

Under a heavy rain

It starts, as these things so often do, with a death.

Donalds sat in the car for a few minutes, finishing the cigarette. There was no reason to smoke them, especially these days. A few years back, he'd got hold of the real thing - a carton of cigarettes from the noughties on the QT. He'd managed maybe two or three before coughing up a lung, and had binned the rest.

Kanly was waiting with an umbrella as the rain poured down. The white tattoos on his night-black skin seemed to glow in the early-morning gloom. The young Nazzadi was fidgeting with his Peek, tapping at the console, as the CS techs bustled around. Donalds sacrificed his dignity and dashed across the car park. He straightened up once he was under the umbrella and nodded to his partner.

"What happened?"

"Dog walker saw the body floating by this morning. It's not the usual drug-related crap."

"That'd be a first round here. Must have been carried in on the tide."

Kanly looked at Donalds.

"How the hell do you know that? You got nautical all of a sudden?"

Donalds grinned and pointed at the nearby sign.

"Naw, it's hiding in plain sight. The tidal times are there."

Across the water in Fife, an NEG military craft with D-engines at full, roared into the sky causing both human and Nazzadi to start. Donalds snorted.

"I hate this part of town. I hated it before the war, and I still hate it. Why didn't you guys level it during the damn war?"

Kanly smiled, showing sharp incisors.

"Nothing worth hitting I guess, although who knows how the Bugs think? Mind you, they may have thought it wasn't worth the payback!"

Both laughed as they watched a police officer in power armour surface from grey waters of the Firth of Forth. He made his way to the curtain wall and shook his head to both CID when he saw them. Donalds waved him off, and flicked the remainder of his cigarette into the Firth of Forth.

"Okay, looks like no forensic evidence in the locality. Is the FME here yet?"

Kanly shifted uneasily.

"Yeah, he's with the body now.... Gav, it's Morton."

"Oh, hell. Well, I'd better see what he says. Maybe you'd better stay here. You know how he feels about Nazzadi." Donalds decided to ignore the rain this time and headed toward the plastic tent erected around the body. Donalds hated Morton, who was arrogant, xenophobic and reminded him way too much of himself. Morton had lost family in the war like many Edinburgh natives, and Kanly was an all-too-obvious reminder of

the face of the enemy. He steeled himself and parted the curtain to the evidence scene.

Morton was already recording his observations.

"Large number of contusions and cuts. The pattern suggests a ritualistic manner. Preliminary blood analysis reveals large number of..."

He looked up as Donalds and Kanly entered, and switched off his Peek.

"Nasty. Looks like he was tortured over several days - there's signs of cardiac massage and resuscitation. His bloodwork is filled with a dozen chemical cocktails, mostly stimulants, injected straight to the heart. This guy died hurting a lot. Repeatedly. When they couldn't get what they wanted, they started cutting."

Kanly lifted the plastic sheet covering the body. Symbols were scribed into the corpse's flesh.

"They're not Nazzadi symbols; this is something else."

Donalds raised an eyebrow and winced.

"Ritualistic then? Aw, no. That's gonna be a bastard of paperwork."

Kanly looked past the ME and Detective, and whistled.

"Oh oh, who ya gonna call?"

Donalds swore under his breath, and turned to face the two figures, seemingly oblivious to the rain pouring over them. Both wore black suits, and looked like trouble.

"Let me guess. Smith and Jones?" said Donalds.

One of the figures smirked, and Donalds resisted the urge to smack him one.

"What a coincidence. I'm Agent Smith."

Donalds kicked a rock off the marine defence wall and sighed.

"Of course you are. Kanly, come on. We're out of here. It's not our case any more. It belongs to Bureau 13"

Smith turned to the FME. "You can go. We're bringing our own people in. This is OIS business now." Resignedly, the two detectives and Morton walked back to their cars, Donalds using the opportunity to light a cigarette in the shelter of a rocket defence pod. He looked up at the Edinburgh skyline, blurred by the rain.

"I hate those bastards," he said, gesturing at the two OIS agents talking on their PCPUs, "but I'm glad they exist."

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