

A loud thumping on my door wakes me up, "Wakey, wakey Vincent!" Hamino's muffled voice yells from the other side, and I groan, trying to shake off the sleep.

I get up, walk to the door, and open it.

"It's only seven." I yawn and lean against the doorframe; Hamino just scoffs, "We have enough time until the breakfast ends. Besides, it's better if we head out now so we can prepare and meet the chief earlier."

"But we could have just gone when we were supposed to go, Hamino..." I mumble, trying to rub the sleep out of my eyes.

"That's not the way the F.I.A. rolls, Vincent; we need to be punctual and organized at all times... And a little bit earlier than normal." He says, crossing his arms.

"Whatever, I'll be ready in a minute." I shut the door, walk back inside, and quickly get dressed in my suit and fix my hair, not bothering to shave; not like it would matter here.

I grab my keys, check that I still have the pendant, and walk outside.

"See, that wasn't so bad now, was it?" Hamino says as we walk toward the elevator.

"We grabbing a bite to eat first?" I ask, and Hamino nods.

The elevator arrives, and we step inside, pushing the ground floor button.

"You didn't hit the bar last night, right?" He asks, looking at me, and I shake my head "Did you?"

"Are you really trying to drill me when I'm trying to drill you?" Hamino chuckles, and the doors open, and we walk through the hallway toward the restaurant.

I ignore his comment and look around, spotting Kelpy as she waves to us, obviously forcing a smile on her face.

"Morning Americans, Did you guys sleep well?" Kelpy asks as she gives us a small menu card. Hamino looks through it, "Two black coffees and one toast for each." He looks up and smiles at Kelpy and then looks at me, "Sound good, Vincent?"

"Don't pretend I have a say in the matter." I mumble as Kelpy walks off, "She seems friendly enough." Hamino comments, folding his hands together and laying his chin upon it, observing Kelpy.

"Well, she is the only person here that at least gave us a warm welcome, but still, that's her job," I respond, stretching.

Kelpy returns with two cups and pours the coffee into it, "Here you go." She says as she puts them down, "Thank you very much." I respond, taking a sip.

"Hey... You work alone here, Kelpy?" Hamino asks, looking around the room.

"Oh yeah, my brother tends the bar at night; I believe you might have missed him yesterday. it might be for the better, though; I bet he'd talk your ears off.' ' Kelpy replies, scratching her neck and smiling.

"It must be hard working in the morning for this many people then; do you mind if we ask some questions?" Hamino smiles back at her.

Kelpy shrugs, "Go ahead." She sits down opposite me, her right foot tapping on the ground; it's clear she has no time for this.

I look at Hamino, raising an eyebrow. What the hell are you planning?

He raises an eyebrow back and gives the "What?" expression as Kelpy sits in front of us.

"Is... everything okay?" Kelpy asks, confused.

Hamino's eyes widen for a second, and he chuckles, "Nothing, just want to ask about your relationship with Gerard. I know yesterday you didn't want to get into it, but it might help us get along with him." He broad smiles awkwardly, his teeth clenching, and I rub my temples. She looks down for a moment, her hands resting on her legs, and she sighs, "Gerard is a good person... and uh..." Kelpy sweats, her gills curling up, which I can only assume means discomfort.

"Hey, If you don't feel like telling, I get it," I say, and Hamino glares at me and me back to him; Kelpy notices and stands up from her chair.

"I- I'm sorry, but I got to tend to the other guests."

"Oh... Oh! Right, don't let us stop you from your job!" Hamino chuckles as he waves his hand around; Kelpy gets up, smiles at us, and walks away, leaving me with Hamino and two plates with two toasts.

Hamino's kind behavior suddenly changes as she disappears into the kitchen, pinching the bridge of his nose; he looks at me.

"Don't question the way I do things, Vincent," Hamino growls, taking a bite out of his toast, and I frown, taking a sip of my coffee.

"For fucks sake, you made her uncomfortable. Where-ever that fucking questioning was going, I'm pretty sure that would not have ended well." I glare, trying to keep my voice down.

"Oh, like how you questioned that witch doctor?" He grumbles, and I narrow my eyes at him; Hamino shakes his head and sighs.

"Look, I don't know where this sudden surge of confidence and brashness came from, but just drop it and stick with what I'm doing; I'm seven years your senior." He says, looking at me, not in an annoyed way but with a genuine look, trying to keep me out of harm.

I'm about to protest, but I take a deep breath and just eat my toast. I'm not going to get into a fight over something like this.

"When we are finished, we're heading toward the police station. If the others there have the same mentality as Gerard, it's going to be a rough job." Hamino says as I finish my toast and down my cup.

Before Hamino could put a couple of coins on the table, Kelpy yells from another table she's tending, "It's free; you give Gerard my regards, alright?"

"You sure, we can just-" Kelpy looks at him, deadly serious, and then chuckles as she sees Hamino backing off from the table.

"O-Ok then, Thanks again! I'll tell Gerard." He stutters and walks outside; I thank her, and we go outside the restaurant toward the grim streets of Rotterdam, heading to the address Gerard gave us the night prior.

"You think he'll act a bit more decent now he's sober?" I ask Hamino as he twirls an unlit cigarette between his fingers.

"Alcohol often brings the truth out of people; however, he will act now; we know it's just a facade." Hamino grumbles, then stops when he sees an open door to an apartment; besides, it is a soaked cardboard sign "Super Market."

"Could get him some alcohol right now to get on his good side..." He rubs his chin, and I look at him, trying to see if he's joking.

"... Why don't you kiss his shaft while you're at it?" I groan as I walk away; Hamino turns his head in annoyance and then sighs, walking after me.

"Got a better idea then?" Hamino asks, catching up to me, "Not really..." I mumble, and he shrugs, grabbing the lighting out of his pocket and lighting the cigarette he was playing with between his fingers.

"I don't want us to ask Kelpy; if Gerard finds out we are prying too much about it, it will only make things more complicated," I say as Hamino rolls his eyes, "Yeah, whatever..." He looks ahead to a crowd of people in front of the station.

We stop for a second and then decide to push our way through.

"I'll do the talking," Hamino whispers to me as we near the center. We see Gerard sitting on a damaged lawn chair as the crowd seems to berate him, a few officers looking behind the glass of the decrepit building that was once a laundromat; at least, that's what the sign above it says.

"I want my money back for my talisman!" One of them yells; another man chimes in, "That fucking witch doctor swindled me!"

He grabs his megaphone, "BE QUIET, ALL OF YOU." he yells, his metal fingers trembling on the side of the microphone, trembling with rage.

Everyone falls silent and looks at Gerard as he stands up and walks to the front.

"You lot, who the fuck do you think I am, your personal bank?" He yells, spit flying out of his mouth, the crowd seemingly confused yet too afraid to say something.

"You think I am responsible for you absolute desperate braindead idiots not knowing better?"

Gerard shakes his head, laughing at the crowd, the people becoming more angry as the chief's words cut deep, like a hot knife on butter.

"... Has a point," Hamino whispers, his eyes fixated on Gerard as the chief walks up to a man who is shouting, grabs him by his coat, and pulls him up, holding him in the air like it's nothing.

"Look at you, thinking you are weak and tiny, not knowing your true potential; you never NEEDED those talismans." He snarls as the man is now frantically shaking, pleading not to drop him, tears forming in his eyes.

"Well, Come on, Fight back!" Gerard yells as the crowd just looks, frozen by what is happening; even if they want to help their fellow man, the chief has such authority and presence over them that nobody even moves a muscle.

Gerard looks at the crowd, his face turning somber, and... releases their grip on the man, making him fall on the ground, and he scampers away from the police station.

The crowd looks at Gerard, still petrified, thinking what the brute would do next.

Gerard shakes his head, grabs his megaphone again, and walks back to his chair.

"Next time I'm grabbing one of you, FIGHT BACK." He snarls into his megaphone as the crowd scatters like a disturbed anthill; Gerard looks around, breathing heavily.

"Unbelievable..." He mutters and puts his megaphone back on his belt.

"Is... This him being sober?" I whisper, looking at Hamino, who's just as confused as me, not knowing what to think.

Gerard turns around and looks at the both of us. He rubs his head, scratches his back, and walks toward us, sighing, his eyes almost entirely red, making them look bloodshot.

"Fashionably early... Don't see that often these days." Gerard snickers and waves us inside as he opens the front door.

I look at Hamino and gesture to follow, which he does, albeit reluctantly.

Gerard's eyes almost immediately lock onto my face and narrow his eyes.

"You brought him too?" he snarls, his fingers twitching slightly.

I look at Hamino, then at him; I thought we were done with this shit, and the first thing he says when we're here is that.

Hamino crosses his arms and leans back, "He's going to be helping me with forensics here, whether you like it or not." Hamino snorts, not breaking eye contact, and I nod.

Gerard rubs his face with his prosthetic and sighs, "Whatever."

Gerard opens the door with a loud creak, accompanied by the most vile smell of musk, and the officers at the window quickly turn.

"Quite the scene there, boss; think they got it this time?" The Officer with a large pompadour says sarcastically.

"... Cant you for once look, for example, at Harry and keep your fucking hole shut, Richard?" He said bluntly, and the two of us walked inside as the door shut.

Richard looked at his fellow uniformed colleague, who was almost a complete contrast to him, his long, unkempt brown beard and hair covering his face, almost making every feature of his face obscured.

The mass of hair looks at Richard and raises his eyebrows, revealing his dull, dark eyes, and Richard just looks at him uncomfortably.

He quickly grabs a comb on one of the laundry machines and starts combing his pompadour profusely.

"And stop fucking with your hair!" Richard turns around, "Yes Sir, Sorry Sir," He says and sighs.

"Little shit..." Harry snickers as the two of them return to their dusty, almost fallen-apart bar stools in front of one of the laundry machines and start filling in paperwork on top of it.

The other laundry machines are just... empty, No papers on there, No little desk ornaments, nothing.

"... Is this it?" The question escapes my mouth as he looks around the makeshift station.

"Not as fancy as the feds have, I assume." He grins as he walks to an oversized Chesterfield chair, which is seated at the only typical wooden desk around.

"Grab a chair from somewhere and sit down; we got matters to discuss."

We take two old plastic chairs from the five that were lined against the wall and sit down in front of him.

Hamino grabs a small notepad and pen from his pocket and places it on the table; Gerard glances at it and chuckles.

"Let me say this before I'm gonna get into the meat of why you are here." He puts his feet on his desk, leans in his chair, and points at Hamino.

"I know you are going to give me a whole preaching about how you are from the F.I.A., and you take over everything now; you are wrong." I raise my eyebrow, and Hamino looks at him, surprised, "Then why call us?"

"Cause the government asked for some extra help. Not like they got many other options."

"But me? I want to make it very clear that I do NOT need you, people." He glares daggers at my colleague as the tension starts to rise in the laundromat.

I looked around. The windows were blocked with old metal plates salvaged from washing machines, the walls filled with holes with trash stuffed into them, and dust everywhere, even in the chair he was sitting in; there was so much of it that if he even moved an inch, at least some particles would fly up in the air.

Hamino clenches his pen as if he is trying to compose himself before speaking; I'd better take over from here.

"Gerard, I'm going to be very blunt with you, and I hope you don't disregard it as me being stubborn..." I say, and his glare that was once fixated on Hamino is now on me.

"You use washing machines and old bar stools as improvised desks; the only two being used at the moment are by Harry and Richard."

Hamino snaps out of it and looks at me confused, "Who?" he whispers.

"The two at the window, and from what I can gather from that..." I point at the other washing machines.

"See that the ones that don't have papers on them are covered in dust?" Gerard looks around and rubs the back of his neck, "Yeah... So?"

"So that would mean You, plus your two officers, are the only ones here... Unless you have a couple of patrol officers running around." I lean on his desk with my arms as I look at Gerard's eyes and notice a look of discomfort on him.

"I hope this doesn't go where I think it goes... And your point being?"

"You need us more than you think, I believe," I say. Hamino looks at me, raising both his eyebrows, and gives a sly smile.

"Gerard, I understand that you have pride; we all have, and it might not seem like it, but we want to help," Hamino adds to my observations.

Gerard stays silent for a few moments before letting out a heavy sigh, his expression turning from an annoyed to an exhausted and drained.

He puts his feet down and leans forward, his eyes filled with pain as he looks at Hamino.

"I... Don't like your kind of people, and sadly, most of you people are part of the F.I.A."

"I don't know how I can say this in any other way that could get the point across, but..." He leans forward, and his metal fingers twitch a bit.

"It's almost like a feeling, Or maybe an instinct, the instinct you get when someone isn't sincere at all."

He glares daggers at Hamino again, and Hamino's smile slowly fades, and his eye twitches.

Gerard notices, "I know what you are trying to do." he continues, not letting up on his glare.

Hamino, without hesitating, slams his fist on the desk; afterward, I hear two screeching chairs behind us.

"Cooperate, for fucks sake Or- Or else what?" Gerard, not phased by it, laughs as he waves his subordinates to sit back down.

"Or else what? Isn't the first time a suit tried to threaten me, Hamino, Do your fucking homework." Hamino's glare gets worse as Gerard grins and turns his head toward me.

"And you? What the fuck are you even doing here? I thought you were supposed to be experienced!" Gerard yells, Not with a glare, not with any rage in his eyes, the same look he had in the crowd.

The man lets out a chuckle, and before Hamino or I can say a single word, he holds his hand up and shakes his head.

"Save it; maybe in your Nyarltophian hellhole, you have to get along with people to work together; we here do not." He crosses his arms and looks at both of us.

"That took longer than expected, don't you think? Now let's have the big boy talk." Hamino is still trying to comprehend Gerard's words, and he simply shrugs in defeat and looks at the chief, not saying anything more.

"So why did the government call the F.I.A., Gerard? I hope-" Before I could even finish, Gerard opened a drawer on his side of the desk, pulled out an unnamed case file, and waved it around before putting it gently on the desk.

"This is the reason; Go ahead, Open it." Gerard's tone of voice suddenly changes into one of slight dread and caution.

I reach out my hand to the manilla case folder, my finger reaching for the brown clasp lock before being stopped by a prosthetic hand holding my index finger gently yet firmly.

"Strong stomache?" Gerard looks me in my eyes with a slight grimace.

I look at the folder and look back at him, "Yes." I nod.

The man takes his hand off my index, and I open the file, which reveals a Polaroid.

A bald Man hanging from a noose, nude, his pale skin revealing his many veins, and his member fully erect, posed as if he's smiling in front of the camera; his expression sends a shiver through my entire body.

Around the man, stacks, and stacks of papers, A puddle of liquid, and a circular window behind him letting in the moonlight.

There's something written on them, yet due to the only source of light being the moon, it's unreadable.

"Fuckin' hell..." Hamino leans forward to get a closer look and shakes his head, looking disgusted yet a bit amused.

I gulp. I've seen these photos of old cases in the academy, yet those were pictures of solved instances, pictures you know the story from beginning to end; this is just a whole new can of worms.

Gerard points at the puddle of vomit in the picture. "At least you know how to keep it in, unlike Richard."

"Huh?" The young officer looks up from his washing machine table to Gerard.

"That you are constantly vomiting on crime scenes!" He yells back to him, which makes Richard turn red.

"Because I keep fucking discovering them!" He responds his tone not one of annoyance but a mixture of dread, shock, and confusion.

Gerard laughs, his tone still filled with a slight amount of sarcasm and slight disdain.

"Just continue already; that way, we don't have to see each other as soon as possible." Hamino, still pissed off, grabs a paper written by a typewriter.

"Seems like you already have accepted the nature of our relationship, good," Gerard responds, still keeping the slight attitude he's had all this time.

Hamino starts reading what's written...

-August 28, 1955-

SUMMARY -WRITTEN BY: Richard Wouters-

The situation was reported by some nosy elders who saw their neighbor, Robert Sneek (Caucasian, Age 60), seemly having a random person over every night. They suspected it was some kind of drug den, yet nobody really saw anyone leaving the house except Robert himself.

Every time anyone asked him about it when he went out for work or to do groceries, he politely gave an excuse why that was.

Eventually, Katja Vermeulen (Caucasian, Age 52) Asked him about it once more; this time, he claimed it was kind of a sex thing, and he didn't want to talk about it.

Being very connected to the community, Katja gossiped about what she heard to the others. They just shrugged it off as another excuse until the night of August 27th, when they saw a child enter Robert's home, which made everyone in their neighborhood call the PD hysterically, yelling and screaming over the phone to send somebody over.

Harry Romsbouw and Gerard Barnes were on call duty that night and called me; Richard Wouters, out of my sleep as I was the closest, gave me a quick rundown of the reports made, and I quickly grabbed my revolver and drove away on my police motorcycle without dressing in my police uniform.

I made my way to Erasmus's straat. The residents of the poorly renovated houses waved toward me in a panic, pointing me to house number 203.

Before I could jump over the fence to Robert's front door, I saw a bright white flash from the circular top window, which made me sprint.

I tried to open the door, but It was locked; as I tried to bash my way in, I yelled multiple times, "Let the kid go, Robert. Don't make me do this!".

The door didn't budge; I pointed my revolver just above the doorknob and shot the lock off, opening the door.

I looked around for any sign of Robert, The two rooms connecting to the hallway were the kitchen and the living room; both looked normal, but I didn't proceed to investigate the ground floor.

Then I ran up to the stairs. Midway, I saw several articles of clothing: A soiled pair of pants (Later, this was revealed to be Robert's semen.) and a worn-out checkered shirt.

There was another intersection of Rooms, The left of the stairs being the bathroom, its door wide open.

I checked this one first, Iron drawn, yet was only met with clothing men and women littered on the floor (Only Adult clothing?).

In the sink was a big plastic pill bottle in pristine condition (The expiration date was scratched out, and markings and specks of blood indicate fingernails?)

I rushed out toward the other room, The attic; I kicked down the door, and the bipodded Polaroid camera behind it fell over on the ground.

Papers were littered around the ground and stacked up to the ceiling, and in the middle of it all, Robert was smiling.

I yelled at him to get down on his knees, yet I noticed that his feet weren't touching the ground.

I walked further into the moonlit room and saw the noose, which made me fall to the wooden floor, the vibrations causing a few of the top papers to fall onto the ground.

Yet I swear when they were about to touch Robert's pale, lifeless body, the papers. Those that were about to hit him got repelled. (No papercuts were found on Robert.)

I gathered myself and checked Robert's body for signs of life just in case; no pulse was found. Looking around the room, I checked one of the papers, which had writings of unknown origin, and as I walked around the room, I noticed more of those writings all around the room: In the planks, In the wooden support beams, even some of scratched on the window. (Asked at the library, If Margret doesn't know, Who the hell does?)

When I exited the room, I noticed the Polaroid I knocked over, even if slightly damaged, was still working. (No firearms were found, Source of the flash? How could he even afford it?)

I double-checked the other rooms to see if anyone was still there.

Nobody, No danger, No sign of someone escaping, and No child.

Going outside, I was met with a crowd of people, as I forgot my radio, I had to ask to borrow someone's phone to call the others to get over there.

CONCLUSION -WRITTEN BY COMMANDING OFFICER: Gerard Barnes-

I arrived at the scene as soon as possible; the crowd blocked the road and threatened them to move over or get run over.

The crowd quickly dispersed, managed to park my car in front of the house where Richard was leaning against the doorpost, smoking a cigarette, shaking profusely.

He explained the situation to me (He already wrote down what he said; I'm not doing it again, don't care if some big wig in Den Haag made it protocol).

The crowd gathered again around the house of horrors and yelled at them to get inside; they went to their homes and looked from behind the window.

I consoled Richard to make him ease up a bit, then asked him to get me to the crime scene.

He asked where Harry was and told him he was at the PD should anything else happen.

Entered the attic, saw Robert's corpse, and asked Richard to cut him down from the rope he was hanging on with one of the knives in the kitchen.

Richard, with a little bit of resistance, agreed to do this as I further investigated the room.

Everything Richard told me was correct, except he left out the part where he... Vomited on the wooden floor. (I don't know why he keeps leaving this out every time in his reports; he knows I'm still going to mention it in mine.)

Richard came back, yet before he could reach around the body's neck, I stopped him.

Making use of the "Inherited" camera, I snapped a picture of the crime scene. (I am keeping the camera as evidence and as a tool to assist us further; this is something I am actually willing to file the paperwork for)

Checked around the living room, there was a display case full of cameras throughout the years, with multiple film rolls. (This too, I am taking.)

The kitchen was pretty normal, besides the drawer full of utensils that was open. (Confirmed that this was Richard's doing per my request.)

Bathroom upstairs, I completely forgot; I went to check that last.

Noticing the pill bottle, Richard told me he took a quick glimpse at it before continuing to pursue Robert. (Found later that he had opium in his system).

Like Richard, I noticed its perfection, A perfection that could either mean he made it himself, which is very unlikely, or it was an import from somewhere else somebody smuggled in. (I Thought Den Haag PD caught them already.)

The following has been taken as evidence.

* Noose

* Polaroid Camera and film rolls (Paperwork pending for ownership transfer)

* The corpse of Robert Sneek (the First one we actually found, Stored in a freezer at The Ward Eye till pick-up by the coroner's office Den Haag; REMEMBER TO COMPENSATE KELPY SIRENTAL FOR THIS, NOT GOING TO ARGUE WITH YOU AGAIN KEES)

*Kitchen Knife used to cut the rope (Don't list Richard as a suspect... Again)

*Some of the papers (I destroyed most of them after realizing all the weird symbols on them were the same on every page; they almost seemed like copies of each other; that's how precise the handwriting is on each.)

*Pill bottle (There's nothing in there, And no, I quit a while ago.)

*Several articles of clothing of Male and Female clothing (Shirts, Dresses, Pants, Underwear, Don't think your department will like them, Hell, I don't like them)

-REVIEW -WRITTEN BY HEAD OFFICER: Kees Rozenboom-

Gerard.

This is the last time I accept this kind of sass written in a police report. You're the commanding officer, not a teenage girl.

As for Richard, get him a day off; I'm even willing to send one of the boys from Den Haag to take his place for it; I think he has seen enough for a bit.

And if you agree with this, No, If Nancy sets foot on the makeshift P.D., you cannot tell her to "Shove it"; she's one of the best officers around, and you can't send her away because this is a "Man's job".

You are lucky you are, at least somewhat..." Tolerant" to Lisbeth, as she approved your paperwork for the camera, and no, she did not list Richard as a suspect this time; mistakes happen; I think you know that better than anybody else.

I'm worried, Gerard; me and Richard have been talking over the phone, hearing him explain it, his trembling voice.

I wasn't even there, and this stuff keeps me up at night.

It is not only that I worry about this eventually reaching the capital, but also for your guy's safety. So, I have been in contact with the Reefs due to my weekly report to them, and I, of course, had to mention this to them.

You don't see it often, but the room was full of panicking fishheads when I told them that story. I even had to plug my ears as they were yelling at each other in their native tongue.

Eventually, when they calmed down, they told me they'd handle it, and before I could even arrive back at the Den Haag station, Lisbeth received a telegram.

It was a notice, Two F.I.A agents, The names being Hamino Corendal and Vincent Soaring. I know what you think of them. It is like every time you come over, it leads to this subject. But I have a good feeling about this; I think we can get a lot out of this temporary cooperation. This is no job for three people with a severe lack of resources. They even want me to fine Richard for that bullet!

Just... Try to behave around them, Okay?

A small note sticky note is attached to the back of the paper; Hamino grabs it and reads it out loud.

P.S. I don't see why we should compensate the Dagon. Don't you think they have bled us dry already?

Once Hamino wraps up, I rotate my head to face Richard. His face is now a deeper shade of red than when Gerard had teased him, and he deliberately avoids our gaze, scribbling anxiously on his paper. Harry gives Richard a gentle elbow nudge, prompting their eyes to meet. With merely a faint nod, Harry communicates a sense of compassion and comprehension... Funny. "So... What do you make out of it?" Gerard's voice startles me, and I turn my head toward him as he leans in his seat.

"The ritualistic nature of it is... Apperant." Hamino rubs his chin, and Gerard just looks at him, tired "... Yeah, Was there".

Ignoring Gerard's remarks, he now grabs a small sheet with fingerprints on it, Sneek's name on top.

"Found on any of the objects?" Gerard raises an eyebrow as Hamino asks.

"Pill bottle, Camera, and some of the zippers of the clothing. All his thought, you can go to the basement where we store the evidence if you want to see the paperwork for it; help yourself." He says smugly as he points to the small staircase in the corner.

Hamino stands up, "Surely you haven't grave robbed all of it, I assume?"

Gerard, almost taken back a bit, leans back in his seat as Hamino finishes the sentence, "Fuck off." He says in a deadpan tone, yet with his glare still present.

My colleague gestures to me to get up from my seat as we walk toward the small staircase.

Only a few of the steps were visible as the pitch-black darkness consumed the rest of it.

"Hey, any of you know where the light switch is?" I call out, turning back toward Gerard.

Before I know it, I hear heavy footsteps approaching me, Harry.

The burly-looking man looks at me, and with his heavy voice, he utters "Ik help je..."

He clenches his scarred right hand into a fist, raises it up to his chest, and Hits the wall with it full force, and with that, the lights turn on.

While he did that, he never broke eye contact with me, I think at least.

There was an awkward silence between us as he moved his hand away from the wall, rotated his fist upright, and extended his thumb.

He gave once again a slight nod as he returned to his washing machine desk.

"T-Thanks," I said, but he just looked at his paper and continued to write as if in a pure trance. Hamino walks behind me as we continue walking down the steps, him looking around as I try not to lose my footing on the small staircase.

Midway, he taps my shoulder and whispers, "Keep quiet from now on until we go back. Don't want them to hear anything we discuss," he says, and I nod.

We reach the basement floor; the room is filled with file cabinets just dropped at random places, some even with half-open drawers, and boxes littered everywhere on five small plastic tables. Stacked, Upside down, Lying on its side with its contents almost spilling out, anything but the right way to store evidence.

Most of the room is taken up by the pipe system of the building, yet it is all connected to the large apparatus in the middle, the boiler.

Hamino walks into the middle of the room, looks around for a bit at the absolute mess, and clenches his head.

"Are you fucking kidding me!" He shout whispers, throwing his arms around and looking at me in disbelief.

I walked to the table nearest the stairs and looked at one of the boxes named "September 24, 1951..."

"Hey, can you check that other table?" I point to the one nearest to the one I was standing at. Hamino walks to the second table of the row, "October 12, 1952; oh, I get it."

"That would mean the last table is 195- I know, Vincent."

We quickly walk to the final table and look at the pile of boxes.

"Oh, so they did the tables chronologically but not the actual boxes on the table; great." Hamino rubs his eyes as he looks at all the boxes.

"You take the right side, I take the left?" I look at my colleague as he looks back and nods.

He starts taking boxes off of his side as I do the same to mine; he quickly walks to the other side as we look at the dates.

While doing so... Something hit me: uncertainty.

"... Hamino?" I reluctantly try to get his attention.

"Did you find it?" He responds, not keeping his eye off his side.

"N-No, just a question," Hamino sighs and looks annoyed, "What?"

"You, uhh, think about going back?" I scratch the back of my head.

He stops, slowly turning his head toward me, "Already to the hotel?"

"I mean... back to America," I said more forcefully.

I'm shaking, Unsure if it is about the judgment I'm about to face from Hamino Or the bottled-up rage I suppressed upstairs.

He stares at me for a moment, and his frown twists into a grin.

"You are thinking about it too, aren't you?" He chuckles.

"It's not funny; the guys up there weren't really ecstatic about us waltzing in here," I say, slightly offended.

He laughs and shakes his head, "They are low lives, Vincent. Look at their country; look at their people."

He points up to the ceiling. "Those three are the only ones with any form of law enforcement around here. Look at their sorry excuse of a police station."

"Their city, their land, everything, It's a shithole, a literal shithole, and they have to audacity to treat us like shit."

Every word Hamino cuts into me; I know that we in America have it better off, but... To think us superior? To them? He told me stories before about his experiences, but being in one of them... It leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

"Like all out-of-country cases I've handled, They are all like feral dogs, biting the hand that feeds them."

He walks closer and points his finger at me, "Don't forget where we are and what we must do, because if we do not, well... We both know what's going to happen."

I stare back, bewildered by the sudden change of attitude from him.

"What about you wanting to get to know him better?" I scratch my head, just trying to make sense of his reasoning.

He shakes his head in disappointment and snickers, "I'm trying to get him to cooperate, Vincent; it's called "diplomacy." I couldn't care less about the turkey."

He pats my shoulder, "Do know, even if these absolute morons surround us, I consider you... My Stubborn Inexperienced Equal Also were not leaving till were done."

I open my mouth to protest, but before I can utter a single word, Hamino's eyes widen as he turns his head and points to a box, "Gotcha!"

The box he has in his hand is dated 08-26-1955, Sneek's death.

Quickly opening the box like an excited child, we are met with some torn and dusty clothing, badly folded and jammed into the box.

"See, exactly what I mean; morons cant even store shit properly." He complains as he goes over the pieces of clothing, examining them.

"Jeans... A dress... Leather Jacket... Under- Grah!" He yelps as he lets go of the pair of underpants that have a visible yellow strain on them, startling me as well.

Hamino gags as he wipes some of the yellow liquid on the side of the table, "That's... Robert's..."

"You mean..." I back off from the dead man's garments that are now on the floor.

"Yeah..." Hamino gathers himself, shakes his head, and looks disgusted.

He continues cautiously to grab the other articles of clothing... Panties, A bra, and a belt.

"At least there are no stains on those... Thank fuck." He puts them on the side.

We both look in the box and see plastic bags containing the rest of the evidence.

The noose, Some of the papers, the knife, and a pill bottle.

Hamino grabs the bag with the rope and takes a good look at it, noticing the blood-stained marks.

"Work your magic on the rest of the stuff, will you? I'll do mine on the rope." He tells me as he opens the plastic bag.

After he does this, he unbuttons his trench coat to reveal multiple vails inside, all labeled.

He grabs one of the vails named "Gras'mul", pours it into the plastic bag, and gives it a firm shake, making it boil the rope inside.

He opens the bag a bit, letting some of the steam out and filling the room with this faint, acidic smell.

"Looking at my work doesn't help us any further, Vincent; go on, shoo!" He demands, and I snap out of it, turning myself to the bag containing the papers.

They seem to have been written in some substance thicker than the average ink. Opening the bag, I lay all the papers next to each other, exact copies, all of them. From the handwriting, The curves he makes with every little symbol, and Even the thickness of the Ink.

He didn't use a copying machine for this; it's too perfect, yet handwritten... Who in the right mind would do such a thing?

I run my index finger down at one of the pages... There are little metal pieces between the "Fuck!"

One of the sharp pieces slices my finger like a knife, and I instinctually suck on it.

Hamino, still with his boiling bag in hand, walks up to me in a hurry, "You alright?" He asks with a concerned look.

"Fucking metal pieces are in the ink... Fucking Psycho piece of shit..." I respond as I get the finger out of my mouth; it's a small wound, yet one that burrowed deep in the skin.

Hamino, in a panic, quickly grabs my hand and moves it away from the table with a strong pull. "Come on, Vincent, head in the game; look out, you don't bleed on the evidence!"

I glare at him "Thanks for your concern for my well-being..." I say sarcastically.

Hamino shakes his head, "Just because it's a baby wound doesn't mean you have to act like one." he points at the wound, "See, bleeding already stopped..."

"Don't you have something on you that can, like, stop it from hurting?" I ask, and Hamino grunts annoyed.

"I do, but for serious wounds, for serious situations, for serious people."

He says with a stern tone, wagging his finger at me with every "serious" he says and focusing his attention back on the bag, giving it a firm shake again.

I'm a little annoyed at him, yet I get the message.

I store the papers back in their respective plastic bag and afterward turn my attention to the pill bottle.

A hard transparent shell made out of plastic with a white cap on it, with just some faint remnants of pill dust inside.

There is a worn-out label on the back, Something in Dutch... maybe even in German?

"Peensteeles... doudbearheid- Vincent, The hell you muttering about?" Hamino calls out to me.

I look at the label and tilt the bottle, "I'm trying to read this."

"Well, do it quietly; I'm already fed up that this thing isn't dissolving the way I want."

He says, frustrated and shaking the bag once again, this time much more violently.

"How long has the rope been in there?" I ask, trying to be considerate yet not getting through to Hamino; I am sure he's just ignoring me at this point.

"... It says: Pijnstillers," A voice coming from the stairs says, and both Hamino and I look.

Richard looks down at us, his expression showing slight annoyance, "Can't believe you here for like a day already, and you are already butchering our language."

I look at the label confused, then at the pompadoured man, then back at the label.

"Pill-Tilers?" I try to pronounce it like him, and he rubs his temple, shaking his head.

"You know what, Forget it, Don't even try it; give me that." He walks down the stairs and, with a swift motion, snatches the bottle from my hand.

He puts his finger below the words as he translates them.

"Painkillers, Expiration date 18.12.18... And the last two digits of the decade are scratched out." He throws the bottle back.

His nose perks up; he takes a big whiff, winces, and looks at Hamino.

"Wait... is that bag sizzling?" He walks toward the table, looking at the steaming bag in awe.

Hamino looks at him and just says "Yeah, it's the rope."

Richard takes a step back, and his face contorts in disgust.

"You're destroying the evidence? Why?!" He yells, his voice echoing in the basement; there goes being quiet...

Hamino points at the bag, "The rope has traces of blood on it. Just wanna know if they are all from the same person; pretty nifty seeing first-world forensics, huh?"

Richard looks dumbfounded, "First world? We are equal; you know that, right?"

Hamino is silent for a moment, and before we know it, his laughter echoes through the room.

Richard looks at him with a stern glare, "Stop laughing."

"Pff... S-Sorry... Just... Go back upstairs, alright, let us handle this." Hamino snickers, trying to hold it in as Richard's face gets redder and redder.

"Hamino, come on..." I sigh and shake my head in disappointment

Richard's posture sags in a bit, his now balled-up fists now white as he stabs his fingernails into the palm of his hand... And then, he breathes from the mouth in, through the nose out.

His face's color slowly returned to normal, "Looking forward to our cooperation." He tries to say as calmly as he can, A poor facade.

As he turned around and walked up the stairs, I heard a faint mumble coming from him, "Kanker Amerikanen..."

Hamino tries to compose himself, yet when he takes a glimpse at the bag, he looks in surprise. It stopped boiling, but the transparent bag was fogged from the inside.

Hamino grabs the plastic bag with the knife inside and empties the contents out of it, then starts to pour the now liquefied rope into the clearer bag.

Looking at the other bag... The rope has been unwoven to its very fibers, suspended in the now transparent Gras'mul liquid.

On top of that, two layers of blood, one lighter than the other,

Hamino's eyes widen, and rush up the stairs, and I quickly follow after.

He heads to Gerard's desk where Richard is furiously talking to Gerard "It's fucking bullshit!

They are clearly destroying-" With a wet flop, Hamino throws the bag. On Gerard's desk, interrupting him.

"Oh... So this is what you were talking about; Better have a good reason." Gerard says, annoyed.

He opens the bag and takes a look, and his face scrunches up, "Ugh... The hell is this?"

Hamino grabs his pen out of his pocket and points with it at the two layers, "Two different layers of blood; one darker is from an older man; high chance it's Robert's.

"T-That would mean..." Richard's mouth is left agape, and he looks at the bag in horror. Harry, hearing the news, stands up from his desk, clearly tense.

"... We want to speak with the people from Erasmuslane tomorrow. Don't call them; I want you to knock on their doors." Hamino looks at Gerard, and he just sighs.

"Why not? Easily could call them from here, and it would save us a lot of gasoline," Gerard scoffs, yet before Hamino could open his mouth and explain himself, Richard quickly grabbed his coat and ran outside toward his bike.

Finally, I muster the courage to speak up "I'm sorry, Gerard; it shows a level of urgency to the people if we come to their door; I'm afraid whatever caused this, It will not wait."