

“Ahem, credit for a thought?” A deep rumble broke through the din of thoughts and music, laughter and chatter of those present.

“Hmm?” He looked up, breaking his crossed arms and pulling his gloved cyberhand away from his face. Hazel eyes met vibrant, curious blue and a flick of attentive ears that belonged unmistakably to the eight foot tall Arconan Lieutenant, Jax Erinós. Kobign exhaled and smiled at the familiar sight, and greedily taking a second to hold that gaze before reaching to take the drink offered to him. The half-Selenian soldier knew before he even took a sip that it was lacking any drop of alcohol. A part of him wished it did.

“Was just sitting here feeling a bit overdressed,” Kobign gestured to the white and gold Arconan formal officer dress he donned. It was certainly a stark comparison to the sweaters and festive onesies and capes the rest of the partygoers wore. “I misunderstood the assignment—”

He trailed off, brow raising as he caught the contemplative look the taller hybrid gave him. He sighed.

“*Kobign*,” Jax started, rolling his name over his tongue and through more openly presented teeth — just with him. “You can relax here. We are among friends. Hmm...but I would not be opposed to retreating and relocating to celebrate on our own.”

That got a chuckle out of him. Kobign elbowed the purring giant in the side, sidestepping his own slightly spilled drink. With a pleased hum on his lips, he stared back across the party. His gaze shifted slowly through the crowd as he debated the offer — pausing suddenly on a figure chatting in the distance.

Three scars marred the hand gripping their glass and when he looked up their gazes met.

*‘Parties are a great place to reestablish connections with old friends, looking forward to that myself this holiday...’*

Will’s voice echoed in Kobign’s head from their conversation several days ago, sitting on a bench in one of Estle’s City’s parks. Both knowing what sort of ‘connections’ and ‘friends’ the Collective handler was referring to. And here he was about to decide whether he should do just that, contact a possible sleeper agent amidst the Odanites.

“Friend of yours?” that rumble again. *Kark*.

Kobign didn’t need to look up to guess that Jax didn’t believe this was an actual friend. The attentive man had equally been looking at shadows nearly as much as he since the blizzard last year. Jax, who was one of the reasons he was trying to finesse between keeping suspicions off himself from the splintered and abandoned collective operation he is — was — a part of and not karking over Arcona in the process. The day they could safely clean them out will either be the day he dies or breath easily...for a min.

“Not...yet acquainted,” he replied finally, finishing his drink. He watched the stranger disengage from a conversation and head to one of the exits, “but I think I should.”

“...Do you need me to come?”

Kobign paused before setting his glass aside, shaking his head. “No. think I should do this on my own. See you back at the room.”