

### Storyboard-8

I'm in so much trouble.

I miss the USB slot on the computer because I'm looking over my shoulder at that broad back, those muscular arms, large hands.

What a hunk.

What a bog, strong—my cock jumps at the memory of that hand tight around my neck—dangerous hunk.

And that accent?

I thought Gomez was going overboard anytime Morticia spoke French. Now, I want to nibble very intimate places just to hear that accent.

I'm in so much trouble here.

I force my gaze away. The things I'd let him do me. I touch my neck and hope I'm going to have bruises for a while. My other hand is still blindly stabbing for the USB port. I need to focus. On the computer and not him, I remind myself.

Visually, the computer is a midrange Dell, down to the logo on the front. I can't know for sure without opening up, but this shouldn't be worth more than a few hundred dollars. It feels wrong for the value of the information it contains.

The USB key goes in. It's amazing what I can do when I'm not busy looking at Mister Hunk behind me. I turn the computer on in BIOS mode, tell it to boot off the key and it starts working. The OS is Linux, of course.

With nothing else to do, I look over my shoulder again, but around Mister Hunk, although it's impossible to miss those hanks as they place the lock cover case on a shelf. There is a saying about the size of a man's hands and the girth of his junk, right? Oh, I wish I'll get to find you. His wallet is open next to the case, and he takes thin tools from it. For hands so big, he is delicate with them.

The wallet reminds me of something.

I take my phone out with a hand and unlock it without looking away from Mister Hunk. Then I have to look at my phone. Maybe I need to clean up my apps. I have a lot of them. I find Mirror Master on the fifth page. I tap it and the surface shows my face, flipped. As if it was now a mirror, hence the name. I tap a code on the unseen number's pad, and a progress bar appears at the bottom. It could be a light intensity reader for all a casual glance at it would give.

What it actually is, is the progress it's making on cloning Mister Hunk's phone. I put it face down on the desk, no point in risking him seeing it and wondering. I can't have him putting his hands around my neck again until after I have the information I'm here for.

Which I should get back to. I step around the desk and study the back of the computer. No CAT cable, so it's on Wi-Fi. That's good and bad. Good in that there's no chance someone will cut the line to the drive that way. Bad in that my program will have to navigate more security, so take longer, and I can't visually check the size of the array. If it had been wired, the odds of it being in this room would be higher.

Still, what are the odds that array contains more than eight terabytes of information?

That's what can fit on the key. It's of my own design.

From here I watch Mister Hunk pull the front of the bookcase away, the way those muscles bulge. I sit back and look at the screen before I lose control and press myself against him. That would earn me a beating at a minimum, and I'm not done here. The drive has been found and is being copied. I'm not bothering with trying to find the specific information I'm looking for here. My program is copying everything there as is. I'll deal with whatever encryption or kill programs they have on the files once I'm home.

A check of my phone reveals the cloning is done. Can I get anything more on Mister Hunk? Dressed the way he is, he has to have credit cards. I turn on the RFID reader. He probably has them in those copper-lined sleeves advertised everywhere, but they only give people a false sense of security I have no problem exploiting.

I'm not going to steal from him, but having access to his transaction history will cut down on the 'getting to know you' period so we can move on to the more interesting stuff.

Something solid thuds on a shelf and I glance, then stare, at the ledgers as Mister Hunk opens the top one and takes a picture before turning the page and taking another picture.

"Paper?" I said without entirely meaning to. He is working; then I can't stop the rest. "They have a computer. Why are they wasting time with paper ledgers?"

"They're making sure vital information isn't on that," Mister hunk replies and I shiver at the accent. Please say more, "for any hacker to access."

I'm hard. I am fucking hard just at that accent and the memory of what he did to me. And I nearly miss the implication of what he said. He isn't wrong. I wish I could watch the pictures he's taking in real time, but short of standing and looking over his so broad shoulder, I'm going to have to wait until he's done and reclone his phone. If I really want to bother. He might not be entirely wrong, but this is the digital age. No one will only keep paper copies. What if the building burns down?

I will give him one thing, as he closes the last of the ledge and my program is at the sixty-four percent mark. His method is faster. He places them back inside the large safe and I idly wonder what else is in there, and is there enough space for him to push me in, rip my pants off and—

Focus, Bart. Wow, it's like you've never seen a deadly hunk before... to be fair, I haven't. But I still have work to do, even if it's only keeping an eye on my program.

He closes the safe, then works in the lock, before putting the cover back on seventy-seven percent. Yeah, his way is definitely faster, but there's no way he's going to have more information from those ledgers than I will from this computer. Hopefully, not too much of what I'm getting is porn.

He puts his wallet back in the jacket and turns. The look he gives me is calculating.

I grin at him. "So, I guess this is where—"

He raises a hand, and he's moving as the clock of the door lock registers. Wow, he's fast. He's behind the opening door before there's enough of a gap for anyone to slip in. I lean back in the chair and wave at the entering man as he'd in the process of scanning the room.

The man pulls a gun on me as Mister Hunk slowly closes the door behind him. “Who are you?” Mister Gunman Demands.

I stand. “I am the Crimson Binome.” I give a theatrical bow. When I look up, he and Mister Hunk give me neatly identical quizzical looks. “Reboot? The pirate Dot convinces to work ethically, well for programs anyway.”

Mister Hunk has his arm around Gunman’s throat and, with a violent jerk, snaps his neck.

“How can you not know Reboot?” I demand of him.

“I have better things to do with my time than watch television.” He takes Gunman to the couch and stretches him on it before searching him.

“I am so going to have to show it to you. That show was amazing. The computer animation’s dated, but the stories are still good.”

He takes a radio from the man’s belt, then places the gun back in the holster. He turns it on, and I hear static, then a short discussion about the roof being clear. He turns it off. “He’s only a guard. But this is still a problem. There’s no way to know when he needs to report in.”

“It’s not like I was planning on lingering.” Fighting to remain casual. That accent will be the death of me.

He rearranges the body and Mister Gunman now looks like he’s taking a nap. He looks at me. His gaze is still calculating. “You are taking the fact I killed him rather well.”

I shrug. “Not the first time I’ve seen someone killed.” Not by a long shot. “Although I am impressed at the ease with which you broke his neck. That’s not easy to do. I have nowhere the upper body strength to manage it.”

The raised eyebrow is the only sign of surprise I get. “You have attempted it before?”

“Not on a person. Gramps as access to—” I shut up. I can’t let that accent distract me into revealing information. “I tried it.”

He nods. “Are you done?”

I glance at the screen and the bar ticks to one hundred percent. “Yep.” I take the key out and shut the computer down. Other than Sleeping Gunman over there, there is no sign either of us was in the room. We both have gloves on, so no prints left.

“Then we need to leave.” He presses an ear to the door. “Once in the hall, behave as if you have just finished being entertained.”

I grin. “Oh, I am. I hadn’t had this much fun in a long time.” He gives me a blank look. “Come on, our tussle was fun for you too, right?”

He frowns, focuses on the door, opens it, and exits. I follow, letting his longer strides put distance between us. I nod to a passing couple and notice my shirt’s out of my pants. The man smiles at me as I tuck it back in.

Mister Hunk heads for the exit, and I follow. Outside, he continues to the parking lot. Against I follow and try to come up with reasons to saddle up next to him. Hopefully, there’s a car parked beside his and I can claim it’s mine while we chitchat. Fuck, I want to get to know him. I haven’t wanted that since... fuck have I ever wanted to get to know a guy before things got heavy? Well, things have already gotten heavy between us, so we have that going

for us.

Fuck. He said he likes girls. Maybe that was just his cover? Maybe he's bi? Pan? Please be into me.

He opens the door to a gray Maxima and I blink. My car is next to his. "Nice car," I said. Really? That's the best I can come up with? Could have I have come up with anything more lame?

He seems surprised to see me. "A rental." As his expression turns suspicious, I point to the Camaro.

"That one's mine."

He looks at it, then at me. His expression is speculative now. "It's an interesting choice."

"Thanks, sort of a gift to myself."

He looks me over again before stepping into his car. Was that the hint of a smile? Could it be that you like me, Mister Hunk? Now isn't that interesting.

I watch him drive away. Yes, I am definitely going to get more information on you.

### Storyboard-9

The motel room has a faint scent of ammonia to it. If not for the fact this isn't the kind of place where the cleaning staff works after hours, I'd worry someone came in to clean and saw what's left of the bodies in the tub.

A stench escapes the bathroom as I open the door. I cover my nose and mouth with a wet cloth to protect myself from the caustic fumes as I used the hook I connected to the tub's drain cap to pull it, then I start the shower running to wash the lye out.

I leave the room as I begin to feel light-headed and lean against the rail, looking out onto the parking lot. I am simply another man taking a breather after having had his fun. The sex in two of the other room is loud enough no one will question it. I look at the pimp's car. Do I need to do anything about it? It will be impounded, probably linked to him, but not to me.

After fifteen minutes of solitude and intensifying sex in the room, a couple climbs the stair. A man and a woman. She is in charge. He's happy to be controlled. I am inside the room before either notice me. The air is still acrid, but the cloth of my moth works better in the lessened concentration. In the tub, bones, with remnants of muscles, lie at the bottom. With rubber gloves on, I wash them clean, dry them and stack them on the bedsheet.

The tub is left with a thin sheen of soapy residue.

A box rattle and I smile at a memory. My father forced a great deal of things on me as he taught me to survive in the wild. One of them was how to make soap. He liked being clean, but didn't like civilization. Has anyone disposed of a body by turning the fatty tissue into soap? The idea amuses me. I still the box. But not enough to try it.

I plug the drain again and empty two gallons of bleach before thoroughly scrubbing the tub. Once the drain is unplugged, there's enough flesh I have to use a stiletto to force it in the drain, then I pour another gallon of bleach in. That should take care of dissolving it in

the pipes.

I duct tape the bones together to keep them from rattling, then put them in a duffel bag. It bulge since I didn't account for two bodies. That waits for me by the door. I take the sheets off the bed and ball them. I open the new set and remake the bed. I will incinerate the sheets once I am home and destroy whatever DNA evidence I and the young man I used in this bed left. Some cum may have escaped the condom I used, and his will be on them too. I ensured he reached orgasm. It might not have been a situation he wanted to have one in, but he still did.

I look the room over. It is as it was when I arrived, except for the sheets being new. There is little I can do for the skin cell I shed around the room, but by the end of the day tomorrow so many other will be added it will be impossible for anyone to say which came from whom. Not that anyone will come here to resolve a crime. No one will miss the pimp. Men like him disappear all the time. His bodyguard may be more problematic, but I'm counting on the company he kept to be indicative of him being a man who will also not be missed. I have their wallets and I will have Asir flag any mention of them within law enforcement computers.

I take everything I brought in back with me and it goes in the back of the Maxima, then I drive off.

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I park six blocks from the storage company and walk the rest of the way with the duffel back over my shoulder, avoiding as many of the cameras as I can. In the locker, I set up the grinder and dump the bones in the feeder. The bucket under it is one from any of the multiple hardware stores in the city. I keep a large supply of them for this and other situations.

I open a case of bottled water as the pages I photographed print. I read them carefully and slowly. It takes me six pages before I work out the code hiding the identity of the people locations and companies represented. Half the payments go to law firms with may or may not exist. They aren't important, so I don't bother confirming it.

Ten percent are individuals without connections to any businesses. Scouts, wandering the city, looking for talents that can be recruited for the whorehouse. If the money trail in the ledgers doesn't lead anywhere, I will question them. One of them will have identified Denita as a recruit and will know who did the rest of the work.

One of the companies is a moving firm, and that catches my attention. This kind of business doesn't require many buildings, and the use of Liaison indicates they like to keep things looking respectable, which isn't conducive to moving offices around, or moving them at all since the few businesses I have confirmed at directly linked to Liaison have shared an address for over fifteen years.

What they will need to move is people—their talent. They won't bring them to one of the official business locations, not while the talent is still in the training process. I send Asir a request for the company's file, authorize the expedited rates and get that fifteen minutes later.

I trace routes. Pickups and deliveries, but it only takes four to suspect where they

kept Denita. All four delivered to the same location. By the tenth I'm confident, by the twentieth I'm certain. Once I have gone through a year of business, there is no doubt left.

Belden Court is another storage company; this one is near the airport. Something about the location nags at me, but I have more pressing matters. I trace the owner of the company to one of the numbered law firms that share an address. Those who have been creating power of attorney documents.

This is where the talents are being trained.

The nagging resolves itself. Every four days a van makes a delivery. That is too many. I made in mistake in my reasoning. The people behind Liaison are not training the kind of whores someone like the pimp would use. They require a higher class of employees. That kind of training can't take place in a storage company, no matter how large. This isn't a training location, it's a holding facility.

A box rattles and I clamp down on it. I can't allow hope that Denita is still alive to cloud my judgment; that will only get me killed. And she might already have been moved. I can't know the rate at which they process their employees.

I look at the timer. Only over twenty-nine hours until the drug stops working. I should have brought more. If she'd been moved, I will not be able to find her in that time. I slam the box show as the number for the woman who provided me with my supply pops in my head. If Denita has been moved, then I will have the time to deal with the withdrawal and get proper sleep.

I need to use the time I have left to find out where she is.

An alarm sounds from the laptop. One of the programs Asir has set up for me, warning of an intrusion in one of my identities. I look at the information it provides me. Someone accessed Benoit's credit card history. I look further. No changes, no unauthorized transfer. This hacker isn't a thief, but an information gatherer. Who could have access to this card?

A second message appears. Another of Benoit's cards has been accessed. When the third message appears, I expect it, but I don't understand how someone can have access to all three cards. I have only used one per purchase, never the same twice in a row, and I would have noticed someone following me throughout my day. But only someone making a concerted effort could get this much information.

A box rattles. Disappointment as I remember a phone on the desk. I was busy and didn't think of it.

I quiet the box. What might have been is irrelevant now. It could have been interesting to see what he would have become. His bravery was refreshing. His cockiness in the face of death is something I hadn't seen in a long time.

I wish...

I sigh.

Now he had to die.

The only usable information on any of the cards is the hotel charges where Benoit resides during his stay. Asir wrote me a program and I use it to infiltrate the hotel's simple systems. I add entries and exits to match when we were at Liaison, as well as before,

creating a history of movements and purchases at the hotel, all charged to the room since he would notice modifications to the card's charges.

When I'm done, I shut the laptop down. I turn the grinder off; there are half the bones still to go. I take containers of lye out of the cabinets where I keep them, make a note to get more, to that I add containers of bleach. I need a weapon and look at the Pimps and his bodyguard's guns. They are untraceable to me, but they are nine millimeters, basically useless.

My usual harness is too easily noticed, so I take a belt holster out of the cabinet, along with a Desert Eagle. They will go at my back.

I take the duffel, shut the power to the locked, set the alarm, and hurry to the Maxima.

I wonder if the desire I saw in those eyes will die before he does.