

Hide and Seek

A door creaked and let in a sliver of light, before footsteps announced the entry of an intruder. The steps were quiet against the carpet of the room but, not so much that they couldn't be heard. A dense and dark voice, spoke in an attempt to lure out the last of the prey. It was dark and the only visual was of a dark and featureless figure lit from the hallway light, a bloodied knife and a determination to finish what they started. Hiding in a small enclosure, and praying to be saved, the hiding space became a death-trap as the phone rang again and drew attention to it. The blade came down inches from the face of their prey, but somehow they managed to not scream, the hiding spot was ruined.

Quiet speaking brought me back to awareness, and waking up curled up on the armchair I opened my eyes and moved to stretch my arms.

Oh yeah...that happened.

I recalled, seeing the rope that bound my wrists. Just how long had it been? I couldn't really remember most of what tests Blondie ran on me, but at some point I must have fallen asleep...I guess. Well I guess I better find out what's going on.

"Hey,, uh...Porter. What's goin' on?" I asked, sitting up and stretching as much as the restraints would let me.

Absolute silence.

Unbelievable...I get forced to open a vein and strip for the camera so this Blondie chick can run whatever tests on me, and I can't even get any answers. Complete bullshit is what that is.

Turning and looking around the apartment, for the first time I noticed the décor. This Blondie chick had expensive taste from the look of it. Everything looked expensive enough to be, well shot for

touching. Maybe what Porter said was true...people always joke about how much you can make in the 'killing' business. Up until now, I thought that was just spy movie stuff.

"What are you looking for?" Porter spoke, now looking at me intently.

"What?"

"I asked what you're looking for."

"Nothing, just looking around. I wasn't exactly able to between being shot in the head, and then tied up for interrogation last night."

"I see. Blondie's finished with her tests on you."

"Oh joy...now what?" If Porter couldn't detect the sarcasm in that, she *had* to be a robot.

"You're near-sighted."

"Yeah, I know. I told you my glasses were broken when I got attacked."

"What's all the metal plating in your body?"

"A really shitty ending to a really bad day."

"What was your nightmare about?"

"Another really bad day. What difference does it make?"

"Blondie has no information on you and tests she's run, suggest she needs at least medical background."

"What? Is she going to clone me now? *She's done everything else short of molesting me.*"

“No, but she might shoot you again if you continue to be difficult.”

“What and ruin more of her expensive furniture?”

“It can be replaced.”

Blondie spoke up, looking the information over on her computer and deciding to join the conversation we were having.

“Assuming we’re still on Earth, you could.”

I should really learn to watch my smart-ass mouth.

Blondie turned and looked at me, the expression made me feel like I was going to be shot for a minute...then she spoke.

“What makes you think we aren’t?”

I don't know...maybe the monsters and how I seemed to climb out of the window of the dorms and into an apocalyptic nightmare world?

“Have you been outside recently?”

“We were on the roof yesterday, before you broke into my apartment. It was night.”

“Yeah, well it was just turning what I assume was day down on the street but, I wouldn’t exactly call what I was running through, a city. More like a maze for some death-trap hide and seek.”

Blondie looked at Porter for a moment and then to the window. It was getting dark, and I could feel a chill of dread come on. Porter caught me looking around again, I’m pretty sure she noticed the terror, because she didn’t ask questions this time.

“Porter, what are you doing?” Blondie asked, watching her cut me loose from the bindings...like that was going to do any good if one of those monsters came for me.

Wait? Wouldn't it be us? Why should I think it would come just for me? That was a weird thought.

“Blondie, pack up that monstrosity of yours...I don't like the look he has right now. You, up.” Porter directed, before practically lifting me out of the armchair.

Looking around as it grew darker outside, I saw Porter heading towards the door and reaching for something...probably a weapon. She must have heard the scratching and creaking sounds too...at least I hope she did. I didn't want to be the crazy person who was hearing things again.

As she opened the door, I pushed it shut and leaned against it to keep her from opening it again.

“What the hell are you do-”

Shushing her, I did the only thing I could think of and locked it. “Turn off the lights.”

“Why?”

“Just do it! Whatever those monsters are can't see in the dark. We can for some reason but they can't.”

Porter looked at me strangely, then to Blondie who was finishing up packing away her computer into a snug backpack. “How do you know that?” She asked, still giving me that suspicious look I hope she didn't give her dates.

“I stumbled here out of fear...not because I couldn't see. I noticed, when I could stare at one, and it couldn't see me.”

“Porter, hit the lights. Now what?” Blondie asked, as the apartment went dark.

“Hide. I don't think the not dying thing works if they get us.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Possibly the dead people I saw on the way here.”

“Not at your dorm?”

“No...trying to clear that rat maze out there. There were more than a few people who had the glowing stuff in their bodies but were definitely dead...they were torn apart.”

I didn't have to be more convincing after the sound of creaking could be heard in the hallway louder than before, and even came from the nearby window now.

Looking around the living room for a hiding spot, I couldn't do much more than curse Blondie for having such an immaculate setting. Where in the hell were we going to hide with nowhere to hide. The hell kind of spy was she supposed to be?

The closet...they sometimes have ceiling entrances.

Running towards the nearest closet, what turned out to be the towel pantry, I saw my salvation. “Hello safe space, my old friend.” I murmured to myself as I started climbing the shelves and punched the small entrance, just big enough for an average sized human to fit through. It didn't matter if I had any explaining to do later...they were following me now, and I hoped that would keep us alive...if the ceiling held until the light came back.

Nightmare

Breathing quietly and trying to be as still as possible, the three sit in hiding and hear the sounds of creaking and whining roam in the apartment. It sounded like wind-up toys moving around, broken ones. Looking from Blondie to James, Porter saw Blondie watch the creatures with interest while James curled up tight and seemed to be trying to protect himself in the small space. Whatever had him so scared, wasn't what was going on below.

Within a few hours, just like James said, light began to filter through the window, but the monsters hadn't left yet. They seemed confused or something, but I'm not sure who should be more confused...us or them. Watching these things for a couple hours brought up a lot of questions. Noticing James' behavior after Porter did, brought up ones I was more interested in. Why they weren't leaving was something that definitely irked me for now. I wanted to drag the information that James wasn't sharing out of him...something I don't know is a dangerous thing.

After a little while longer, as the light became brighter, as though it were midday, the monsters seemed to just disintegrate.

Looking at the two of us after several moments of silence, Porter leaned down to peek out and see if there were any signs of the monsters left. When she came back up, she must have seen me staring hungrily at James...or rather his brain. She must have figured out what I planned on doing, because just before hopping down from the crawl space, she shook her head at me.

"It's all clear."

"James...James."

He looked at me with the same expression as before, and I knew I was going to love the information I got out of him. The spicy brat that he was a couple hours ago was practically nonexistent now, replaced by some terrified kid. *This was going to be fun.*

It ended up being more annoying than I thought it was going to be to get the information out of him. Porter literally had to drag him out of the crawlspace but, then she stood in the way of me getting what I wanted.

Damn mothering instinct.

"We should look for another place to go...they came here and they'll probably come again. It's not a good idea to risk the same place being safe twice in a row." I hated her being right, although I have to say it would bring me more information to see the "maze" that James talked about.

“Fine, but first...I want my fee.” I demanded, crossing my arms with the smirk impossible to hide...so I didn’t.

“Fee? At a time like this Blondie? Really?”

“Not you. Him. I’ll collect from you soon enough.”

James looked at me for a moment before switching his view to Porter and back to the closet.

“I want to know everything. The plates, the near-sightedness, and about your very bad day.”

Looking at me in confusion, he sneered and demanded, “Why?”

Because you’re messing with the accuracy of my data, that says its all due to injury and trauma and I want to know why it obviously makes a difference in you and Porter.

“Why? For starters, Porter and I didn’t have any visitors when it was just the two of us. Then you come along, and my apartment is suddenly teeming with the sound of broken toys and featureless monsters. That leads me to think they followed you here...I want to know why. So you can fill in the holes for me and stay safe, or I can use you as bait to discover my other curiosity when they rip you apart and you don’t revive. Which one do you want?”

James swallowed heavily, and I knew I was going to get what I wanted.

Two hours later

“Blondie, you’re the devil. I’m sure of it now.”

Shrugging, as I mulled the information over, I looked back to James who I’m sure was sleeping by now. If Porter was planning on moving us soon, he was going to need that rest.

“So those monsters are likely attracted to trauma of any kind. His injuries all validate what he says happened, but that doesn’t explain why they didn’t come looking for you or me.”

“Blondie, you exist outside the realm of possibility for being traumatized...although I’m pretty certain you just did an amazing job of further traumatizing him just now. I kill people for good pay, I don’t think I qualify at this point since I doubt you feel remorse and you know I don’t. Besides, I think the question we should be asking here is why he’s got so much trauma he’s lived through.”

“Porter normally I’d think you were over-thinking things and tell you that some people are just that unlucky but, this time I’m inclined to believe you. He *has* had something abnormally awful happen in each milestone phase of his life.”

Maybe we should use him as bait after all and confirm the suspicion.

That’s how I would normally bring conclusive evidence to the situation but, I can already hear Porter’s “motherly tone” coming to the rescue and saving James from good science.

“So where are we going then?” I asked, reluctant to leave the comfort and now ruined safety of my apartment.