

**Another Way**  
**Saturday – 11.19.62**

AS I SAT DOWN I NOTICED THAT ASHLEY LOOKED A BIT nervous. Having recently realized I'd ignored people who were flirting with me, I had to wonder if Ashley had been and I'd missed it. Once our food arrived, I learned that this wasn't the problem.

"This is going to sound terrible, Katherine, but I might have a way to help you jump ship. It just makes it sound like I'm taking advantage of you," Ashley said slowly.

I raise an eyebrow. "And what is it?"

"My guild wouldn't mind fighting the larger national guild in your favor. But like before, they would need some assistance. They'd like you to bring some evidence along the way. Some evidence of acquisition, kind of sounds like spying." Ashley fidgeted in her seat; clearly she didn't like doing this.

I wasn't happy with this, but really. Unless I wanted to jump to another national guild or one with a massively wealthy backer, I kind of expected a similar requirement. The problem was that there had to be a legal fight to determine if the 'non-compete' clause counted or I had to wait for it to run out. Or at least close enough to the end of the clause's time table that it didn't really matter.

"I don't know. What exactly do they want evidence of?"

"Internal emails. They are certain there are legal wrongdoings going on in Sanctified Devils, and they want to prove it," Ashley said quickly. "I think they believe the scummy way you were treated is a symptom of a larger issue."

"And if I can get the internal communications, and they don't help the larger case, what then? Will they still help

me out?" I asked the most important question of Ashley. I didn't know if I would agree even then, but a "no" would definitely end the consideration.

Ashley seemed uncomfortable. "They are certain you will succeed. But I have no reason to believe they will say no. After all, you are a Necromancer who has proven she's willing to do all the work needed to excel in this game. So yeah, I think you'll do well."

That wasn't the most heartening answer I could have gotten. Still, it was probably the best answer I'd get. Especially as it was in the best interest of the Red League to make it sound like things were dependent on this kind of help. Even if they weren't.

"Ashley, the Red League isn't a bad guild, but I don't know if I should risk it when I have no reason to believe the Devils have committed crimes. Been scummy as hell and have a dated view of the world? Yes. But that doesn't mean they're criminals," I commented. A slight hesitation came, because I wasn't sure what I wanted to say next.

"Besides, I don't know how to deal with this," I said slowly. This was really becoming a major problem for me. "What am I supposed to do, kick down the guildmaster's door and hope he left his computer unlocked?"

Ashley seemed more comfortable now. "If you agree, we'll provide you with a USB drive which has programs that can do most of the hacking for you. All you'd have to do is plug them into a computer with access to the network."

I leaned back and wondered about this. It wouldn't be a big deal. The issue with the Red League, in my opinion, is that they were the first local guild. And they'd never really grown. Which suggested to me that they had no desire to grow. I'd like to see the world if I could. And hunting dungeons as one of the few Necromancers in

existence would really make that possible if the guild you were a part of had contact outside of the local environment. Which I doubted they had much of, given their localization.

On the other hand, having actual evidence of criminal activity would be nice, as it would very rapidly make the case against the Devils much easier to win. And making it another guild who called bullshit would make it unlikely that public confidence in guilds would drop. Something that has been shown to cause serious problems with all sorts of things, including, but not limited to, a few dungeon breaks.

You'd think dungeon breaks wouldn't be affected by things like a loss of public confidence, but reality wasn't so nice. Less public confidence meant fewer people willing to be Divers, work in guilds, and thin out monsters. And more risk of the dungeons bursting.

On the other hand, no one would be surprised that a rare class got screwed over once. And it would be fairly easy to argue self-regulation in this case. Especially if I could get an agreement to go our separate ways when I hit a high enough level to make travel for work a viable choice. Or that they would help facilitate that desire.

Either way, it was worth thinking about. "Ashley. One of the things that makes me hesitate, even ignoring the legality of the whole proposition, is that I want to travel. Getting contracts to hunt through another dungeon for whatever reason would be a lot of fun. And as a Necromancer, it's totally possible to get a guild to pay for it. Yet the Red League is deliberately a local guild. You see the problem, right?"

"Yeah. I get that. But I'm sure you can work out a solution. It's going to be years before you're able to do large-scale movement, right? Something to figure out in

the future. And any general contract will have run out by then anyways.”

“Maybe. But I will also have jumped, and guilds don’t always look favorably on that.”

Ashley winced at that and sighed. “I understand it’s confusing. But you can work that out when you sign up with the League.”

“After I’ve gotten involved in corporate espionage. Yeah. That sounds like a way to leverage a better deal out of me.” I grinned at Ashley. “I’ll consider it. But I don’t know if it’s going to happen. Ok?”

“Yeah.” Ashley suddenly grinned. “So got a significant other yet? Know what you’re looking for?”

I rolled my eyes at the change of topic and answered negatively to both. It wasn’t really an important concept to me at the moment.

As we continued to visit, and relax, I realized I wasn’t about to overlook a possibility that I’d been missing. Maybe I wasn’t the only one with a case against the Sanctified Devils. There were others who avoided the guild as much as possible and tended to talk longingly about the end of the non-compete clause in their contracts. Maybe that could be a useful angle to use against the Devils.

Once we left the restaurant I pulled out my phone and called my lawyer. Mr. Witt was now fully employed and believed I had a shot. Not sure how great of one, but one worth the effort. Once I’d gotten through the secretary and the basic greetings were out of the way I had to ask my question.

“So, boss, tell me. If we could find others who were, at the minimum, desperate to get out of the guild, other mages for instance, how would that affect our chances?”

“Well, if they have a real case against the guild we could add them, adding weight to our argument. If they

don't have a full case but could act as witnesses and are willing to testify, despite not likely getting out of the non-compete clause, that would help as well."

"I take it you don't think that second one is any more likely than I do," I answered sadly.

"Nope. It's why I didn't say anything before. There are never witnesses unless they're subpoenaed as verification of the video evidence. We'll be doing that. And we might find those who might help, but it's not likely to be a lot. After all, most guilds are careful to avoid major breaches that could give their employees cause to leave and taking the hit to their bottom line."

I sighed. Well that, at least, sucked greatly. "Any guidelines to what might be a good view of things that could be added to our claims?"

Mr. Witt was quiet for a moment. "Well, I guess it never hurts to keep an eye open. But if you say anything before we file the charges, it will hurt our chances, as they could delete things that would be useful and say they had no idea they were destroying evidence."

"Good point. So what do I need to do?"

"I'll put together a document. Or more likely get an intern to do so—it's a good learning method—and we'll send it to you in a few. Just don't say anything to those people you're talking to until we have officially given notice to the Sanctified Devils."

I grinned. Yeah, this seemed like a good way to go. "I can do that. And honestly, people will likely expect me to be asking them about things by now anyways. I haven't exactly been silent about my issues with the guild."

"Good point. And good luck. Anything extra luck we can get on our side is always better."