

Chapter 6: Poison

Raven: "Talon asked?"

Dean: "Yeah. Something something scalpel, lion's den, whatever. He wants someone dead."

Raven: "He's got people for that."

Dean: "Wants someone independent."

Raven: "He wants to ghost."

Raven sighed, kicking their feet back onto a side table as they tried to overrule the bass that pounded their stomach. They traced their eyes along the cables on the walls, imagining them to be the highways up above.

Raven: "Who even does he want to nail?"

Dean: "Some corporate big shot, somewhere in business district, you know how it is. Big old weapons manufacturer. Talon thinks the poor sod is supplying the PKF."

Raven: "Well, he is. Don't suppose he would like to take a more subtle approach?"

Dean: "It's the Agency, Ray. One person at a time is about as subtle as they get."

Raven: "I can see why he wants an outsider to pull the trigger."

The young one got up from their seat and looked back at Dean, a woman who was built like a wardrobe. They walked over to an office cabinet up against the side of the room.

Raven: "He is willing to pay for this, right?"

Dean: "Said you owe him."

Raven: "Shit. A life for a life, I guess."

Raven drew a burner phone from the cabinet, turning it on and taking it through the factory installations as Dean got up from her seat as well and joined them by the wall.

Dean: "We even got someone who hates themselves enough to take the job?"

Raven: "No. But we got someone who hates corps just about enough."

Dean: "You're not talking about the Grey kid, are you?"

Raven: "You'd object?"

Dean: "Boy's all green. Can't we get someone more seasoned?"

Raven: "Nick Grey is the only one who hasn't grown a brain yet, which is why he will take this job."

Dean: "But his brother would- I mean-"

Raven: "Hm? Oh, right, Alex? Yeah that was his name. Forgot about him."

Dean: "Alex works for ForeverTech. Even if Nick can pull this off, they could- FT would-"

Raven: "I don't care what ForeverTech does. We will remain one step ahead of them, Nick can have his revenge and Talon will have his blood. Simple as that."

Dean: "What if they retaliate?"

Raven: "We will be undetectable."

Dean: "Nick won't."

Raven pocketed the phone and slammed the cabinet door shut.

Raven: "Why do you care so much about Grey?"

Dean scowled briefly, before composing herself and taking a step back.

Dean: "Why do you care so little?"

The two exchanged some looks, before Raven turned about and started to pace towards the stairwell.

Raven: "We have plenty of people here to worry about. Jackdaw gets arrested, we'll bail her out. Crow gets stuck at the docks, we'll extract him. These are small problems. Small problems that could get big for us if we start worrying about outsiders. He is independent, not Collective."

Dean: "You know that he wants to join us, Ray. Why do you keep pushing him away?"

Raven: "You said so yourself. His brother works for FT."

Dean: "I thought you didn't care about FT."

Raven: "I don't. I just don't want someone who does to come knocking."

Dean: "You think his brother would come find him?"

Raven: "Bullshit. Alex couldn't give less about us."

Dean: "Then who are you so afraid of?"

Raven marched up the stairs, phone still in hand as they linked it to the nightclub's wi-fi network, using it to download an APK, before promptly scrubbing the connection from the device again.

Dean was quick to follow, pulling the other to a halt as they entered the main floor, where they stood in a corner, away from the ravers over on the dance floor.

Raven could barely hear her as she spoke, merely nodding towards the stage, where a serpent-tongued dancer had claimed a pole.

Dean: "You think he'll come back?"

Raven: "He won't if we don't give him a reason. Having this done quietly, by an independent, will help keep the target off our backs."

Dean: "Didn't think Viper had it in him."

Raven: "Yeah, well, he picked his venom."

Dean: "Any ideas on how to deal with him?"

Raven: "We could ask Tal."

Dean: "So why didn't you?"

Raven sighed again, straightening his back as he leaned against a wall, eyes trailing along the crowd.

Raven: "The Overseer likes him. Wouldn't want to touch anything more valuable than my own head."

Dean: "Fair enough. But still, what are we doing about it?"

Raven: "I don't know yet. I guess I was hoping that the Militia would have dented them by now."

Dean: "Was there ever any hope?"

Raven: "Maybe not, but one thing's for sure. We either need a whole lot more firepower or some venom of our own."

Dean: "You still want to fight back?"

Raven: "While that card remains on the table, we have a shot at it. That's really all we can take. I want you to go find Nick. Tell him about the job. Tell him we'll pay."

Dean: "What if he declines?"

Raven: "Then we'll remind him of the things he lost."

Raven slipped away into the ground, quickly fading into the silhouettes under blinking, violent lights, leaving Dean behind to look at the dancer.

Dean: "Fuck, Viper. You're in over your head."