

Chapter 15: Mouse

Turns out Deidre wasn't the only cop at the rave. "Jaye" discretely flashed me her badge in the middle of a slow dance, and started whispering very un-sweet un-nothings into my ear-- asking me about my connection to Olexa and what I'd learned about the Medusa queen so far. Thank Allah Dee busts in all obvious-like, and makes a beeline for me, looking for the entire world like a jealous lover.

"Who the fuck are you?" Dee asks Jaye.

"Who the fuck are you?" Jaye retorts. Even though I try to untangle my body from hers the instant I see Dee, Jaye keeps her arms around my neck possessively.

"The girlfriend," I tell Jaye. "I probably should have mentioned her, huh?"

"Your girlfriend, my ass." Sends Dee to my private line via mouse.net.

I give Dee a helpless shrug. "Help me out here. The chick is a cop."

Dee looks Jaye over with new interest. Jaye, meanwhile, is looking between my face and Dee's as if trying to decide if I'm lying. She lets go at least. I take a step closer to Dee.

"Well, we should probably be going, huh, honey?" I say to Dee, tugging her arm toward the door.

"Yeah, yeah, okay," Dee says, but doesn't take her eyes off Jaye. Via mouse.net she asks me: "What's she doing here?"

"Would you believe she's my parole officer?"

"No. She's undercover. Your parole officer is Frank Delapalana from the 10th precinct."

Trust Dee to know all about that. "Okay then she's my parole officer's snitch." Then, out loud, I added, "Come on, lover. I'll explain everything in the car."

"Yes." Dee says. "You will."

I don't even have to fake the apologetic I'm-in-trouble look that I flash Jaye as Deidre takes a hold of my elbow and escorts me out of the storeroom.

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Unfortunately for me, Deidre isn't stupid. We're not even all the way to the garage when she swings me around and slams me into the wall of the trade tunnel. I hit hard enough for air to rush out of my lungs and for my head to bang against the concrete. Then, Dee is right in my face. Her voice is even, calm. "Why would Frank need a snitch to check up on you, Mouse? He shouldn't even know about the rave."

I open my mouth, my fingertips groping at the rough concrete wall, as if searching for an answer. Dee grabs my wrist and pushes up the sleeve of my leather jacket to reveal the dick tracy. She twists my arm up in front of my eyes so that I'm forced to look at the phone.

"Oh, and don't think I didn't notice this," she says.

I jerk my hand out of her grip. "Look, don't give me this crap. I had to tell Frank about the rave. I'm ticked, remember?"

Dee's face is close enough that I can smell her lipstick. Her eyes are narrowed with anger, but her voice is preternaturally relaxed. She pokes my chest with a sharp fingernail. "Which is exactly why I'm puzzled about the phone, Mouse. And how it is that you rate an undercover cop to check up on your misdemeanors. What are you doing for Frank, Mouse?"

The wall at my back suddenly feels hard and unyielding. Deidre moves her arms so that they are on either side of my shoulders, boxing me in. I look around for an escape, and see none.

"It's not like you don't know the answer," I say, once I'm able to look into her eyes again.

"No, it's not. But I want to hear what you have to say for yourself."

The words stick in my throat. "What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to tell me who they're after. I want you to tell me who you're betraying." She slips one hand toward the pocket that I saw the cattle prod disappear into earlier.

I take a deep breath to try to steady my pounding heart. Then I jump off the deep end. "Why should I? I mean it's all fucked now, isn't it? What little trust we had is broken. I can't imagine you'll let me stay at the commune and so I'll be back on the street, won't I? Then Frank isn't even going to have any use for me anymore, is he? Odds are I'll be back inside by the end of the month."

Dee's hand is a fist bulging behind the fabric of her coat. She seems completely disinterested in my plight. "I'm sure Frank can find you someone else to betray. Maybe one of your old wire-buddies."

I find I'm shaking, anticipating the shock of the cattle prod. My eyes desperately strain to keep track of her hand. "Yeah, well, maybe he can, but I don't see any advantage of telling you anything, if the shit's going down like this either way."

Dee's eyebrow cocks and she laughs incredulously. "Are you trying to broker a deal, Mouse?"

I manage to cross my arms in front of my chest, giving me a tiny bit of breathing room. "Yes."

Dee steps back, releases the prod, and regards me with a shake of her blonde curls. "You haven't changed. Still ballsy as ever."

More like, still as fucked as ever, I think.

"All right," she says. "Let's hear it."

Of course, it isn't like I had a plan when I started down this road. I'm not even sure how much I want to tell or how much I want to keep secret. Dee's eyes watch me carefully, calculating, it seems, my every thought. That cinches it. There's no way I can successfully play Frank off Dee. I've got to come clean. Completely. So after another steadying breath, I say: "It's like this: I'll work for you. Double-agent."

Dee shakes her head. "Why should I care if you will?"

"Because they know about Maxine, Deidre. They know you're harboring her at the commune."

Part of me hopes she'll deny it, prove Frank wrong, and say she doesn't know what the fuck I'm talking about. Instead, her face loses its smugness, and grays around the edges.

I look away, not liking what I see. "Here's my deal," I continue. "You let me stay, protect me, and I'll feed Frank whatever crap you want. I'll even tell him Maxine has gone underground. Anything. You can play me however you want. I don't care."

I glance up to see Dee nodding thoughtfully, weighing her options. "When you say protect you, what do you mean?"

"Inquisition. You know as well as I do that the NYPD doesn't have the resources to have tracked Maxine on their own. If there's Inquisition heat, I want access to the railroad. I want safe passage out. I want a fucking Israeli honor guard watching my back for me until I get to some nice, non-extradition country."

Dee gives me a curious, soft smile. Then she says, "Prison didn't agree with you, did it?"

"Not especially, no. Do we have a deal or what?"

"I think we do."

My shoulders still haven't relaxed, but I manage to unclench my jaw. "Fantastic."

"Mouse," Dee says in a completely different tone of voice that makes me look up. "Where's Amariah?"