A Mercurial Rebirth

They landed silently onto the cold floor, both Robert and Laura managing to dampen their fall from height well enough to conceal their presence away from unwanted eyes. Recuperating from their unceremonious entrance, the spy couple now readied their guns and pressed themselves against the walls of the complex, eyes strained in the twilight to spot any and all enemies that might come to apprehend them… but fortunately, no one has seemingly noticed their incursion just yet.

“It appears that the infiltration was easier than we anticipated…” the woman whispered, skittering to the left of them to scout ahead.

“Yes. Too easy.” her partner grumbled, following her after she motioned with her hand. “Remember that we are still on borrowed time, Laura. It is only a matter of minutes before security notices the broken window and the incapacitated guards outside. I still think that we should have at least cleaned up the mess a little before breaking in this haphazardly!”

The woman named Laura, turning back to her partner, frowned.

“You don’t need to remind me of all people, Robert.” she retorted angrily “This beast has slipped out from our fingers far too many times. This may be our last and only chance to neutralize her before she vanishes again! So follow my lead – and trust in my instincts this time around, will you?”

Robert, scouring his partner’s expression hesitantly, nodded at Laura’s proclamation, watching anxiously as the woman proceeded deeper into the darkness, leading the duo deeper into the dark depths of this research facility – and hopefully, closer to their target as well.

During their career, they have faced many cunning adversaries, yet none could even compare to the ruthlessness and ingenuity that Dr. Elena Deus possessed, a maniacal genealogist, whose rampant research has caused many casualties to civilians and the agency alike over the years. Known only as ‘The Human Transmuter’ for her gruesome and morbid experiments on her unfortunate victims, Deus was just as careful as cruel, making sure to cleverly mask and hide away her trail wherever she went, always managing to slip under any radar, all the while deciding to neutralize, or worse, ‘recruit’ any and all soldiers who had the misfortune to be sent after her. Though little was known about the fates of these poor souls, both Robert and Laura were certain that they have met their ultimate demise by the madwoman’s schemes, needing to endure unimaginable horrors before they met their makers, becoming yet another batch of statistic in the doctor’s ledger. It was because of this track record that the agency ultimately decided to send in their two most treasured, most talented spies to try and apprehend the elusive monster– a task, which the couple aimed to carry out without a hitch, hoping to end this senseless massacre once and for all.

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Like ethereal wisps, they dashed past the darkened corridors of the quiet facility, the duo having their arms rest on their firearms, ready for any sort of confrontation at hand. Nerves and muscles tensing from the eerie silence which permeated the entirety of the complex, they proceeded through empty halls way too easily for their liking, causing an unnerving sense of suspicion to swell in their hearts as a result. Could it be possible that they were too late? That they missed this nefarious butcher already? Thoughts of uncertainty started to find their way into the duo’s minds, attempting to fester and consume their sanity at once – it seemed that even when she wasn’t present, Dr. Deus’ schemes already put her enemies to a test, one which they dearly hoped wouldn’t fail, lest this whole incursion would have been for naught.

Coming to a halt abruptly, Laura signaled for her partner to freeze, the woman now raising her gun to the faint silhouette in the distance. Ready for confrontation, she watched the swaggering female form walking past the corridor, only to realize that it was but a meek lab assistant hurrying to whatever room she was ordered to, carrying a strange container of shimmering liquid in her hands.

“False alarm…” Laura hissed, lowering her guard for a moment as she leaned against the wall tentatively. “Still, this place… it is as barren as a ruin. No guards… no security cameras anywhere… we are either the luckiest people on earth, or we are walking straight into a trap...”

Robert, sighing as he savored the momentary respite, shrugged.

“You can bet on that she has something twisted and disgusted in store for us. But honestly, I can’t care less at this point…” he growled, his hands curling into fists from anger.

“She will answer for her crimes and all the atrocities she had committed in the past one way or another… and if it means that I need to pay the ultimate price for it, then so be it…”

Laura, quite uncharacteristically, let out a brief chuckle.

“Let’s not become martyrs just yet, shall we? There is still a chance that we’ll be able to get through all this without a hitch. Let’s focus on that, shall we?”

Robert, glancing over to his partner, snorted in an agitated fashion.

“Even after all these years you are overly optimistic about the outcome of every single mission we embark on. I thought you’d know better by now, Laura.”

Smirking with a bemused expression, the girl rolled out of hiding, lifting her weapon, entering into a state of intense focus, scouring the area to be on a lookout for enemies… yet, once again, there was no a single soul lazing about.

“Someone needs to be a voice of mirth in this swamp of despair, don’t you think?” she hushed, her gleeful smile evaporating in an instant after their cheery banter.

“Come, let us waste no more time. We are close, I can feel it.”

Robert, nodding to his partner’s reply, sprinted through the darkness to stand beside her, proceeding into the depths together, feeling a hint of hope glimmering in his soul. To think that they could crack up some jokes even in this tight situation was… strangely reassuring, if anything, it meant that didn’t lose their spirit or determination just yet. Vengeance burned in their hearts, yes, but it was tempered by their expertise and professionalism, allowing them to remain focused and calm even as they waded forward in these twilight-clad corridors, making their way to the main lab with a slow, but steady pace…

Having not a single clue, that an unknown presence was watching their every step.

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Minutes, which felt like hours, passed by, and as the surroundings changed around them to something more illuminated and modern, the duo knew that they were very close to their destination. The unnatural silence, which permeated the air, was now occasionally broken by sounds of machines whirring to life, showing them the way towards their ultimate goal unwittingly. Heartbeats quickening from excitement, Robert and Laura hastened their steps, trying to move as fast as possible whilst remaining as stealthy as they could, relishing in the fact that they could dish out long overdue justice at last…

That was, until Robert felt something snapping underneath his feet, a dreadful omen, which was followed up by a faint clicking noise.

“Shit! No way… a tripwire of all things?” he cursed, turning his head left and right, trying to counter whatever defense mechanism was to leap into action following his hubris… but to his surprise, nothing seemed to happen. Perplexed, he looked around anxiously, fingers tightening on his gun with such force, that his knuckles turned white… yet no matter how hard he tried to find the source of their impending demise, neither cries of alarms, nor erratic footsteps were to be heard in these dismal halls, lulling him into a false sense of security, leading him to believe that they may have, for this once, managed to avoid being detected…

This dream, however, was shattered relatively quickly, as a loud clinking noise sounded from behind him, coupled with sounds of whizzing and gasping. Whirling around in terror, Robert put his finger on the trigger, ready to shoot whoever tried to ambush them – but the sight which welcomed him was far more terrifying than anything he had anticipated:

Laura, having dropped her weapon to produce that clattering sound, now collapsed onto the floor, her body twitching and convulsing constantly. Robert’s heart skipped a beat as he watched her eyes racing up and down, arms grasping her neck momentarily before she lost consciousness completely, the female spy’s empty gaze making one final contact with her companion’s before falling down to the tiles in front of him as a ragdoll, lying motionless and limp due to the unknown affection that ailed her.

“Laura!” Robert exclaimed in utter panic, putting his weapon away and kneeling down next to his beloved, his erratic breathing normalizing only once he managed to check her neck for her vitals, realizing that the girl was, in fact, still alive.

“Thank goodness…” he exhaled in relief, trying to turn her over to her side in order to place her into a more comfortable position.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get you out of here once I am done with her…” he murmured, his eyes now sparkling with unfounded rage. “She will pay dearly for… for… for…”

Robert needed to blink once or twice as he felt his vision blurring a little, his head beginning to get hazy and unruly, almost as if something impossibly intoxicating had seized control over his very senses, stripping the man not only from his clairvoyance, but also his ability to command his body entirely. Trying to stumble onto his feet, the spy felt the world spinning around with him, leading him to trip and fall to the floor clumsily, coughing and whizzing as a strange, thick air weaseled its way into his lungs, numbing his senses even more. He tried to push himself up into a sitting position, but none of his limbs decided to heed his call, the strange toxin, which now undoubtedly was the one paralyzing him, having made sure that he remained perfectly still in this hapless state.

And so it was, that after long minutes of pointless struggle, Robert finally fell into his coma-like, dreamless sleep with the terror in his heart, knowing that he would be, most likely, a guest for the monstrous scientist’s experiments once he was forced back into the waking world once more.

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The myriads of bright lights of the room felt so intrusive, that Robert needed to squint his eyes as not to become completely blind whilst he finally regained his senses, the spy needing a couple more minutes before he’d be able to properly acclimate himself to the new environment he was in. He was still reeling from the chemical trap of their adversary, his lungs and muscles feeling so sore as if they have been ignited by some unfathomable infection, sapping all his strength and energy, ensuring that he won’t be able to escape from his straps which held him firmly in place. Indeed, Robert was unsurprised to find out that he was tied down in a chair, helpless and vulnerably, leaving him at the mercy of whoever wanted to interrogate or torture him for his insolence.

Unluckily for him, however, his captor had a far more imaginative plan for him in store.

“Rise and shine, Mr. Robert. Rise and shine.” the melodic, emotionless tone of Dr. Elena Deus reverberated mockingly in his ears, the agitating, almost kind voice now invoking the full, unbridled ire of the man in a matter of seconds.

“My apologies if you feel uncomfortable – after all, I tried to make your seat as nice as possible for a marauding intruder.” the scientist nodded, walking up to a small control panel in the middle of the room.

“If you feel any side-effects like suffocation, please don’t be alarmed. The paralyzing poison will soon evaporate from your blood, I promise… and then, you’ll be back to your full glory once again. Well, at least for a little bit, before you join my fold.”

Robert, grumbling in revulsion, spat on the ground, focusing his eyes for long enough to stare into the burning, golden ones of the sadistic doctor, watching as she played with her dark indigo hair playfully as she hummed a melodic tone to entertain herself.

“I have to admit, I was surprised to find the two of you on the floor out there. To think that you’d be so careless to activate the most archaic traps of all time…”

She frowned, her unimpressed gaze shifting to the tied spy briefly.

“Of all the agents they could have sent after me, they decided that the two of you, the heavy guns, were needed to neutralize my operation… why, I feel flattered and honored. You actually fared better than the last squad – they managed to find my decapitation pressure plate instead… what a waste of human resources....”

 “I… will make you… suffer… for what… you have done… to my comrades…” Robert hissed, trying to muster up his non-existent strength to break free from his bonds.

“Please, spare me the sanctimonious bluster, will you?” Deus rolled her eyes, continuing her calibrations. “I did what I had to in order to survive and advance my project, that’s all. I have no quarrel with you or any of your previous… friends. In fact, I always thought of our relationship as a beneficial one: you send me troops for me to test, and I leave you alone otherwise. It’s a win-win situation, don’t you think?”

Robert’s heart sank at hearing these words.

“You… are a heartless monster, Deus.”

“That’s a bit excessive of a statement, Mr. Robert. I am but a humble scientist who wishes to staunch the flow of time and create a daughter, who would live on forever to carry on my legacy. And, thanks to your relentless and rather reckless wish to interfere with my plans, I think I might have the last… ‘ingredient’ for a breakthrough.”

Turning pressing a couple of buttons to activate some sort of sequence, the machines around Robert suddenly started to whir to life, the entire laboratory now becoming animated in a moment’s notice. Two gigantic robotic arms started to bring forth gargantuan canisters, both of which contained the similar, metallic liquid which the lab assistant carried earlier on – only these ones were magnitudes bigger and contained a lot more of the alien substance as a result.

“You see, my ‘daughter’ was reluctant to accept weak hosts.” Deus continued as a second chair was brought forth next to Robert, with a still unconscious Laura sleeping in it, much to his horror.

“All her previous test subjects, all those who willingly sacrificed themselves for the greater good prove to be… incapable of sustaining her for long enough. They either dissolved their bonds in a matter of seconds, or the transformation didn’t finish at all. I couldn’t fathom what was going wrong… until I saw you and your partner today.” she continued, her monotone tone now showing the first signs of excitement at last.

“Indeed, Mr. Robert, it might very well be that you are the solution to all my problems. Tenacious, strong, clever agents, who fear nothing, not even when the jaws of death close around them! These are the traits which I – and in turn my dear Mercury – seek. Together, we may achieve what so many before me failed to do!”

Robert’s heart skipped a beat as he watched the stoic scientist walk up to his beloved Laura, touching her cheeks tenderly, a hint of playful mischief glimmering in her eyes as she did so.

“And best of all… you won’t feel a thing. If anything, you’ll become even stronger than you ever dreamed of being…”

“You… don’t you dare touch her, you monster!” Robert exclaimed, barely being able to control himself as Deus chuckled.

“Worry not, Mr. Robert. No harm will come to her, I promise you.” she shrugged “After all, my precious Mercury will want to keep her host alive in order for the assimilation to be perfect for a little while. Think of it this way: your ally will be the first person who has a chance at achieving untold splendor in immortality! But… even if she is not the person I am looking for, her valiant offering will bring me one step closer to total perfection. Either way, we can only win from this bargain, don’t you agree?”

His mind was racing franticly as he watched one of the big, robotic arms started to move after Deus pressed a remote, bringing forth the massive container containing a shimmering, silvery liquid, lifting it above Laura’s head suggestively. Much to Robert’s horror, he watched helplessly as the scientist ordered the robotic arm to lower the canister closer and closer to the unconscious gal, the shimmering liquid starting to ebb and flow constantly with an increasing, erratic fashion in its container, seemingly ‘feeling’ the proximity of its new, potential host, eagerly awaiting its assimilation with the defeated spy…

This was the point when Robert snapped – forcing himself into a sitting position the best he could, he did the only thing that seemed reasonable to him: he opened his mouth and shouted at the scientist as loudly as he could to get her attention.

“Take me!” his bellowing roar shook even the calm doctor, forcing her golden eyes to turn towards him in confusion as he repeated his offer “Take me instead, Deus! Leave Laura alone and conduct your sickening tests on me instead!”

For a moment, everything fell silent, only the ragged breathing of Robert disturbed the serenity, the desperate spy now staring into the glowing, nefarious orbs of his jailer, watching with increased revulsion as Deus’ face first turned shocked, then mellowed into a sadistic, satisfied one.

“Such valiancy…” she murmured with a hint of curiosity echoing in her calm tone “Would you truly sacrifice everything for your partner, Mr. Robert?”

“Without hesitation.” the man hissed, prompting the stoic scientist to scoff.

“Well then, it is decided. You’ll be the one to finish my grand design – or die trying.”

Pressing the command controls on the machine once more, Deus reversed the trajectory of the canister, ushering the liquid mercurial container closer and closer to the hapless agent until it was directly above his head, menacingly looming as the agent of his certain doom. Discarding even the option to fear his predicament, the spy steeled his heart and simply stared defiantly into Deus’s eyes, showing his seething, burning hatred towards the monstrous doctor instead of any shed of remorse or regret.

“Any last words, Mr. Robert?”

“Rot in hell, Deus.” the spy growled, prompting the indigo-haired woman to finally press the button beside her, opening up the canister and bathing the helpless man in the shimmering goo in a moment’s notice, laying back against the wall to witness the unholy metamorphosis with eager anticipation.

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Robert fully anticipated the reflective, silvery liquid to immediately drown him under its might, that his suffering and humiliation would end swiftly and quietly as the churning, poisonous flood of mercury would claim him in a blink of an eye… but such demise was not his fate. Most curiously, it seemed that the continuously convulsing material did not aim to harm him to any degree – instead, it simply attempted to take over his body like a symbiotic amalgamation, molding his otherwise buff and masculine form to its own image. Gradually, as even the last droplets of the material dropped onto his frame, Robert felt a strange squeezing force holding his hapless body hostage, the powerful substance now clearly attempting to commence its dire ritual of merging with him. With his sight taken from him by the all-encompassing goo, he relied on his other senses exclusively to embrace the imminent change happening to him: clothes completely dissolved from his entire being, the sentient liquid wishing only his manly frame to be left behind for the sculpting process, almost as if yearned to claim the man as its own as some sort of a trophy, making sure to subjugate its unwilling thrall to be a kind enough host for his own sake.

Slowly, the Robert’s muscular legs started to turn more slender and feminine, his bodily proportions bending to the thing’s will obediently, morphing the spy’s features beyond recognition. Robert hissed underneath his prison as he felt a strange, searing heat coursing through his body, almost as if his very skin was incinerated and burnt away as some sort of purification ritual, a torment-laced metamorphosis, which the liquid followed up by coating his pain-ridden body parts in a revitalizing, icy cold sensation of a numbness, stripping away dominion from the man as it claimed his body for its own. Robert tried to writhe, to wiggle around in panic, to do anything to slow down the inevitable… but no matter what he did, his sentient prisoner continued its macabre quest of tearing his humanity asunder, covering more and more of his naked body in its own grace, molding and distorting every little detail reminiscent of his previous frame to please not only its own needs, but also those of its sadistic creator – who watched this rebirth with elated glee.

Deus held her breath as she witnessed her ‘daughter’ finally taking shape, the powerful, all-consuming metallic liquid seemingly having found the perfect candidate to sustain her until she could finally take on the immortal form the woman dreamt up for her. This was a momentous occasion, one beyond even Deus’s own scope of understanding. So many times did she need to watch her experiment fail, her creation managing to take hold of its host momentarily only to fall to pieces moments later, losing the spark of sentience which she gifted them… but this time around, at long last, success was at hand, it seemed. She wasn’t sure whether it was her new concoction’s stability or was it indeed the strength of the new host which was more potent than previously, but whatever was the case, the assimilation continued without a hitch, filling the doctor’s heart with premature triumph and jubilation.

“Mercury, my daughter…” she whispered quietly as she watched the reflective, metallic husk solidifying around the man’s hips, surging upwards on his form with a voracious hunger, swallowing his stature in whole in but a manner of seconds, leaving behind but a beautiful, feminine form in its wake, subduing the raging agent effortlessly and mercilessly. Deus couldn’t help but bask in her creation’s glory and beauty, watching how her smooth, faultless silvery skin slowly but surely took hold of her host permanently, her metallic frame shimmering in the twilight as a star as it did so. She watched Robert’s broad chest shrinking to a petite size, his bulky torso morphing into the likeness of a charming, gorgeous girl’s, rotund, eloquent breasts now sprouting beneath her small shoulder-blades, the pristine bosoms jiggling up and down ever so slightly, exemplifying the dominance of Mercury over her unwitting host even more.

At this stage, as his mind itself was teetering on the precipice, even Robert seemingly surrendered to his fate. Being only able to move his head around a little as the insidious goo marched down onto his arms to claim them for its own, he knew that the end was rapidly approaching. His ragged breathing, one which previously was laced with panic, turned calmer, his mind suddenly starting to clear up as a strange sense of serenity washed over his entire being. Closing his eyes, he finally embraced the searing sensation of the mercurial substance rushing up on his neck and face, opting to ignore the light, suffocating feeling that constricted his mind for the final time, ushering him into the darkness to be finally reborn as the doctor’s greatest triumph…

To most likely undo everything he had ever fought for in life.

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