Chapter 13:

Back at the hangar the whole crew was gathered around a makeshift bar as they told the entire story, everyone with a drink in their hand while each possible perspective was shared.  When everything was said and done they continued to celebrate well into the night as they also destroyed all the evidence that could link to them. The bonfire they had created in a couple of old, rusted oil barrels burned with the plans they had made, the equipment they had used on the job, and finally the USB data itself.

“So that was it,” Serathin said as he watched the plastic melt.  “They just plugged that into the black box and it took everything we needed for us?”

“Well after I found out they had a time lock on the data I knew that they were going to check it for tampering,” Draggor explained as they all sat around the fire.  “I brought a number of devices that the SEC would likely use so that we could counteract them, I just never thought that I would have to reprogram one so that it could siphon data off of the box and erase our involvement while giving them a false positive signal.  So now we all get rich and Alkali and I don’t have to go to jail.”

“To avoiding incarceration!” Alkali said, holding up his bottle in the air while the others repeated the sentiment.

While the others settled back Zen leaned forward and looked at the demon intently.  “So how much are we looking at here?” the fox asked. “Just curious, there’s some new tech coming out that I would love to get my hands on and it would help if I had a lot of money.”

“Zen, you could probably blow up your own island with what we’re about to make,” Xander said drunkenly.  “To mass destruction!”

Everyone once more brought up their glasses in cheer and Alkali brought up his bottle to make a toast to the success that their teamwork had gotten them.  It had just started out with five insane guys and a fixer to bring them together, he said as he tried not to fall over, but they still came together and not only broke into two vaults at once, but also made a casino owner think that he had gone crazy.  Everyone cheered to that as well and laughed as they shared theories on what happened to Miko Maus after the botched investigation.

“Maybe he put a hole in his vault in an attempt to try and get people to believe him,” Zen stated, the others laughing.  “Since no one does he’ll crawl into the walls to live there like a crazed hermit. Now that’s an urban legend I’d like to see.”

“Well one thing is for sure,” Draggor replied as he turned around the laptop he had been working on so that the others could see.  “He’s not going to host any more Securities and Exchange Expos. Not only are they so convinced he was trying to pull one over on them that they’re looking into his entire history, but have also vowed that they will never use his services again.  I already heard that a number of his sponsors are pulling away, too.”

“Well at least he might find his calling as an internet sensation,” Serathin replied.  “The news clip that showed him attacking those reporters is up to like a billion views.”

“Well here’s to Miko Maus,” Zen said, raising his glass once again.  “Without his help we would have never have pulled this off. To Miko!”

The others continued to talk but as the night grew long and the sky started to turn from night to day the others began to filter out of the hangar.  By the time the sun started to rise and heat the desert air there were only five left, the original crew. All of them were sleeping in some state of disarray; Xander and Draggor had nodded off in the chairs around the campfire with the laptop still on in the demon’s lap, Zen had found a bench, Alkali was just on the concrete floor, and Serathin somehow had dozed off hanging from his harness with a bottle still clutched in his hand.

As the hangar began to heat up it slowly caused everyone to awaken and get their personal stuff together.  “You know this would be much easier if you would just allow me to blow up the hangar,” Zen mentioned as he put his gear together.  “No way anyone could find any evidence.”

“Well as Nizzbit mentioned he would like us not to do that,” Alkali replied.  “This is a rental after all.”

“Fair enough,” the fox stated as he slung his pack over his shoulder.  “I’m off to find that island, a nice little slice of paradise that’s deep enough to be in international waters.  I figure by the time you guys get all that insider trading done I will have picked one out.”

“We’ll wire you the money,” Alkali replied, waving off the fox as he went to his car parked in the cracked concrete lot.  “Man, he is such a weird guy.”

“That he is, that he is,” Serathin said as he went over and shook the ferret’s hand.  “Well it’s been fun, but my ride is coming and I wouldn’t want to miss it. Sorry again for kicking you in the chest and almost killing you.”

“Sorry for doubting you,” Alkali replied.  “You know you never did spend that free play, now that you’re off the clock you going to go back there and give it a shot?”

Serathin just grinned and pulled a wad of cash out of his pocket.  “Arkham got lucky on the slots,” he said with a wink before putting it back.  “Of course it pales in comparison to what we’re about to get, but it should be enough for a week of fun.  Speaking of which I do believe I see the hellcat coming up the street, but don’t be a stranger.”

Alkali nodded and watched the sabrewolf go out and flag the car that had pulled into the parking lot, the ferret watching as he put his gear into the trunk.  Once everything was packed away he got into the passenger seat and kissed the maned lioness in the driver’s seat before speeding off. As Alkali watched the car disappear into the horizon he felt the presence of someone else there, too, seeing Xander standing next to him.  The two watched in silence for a while before the blue dragon finally broke the silence.

“Anyway…” Xander said as he sheepishly scratched the back of his head.  “I’m going to be coming home in a few months, are you sure that you don’t want to just come and join me on the tour?  It’s not like you need to work anymore.”

“Well we all agreed to keep working at our respective jobs to make sure they don’t suspect that we just came into a lot of money,” Alkali replied.  “Plus there’s something that I got to finish now back in the city. You keep touring through and once you get home we can start talking about the future.”

The blue dragon seemed like he had more to say but just nodded, then grabbed his own luggage and made his way towards the last of two cars that were in the lot.  When he drove off it was just the demon and ferret left, the two making one last sweep of the hangar to make sure nothing was left behind. They had volunteered to do the work since their flight left the latest and because they were the ones that benefitted the most from their heist.  After all the trash had been cleared and either burned or taken with them they made their way back into the city.

The ride home was silent, Alkali and Draggor hardly looking at each other the entire drive back to the city and even when they got onto the plane.  It wasn’t until the wheels were up and they were soaring back into the air that they felt the burden lift off their shoulders, like they hadn’t gotten away with it until that very second.  As soon as one of the flight attendants came around with the beverage cart they both ordered the maximum amounts of tiny alcohols they could. About thirty minutes and several shots they both finally seemed to relax.

“Must have been hard not going with him,” Draggor said as he put a mask over his eyes to block out the light.

“I still have something left to do,” Alkali replied.  “Even though everything is done, this isn’t over until I do one last thing…”

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“Mr. Bismuth,” one of four sharply dressed people said as he sat opposite of them in the conference room table.  “As you know this is a follow-up to the meeting you had a few weeks earlier in reference to an investigation that the Securities and Exchange Commission had with your company.  As before you have been informed of your rights in all matters and proceedings.”

“Indeed I have,” Alkali replied as he straightened his trader’s jacket.

“The primary reason that we’re here today is not only to make sure that we’ve covered all our bases in order to close the case, but also to sort out an impropriety that may have happened,” the chairman of the hearing said.  “While you and your company have been cleared of all charges it had been brought to our attention that you were involved in another SEC incident while at the Securities and Exchange Expo. Could you please give us a statement on the record to that incident?”

“I believe I can,” the ferret replied, rubbing his hands together as the smallest play of a smirk formed on his muzzle.  “Let me tell you about Miko Maus… but for this to happen we’re going to have to go all the way back to the first time I was sitting in this chair.”

THE END