

Chapter 94

It took a long moment before they came down from their high, coming back from the fantasy where it was only the two of them, then reluctantly left each other's embrace - but not each other's side - and got back to work.

In the following hours, as Greg checked in with the mavericks in the trenches, Sush went through the eastern documents. Then, she remembered something: there was a formatting issue when she first opened these files. Her mind came to a standstill for a minute or two. Then, deciding to backtrack her edits and remove each one, she scrutinized the sections she changed again. That was when she saw it - not a pattern, but a message.

"Greg!" she hollered, too shocked to get up.

Greg sped from the study, immediately dropping his link with Jade and Ella, appearing by Sush's side within the next second. "What happened?" he asked, frantic, skimming her - twice - and was relieved to find no injuries.

"I found this," she uttered, voice lowered in stunniness as she angled the laptop toward him.

Positioning the laptop back in front of her as he stood directly behind her, his breath fanned the crown of her head when he tried to see what she saw, and Sush leaned into him as she waited, drowning in the heat radiating from his body, taking comfort in his scent, and cherishing the safety that came with the way his body shielded hers.

Greg's eyes on her desktop popped from one minimized screen to the next, going through all eight of them and starting again.

The first file, Ferdinand's name was bolded; the second, Jagah - the remote location where Catrine Carter was sent to and subsequently found dead in - was in a smaller-sized font for some reason, the change

so minute that it was almost imperceptible at a cursory glance; the third was a page which specified the hunters involved in the task, and the word "Robinson" had a double spacing between each letter, and - coincidentally or not coincidentally - it was Hazel's family name; the fourth, a three-line paragraph that was thought to be redacted for no reason left only the words "premium", "lycan" and "blood" unredacted; the fifth, the words "black market" was bolded the same way Ferdinand's name was; the sixth, "Carter" was in the same smaller-sized font as "Jagah", though this Carter was another individual entirely - not Catrine Carter; the seventh, the explosion file - there was nothing jarring within the document itself, but the jarring thing had already been identified earlier on: the fact that it was kept opened the longest.

There wasn't a pattern. What there was was a connection: Ferdinand and black market; Jagah and Catrine Carter; the Robinsons, which may or may not include Hazel's parents since the file was on a task that occurred during their tenure; premium lycan blood - Enora's blood, most likely because whispers in the underworld about the royal family's unusual ability to heal from poisons circulated, as much as those who were loyal to the said family tried to stifle its circulation; and the explosion - vague, but not irrelevant - about his car, Sush's late mother and the archer, Sakura Kondo, from many years ago.

"It wasn't a formatting issue," he muttered, almost to himself.

Sush had no response, and as Greg's hands wrapped around the balls of her shoulders, something else hit her and she turned frigid, which set off the panic button in Greg too when he gazed down and demanded, "What?"

Patting his chest in quick successions like she was hastening him, she said, "The footage of the eastern murders. The six archers with the culprit in the beanie. Where is it? I want it."

"You have it right here," he uttered steadily, as much as his heart was beating erratically inside.

He opened the file and put it to play. Sush immediately paused the

video when it reached the part where the culprit was facing - though not looking - at the camera. Zooming in, she groaned at the pixelated image, now blurred through enlargement.

"Patience, my octopus. Jade taught me this trick a while back." Greg used a program, clicked around here and there and got the image to sharpen.

Sush knew those eyes. "Zoom out a little." Once he did, she stared at the screen with even larger eyes and hissed in a whisper, "Fuck. Me."

"I'd love to, but I hope you'll tell me what this means first."


"That's her!" Sush exclaimed like it was obvious, hand gesturing at the screen. "That's Monica Upshaw!"

The person in a beanie was - evidently - never a he and never a thug.

When Monica said she had been in touch with Sush, the Chief Octopus expected it to be something more direct, but even she had to admit this was a sleek move to convey a message - a message that the archer most likely conveyed at the expense of her own safety, resulting in her death. Someone must have found out and shut her up for good, and if the clues she left were to be believed, their answers lay in Ferdinand and the Robinsons.

Chapter Comments



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