

Chapter 17

Trembor put the pad on the charger, wondering where his brother had disappeared to. He'd gotten the names of a few of his friends from Herelex, and from there began calling around. After more than a dozen calls, he'd concluded Bo hadn't gone to any of his friends for help.

He glanced at Arlant Shine's file, open on his screen; what he should be working on right now. But he needed to get answers from his brother before his troubles spilled over on more than just Trembor. The coyote's case wasn't exactly going anywhere. None of the females at the club had been sufficiently angry with him to leave his body to rot. And those Arlant had seduced could prove where they were when he'd died.

So, unlike Bo's situation, Arlant's couldn't really get worse.

He exited his office and after looking the bullpen over headed for a jaguar, seated at her desk and typing a report. "Need help with Something Goldenmane?" she asked without looking up.

"Can you run a search for a car?"

She looked up, ear canted. "Forgot how to send out a description to dispatch in all those years since you abandoned us? Or did someone revoke your RI license so you're reduced to begging?"

Trembor chuckled. "You need to frequent a different class of males if this qualifies as begging. This isn't case related, so I'd like to avoid channels. My brother got himself in some trouble and found a hole to hide in."

"Wouldn't he be with your family? You lions are big on that."

"Our father is currently pissed at him because of that trouble. Because dad's pissed, Bo's going to be reluctant to go to anyone else in case they hand him over."

"And you won't?"

"Oh, I definitely will," Trembor replied, smirking, "but after I've made sure he's been extricated from his current problems."

"I can do that."

Trembor gave her the car's description and tag number.

"Any special instruction to give to the enforcers for when they find it?"

"Tell them not to do anything; maybe keep an eye in case my brother drives off before I get there, but I'll handle the stalking myself from there."

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His brother's car was parked at a crowded mall in a neighborhood Trembor wasn't familiar with. Looking at how expensive the other cars in the lot were, he didn't think Bo was familiar with it either. He'd parked his car among them, hoping to hide in the herd, but he lacked the mentality to understand a herd wasn't the same thing as a crowd. So his car stood out, being an older model, in not as good a shape. If this was a herd, it would be pushed to the edge for a predator to stalk.

Trembor chuckle. That was what he was doing.

The officer who'd found it had asked around but hadn't gotten any information. The mall didn't have cameras on the lot, so he hadn't been able to track Bo from the car

to where he might have gone to; in the mall, or to the nearby transit stops. There were four of them within a ten-minute walk, three busses, and one subway stop.

His brother had done one thing right. He'd picked a place that didn't indicate his plan, then lost his scent in the crowd. So many people had walked by, even this close to Bo's car, Trembor only got hints of his scent. He suspected anyone who hadn't grown up with it wouldn't be able to pick it out. Two steps away from the car and he couldn't hang on to it.

If Trembor was tracking prey, he'd go to the mall; until his quarry realized they were being stalked their reflex would be to stick with the largest crowd. If he was stalking a criminal, he'd look for the places in the area they were familiar with, maybe people they knew.

His brother was neither, and while Trembor didn't think Bo would act like a criminal, he might try to behave the way he thought prey did, which would make him stand out in the crowd. Predators had to fall on much harder times than Bo was at the moment before their behavior and appearance let them blend in with prey.

It was how Trembor knew the panther walking among the crowd heading to the mall from the bus stop didn't belong, why he'd paid attention and caught her glancing in his direction too often, then moving close to prey, trying to blend in when all they wanted was to be as far from her as they could.

He ignored her. She was too far to be a threat, and she'd have to deal with a panicked crowd if she started running in his direction. He suspected she was letting him do the stalking for her; that once he found his brother, she'd move in on them. It meant she had friends around; only idiots would think one person was enough to bring down two lions.

Of course, that was a concern for once he found his Bo, and starting from this location, he easily might have to search the whole of the city before that happened.

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Trembor walked through the bus terminal, looking for any signs his brother had been here. He'd checked the train station and airport, since one of the bus lines from the stop close to his brother's car went to both, and hadn't found anything. Not that he'd expected to. He was tracking a dead scent and hoping Bo wasn't the same.

The antelope who'd replaced the panther at the train station gave him hope. If the criminals had his brother, there would be no need to continue following Trembor.

He'd called into dispatch and asked them to get copies of both places' security cameras, but that would take a few days since he wasn't willing to lie and claim this related to a body. It would make things easier to put his RI weight on this, but even in this, there was a right way to do this, and then there was Marlot's way.

He rubbed his temple. Again, the wolf was in his head.

He looked for the warthog who was his shadow across the bus terminal to force himself into the now and out of that day of betrayal. He leaned against one of the ticket kiosks, not even trying to hide that he was looking at him. Directing anger at Trembor.

His pad buzzed. The precinct.

“Trembor,” he answered, trying to keep the fear out of his voice.

“It’s Reglin,” she said. “I know you didn’t ask me to do more than send people looking for your brother’s car, but since it’s been taking a while I looked at his finances to see where those might put him, but there hasn’t been any activity on that side in three days.”

Trembor sighed. He hadn’t thought about that, but it made sense. “Dad’s a lawyer, we’ve heard plenty of stories about criminals making themselves harder to find by staying away from the kiosks. Thanks for thinking of it.”

“No problem, but you realize that means he only has whatever left of the physical money he had on him three days ago. There isn’t a large withdrawal at that point.”

Trembor nodded and tried to remember if Bo had switched completely to electronic funds or not. Most people had when the government had started pushing for it over a decade ago, but some, like Marlot, still hung onto it. Him, because it let him do transactions with criminals without being traced, but there were others who just hung onto the old ways.

His father was one. Had Bo? It had never come up.

The bus station was also a bust. He hadn’t expected to find his brother had come through here. Trouble didn’t send Goldenmanes running for the hills. They prepared for battle.

Or so the family stories went.

What was left for Bo as places to hide if he had no physical funds?

He shuddered at the idea his brother might be among the homeless population. He wouldn’t need money there, and while it would go against everything his brother stood for, it wouldn’t take long for his appearance to degrade until he fully blended in.

Trembor could see his brother going hungry for a few days in an attempt to through anyone looking for him off his trail, he’d do without a lot of the amenities Trembor and everyone else took for granted, but not shower? Not condition his mane to it looked perfect, except for those locks that just wouldn’t stay out of his eyes?

Trembor just couldn’t see Bo putting himself through that misery.

Which made the homeless population the perfect place for his brother to hide, he had to admit.