let fear control him.

Another box rather, one that had been quiet until now. One I have learned to pay attention to. He's too perfect, it warns. This level of perfection only occurs when it's manufactured.

It is something I am familiar with. It's how I operate. I become my target's perfect partner and use that to get them to do anything I ask.

I watch him work, look for indication this is an act, that he is gauging me and adjusting his behavior, but his attention is entirely on what he is typing. And Bart doesn't act; he wears his reactions on his face.

*You can do the same,* the paranoia replies. *He must die.*

I force the box silent. If he gets in my way, he will die. When this is done, I will leave and we will never cross paths again.

The gate clicks and opens.

“Hop in,” Bart says. “I’ll drive you over the threshold.” The smile he gives me indicates the words have a different implication.

Whatever they are, I have other plans. “Keep the gate open, my car is across the road.”

He pulls the car forward to break the sensor, telling the gate there is something in the way. Does it have a timer after which it sounds an alert at the security company? Did the camera see how we opened the gate? I don’t know. Bart was a distraction.

I drive the Malibu out of the alley and he drives in when I’m behind. We park before the office. The windows are clean, but there is an air of disuse from what I see inside. The computer is years out of date, the desk is cheap. The plants around the room are plastic.

Props on a stage to give the illusion if use.

“I told you why I’m here,” Bart says, exiting the Camaro. “What’s your story?”

“I am looking for someone.” I ignore the paranoia’s instructions to lie. There is no need for it when I will never see him after that. Even if his goal is to amass information, which I don’t believe it is, there is nothing in what I am doing here he can use against me should we meet again.

*He is acting*, the paranoia claims.

I think back to his reaction. For all of this to be part of his plan, every interaction we had was an act. The surprise at his action when he kissed me was real, as was the pain when I fucked him, and the pleasure. No one is that good of an actor.

*You are*, the paranoia warns.

No. One. Is. That. Good. I shut it up. Lying to myself isn’t something I indulge in.

“So this is something you were hired for?” He asks, studying the inside of the office. “You don’t strike me as someone who has many friends that would need rescuing.” He is watching me through the window’s reflection.

His lips quirk when I nod. He considered saying something irrelevant, but his face grows serious as he turns.

“You didn’t know this was a human trafficking ring?”

“I suspected a well-organized and funded prostitution organization. I had no need to consider this beyond that.”

“Does this change how you’re going to proceed?”

I consider it, then shrug. “It means more guards, so more bodies to deal with afterward.”

“How about the other victims we’re going to find in there?”

They aren’t who I agreed to rescue. What I say is. “We can worry about them after everyone else is dead.”

He searches my face for duplicity, doesn’t find it, and nods.

We head to the door leading into the storage facility. The lock on this door is older; Trilogy PL1500. A card reader with similar RFID technology. Bart has his card in and it is unlocked without him having to type anything. I pull a Desert Eagle as we step in.

The smells that assault me are as human as they get. Shit, piss, blood and sweat. Bart pulls his shirt over his mouth and nose. It won’t help. You either experience it enough to get

used to it, or you don't.

I got used to it at a young age. A small box in the heat of the sun. My father put me in it when I displeased him. Sometimes, he put Justin in with me so he didn't have to deal with him. The memory rattles an old box and I wonder if Justin is still alive. I still that box, but not before I hope. Hope that he is, that unlike me, he overcame what was our father put us through. That being ten, the foster system was kind to him and offered him help to under the damage caused. That he lives a good life right now, a quiet one.

I don't need hope. It's a distraction. When I am home, I can look for clues as to what happened to him.

We face a wall that is twenty feet long with a hallway on each side. Five feet of space, then another wall and another hallway. Where I can see part of the hall, I see cages. The whimpering and crying tell me there is nothing about this place that serves to store anything other than people.

Bart takes out his Beretta—he needs something bigger—and we head to the left hallway. Many of the cages are empty, the others have one person each in them. Most are women, young, no older than twenty, while averaging fifteen. Some have boys, far too young. Eight or nine.

Another box rattles and I'm quick to still it. What is happening to them isn't fair, and those who are doing it will pay, but letting their plight distract me will not help them.

We are halfway through the hallway when there is motion at the other end. Two men stepping into it. Before they register we are here, I fire twice. One shot each. They go down and don't get up.

Bart runs, I follow.

I have announced our presence. This will become hectic.

These men may think themselves monsters. I am about to prove them wrong.