**Mountain View, United States of America. 7 Hours Earlier.**

Rebecca stepped on the crosswalks, leaving the public gardens of Shoreline Park, and headed towards the downtown, walking on the platform.

The suburban area of Mountain View was quiet as the noon approached, the houses exhaled sweet scents of freshly cooked food and the breeze messed up her hair.

She used to live in the district she was passing through, and walking there she recognized some place she played in when she was younger.

A lot of things had changed, but it still looked familiar...

She took the lipstick out of the bag and started applying it with gentleness on her lips, trying to smile at the pocket mirror that she held with the other hand.

Whatever the girl did to appear professional, that blond hair would get even messier than the usual, and her eyes looked tired.

It had been a hard week for her.

Despite the high price it cost and the humiliation to attend a trial as a defendant, she had accepted Alicia's plan to let her be charged with invasion of privacy and she had took part in the hearing.

Her brother's lawyer had handled her defense, without arousing suspicions to her boss, and he had assured that she wouldn't have been jailed.

She remembered the flowing tears that wetted her cheeks during the hearing before the court.

The voice of the Judge that decreed his sentence and imposed a restraining order that prevented her from approaching Gayoon within a kilometer.

She could still hear Miyuki that muttered in a broken whisper that their story was over.

Rebecca wanted to just screw the agreements and tell her the truth, but it was so hard to explain, and the less she knew the less she would have been in danger.

She had already endangered her, revealing the real goal of her work for Alicia Perez.

Moving away from the mind those hurtful thoughts, she tried to smile and look as calm as possible, heading towards the palace that she had been told to go to.

Kylie Walker's editing company was hosted in a single palace that seemed to be designed for that purpose judging from the powerful antennas and the bulletproof glass door blocked with an electric lock.

At first sight it looked overly protected for that kind of establishment, but it didn't ruin the outward appearance of the building.

On the contrary, there was a fine flowery meadow and a cobblestone path that softened the soldierly air of the place. Whoever had planned that palace possessed a weird yet immaculate sense of taste.

She typed the code that Mark gave her in the keyboard of the locked door, and pulled it.

Despite the large amount of desks full of stacked sheets and documents, the reception room was preciously tidied and impeccably neat, with the air that scented of lavender.

There weren't too much people, probably because of the lunch break, and she headed towards a middle-aged woman who sat in the atrium, behind a writing desk.

"Excuse me...? I am Reb..."

"I know who you are..." - The woman replied, standing up from the seat, - "Ms. Walker will be available for your dialogue soon, in the meantime you can wait in her private office".

Rebecca followed the woman, who led her to a room blocked by another electric lock and typed the code to enter.

"I am afraid that I have issues to care about elsewhere" - The woman said tonelessly - "However, I am sure that Ms. Walker will come as soon as possible, if you don't mind waiting..."

She motioned that it was fine and took place on a velvet lined chair.

The studio was well-ordered like the atrium and on the table there were no stacks of documents or other signs of work to be finished, as if the desk was completely brand new.

The only thing that seemed to be messy was an enormous bulletin board that brooded in the wall opposite to the table.

It was a huge collection of photos and newspaper clippings from various years and sources, linked to each other by a never ending thread of twine of various colors.

Intrigued, she stood up and walked closer to the wall.

Giving it another look, she realized that she knew some of the people whose photos hung on the board.

A few of them were familiar faces that she saw during her stay as a translator in Japan, but most of the photos she could recognize were related to Alicia Perez and to Hernandez Entertainment.

A long piece of red wire passed through the whole left side of the scheme and linked Alicia's picture to her employees.

Finally, she spotted the cutout that she was looking for... A younger copy of the blond-haired girl smiled to the real life one from the photo, and a little attached label said "Rebecca Jackson" written in pen.

It frightened her.

On that wall there was a complete timeline of events, including her trial and dozens of other cases, meticulously related to each other with the colored wire.

Eventually, right on the edge of the board, a green thread linked her photo to another one... Gayoon.

"It's creepy, isn't it?" - A laughing voice spoke behind her, making her startle.

Rebecca turned towards the newcomer, who smiled at her.

A hazel-eyed girl who dressed with an indigo miniskirt was standing next to the blondie. She had a brownish messy short hair, dyed with shaped of red and a pair of quirky earrings.

"You are...?" - The older girl whispered.

"Kylie Walker, at your disposal..." - Kylie chuckled, inviting her to sit and taking place on the other chair. - "Finally, I have the honor to meet Rebecca Jackson..." - She said.

Her boss definitively wasn't like she had imagined, but she just took a seat and listened to the weird girl.

"You are probably wondering why I made that..." - She stated, pointing at the board.

"Well, that is the reason why I am offering you a full-time job in my company and also the reason why I want that woman to get arrested" - Kylie said, pointing at the miniature of Alicia Perez on the wall.

"How am I related to all these people?" - Rebecca asked in a worried tone.

The younger girl stood up and stepped towards the wall.

"This is Invicta..." - She began, drawing a circle that embraced the whole graph with the arms - "...a criminal organization that operates all over the world to subtract money from the entertaining industry".

"For years, Invicta has corrupted hundreds of recording labels, producers, film-making companies and others branches of the global economy and hides behind a wide variety of companies spread across the far east and the States..."

Rebecca glared suspiciously at the weird girl.

"Why are you revealing me sensitive data without even knowing me... how can you be sure you can trust me?" - She asked, raising an eyebrow.

Kylie just let out giggle - "I don't have to meet you in flesh and blood to check your reliability... it is already in the scheme"

The blond girl was annoyed by the cryptic statement given without an explanation, but she refrained the comments and focused on the graph. It was easy to understand, after all...

Those people who had direct relationships were linked to each other with the string.

She cautiously observed the red thread that connected her photo with Alicia Perez and then her gaze fell again on Gayoon's face and the other piece of green thread.

"What do the colors mean?" - She exclaimed.

"I see that you begin to understand the board" - Kylie whispered with a satisfied voice. - "One of the most important notions that you need know in order to fully understand how Invicta works is how trust is gained and managed..."

"...you see a lot of blue strings over there, near you beloved boss" - She pointed again to her former employer - "Those mean that mutual trust is still alive between the people who are linked..."

It made sense. Rebecca recognized Alicia's most intimate advisers in the closest row of photos and all of them were linked with blue thread.

"Your miniature, though, is linked with a red string" - The brown-haired girl added - "The scheme is telling me that no trust exists anymore between you and that woman and that I can trust you..."

"Why do you talk about the scheme as if it was a living being?" - Rebecca blurted out, slightly irritated - "You wrote it yourself".

"I just drew it on a board..." - Kylie calmly replied - "which doesn't necessarily mean that the scheme didn't exist before I decided to capture it into a written form..."

The weird girl smiled, observing the glimmer of amazement in her eyes.

"We went way too far in the talk, though..." - She muttered - "Why don't we make a pause; I can offer you a cup of coffee in the other room..."

Kylie was about to take her hand to let her out of the room, but Rebecca stiffened, recalling Gayoon's image on the wall. - "Wait... what does the green mean?" - She asked.

The hazel-eyed girl just let out another cryptic smile.

"Hope..." - She whispered with a soft voice.

They headed to another room, which was bigger and even more carefully organized than Kylie's private office, which after all looked spartan compared to the public places of the building.

It had sofas full of embroidered cushions and even a small bar counter where the employees could order warm drinks.

"Ehi, Gabrielle..." - Kylie shouted quite loudly to a staff member, who immediately neared - "Why don't you bring us two Cappuccinos with cream?"

After ordering, they sat on the comfortable couch, waiting for the beverages to be prepared.

"I stressed you too much with the major issues, didn't I?" - The younger girl tried to start a conversation - "Why don't we talk about your professional skills, instead...?" - She proposed.

"Tell me about your experience as a translator... I was told by your brother that you worked in Japan for a couple of years"

Rebecca blushed, sensing that Mark probably had overvalued her in the ostentatious praises he always did about her. - "Yes, but it was just because there weren't available workplaces here... I mean..."

"Oh, come on..." - Kylie exclaimed, playing down her modesty - "Don't be afraid to show your self-esteem"

The blond-haired girl was slightly embarrassed by her weird way to bluntly say whatever she thought about, but the waitress Gabrielle saved her, arriving to bring the coffees.

The girl was about to put down the glasses on the table, when the coffee slipped from her hands, falling and tarnishing her clothing.

"Fuck!" - She shouted.

She was about to shout her to go to hell, when she suddenly froze at the sight of the waitress' face.

Immediately after their gazes had met she had recognized those eyes, those facial features of the girl, who was half Asian and half European judging from the visage.

The hair that was the color of the sand, just a little darker…

She was Gayoon's sister.