

The call had reached him while he was going through the monthly expenses of the security agency he'd bought the year before, just to have something to do. The company had been a mess of illegal operations committed by employees wanted across multiple continents.

"Damian," Dominic was crying. "There's been an accident, Dad's hurt bad."

"Alright," Damian answered, comparing two pages, money was still disappearing.

"Damian, please, listen to me, Dad's hurt. He's at the Memorial, you have to come."

"Why?"

There was a loud sigh. Of all his brothers Dominic was the one who knew how best to deal with Damian's detached attitude, not that it meant he didn't dislike him as much as everyone else.

"He's your father too. He'd want to see you. You can act like you care about him can't you?"

Damian considered telling his brother he had more important things to deal with right now, like an embezzler. but something in Dominic's tone made him pause.

"Just how badly is he hurt?"

"Pretty bad. I don't know the details, they just took him out of the operating room and he's resting. All the doctor will tell me is that it's serious."

Brian would understand if he didn't show, and Damian didn't care what his brothers thought about him, but still, as his son, he would be expected to put in an appearance.

"Alright, I'm on my way."

"Thank you."

\* \* \* \* \*

When he reached the waiting room everyone was there, even his uncles, Bobby and Byron, they were holding each other, crying. Dietrich was in sweatpants and a jacket over his bare chest. He must have been competing close by to make it here this quickly.

Dominic hugged him, still crying, and Damian hugged him back. "How is he?"

Dominic dried his eyes. "I don't know. The doctor hasn't been back since I called you and the nurse won't let us in to talk with dad."

"Why?"

Dominic shrugged.

"Okay, I'll deal with him, but first what exactly

happened?"

Dominic breathed in. "I was at the garage, seeing Harry. We'd finished fucking in Dad's office and were just talking in the afterglow when we heard metal break and crash to the floor. We rushed out and one of the lift had broken and the car fell on dad. I called 911 while the others got the car off him."

"What was he doing on the floor?" Damian asked. Brian owned the garage, he had twenty employees, he had no business standing anywhere near one of the cars.

"You know dad. He loves working on cars. Fuck I should have been keeping an eye on him instead of having fun with Harry."

Damian agreed with his brother, but didn't say it. He could see it wouldn't change anything, and to say it would hurt him. He'd promised not to hurt his brothers.

"What happened next?"

"They're raised the car off him by the time the ambulance arrived but we didn't dare move him. He was in bad shape, bleeding a lot, but he was breathing. I rode in the ambulance with him and they took him directly to operate on him. I was so out of it that I didn't think to call anyone. Someone from the garage called Donny. When he and Danny showed up that's when I thought to call you."

"Okay, you go sit down, I'll go see him and let you know how he's doing."

Dominic crumbled in the nearest chair.

Damian stepped to the nurse, a tall gorilla, Silverback, by the gray poking our of the back of his uniform. He stepped in front of the door as Damian reached him and crossed his arms over his chest.

"No one's going in." He sated.

"That is my father."

"I don't care. the doc said he needs rest. No one's seeing him for a few hours."

Damian smiled at him. "You are going to let me in."

The gorilla returned the smile, but bared his teeth. "If I didn't let in that wall of muscle over there, what makes you think I'm going to let you in?"

Damian quickly went through what he'd noticed on his way. *wedding band, married, well groomed, she takes care of him, but he looks haggard, he has children, young.*

Damian dropped the smile. "How many children do you have?"

The question took the nurse by surprise and he took a moment before answering. "Three."

"The oldest, four years old?"

"Four and a half."

Damian nodded. The look was the same as he remembered on Brian's face while he was trying to keep up with him, Dietrich, Donald and Daniel.

"I take it you love your children, and your wife?"

"Or course."

"Good." Damian looked at his watch. "If you don't let me into the room so I can see my father within the next five minutes, I am going to leave the hospital and drive to your house. Since you have three children and make good money here your wife is at home. You will warn her that I'm coming, but that isn't going to help her. I am going to subdue her, tie her down and then slowly cut up your children in front of her."

"Are you fucking threatening me?" the gorilla growled.

Damian got in his face. he didn't have to work at making his expression menacing. Dominic had told him that his neutral expression looked like he was a stone cold killer.

"No," Damian stated quietly, "I am threatening your family. You, I will leave here to suffer in the knowledge that you could have saved them."

Damian saw the rage flourish in the gorilla's face.

"If you lay one hand on me, I will break all your limbs, then I will see my father, and then, I will go visit your family. Think very carefully about what you do next."

The anger was replaced by confusion. The gorilla looked at Damian, then around, back at him, the confusion was gone now, replaced by fear. He stepped aside.

Damian entered the room. He was assaulted by the smell of disinfectant and the sound of the machines helping Brian stay alive. What wasn't covered by a thin sheet of bandages had been shaved.

They had reset both the legs, pins were holding them in place, as was one arm. By the type of brace holding the other arm in place that one had been crushed. Brian's breathing was labored even with the machine's help. His lungs weren't working right.

He took the chart and read it. The spine was broken in three places. The operation had been to realigned it and reattach the nerves. Now they could only hope it had been done early enough they would fuse properly. He read the rest of the notes and comments on what else they had found during the operation.

He had read the entire medical library out of boredom during his first year at the university, so he understood what the expressions used meant. He'd taken psychology and that had

proved so easy he'd gone there looking for something more challenging to read.

It didn't look good.

Damian felt something at the realization Brian wasn't going to make it out of the hospital alive. It surprised him, because he didn't love his father. He'd never felt anything but respect for this man who had raised him without fear. The only person who had known him and not been afraid of him. For all that they did love him, his brothers were afraid of him. He didn't hold it against them, they were right to be afraid.

But Brian didn't. He had seen concern in that man's eyes, worry at times, love often, he could recognize the emotion even if he didn't feel it, but never fear. And Damian was now realizing that meant something to him.

"Hey dad," he whispered, standing next to the bed and calling him the way Brian wanted to be called, the one that made him feel like Damian cared for him, even if he knew it was a lie.

"Damian," Brian croaked, his voice weak. "How bad?"

"Very bad Dad."

Brian was silent for a moment. "I'm not making it, am I?"

Damian didn't answer immediately. Was this one of those times when it was better to lie? Could he lie to his man? They had promised they would never lie to each other, and Brian had kept up his end.

"No, Dad, you're not going to make it."

Brian nodded weakly.

"Damian, promise me something. Promise you'll look after our family."

"I will, dad."

Brian turned his head in obvious pain. "Promise me."

Damian didn't want to make another promise. He didn't want to bind himself to something as long ranging as that. But Brian knew him too well. He continued looking at him despite the pain. Damian could walk out, He didn't have to say anything.

But he owed this man too much. "I promise."

Brian let his head settle back. "Thank you. And try not to hurt too many people."

"I'll try." At least Brian hadn't made him promise that. He'd promised not to hurt his brothers when he was four, to only hurt people who deserved it two years after that. Another promise like that would have been troublesome.

"I think I'm going to sleep now."

"Alright dad." Damian turned to leave, then stopped. He came back and kissed Brian on the forehead. This was the

proper son to father behavior in this situation, wasn't it?

The gorilla eyed him wearily and Damian smiled at him.

"How is he?" Dominic asked, Dietrich and Daniel a step behind him. Donald was seated on the couch, looking after their children, who at eight seemed to be taking it better than the adults, but it was their second death in only a little more than a year. They might have been inured to this by their great grand father's death.

Damian only shrugged, before sitting in the first seat he saw. He'd never promised to be truthful to them, and he expected they would be more comfortable believing there was hope.

He had to think. If he was going to take care of the family he needed to change his plans. The security company couldn't accommodate what was needed. It would still play a part, but now he needed something larger.

To accomplish what Brian asked of him he needed more money, more power. It would have to be a multinational. He couldn't limit his action to a local arena, he was going to have to remake the world.

While he thought, he was aware of a code blue in Brian's room. His brothers expressing concern, then relief. They argued, blamed each other for the situation. Some time later there was a second code blue.

Doctors rushed in. There was furious activity in Brian's room, then it was silent. He looked up when he noticed the mass of people leaving the room, and his brothers and uncles entering it. He checked his watch, twelve hours since he'd sat down.

He went to the door and looked in. Dominic, who was on the other side of the bed noticed him.

"He's gone," was all he said.

Damian nodded, looked at the others, who were focused on Brian, and left. He didn't care what people thought. Let them think he was overwhelmed by Brian's death and couldn't tolerate staying here. Brian was dead, there was no reason for him to stay, it was that simple.

He had more important things to do. He had to set plans in motion to ensure his family's survival.

\* \* \* \* \*

He put the frame back on his desk. Things would have been different if he hadn't made that promise, but they certainly wouldn't have been quite this interesting.

"Mister Orr?" Alice called. "Your three O'clock is here."

"Thank you Alice, send Mister Hammer in."

Damian leaned back in his chair and watched the fox cross the space to his desk. He still walked wearily, as if at any

moment Damian might jump out and attack him.

Damian was amused at the reaction. After six interviews the man should know he had nothing to fear. Although, Damian supposed, the things he had learned during those conversations could make a less rational man uncomfortable.

"So, Nicolas," Damian said once the man was seated. "What do you want to cover in this session."

The fox took out his recorder and placed it on the desk. He didn't immediately say anything. Damian could see him weigh how badly he wanted answers. Finally Nicolas' face took on a professional air. "Last week, you mentioned you had some sort of interaction with Bannerson Pharmaceutical. I'd like you to go into details about what happened.

Damian smiled at his biographer. That had been such a good time. "It started when Bannerson bought farm land out from under me."