

Chapter 02

Ethan Ramsey pulled a piece of paper out of his jacket pocket, and reached up to his headset.

"So what am I here to do?"

"We received an anonymous call," came the reply. "It was a man offering information about Petron, the Disappearing Man."

"What did he tell you?"

"Nothing. He agreed to meet somewhere at the address I have given you. He said that the information would be very helpful to us in our investigations." There was a brief pause, and Ethan heard the Boss breathing out, probably exhaling plumes of smoke.

"Why didn't you get the information from him over the phone?"

"He requested that you be sent. He refused to tell me any information. For all we know it could be Petron himself trying to get us in a tight place, so I've sent you heavily armed and prepared to fight. You're the most qualified person in this organisation for this situation."

"Fine. I'll bring back your information."

"See you on the other si-" Ethan switched his headset off, and knocked on the door. He took a look around the street.

This was a small and tightly spaced area consisting of small apartments stacked on top of each other. The air smelt of dogs, with a hint of garbage. Every second window seemed to be broken and covered up with wood, and in some of the windows, the wood was broken.

Ethan heard shuffling behind the door, and his hand reached down to his gun holster. The shuffling stopped.

A small shaking voice spoke out from behind the door.

"Wh- who, who is it?"

His hand trembled over the handle of his pistol, but Ethan held up the piece of paper to the light so that he could read it.

"It's... a friend."

"I'm af- afraid I can't let you inside unless you g- give me more information."

Ethan sighed. "It says here something about the moon bleeding in the dead of the night, but I personally don't go for that sort of playschool crap." Ethan's hand stopped shaking as he became slightly more familiar with the mind he was talking to.

"I... guess that will have to do."

The door opened, revealing a small balding man.

"You're the man I'm supposed to be meeting about some inf-"

"Yes. I am. Please come inside. Take a seat."

The man waved inside with a scarred hand. Ethan looked at the hand, then sat down on a couch which had a ragged blanket covering it. He could feel the springs digging into his sides through the torn fabric.

"I think I'd rather stand, actually."

"Fine." The man sat down himself, then his expression changed to a more pleasant one. "You can call me Mr. Moon."

"Tell me, Moon. What is this information that you can give me?"

"I can tell you exactly where you can find Petron, the Disappearing Man."

There was a pause.

"Where is he then?"

"I can't tell you yet."

"Oh. Right. So this is one of those 'You scratch my back I'll shoot yours' type deals, is it?"

"You could put it that way, yes." The small man rubbed his scarred hand, and stared at Ethan.

"What do you want in return?"

"We would like you to kill someone for us."

"Who?"

"She's an agent for your company. You may know her." Mr. Moon rubbed his hand. "We know her only as 'Aphid.'"

Ethan stared back at the small man, and then turned to leave.

"I'm afraid I don't need the information that much." He walked straight into an overly sized man wearing a white mask, who breathed heavily on him.

"This is Brutus. Take care to note the rather large gun in his hand."

"It has been noted."

"We're not being unreasonable here, Ethan. Aphid has been nothing but a nuisance to us. We would be turning over one of our own for one of yours. At least this way you get a rebate."

"I'm afraid that my loyalty at the moment is to the company, not to the mission."

Ethan walked past Brutus, towards the door.

"I am sorry that you are unwilling to accept our offer, Ethan."

Brutus lifted up his shotgun as Ethan turned around. Ethan's pistol whipped out of his pocket, and he fired a shot at the large man's head. Brutus keeled over backwards, revealing the man with a scarred hand standing behind him with a rifle.

"Impressive." He cocked the gun, and looked down at Brutus. Brutus groaned. "You've hurt him."

The large man pushed himself back up onto his feet, and shook his head.

"Tell me Ethan, would you perform our little task if we were to give you a little more information?"

"There is nothing that I need to know." Ethan walked to the door, and opened it.

"Ever wondered how you came to be working for The Company?" This made Ethan stop. "What do you remember so far? Let me guess. Blank, blank, blank, pain, The Company?"

Ethan closed the door. "What do you know?"

"A lot. I know that The Company took you from the ones who held you under lock and key. I know that the man who saved you, Isaac, narrowly avoided being killed a year ago, when he was ambushed by gang members."

"You haven't told me anything new yet."

"I know it was you who saved him."

"I am aware of that." Ethan's grip on his pistol tightened.

"Do you know how you saved him? I hear it was a super-human feat."

Ethan closed the door and turned to the small man. "You have my attention."

"Ah. Now you're interested."

"I'm making no promises."

"I feel sorry for you, Ethan, so I'll make you a deal." The small man put the rifle down. "I'll tell you the whereabouts of the Disappearing Man, so that you can run home to your boss and have something to tell him. In return, you will promise me the death of 'Aphid.' Once the news reaches me of her 'tragic demise,' you can come and see me, and you have my word that the mystery of your life before the company will no longer be a mystery."

Ethan stood still, staring directly into the man's eyes.

"Will I find you here?"

"Yes. I will always be here. Do we have a deal?"

Ethan breathed out. "Yes."

Mr. Moon smiled, and sat back down. "Petron Yussen, the Disappearing Man, has a long-standing association with a criminal group named the 'Rippers.' I just happen to have sources who state that he will be convening with them tomorrow night at their leader's club, 'Ulterior Motifs.'"

"I have your word that he will be there?"

"Oh yes."

"Good."

Mr. Moon stood up, and put forward his un-scarred hand. "It has been a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Ramsey. I look forward to doing business with you."

Ethan flashed a smile at Mr. Moon. On the way out the door, he glared at Brutus and glanced at the hole in his mask.

"Boss?"

"Ethan. How did it go?"

"I have a lead. He will be at 'Ulterior Motifs' tomorrow night."

"Good. I take it you will also be there?"

"Yes. I will." Ethan turned around and looked at the door he had just walked out of. "Oh, and one other thing."

"Hmm?"

"Do you have a recollection of a man named 'Mr. Moon?'"

"Yes. He's given us trouble in the past."

Ethan paused.

"I would recommend that you send a 15-person infiltration unit to the address that you sent me to. And keep Aphid inside the stronghold for a while, I think she may be being hunted."