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Amidst the swarm of people trying to escape, Lilli, Joel, and Maura fought their way down the steps. Following the sound of frightened whimpers and gunfire, they made their way to the main platform to find four soldiers lording guns over a group of 20 passengers cowering on the ground.

In front of the hostages stood Tyrol, Pytor, and Aaron. Pytor and Aaron wore somber expressions as they stared back at Maura, Lilli and Joel, while Tyrol stood apart with a devious grin.

"We're happy you could join us," Tyrol said triumphantly. "It's been a while since our last reunion."

Fighting back the flash of regret he felt for not letting Vincent kill Tyrol in Berlin, Joel spoke first, "What do you want?"

Seeming even more pleased by Joel's brevity, Tyrol's grin spread impossibly wider. "We've come to do a little exchange. You for them. If you agree, no one needs to die here, but if you resist, well, let's just say it won't end well for these people here, or you, I'm afraid."

Lilli tried to mask her concern as her eyes darted around the room in hopes of seeing Michael and Nina.

"Looking for someone?" Tyrol asked Lilli knowingly.

Lilli narrowed her eyes in disgust, but did not answer.

"As I'm sure you can imagine, the events of the last couple of weeks caused quite a stir in our little group. We've had to keep a close eye to make sure no one was consorting with our enemies. Unfortunately, we discovered we had a few traitors among us. Nina and Michael aren't quite as adept as you would have liked at blocking their thoughts during Quorum. We know they've tried to contact you."

"We already know what you've done," Joel answered back. "And you should also know that we're not going to let you just walk away. One of you murdered a man and his child today. You will pay for that."

"A child," Tyrol muttered curiously. —"Hmm. I didn't see that, but then again, I'm guessing by the look on your face that you didn't either." Tyrol paused, hoping to get a rise out of any of the Seers in front of him. When they remained silent, he shrugged and continued. "Makes you wonder who could have blocked both our visions of the outcome of this meeting. I've got to be honest with you; I didn't think that we would be able to get you here, but Crane said that he would handle it, so we came. And here you are."

Standing in front of him, Maura, Lilli, and Joel had some of the same questions that Tyrol expressed. But instead of engaging in a back and forth with him, they used the time that he spent gloating to figure out a way to free the hostages.

By the time Tyrol finished, they'd worked out the first part of a tentative plan.

"What you have planned," Maura began, "isn't going to work out the way you think. All the people behind you fear you more than they do us. They, for the most part, are decent people. They want to stay alive more than they want to kill us. You are the worst person here."

Tyrol stared at Maura for a long moment, wondering if they shared the same talent.

"How do you know that?" he asked finally.

"Because I see who you are, who all of these people are. I don't need to Quorum with you to know you think only of yourself," Maura answered.

Tyrol lost his smile as he listened to Maura's truthful assessment of him before he finally spoke. "I've also never met another person who can see things the way I do. It's... curious."

Maura hesitated for a moment. Though she'd never met another Seer with her ability either, she didn't particularly want to trade stories with the man in front of her. But she needed to keep him talking, in order to ~~to~~-give Joel and Lilli time to finish connecting with the other people in the room. So far, all the hostages and hired security were on board and had agreed to stay down no matter what. The only people who remained undecided were Pytor and Aaron, and neither of them wanted a fight if they could help it. Reluctantly, Maura kept talking.

"I see color, mostly, or the absence of color sometimes. But unlike you, I seek out the good in people. You, on the other hand, are drawn to evil things."

"That's because I like to win," Tyrol sneered. "And the bad guys always seem to have the upper hand, don't you find?" Tyrol waved his hand around the room to prove his point.

"No," Maura answered, "Not today."

"That's because you think I'm the worst thing in the room."

His choice of words sent a shiver up her spine. *He knows what tried to kill Katia*, she told Lilli and Joel. *He knows, and it excites him. He doesn't fear it.*

"I said you were the worst *person* in the room, not the worst thing. I sense its presence, too, though I can't see it. But you're wrong if you think you can benefit from whatever it is. It doesn't need you, and when it's finished with whatever you think you're doing for it, it will destroy you. That is its only power."

"We'll see," Tyrol said nonchalantly, but Maura could see that his confidence had been shaken by her words. "In the meantime, let's see how good you are. Bring up one of the hostages."

When no one moved, Tyrol looked to the back of the room.

"Did you hear what I said?" He roared. "Now!" When his demands went unanswered, Tyrol turned around, intent on retrieving one of the hostages himself before Aaron's voice broke his stride.

"This is wrong, Tyrol," Aaron said in a soft, but determined tone.

“These people haven’t done anything wrong. There has to be another way.”

Tyrol opened his mouth to argue, but then shut it quickly as he finally registered the changing mood of the room. Among the security team that had entered the tunnel under his authority, not a single man was willing to look him in the eye. The evidence of his command had somehow evaporated in the short time he wasted talking with Maura. In a quiet rage, Tyrol extended his fingers so that no one behind him could perceive the movement, and with a slight twitch, he snapped the necks of each guard who betrayed him. The sound of bones cracking echoed off the walls as the soldiers’ bodies collapsed in unison. The underground platform erupted with loud gasps and screams of terror.

Pytor took a step towards Tyrol in a frightened attempt to stop him from hurting anyone else, but Tyrol proved too quick. Tyrol extended his hand towards Pytor with the intention of grinding the bone of Pytor’s sternum into his heart, but he couldn’t complete the task as Joel barreled towards him, knocking him to the floor.

The next few seconds happened in a blur as Pytor clutched his chest and fell to the ground. Simultaneously, Lilli and Maura went into action, yanking the hostages to their feet and guiding them towards the staircase that exited the tunnel. But it didn’t take long for the physical struggle between Joel and Tyrol to escalate into the full use of their powers. As Tyrol lay trapped underneath Joel’s body, watching the hostages he had planned to use as leverage get away, his anger bubbled out into a force that propelled Joel’s body off of him and into the ceiling before he came crashing down to the floor. Watching the first of the ceramic tiles break off and pepper a stunned Joel with rubble gave Tyrol a renewed sense of purpose as he got to his feet and began shaping the force of his energy towards the first of two pillars that held up the archway to the stairway exit of the platform. The sound of metal and concrete folding in on itself was deafening as the first pillar exploded, sending shards of ceramic, concrete and steel throughout the room. Moments later, the archway began to crumble. But before the heavy debris could make its full descent to crush the hostages below, Lilli used her energy to create a barrier between the fallen debris and those around her as Maura continued to usher the hostages through. Recovering from his fall, Joel used his energy to throw Tyrol across the room before tackling him again in an attempt to stop him from

destroying the second pillar.

But the damage to the structure was done. Maura was only able to get the first group of hostages safely through before the second pillar began to give way. If she continued through, Lilli could easily keep the tunnel open for the others, but when it fell it would cut her off from Joel, leaving him alone to deal with Tyrol and whatever presence Maura sensed.:

"Go! Go!" Lilli shouted to the hostages behind her. When they scurried past, Lilli turned to Maura. "Take them the rest of the way. We'll find another way out!" Maura only had time to look back at Lilli for a moment as she pushed the hostages forward and out of the stairway that was quickly disintegrating around them, but the risk of what they were both prepared to do hung in the air between them.

Be careful, Maura answered back before the last person ran by and the remaining ceiling began to crumble, erasing Lilli from her view.

The force with which the concrete and steel pummeled the steps behind her shook the ground as Lilli raced back down the stairs to escape its path. Suddenly, she felt a gust of fresh air behind her as dirt began to mix with the dust. She realized that the collapse of the ceiling had created a sinkhole in the street above, sending chunks of debris from the street and sidewalk into the stairwell. Leaping from the last step of the staircase onto the platform, Lilli crashed down and rolled inches away from where the avalanche finally stopped.

Disoriented and covered in dust, Lilli sought Joel out only to find him gritting his teeth under the weight of Tyrol on top of him. In her peripheral vision, she could see Aaron holding Pytor's limp body and begging Tyrol to stop, but she didn't understand what was taking place until she noticed the bones in Joel's face seemed to pulse in and out as if being broken and rebuilt in a painful repetitive pattern. It was then that she saw Tyrol's fists clenching in and out. She remembered the similar gesture from Alessandra's thoughts in Berlin.

He's trying to crush him, Lilli realized.

Lilli knew that with their bodies so close together, there was no way for Joel to shield himself from Tyrol's attack. With a blinding rage, she was on her feet in an instant, barely noticing the sudden burn in her right calf. Her only thought was to get Tyrol off of the man she loved. But as she lifted her foot to run towards Joel, something caught her by the tail of her jacket and yanked her face-first back onto the floor.

Furious at whatever had delayed her progress, Lilli was about to roll over and face her attacker, but was stopped by the wide-eyed terror in Joel's expression as he looked at some point behind her and then back to meet her eyes. The look of pure fear on his face was something she had never witnessed in her life.

Before she could begin to try to understand what was causing him to be so terrified, she was jolted to her feet, then grabbed around the waist by an arm that held her in an iron grip. It was only then that she saw through Joel's mind the image of herself being held captive by a monster. The beast stood 9 feet tall with filthy, ruined skin that stretched across its immense body like worn, cracked leather, covered with fresh and healed over scars. The protruding forehead, cheeks, and jaw of his face were exaggerated and grotesque along with a twisted black mouth that when opened to speak revealed a blackened collection of twisted teeth.

"You are the one I came for," he rasped as he held Lilli high above the floor with one enormous arm. His other arm quivered oddly at his side as it dangled without a hand.

"Yes!" Tyrol hissed excitedly above Joel as he held him down. "Now you see what I'm talking about. Just give in. It's useless. God only knows what he's going to do once he gets his hands on her."

It was exactly what Joel needed to hear to override the unfathomable pain of feeling his bones being crushed and rebuilt while he was completely conscious. He felt his purpose, the total of all the energy he had summoned. In that moment, any pain he had ever endured meant nothing compared to the need to get on his feet and fight.

Joel could no longer feel the pain as he focused his attention on Tyrol's pulsing fists. In his determination to save Lilli, the effort it took to break Tyrol's wrists ~~felt~~ was as easy as blinking an eye. Tyrol's screams of pain seemed distant as Joel felt his energy surge and ripple throughout his body, repairing what was broken and restoring him to his full strength.

The beast watched in growing concern as Joel rose up from the ground.

Undecided about exactly what to do with Tyrol, Joel's energy left him hovering in mid-air, until he heard Tyrol ask the beast for help.

"Please," Tyrol begged, as the beast backed away from Joel. "I

helped you find her.” It was all Tyrol had time to say before Joel made his decision and Tyrol’s body burst spontaneously into flames. —In that instant, the beast unfolded an enormous pair of torn, weathered wings and took to the air as Joel ran towards them. But, hopelessness filled his eyes as he realized he couldn’t run fast enough and Lilli’s outstretched hand slipped through his fingers.

Unable to keep her body from being dragged into the air by the thing that held her, Lilli projected her mind toward Joel as he clawed up the rubble after her. But her image only haunted him as he screamed her name until it faded with the light of the street as she fell into unconsciousness.