

It had been given much thought. Hours, days, pondering tinkering. Never had such excitement launched him from his bed, such hunger. Despite it being all words and commands, his tongue felt a sweet, lingering taste at the thought alone.

This... job... was a medium. It had become a medium. An intoxicating drug, an entrancing song, a petrified embrace. The time before it was irrelevant. Friends, family, what were they if they didn't want this?

He saw the posters. He always kinda bit his lip when they were so close. Hoping nobody would see it. Nobody ever did. Strangely enough, people figured it would be rude. A trenchcoat and a sultry smile can make most people a lot more affectionate.

Oh, sure, it was all for the job at first. But every faked giggled, every drooling lie and spicy line, it started to grow. It stopped being lies. It became an outlet for something deeper, until it was almost as natural as breathing.

Going back just wasn't an option. Too many things could be pinned on him, too many questions and worries about how he made it months without seeing anyone. Could he even go back? Could he wake up, knowing his veneer, his mask was no longer part of his day? Knowing he couldn't throw a sly wink and make people dance for him?

No, it just wasn't an option. Maybe a few weeks in, while it was still nerve-wrecking work, when his feet felt like water and his face was burning in withdrawal. When it was dumb, stupid, surreal and idiotic. When it was unnatural, and he hadn't bonded with it. Before he knew himself.

Of course, she was watching on most jobs. He liked her to. Show off how good he was, how much better he was. What she couldn't do, he could do twice over. Something about how his male mind worked made it just a bit easier to do. Did she even do her own jobs? Not likely, with how eager he became.

At first it was pushing, shoving, practically kicking him down the stairs in a cascade. But now he begged and pleaded for a reason. A reason to get out, make 'friends'. See himself in other people's eyes and feel the love. Honestly, he was close to a succubus with how he absorbed lust and affection like a fuel. Sometimes he went hours without eating, just going through tiny motions, tiny little nudges to make the mark fall over and spill it all.

He wanted calls home at first. She dangled it, figuring he'd forget. He didn't; he just stopped wanting it. His voice had turned slightly, as the job took its toll. As his talent took over. Why talk to people who would shun who he is, shun him for what he likes to do? With a few hours, he could get a new group of friends, the kind he could boss around without feeling bad. New life, new people.

Except for her. Perhaps that's why she started to get him things. "His part of the loot" was a ruse, because she liked it. Perhaps she thought of him as a mirror, or an apprentice, or maybe she projected herself.

The lack of private life wasn't a problem either. For now, he just went from job to job, no trail, no identity. He was whatever he wanted to be, and that worked out just fine. People don't care about complicated backstories, especially when here and now became the focus. People are so much more interested in talking and hearing about themselves than others, he quickly learned to need a backstory at all. Just let them talk about themselves and he could dodge any inquiry.

He wondered when he had turned. When it stopped being about the old and it started being about the now. When he became comfortable, if not insistent, on leaving his old friends behind. He likes to think it was that first kiss.

Oh, his silver tongue was getting into shape then, and he pushed a little too hard. A mark giving a kiss, he had to pull off some slick moves to stop any fallout. It paid off more than it should have, but he hardly cared about the job at that point. He felt a loving kiss. Not from someone he learned to despise, or a mellow kiss. But a kiss of passion and energy and allure. A kiss made to last and impress.

He would've gone solo after that. He didn't, for a few reasons. He didn't have contacts, nor was he great at the other side, the sneakier side. No, he was great in the field, the 'prep' work. He

shined like a diamond and got more out of tips than he ever saw in shares. And going solo means being a lot easier to trace. Too much of a risk with how all in he tends to go.

He sighed and glanced over his hands. Thick leather gloves, yet he could just as easily apply a new layer or stroke a cheek. The mirror he started into started back. It was her. The one who went out there and got stuff done. He felt pride in what he saw. A person who followed a dream and became what she could become.

Name... he needed a name. An address, a life. His skills would easily get a nice job, but honestly, he needed a name first. Maybe another day, he figured, tapping along the dress. Maybe after he meets someone truly special. He met people so often he could easily just cling to one.

There was a name, written on the envelope. Communication with her was a bit rough lately. She seemed to distance herself, giving the other time to flower and grow.

"Edward and Silvia McMilan, 24th Downing street. Keep him busy from 9 to as long as you can." Tsk. As long as he could? He preferred one on ones, where every trick in the book was a valid option, but there's little wrong with a little couple's therapy. After seducing troubled men, naggy women, he knew what kind of troubles to poke at.

Dig in his manicured nails and drag out a dripping mess of problems. Make them bleed emotions until the cafe was a whirlwind of agony. And then watch, licking his lips. Enjoying at how they'd sooner return home than to the security stations they had.

Naturally they'd be security. Of some sorts. Either it's figure out a thing, steal a thing or keep someone off-post. Maybe they were researchers, or just curators? He didn't care. Honestly, even if they were a perfect couple he'd just hit on a bit. Make one or the other feel awkward.

Or just talk. He knew how long people can talk about themselves. One of them would. Or he'd hit a nice hobby, bursting at the seams for an outlet. He'd play them like a violin. A nice long, classical piece, where one's too busy to notice and the other too polite to interrupt. Oh, he loved those.

Chained to etiquette, he called it. When people are so into manners for their special friend they just can't bring themselves, no matter how important. Part of him wanted a person like that. A friend that'd let him chat, or he couldn't bring himself to interrupt. Wouldn't be either McMilan; never like a mark.

Heavy, brown, leather trenchcoat, smelling strong of perfumes and kind words. Slightly shiny, to match the black leggings. Sure, it didn't like the pink and white boots, but that's what the make up and barret was for. Together with the gloves it made a great staple for when he just wanted to get on.

A quick peer in the pocket mirror, assessing every spot and coating of make up. He couldn't ever leave. Never. He'd be locked in a closet during visitation, so much so even his 'contact' couldn't see him anymore. No, only she could leave. Only she was allowed to have a life, live the life. Only then could he feel happiness inside.

She, his contact, prescribed most of it, but it clicked so well, who was he to argue? It became him, or perhaps it was always him. Sonia, he liked to think that'd fit, though it was so easy to guess, so cliché, so drab. A fashionable madam wouldn't dare be like that. Sophia was a little more clever, or perhaps something else.

Once outside, she could feel it was over her. A quick test of the voice, a quick lock of the door. Trying that smile a few times. Yes, she was ready. It was her day. Deep inside, she could feel that eagerness stir.

A part of her kind of wanted to be confronted about the poster. "Who's Sonic?" She'd reply, before putting on the cutest smile and play dumb. Oh, the ultimate test. She wanted it. With that, she figured, she'd be done. Her final gauntlet. Then, she'd be free, forever. To be who she is. To look forward, never backward. To explore, to embrace, to love, to cherish, to become who she wants. To finally say to her contact... "Thank you for blackmailing me."