All over the complex a loud siren wailed. Security forces ran to the various rooms where the racers were. As security busted through the doors to room 10 John and Susan looked up in shock. JoAnn and Tom woke up from their groggy sleep.

Rubbing his eyes, Tom looked at the door. “What's going on?”

JoAnn looked over as well. She jumped out of bed and walked up to the security officers who just stared back.

“On your feet!” The intruders said.

JoAnn stood at attention. Tom got out of bed as well did Susan and John who tried to cover themselves up as best they could with their hands. Tom looked around the room. He wondered why JoAnn was at attention. Had she been in the military before? Was there something else going on that he wasn't aware of? He didn't bother to look over to the other two. He didn't care except for the fact they obviously knew each other.

The security guards walked further in the room. Looking at JoAnn the first guard smiled. “Good. You know discipline.” He said.

JoAnn stood still. Don't speak unless spoken to. The thoughts from her father ran through her head. He had participated in the race when she was seven. Too bad he hadn't made it. Stupid race officials had ended his race when they suspected sabotage.

She stiffened further to be on the safe side.

The guard walked towards Tom. “You'll learn.” He said. “What's your name?”

Tom's pulse quickened. His heart was almost beating out of his chest. “Tom sir.” He looked the guard in the eyes. Tom had never been one to back down due to fear. As he stared into the security guards eyes, Tom couldn't figure out what his game was. Did he get off on making people feel uncomfortable? What was his deal? He hoped he wouldn't have to find that out.

The second guard walked towards the other two in the room. “Susan and John.” He said addressing them. He looked them up and down. “Having some midnight fun huh?”

They didn't say a word. Unsure of what to do, they just stood there. Were they in trouble? What was the guard going to do? These questions and more crossed their minds. Susan shot a quick glance over to John. John shot the same glance back at Susan.

The guard got in Susan's face. He stood there an inch away from her. Susan stiffened even more. She felt his breath on her. It smelled like vodka mixed with more vodka. She detested the smell of alcohol. She detested this man even more, if he could be called a man. The guard reached for her.

“You smell good.” He said. The guard reached to her waist and placed his hand on her hip. He let his fingers trace her hip for a second.

Anger grew in Susan’s eyes. You son of a bitch. She thought. “If you didn’t have a weapon, you’d be on the ground.” Susan said to the man. She looked at his hand on her hip and moved to the left to get out of his reach.

The first guard looked over. “You're out of line!” He yelled across the room. Pulling out a baton he walked up to the second guard. “You will excuse yourself from this room immediately.” He said.

The other guard smirked. “They won't survive the first day. You know this.” He said. “They've been in prison too long. There's nothing they could do to win this race. No one has ever won.”

It was true. Out of all of the contestants and out of all the years, no one had ever one the race. The first guard knew this. The second guard was only speaking the truth. But that didn't give him the right to treat female contestants like they were his personal plaything.

“Back off.”

The guard took another smell of Susan's hair. “One taste, it won't hurt... much.” He reached for her neck.

The first guard took his baton and slammed it against the second guard’s legs. The guard fell to the floor where his superior continued to beat him. The guard looked to Susan, “My apologies ma'am. This won't happen again.” He dragged the lifeless body of the other guard outside the door and into the hallway. He looked back into the room. Looking at the four players, he addressed them. “Get dressed. The race begins in two hours. That is all.” He closed the door.

“Two hours?” Tom said. “Thought it wasn’t for another six. That it started in the morning.”

JoAnn looked to Tom and then outside. It was light out. She pointed to it. “It is morning, which solves that. Hope you make it out alive.” She smirked.

Tom looked back to JoAnn “Same to you.”

Susan pulled on some underwear and went searching for her clothes. John did as well. Once finding their attire they got dressed. Tom watched them with caution. Prison. He thought. They put him in a room with prisoners. Prisoner’s couldn’t be trusted. They played dirty.

Tom recalled the first time the race had a prisoner in the game. No one had known until the very end. After most of the contestants had been killed off. With all the cameras throughout the area, the killings had been done in quiet. No one had known why people had disappeared.

Susan looked up to the security camera in the room that had been observing her and John. Flipping the camera off, she mouthed some choice words and then stared into it. “Hope you enjoyed that!” She said.

Back in the main recording area, Dexter watched the video feed. “Indeed I did.” He said to himself in response to Susan's inquiry. Dexter had enjoyed the whole security attachment checking in on rooms. Only that room had issues. The other room checks went accordingly. He was surprised that no one else had problems. There usually was one group that would fight the guards and end up dead before the race even began. Jumping before the gun went off was always a risky business. There were no laws in the dorms. The race laws didn’t exist there.

Susan flipping Dexter off amused him for some reason. He wasn't sure why.

There was a knock at the door.

Dexter pressed a button on his console and watched as all of the monitors went dark. Ever since he came to be in charge of the complex, Dexter had made sure no one saw what he viewed on the monitors. It wasn't anything out of hatred for his coworkers; it was more of a respect thing. He could do whatever he wanted in his space. Others didn't have that choice.

“Come.” He said after making sure everything was locked down.

Two security guards entered. One was helping the other limp in. As they entered the first guard stood at attention, the other guard tried his best to do so, but fell to the ground.

The first guard looked to the second guard and shook his head in disappointment. The second guards kneecaps were bloody. Dexter looked to the guards knees and then to the other guard who was holding a bloody baton. Made sense after all that happened during the security sweep. Dexter didn't have the time or patience for disorderly conduct. Especially from a second grade nut job.

The first guard continued to stand at attention waiting his commander's orders.

Dexter approached the two men. As he walked he limped. His artificial leg making a slight scraping sound on the concrete. When he was standing in front of them, he smelled the second guards breath.

“Liquor?”

The man hesitated for a moment and then nodded his head in confirmation. He looked to the floor fully knowing his fault.

Dexter looked to the other guard. “Thank you for bringing this to my attention.” He said. “You are dismissed.”

The man turned and exited the room.

Dexter turned his attention back to the guard. “What's your name?” He said looking the man over. He didn't recognize the man aside from the video footage from fifteen minutes ago.

The guard looked forward as he answered. “Jameston sir. Lieutenant Junior Grade, Serial Number 3314 SP Romeo.”

Dexter shook his head. He wasn't a fan of the military protocol but that's how it was. When he accepted the assignment he also had to deal with people he didn't trust. Dexter never felt he needed a security force. They managed to get in the way more times than not. The players of the race knew the rules and they knew what was expected of them. Disobedience meant certain death.

“Sir?” Jameston said. “What are you going to do with me?” He was trembling. The shaking didn't help matters especially with Dexter watching him the way he was.

Dexter tapped his foot against the floor. Each strike against the concrete made a loud booming thud that echoed throughout the room. “You shouldn't be worried with what I'm going to do to you. You need to be worried of what they'll do to you in the race.”

Jameston's heart skipped a beat. The race?

He could handle anything. Extra shifts. Limited duty. Anything at all. He wouldn't wish this punishment on anyone. Not the race. Jameston became a guard for a reason. As long as he served he wouldn't have to be in the race. He didn't want to die.

As a security guard, he could enjoy a long natural life. This meant a steady paycheck, housing, health care. Basically anything he needed. Not wanted of course. Needed. The government provided nicely for him. He got by without issue. Now with the prospect of the race and his being in the race? He shuddered at the thought.

He fell to his knees. They cracked upon hitting the ground. As pain shot through his knees and into his legs, tears formed in his eyes. “Please sir. Anything but the race. Not the race! I'll do anything.”

Dexter shook his head. “Drinking on duty and flirting with the contestants with the forethought of rape.”

Jameston paused. How did Dexter know? He looked over at the monitors. Of course. Looking down at his knees he saw the pool of blood that was forming. If he didn't seek medical attention soon he would be dead by morning. If he were to be entered into the race in this condition... Jameston felt a knot in the back of his throat. Two hours from now the race would start. He would surely be dead.

Dexter looked at the guard. He felt no pity for the man. He deserved to die. “What would you have done to the girl?”

The guard looked up. He had a choice. Lie to his superior or tell the truth. Simple as that. There was only one problem. He wasn't certain what he would have done. The other guard would have stopped him had it progressed any further. He figured had he attempted anything more he would be suffering a lot more than broken knee caps. Jameston didn't respond. He had no answer.

Dexter snarled. “You are a pitiful excuse for a man. At least show some dignity in your work.” Leaning forward he helped the lieutenant up from the concrete. “What a waste of a man you are. I can't stand to even look at you!” Letting go of his arm he waved his hand. “Get out of my sight! Go!”

Jameston hobbled to the door and left.

Dexter sat back down at his control station. Switching on the monitors he zoomed out so he could see the full rooms. Ten people getting their things ready. Eleven people would enter the race and they would soon know why it was important not to go against their government. Dexter reclined in his chair. Shutting his eyes for a few moments he thought about the months ahead. He wondered which would be the first to go and how they would end their existence.

A new day waited. He'd have to wait with it. Jameston would be dead shortly after the race started. The news would report it as an accident. Someone who wasn't suppose to be there getting caught up in the excitement or something else along those lines.

It was the perfect cover up to a perfect murder. Dexter was in control. He liked being in control. It was his nature.

Opening his eyes he took out another cigar and lit it. Turning to his right he activated a CD player. It started playing Beethoven's Fifth, a favorite of his, and so he sat there immersed in fine music and surrounded by a cloud of smoke. This was the life.