2415 Huge, Huge Trouble  
  
"Everyone on the floor! This is a robbery!"  
  
There was gunfire, screams, and the sound of breaking furniture as a group of masked men burst into the foyer of a prestigious bank. The startled clients froze, paralyzed by shock and fear; the workers raised their trembling hands into the air.  
  
The Awakened security guards lunged forward while summoning their Memories, but a few seconds later, they were already sprawled on the ground, groaning or unconscious.  
June should have known that his first mission as а member of the Shadow Clan would go terribly wrong.  
  
'Ah. I hate amateurs.'  
  
He had spent close to a month in the peaceful silence of the Dark City, being trained by the graceful stone Devil, learning how to use the Mark of Shadows, and establishing bonds with other mеmbers of the Shadow Clan. Usually, a new recruit would have been given more time to adjust to their role and get used to things, but June was in somewhat of a unique position. His status as an elite among the black market operatives gave him a perfect cover to be seen in places where other members of the Shadow Clan could not enter without drawing attention, as well as a convenient reason to meddle in all kinds of unsavory business.  
  
So, he had been sent on a mission earlier than usual. And now, he found himself in the middle of a bank robbery.  
  
To be precise, June was wearing black combat fatigues, hiding his face behind an Abomination mask, and holding an automatic rifle while watching his fellow robbers herd the hostages to the center of the foyer. The rest were breaking into the security system of the bank to activate the lockdown protocol - having made sure that everyone was proceeding smoothly, he turned to the person who had fired a burst of bullets into the ceiling and regarded him chillingly.  
  
The man sensed his gaze and turned, asking in a hoarse voice:  
  
"What?"  
  
Instead of answering, June silently punched him in the solar plexus. His jab had not been telegraphed in any way and lacked a wind-up, so it did not seem very forceful. And yet, the Awakened henchman folded in two and fell to his knees with a pained gasp, struggling to breathe.  
  
June calmly grabbed him by the hair, jerked his head upward, and asked in a chillingly calm tone:  
  
"What are you doing?"  
  
He pointed to the ceiling.  
  
"Have you watched too many movies, moron? This bank is built to withstand Nightmare Gates. It is a box made from monster hide and reinforced alloy, so where do you think your bullets go when you start shooting randomly? Do you want to kill someone with a ricochet?"  
  
The man hissed, trying to struggle free from his grasp, and glanced up at June with fury. However, that wrath was replaced with fear after meeting his cold, murderous, and eerily calm gaze.  
  
The enforcer shivered behind the snarling mask.  
  
"S - sory, Corsair."  
  
June watched him for a second more, mentally reevaluating the situation. The people who had reached out to hire him for this job were not his usual clientele. They were not professionals assembling a crew of reliable specialists - instead, they were zealots.  
  
Usually, June would not have taken such a contract, but the peculiar cult these zealots belonged to had been on the Shadow Clan's radar for a number of months now. This was their first serious move, so Awakened Kim had sent him to learn more about their goals and to make sure that nothing went wrong during the attack on the bank.  
  
In short, the robbers were a motley crew of a dozen or so believers and a few hired hands - June included. He was one of the more experienced people among them, so even the zealots seemed to be treating him with respect and trepidation. Still, maybe it was a good idea to make them respect him a little more.  
  
June glanced at the kneeling enforcer, considering if it was worth it to make an example out of him.  
  
"Is there a problem here?"  
  
He shifted his gaze and glanced at a delicate young woman with fair skin and blonde hair who had approached them. She was the only one of them dressed as a civilian and wearing no mask - granted, she did change the color of her hair and the features of her face with a camouflage charm. She had been hiding among the clients of the bank when the attack started, looking weak and inconspicuous. That was why the guards had not paid the delicate young woman any attention and were taken down by her in a matter of moments as a result. Now that they were expertly tied up and under watch, she approached June.  
  
The young woman was another specialist hired by the zealots. She was also his fellow Shadow, Fleur.  
  
Ray was also here, posing as a mundаne person and being restrained alongside other hostages. The three of them were sent on this mission together, with June taking charge.  
  
However, they were not supposed to show any sign that they knew each other prior to being hired to rob the bank. Fleur had to stay away from him to avoid drawing attention. June knew her well enough by now to know how competent she was despite being quite young, so there had to be a reason why she had gone against his instructions.  
  
Something was wrong. Letting go of the kneeling henchman, he wiped his hand on his fatigues and gave her a frigid look.  
  
"No problem whatsoever. We were just having a friendly chat."  
  
Using the opportunity, the henchman scrambled away. Fleur studied June for a moment more, then nodded and turned away. Her delicate fingers, though, moved to form subtle signs. June glanced the other away, paying no attention to them.  
  
He did, however, sense the signs formed by the shadow of her fingers on the floor.  
  
[We are in huge, huge trouble.]  
  
Maintaining a nonchalant attitude, he tensed inwardly.  
  
[Look right.]  
  
June did just that.  
  
The hostages were divided into two groups. The larger group consisted of mundane humans - Ray was among them, sitting on the floor with his hands tied behind his back. Despite being amateurs in June's eyes, the robbers were not, in fact, hapless. They had reliable means of identifying Awakened, it was just that Ray's Aspect made most of such means useless.  
  
The smaller group, consisting of only a handful of people, was isolated to June's right. He glanced at them, immediately noticing two stunning young women - both handcuffed with special enchanted cuffs. His attention was not focused on them because of their beauty, naturally, but rather because both seemed much too calm for the situation they were in, which was not at all a good sign.  
  
June frowned, feeling a very bad premonition.  
  
One girl was of medium height, with tan skin and ashen hair, looking at the world with the imperious, cold gaze of a Legacy scion. The other looked much more approachable, beguiling, even, looking around with lively curiosity in her gemlike onyx eyes and a slight smile playing on her soft lips.  
  
It was that easy, captivating smile that made it hard to look away from her. Well, that and the fact that she looked vaguely familiar.  
  
No, not just vaguely.  
  
Fair skin, raven-black hair, the girl strongly reminded June of someone he knew all too well.  
  
His mouth was suddenly dry.  
  
"Don't tell me."  
  
Fleur gave him another signal.  
  
[Yes. that is the Princess of Shadows, Rain. Boss's little sister.]  
  
June closed his eyes for a moment, remembering every curse word he knew.  
  
'You gotta be kidding me!'