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There's a strange feeling to being in a dark room alone. Normally, it's how you sleep. In comfort knowing that you are safe and wrapped up with no one to disturb you but your own alarms or the stirring of a trusted partner. With no lights of day to disturb you, you're allowed to rest after a long day.

CRACK!

Yet, that darkness isn't the safety of that room. It doesn't take much for that safety to be removed and for the shadows to become the silhouette of strangers. Hostiles.

Cole hadn't been able to identify where the threats were coming from for days now. Every shift in the shadows was a threat. There was a door but it was behind him somewhere. Maybe it was a ladder down from the ceiling. He hadn't been conscious when they dragged him in here. He hadn't been able to see anything for days.

His hands were chained to a pole, trapped above his head. When he'd first woken up he'd stood, unable to move more than a few feet away but now his knees were grazed from impact again and again.

Eventually you stop trying to stand.

CRACK!

His jaw hurt with the effort to bite back screams. Scabs that had barely formed were bitten away, blood tainting every taste bud in his mouth.

"All you have to do, Farrow, is give us the codes to get into the buildings."

His torturer was panting. The other male was trying to hide it but there was a roughness that wasn't usually there. Whips were heavier than they looked and at the point the victim of it had long lost count there was no way the assailant had kept it. Every crack of the whip had dragged him back but Cole's mind kept drifting further.

Cole didn't respond. He hadn't said a word since he woke up in this room. That's what they wanted. He was the youngest Farrow, the smallest. The weakest but also smartest. The quietest but the most perceptive.

You'll talk because you know it's the only way you'll survive this.

Except his survival was little in comparison to the survival of his family. They'd realised that by now, just as Cole had realised that they couldn't kill him. They could

whip him until his back was nothing but bloodied flesh but the fact he was alive but still here was the only reason his father hadn't killed them all yet.

"Come on. You can't even stand, one code and it's all over. We'll take care of you, keep you safe. There's contacts we can put you with. Whole new life. Just for some karking numbers."

They were desperate.

Cole remained stoic, staring at the ground below him. Originally the steel had been clean but there were layers of dried blood there now. Fresh blood dripped down to form a new layer. Eventually Cole screamed, as any man would, when the torturer continued the whipping. Rending already tormented flesh apart from itself, blood dribbling down his sides, his stomach, his legs.

Then they were gone and he was left to lean against the pole, arms straining against his weight. Dragging down. Every twitch in his arms set his shoulders, the rest of his back, aflame with agony.

The next time they came the whip came from the side, targeting his arms. There was never any way of telling. The threat could come from anywhere. They walked quietly, he had yet to notice the door opening. It felt pathetic that he hadn't even been able to spot where they were coming in from.

Not that there was anything he could kriffing do about it anyway.

The crack of the whip echoed. Eventually the whipping stopped and he relaxed, waiting for the footsteps to fade away-

Something hard smacked into his temple.

When Cole woke up he was on the ground flat, wrists unchained. The darkness had a break in it, a doorway set into the corner of the room allowing a line of blue light across it. Behind but also to the side. The Human pushed himself up to his knees, watching the door, the room. He was alone this time. In the room at least. The door was open. They'd left it open.

It had to be a trap.

Cole shuffled toward it despite that. He'd forced himself to his feet, ignoring the way the world tilted sideways when he did. He stumbled into the wall. Blood streaks marked the scramble to remain upright. A quick glance out of the door showed no obvious threats.

It was wrong. *Wrong wrong wrong wrong-*

He could leave. The door was open but they'd set this up. Was this a way to say he'd tried to escape, to kill him with good cause? Or would they use him being freely allowed to leave as some other leverage. There had to be some angle. Trying to convince him they did have his interests in mind? That'd be a weird angle.

Cole swung the door open further, staring down the hallway it opened up into. There was a staircase at the end. There were no guards. What the kriff-

He could just walk out.

He took one step, two. Still nothing. There were cameras. They had to be online.

Cole froze in place, dizzy as it was but unsure if he should go further. How far would he get before he was caught out? This was hostile territory.

He walked three steps back into the room. Into certainty. There was danger here but it was a known danger. This wasn't an escape if the captor allowed it. That made it unpredictable. Uncertain. Part of his mind screamed to just run to just go, leave. Now. It couldn't break past the paranoia of what laid beyond the door.

It was hours later when the other returned. He was a red-haired man, one who looked surprised to see Cole still there.

"So you'll talk then? I expected you'd be long gone by now."

Cole narrowed his eyes.

The torturer had the whip in hand, the cleaned tip trailing lightly across the ground.

"So you won't talk, you won't leave. You won't do anything it seems, other than stare angrily at whatever you're pointed at." A short laugh, "Kriff, I really thought you'd just karking run."

Cole dove forward, weak but determined. It wasn't enough. The scuffle was short, he got in a punch but he was slammed into the floor only a few moments later, a scream ripping free at the impact. His wrists were cuffed again, he was too stunned from the pain to resist. His back was on fire, he couldn't breathe, he could have run dammit if only he'd kriffing just gone with it, maybe he could have- Maybe it would have been-

"You should have run."