**Chapter Eleven: More Insanity**

**Year 1991, Washington DC, United States of America**

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<Unless you are planning on living here forever, I think it is about time that you get out of this damn toilet.>

The man in the mirror might have been imaginary, but he did make a good point. I couldn't keep myself barricaded inside of this toilet for much longer without wearing out what little patience or goodwill that the man outside still had remaining. He said I could take however much time I needed, but I don't think he expected me to take quite this long, so it was about time that I left the toilet under my own steam before I get hauled out by security.

I straightened my clothes, patted my pants and jacket to remove any dust I might have picked up when I fell on the floor, and took a deep breath to pull myself together for what felt like the millionth time in less than two hours. I tried to convince myself that everything was going to be fine and checked the mirror to see if my blatant lie had any effect. My feeble attempt proved to be futile because my reflection winked at me and made 'shooing' gestures with his hand. I sighed in resignation and left the sink, the mirror, and that damned reflection behind.

<I'm still here you know, and I'm not sure I like your attitude towards me.>

Was this how the rest of my life going to proceed? With a smug annoying bastard prattling around in my head? I didn’t know how long I could take it before I would go insane, if I wasn’t insane already, which according to recent events seemed unlikely.

<Fine. Fine. I'll be quiet. You won't hear a peep out of me. I'll be as quiet as a door mouse. Hmm....is a door mouse really quiet? I guess they do make those squeaky little noises. Silent as a grave, maybe? But that sounds much too ominous.>

I ground my teeth in irritation with my hand on the toilet's door handle. I was going to go out, but I couldn't face whoever was outside with an obnoxious voice talking incessantly in my head. It would be kind of difficult to have a conversation with somebody when there was an imaginary person constantly rambling in my head. Didn't he just promise to shut up? Why was he still shooting his mouth off like a machine gun?

<Aren't you just using me as a convenient excuse to delay confronting the difficult situation waiting for you when you go out there? I promised to be quiet and you keep telling yourself that I am the reason that you are not getting out of this toilet, I guess that makes us both liars. Now, stop bitching and put on your big boy pants. It's time to see what is waiting for us beyond that door.>

I am not a man that likes to curse but I found myself struggling to think about the smug little shit in my head without resorting to offensive words. The most annoying part of the whole experience was that he knew all of my thoughts inside and out, so he knew more about my own thought processes than I did. He knew all the things that I try to ignore, all of the little lies I tell myself, so his assertions about my cowardliness being the true motive behind my hesitation to go out was correct. In my heart, I knew that I was scared of the consequences awaiting me when I left this restroom. In the end, I resolutely turned the doorknob and opened the door, not because I had a sudden burst of courage, but because I refused to let the little bastard inside my head have the satisfaction of being right.

There were a lot of things I was expecting to see when I opened the door: an angry crowd, security guards, or even maybe some scary men wearing black suits waving badges around and proclaiming that they needed to “take me in for some questioning”. What I didn’t expect was a single harmless looking portly man in a tuxedo and top hat to be waiting for me without an ounce of impatience or hostility on his ruddy face. The portly man’s well groomed mustache twitched as he looked up at me and started to smile like he saw his favorite grandson.

<Oh my god, it is the monopoly man! The only thing that is missing is the monocle!>

The annoying voice in my head was right, the man in front of me did look an awful lot like the monopoly man. He even dressed like the monopoly man. I was so surprised by the uncanny resemblance that it took me a few seconds to register the fact that the man had extended his hand out for a handshake. When I finally did notice, his hand had already hung there for an uncomfortable amount of time and things had gotten awkward. In an attempt to dispel the awkwardness, I responded to the overdue handshake with a little too much enthusiasm and things got even more uncomfortable.

The portly man pretended to not notice my little blunder and continued to smile as he said, “You are Dorothy’s kid, right? My name is Barnaby, Barnaby Phelps. I’m a friend of your mother’s.”

My mother’s friend? What did that mean? What exactly was he doing here?

“Nice to meet you Mr. Phelps. I am Dr. Jonathan Thorn. I would like very much to know what your purpose is in coming here.”

“You are a cheeky one, aren’t you? You just pissed off half the country with that little speech you made on live TV and you have made enemies you can’t even imagine. After that stunt you pulled, you still have the gall to ask me what I am doing here? I am here to save your ass kid. Your mother sent me here to protect you and bring you back to her manor where you can stay safe until this whole thing blows over. Until then, I am your babysitter.”

I looked him over from top to bottom and I couldn’t imagine how the pudgy little man could protect me from anything. “Look Mr. Phelps, I appreciate your concern, but I doubt I will get assassinated on the street just because of the things I said. I don’t think that the US government is that petty.”

“I don’t have the time or patience to explain to you just how much you have fucked up or how dangerous the situation is for you right now. Just do what I say and I will take you to your mother, she will explain everything to you. Just shut up and follow me.”

When he said “follow me”, a black tattoo of what looked like a leaf or a feather suddenly appeared right between his eyebrows and started to glow with an unsettling purple radiance. As I was bathed in the eerie purple light coming from the tattoo, I suddenly had the irrational urge to relax and follow Mr. Phelps, but that urge disappeared as quickly as it came, leaving me shaken and fearful. What the hell was that? Was I really going insane? Did I start hallucinating again?

<I have got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that you are not hallucinating. This is not originating from your mind, so I can conclusively tell you that it is not a delusion. The bad news is that you are not hallucinating. This is happening in real life and the friendly monopoly guy just tried to mind fuck you with a magic tattoo.>

For the millionth time I asked myself what was happening. First it was the darkness spreading through me like a disease, and then it was a talking reflection in a mirror followed by a voice in my head, now I am seeing what could only be described as magic? No. Just no. I have had enough of this shit. I needed to get away from this insanity.

Phelps must have seen the panicked expression on my face and guessed that I was going to bolt like a startled deer because he shouted, “Stop!” at the top of his lungs. This time the tattoo between his eyebrows turned into an image of a bird’s wing which then started to shine a hundred times more brightly that the feather did, nearly blinding me with its dazzling purple glow. My body froze up, instinctually following Phelps’s instruction, but just like before, the unreasonable urge that I had to follow his instruction quickly faded and I regained control over my body. I was just about to turn around and run away but Phelps had used the time I was frozen to pull out a pistol and point it at me.

“Don’t move kid. I don’t want to shoot you in the foot to stop you from running but I will do it if I don’t have a choice.”

I considered taking a chance and running away even with the gun pointed at me, but my sense of self-preservation wouldn’t allow it. I just couldn’t make myself take the risk.

“What do you want with me? Why do you want me to go with you so badly that you are even willing to pull a gun to force me to come with you?”

Phelps looked a little unsure on how to proceed but eventually he just sighed and said, “It wasn’t supposed to be this way. I was told that you were one of the rabble. They told me that you were completely sealed up and that you couldn’t access an ounce of power. Someone royally fucked up and now I have to deal with this shit,” he then looked right into my eyes and asked, “How long have you been awake kid? How much do you know? Who have you told?”

Awake? What did that mean? Part of the rabble? Sealed? He was saying words whose meaning I knew but I couldn’t understand what he was trying to say. My confusion must have been obvious because Phelps’s expression changed from slight alarm to curiosity.

“You haven’t been unsealed, have you? You aren’t awake? But how can you resist my compulsion if you can’t connect with…” He didn’t finish that sentence. He seemed to have a sudden revelation as he spoke and his expression quickly changed from curiosity to alarm. He suddenly ran towards me, and before I could say or do anything, the portly little man grabbed my shirt with one hand and pulled. The small buttons holding my shirt together popped off and the shirt tore open revealing my bare chest. It wasn’t much of a sight to be honest. I try to work out as regularly as possible, but I have always had problems trying to add muscle mass to my body. I wasn’t sickly or fat, but I was no body builder either. No, my chest was completely unremarkable except for a strange tattoo that had mysteriously appeared right over where my heart would be. The tattoo consisted of shifting ones and zeros which were glowing with a faint blue light. The thing reminded me of the tattoos that kept appearing on Phelps’s forehead. I looked up at Phelps to see if he would explain what was going on but before I could speak, he started to shout and curse.

“Shit! Shit! Shit! How the fuck did this happen? Which idiot dared to do this right under our noses? Which asshole is insane enough to actually try this? How is this even possible? Why did this asshole not get devoured? This makes no sense! What should I do now? What the fuck should I do!?”

The man looked like he was ready to breakdown into tears, but he slowly started to calm down as he muttered, “She will take care of it. She has to. I don’t need to make a decision, I just have to get him to her and let her figure it out.”

With the return of his clarity and purpose, he regained his former confidence. He pushed me down the hallway with the barrel of the gun pointed at my back. We passed countless people on our way to the elevator and out of the building but nobody seemed to notice the gun that Phelps was brandishing openly or my bedraggled state with my shirt ripped open. Even when I tried to make eye contact with them, they seemed to see right through me.

With what felt like the entire world ignoring us, Phelps led me to the parking lot of the building and pushed into a sleek black convertible, a Jaguar two-seater.

<The man might be a complete dick, but he does have some taste.>

With the way things were going, the beauty of the car I was being kidnapped in was the last thing on my mind. I was too busy trying to make sense of the things I had seen, the things I had heard, and their connection with what was happening inside of me. This all started with the darkness, so maybe Darky could enlighten me on what was going on.

<Darky? Is that what you are calling me now? I guess it is significantly better than little bastard. As for your conjecture that all of this has something to do with me, you might have a point. As we have already discussed, I am nothing more than a very incomplete piece of something and I am not sure what that something is. Is all of this related to me? Maybe, but if it is, I don’t have the required memories to answer your questions. Beyond my involvement, there is one thing you seem to be forgetting, or should I say deliberately ignoring. All of this might have something to do with me, but it also has something to do with your mother. Phelps has already said that he is a friend of your mother’s and I don’t think he was lying. There was also the things he said about you being sealed and not being unable to access your power. That seems to imply that you have gained some sort of power at some point and you were then sealed on purpose. You and I met only recently and we have already established that I am a foreign entity. If my guess is correct, the power you obtained and is still sealed inside of you probably predates our meeting today by quite a while. In fact, something tells me that this dates all the way back to your birth and it involves your mother, your absentee father, and maybe even your entire family.>

As Phelps started the car with one hand on the steering wheel and the other pointing the gun at me, I couldn’t help but agree with Darky. This whole thing seemed to reek of a large conspiracy and my mother seemed to be at the center of it.

Any other thoughts I was going to have were forcefully erased when the car suddenly lurched forward with a ridiculous amount of acceleration as Phelps floored the gas pedal. He drove like a crazy bat out of hell until we left the underground parking lot and continued to floor the pedal as he zigzagged through traffic like a madman.

<Someone is in a hurry. It looks like Phelps wants to get rid of you as quickly as possible.>

I could understand that in Phelps’s mind I was like a hot potato that he needed to get rid of, but the way he was driving was more likely to get us in a car accident than get us where we were going, and just like I predicted, when was trying to navigate through a particularly tight space between a van and a truck, he scraped the van pretty badly. I thought that Phelps would stop like a normal motorist after a car accident but I had underestimated how insane he was, he didn’t even glance backwards or slow down as he continued to drive.

I looked back through the rear view mirror only to notice that the van was following us. The angry driver was probably trying to flag us down so that we could compensate him for the damage on his car, but he didn’t stand a chance of catching up with us, or at least that was what I thought until I saw a traffic jam ahead of us.

As we were forced to slow down and then stop, the van pulled up behind us and rammed us so hard that we crashed into the car ahead of us. The van then backed up and rammed us again. Phelps looked back at the van and started to curse.

“Buckle up kid, this is not just some angry motorist. I am afraid we have run into some of that ‘deep shit’ that I told you about earlier. We need to leave before they completely total the car if we are going to have any chance to survive. I need your help kid. I will open up the traffic and you will steer us through the space that I create.”

He forced my hand on the steering wheel and closed his eyes. As the van backed up for a third ram, Phelps opened his eyes and they had completely turned black, from his sclera to his irises, and a bright purple beam shot up from his forehead which transformed into an image of giant black wings in the sky. Black feathers started to fall from the giant wings in the sky and each one fell on a car that was ahead of us. The cars all suddenly and simultaneously decided to pull to the side, opening a narrow space between them. I was looking at the scene with shock and awe when Phelps suddenly floored the gas pedal and I was forced to pay attention to the road so that I could navigate through the narrow space between the cars. The space between the cars was barely wide enough for the small convertible, it couldn’t fit the considerably wider van so I glanced at the rear view mirror to check if he had given up, but I was sorely disappointed. The maniac in the van was bulldozing through the narrow space without a thought for the cars he was hitting or the damage he was causing to his own van.

When I pulled my eyes from the rear view mirror and focused back on the road ahead, I saw that we were nearly through the traffic jam and the cause of the jam was clearly visible. It was two vans similar to the one behind us barricading the road and two strange people completely covered with what looked like black cloaks standing in front of the vans.

Phelps immediately grabbed the steering wheel from me and yanked it violently to the right, trying to drive around the vans but something red streaked out from one of the strange cloaked people and hit the front wheel of the car. There was a loud sound of a tire popping and that was the last thing I remember before the world started spinning and everything went black.