



Whitney Rines

Revived

*The floor was slick beneath her grasp, thwarting her already weak attempts to get up. The room was dark but light from the nightlife of her city poured in just enough to make out the shapes of a counter, a doorway into darkness, and a person, large and encroaching.*

*What the hell is this? Why can't I get up, what happened?*

I wondered, trying again and again to get up, unable to make my body comply. I could feel my arms and legs, so why couldn't I move. Looking around in the dark, I saw the vague outlines of the bathtub faucet and the near completely shattered shower door. Suddenly the pain made sense, I always knew that shower door was going to bite me in the ass one day...I just didn't think it would be literally. Tasting iron in my mouth, I swallowed and shivered at the taste of something foul going down with it. Something round and slimy, hitched a ride

down and added to the shit day I was already having. Looking back at the person when I heard footsteps approaching, I felt a new sensation of pain, but it went numb before I really had the chance to know what happened. Feeling blood run warm down my chest and take the warmth of my body with it, I understood.

This person was here to...well succeeded in murdering me. You'd think my life would flash before my eyes and I'd think of all the things I regretted not doing...or doing in my case but, none of that happened. All I could focus on for some reason, was how I didn't want to die in such a crappy bathroom. No class in that.

I can't say I didn't see it coming, though. I'd killed quite a few people, not as a fetish or anything, but as my main work. It was only logical that someday I'd get mine, and I have no shame in my life...just this bathroom. Shitty tiles, cracked mirror, ugly as hell wallpaper, and the damn shower door which probably shattered and sliced me up enough to keep me from moving.

So how can I talk about this like it's nothing?

Well some weird shit happened right after they sliced my throat open. They stood there and watched me bleed out, I know because I saw them until the final moments where my heart stopped...and then I could still see them. They looked at their watch like they were waiting on something.

Feeling my body unexpectedly regain its strength, I found the strength to climb out of the bathtub despite the glass skewering me and the obvious lack of necessary blood. I told you it was weird.

“Experiment complete.” They spoke. Looking me over and took something out that glowed.

“What happened? Who are you? What did you do to me?” I asked, much calmer than I felt for some reason. “You were murdered, by me. I made you our first experiment, seems successful. I think further testing is necessary to prove the results. Hold still.”

“First? First what?”

I didn't exactly get my answer because, my murderer then lunged at me with their knife and tried to stab me. This was not how it was about to end...I won't let that happen.

Heartbeat

*The bathroom was nearly destroyed in the fight for her life against her murderer. She fought viciously to keep the person from succeeding in making the second attempt. Refusing to be killed by the same person twice, she found herself pinned against the wall and seemingly out of options. A pain in her back made her remember the shower door shattering. That shard must have impacted her spine, that explained a lot about why she couldn't move before now...and raised so many more questions. Setting them aside, she dragged the shard out and attacked back.*

Slicing my attacker across the face, I managed to duck and roll away from them, as they swung blindly and covered their face in pain. A smile of victory spread across my face, and I went for the kill. While they blindly stumbled around the room, I stuck that glass shard where it counted and watched them fall to the ground. Sighing in relief, I looked over my would-be twice murderer and flipped on the bathroom lights to get a better look. Everything was destroyed and most of it was covered in blood...probably mine. The shower door was shattered and the bathtub had blood streaming down the drain, the tiles were smashed in sections along the walls and that cracked bathroom mirror was pretty much dust from the fight with the person. Looking down, I expected to see them, but they were gone. "How's that possible? I know I made contact." Looking around for a moment longer, I turned off the light and started towards the shitty room where I keep my clothes. I really needed a cigarette after that situation. Entering my room, I saw a silhouette of a person and flipped the

light on to find they looked no different. They were a dark and featureless person who stared at me from the window. "You'll make a decent specimen for our research, for now." They said, facing me still.

Before I could react, my chest exploded...or at least it felt like it. A feeling worse than being shot knocked the wind out of me and dropped me to my knees in this shadow person's presence. There was an explosive thud in my chest followed by another and another, until it was all I could hear. It felt like I was dying from the pain it produced. "Don't worry, you're not dying...you're reviving." They said, watching me writhe in agony, I didn't believe them until it subsided within moments. Placing my hand to my chest, I was shocked to feel my heart start beating again, the remaining shards fell from my body like they were pushed out and the gash around my neck scarred over. "What the hell is this?" I demanded, nearly shouting at them. "That's an unfortunate side effect, but I think we can say this part of the experiment was successful. I'll be watching for your progression, but in the mean-time try not to die." The person said, and walked out past me. Looking out into the hallway, I found out they vanished. Feeling my throat, I had a scar across it where it had been slashed, but after inspecting the rest of my body I couldn't find signs of any struggle or injury.

"Nope. Not happening, this is not happening." I muttered to myself, quickly put on new clothes, neverminded my hair, and armed myself just in case the shadow person decided to try for round two. Chain smoking the whole way, I marched into the nearest clinic.

"Nothing's wrong with you, Ms. Porter. You're perfectly healthy, the only concern is the scar across your neck." The nurse told me, but I didn't believe her...no way would I believe that I

was fine. I was just murdered, and came back. “What about blood tests and all that?” I asked, sitting on the examination table and rubbing my neck again.

“Is there something wrong ma’am. You seemed quite concerned about something.” The nurse asked again, he looked concerned, especially about the gash on my throat. “No, everything’s fine I guess. I’m going.”

*So much for that help.*

So in one night, I’ve been moved to a new city for a new target, murdered by some *thing* and revived by its little science project. I got nothing as far as clues to who or what it was that attacked me, except that the wound on my neck is the only thing that scarred instead of healing up.

How? Why?

“Porter!” A familiar voice called from across the street.

I am *really* not in the mood for conversations right now, better cover up the scar. Don’t want this to take too long.

“Porter, it’s been a while. I missed you.” An attractive, well dressed, and short woman said, approaching and standing before me. She’s shorter than me, blonder than me, and I guess you could say prettier since she really cares about that kind of thing. I’m almost six feet tall, athletic because of my job, and dark-haired. “Hi Blondie.” That’s not her name, but then using work names is safer than real ones in public...besides it suits her.

Intelligence

“So what are you doing in town?” She asked, her eyes sparkling with interest. “Work. So, how’ve you been? What’s new? All that stuff.” I asked, I’m not really interested in what’s been going on with her, since seeing she’s still alive tells me more than enough. “Great, I’m doing pretty good...what’s it been, two years?” She asked, nosy as ever about my business. “Well when your work takes you all over.” I answered, thinking about how I probably should regret that little relationship with her, but don’t. It was fun, and she was clearly still smitten over it. I know it’s not a good idea to sleep with co-workers, or other assassins, but Blondie’s intelligence and that’s completely different.

She’s nosy but, she knows everything about everything by being that way. I’m sure she’s killed for some information at some point but, you’d never know by how innocent she looks. Sighing, I gave in and gave Blondie the conversation she wanted. “It’s good to see you’re still alive, Porter. Why not come to my place and tell me what’s going on.”

“What do you mean?” I asked her, confused by what she was getting at. “Well, there’s something on your mind, blood in your let-down hair, you smell like smoke and copper, and that scar on your throat looks a little too fresh to be a ‘old wound’ so, come on. Besides, I can give you those tests you wanted at the clinic.”

*Shit.*

“So, do you want to know or not?” She asked.

*Temptress.*

“Fine, but I make my own drink this time.” I conceded, following her back to her apartment and wondering what else she knew.

“By the way, I went by where you were staying and picked up your stuff.” Blondie said, nonchalantly as she pulled out her keys.

“You know, some people would call your skills stalking.” I returned, trying to hide my surprise that she already knew where I was staying when I hadn’t even been there three full hours.

“Sweetie, I’m in Intelligence. I’m a career-level stalker.” Blondie answered, before opening the door to her apartment and clapping twice turning the lights on.

I walked in and took off my boots, and sighed seeing my suitcase sitting in the corner of the living room. *She really was a stalker.*

“How have you not been caught yet? Intelligence is more dangerous than what I do for a living.” I asked, now curious about how she’d actually been doing. She managed to impress me yet again with her stalking skills. “An engineering degree, ten years in military dark work, and seven in ‘less than legal’ things...I’ll let you figure out the order that happened in. I wanted something safe to retire from. Speaking of which, when are you going to retire to a more docile position?” Blondie asked, returning from her kitchen, which was more wet bar than kitchen with a glass of water...probably.

“I like what I do, it suits me better. Though I wouldn’t exactly call your job safe.” I answered, waiting for the moment that I knew was coming.

“Well, anyways. Why don’t you tell me about your attacker?” Blondie asked, leaning against the wall.

“I don’t really know, I don’t remember much about it. They didn’t have any features...like a black shadow but in the form of a person. I stabbed them with a shard of glass and they went down, but when I went to change clothes, they were there. They kept saying stuff about some sort of experiment.” I answered, Blondie may not have been there when it happened, but she could easily deduce that I was fighting with someone by how the bathroom looked.

“Interesting. So tell me, what they did. You’re still standing after losing over half the blood necessary for someone of your size, build, and weight-what are you 180? How are you still functioning or even alive? That kind of beating would take weeks to recover from, and I doubt that you’ve thought of a good enough cover story for that neck ornament.” Blondie inquired. Moving to the coffee table, where her laptop sat, she put something clumpy on the back and opened her laptop after the thing began to glow.

“They sure do give you some interesting toys in Intelligence.” I admitted, watching her work magic on her computer.

“Yep, you should come over and play some time. By the way, how are you paying me for this special service? Don’t say money, as you can see I have enough of that.” Blondie teased, looking over her laptop at me with suggestive eyes.

I sighed, “Blondie, that’s probably not a good idea right now. I don’t even know what they did to me and what if it’s something communicable? You saw the mess that I walked away from.” Sighing Blondie agreed with a condition. “You’re cuter with your hair down so...you can owe me. And I can cash that IOU whenever I want, for whatever I want.” I nodded and

sighed, at least this nightmare came with a plus...I probably wasn't going to be Blondie's toy anytime soon.

"Alright, take of your clothes and say cheese for the camera." Blondie instructed crossing her legs and sitting back in her chair.

*Take off my clothes? Why? What does that have to do with anything? Blondie you horny bitch.*

"Don't look at me like that, Porter. I'm a stalker, not a pervert." Blondie defended, though she wasn't fooling anyone.

*Apparently, no one told her that stalking and perversion usually go hand in hand.*

"Whatever you say Blondie, but I'll only take off my top." I responded, obliging as much as I could stand to. Sighing deeply I turned and faced her as she spun the laptop to face me. A bright flash caught me off-guard and when I regained my vision, I saw Blondie going to work on her laptop, tossing a stick-pen and tab for blood testing. "Hurry up with that." She ordered, still facing her computer and researching.

Experimental

*With Porter asleep on the couch, Blondie continues to work on the information that her samples have given her. Testing what she's collected from the scene of Porter's attack, she is shocked still at what she learns from her collection of information. Twelve small balls looking to be made of some sort of luminescent metal, are lodged in both Porter's organs, forming a cage around them.*

"Porter! Porter, wake up!" I woke up to Blondie shaking me awake and nearly shouting. "Blondie, shut up...you're loud." I snapped, rubbing my head. For some reason, I had the worst headache and I hadn't even had anything to drink. "It's morning?" I said, surprised that I'd actually slept through the night. Stretching, I walked over to see what Blondie had to show me. I admit, I was more than a little freaked out. "Here's a picture of you a few weeks ago...never mind how I got it. Your organs are all normal and functioning here. Now here's the image from last night, what do you see now that wasn't there before?" Blondie asked, showing me the scans of my body.

Drawing in a deep breath, I reluctantly asked about the blood test. "I didn't see anything wrong with it, your blood sugar was low, but otherwise it seemed normal."

"What do you mean, seems to be?" I asked, looking at her suspiciously. "Well those things seem to be putting something in your blood. I noticed that it glows in the dark a little. I did a little test of that finding while you were asleep. It didn't show anything that would affect your health or anything, so I can only guess that maybe it's fuel for whatever those things are." Blondie explained, holding up the blood strip for me to see.

“So what else happened last night, Porter? People don’t go to the clinic and demand such specific tests for things like the flu.” Blondie demanded, looking at me with a stern gaze. It was much different than the innocent stare she used to her advantage.

“I didn’t just get attacked last night, they murdered me. Except, there was no dying part. I was conscious for everything. I was able to move able within minutes of my heart stopping, and I had this terrible pain, like my chest exploded when it began beating again. They said something about it being an unfortunate side effect to their experiment and suggested I try not to die.” I explained, watching Blondie sit and think about what she was being told.

“Okay, so some experimental organ ornaments and you don’t die when killed. Sounds interesting, I’d sure like to know what the experiment is about.” Blondie said, assuring me that she didn’t need to test what she could see for herself in her data.

“They said they’d be keeping an eye on me. If we took one of these things out, could you find out what it was?” I asked, hoping there was something that could be done. Blondie simply shook her head, “They’re in deep on every organ, and have gridded themselves through the inside and reformed them. Your organs are part of those things now, there’s not much more that I can do for now besides monitor you, and keep my mouth shut about it.” Blondie explained, before closing her programs, and closing her laptop before taking off the clamp thing.

“Blondie, what is that thing you put on your computer. It’s been nagging me.” I asked, trying to take my mind off the facts that Blondie found...and focus on something else. “My partner. It’s my own design...keeps my files private, even from work and allows me to do the type of work you just saw. I call it my Alien brain, since it modifies my computer to be able to do

what I need.” Blondie explained, showing off her genius. “You made that thing? Alien brain? Is it alive or something?” I asked, now really interested in it. “A little bit. It’s partly organic...so I can talk to it and it tells my computer what to do.”

“Talk to it? I haven’t heard you say two words to that thing.”

Grinning, Blondie lifted up the curls that fell down her neck and revealed a tattoo that glimmered like computer lights every so often.

*This is getting a little too weird for me. Organic immortalizing marbles, my ex made herself a cyborg, and she’s created alien technology.*

“Blondie, I need some normalcy right now. Can you just give me the information on what I’m supposed to do here so I can get it done and go?” I asked, and grew uncomfortable at the look she gave me.

“What is it?” I asked, looking her over to make sure she wasn’t hurt.

“I don’t have any work for you...I thought you were here visiting Porter. Really.” She answered, looking at me in confusion.

“Well we both work for the same place, how can this happen? I was told to come here, set up at the apartment they prepped, and come to you for details on what my job was.” I explained, going through the steps to my arrival and where we were.

“I’m not saying you’re wrong Porter. I’m saying I don’t have work for you, I wasn’t even told you’d be here. It’s why I was so surprised to see you.” Blondie answered, as I pulled out my phone and read the message as it appeared before.

*Welcome to the experiment*

I dropped my phone in shock reading what appeared directly beneath the coordinates and directions for my job.

Picking up the phone, Blondie looked at the message and her eyes went wide. “Porter, what does this mean? It looks like sigils or something.” She asked, looking over the same words and trying to figure out what she was seeing. Looking at the phone, I saw the words clear as day. How could she not read them? How could I read them?

“Don’t worry about it Blondie, I think I just figured out what’s going on.” I answered, looking at my phone in her grasp.

No Escape

Rinsing off in Blondie's shower, I cleaned the remainder of the blood from last night's attack off and thought about what was going on. Getting dressed in simple clothes: a long sleeve shirt and black jeans, and pulling my hair back to its usual ponytail, I was finished quickly. Blondie sat in her living room wearing one of her less attention grabbing outfits and reading information she collected. The ones that I always thought suited her best. A flouncy skirt and long sleeve shirt...a different look than the "call-girl" look she had the night before. Probably from an information gathering job. She preferred to stand out as the sexiest woman in the room, it brought enough attention to her that it deflected it. She never wrote anything down and was masterful at getting information from people who didn't even know they were getting it.

Looking at that 'Alien brain', I had a better idea of how she did it now. "I'm going up to the roof." I informed, grabbing my boots and putting them on.

"Why?" Blondie asked, looking away from her Alien brained computer.

"I want to see what's going on. It feels like I've been trapped here and that concerns me. If I'm trapped then whoever else living in this city probably is too...and if that's the case, why?" I answered, putting on my jacket and heading towards the escape. Standing on the roof, I looked out onto a city that showed a night sky above, even though there was sunlight coming into the apartment. The night sky expanded forever in every direction, so I decided to take a little rooftop promenade to see just how far that sky went.

“You’ve been gone for hours. Where were you?” Blondie asked, seeing me return and pull my gun out to check it for signs of tampering. “I went on a walk.” I answered, before adding, “Did you know it’s still night?”

Looking out the window, Blondie saw sunlight coming in and looked back at me in disbelief. “Go up to the roof and check it out if you don’t believe me.” I challenged, walking behind her after she slipped on her shoes and led the way. Looking at the night sky in confusion, Blondie fell to a sit on the roof, struggling to process what was going on. “There’s no way out, I checked. This sky goes on for at least five miles in all directions. I think we’re in trouble if we can’t figure a way out of this, Blondie.”