

"Mister Orr?" the phone's intercom said.

"Yes, Alice?" Damian said, continuing to type, he was writing a contract for the humanitarian work one of his companies was being ask to do by the Iranian government. He wanted to make sure it was worded correctly. He needed them to interpret it one way, when it meant something else.

"There's a mister Hammer here to see you."

"He doesn't have an appointment," he replied. He didn't have to check his calendar, he knew all his appointment for the next month. "Have him make one, and come back then."

He reread a phrase, changed the position of a word, it still meant the same thing in English, but because of the way Persian was structured, they would assumed it meant the opposite.

"I'm sorry, sir." She had been silent for a few moment, probably explaining the situation to the man with her. "He says it's important that he talks with you. It's about your uncle Bobby."

Damian's hands became still. It wasn't a medical problem, his uncle's doctor had instruction to call him. It also wasn't a legal issue, since his lawyers had the same instructions. Then, the reason for the visit was personal. Why here, if it was about his uncle? Because it wasn't just about him. This was a family issue.

"Very well, I'll see him." He saved the contract, and then shut off his screen.

The door opened, and a fox entered.

Jacket, pants, and shirt, crumpled and stained. He'd been traveling for a while. A few stains were automotive grease, by car.

He had a folder in a hand, and looked confident, but he wasn't looking at Damian with disdain, not blackmail then. Blackmailers always looked at their target like they were stupid for getting caught. He'd had to deal with a few of them, in the years he'd run his business. They were always quite surprised when he turned the table on them. No, there was curiosity in that look, inquisitiveness.

Damian stood, and when the fox got to his desk, he extended his hand. "I'm Damian Orr, Mister . . .?"

The fox was taken back for a moment, by the act of civility. Damian excelled at acting civil. He took the hand and shook it. "Nick Hammer."

"Please, Nicolas, have a seat." Damian sat. "You said this was about my uncle. What is the problem?"

Nicolas put the folder on the desk and pushed it to Damian. When it came to a stop, a picture slid a little more. Damian recognized Bobby's head. He pulled the picture out, without opening the folder.

It was of his uncle's backyard, he was reclining in a lounge chair, near the apple tree, a bear cub, of twelve was

stretched between his legs, his name was Shawn. The tree's leaves were just starting to come out, spring, probably a few days ago.

The picture had been taken from a high place. His uncle had twelve feet high fences because he liked his privacy. The only indication Damian had of where the photographer had been was a little bit of a fence at the bottom of the picture. It hadn't been taken from the roof of his uncle's house.

On one side, were the Harpers, a father and son couple, who were very close to his uncle. They would never have allowed someone on their roof. The house on the other side had burned down five years ago, an accidental electrical fire, Damian had the cause verified by his own expert, no one had been hurt. The lot was still vacant. That left the woods at the back of the property.

Without moving his eyes, Damian focused on Nicolas' hands, visible in his peripheral vision. They had cuts and bruises consistent with climbing a tree without gloves. The man had worked hard for the picture, Damian respected that.

He opened the folder and located another picture of his uncle. It was zoomed on him and the cub, and showed the bear sucking his uncle's cock.

He took another picture out. This one showed his uncle Byron, talking with a boy who looked to be no more than seventeen. Even in his eighties, his uncle still liked to hunt. His uncle loved having to charm the pants off boys.

The next picture showed Anakin entering a mortuary, at night. What was his nephew doing there? He'd have to look into this. The next was Dominic with Senator Melowes. The picture wouldn't really cause his bother problem, although the scandal would probably mean he wouldn't be able to see his master anymore.

The next one was a still from a video, old and grainy. Why hadn't those two listened to him. He had told them to delete all the recordings they had made of their exploits at school. This still showed Donald, balls deep in and otter's ass, while Daniel sucked the otter's cock.

The next one was Arthur, with a thirteen old boy. Because of his smaller stature, the casual observer would think them about the same age, but Arthur's cock, about the enter the other boy's ass, was most certainly that of an older boy.

He quickly flipped through the other pictures, the message was clear, this man had documented almost every family member's eccentricities. Except for himself, three pictures of him entering nondescript buildings, and Dietrich, no pictures at all. That told him all he needed to know.

He put the pictures back in the folder, closed it, and pushed it back to Nicolas. Damian sighed. Not blackmail, but that's still what anyone else would think of first. Lets start with that. "Alright, how much?"

"What?" The fox asked, surprised.

"How much for you to keep your mouth shut about what you know?" Damian noticed the fox put a hand on a pocket. There was something rectangular in it. More evidence? Backups?

The fox was first stunned, and then angry. "You rich guy are all the same. You think you can just throw money at your problems and make them disappear. Well, that isn't going to work with me. You can't buy me, I have integrity."

We do that because it works, Damian thought. Integrity . . . Not many people used that word anymore. Not a lawyer, a reporter. That was a recorder in his pocket.

This was interesting.

"Very well, if you aren't here to blackmail me, why are you here?"

"Because I'm a decent guy, and I think you should get a chance to tell your side of the story before I publish my piece."

'Our side of the story?' No, he couldn't mean the family, the pictures showed he'd done his research, after his source gave him the starting point. He would know, at this point, that there wasn't much they could say to defend themselves. No, it wasn't 'our' side of the story, it was 'my' side of the story.

Interesting.

"You're a reporter?"

"Yes, and I'm with an actual paper." He pulled out a card and flicked it on the desk in front of Damian. 'Los Angeles Time' he read, with Nicolas' name underneath, and his editor's name and number.

"Look, I can't," Damian said, putting a tremor in his voice. "I mean, I can't talk for the others. I have to check with them first."

"I expected as much. How about I make an appointment with your secretary, for this time next week. You're willing to talk to me then, and I'll make sure your explanations for those," he indicated the folder, "make it in the story. You don't, and I put the story out as it is. You get to deal with the fallout on your family. And I have it on good authority, you don't want to see your family get hurt."

This sealed it. He was going to have a serious talk with his brother.

"Keep the picture." The fox stood. "In case you need a reminded of what's at stake." The fox left, quite confident with his position.

Damian waited ten minutes, during which time he went back to working on the contract.

"Alice?" he said, and the phone automatically turned the intercom on.

"Yes, mister Orr?"

"Unless you expect anyone else to show up unannounced, you can go home. I have to work late on this contract."

"Sir, you really should let legal deal with that, that's why you have a legal department, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Have a good night Alice."

"Have a good night Mister Orr, I'll see you in the morning."

He took the card Nicolas left, and called the number on it.

"Los Angeles Time." A man said.

"I need to talk to Elliot Nelson, please."

"A moment, please"

"Elliot Nelson's office."

"I'd like to speak to Elliot."

"I'm afraid mister Nelson is in a meeting at the moment."

"Please let him know Damian Orr is calling. If he's too busy to take my call, I'll call later."

There was a pause.

"Damian, old boy, it's been an age. How are you doing? I haven't seen you at the golf club recently. You missed an amazing game last week."

"I'm sure I did." Damian didn't like golf, he couldn't see a point to it. "I'll do my best to be there next week. Listen, I'd love to hear all about that game, but I'm actually calling on business. You have a reporter, Nicolas Hammer."

"Ah, yes. Young Hammer is a great reporter, he's going to do great thing for this paper."

"I'm afraid not, Elliot. I have to take him out."

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Finding his brother hadn't been easy. Ever since falling on hard time, Dietrich had stopped using credit cards. Well, Damian had canceled all of them, and made sure no credit company ever dared send his brother more. This had prevented him from owing too much money, and it limited his alcohol intake, but it made it more difficult to track when he left town.

Not that Damian had cared to know where his brother had gone to, until now. His people had finally tracked him to a run down motel, one with weekly rates, on the outskirts of Roanoke, Virginia.

He unlocked the door with the key he bought from the front desk, an actual key, this place had never updated their locks. He opened it an inch, and wasn't surprised to see the chain wasn't on. His brother probably hadn't been sober enough to put it on, if he'd even thought about it.

He opened it just enough so he could slip through, and closed it. The curtains were closed, blocking most of the light, but after a moment he could see well enough to tell that Dietrich was the only one on the bed. Damian had been prepared for him to have a companion. This simplified things. He carefully walked around the room, making sure to avoid stepping on any of the bottles. A quick look around told him there were fifty-seven empty bottles of the cheapest alcohol available.

He sat on the chair next to the door, carefully and

silently removing the two bottles on it first. He settled in to wait for his brother to wake up. While he waited, he built the theoretical model of San Francisco, and watched it evolve over the years as his planned changes for the city took effect.

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The body on the bed stirred, and groaned. Damian lifted the protective glass over his watch with a finger, and ran the finger over the face. He'd been sitting here six and a half hours. He'd move seventy five years in San Francisco's future. It was going to be quite a city by that time.

The body moved again, a striped head lifted, and looked around. Eyes landed on him, took a moment to focus, and then groaned, falling back to the pillow.

"Go the fuck away," he growled. "I don't feel like dealing with you."

"The feeling is reciprocal. Unfortunately, you have left me no choice, but to deal with you."

Bottles clanked on each other, as a hand searched the floor.

"Don't bother, they are all empty."

"You had no right!" Dietrich yelled, sitting up, then moaned and held his head. "You had no right to empty them," he said, quieter. "I paid for them with my money, they were mine."

"I did not empty them, you drank them all. As for the money, considering you sold out your family to get it, it wasn't yours at all."

"What do you care? I know you. They wouldn't be able to find anything on you. You're just too fucking good." Dietrich went back to looking for a bottle with any alcohol in it.

"Because of what you told that reporter, uncle Bobby has been photograph educating one of his kids. Do you have any idea the kind of trouble that could be for him?"

Dietrich looked at him. "He's an old man, he can deal with it. Just leave me the fuck alone. Why are you even here? You abandoned me like the others."

"We didn't abandon you. You refused out help. We all knew that cock of yours was going to be your downfall."

"You weren't saying that when you were sucking on it."

Damian leveled his gaze on his brother, and he looked away.

"Don't try that voodoo stuff on me, you know that won't work. I'm too stubborn for you tricks."

"No. I just never felt you were worth the effort. Father would be ashamed of you."

"Don't you fucking dare bring him up. He didn't give a damn about me. He loved you. You didn't give a damn about him, but he loved you."

"I know."

"He shouldn't have been wasting his love on you. He should have given it to us, instead."

"He loved us all, Dietrich. You were just too full of

yourself to see it."

"Get the fuck out!" he groaned again.

"No. Not until we have talked. I have been happy to ignore you, let you self destruct in peace. I tried to save you, to keep you safe, as I promised father, but I had to decide that if you didn't want to be protected, it was no longer my responsibility. Father would have disagreed, I know, but he is no longer here. So long as you were only destroying yourself, I was content, but you are now trying to bring us all down with you. I will not abide that."

"I don't fucking care what you want. I can do what ever I want."

Damian sighed. "I can't talk with you when you are like this."

"Then leave!" more groaning.

Damian stood, went to the dresser, made sure that one of the courtesy glass was clean, and pulled out a fifth of rum from his trench coat pocket.

"You brought drink?"

"Yes," Damian replied, with disdain. "I know very well, that I can't convince you to drink water, which is what you need right now." He offered the glass to his brother. "This will numb your pain so we can talk."

"Give me the bottle."

"No."

"You want us to talk? You're going to give me the fucking bottle."

"I give you the bottle, and you'll have drank it all before it has left my hand. You will take this glass, we will talk, and when I leave, I shall leave the bottle here."

Dietrich smiled. He took the glass from his hand, and lifted at Damian. "Up yours." He downed it. "Oh wow, this is good stuff."

Damian watched his brother for a moment, and then went to the bathroom with the bottle. He emptied it in the toilet.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"I am emptying the bottle." He flushed, and came out.

"You fucking liar, you said you'd leave it for me."

Dietrich started getting out of bed.

"I said I would leave the bottle here." He put the bottle on the dresser. "I didn't say it would contain anything."

Dietrich reached for him, but staggered. He frowned. "What the hell?" he put a hand on the bed to steady himself. "I only had a glass, I can't be drunk yet."

"No, that would be the benzodiazepine that was in your drink. That's why I emptied the bottle. I don't want anyone else to drink it, once we have left."

"I'm not going anywhere." He sat on the bed.

"I'm afraid you are. I need to do something about you."

Dietrich fell sideways on the bed.

"Frankly, I think that killing you would be the best thing to do for everyone. It would end your misery, which is obviously what you are aiming to do, and it would ensure you wouldn't divulge anymore of our secrets. But that would go against my promise to father, so I have decided on a different course of action."

His brother was snoring.

Damian took out the small case from his pocket and unzipped it. From it he took out one of the twelve syringes and injected its content in his brother's arm. That would keep him sedated for four hours. Twelve of them would be more than enough to get them to their destination without problems.

He dressed his brother, with the only clothes he could find, a dirty wife beater, and dirtier jeans. He looked at him. Being an Orr, Dietrich had good genes. All of them had good musculature, even with minimal work, as Dominic demonstrated. As a professional body builder, he had developed them to an extreme, another reason his ego was so large. Now, after ten years the muscles were still there, but they were no longer defined. Years of alcohol and drugs, and a lack of regular exercise, had coated them with a thick layer of fat, as well as given him a belly.

Damian didn't care about that, except that it would make carrying him difficult. He hadn't counted on his room being on a the second story of the motel.

He saw a shadow pass by the window, and opened the door. A large framed lion was headed for the stairs.

"Excuse me," he said.

The lion stopped and turned. He wore a beige suit, well filled by his muscular body.

"Is there any chance you could help me? I need to take my brother to the car, and I don't think I can do it alone."

"Sure." The lion put his case against the wall and entered the room. "Woah, you guys had a party?"

"He did," Damian said, setting his mind in 'concerned brother' mode - talk with caring, and a little too freely. "I don't drink."

The lion eyed the bottles on the ground, before putting an arm under one of Dietrich's shoulder. "How long did the party last?"

Damian placed himself at the other shoulder. "This one? ten years. Ever since his career died, he's been trying to live on the memories, guys, drugs and drinks. I'm taking him home."

They lifted him, and started for the stairs. "He's lucky, that you care I mean. I travel to lots of gym around the country, I sell supplements, and I see plenty of guys pass their prime, slowly killing themselves, with no one to stop them."

"I made a promise to our father, and while Dietrich sometime makes me regret it, I will continue to look after him."

"Wait, Dietrich? Dietrich Orr?"

"Yes." Damian eyed the lion. "How do you know him?" What were the odds of running into someone who knew his brother in a place like this?

"I used to follow his career. Man, when I was younger I wanted to be like him so much. He's one of the reason I look the way I do. I work out everyday, even when I'm on the road." He looked at the tiger they were supporting. "Man, this is so sad. He disappeared from the scene when he lost the Mister Universe title to that Austrian dog."

Damian nodded, studying the lion. He couldn't detect any subterfuge in his features. "Yes, that did mark the end of his career."

"I didn't know he'd fallen so low. I just thought he'd retired, started a business, like most of them do."

"You didn't become a body builder?"

"Not professionally. I didn't have the dedication for it. I went in nutrition, instead. Now I represent AgroMuscle, selling to all the large gyms."

They reached the parking lot, and Damian indicated the Bentley. He reached in his pocket, the car beeped, and the passenger door opened.

"What are you doing staying in a place like this? Doesn't your company pay for your hotels?"

"I get reimbursed." He leaned Dietrich against the car, and Damian went in from the driver's side. "I don't like over charging. I'm just sleeping here, so a place like this works just fine for me." He carefully lowered the tiger, and Damian caught him, sitting him in the seat. The lion passed him the seatbelt, and Damian buckled his brother in. Damian took a business card out of his wallet, and wrote something on the back.

He extended his hand to the lion. "I'm Damian Orr."

"Ronald Jackson."

They shook hands.

"Do you ever find yourself in San Francisco, Ronald?"

"Sure, a few times a year."

Damian handed him the card. "The next time you are there, stay at the Pacific Royal Hotel. Treat yourself, your stay will be on me, however long you want."

Ronald looked at the card. "I can't do that. That kind of place can't be cheap."

"Don't worry about it. I can afford it. Think of it as my way of expressing my gratitude for your help."

"Thanks," Ronald said, awe in his voice.

Damian backed out of the parking spot, and headed out.

"Call the office," he told the car.

There was a ring. "Diamond Enterprise," a man said

"Hello Matthew."

"Mister Orr? What can I do for you."

"Forward this name to recruitment. Ronald Jackson. He

currently words for AgroMuscle, as a representative. Ask them to compile a dossier on him. Then contact the Pacific Royal, he will probably show up there within the year, and I want them to tell us when he does so."

"I'll do that."

"Thanks you, Matthew. I'll be in on Monday, let them know I'll drop by then to read it."

"I will."

"Have a good day." He hung up. If Ronald was who he claimed to be, Damian wanted him. Someone who didn't like wasting company money, was someone who would fit well in his organization. If he wasn't, if somehow Damian had missed a sign and he had a tie to his brother, maybe an enforcer for a loan shark, he needed to know that too, even if he didn't do anything about it. At best, the lion would leave San Francisco with a new employer, if not, well, that would then depend on who he really was.

But that was a problem for another day.

He set the GPS with the destination. A sixteen hour drive, then his brother wouldn't be his concern, for a while at least.

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Damian stopped the car in the large, but empty parking lot of the clinic. It was in the woods of Colorado, away from anything.

A black bear stepped out. "Mister Orr, it's pleasure to see you again."

"Sebastian," Damian shook his hand. "I'm glad to see you put the money to good use."

"The expansion, and renovations have made a lot of differences. Helped lower the tension of our patients. Are you here for a tour?"

"No," Damian opened the passenger door. "I'm here to check in my brother." Damian had become aware of Sebastian Threclk's radical technique when Dietrich's problem with alcohol had become apparent. After he was unable to convince his brother to go to regular rehab clinics, he'd suspected something more extreme would be needed one day. So he had invested money in Sebastian's clinic.

The bear looked at the unconscious tiger. "Mister Orr, you know my policy. The patient has to check in voluntarily."

"I know, but I'm hoping you'd be willing to make an exception for me. My brother's addiction is proving destructive to him and our family."

"Drugs always to that." Sebastian closed his eyes and sighed. "You told me there wouldn't be any strings attached to the money. You promised me."

"And there isn't. If you refuse to take my brother, I will try another clinic, but I know him. He won't stay, and even if the clinic tries to keep him in, he is surprisingly adept at convincing people to do what he wants. I wouldn't be here, if I

didn't think your clinic was the only place my brother has any hopes of living."

"Damn it, he could sue us."

"He won't. I'll see to that."

"You remember, that once I take him in, you're not going to see him, or talk to him, until I determine he's ready to leave, right? If he's as bad as you're alluding to, it could be years."

"I know." Sebastian's method cut the patient from the rest of the world completely. Until he was completely dry, he was restricted to one room, after that he as moved to a living floor, and had regular session with Sebastian or another of his doctors.

The method was closer to brainwashing than to any actual accepted rehab method, which was why Sebastian's clinic had only consisted of a cabin in the woods, until Damian invested in him. It was also why he insisted his clients come to him of their own free will.

"Alright. I'll take him." Sebastian said, shaking his head.

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The door was flung opened. "What the hell have you done to him?" Dominic yelled.

Alice was right behind him. "I'm sorry, Mister Orr, I couldn't stop him."

"It's alright, Alice. I'll see my brother."

Alice closed the door behind her, while Dominic glared at him.

"You're going to have to be a little precise, I have done many things, to many 'hims'.

"Dietrich called me. They have him looked up in a room, and they are hurting him."

"While I'm certain he feels like he's in pain, no one is hurting Dietrich."

"Damn it, why is he locked up?"

Damian pulled out a folder from a drawer, and handed it to his brother. Dominic took it and opened it. He frown at the first picture.

"That's . . . Shawn? Right? The kid uncle Bobby's educating at the moment, right?"

"It is."

"Oh my god, that's my master! What are you doing with pictures of me and my master?"

"These pictures were given to me by a reporter, who was able to take them because of information Dietrich gave him in exchange for money so he could drink himself into oblivion."

Dominic dug up his cell phone

"You don't need to call him."

"I have to let him know. This can destroy his marriage."

"It won't. I took care of it."

Dominic nodded, relieved, and then froze. "Took care of it?" he slowly ran a finger across his throat.

Damian rolled his eyes. "Of course not. You know I dislike killing. I'm making him a job offer."

"Why would you hire this person?"

"Because he put in a lot of work gathering evidence of our eccentricities. I don't like letting such hard workers go to waste." The light indicating Alice had a call waiting for him started flashing.

Dominic was quiet for a moment, looking at his phone.

"This is why I put Dietrich in rehab."

His brother chuckled. "That won't work. You know no one can get him to do anything he doesn't want to."

"I can make anyone do anything, remember? Or do you need a reminder?"

Damian had been twenty-two, he and Dominic were the only ones at the house, they were relaxing, and Dominic had said he didn't believe Damian could manipulate people. So Damian had asked for something Dominic would never do, even with a gun to his head. Dominic looked at the dying fire before them, and said he'd never put his hand in it.

A day and a half later, Dominic was on his knees before the fire pit, a fresh fire he'd lit himself going strong. He was crying, he didn't want to do it. And yet, with a scream he plunged his hand in the fire.

Damian caught it before it got close enough to be burned. Then he held his brother tightly. He'd made his point.

Dominic looked at him, swallowed, and looked away.

Damian knew his brother was sporting an erection. As much as he hated him for getting him to do it, being controlled like that turned him on.

"Where is he?"

"No."

"I just want to see him. I get he's in rehab, and that's why he feels they're hurting him, but seeing family can help him."

"No. It won't. Dietrich doesn't need us right now. He needs to be alone. This doctor knows what he's doing." He leveled a gaze on his brother. "You are not going to call the number you have. You're going to erase it, Dominic. For the time being, you're going to forget we have a brother. He will come back to us, when he's ready."

"Do you even care that he's in pain?" Dominic whispered.

"No. And right now, that's what he needs. You've cared too much for him. You've let him take advantage of that. Even I'm guilty of letting him get away with far more than I should have. That's done. Go home, Dominic. See if your master will see you. Seek comfort with him."

"I hate you." The words were barely audible, but had no vehemence in them. Dominic stood.

"I know." Damian waited until his brother was out of his office before picking up the phone. "Hello Sebastian."

"Mister Orr, I'm so sorry to disturb you, but your brother, he managed to get to a phone and call someone. I'm really sorry, he convince an orderly," there was sigh, "in exchange for sex."

"It's alright, Sebastian, I did say my brother was surprisingly good at that. You'll know for the next time he attempts it."

"Will his call cause problems?"

"No, he called our older brother. I just had a talk with him and explained the situation, you don't have to worry."

The sigh of relief was loud. "Thank God."

Damian didn't comment, and hung up.

"Alice," he asked in the intercom, "whenever my three O'clock arrives, send him right in."

"He's already here, sir."

A moment later, the door opened, and a fox entered. He wasn't as confident as during his last visit. Damian indicated the chair. "Please, have a seat Nicolas. You don't mind if I call you Nicolas? I understand if you'd prefer I didn't, our last meeting didn't end exactly as you'd expected."

"Do what ever you want." The anger was barely controlled. "It's pretty clear I can't stop you."

"While that's true, it doesn't mean I want you angry at me."

"Is that why you got me fired? I wasn't even allowed get my files."

"I couldn't give you a chance to do something impulsive with them, that's why I took such extreme measures."

"My home computer's been wiped!"

"I have a copy of everything that was on it. After this meeting, regardless of how it goes, it will be restored, minus the files on my family. I can't let you keep that, at least not right now."

"Why am I here? You want to gloat? Is that it? I said you couldn't shut me off with your money and you proved me wrong. Fine, good on fucking you!"

"I want to hire you."

"You can go fuck yourself I don't care what you say I'm never going to drop . . . What?"

"I want to hire you." Damian repeated. "In fact, I want to offer you two jobs."

"Why?" Nicolas looked at the tiger distrustfully.

"Because you impressed me during your job interview."

"Job interview?" He sat. "What job interview?"

"Our last meeting. I understand that you saw it as 'sweating me', but I saw it as you showing me how good you are." He tapped the folder. "Regardless of how you gained the information on my family. You won't have access to him anymore, by the way. You worked hard an uncovering things you shouldn't have been able to. I work quite hard at protecting my family from prying eyes."

"Because you're a bunch of perverted criminals."

Damian opened the folder. "What do you see?" he asked, tapping the picture.

"I see an old man forcing a kid to have sex with him."

"The child's name is Shawn. My uncle hasn't forced him to do anything. Shawn is doing what he wants."

"Bullshit."

"I get that society doesn't accept that, but it's still true. All my uncle does is allow the children he educates to explore their sexuality. He never forces it on them."

Nicolas took out another picture. "How about this uncle? I know he 'convinced' that kid to have sex with him."

"That boy is twenty-one. If you check his bank account, you'll discover he was paid handsomely for what he's doing."

"Oh, I get it. That's you 'fixing' things, right? The transaction probably only appeared after I showed these to you."

"No. You are correct. Uncle Byron has gotten forceful in his conquests. I can't stop him, but I also can't let him endanger our family by raping someone. So I've made arrangements. None of the 'boys' in his preferred stalking grounds are minors. I also have someone keeping an eye on him, ready to run interferences should my uncle target someone unexpected."

Nicolas looked at him, disbelieving.

"I have told you, I protect my family. That doesn't mean I will let them do something I understand is wrong, and cover up for them. It means I will make sure they do nothing that can come back to cause us problems, even if they don't realize it's what I'm doing."

Nicolas took out another picture. "What about him. Are you going to tell me the corpse he's having sex with are plants?"

"They're dead Nicolas, it isn't like they mind."

"He's desecrating the bodies." The fox didn't seem to have any anger left in him.

"He's having sex with them. Who will be able to tell? If you want to tell me their loved ones, then explain to me why they leave them on cold slabs, alone. If they care so much, why aren't they there. My nephew loves them more than their own families."

"But it's wrong."

"Only because society tells you it is."

"Society is right!"

"Who have they hurt?" Damian waved a hand at the pictures

"They have to have hurt someone, they can't forced people like that and not hurt anyone."

"They have never forced anyone to have sex with them. It is one of the first rules we are taught. No means no. Unlike how society seems to accept it, there is no nuance for us. They make an advance, the person says no, they drop it."

The fox eyed him. "You keep saying 'they'. How about you?"

Do you respect that first rule of yours?"

Damian smiled, pleased at Nicolas' astuteness. "We'll come back to me in a moment. First, I'd like you to understand that the members of my family have eccentricities, but except for uncle Byron, none of them would ever force it on someone."

"And if I can't accept that?"

"Then I ask that you keep that dislike to yourself for the rest of this meeting."

"Afterward?"

"That will depend on how the meeting goes."

Nicolas took some breaths, forcing his fur to lie back down. "Alright. You said you wanted to offer me two jobs."

"Yes, the first one is a position at any of the news company I own. You are a very good investigative journalist, and I'd like you to apply those skills at one of my companies."

"Right, so I can investigate your competitors and help you take them down."

"You can investigate who ever you want, that would be between you and your editor."

"Until I look into one of your companies, and find something not kosher, right? Then I get shut down."

"No. If you find something untoward going on at one of my companies, I want you to bring it into the light"

"You can't be serious. You're telling me that you actually want me to investigate your companies? You're not going to tell my boss to shut me down?"

"Nicolas, I run a multinational corporation. I don't have the time to micromanage one employee. My companies run very well, because I make sure the right people are in the right positions, and then, I trust them to do the job I hired them for."

"I welcome you investigating my companies, because I don't believe you'll find anything worth reporting on. You should already know I have exacting standards for my employees, and I pay accordingly, but if you do find something wrong, I want to hear about it. I understand that you probably don't trust me enough to want to bring that to me directly, so I can resolve the issue with a minimum of publicity. Hearing about it in a public forum is acceptable."

Nicolas stood and paced for a moment, before sitting down. "What's the second job?"

Damian leaned back in his chair. "I understand that the reporting job isn't much of an incentive for you to keep what you have discovered about my family a secret." He raised a hand, to forestall the fox's comment. "And I will not make it dependent on it. No. To keep you quiet about my family I will give you something you want."

Nicolas looked at him sideways. "You said a job, not a bribe."

Damian smiled. "One doesn't have to exclude the other. I

noticed you were unable to find out much about me. You have a few pictures, and the little I've made public. The job I'm offering you, is to write my biography."

Nicolas stared at him.

"I'm serious, Nicolas. You've gathered a lot of information on my family, and your threat to publish the story was real, but that's not why you came to me with it. No. You want to know about the one person in my family you couldn't find anything about. Me. I am offering you this opportunity."

"And, and all I have to do, is forget about the rest of them?"

"Yes. I will answer all your questions about me, truthfully, but you will not seek out anyone else. You won't question them. I may mentioned them, as part of the answers I give, but that is the extent of it."

"What if they seek me out?"

That gave Damian pause. He hadn't considered his brothers or nephews might ask to speak with Nicolas. He wasn't planing on making his employ as biographer a secret, so they would know about it. It made some sense they might want to participate.

"So long as you have not initiated the contact, through subterfuge or directly, I won't forbid you from talking to them. However, there are some rules. First off. You won't publish my biography until after I'm dead."

"What? You can't ask that. For all I know I'll be dead before you."

"You're twenty years younger than me. Unless you are careless with your health, you'll outlive me. And the publication will ensure you have a good income as you are retiring."

Nicolas was visibly debating. "Alright, fine. I'll agree."

"Second. You may include anything from the interviews you will conduct with the rest of my family, except what deals with their eccentricities. You should consider their sex lives to be off limit."

"Yours?"

"I will answer any and every questions you ask, and they can all go in the biography."

"Anything else?"

"I want your word you will abide by these rules, Nicolas. Do not take me lightly on this. Do not try to find gray area that you think will let you get away with skirting the rules. I am not a nice man, Nicolas. I would prefer you never have to find that out first hand."

The fox swallowed. "I promise."

"Very good. You might want to take the recorder out of your pocket now. Yes, I'm aware you've been recording this from the moment you entered. I don't mind."

Nicolas placed the small recorded on the desk.

"You said 'they' obey the first rule, do you?"

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"No. I do not."