

"I agree with Eastyn," Ramon said.

"I thought you wanted the tech?" the man replied. "I expected even if Krystal agreed with me, we'd have to—"

"Look," the engineer replied. "It's been made clear what I want can't be gotten. Believe it or not, while I think getting the terraforming technology *is* the better way to get Karliak off our back, I am in this to get them to leave us alone one way or another. And it's looking like it's going to be another way than mine."

The man agreed too easily, Tristan decided. As Eastyn said, the expectation had been he and Krystal would have to argue Ramon down since going after the Karliak representative had already failed once. Tristan expected the man was looking for this attempt to fail also, which would leave his plan as the only viable one. How subtle he would be in exerting that attempt at control, Tristan didn't know, but it didn't matter. He and Alex would be done by then.

"Okay, then, Krystal, unless you mind. I think Tristan has the operation for us."

"Go ahead," the woman said. She'd been watching the exchange carefully. Like him, she wasn't certain what Ramon's plan in agreeing involved.

Tristan sent the hotel's plans to the table, which projected it. "This is the Horidon Hotel, in Dadelus. It has two hundred and seven room, and a current occupancy of thirteen."

"Karliak hasn't been good for the tourist industry," Krystal commented.

"Like anyone wanted to come here before they showed up," Eastyn added. "Come right up, great accommodation for you to experience a planet tearing itself apart."

"Regardless," Tristan continued, "of those thirteen, seven work for Karliak, and one the Lady Magory."

"Do you know which room she's staying in?" Krystal asked.

"Whichever one has the highest security," Ramon replied.

"I don't know yet. That information wasn't contained in what Alex and Bernie were able to get from the Karliak system. It's what they'll be working on while Eastyn sees to it we have transportation there that won't attract attention."

"You aren't doing that?" Krystal asked.

"Eastyn knows the city and has contacts that can get him the shuttle."

"And you're okay with that?" she asked the man.

What was she after?

Eastyn shrugged. "It's not that big of a deal."

"I see."

"Once we know where she is situated, we will go in, extract her, and take her to a secure location to extract the access codes."

"You're not taking her back here?" Ramon asked.

"The risk is too high. Corporation are highly protective [don't want to share if what I'm looking for] of what's theirs. She will have trackers implanted. The vehicle Eastyn is obtaining will be shielded, as will the location we will take her to."

"How long is that going to take to set up?" Ramon asked.

"A few days, at best," Eastyn answered. "A shielded shuttle isn't something that's just left on the in the random landing lot."

"I might be able to help with that," Ramon said thoughtfully. "We regularly had to transport hazardous material to and from the research station. If they could keep that stuff from leaking out, it's going to keep anything on her from calling out for help."

The glance Eastyn gave to Tristan was discreet, and Krystal reaction to noticing it not as much, but she remained silent. Tristan would wait for her to make her move. Whatever it was, she would protect the rebels, so it would come after the operation, unless she believed they were planning on having it fail, and nothing in what Tristan was laying out gave that indication.

"I guess that will be fine," Eastyn answered at Tristan's lack of response. That Ramon would have an alternative hadn't occurred to him.

"When will you have it here?" he asked.

“By morning at the latest.”

Not ideal. Tristan had planned on doing his work while Alex slept, giving himself two full nights to ensure everything was in place. He’s have to start as soon after this meeting as he could arrange. He’d already located the system he’d used. Not Bernie’s since it and Alex had a camaraderie based on being coercionists. Tristan didn’t know enough about the Asharan to ensure his silence. And he didn’t need that powerful of a system for what he needed to do.

His biggest problem would be making sure Alex didn’t find out.

“How are you going in?” Krystal asked.

“Stealth,” Tristan answered. “Me and Alex will—”

“No,” she stated.

So trust was the issue.

“It isn’t the first time we have infiltrated a corporation. He can coerce the security into not seeing us while we move. I can neutralize any security we encounter, although the plan is to avoid all of them.”

“Ramon, how many people fit in that shielded shuttle?”

“What? Oh. Not counting the pilot? Five, maybe six, but it won’t be comfortable.”

“Can Alex mask eight people as easily as two?” She asked.

“Yes, but the increased number—”

“Reduces the chances that if you or him are incapacitated, the entire mission fails. I respect how good you are, Tristan, but I’d like to make sure everyone comes back after we lost Spence and Kaleb.”

Altruism? “I’m giving you my expert opinion. More people will only result in this not going as smoothly.”

“I’m with Krystal,” Ramon said, now paying them full attention. “We can’t afford to lose you since you’re the one with all the tactical knowledge. How much more difficult can it be with a few more people?”

With two of them agreeing, Eastyn had no change to change the vote, and since they were his employers, technically, refusal to obey them would expose the truth and complicate his plan immensely. But for it to work, it still needed to be him and Alex, with as few of those extra people as possible, since by Krystal’s statement, should would not let the number be zero.

“If it will be more than me and Alex, then here is the plan we will need to adopt.”

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Tristan slipped into the shower behind Alex and nibbled his shoulder.

“Fuck, I’m glad you’re back.” His human leaned back against him.

“I’m glad to be back. I hate negotiation with comities.” He reached down.

“I got the details of where the representative is—” his scream as Tristan bit down was accompanied by an erection in the Samalian’s hand.

“I don’t want to talk about this now,” he whispered in Alex’s ear, adding a growl for emphasis. “I need to work out some anger, and you’re going to be my outlet. Do you have any problem with that?”

“No,” Alex whimpered as Tristan squeezed his cock.

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Tristan exited the room he and Alex had been assigned later than he’d hoped, but with the certainty his human would not walk in on him as he worked. As much stamina as Alex had, Tristan was a Samalian who had spent his life working toward his survival at all costs. That meant he couldn’t let exhaustion be something that would bring about his end. Nor could he depend on drugs to keep it at bay. So he had trained himself. He had no idea if he could fuck a Samalian until they’d be unable to stay awake, but he could definitely do it with Alex.

The resort’s small communication room was located among offices that saw to the functioning of the business. It doubled as the security room, but by the few sensor screens, Kaleb hadn’t believed it was a place in need of much security. He’d already confirmed it functioned when he’d evaluated the location’s for security flaws.

He’d need years to make it secure. Objective.

Getting into the local Immerter Enterprise system was simple. As with all corporations, they were security conscious, but as one focused on rescuing people, instead of amassing power and influence, they

seemed to feel they had better things to spend their credits on when securing their servers.

Marjoline and her team were currently assigned to relocating people whose city had been shattered by a quake. The death toll was already in the millions, the thousands they saved would barely be noticed. Convincing their system that a new emergency required her team was simple, especially since the shielded location he'd picked for the code's extraction, located not far from Dadelus, had experienced ground instability over the precious weeks. The community there was small, but that wouldn't matter. Immeter prided itself on not discriminating when it came to saving lives.

Having them there also meant they would have the equipment needed for when Alex acted. Having to transport people too close to death for anyone's comfort was something they dealt with regularly.

The hospital was harder.

Once in, locating schedules was easier. Unlike with Immeter, he couldn't make alterations. He didn't have the skill levels required to get in deep enough so they would be accepted in the time he had. What he got from looking at them was the timing of the job.

With that done, he looked over the information Alex had extracted from the hotel and finalized the plan.

He was completing it when the door opened. He breathed in and smiled. Alex still smelled of sex. The human draped his arms over Tristan's shoulders. "You weren't the when I woke up," he whispered.

"I woke up early. I thought I'd work on the job."

"I'd rather you have worked on me."

Tristan shivered as Alex nibbled on the edge of his ear's pavilion. He had never known how sensitive they were until Alex had discovered it. Or how much he liked when Alex excited him with them.

"I thought I'd worked you over hard enough when you lost consciousness." Tristan replied, a purr slipping in his voice.

"Next time, don't let that stop you. I'm yours, remember? Use me as much as you want."

Tristan grabbed Alex's arm and pulled him onto his lap. "You are a poor manipulator, Alex," he said, undoing the human's pants. "You don't want me to use you as much as *I* want. You want me to use you as much as *you* want."

Alex smiled, reaching under him and groping Tristan. "I'm not feeling any protests."

"You are mine, Alex," Tristan whispered. "I would never protest what you want."