

Series of death-48

Trembor found a properly angled security camera on the third story he checked, and his identification as an RI was enough for the owner to give him access to the computer and access to the feed, which, the sheep informed him, went back twenty-four hours. More than enough for what he needed.

The program took him a few minutes to work out, Marlot would normally deal with this, and this wasn't intuitive to work with. He rewound it a few minutes, then accidentally far more than that, with a van, and what he thought was the tail-end of his father's car.

Being more interested in who Bo left with than what took place when he arrived, Trembor rewound the feed to something closer to the present and watched himself holding the envelope.

Going back by increments of a minute, which seemed to be the shorted the program did, he vanished; then a gray van was there. And was still there twenty clicks later, and another twenty. He decided that had to be who he left with and returned the feed to him with the envelope. Three clicks ensured he'd see Bo arrive, he figured, and instead watched the van sit there for a full minute before someone exited the driver's side, put something under the picnic table, get back in the van and drive away. A few seconds later, Trembor arrived where it had been parked.

It had been a relatively straight walk to the parking lot, so the driver would have seen him come. Known to put the envelope and leave. It didn't explain why he'd done that, or where Bo was.

He rewound it and waited until the driver dropped the envelope and turned to return to the van before pausing it. The image was grainy—the camera was old—but he could make out

long ears. One of them partially flopped down. A hare.

He watched the hare get in the van, backed it, and drive away. He didn't see Bo in the passenger seat. He backed it one minute at a time, letting it run only long enough to tell if the hare of Bo were in the frame, and had to go back close to half an hour to see the hare become visible within the park, walking next to Bo.

They reached the van on the path Trembor followed. The hare opened the side door instead of the passenger one and Bo stepped in, followed by the hare.

That was unusual.

If Trembor had watched the hare with some random male, he could work out what they'd done for the time until they drove off, but Bo cared nothing for males. And there was the envelope. Was the drop of blood on it Bo's or the hare's? Did it serve another purpose than to ensure Trembor noticed it?

He couldn't shake the bad feeling. Could the criminal group be that quick to react to what Trembor had arranged? Was the hare one of their enforcers? The idea of a hare sent to retrieve a lion was hard to believe, but Trembor had watched Bo step in the van without any protest.

He called his brother, just in case, and the call went to the message center.

"This is just some random hare giving Bo a ride," Trembor told himself. He wanted to believe it. But the envelope? And the hare waiting until he saw Trembor in the distance to put it there? That spoke of intent. Until that, there had been a chance Bo had put his ID in an envelope for some strange reason, cut himself when doing so, and it had fallen out as he walked by the table.

"And even the production company that made that move

Tiff was in wouldn't buy this idea.”

Alright. Reality could be strange, but was it this strange? Could he tell if this was planned or a random meeting?

He wished the park had cameras.

He went back quickly until the van wasn't there. That was ten minutes before his father's call. He was about to forward it when the car passed through the frame, followed by a van. The same van he was waiting for.

It could be a coincidence, had to be.

The van reappeared and parked in a spot that only let him see a sliver of the back. The hare walked into frame, crossed the street, and vanished on the left, only to reappear a minute later. He studied the storefront, looked up at the camera, then turned to look over the parking lot. He crossed the street, vanished out of the frame, and moved the van to the parking spot it was when the hare and Bo returned to it. A spot almost perfectly centered in the frame.

As if that wasn't confirmation of intent, the hare stepped out and turned to the camera and waved.

Trembor's hackles went stiff.

There was no doubt now. That hare had wanted to be caught on camera. He'd wanted someone to see Bo get in the van, see him place the envelope. Had he known Trembor would be the one? More likely than not, since he waited until Trembor was approaching to put the envelope down. That indicated he knew Trembor had a way to get access to the recording.

That settled it. This was those criminals. They weren't happy he'd cleared Bo's name and were seeing retribution. He fought the urge to go to that restaurant and track down that mole. Getting to her wouldn't help Bo, it would just put him and

his brother in danger. The first thing he needed to do was get Bo out of the hare's grasp.

He went back to the van as it drove by, and pausing and played it, until the sign on the door was legible.

Harotal's meat Distribution.

A search brought up a failing restaurant supplier. The hare would have bought, or stolen, the van for this purpose. He didn't bother with a search through the stolen vehicles. Even if it had been reported, he'd be looking through it for days before confirming it, and he had better things to do with his time.

Like figuring out where the van was right now.

The main tracking system he had access to—although technically he didn't right now, since this wasn't a case—was to input the van's tag in the system and have someone run a search through the street cameras.

His two problems, ignoring that this wasn't related to a case, was that he could barely make out the tag, and he needed to get someone to do the search without asking why.

The tag was in view of the camera, but the resolution meant he had to guess at the numbers. He knew there were programs to fix that, something about taking a bunch of frames and running algorithms. Marlot had explained it to him one time. One of the multiple times the wolf had tried to educate Trembor on the wonders of technology.

Marlot could get him the answer in a few minutes. He could probably also find out where the van was since he had no problem breaking the law.

Trembor looked at Marlot's name on his pad, with the option to unblock him under it. Marlot could help, but would he? What would be the price? Getting back together?

Submitting to the wolf's desires? That wouldn't be so bad, would it?

You didn't leave me any choice.

How long until the violence started? Until there was nothing left of Trembor and the wolf just threw him away like a broken doll?

He put the pad away. He'd avoided that fate once. He wasn't going back to that, not even for his brother.

He needed to find a different way.

He studied the image, wrote down what the numbers of the tag could be, then placed a call.

"Registry," a bored sounding female said.

"Urion?"

"Speaking, how can I help you?"

"It's Trembor, we were at the academy together, we did a year of—"

"Trembor?" she sounded awake now. "Of course I remember you,. How have you been? I heard you became an RI."

"And I heard you transferred to Registry, how are you liking it there?"

"I spend most of my days bored out of my head, I love it. Much better than the stress of patrolling the street. How about you? How is life being an RI?"

"It can be a challenge, that's actually why I'm calling. I need to find a vehicle, but all I have is a company name, who might not own it anymore, and possible tags for it. I only have low-resolution pictures to work with."

"Give me the company name. Do you know when they might have sold it off?"

Trembor gave it to her. “No. Their site only shows they’re losing clients, not what they did with the vehicles.”

“Three years ago they had two hundred vans, they’re down to twenty-three, definitely failing.”

“You can see that? I didn’t think you could access the list by company.”

“Technically we can’t, but it’s pretty simple to reconfigure the search algorithm to take a field that narrows a search and makes it the principal search.”

“I’m going to say I understand that and ask where do we go from here.”

She chuckled. “Right, you were always more of the go-around and ask question type. No wonder you enjoy being an RI. Give me the first possible digits and I’ll see what comes up.”

Did everyone but him know that much about computers and how they worked? He wondered as she worked. His father knew less, but comparing himself to Torim just made Trembor feel old.

“Got it,” she said after he’d given her the seventh of ten digits. She read him the ten-digit number, which he wrote down. “How does that match with your possible last three?”

“Pretty much on point. Thanks. Are you still a fan of that Arkanian lettuce? I can have a few packages sent as a thank you.”

“You don’t have to, I’m happy to help, for old times sake.” She gave him the make of the van as well as the registered infractions and current status. Officially it was parked in a holding lot until it was sold to pay off the company’s debts.

“Thanks again, and I’ll still make sure you get some. You deserve the treat.” He placed the order and had it sent to her at

the Registry. Let her herbivore coworkers be jealous.

He placed another call.

“Tracking,” a male answered.

Trembor let out a breath to steady his nerves. “Jockon, it’s Trembor.”

“Hey Trem, how’s thing? You looking to find out where a certain someone his hiding so you can make him pay for—”

“You heard?” Trembor chuckled. “How? You’re in a basement in the furthers enforcer building. No one but you tech-heads go there.”

“You do know there’s this thing that was invented a few decades ago called a pad. Not only can you place calls with it, but you can send messages. You’d be amazed how easy it is to learn what’s going on in the rest of the world without ever having to get out of this dark and foreboding building.”

“And does Ylinder lets you stay hidden down there?”

Jockon’s voice was cautious when he spoke. “No, he doesn’t. You’re calling in that favor for hooking me up with him, aren’t you?”

“I need your help, yeah. My brother’s been kidnapped, but because of events around that, I can’t exactly go to the enforcers with it.”

“Is that the same brother who was in court?”

Trembor sighed. “Can you help?”

“I owe you, so I will do everything I can, but you know how supervised we are down here. The things we have access to means we could cause a lot of trouble if we did something unauthorized.”

“If this is going to get you in trouble, tell me no. I need a vehicle found, the sooner the better.”

“That I can do. Give me what you have.”