2416 Can of Worms  
  
The assailants moved rapidly. Befоre too long, the bank's security system was in their hands, and the heavy armor plates meant to protect the building in case a Nightmare Gate opened nearby fell down, turning it into an impregnable - an inescapable - fortress.  
  
Of course, all things were relative. Nоthing was truly impregnable in the world of the Nightmare Spell - the bank could withstand the attacks of Awakened abominations, and possibly a few Fallen ones as well, but far more frightening creatures were entering the waking world more and more frequently these days. What seemed like reliable security measures just a few years ago were rapidly falling behind and becoming obsolete.  
  
The robbers were not really worried about Fallen and Corrupted abominations, either. What threatened them more were humans - government forces would arrive at the scene soon enough, including powerful Ascended officers. If their luck was especially bad, even a Saint could show up to resolve the crisis.  
  
The chances of encountering someone they had no business encountering were especially high because this bank was an old and prestigious one, having existed from before the descent of the Spell. Many prominent families, including storied Legacy clans, used its vault to store precious heirlooms and priceless treasures - a concerned powerhouse could appear out of the blue not out of a sense of duty or altruism, but simply to prevent their own family from being robbed.  
  
'Ah. it's getting worse and worse.' June sighed quietly. The presence of hostages would buy the robbers some time, but not enough time. They had to finish the job rapidly and get away before things went south.  
  
By now, the mundane clients and workers were tied up and sitting on the floor near the east wall of the foyer, while the Awakened visitors and security guards were restrained and kept under watch near the west wall.  
  
Among them was the mysterious Princess of the Shadow Clan. June threw a dark look at the gorgeous young woman and groaned inwardly. 'Blast it.'  
  
On the day he joined the Shadow Clan, Awakened Kim warned him about three people - her husband, Aiko, and the Princess. He had become good pals with Luster in no time and built rapport with the Shadow Fairy in no time. However, June had sworn to stay as far away from Boss's little sister as possible. He did not need to open that particular can of worms. And now here she was, in front of him. .Locked, restrained, taken hostage, and surrounded by militant zealots. What was going to happen to June if even a single hair fell from her head?  
  
'What was it that Awakened Kim said?' When it came to their Boss, being killed was not an escape from suffering. it was merely the beginning.  
  
June had remained calm in many situations that would have made most Awakened faint. He had survived horrors beyond imagination and glanced Death in the eye without flinching on innumerable occasions. But now, he suddenly felt nervous.  
  
Forming subtle signs with his fingers, he sent Fleur a message:  
  
[We must make sure that absolutely no harm comes to her.]  
  
Fleur did not answer for a few seconds. And when she did, there was something peculiar about her response.  
  
[Harm comes to her? No, Corsair. You don't understand.] She turned faintly and gave him a peculiar look. [You should be concerned about the zealots, instead. We must make sure that Rain doesn't take them all out before we can complete our mission.]  
  
Deciphering the ominous message, June raised an eyebrow behind his mask. [Why? Is there a possibility that she'll go on some kind of massacre?]  
  
Fleur stared at him with an incredulous expression for a brief moment, then glanced away.  
  
[Don't be silly. She's a pacifist.] Now, what the hell was that supposed to mean?  
  
June would have loved to learn more, but at that moment, a man wearing a Tyrant mask walked into the empty space between the two groups of hostages. His low voice resounded in the foyer of the bank, making a few of them flinch:  
  
"Ladies and gentlemen, I am Tyrant. You have the honor of being my guests tonight - show proper manners, and you'll have a pleasant visit. If not." His dreadful gaze landed on the hostages, forcing a few to reel back. "I am afraid you won't enjoy the consequences. My people won't enjoy washing blood and viscera off our clothes, either, so do consider acting with decorum and following our instructions faithfully. Don't give me a reason to revoke my hospitality."  
  
The man was the leadеr of the group - a figure of prominence in the cult and a seasoned warrior, at least judging by what June had discerned about him. Worst of all, he was a Master. June had taken down a Master or two in the past, but it was never easy - especially when he did not have the advantage of striking from stealth or luring the adversary into an ambush. Assassinating an Ascended was one thing, but facing one in an honest battle was not something he ever wished to repeat. He just hoped that the Princess would not draw the Tyrant's attention. Nothing good would come if she did.  
  
As June was somberly contemplating contingencies, the dead silence that followed the Tyrant's address was suddenly broken by a loud whisper.  
  
"Wow. Tamar, did you hear that? That was a proper villain's speech, wasn't it? So cool! That guy is too full of himself, but let's give credit where credit is due - he's really eloquent, for a pompous dimwit, I mean."  
  
"Rain. can you shut up? Please."  
  
"Do you think he gave that speech impromptu, or had he rehearsed it at home? If it's the former, amazing! Great improvisational skills. I sort of think that it's the latter, though. Can you imagine? That'd be so funny, him standing in front of a mirror, practicing a sinister voice."  
  
"Stop talking, fool. I'm begging you."  
  
"No, I'm just saying. do villains like that utter buffoon over there also get stage fright? I'd be mortified, having to give a speech in front of a hostile crowd. He has guts, that's for sure!"  
  
"Ah. You've done did it now."  
  
"Huh? Why is everyone looking at me?" The loud whispers finally grew silent. Everyone in the bank - the robbers, the hostages, and the Tyrant himself - were indeed staring at the two young women.  
  
The Princess of Shadow blinked a couple of times, then smiled awkwardly. "Oh, was I too loud? Sorry, sorry. Uh. continue as you were!"  
  
June shook and suppressed the desire to shoot someone. possibly himself?  
  
In all his career as a soldier, mercenary, and occasionally an assassin. 'Argh! She's exactly like her brother!'