

Series of death-34

Trembor followed the black-furred bear through the precinct. It had taken all evening and too much of the night calling people he knew within the enforcers, trying to arrange this meeting, until he thought of the bear. Unfortunately, this was one of the few precincts where he didn't know anyone in it; he'd almost think Sleekcoat had picked in on purpose, but it was the one in her territory, so it was just bad luck.

It turned out he also didn't know many people within enforcement who were in a position where their authority carried over multiple precincts. He'd made friends with everyone in his classes at the academy, then when getting his enforcer training, but with a few exceptions, they were still all stalking the streets, and those who had raised rank high enough to be able to talk with captains in other precincts, could only ask and not tell them what to do.

"Thanks again for doing this, Bahamel," he told the bear, "I know I'm not your favorite person right now, with you being Marlot's friend, so—"

She turned and fixed him with his gaze. "I'm not happy you and the wolf broke up. I thought what you had was more solid than that. But that's your personal life and none of my business. And you happen to be one of the few RI who respects us, enforcers, instead of barging in making demands, so yes, I'm happy to help you."

Vice crimes were such that they spread throughout the city, so every precinct was involved, they also required a centralized control, because organized crime couldn't be handled in small bites. And that was who Bahamel Strongbones was. She ran the vice division and as such could walk in any precinct with an RI in tow and let him talk with his brother, even if technically, Bo wasn't supposed to see anyone other than the RI who'd brought him in, until his lawyer had spoken with him.

She placed a hand on the door's handle. "I can't order them to turn off the camera, so watch what you say, and don't lead your brother into saying anything that can be used against him if this thing ends up going to court, which we both know it will since he'd claiming he didn't kill that cub."

"He didn't. Bo wouldn't do that."

She shrugged. "Underage death isn't my division, so I don't have to pass judgment. But I hope you're right, because what they do with those criminals isn't pretty." She opened the door.

Bo stood as Trembor entered, looked uncertain, then sat.

"Don't take too long," Bahamel said, "that RI is going to raise her hackles if she finds you in here."

Trembor sat as the door closed. Bo didn't look pleased. "How are you doing?" Trembor asked. The look in his brother's eyes warned of a coming tirade, but Bo closed them, took a breath, let it out, and seemed calmer.

"Not good. How are Herelex and Isenson? Did dad make a fuss about them staying with him?"

"They spent the night at night place, Herelex called me after you called him. I got Ufen to pick them up, but the RI handling the body got to them before him."

“Got to them?” Bo asked, his fur bristling.

“She had them brought to your house so she could question them. I got there before that, so I kept her from doing it. If she wants to talk to them she’d going to have to do it at the academy, with their adviser present. As soon as their office open I’m going to warn them so they can have a lawyer present. This RI is known for pushing the limits to close her cases.”

“Fuck,” Bo whispered. “Does that mean I’m screwed? I didn’t do this, you know that, right?”

“I do, but the body was in your house, Bo. That’s not the kind of thing that happens by mistake.” Was this because of Bo’s involvement with those criminals? Trembor wanted to ask. “Tell me what happened.”

Bo threw his hands up. “What do you mean? The enforcers showed up at the office, cuffed me, telling everyone I was being arrested for underage predation. Do you have any idea how humiliating that is? Now everyone there’s going to look at me like ‘this is the male who killed a cub,’ even once it’s proven I didn’t do it. I won’t be surprised if I’m fired because of this.”

“They can’t fire you unless you’re found guilty.”

Bo narrowed his eyes on his brother. “You clearly don’t work for the government. The system can’t function if people think it’s letting criminals work within it.”

“Think?” Trembor asked, tilting an ear. “We are talking about the same government who’s fighting half a dozen allegations of misconduct, right?”

Bo waved that aside. “Once you run things you can survive that stuff. I’m an office worker, Trem. They’re going to make sure it doesn’t look like this is the reason I’m fired, but you can be damned sure they’re going to see to it I’m quietly let go.” He dropped his head in his hands. “Oh, fuck, I’m screwed. I need this job. They’re going to k—”

“Bo,” Trembor cut his brother off before he said something he shouldn’t. “Bo. Look at me.” When his brother did, Trembor nodded to the camera with the red light indicating it was active.

Bo mulled it over for a few seconds. “I didn’t do anything wrong, what do I care what they record?”

“You care because anything you say in here can be used in any way they can find evidence to support. Don’t you remember the stories dad told us about some of his cases?”

“Those were twenty, thirty years ago. Back when they didn’t have stuff like DNA, they’re going to see I didn’t do this.” There were hints of desperation in his brother’s voice. “They’re going to see someone tampered with the lock on the house to get the body in there, right?”

“Tell me where you were yesterday,” he asked instead of answering his brother. Marlot had shown him just how easy it was to break into one of those electronic locks most people had without leaving any trace of doing it.

“At work, then at home. As usual, you know that. It’s not like I’m out partying all

the time.”

“Herelex and Isenson can corroborate that?”

The lion facing Trembor opened his mouth, then closed it.

“Bo, I might have made sure the RI can’t abuse her power with your kids, but she will question them. What are they going to tell her?”

Bo sighed. “I went out after we were done eating. I didn’t come back until after they’d gone to bed.”

“Where did you go?”

“To—to hang out with friends.” The hesitation and the way Bo’s eyes flicked toward the camera even if he managed to keep his head from moving told Trembor exactly which friends he meant. Not the kind of friends who would come to his defense.

“Where?” If he couldn’t get someone to give his brother an alibi, he’d need records showing where he’d been.

“At one of their houses.” Bo didn’t volunteer more. Trembor kept his reaction from showing. That meant a residential area, which didn’t have much in the way of camera coverage, and if one of those friends lived there, the odds are good none of the neighbors ever saw anything.

“How much meat is in your cooler?” the lack of a need to hunt as a defense was something their dad would laugh at, but Bo needed something.

His brother shrugged. “I don’t know. I hunted four, no five days ago. I prepared the body myself, but there’ll be records of me seeing the hide and extra fat; not that there was a lot of that. She was an Elk, pretty lean. You know I go healthy for the kids. I’m guessing there’s two weeks worth left.” He sighed. “What did dad have to say?”

“I haven’t spoken to him yet, but I expect he’s making sure you have proper representation.”

Bo snorted.

“Come on, he’s not that kind of father and you know it. It doesn’t matter how angry he is at you, he’s going to do all he can to protect you, you’re still his son. If nothing else, he’s going to make sure this is handled correctly, so all parties have the time to build their cases.” That would piss off Sleekcoat, if nothing else, with her desire to close all cases as quickly as possible.

Bo nodded. “What do you know about this? They haven’t told me anything other than the body in my house is underage.”

“I don’t know anymore myself. This isn’t my territory, and I didn’t make a good impression on the RI so she isn’t inclined to share.”

“Really, it’s hard to imagine you not making a good impression on someone.”

Trembor chuckled. “I had to step between her and your kids pretty hard, it doesn’t lead to making friends. But don’t worry, I’ll find out what I can and help whoever dad finds to defend you.”

“Are Herelex and Isenson staying with you for long? Your house isn’t exactly set up for two cubs.”

Trembor chuckled. “Don’t let Isenson hear you calling him a cub, he got pretty

fierce when Sleekcoat did that.” If it wasn’t for how busy he was going to be, he’d let them stay, but he was seeing a lot of long nights in his future. “Maybe for tonight, if Dad and Moms aren’t ready, but you’re right, I’m not set up for cubs. If somehow our parents can’t, someone in our family will, don’t worry, we’ll all make sure they’re okay.”

Bo was quiet for a few seconds. “Trem, my friends, they—” he glanced at the camera and sighed. Trembor hated how helpless his brother looked. “Just make sure the kids are looked after, okay? No matter how this turns out, they’re the ones that matter.”

“Don’t talk like that Bo. Even if the RI here screws this up, I will find out who did this to you, then you and I can have them for dinner, alright?”

Bo nodded, but his helpless expression didn’t go away.

Trembor searched for anything else to say, but he couldn’t do more to comfort his brother. Now he needed to get to work proving he hadn’t done this.