

“Man, you have got to get it together.”

Detective Kenton Matthews glared at his partner, Bruno Price, over his coffee cup. “What’re you talking about now?” He grunted.

“I’ve seen that look before. You’re thinking about dropping her.”

He shook his head as Bruno collapsed in a chair at the break room table.

“Stay out of it, Brune.”

“Milly is hot and smart. I have no idea how you end up with these women, but you’ve got to stop being so picky and just go for it.”

He chuckled as he leaned a shoulder against the wall. “Go for it, huh? You think I’m looking at getting married?”

“At your age? Well, yeah. That’s kinda the end goal, right?”

He frowned.

“There’s nothing wrong with her. You’re like a bad rerun of *Seinfeld* episodes. You find a problem with every single woman you meet and end up dumping her for something stupid.”

He turned with a smirk. "I've never dated a woman with man-hands or an Elmer Fudd laugh."

Bruno laughed as Kenton sat down across from him.

"But we did break up yesterday."

Bruno paused mid-laugh and glared at him. "Seriously?"

Kenton set his coffee cup down with a shrug. "She's too smart for me. Besides, we have nothing in common. It was mutual. The second I brought it up, she said she had been thinking the same thing. Attraction is great and all, but if we have nothing in common, nothing to talk about, then there's not much left to do."

Bruno smirked. "There's always more to do."

"You're married," he said flatly.

Bruno chuckled. "I am." He sat back with a sigh. "Your problem is you keep meeting these women at the courthouse. Milly was there testifying on behalf of a friend, Shelly was there as a witness and was—"

"She had some emotional issues. Leave it at that." He'd tried to forget the way she cried at everything the few times they went out.

"Oh, but Karen. Now, she was great."

"She was a lawyer who wanted to win every discussion and argument. I couldn't even talk to her about anything because she made it a competition."

"See, too picky."

"I need you two for a minute." Captain Post motioned through the doorway.

Following Bruno, Kenton rotated his neck and rolled his shoulders. His morning workout hadn't loosened his joints, and his body was stiff and sore.

"You good?"

He nodded at Post as he sat next to Bruno.

"Getting stiff, old man?"

He smirked at the grin on Bruno's face. "This old man put you on the mat in record time yesterday."

"We were boxing, not that ninja stuff you know."

He chuckled. "A fight is a fight, and you lost."

"Gentlemen."

Kenton turned his gaze to Post.

"I've been asked to assign two agents on a threat. I've picked you two if you think you can stop bickering long enough to take a look."

Post handed each of them a binder. Not their usual form of communication.

"The Reliance Institute? You mean that tech company that has every kind of spyware and gadgets? Like James Bond?"

Kenton scoffed. "That's all fake. You know that, right?"

"Did you know—"

Post cleared his throat. "Gentlemen, this is a delicate situation. There's been an online threat against their company, and they are taking it very seriously. Although this company has board members from the UK, there are also a few Americans involved, and they want a police presence."

Kenton frowned. "They have some of the best security in the world. Why us? The feds probably have better clearance and allotment for this sort of thing."

"They do, but the company doesn't want clearance. They don't want us to get even a picture of what they have, so we're not going in to guard merchandise. We're doing a sweep, a terrorist assessment plan to fulfill the board members' wishes."

Kenton tossed the folder on the desk. "This is a brown-nosing mission, and I'm out. I don't need to waste my time satisfying someone's request to have an American step in and tell them they're doing a good job."

"I'm in."

His glare snapped to Bruno. "What?"

"Even if I don't get a peek at the goods they have in there, I

can at least get inside. This is a tech-lover's fantasy, Ken. You have no idea."

Kenton shook his head and stood.

"Matthews, this isn't a request."

He paused. "Sir, with all due respect, it's not my job to go in just because they want a police officer's opinion or presence. We won't really be helping, and nothing we say will be considered. I have actual situations that need my attention."

"Price, give us a minute."

Kenton clenched his jaw as Bruno left, closing the door behind him.

"Have a seat, Matthews."

"I can stand, sir."

Post sighed heavily. "You have to make things so hard?"

"Sir—"

"Don't." Post held his hand up. "I was only to mention this if necessary, and considering they gave me the information, they must know you better than I do."

"Who's they?"

Post frowned. "You, specifically, were requested. It wasn't just the Americans that wanted the police. When met with the request, their chief information officer asked for you by name."

Kenton crossed his arms and racked his brain. No name emerged. He knew no one working in that kind of industry. "Who?"

"Marcus Moore."

Kenton's heart pounded as the memory flashed. "Moore? He lives here?"

Post shrugged and glared. "I only know he's in town and requested you." Obviously, being left out of the loop was bothersome. "Anything you want to say?"

"Classified, sir." With a grunt, Kenton grabbed the binder from the desk.

"They're expecting you at one, allowing you some time to get a few ideas based on what's in that book."

"Yeah, we'll be there." He headed out of the office.

Tossing the binder on his desk, he rushed past Bruno to the men's locker rooms.

Pacing a moment, he closed his eyes and tried to breathe through the vision of blood, the sound of gunfire, the pain. That was the moment. God used that precise moment to let him know he was not invincible and that his life had more than one purpose.

And He used Marcus Moore to do it.

Leaning against the wall, Kenton opened his eyes and let the shudder roll through. It didn't happen often, but on occasion, the nightmare returned. If he had done things differently ... Well, that wouldn't happen. He did the right thing, even though it almost cost him his life.

"Hey." Bruno stood a few feet away, leaning against the opposite wall with his arms crossed. "You were looking at me, but I don't think you saw me."

Kenton shook his head. "Just thinking."

Bruno knew about his previous career, but the details weren't something to discuss. They'd worked together for three years, and he hadn't had a flashback at work. Until now.

"That bad?"

He blew out a deep breath. "I'm good. Just needed a breather. I'm in on the op, by the way."

"Case. We call them cases."

He chuckled at Bruno's smirk. "Well, it's not a case, nothing's been taken. It's a consult of sorts, I guess."

"Yeah, consult. Sounds good. Meet you out there?"

He nodded as Bruno left.

*God, what's the plan here?*

Dizzy, he splashed his face with water. Taking a few deep breaths, he dried off and made his way to his desk.

“You think the threat is real?”

Kenton nodded. “I do. I know the chief information officer. If he requested me, there’s something else going on. Find all the loose ends, Bruno. I want a list of things to give them.”

Bruno grinned as he looked up from his computer. “I’ve already started.”

Kenton chuckled and flipped past the electronic security. That was Bruno’s area of expertise.

Going through the set-up of the company and perimeters of surveillance, he made a few notes. Although, most of what he could help with needed a more hands-on approach. It would have to wait until one.

Sitting back in his chair, he wondered why. Why, after all these years, would Marcus request him?

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WALKING up the steps to the Institute, Kenton shook his head at Bruno. “You need to calm down.”

“You just don’t get it, man.” The guy’s smile was a mile wide.

Kenton sighed and led the way inside, finding an armed guard waiting. With little talk, they were led to an elevator and up to the top floor. Escorted to a room at the end of a long hall, they waited outside the closed door.

“Come in.” A husky voice sounded as a click echoed.

They stepped through the door and entered the large, formal room. Sitting behind a desk was a familiar, smiling face.

Much older, grayer, but familiar.