

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Alex finally gets her talk.

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Alex really doesn't like being left in the dark. And yeah, she knows just how fucking ironic that is given her line of work as an FIA Sleeper Agent. She's basically been left in the dark for the past seven years, stuck in the dead end of Dogtown playing bartender without a fucking clue what lay at the end of the assignment.

Still, that was one thing. This? This was something else entirely. Whatever the fuck was going on, she was being yanked around by her chain and she didn't like it. It was one thing to be a government agent, a spare wrench in NUSA's toolbox just waiting to be called upon. It was another entirely to be toyed with by some hot shot mercenary who had somehow convinced Myers to loan her out to him.

... Maybe if it felt like she'd had much of a purpose in all of this, Alex wouldn't be so damn irritated. But all V had her do was lure Hansen out of the way so that he could ice the motherfucker and take over his likeness.

And fine, that was... whatever. Cool, she supposed. But after that, she felt like she was frozen out of everything. She and So Mi hadn't even gotten a chance to talk yet. And Alex was pretty sure they weren't shipping So Mi back to NUSA either, which made the whole situation stink to high heavens even more.

So when V had pinged her to let her know they needed to talk, Alex had come ready with questions and a loaded gun, because it seemed like either she was about to eat a bullet or... well, that was the problem wasn't it? She couldn't fucking think of what the 'or' was.

The only thing she really had to go off of was what V had said back in the Black Sapphire.

"Give me some wiggle room Alex... and I'll make sure this ends how you like it as well. Even if that means a cushy assignment to a beach for the rest of your days."

At the time, she'd let it happen. She'd let everything happen. But now? Well, suffice to say she was starting to have her doubts. And maybe some regrets.

"I'm sure you have questions."

Though this conversation didn't necessarily feel like an ambush, she had to admit. V was there with Alt, but it was just the two of them as far as Alex could tell. Didn't mean they wouldn't still zero her before this was all over, of course.

One might assume that called for a more... diplomatic approach. But fuck that. If they really had bad intentions, then going hard and fast would reveal them quicker than any soft and slow bullshit she could pull. Plus, going hard and fast would make her feel better, in the end.

"You're damn right I have questions. Because from where I'm standing, I gave you wiggle room and you used it to *fuck* me."

She's watching them both closely for any hidden anger or rage over her caustic response. But ultimately, all she gets is an amused snicker from Alt and a smirk from V. The latter of whom just shakes his head.

"If I were fucking you, you'd already know, Alena."

Ah fuck and there it is. Alex (because she hasn't been Alena to anyone in a long time) draws her gun right there on the spot and points it at V's head.

"How do you know that name?"

V stays quiet, completely unfazed by the gun in his face. Alt though...

“Simple. I’m not a poser. I’m really Altiera Cunningham, the greater Netrunner to ever do it.”

That... Alex narrows her eyes, her aim not wavering for even a moment.

“First of all, that’s pretty fucking narcissistic even if it is true. What about Bartmoss and Spider Murphy, huh?”

The blonde just shrugs.

“Bartmoss’ corpse is stuffed in a fridge over at the dump and Spider Murphy got out of the business decades back while she still could, smart girl that she was. I think, after everything, I can safely say I’ve got both of them beat. After all, I’m still here.”

Alex snorts derisively.

“Yeah, which brings me to the second thing. Altiera Cunningham is fucking dead. Has been for more than sixty years. There’s no way you can be her, you’d have to be an...”

She trails off as she stares hard at the both of them. Alex isn’t dumb, thank you very much. She knows how to read body language. And she’d seen terror on both the Cassel Twins and So Mi at certain points during the operation. Terror that wasn’t directed at V... but at Alt. The kind of terror you only got when you were out of your fucking depth.

“You’ve got to be shitting me.”

V finally speaks up.

“I assure you, we aren’t. And yes, Alt is exactly what you think she is. On top of being who she says she is.”

Fuck. This was fucking insane. Still, Alex knows enough to switch from pointing her gun at V to pointing it at Alt instead. Biggest threat in the room and all that.

Except if Alt is what they say she is, then that body is just a Gemini isn't it?
Shooting her won't kill her.

Alex quickly switches back to pointing at V. He should still be flesh and blood, right? And Alt seems to care about him, so if she wants to minimize the danger, keeping him in her sights is probably her best bet at this point. Except...

"You're catastrophizing."

Alt's voice causes Alex's eyes to narrow.

"Excuse me?"

The blonde just smiles, entirely unconcerned.

"You're overthinking it. Trying to figure out which of us you should point the gun at. When in reality, it's pointless. That gun will never fire and you should know that by now."

Ah. Right. Fuck. Despair floods her as Alex points the gun back at Alt and pulls the trigger. Nothing happens. Or rather, the gun jams because of course an AI masquerading as a Netrunner would have already managed to quickhack her gun with Weapon Glitch without Alex even knowing it.

Cursing, Alex tosses the gun off to the side and stands there feeling... she's not sure what to feel. Hopeless? Done for? Almost... energized, weirdly enough?

Letting out a shuddering breath, she focuses and narrows her eyes at V.

"Alright then. What happens to me now?"

V smiles.

"Whatever you want, Xenakis."

That...

“I told you, didn’t I? Give me the wiggle room and I’ll get you your freedom.”

“That’s not quite what you said. You promised a cushy assignment.”

His smile growing, V shrugs.

“Then I guess I’m overdelivering. Our negotiations with Myers concluded days ago. You could say we bent her over and made her beg for mercy.”

What.

“She’s given up on ever regaining control of her Songbird. So Mi is free now. And at the same time, I made her give you to us as well. You’ll be my team’s permanent FIA Liaison on paper, but under the table... you no longer answer to Myers, the FIA, or anyone else in NUSA.”

No seriously, what?

Alt pipes up, a smirk of her own on her face.

“V isn’t wrong. We bent Myers over a barrel and made her cry uncle, plain and simple. And that means you’re in the clear. Free to finally be your own person.”

Good lord, those were some positively ancient references. Alex can almost believe Alt is who she says she is from those alone. They’re serious though, aren’t they? What kind of dirt did they have on Myers to make all of that happen?

“It’s alright if you don’t believe us immediately. Your new orders should come through the proper, much slower channels sometime in the next day or so and-”

“No.”

Alex cuts V off, shaking her head.

“No... I believe you. Don't really have much choice but to believe you at this point, do I? If I don't believe you, then I'm fucked either way. Either you're lying, in which case Myers and NUSA are about to come down on all of us like a ton of bricks... or you're telling the truth and Myers sold me down the river to cover her own ass because of whatever fucking dirt you have on her.”

She's not fishing for information with that last bit. Really, she isn't. So it's more than a little surprising when they just... tell her.

“Myers has been a very, very naughty bitch. She was pushing past the Blackwall to get ahead of her rivals and enemies, a leg up on the competition if you will.”

“So Mi was her weapon of choice, but every time she forced So Mi to use the Blackwall for her own ends, she was killing the woman inch by inch.”

“Which is why So Mi betrayed Myers to Hansen in the first place, because she knew the only way she was surviving was if she somehow managed to escape Myers' clutches. She got desperate... and all of this is the result of that desperation.”

... Holy fucking shit. Alex's mouth opens and closes wordlessly and she finally stumbles forward to take a seat. V has been sitting this whole time while Alt has been standing with her back to the wall and her arms crossed over her chest. Both of them watch Alex with sympathetic gazes as she... handles the deluge of information they've just thrown at her.

This shit wasn't fucking small potatoes. The President of fucking NUSA was messing around with the Blackwall and breaking a dozen different international treaties. This was the shit that people got disappeared for. The only... the only saving grace is that if they were right, then she was cut off. So Mi was the golden goose and Myers had lost access to her. While at the same time attracting the attention of a fucking AI that was on THIS side of the Blackwall, if Alt Cunningham's claims were to be believed.

... Fuck her. Fuck her running.

“What the fuck happens to me now?”

“You already asked that. And we already answered it.”

Alex scoffs.

“There’s no fucking way you’re just going to let me go though. No way that you let me decide.”

V tilts his head to the side and raises an eyebrow.

“And why not?”

Scowling, Alex sits back in her chair and crosses her arms over her chest.

“Because... because nobody does something like that for someone they don’t know for free. You want something from me. You have to want something from me.”

She hates how an edge of something manic enters her voice at the end there. And she doubly hates how V and Alt exchange a long, silent look between one another. Finally, Alt turns back to her and speaks.

“And what do you think we want from you, Alex?”

That... what could they want from her? Her skills as an infiltrator? Maybe, but then she’d already seen how easily they infiltrated the Black Sapphire. It felt like they only really brought her along for the hell of it, not because they needed her.

So then what?

“I... I don’t know.”

Almost gently, Alt nods.

“Maybe because... we don’t want anything from you. We just want you to make a decision for yourself for once. To finally be able to choose your own path and find your own happiness.”

Alex’s mouth opens and closes for a second, the disbelief heavy within her. They couldn’t be serious. But they were. This was really happening. Fuck, it felt like a fever dream but she knew it wasn’t. She knew this was all real.

“So... what? You’d let me leave just like that? Let me set myself up on some tropical beach somewhere on the President’s eddies?”

V nods.

“If that’s what you want, then yes. Or we could help you get back to your original passion as a braindance actress, if you wanted. Nobody knows Alena, after all. You could easily reinvent herself.”

That... was a nice offer but no.

“I think I’ll pass. I don’t really consider myself Alena anymore and... and the FIA has rather judiciously beaten any desire like that out of me. I’ve spent more than enough time wearing the faces of other people and playing parts handed down from above. I’m done. I’m ready... I’m ready to rest.”

“Then that’s what will happen. You did it, Alex. You earned the cushy eternal vacation.”

Fuck her, she was going to cry at this point. This was... it was all too good to be true. And yet, she didn’t doubt it anymore. There was no reason, no long con to play here. This was real. Fuck, she kind of wanted to...

“Can I repay you both? One for the road, so to speak?”

V furrows his brow and shakes his head while Alt just smirks.

“You don’t have to do anything to repay us, Alex.”

“But what if I want to? I’ve been the third wheel in many a committed relationship, V. Sometimes to my detriment, but not always. I think this time... I wouldn’t mind it one bit.”

V opens his mouth but Alt cuts him off this time.

“Actually, V and I have been having our way with far too many women of late. If this is going to happen, I think it should just be the two of you. That way you can see what it feels like to have a man entirely fixated on your pleasure for once. V really is something else once he gets... focused.”

Alex’s eyes flicker between V and Alt. V looks a little exasperated... but not uninterested. Alt just looks amused. In the end, Alex just shrugs.

“I’m down for whatever. Just wouldn’t feel right not showing my appreciation to you two after all you’ve done for me.”

V grunts.

“I don’t want you to let me fuck you just because you’re showing me your ‘appreciation’.”

His dry tone makes Alex snort in amusement.

“Fine then. Turns out good men doing me a good turn gets me hot and horny. Never knew before because I’ve never had a single good man in my life to do me a good turn. I’m fucking wet for you V, so why don’t you fuck me silly and send me on my way... with or without your crazy pet AI.”

Funnily enough, V scowls over that more than Alt does. In fact, Alt lets out a bark of laughter, her eyes twinkling merrily in amusement as she and Alex both wait for V to make a decision.

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A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!