Chapter Two

- A New Bordum

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My offices were more luxurious than I had thought they would be. Being the Senior Engineer of a T1 required much more space than I was used to. But to be fair, I hadn't ever been able to find out. A couch lined the immediate wall beside the door in the main office, and a large painting of shrubs and trees decorated the wall behind it. On the opposite wall was a bookcase with a smattering of books left behind by the last tenant and plenty of space to add my own. A large desk separated the far wall from the entrance, and two chairs sat in front of its length that held a terminal system and a few monitors. A door past the couch leads to a small bedroom and bathroom with minimum amenities.

The door on the right intrigued me as it was apparent that it hadn't been touched. Where else in the rest of the rooms, there were left behind spots in the dust where the last tenant had packed their stuff up before leaving, indicating they had been lived in. But this room was spotless, with a medical bed, medicines, and medical devices adorning the walls. A cabinet full of bulkier medical machinery rested immediately beside the door, all stocked and untouched. The room hadn't been used once, made even more apparent by the fact that some medicines were expired. Kiara or none of the last Engineers had used this room once, and I don't think I had to guess why. A part of me couldn't help feeling disappointed, let down, stolen from. My earlier thoughts of finally seeing a reward for all my efforts were just pipe dreams. It almost made me want to cry, but instead, I breathed. An opportunity was just that; I would be foolish to let it out of my grasp now that I had it.

I spent the first few days getting familiar with the base's operations, digging into the terminals while keeping eyes on Kiara's and the T1's vitals through their transponders. But with the lack of action, it seemed that the woman at least seemed to keep to herself enough not to come to harm. And my curiosity about what happened to all the engineers before reared its head as I dug into the file cabinets left behind, only to find missing files and redactions that gave me less information than I had gotten my first day from Kiara. It was clear that each had been moved or dismissed willingly or unwillingly at the request of Kiara, yet none of them gave reasons why.

I spent another good chunk of my day doing health reports, all of which began to sound cookie-cutter and copied and pasted. I couldn't help but feel like a parrot in an officer's uniform. The other engineers seemed to avoid me, which I could only attribute to jealousy or some bitterness at my past achievements.

It was a week of mediocracy and boredom that I eventually crawled from my offices to have coffee and breakfast in the cafeteria. The stale rooms and almost harrowing interior tended to draw out your exhaustion, so coffee was a good start.

"If it isn't the famous Senior Engineering Officer, or should I say youngest Senior Engineering Officer?" I nearly toppled my coffee as the man sat in the chair across from me, his tray thumping against the metal table, rocketing me from my thoughts.

"I-I'm sorry?" I blinked back unwavering as I took in the man's almost handsome cut face, long black hair that touched his shoulders, and immaculately shaved face and cleaned uniform.

He reached a hand across the table, which I took to shake, glade when he let it go. "Name's Lieutenant Marim Folister, I'm the Information Technologies and Security officer here, but you can call me Marim." He nodded to me before picking up his utensils to begin eating.

“How has your first week been? Hopefully, the T1 isn’t giving you too much of a problem?” I could almost hear the sarcasm from him. It had become more apparent that everyone avoided the T1’s Reaper Pilot like the plague.

I busied myself with my coffee taking short sips of the now cold drink, “I’ve been making my way- “

“Meaning you haven’t done much?” Marim interrupted with raised eyebrows and a gangling smirk. “Don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone, but if you need anything, just let me know” I nodded back before letting him return to breakfast and myself to my coffee, long enough for a thought to occur.

“Your Officer of Information Security?” he nodded with his mouth full, “Could you help me get some files? I have been trying to get all the health reports and medical documents for the T1 and Kiara but haven’t found them.”

Marim seemed to ponder my question before replying, “I think I can do that; I’ll have to check clearance levels and such, so give me a week or two, and I’ll have what I can on your desk, sound good?” I could only nod enthusiastically with the inner ‘thank gods’ ringing in my thoughts.

“Speaking of the devil herself,” Marim spoke in a comical whisper as I followed his gaze. The room had fallen to whispers, causing the utensils against the trays to sound like gunshots in the night. Kiara had stepped into the room, her baggie hoodie swallowing her, the black spandex of her core suit was hidden under a pair of ripped jeans, and her boots were muddy and old. Her hair looked unkept, but I could see the darkness of it being washed.

She kept her head down as she moved to the line that parted, letting her quickly grab a tray, laden it with a bowl of oatmeal and a carton of milk before rushing away, stopping only for a moment as her green eyes caught my blue. I wasn’t sure what to think as her face went from surprise to wonder, to unsureness and then a glare, before leaving the cafeteria to explode in noise.

“Someone likes you, that or you’re in her little black book of death, Reaper and all” Marim grinned all the while; I didn’t know which I preferred. “You excited about the field operation? Kiara and the T1 are going out for a training op.”

I blinked back, trying not to choke on my coffee before asking, “W-when was that exactly?”

Marim raised his eyebrow again, a grin spreading across his lips, “it’s tomorrow. I’d suggest sorting out your calendar soon.” I pondered, chucking the last of my coffee at the man before standing up.

“Well, I’m going to go do that now. Let me know about those files as soon as you can.” The man gave a tiny wave as I took my tray away, disposing of it, before leaving, intending to scream into my duvet after ensuring my calendar was updated