

Series of death-38

Obtaining the file required Trembor made another visit to the bar to meet with Jasber and her hedgehog brother. When he left, he stank so much he figured he'd have to burn his clothes. He got out of them the moment he was in his house, threw them in the wash, and added more descenter than it probably needed before putting on his gym pants, forcing food down and then sitting in front of his computer.

He spent ten minutes going through everything Marlot had told him about how he could disconnect his computer from the network, and by the time he'd done what he remembered he could only hope he'd done it right. He didn't want to risk anything on the slate calling out. There were apps that could do that, Marlot had told him when he'd first seen his computer that first visit.

He hesitated once the slate was in. He could make believe he hadn't broken the law, he'd just hired a specialist to... he sighed. His delusion didn't go as far as he'd like. All it would take is someone asking why he'd gone around the city making withdrawals just under the notification limit and his excuses would falter. He accessed the slate.

The files were within folders, one for the kill location evidence, one for the body, one for Bo's person, his car, and finally another for Bo's house. That the kill location and house had their own folders was telling. Trembor expected Sleekcoat to claim something to the effect that Bo had lured the cub in his home and killed him there, which was ridiculous, with Herelex and Isenson there.

He began with the body. That should be the easiest to deal with since there was no way Bo had hit the cub.

And the cub had been hit. Hit hard and often. Looking at the patterns noted by the medical examiner, Trembor saw anger in the attack. Whoever had done that... they hadn't been happy. The death had been caused by a broken neck, a blow from the back, a lot of strength, the examiner noted. The predator had to be among the larger species.

Trembor cursed on reading the cub had blood under his the claws of one hand, identified as Bolifen Goldenmane's blood. Looking in the folder with Bo's examination, he found pictures of three small cuts, the width of the cub's claws. Reading, Bo didn't have any explanations for them. His guess was he'd gotten them was hanging out with his friends, the name of whom he didn't give.

“Stupid, Bo. Don't protect them.”

Bo's knuckles had no evidence he'd punched anything, but a set of hunting gloves had been found in his laundry basket, and that had strands of the cub's fur on it. Bo didn't hunt with gloves, even after breaking his hand, years ago, he refused to wear them. It took away from the purity of the hunt, he said.

“Of course, I wouldn't believe that scent either,” Trembor grumble. Especially with Bo's fur inside the glove. The car had the cub's fur in the trunk, where Bo would have transported him back to his house. The body had been found on the preparation table in the kitchen, not yet cut or even bled.

Trembor had to search for how Sleekcoat had even become aware of the body. Bo's house had a garage, so he would have driven in before taking the body out—if he'd

done this, Trembor reminded himself. If. He knew Bo hadn't. Regardless of the evidence, his brother wasn't a cub killer, even accidentally.

How Sleekcoat was informed of it was the same way most bodies were discovered. A call to the report line. Someone young, or female, or female sounding at least. They'd peeked into the kitchen window, saw the body. Called.

"Fucking convenient." Why had they been looking in? Looking to rob his brother's house? Why look into the kitchen? What did a would-be thief think would be of value there? It wasn't like they could carry out the preparation table. Like their father's, Bo's was a stone surface on hardwood support and legs. He'd invested good money in it. Like everyone in his family who had one. You didn't go cheap when it came to preparing your meat. Of course, the reasoning would be that the thief looked in the other windows first and this was just them being thorough.

The evidence was nearly overwhelming.

A car matching Bo's had been seen by a witness, but Trembor didn't worry about that one. Without corroborating pictures, Bo's lawyer would easily discredit witness testimony. The harder one was that Bo's pad had pinged one of the broadcast towers in the area. For that to happen, it had to be there, would be the argument.

How easy was it to fool the towers? Trembor didn't know, but it would be simple enough to borrow Bo's pad while he was with his friends, carry it while killing the cub, and return it afterward. The death had happened while Bo was at the bar, if his story was to be believed. There were no indications anyone at said bar had seen him, or that an enforcer had gone there to ask. Bo's lawyer would have to see to it.

Not that Trembor thought anyone there would say anything, not if it was the friends Bo had hung out with were the ones Trembor suspected.

Trembor closed his eyes and let his breath out. He put Bo out of his mind as he went over the evidence and the story it told.

The predator had stalked the cub. The age was such the scent might have come across as adult in the thrill of the hunt. The cub might have been too scared to call out, say he was underage. He got one swipe in, then a precise blow broke the neck. He'd have taken out the ID and only then saw he was under-aged. Cub these days were notorious for carrying their ID in a pocket instead of on a lanyard for everyone to see. Dismay, anger, rage at having killed a cub caused the predator to lash out, striking the cub over and over. When he worked it out of his system, he put the body in his car and drove home to cut it up. No body, no crime. At least no tax-related crime. The Missing Person Bureau would be on this for a while, although with the circumstantial evidence, the predator would still be found.

Trembor saw only one problem with this story, Bo's cubs. They were in the house. He would never had put them at risk like this, and they would have seen the body in the morning. Of course, the angle here is that they want to protect their father. Trembor looked for what Herelex. His father had overslept, so they had to hurry. It had been cool meat as they got ready, a glass of blood on the dining table, which was separated from the kitchen by a door which Bo kept closed. So they might not have seen the body, and

Bo's claim there was no body wouldn't be listened to.

That he'd overslept was odd. Bo's alarm was loud since he hated being late. He might be groggy, but he woke up on time every morning. Sleekcoat would claim he'd hunted late.

Trembor looked at everything there. How would he do this? How would he arrange everything so it looked like his brother was the predator who'd killed the cub? He'd already placed the pad in the area, and with the pad in hand, the predator could have borrowed Bo's car, making that part of the evidence. Put the body in the trunk, returned the car to the bar with the pad. Once Bo drove home, broken in, took the body out, hid it in the garage until everyone left for work, set it on the table, call it in.

The blood. How would he get the blood on the cub's claws? Bo overslept, did that mean he was drugged? It would be a way to get the blood, make the cuts. Had anyone drawn Bo's blood for tests? He saw no mention of it, and it wasn't standard procedure in cases like this.

Trembor now had a demonstrative way Bo could have been framed for the body. The why he didn't know, but he had no doubt who the who was, Bo's so-called friends had the means to do this. Trembor's problem was proving it, and doing so without revealing he had access to the evidence.