

Damian walked back to his office. "Alice, I need you to find out what and when the next event that Commissioner Hyacinthe is attending is, and who we normally send there."

"Yes sir."

He entered his office and was about to close the door when she called to him.

"Actually sir, there's one tonight."

"Good, who are we sending?"

She took a moment to find the name. "Benita Johanson, out of finances."

It took him a moment to remember who she was. Benita was an armadillo, she was married, had been for twelve years now. She had a son and two daughters, twelve, eight and thirteen. She was a good worker, often stayed late when it was needed.

"Tell her to to enjoy her evening, I'll go in her place." He started to close the door, then paused. "Wait, is this a woman only event?"

"No sir, it's a gala to raise money for the police's retirement fund."

"Alright, good, is there a required dress code?"

"Yes, it's black tie. Do you want me to inform them of the change?"

Damian shook his head, "No, there's no need. I'll simply look for Benita's card."

He closed the door. He would have to stop by his condo and change. He still needed to decide what he was going to do with what his people found on the woman who had kidnapped his nephew. He could simply go take his nephew and fix him, it wouldn't be too difficult.

But he was family, and he had to consider what that meant for the mother. The promise he'd made to his father only involved taking care of his family. The situation with his nephew wasn't covered by it. He wouldn't be breaking his word if he ignored the mother. Or he could approach this from multiple angle, set things up for him to take him, while approaching his brothers with the information and seeing what they did with it.

There was one thing he needed to get started regardless. The meeting with the commissioner was one part of it, the other would be handled by the security company. He sent the necessary messages to get that started, then settled in for the rest of his day.

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The gala was held at the Old City Hall, the room could

easily host a thousand people, and it was almost full, even if Damian had arrived half an hour early. Finding out where the Commissioner was seated had only required him talking to the the host. Having his card, Benita's, moved to be seated next to her was only a question of paying one of the servers to move it.

He waited for the gazelle to sit down before heading for their table. Before he reached it a slim black bear looked like he was going to sit next to her, noticed the name on the card, read it again, before heading out, searching for someone. Damian sat down.

"Commissioner," He greeted her, setting his untouched glass of champagne down.

The gazelle looked at him, then the card in front of him. "Benita?" She asked.

He gave her a charming smile. "Actually it's Damian. Miss Thortorne's youngest daughter fell sick so she had to go home. No one with the seniority in financial to come here was available, so as owner of the company, it fell to me to come. I just had time to stop home to change and come here."

"And which company do you own?"

"Diamond Enterprises."

Her ears went up. "Really? I know your company has given a lot of money to the police over the years."

"The police does important work, I believe it's also important that as a company, and a citizen who benefits from that work, I show my appreciation for it."

She looked at him. "You certainly have a concise way of putting it."

"Thank you. Actually, it's fortunate that I'm here tonight, I've been thinking of contacting your office to discuss funding your anti gang task force, I believe it's something you've been looking to do for some time."

"Yes, but It wouldn't look very good for the money to come from a corporation as large as yours. It would make it seem like you're trying to buy our services."

Before Damian could reply the lights dimmed and a hyena in police dress garb stepped on the stage. She talked for a time about the kind of work the police did and the financial difficulties the recession had caused.

Here and there she must have said jokes, because people laughed. Damian patterned his reaction after those at his table, two police chief and their spouses. Damian felt the speech was boring, it wandered all over the place. If the speaker had taken the time to formulate it she could have said what she wanted to say under three minutes.

Twenty minutes later she introduced the commissioner, who

left the table to go say a few words. Her speech was better prepared, and well rehearsed. Damian could hear the cue cards she'd memorized in the tempo of her voice. She didn't meander, and was only there for five minutes. What she said was summed up by, The police work hard, so those who reach retirement age need to be able to afford to enjoy it. And the people in this room were responsible for that to happen.

As she came back to the table, and someone else took the podium, a server placed a plate of food before him and the others. It was a platter of expertly made sushi with a variety of fish meats and vegetables. Each piece had a card indicating the provenance of the fish that was used. All of them came from well regulated fish farms, he was pleased to see.

"That was a good speech," he said as the gazelle sat back down. The others at the table nodded their agreement. He gave her time to savor one of the pieces of sushi before whispering to her. "I promise you, I have no intention of trying to buy the police force. I already have enough to manage with just my company"

She chuckled, and Damian wondered what might have been amusing in what he said.

He let her eat some more, but she was the one who talked to him.

"Regardless of your intentions, the public would see it as such."

"Only if the public knows it came from my company. It's easy enough to route the money as donations from multiple origins."

She eyed him. "That doesn't sound particularly legal."

He smiled. "I assure you, it's completely legal. Politicians have made sure there's enough loopholes in the donation laws I could drive your money in an armored car through them."

She looked at him thoughtfully before going back to eating.

He must have said that wrong, except he was certain he'd repeated it exactly as Rigel said it went. Another example of why he didn't bother with humor.

He let them finish the plate in silence. When the server cleared the table he looked at Damian's still full plate, but the tiger nodded for him to take it away.

They brought a streak, from the smell of it, basted in a red wine sauce with garlic and sesame. He expected it to be quite tasty.

"You seem quite determined to get me to agree to this, I have to wonder why."

"Well, eliminating gang violence was part of your

platform when you became commissioner six years ago. Since then you haven't seen much successes in that. As with many things lack of resources is why. I agree that gangs have become too strong in the city. I could certainly use the money to pay private security company to deal with them, but I expect you would frown on such actions."

"Frowning is a very mild word for the reaction I'd have."

Damian nodded. "Which is why I propose to give that money to you so you can fund more personnel, better tool and training."

She was silent as she ate, and Damian didn't interrupt. once their plates were cleared, with another odd look from the server at Damian's full plate.

"The food isn't to your liking?" she asked. "At two thousand dollars for the meal I'd expect you to want to enjoy it"

"As I said, I wasn't suppose to be the one coming here, I had already eaten a substantial meal before coming."

"You could have cut your food, made it look like you you ate some of it."

Damian looked at the desert placed before him, a rich looking cheese cake drizzled in a kiwi coulie. "I suppose I could, but I don't see the point. By leaving the piece whole, they are in a position to donate it to someone who is in need."

She smiled. "I have to say the way you look at things is refreshing. How about we do lunch tomorrow to discuss this proposal further? I know a nice place by the waterfront that's very discreet."

Damian smiled. "That would certainly be agreeable." She wrote down the address for him and they agreed on the time. He watched them finish the meal and then left.

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Damian entered his condo and headed for his bedroom, where he undressed and folded his tuxedo. In the morning he would drop it off at the cleaners.

After that he went to the kitchen, where he took out a thick steak, the making of a lemon rosemary glaze and a salad with a raspberry dressing. Watching those people eat made him hungry, so he allowed himself a larger portion then usual.

After that he called Jimmy, his driver. He was slowly prodding how far he could push the wolf, and he was finding him pleausrably malleable. A few hours forcing him to have sex would be good before bed.