

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Kerberos was seated on his sofa when Ivano entered the room. Nonchalantly sipping from a bright red tea cup, a wisp of steam drifting towards the ceiling, he seemed to ignore his subordinate. Ivano, for his part, had long since understood his position and remained by the door, silent, awaiting the great one's words.

"So," Kerberos said, finally lowering the delicate cup to a side table, "what have you learned from the girl?"

"It would seem that his motives are rather simple," he replied, while tentatively fingering his sheathed dagger.

"Don't play with me, Ivano," Kerberos commanded with a roar, "I want specifics."

"May I sit?"

"No, you may not. Now, speak!"

He Shifted his position, so that he stood directly before Kerberos, who remained seated on the couch with his legs crossed, and unflinchingly stared back at his superior. "The girl claims that he could not function in the outside world," he said.

"And why would that be?"

"She claims that he is a recovering drug addict."

"And you believe her?"

"She is well aware of the price to be paid for lying. I believe her to be telling the truth as she knows it."

"Well, I am not that easily convinced," Kerberos hissed, as he slammed his fist down upon the side table, causing the red cup to wobble.

Ivano's eyes narrowed as he stood at attention. "What would you have me do?" he asked.

Kerberos leaned back on the couch and gestured towards the ceiling. Seemingly entranced, he stared for several seconds at the cut crystal chandelier. "Look, my friend, look at the brilliant colors that reflect in every direction," he remarked.

"Which of those are at the root of all others?"

Ivano frowned. "I don't understand," he said.

"Precisely, my friend, that is the problem. You see, all those many colors that dance before us take their origin from but three."

Ivano relaxed his stance slightly and rubbed his chin. "I'm afraid that I am still at a loss," he said.

"It is actually quite simple. You see, you cannot begin to predict where one might go unless you know where they have been."

"Yes, your wisdom is far reaching."

"And your response to this, err, wisdom?"

"I will learn what I can of his past."

Kerberos smiled, reached for the tea pot and gently shook it. Finding it empty, he grimaced. "Unfortunately, my friend," he said, "like this kettle, the time for such intervention has long since gone."

"What shall we do?"

"We will allow him to gradually integrate back into the group while observing his every move. He will not leave with the others, lest we lose sight of him."

"And the Mass?"

"Hmm," Kerberos said, while tugging at his beard, "allow him to attend."

"But ..."

"You know better than to interrupt me," Kerberos said angrily.

"My apologies," Ivano replied, with a shallow bow.

"Now, as I was about to say, I wish to observe his reactions at the Mass but he is not to be made aware of our surveillance. Let him think that he is one of us."

"But the treatment he received during his last stay, surely it has erased any memories of the master. Are you not fearful of his response to the ceremony?"

"You, Ivano, will be his guide, his mentor. With you by his side I fear not for his outward reaction but, who can guess what torment his mind may sustain."

"I will do as you wish but I assume that he is to observe, not participate?"

"We shall see, we shall see," Kerberos muttered, as he signaled for Ivano's departure with the wave of a hand while reaching for a cigarette with the other. "Wait," he shouted, "the girl, she is to take the oath?"

"Yes," Ivano responded from the doorway.

Kerberos lit his cigarette and launched a puff of smoke off to one side. "Make certain," he coughed and said, "that she continues to gain his confidence, it may prove useful."