The Gang of Five

Role Play => Random Role Play => Topic started by: Pterano on April 29, 2014, 01:32:53 am

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 29, 2014, 01:32:53 am**

Oddly enough, the blue 1948 Delahaye 175 (http://www.ritholtz.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/dela-9.jpg) didn't seem out of place as it whizzed down the highway of one of Corona's busier circuits. Its rakish lines and exotic look seemed to match quite well with the surrounding digital cars that surrounded it and elegant skyscrapers that rose like monoliths around the vehicles.

The only thing that was off about it was the fact it was gliding on tires and not hovering over the ground. Its engine produced a throaty hum that was louder than the modern cars, but it made the ferret sitting behind the wheel relish the drive all the more. There was nothing like a drive on a beautiful day with the top down in a vintage car to make you truly appreciate life. The wind whipped the ferret's fur, blowing it back a bit as Tony Stracci cranked up the speed. He was still mostly obeying the speed laws, but going slightly faster than the limit. While the Delahaye may not have had the horsepower of some of his father's more powerful cars, it certainly looked exotic enough that it was turning more than a few heads as it drove on its way.

Tapping his paw on the steering wheel a tad, Tony thought about what he could do today. There were basically two choices. Well three, really, but he was already mostly doing the third. That third option was drive around aimlessly. But it was one of the other two that most appealed to him. He wanted to swing by Axel's place to see how the rat was getting on. It had been a bit since he'd last stopped in, mostly due to family business coming first, but he had a free day, and he wanted to use it. He was in the area, so he took the exit, and started heading in the proper direction.

On a high-speed train currently making its way to Corona, Vergil Speicher was sitting back in a comfortable chair studying some articles and tapping a pen on his chin thoughtfully. The white gecko had a look of deep concentration on his face. Articles on Rex Sardolemuel and Kalis were spread out all around him. The seating was vis-a-vis, but only the seat next to him was currently occupied by all his papers. The war, the two generals, their going rogue... it was all documented rather well. He was trying to find mention of himself in there, or some clue, but unfortunately, common soldiers were rarely named.

He'd found out some more, at least. Rex had been the brother of Mace Sardolemuel, the founder and current CEO of the Zaloga Corporation, one of the four main weapons' manufacturers in Corona. While Mace had the business brains, Rex was the military talent. He'd enlisted young, and had quickly proven himself as a military genius, if a bit unconventional. Then there was Kalis, Rex's gargoyle gecko second-in-command. But what was missing was the personal story. *Why* had these two decided to suddenly go rogue and attempt to conquer the planet? They were outcasts before, sure, but why take so extreme a measure?

Vergil sighed, and closed his eyes, settling back into his seat. He needed to talk with survivors... people who had known these two. If he could just learn more... he might be able to find out who he was as well, and if he'd indeed served them during their war of conquest. He would get to the bottom of this story if he could. Flashes from his past kept coming back to him, but nothing too solid. One memory was standing out however. It was of Rex and Kalis investigating some ancient ruins somewhere, and he was positive he was with them then. But what was it? What did it mean?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **April 29, 2014, 04:37:12 am**

"Hey! Easy with the soldering iron!"

Soren used his free hand to wipe some sweat from his brow. The apartment he was working in was home to a dour looking Chow-Chow. The dog in question was wearing a basic t-shirt and track pants and leaning back on a battered easy chair. The apartment was simple, much like the cyberneticist's own apartment, which he shared with Rose, Marita, Anne and Marie.

There was however, an incongrous item: a *very* elegant looking ó and expensive ó Ming dynasty vase. A dramatic contrast to the plain and downright cheap apartment.

"Sorry, it's just that many of the components in your arm are severely damaged. What the fuck were you doing? I've already dug out two bullets!" Soren carefully unscrewed the mangled laser module from the arm and placed it aside.

The Chow-Chow growled at Soren. "That's none of your concern!"

Soren nodded and continued removing more debris from the arm.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 29, 2014, 12:15:02 pm**

three streets across from where Soren was working stood the apartments where Rose was living with Him, Anne, Marie and Marita. Rose was coming home from her latest practice, a role named Cherie, based in 1930s new Orleans. She was now approaching three weeks being sober from biproxytol, which had been a very painful-and expensive- undertaking, if not for Marita and Marie she wouldnt have made it. Marie.. Rose smiled. the two of them had been co-workers at a rinky joint called the Black Sheep, Marie had been a waitress there, Rose had been a stripper and dancer. but the place had blown up and burned down during the last adventure which had swept up her, Marie and her old girlfriend Marita in a devious and diabolical attempt by a group called the Purifiers to wipe out all Augments in the city of Lanthae, and topple its government. the attempts had failed thanks to a aerial bombardment by someone called "Lord Kalis" which had reduced the city to rubble, killed millions, and nearly wiped the Purifiers out of existence. The three girls were among those lucky to escape and made their way here. Marita, who was a computers genius and master hacker had found a place for the three of them, and they had offered Anne and soren a place to live, and which helped lower the rent burden the three of them were carrying. Marie now worked at a casino, dealing cards, which made her quite a bit of money. The girls had made Rose go through detox upon settling in, as she was starting to go through withdrawal. after weeks and months of painful therapy, Rose was now sober. Her singing and dancing were greatly improving and drawing notice from the theater director and critics. She was hopeful about the future for the first time in a long time, since she had first met Marita several years ago. the recent crisis had forged strong bonds between the three of them, and Rose liked having someone around who was a match for her in bed. Marita was submissive in bed, a reverse from her outgoing personality, and Marie was the opposite, introspective in public but a take no prisoners sort in her chambers. Rose and her had made love for the first time shortly after her detox was complete, Rose got the sense Marie had wanted to have her for a long time, but never got around to asking management if she could have a fling with her, out of fear perhaps that they or Rose would turn her down.

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Rose reached the floor where she lived and knocked on the door, which was opened by Marita. Rose and Marita were both Great Danes, Marie was a Golden Setter.'"How did rehearsal go?" Marita asked after greeting her with a kiss, her red lips locking with Rose's red lips. ' fine. we're about halfway through the play.. and the director says my singing is making great strides" Rose said proudly. 'That's excellent. Maries still at the Flipped Card, she'll probably get home sometime around 7. Soren said hes got a client in the neighborhood and I don't know where Anne is..." Marita said. "Good thing about Computers is, you can work from home.. "

she smirked. hopefully soon, we'll get a better apartment, once one of my current jobs is finished.. the payout for this job is 1 million credits Rose, enough to get us a better place.' Marita smirked. 'Does it involve your "special gifts" Rose asked ' Of course it does, especially in this town, with the Four Titans paying out big credits to undermine each other' Marita said as she brought Rose a cup of hot cocoa. "At least this place is better than Lanthae' Rose sighed, taking the cup "Rose, honey, Berlin in 1945 was better than that dump. We're out of there, you're sober now for the first time in what, 12 years? We're back together and Marie makes a nice trinity. Once my current tasks are finished we'll have about 5.7 million credits in the till, enough to buy a very nice place and settle into a upper class lifestyle.' That's a ton of credits" Rose said as she set her stuff down.' yeah, but in order to truly hit the big time, we'll need 100 million. Marie has the Megastakes card tournament coming up. she gets picked to deal the last table, she gets a massive bonus. and if you sell out your show you'll get more money coming in too. we won't have to ask Soren or Anne for any rent.' So they'll just be freeloaders' Rose smirked.' Nah, they're friends we're doing them a solid. we might have enough to buy Soren a place for himself to restart his business, and Anne a place of her own too.'Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 29, 2014, 02:26:32 pm**

Axel swivelled in his office chair, spinning in a circle as the voice on the other end of his cell phone moaned on. A mess of various computer parts were strewn around the room, and on the desk in front of him was stacked a pile of papers – order forms for yet more parts. The voice paused to take a breath and Axel rubbed his nose, jumping in while he had the chance. “Mr Kramar, that’s… yeah, that’s a virus.” The rat shook his head. “No… no, that’s where you went wrong. Downloads that say they’ll give you five million credits… I mean, why would you even believe that?” He blinked and put his feet on the floor to stop himself spinning. “No, not even if they say they’ll make, ah… *that* bigger. Alright… look, just bring it in tomorrow, I’ll take care of it. Yeah. Okay, see you then.”

Hanging up, Axel tossed his cell phone onto the desk and sighed. Business had been slow lately. When he and Lily had moved into the small, single story house, Axel had set up his own computer repair business to try and provide for them. The neighborhood they lived in was nice enough, sure, and inexpensive… and at least it was outside of the slums that bordered the city of Corona. But it wasn’t good enough. Axel wanted the best for Lily, and the way things had been going lately, it looked like being able to relocate to the more upmarket region of the city would take longer than he’d hoped. There was a clunk. He looked across the room, and saw the air conditioning unit had broken down. Again. *Awesome…* With a heatwave settling over the city, that was just what he needed. Sighing again, Axel got up and left his ëoffice’, making his way down the short hallway that lead to the small kitchen. The windows had been cranked open wide in an attempt to get a breeze blowing through. He opened up the fridge, twisting open a bottle of water. “Lily, air-con’s broken again,” Axel called out. He took a swig. “Jesus, this heat is killing me…”

Rio panted as he sprinted across the rooftop. His black hair, greasy with sweat, was plastered across his angular face, and perspiration covered his tan skin. The boy gritted his teeth as the edge of the rooftop approached. Picking up speed, he leaped over, his small body sailing through the air… and landed on the roof opposite, rolling into the landing to absorb the impact. The colourful *Captain Super Man* backpack slung over his shoulder, bulky and heavy from what was packed inside, made running hard. But Rio had no choice. If they caught up to him…

“Little fucker jumped!” someone shouted behind him. Rio glanced back over his shoulder. Two large, roughly dressed men were standing on the edge of the rooftop he’d just jumped from. One looked down, saw the distance he’d fall if he messed up the jump, and paled. The other pulled out a cell phone. “He’s heading right for you!” the man yelled into it. Sucking in breath, Rio scrambled to his feet and kept running, vaulting nimbly over the ventilation units that were dotted around, making his way for the door that lead down. He was a few steps from it when the door slammed open, and a large bull burst through. Trainers skidding slightly, Rio quickly changed direction. The roof opposite was too high for him to reach – but he jumped anyway,

and connected heavily against the wall, fingers scrabbling for purchase against the window ledge he'd aimed for. Groaning, he tightened his grip and quickly shimmied to the side, hopping over and grasping the metal drainpipe that ran down the side of the building. It shook for a moment, but seemed to hold. Rio wrapped his legs tightly around it and slid down. One floor from the ground, the drainpipe had broken off. Looking around, the boy looked for a something that could offer a soft landing, and saw a tramp sleeping in the alley just beneath him. Holding his breath, he let go and fell down, landing solidly on the man who awoke with a pained shriek. "*You… piece of shit…*" the tramp coughed, rolling onto his side and clutching his stomach where Rio had landed.

Flipping the man off over his shoulder, Rio darted through the trash, and emerged from the alley onto the main street. In this neighbourhood, the difference between the two wasn't obvious. Looking around quickly, he couldn't see anyone on him yet. Lowering his head, he started sprinting again. If he could just get escape this part of town, maybe he had a chance of hiding out…

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 29, 2014, 06:25:40 pm**

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http://gyazo.com/dfd333542c77b3d4f552200478b056e6
(http://gyazo.com/dfd333542c77b3d4f552200478b056e6)

Lily returned to the kitchen from the bathroom, where she had laundered a fresh set of towels. "Oh no...I'll see what I can do," she offered, smiling as she always did when she saw her husband. Technically, they couldn't legally wed because she was listed as "missing presumed dead" by the Lanthae police records, plus she has evidence that she was once married to a lawyer in Cornova and never divorced, but all things considered they lived like it regardless.

She soaked one of the newly washed towels in the sink. "Here, try this." She wrapped the damp towel around Axel's neck. She was often fixing up household appliances and keeping the rooms clean while Axel worked in his den. This didn't bother her in the slightest; after the harrowing week where she first met Axel and endured incredible amounts of trauma, the thought of living a normal life in a middle class suburb was the closest thing she could imagine to paradise.

After applying the towel she started giving Axel a short backrub, guessing that his shoulders were still wound-up from hunching over the computer the last few hours. "Hey, maybe today, we can cheat a little and eat ice cream for dinner," she whispered with a tinge of humor. "I just restocked yesterday. Strawberry."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 29, 2014, 07:14:56 pm**

Tony was now winding his way through the quieter suburbs of Corona. While Corona was a sprawling metropolis, it was also a plethora of neighborhoods. From towering skyscrapers to seedier districts to relatively pleasant areas like this, there was a bit of something for everyone. Driving down the streets of suburbia, Tony had no need for memory recall here, since he knew the way to Axel's by heart at this point.

Taking a right onto the street Axel and Lily resided on, Tony subconsciously counted the houses as they passed by, and finally slowed the Delahaye to a stop in front of the small home that had become rather familiar to him over the past few months. The ferret killed the engine, and stepped out. While he did lock the door, he saw no need to put the car's top up; it was a nice enough neighborhood that he wasn't worried about someone jumping into the driver's seat and attempting to hijack it.

There was a bounce in his steps as he bounded up the stairs, stopping in front of the door and giving out a few knocks that would be audible enough to those within.

As the train whizzed over a large lake on its track, Vergil frowned thoughtfully. "Hmmm..." he elicited the noise pensively, staring down at the papers strewn all about him. Where to go from here? He'd read all he could from these internet searches and articles, so where to next? Closing his eyes again, the gecko concentrated as hard as he could on the memory of Rex and Kalis in front of the ruins.

Yes... there it was... ancient stone structures that rose up around him like teeth, abandoned for thousands of years. But what about the voices? What were they like? What were they saying? Come on Vergil... focus...

"But this map is incomplete, Rex! It's worthless without the other components! We're still no closer to finding Torment's Cataract than we were when we started!" Kalis was saying, but his voice was far more normal, as he wasn't wearing that facial mask Vergil was used to seeing him in from the reports he'd read. Vergil could see Kalis was a gargoyle gecko, and a rather fierce looking one at that. He appeared very frustrated.

Rex, the fiery red gecko warlord stepped forward now, golden eyes narrowing. "Patience, Kalis. We ARE closer to finding Torment's Cataract. This map has shown us part of what we need. We find the others... we find the Cataract. It'll take time... but it will be worth it in the end."

Opening his eyes, Vergil took what he'd heard and decided to see if he could find anything further. Reaching over to his datapad, he quickly searched for "Torment's Cataract" but nothing came up in the search. Big surprise. Another dead end. Still... the details of those ruins... the way they were aligned and shaped... there could be something there. Perhaps it was time to make a trip to Corona's Archives to see what he could dig up.

"Attention please: we will be arriving at Corona in 15 minutes. All passengers debarking in Corona, please have your personal effects ready for departure. Once again..."

Vergil sighed, and began packing up his papers and belongings. Right... time to see what more he could find out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 29, 2014, 08:17:39 pm**

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across town at the Flipped Card, Marie was in the middle of dealing a hand. across from her were a human, a ferret and a green gecko, all wearing expensive clothes and jewelry . three cards lay in front of her: a 7 of diamonds, a queen of spades and a queen of clubs. bets are 40 thousand'; she said in a clear voice. the human looked at his cards then tossed in 40 thousand. the gecko raised to 60 thousand, and the ferret matched his bet. the human looked at his cards again then at his stack, he was the short stack ' all in'he said pushing in 110,000 chips, there was now 390000 chips in the pot, this soon rose to 610000 as the human and gecko threw in 110000. turn over your card Mr Silur' Marie said ' Silur flipped his cards over and smirked he had a queen and a 7, a full house. the human named Marcus flipped over his hand, he had two 7s giving him a full house as the gecko named Genki flipped over his cards he had a pair of kings. Mr Silur has a full house queens full of 7s, Mr Marcus has a full house 7s full of queens Mr Genki has two pair. Marie flipped over the next card- called the turn- an ace of hearts, which was meaningless ' you need a king to knock me out Silur said to Genki, who took a swig from a martini. the last card was called the river and Marie turned over- the king of hearts, as Genki burst into a huge grin. ' time to hit the bar' Silur said getting up from his seat as marie pushed all the chips towards Genki who was about 100000 chips from winning, which he did on the next hand. ' well that a good million for me' Genki said as he flipped a 100k chip to Marie ' nice work mam' he said feeling good about himself. ' thank you Mr Genki, business doing well i take it ' she said as she took the chip' good enough. allows me the freedom to play some cards ' Genki said as he took his drink and coat and headed off to collect his winnings. the floor manager came up to her ' i want to congratulate you Marie. he said giving her a note . ' You just earned herself a table at the Megastakes' the manager whose name was Mona said with a smile.' he added as a big grin grew over Maries face' you've

earned it. you're one of the best dealers i've ever seen and I've been doing this gig now for nearly 20 years. I cant believe that you've only been doing this for 2 months. , go home and party with your girlfriends ' Marie hugged him then blushed 'sorry, i'm just really excited ' its alright just get your things c and go home. see you in a couple days' Mona said as marie headed towards the employee check out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 29, 2014, 10:13:42 pm**

"Mmn." Axel leaned forwards, enjoying the backrub. After all this time, seeing Lily happy was still the best feeling in the world for him. It felt as though all the hardships they'd endured six months ago were just a bad dream. "Strawberry, huh? My favourite..."

Turning around, he lifted Lily up and sat her on the table then grinned and put on his best 'suave' voice - that was to say, not very suave at all. "Well, if we're having *that* for dinner, I know what I want for desert," he said, pressing forwards and starting to kiss her neck, his hands roaming down her body... then there was a knock at the door.

Axel groaned. "If that's a jehovah's witness, I'm gonna kill him," he said, pushing himself off from the table and keeping hold of her hand for a second longer as he made his way across to the hallway. "Just... keep thinking sexy thoughts! Sexy!" Axel called back as he made his way over to the door, smoothing out the front of his T-shirt. Opening it, his face broke into a smile when he recognised his friend. "Tony! How's it going?" Over the shoulder, he saw the vehicle the ferret had turned up in. "Ah, jeez, couldn't you have picked something fancier? This is a classy place, you know," he joked. "Oh, er... hang on." Axel turned his head slightly. "Honey, Tony's here! Abort the thoughts!"

Looking back at Tony, Axel stepped aside, holding the door open. "Come in. Want a beer? We've still got a few from last time, I think."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 30, 2014, 12:32:01 am**

Tony grinned as his friend opened the door. "Hey, Axel! Oh yeah... you like the wheels?" he asked, turning to show off the ride a bit more. "One of my father's Delahayes. Certainly love it, and he's got several all made by different coach builders." He nodded as Axel offered him a beer and to come inside.

Removing his flat cap and holding it down in front of him, the ferret stepped into the home he'd gotten used to over the past few months during his visits. "Beer sounds good! Things have been... well you know... about the same, I guess. I'm getting more responsibility, but still pretty luckless in my love life." he chuckled, shrugging. "My relationships still don't last very long. How are things going, anyway? I've got the day off, so I figured I'd swing by and see how you were doing. Was thinking of heading into the city center a bit later, but wanted to cool my heels a bit first." he explained.

Vergil gazed upwards at the ornate mosaic on the ceiling of the Corona Archives Building. It was a burnt orange and brown sun that was casting its rays into splashes of green gardens and blue streams. It was certainly one of the most beautiful works of art Vergil had ever seen.

Looking down, the gecko moved across the busy tile floor to the front desk, which was more like the middle desk, as it stood smack dab in the middle of the floor. "Um... ahem!" He cleared his throat, and one of the receptionists looked down to see his head just coming over the top of the desk. "Hi. Um... do you have a section on ancient ruins, and also, something called the Torment's Cataract?" he inquired in his deeper voice.

The receptionist pulled back and tapped away on her computer. "Nothing on the Cataract you

mentioned, but the ancient ruins section is on the 15th floor." she informed him, adjusting her glasses slightly.

Smiling, the gecko nodded. "Thanks." Stepping away from the desk, he headed for the elevators, and a short time later asked the librarian who headed the 15th floor for advice on ruins that were black in coloration and resembled teeth. After being directed to several potential subjects, Vergil was sitting at a table and eagerly paging through one of the books. He soon found what he was looking for: the ruins of Narcosti. It was an older civilization that had been unearthed a few years ago. Frowning thoughtfully, the gecko flipped the page, and continued reading.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 30, 2014, 05:39:07 am**

"Hi Tony!" Lily called brightly from the kitchen. "So nice to see you again!"

She quickly grabbed and popped the caps off two beers, along with glasses of ice in case either wanted their beer that way, but politely waited in the kitchen for them to arrive. She knew that men tended to like some time to talk before being interrupted by womenfolk. Besides, this would give her a chance to look at that air conditioner; it was *significantly* hotter than acceptable when hosting respectable company.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 30, 2014, 03:08:50 pm**

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marie made it home right around 7:30 she was feeling very proud of herself and she entered the apartment with a spring in her step ' Helloo Girls!" she said going up to marita and kissing her. Marita held the kiss for a few seconds then pulled away, her tongue sliding out of Maries mouth ' so how was your day' Rose said as marie came up to greet her.'' Great! i earned a table at Megastakes!; Marie said and she kissed Rose tenderly ' great! so you're getting some good money? Marita said ' Good money? Marie said. ' i'm making more money than at any point in my life! we won;t be staying in our current apartment for much longer, once the month is up we'll move to a better place.' " those cost more than our current rent though...ROse said. ' we can talk this out with Soren and Anne when they get back' Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 30, 2014, 04:37:52 pm**

Axel shut the door behind him then led the way back down the hallway. "Hey, don't worry. I know that some day, you'll find the one girl who's as dangerously obsessed about cars as you are." He glanced over his shoulder at Tony and grinned to show he was just teasing. "And yeah, it's... it's the same old for us. I mean... I was thinking that maybe at the end of the year we'd be able to move out, maybe get a bigger place but... the way the business is going..." He shook his head. "Well, whatever. It'll turn out okay."

Reaching the kitchen, he saw that Lily had already opened up two bottles. "Aw, thanks hon," he smiled. Handing Tony his bottle, Axel poured half of his own into the glass and offered it to Lily. "Come on, join us. We can fix the air-con together later," he said, knowing glumly that with his negligible skills in fixing things around the house, he'd probably make things worse. *It's the thought that counts though, right?*

Taking a seat at the table, Axel took a gulp of beer. "Hey, I was thinking. It's been a while since I heard from Soren and the others. We should all get together sometime, like a, a big dinner or something." He looked at Tony. "Kind of like when we ate at your place that one time... except with, ah, you know... Less butlers. Has Soren not found his own place yet?"

Rio leaned against the wall, gasping for breath. The heat was sapping his energy, and he'd been running for about fifteen minutes now. Looking around to try and get his bearings, he could see that he'd left the dense, packed slums behind him and had emerged into one of the slightler nicer areas. Having grown up in the poorer regions, the sight of individual houses, backyards, cars parked on driveways... it always seemed uncomfortably alien to him.

Pushing himself on, Rio tried to consider his options. He wasn't a pushover, he knew that... but he knew he *was* still just a kid, and there was only so much he could do. There was no way he could go back to the slums now, Slate had men everywhere there. Sleeping out on the streets was always a choice, but out here, even in the slightly more upmarket areas, he knew the cops had a zero tolerance attitude to vagrancy. And if he got caught and taken in, and they saw what he had in his bag... questions were probably going to be asked. Rio swallowed. And that was another point. What *was* he going to do with it all? He supposed he could always...

There was a screeching of tires behind him. Rio turned, and his heart skipped a beat. Barreling down the road towards him was a dusty black SUV. Just behind the tinted windows, he could see arms gesturing wildly - gesturing at him. *Godammit!* Breaking into a run again, Rio cut across the road and ran up the driveway of the single story house facing him. Dashing around the side of the property, he found himself in the backyard where a family was having dinner. Rio jumped up on the table and used it to launch himself over the back fence, ignoring the crash of plates and the family's cries of outrage as their pudding splattered on the floor. Rolling on the other side, he jogged up to reach the road opposite, looking up and down the street. There were enough properties and branching roads that he should be able to lose them easily enough. He hoped.

Setting off, his pace slowed when he came across a large, expensive blue car parked in front of one of the smaller houses that he'd seen so far. It was a convertible - and the roof was down. The boy grinned, and vaulted himself into the driver's seat. The grin faded when he saw the keys weren't left in the ignition. Rio quickly checked under the seat, in the glove compartment. Nothing. He punched the steering wheel in frustration, then looked up sharply at the sound of a rumbling engine, growing closer. Sweat dripping from him now, he pulled himself out and looked around desperately. His legs were exhausted, and he didn't think he had much much left in him. Then he noticed that the windows of the small house he was in front of were open. As quietly as he could, he made his way along the side of the house. From one of the windows, he could hear voices. Moving past it, Rio stopped at one of the windows further back, and jumped up, silently pulling himself through and landing stealthily in what turned out to be a bedroom. From outside, the noise of the engine droned on, incessantly. They were still looking. Crouching down, Rio took off his backpack and waited.

"A white gecko? Yes, he just went up to the 15th floor. Ancient Ruins section."

The green coloured spider gecko nodded quickly, almost dismissively at the receptionist. "Thank you." She started to head towards the elevator.

"Are you helping him look for... for Torment's Cataract? I'm sorry, I tried looking for it in the system, but nothing was there. Maybe you'll have more luck."

Triste Acyle's mouth set firmly. She didn't acknowledge that the receptionist had continued talking, and kept heading to the lift. *Damn it... at least I found him in time...* She hammered the button for the 15th floor, and clenched her fist as the lift shot up, her short, slender body tensed. *I've located him. About to make contact.*

Good. Hurry. *We need him as soon as possible*

Triste narrowed her eyes. *Affirmative.* The elevator made a ding noise, and the doors slid open. Stepping out, her thin legs carried her along the corridor, to the section marked 'Ancient Ruins'. Turning off, she walked the isles, looking up and down... then stopped dead. *There you are... Vergil.* The gecko was bent over a table, his back to her, pouring over a large book.

Triste gritted her teeth, then rearranged her features into something resembling a sympathetic expression. "Vergil?" she whispered, her voice disbelieving. She took a step towards him. "Is... is it really you?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **April 30, 2014, 04:52:47 pm**

Soren entered the shared apartment a while later. He placed a stack of cred on the table. "Not bad, I made about 15,000 today. Not bad for eight hour's work. Granted, I made more in Lanthae but it's not like I can be picky."

He got up and helped himself to a cup of tea from the fridge. "Anyways, how was your day?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 30, 2014, 05:18:36 pm**

Marie got picked for the Megastakes gambling tournament . Rose 's training for her role in the play is going well, and my jobs are progressing nicely. how would you like to move to a better apartment ? and have you seen Anne lately? Marita said, as she took the credit and swiped them into a credit counter ' total creds 6.1 million ' it read ' we have over 6 million creds now' Soren. enough to buy a better place

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 30, 2014, 05:34:30 pm**

Tony grinned as he took the beer and swigged gratefully. "Hey Lily! Good to see you!" He offered her a big wave as he drank. Now *that* beer was refreshing! "Yeah well... I can only dream, right?" he asked in response to Axel's comment about finding a girl who'd be into vintage cars. Speaking of the Delahaye, he was totally unaware that there was some kid currently in the driver's seat looking for the keys he had in his pocket.

Tony sat down at the same table Axel was at. "Your AC's busted?" he asked, swiveling to look at it with a raised brow. "Maybe I could get it running again... I work on my dad's cars after all." the ferret offered thoughtfully. "And hey, yeah! That sounds like a great idea! We should all have dinner! What are you doing tonight? I could make arrangements... uh nothing too fancy, of course!" he quickly added, knowing they couldn't afford some of the nicer places he dined at.

"And yeah..." The ferret nodded here, looking down at the table. "He uh... yeah he's still looking... but he's not doing too badly for himself though, relatively speaking." He wasn't aware that the little intruder outside was now in the house, and Tony casually leaned back in the chair, tilting it onto two legs as he took another swig.

A distance behind Agent Acyle, riding the next elevator up to the 15th floor, several nonchalantly clad individuals stood waiting patiently for the elevator to complete its journey. "We have her." a black and white tapir said into a small headset. "She's going up to the 15th floor."

"Right... remember, we need her *alive*. She's useless to us dead." The voice replying on the other end was only audible to the tapir, who nodded once.

"I know, I know. What about the white gecko?" he asked.

"Who?" came the response.

"She's following some white gecko. He important?"

A moment's hesitation and then "No. He's incidental. Kill him if he intervenes, but make sure you take her in one piece."

"Got it." the tapir murmured, and shifted his attention back to the numbers as they continued counting up.

Vergil looked up as he heard a female voice addressing him. Yes... *him*. His name! She had said "Vergil" and had even asked if it was really him. His big orange eyes moved upward until they were resting upon the spider gecko. He displayed no emotion except passive surprise, his wide eyes blinking as suddenly, he was hit by the memory again.

Yes... the memory of watching Rex battle that other reptile on the bridge of his flagship... it was her... standing before him right now... in the flesh. Gasping, he slowly stood up, fixing his gaze on her as if he were looking at a ghost hovering before him. "You..." he breathed. "You were... you were there..." he said slowly, fingers resting on the table top. "You... do you know who I am?" he asked softly. "I remember you... you fought Rex Sardolemuel onboard his ship... I witnessed it... I can't... I can't fully remember what happened but... it IS you!" he insisted. "What's going on? Who am I? Who are you? Do you... do you know?" His words rattled out like a machine gun, rapid and quickfire. He then blinked again, and shook his head. "Sorry I... I didn't mean to be rude it's just... you're the first person I've seen that I can CLEARLY remember! My mind's been all... hazy and... I have no idea who I am or what I was doing until before six months ago." he explained, holding his head a bit.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 30, 2014, 06:28:15 pm**

"You wanna have a look, go ahead," chuckled Lily. She acquiescently poured herself a small glass of beer, but someone who knew her well enough might be able to detect a slight tightness to her smile once the topic of a reunion was brought up. She's not a superstitious woman, but she suspected that a meeting with the old crew had a high chance of drawing undue danger or adventure on them, and she had quite enough of that from before. Plus they had never seen her as a regular human being, only as the psychotic grey-skinned creature that had hijacked and mutatsd her body beyonfld her control. This made her slightly embarrassed to consider seeing them again.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 01, 2014, 07:45:27 am**

Rio sat back and leaned against the wall, listening to the rumble of the SUV as it roamed around. Then he cocked his head as it grew quieter. They were going away! He knew he couldn’t assume they’d given up, but... at least he was safe for now.

Breathing a sigh of relief he closed his eyes, the exhaustion of running for most of the day catching up with him. The muted sounds of the voices coming from further in the house were almost comforting. Rio knew he should move, or at least find a place to hide, but his limbs suddenly felt as though they were made of lead. His head slowly leaning forwards, he drifted asleep.

Axel nodded when he heard how Soren was doing. “Well, that’s good. I’m glad. He deserves it.” Looking across at Lily, he noted the slight look of apprehension on her face. Reaching out a hand, he touched the top of her fingers and gave a small smile. “We might be busy tonight, but next time we’re free we’ll definitely let you know. It’ll be good to see everyone again.” He knew the idea made her slightly uncomfortable, but he thought that maybe if she saw

everyone again, as her normal self, it might stop her from feeling ashamed of what happened to her before, as if it were her fault. Deciding to drop the idea of a reunion for the moment, he turned his attention back to Tony.

"Yeah… I mean, if you want to give it a go, we'd really appreciate it. Thing keeps dying on us no matter how many times we try to fix it." Draining the last of his bottle, Axel stood up. "I'll go get the toolbox. Thanks Tony." He started to head out into the hall, and called back over his shoulder, "Hey, if you ever want help fixing a car I'll, ah... try and give it a go, I guess." He started to head for the storage cupboard, then remembered they'd left it in the bedroom after repairing a broken drawer that had fallen on Axel's foot. Turning, he made his way down the end of the hallway to the bedroom and opened the door. The bed was arranged lengthways in front of him as he stepped in. To his right, adjacent to the headboard, was the set of drawers with the toolbox placed on top. Axel made his way over then stopped, sensing another presence in the room. He turned, and his eyes widened when he saw the small shape leaning against the wall beneath the open window, facing the foot of the bed. The figure didn't move, and appeared to be out cold. *What the hell…* "Ah… guys? There's someone in the bedroom…"

Making his way further in, Axel approached the figure cautiously. It still didn't stir. *Is that a kid?!* Standing over him, he noticed a colourful backpack lying just next to him. He bent to pick it up, and was surprised by how heavy it was. Narrowing his eyes, Axel turned and placed in on the bed behind him, then crouched down and slowly reached out a hand to the sleeping kid. "Hey, are… are you okay?"

Rio's eyes flew open, and he jerked his head up in shock as he took in the lanky rat crouching over him. "Fuck off!" he yelled, kicking his foot out by reflex and landing Axel a mighty blow in the crotch. All the strength left the rat and, with an *Oof*, he collapsed back, cupping the afflicted area and groaning.

Rio jumped to his feet and looked down for his backpack, the colour leaving his face when he saw it was gone. *What the fuck?! Where is it?!* In his panicked state, he didn't notice that it was on the bed right in front of him.

"No, don't… don't worry about it," Triste said, stepping closer. "I'd heard you were back in Corona, Vergil, but actually seeing you again, in person, it's… it's a shock for me too." Her yellow eyes looked him up and down. "You really don't remember? *Anything*? Our squad? The attack on Rex Sardolemuel's ship? When Kalis fired on us, we all… I thought you were dead…" Triste said softly, reaching out and touching his shoulder as if to confirm he was really there. "My name's Triste Acyle. We're members of the Ivitz Federation. I don't know what's happened to you since the assault on Sardolemuel but…" She swallowed. "Maybe we shouldn't talk about this here. Vergil… come with me. I know where you can get answers." *I've got him. His memories… they're shattered.*

A pause. *Bring him in. Quickly.*

From somewhere behind, there was another quiet electronic beep as the second lift arrived.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 01, 2014, 03:42:05 pm**

"Yeah! I'll give ya a call sometime! We like to fix 'em on good days with lots of sun!" Tony called back to Axel. "Cause we'll usually take 'em out for a spin after the work's done." Closing his eyes, he continued leaning back in the seat. It wasn't so unusual that Lily would turn down an offer to dine together as a group. Far as he knew, they still didn't have much contact with the others, and Tony typically saw them separately when he visited.

But then, an unfamiliar voice yelled out for Axel to "fuck off" shortly after Axel said someone was in the bedroom, and the ferret's eyes shot open. "What the hell?" he asked, springing forward as he launched himself out of the seat. Tony no longer traveled unarmed, but the

small laser pistol he carried for self-defense was currently concealed up his sleeve along a drawer slider. Racing to where he thought he heard the voice, he skidded to a stop as he saw Axel doubled over. "Axel!" he exclaimed, going wide-eyed as he assessed the situation and saw the kid.

"What the hell... who are you?" he demanded, not moving from the entrance of the bedroom for the moment.

Triste Acyle worked to reassure him, and keep him calm. In spite of himself, Vergil did indeed feel himself relaxing as she approached him. There was something very pleasing about her voice to him... she was trying to make him feel at ease, and it was certainly working. He seemed to freeze as she reached out to touch his shoulder as he glanced down at her hand. So... he was part of her squad... amongst a friend, in that case. Yes, that made sense! He was former military, after all!

He couldn't quite place his finger on it, but something about her put him at ease, and made him feel safe. Realizing he was just staring at her hand, he blinked and shook his head, looking back up at her now. "Er, yes! Of course!" he quickly stated, nodding. "I'll go if it means I can find out who I am! For sure!"

The elevator doors opened behind them now, but Vergil could see who was getting out. It was five people: three humans, a tapir, and a serious looking tayra. Well, they all looked pretty serious in fact. The tayra hung back and moved around one of the bookcases while the other four approached Triste from behind, the tapir leading the way.

"Ms. Acyle! There you are!" the tapir spoke up now, smirking a bit as he came to a stop behind her. "New orders. You're to come with us at once as you're needed urgently on another project. So if you don't mind..." The three humans stood in a semi-circle around her with hands clasped in front of them. The tapir had a small but powerful taser concealed in his right hand, which he kept hidden by making a fist around it.

Vergil tried to catch her gaze to let her know something was off about this, and that while he couldn't read minds, this group was definitely *not* being sincere.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 01, 2014, 06:48:20 pm**

Soren got out some crab dip from the fridge and soy/algae crackers from the pantry. "Snack?" He offered the tray around.

He then turned to Marita. "Good call. To be frank, I'm not exactly comfortable in this area. A lot of my clients are people of...shall we say, questionable repute. And let's not forget those goons dressed in full battle gear we sometimes see outside."

The Human stole a glance at his rifle, ballistic vest and combat helmet in the corner of the cramped kitchen/living room. He never had to use it, thankfully. But he was glad it was there when some corporate thugs rampaged through the housing complex a few weeks ago, looking for some poor Augment who fell behind on payments for their upgrade.

"As for Anne, I haven't see her since this morning."

Soren looked at the picture of Axel and him enjoying a pint at The Electric Sheep back on Axel's birthday a year ago. "You know, I wonder what happened to Axel and Tony?"

Anne looked around as she darted into an alleyway. Even in the business district, there were a few alleyways that were less than pristine. An antique 2012 Lamborghini RevËnton thundered

past her. She scowled as the scent of the exhaust trailed behind. The vehicle definitely belonged to some rich stuffed suit; no one else could afford a burner like that.

The mare scowled. Her contact was supposed to be here. And sure enough, a messenger drone flitted down from one of the many elevated walkways crisscrossing the area. Despite that, sunlight was in no short supply as mirrors were carefully positioned so light reached all levels of the Business District.

The drone hovered and a voice with a soft Hong Kong accent came out of the speaker. "Here you are."

Anne swiped her cred chit on the drone's reader. It was a quarter of her day's wages at the warehouse she worked with. It was only a part-time job and she would have preferred working in one of the oil farms at the city borders. Unfortunately, her drug test came back positive. The drone beeped and a finger sized packet came out of the drone's cargo hatch.

She pocketed the package and looked around to make sure there weren't any cops around. Unlike Lanthae, bribing a Corona police officer was more than likely to result in an immediate arrest. Not to mention, they didn't take too kindly to public drug use or purchases.

(OOC - "burner" – slang for a combustion powered vehicle)
(OOC - If y'all are wondering, that drone belongs to the *Bak Long* Triads.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 01, 2014, 07:55:29 pm**

Broadstreet sat at his computer at his corner office. with the destruction of Lanthae, the surviving members of the opolice dep0rtment had been absorbed into Coronas, with broadstreet maintaining his rank and being placed in charge of nearly half the cir\ty's forces. the pay was beter, and the police under him here werent completely on the take as in lanthae. ' things were doing well for him at least.
-
Hopefully she'll get in soon.' Rose said we'll be moving out at the end of the month and moving into the inner part of the city" this was where the richer part of Corona lived, it was safer and cleaner there.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 02, 2014, 12:46:05 am**

"Oh dear, are you...are you all right?" Lily stammered nervously, running into the room. "It's okay!" she tried to console the rat. "We're not going to hurt you!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 02, 2014, 02:40:00 pm**

Rio looked quickly between the ferret and the woman who'd just rushed in. He finally noticed the backpack lying on the bed, and considered making a dash for it, but it was too close to them, and besides... where would he go? He swallowed. It was worth a try. His eyes grew wide and innocent. "Please, I'm... I'm so scared... I need help!" Rio turned his doe eyes to the downed rat, his voice trembling as if he was going to cry. "I, I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm so, so sorry! You just scared me! Please, I'm just a little boy..."

With Lily's help, Axel stood up slowly. His legs shook, then buckled, and he sat down on the bed with a groan. "What's... in bag?"

"Huh?"

Reaching next to him, Axel picked up the backpack and shook it weakly. "What's... *Ooohh*...

What's in this?"

Rio's face reddened. "Oh, nothing! Just, er, just toys and stuff!" Suddenly, the bag's zipper gave... and from it poured bundles and bundles of credits, raining on the bed and floor. Axel watched blankly as they tumbled out, and when at last the final one fell he turned his gaze up to the kid.

Rio's posture slumped. "Oh, fuck me." He sighed. "Alright. I'll cut the bullshit. But I *do* need some help." He licked his lips. "Could I maybe get a glass of water, or something? I'm really fucking thirsty."

Triste looked over her shoulder when she heard her name being called, and when she saw the large group gathered behind her, Triste turned around. "Another project. Really." ***Three humans, a tapir, and a tayra. The Ivitz didn't send them to find me, did they?***

No. Not on our records.

The spider gecko narrowed her eyes at them. She couldn't just discount them - they knew her name. "I'm not going anywhere with you," she said lowly. "Get out of here." Knowing the chances of *that* happening were fairly low, Triste shifted her posture slightly, defensively.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 02, 2014, 04:30:54 pm**

Tony blinked, and looked down at the whopping amount of credits sprawled out on the bed. "What the... hell?" he asked, noting it was a good amount, and much more than anyone would ever normally carry. "All right... where'd you get all this?" he asked suspiciously, picking one up and studying it to see if it was a forgery or genuine. "Furthermore, what's a guy with this many creds need to break into other people's homes for anyway? This stinks worse than a beached fish at low tide."

He had to admit though... his father had grown up kind of similar to this, and he wasn't completely without sympathy for the kid. "As for the glass of water, I don't see the harm in that, but this isn't my house, so it's not my call." he ultimately stated.

"I thought you might say that." the tapir said more menacingly this time, and smiled wickedly as his hand whipped upward and produced the taser in one swift motion. It only culminated in the actual firing of the small dart which lanced out the end of the device and headed right for the spider gecko with a slight crackle...

Vergil had seen this coming about a half a second before it occurred, and was already springing into action, but he had the table between himself and the group, so right as the taser fired he was leaping across said table, bounding over it and reaching down for his energy blade at his side right as the human on the far right started to turn towards him in a delayed reaction...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 02, 2014, 05:00:59 pm**

Lily had already rushed back to the kitchen and brought Rio a glass of water, having used the one she'd already set aside for Tony's beer. "Here you go," she smiled softly. "We won't harm you, it's all right."

She turned to the others. "Why does it matter where he got the credits? Look at his clothes, he's clearly a street urchin. I think we should replace his bag and help him on his way. We

could buy him a train ticket and he could start a new life in a nearby town. Chancellorsville perhaps." As a former fugitive herself, Lily had a soft spot for others who were on the lam with nobody to turn to, and was incredibly quick to forgive even the most suspicious of appearances. After all, if Axel had not given her the benefit of the doubt when they first met, she would have died in an alleyway on her first day in Lanthae.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 02, 2014, 05:21:44 pm**

"I'm only asking because if he pissed off the wrong guys, it'll mean a world of trouble for him if that money doesn't belong to him. There are some very powerful people in this city, and I don't like to think about the things they could do to him if they caught him. Might sound strange, given my own family, but I just want to make sure he's not gonna get into greater trouble after leaving here... or indeed, bring trouble here for that matter." Tony explained. "I could say it's not my problem, and it's not, but all the same, still want to make sure he'll be OK before we send him on his way."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 02, 2014, 06:17:56 pm**

"What do you mean you lost the creds!?" Ruozheng "Rory" Zhao thundered, pointing a steely finger at the two unlucky underlings in front of him. The scent of incense hung faintly in the air, hinting at the meeting place's "official" purpose as a meeting place for a Chinese fraternal organization. Behind him was a small shrine to the gods of the Earth.

"It was not our fault, Sir," the Chinese Water Dragon said, his tail twitching nervously. "We were wrapping up a deal."

"Not your fault!? Why the fuck weren't you watching the bag?" The Triad enforcer then rubbed his temples with his mechanical hands. He slowly took a deep breath to calm down. "There's a bug inside the bag. I'll go send some 49ers after it."

He then turned to the duo. "You two, on the other hand. Get out of my office! And find some way to redeem yourselves before I have you fed to the catfish and crabs!"

The two 49ers scurried out of the office.

Rory pressed the intercom on his desk. "Yuan, Lin and Zhu to my office!"

Less than three minutes later, a Giant Panda and two Humans entered the office. All of them wore very sharp business attire. Both the Humans were Augments despite looking like Baselines, equipped with artificially enhanced senses as well as reinforced bones and artificial muscles far stronger than natural ones. However, one of them was bald.

"Your orders?" the Giant Panda asked.

"Find the creds those two *fan tung* lost."

"Yes, *Dai Lo*."

(OOC - *Fan tung* [transliteration is probably off] is a Cantonese word literally meaning "rice bucket" but is slang for "idiot" or "dumbass".)
(OOC - *dai lo* literally means "big brother" but it's also apparently a respectful term that subordinates use to refer to their superiors.)
(OOC - Lin is the Giant Panda. Yuan is the bald Human. Zhu is the other Human.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 02, 2014, 07:51:40 pm**

Rio took the glass, gulping down the water quickly with a satisfied gasp. "Thanks. Alright, yeah, the money might not be mine exactly." He looked at Tony. "And I wasn't breaking in here in steal anything. I swear. I was hiding."

Axel looked down at the credits uneasily. "Answer his question," he told the kid. The pain from the kick was starting to fade into a sick pain in his stomach, but at least he felt like he could breath now. "Who's money is this?"

Rio looked down at his worn trainers. "It might...kind of be, ah... the Chinese Mafia's money," he said shiftily. He looked up at the three of them. "Look, I know this sounds bad, but... I got payed to run ingredients over to the Triads. You know, for drugs, that kind of stuff. Yesterday, I was making another delivery to their warehouse, and when I was in there I saw this *huge* fucking stash of credits. I knew it wouldn't be there long, so this morning I broke in and just... stole it, kinda." Rio gritted his teeth, his hands fiddling with the glass uncomfortably. "Look, have you guys seen what it's like in the slums here? And I mean *the slums*, the real shit pits. Living there... it's the worst fucking thing I can think of and until I saw that money, I didn't think there was any way I could get out of it."

The boy slouched back against the wall, and now the emotion in his voice was real. "I didn't want to live like that anymore, man. Fuck that. So yeah. I took it. I thought it could be my way out." He glanced between the three adults. "I don't think they can find me out here, and I just need some time to figure out what I'm gonna do with all this shit. And I can't stay on the streets or, or go to a hotel or something. I mean, a kid with all this?" Rio waved a hand despondently at the credits. "Sure. People aren't going to notice *that*. Please, just... look, if you let me stay here just for a bit, I'll split some of the cash with you. Just for a while. If I go out there like this, I'm as good as dead."

Axel bit his lip. This sounded like trouble... serious trouble. But if the kid was telling the truth, and they just kicked him out... *Godammit.* Sighing, he looked up at Lily, unsure.

Triste saw the tapir's fist rising, and without thinking she lurched to the side, the dart missing her neck by millimeters. In a smooth motion, she seized the tapir's arm and pulled him forwards, pistoning her right leg forwards. Her foot connected with his knee, and with a wet pop his leg seemed to snap in half.

Stepping back to let him fall to the floor, she flicked her hand and suddenly a small, curved knife appeared in her hand. Triste twisted the knife around so it was held in a reverse grip and started to advance on the others, catching Vergil leaping over the table in the corner of her eye.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 02, 2014, 09:06:50 pm**

"Well, we certainly don't want any of the money!" exclaimed Lily. "If you stay, it'll be for free." And temporary, she wanted to add, but that would seem harsh. Truth be told, she didn't quite understand the degree of danger this lad had put himself in; her fugitive story cast significantly less blame on herself than Rio's, but she could understand the desire to escape the street life, especially as a child.

She glanced at Tony, seeing as how he knew more of this stuff than she did. "What if...we drove the bag of money out into the countryside and left it somewhere? Or just bought this young man a ticket to another country? It doesn't sound he should stay around here..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 02, 2014, 11:11:57 pm**

Tony closed his eyes at the mention of the Chinese mobs. "Christ..." he breathed. "Not... the best and safest way to get rich quick, kid." the ferret commented, shaking his head. "You're putting yourself in real danger... and I'm not talking the kind you see in movies. This is the real deal. I should know, since my father's a pretty famous don. Staying here's not gonna work. A lot of times, these mobs tag their creds so they can trace 'em. That way it's easier to regather the funds if they've been laundered... or stolen. You gotta ditch that money, kid. *Now*." Tony emphasized. "I understand you want out of that life but... stealing mob funds isn't the way."

He nodded at Lily. "Yeah... or we could return it. Either way's fine with me. We dump it somewhere to be found, or we give it back. Either way, the last thing to do is have him keep moving with it in his possession. They'll track him down. I don't mind spotting him cash for a ticket, but he travels with that money at his own risk, is all I'm saying." the mustelid cautioned.

"Axel... we gotta get rid of that money... or let him go off with it, but he's dead if he does that. I'm not sure how much time we have, but we can't sit here discussing this." Tony explained with dead seriousness.

The tapir screamed in agony as his leg was broken cleanly by Agent Acyle. "Gaggggh! You fuckin' bitch!" he wailed, going down to the floor. "Get her!" he shouted in agony, holding his leg as he fumbled around for the taser, which he'd released after the searing pain had shot through his leg.

Beginning to draw their guns, the human in the middle looked at the human to his right with some confusion. "We can't kill her!" he reiterated.

"Crippling her she'll still be in one piece!" the other guy retorted as he took aim with a pistol for Triste's legs.

The guy that Vergil was heading for just barely drew his pistol before losing his hand when the gecko's energy blade was ignited, the beam slicing the arm off below the elbow. He screamed in pain and shock as he toppled backwards, clutching the stump where his lower right arm had been.

"Shit!" The guy in the middle pivoted and fired on Vergil, the white gecko managing to dodge to the side just in time as a particularly thick tome on ancient ruins behind him took the full impact of the bullet that had been intended for him.

Unseen behind the next bookcase, the tayra poked his head out and saw the unfolding battle. "Dammit... we've got problems." he muttered into his headset.

"Second team is standing by down below... we'll move on your signal." was the response.

"Might need that now... but hold off on blowing the place." the tayra replied. "I want to try and minimize casualties if possible for the moment." He slid back out of sight behind the books, pulled out a pistol and yanked the slide back as he steadied himself. Not yet... as team leader, he couldn't expose himself just yet...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 03, 2014, 10:49:16 am**

"Give it back?!" Rio spluttered. "No fucking way. No. I can't see them again. Even if I do, it's not like they're just gonna forget about it. And what would I do in another country?"

"There's no way you're staying here with it," Axel said.

"Alright then, I'll just... I'll do what that guy said! Hide it in the countryside somewhere,

maybe I can find a way to use it..."

"He just said it's probably tagged," the rat interrupted him. "If you use it, or keep it anywhere near you, they'll find you. Don't you get that?" He ran an exasperated hand through his hair. "Jesus... what the hell were you thinking?"

Rio's mouth opened, then closed again. He swallowed, his fingers working at the glass as the reality of the situation he'd gotten himself into dawned on him. He'd thought maybe he could try to make a new start, somehow... but in the end he was going to be in the same position as always. Or in an even worse one - now it wasn't even safe for him to return to the slums. He had nothing.

Axel sighed and rested his head in a hand. "*Shit...* Alright, we'll drive it out to the countryside and dump it. The further we put between us and it, the better." He looked at Rio. "Did anybody see you come here?" The boy shook his head no. Axel nodded and leaned over, roughly shoving the credit bundles back into the bag. Making sure he hadn't missed any, he stood up and slung it over one shoulder, the strap set at a size far too small for him. "You can stay here for tonight. In the morning, we'll figure out what to do with you." Axel looked over at Lily, his ears drooping slightly. *We can't just kick him out onto the street.*

Triste sprinted for the human on the right as he took aim. Using her smaller size to her advantage, she drew within reach, slapped his gun upwards then hooked the curved edge of the blade around the inside of his thigh. Drawing it back towards her, the blade sliced through the human's muscle and femoral artery. As he fell to his knees in front of her, Triste slashed the knife sideways to open his throat. At the sound of a sudden gunshot, her head jerked sideways and her eyes widened as she saw the man firing at Vergil. *No!*

Pushing the dying human out of the way, Triste leaped up onto the man's back, wrapped a spindly arm around his neck and jabbed her fist forwards, the blade sinking between his vertebrae. She twisted the knife and there was a crunch as his spinal column separated.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 03, 2014, 02:20:47 pm**

Tony nodded at the rat's outline. "All right... I guess I'm the one who has to drive it. I'm not sure I'm gonna go entirely out into the countryside, since that's a bit far. I might just dump it as soon as I can, or... see if the triads' contact info is anywhere conveniently stashed in my phone. I'm wary about driving it all the way out of the city, since it's going to look like I'm fleeing with it." he explained.

He picked up the bag, giving it a woeful look. "Um... you mind if I take the beer with me? I'm gonna need some fortification before I get out on the road." Tony gave Axel a hopeful look. Drinking and driving was of course totally illegal, but the ferret wasn't planning on being overt about it, and one beer wouldn't bring him over the limit.

Pulling his phone out, he began searching through his contacts, seeing if his father had given him the info of any of the triads in Corona in case of emergencies.

Vergil paused as Triste rather effectively killed the two humans in the middle of the room. That just left the partially armless human, who was going into shock, and the tapir, who'd managed to finally fumble around enough to locate the taser. Vergil gave the fellow one look and just as he was raising to fire into Triste's back, the tapir was suddenly thrown backwards against the bookcase and let out a surprised gasp as he crumpled, unconscious amidst a pile of books.

"Well... friends of yours?" Vergil asked as he straightened up and looked around before whipping his tail into the back of the head of the human he'd "disarmed" earlier in order to get

him to cease his bellowing. "Or should I say, friends of 'ours', since apparently, I was in your squad at some point?" He extinguished his blade, and dropped it back onto the belt at his side, his feathers standing a bit more on end from the adrenaline rush he'd just been through.

Behind the bookcase, the tayra silently cursed. Dammit! So much for his team! Sliding the gun quietly back into the waist of his pants, he tried to act inconspicuous as he began making his way back to the elevator, but then stopped, and figured he'd listen in from his position. Besides, he was dealing with at least one telekinetic, maybe two. The gecko had held his own, much to the team's surprise. Their lack of preparation had cost them, and now they were down a squad. At least they had sizable backups waiting in the wings so to speak...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 03, 2014, 04:16:45 pm**

Lin, Yuan and Zhu walked around Corona's business district. All three of them carried Beretta 92 pistols inside their sport coats. While the weapons they carried were practically antiques compared to the energy weapons that were readily available on the civilian market, they had a distinct advantage. Thanks to their lack of a battery and electronics, most scanners would not detect them.

Of course, no one suspected the trio to to Triads. They looked just like any other businessman.

"That's odd," Yuan said, looking at his tablet. "The money went to the edge of town."

"We'll go there," Lin said as he flagged down a taxi.

The trio bundled into the taxi. "Where to?" the Human driver asked, a slight German accent tinting his voice.

"To Crown Gardens," Lin said.

The driver gave the trio a funny look. "Do you mean Crown *Avenue*? I can't seeó" Crown Gardens was a working class neighborhood outside Corona city limits. Crown Avenue was a posh upmarket neighborhood near the Financial District.

"Crown Gardens," Lin said, cutting the driver off.

"Whatever you say." The repulsorcar lifted off vertically as he merged into the skyway above and headed for Crown Gardens. Where Axel and Lily lived.

Soren was about to put another lentil chip into his mouth when he saw Anne perched atop the roof of the next door building. "Holy shit!" he exclaimed. "Maria! Rose! Look out the window! It's Anne!"

Anne breathed in the air as she stood atop the building. She peered behind her, enormous wings of pure golden light shimmered. She had done it, she had somehow become a Cerosala. And now she would prove her acension by flying.

Of course, none of this was real. The marijuana joint she had purchased and smoked had been of an unusual strain. Genes belonging to the ergot fungus had been inserted into the plant via genetic engineering techniques. As a result, smoking a full joint was like taking multiple hits of LSD. At the same time. Normally, this strain was supposed to be used in miniscule amounts to make "space cookies" and similar psychoactive foods.

(OOC - Cerosala are equinoid angels with a unicorn horn and wings of pure light. They feature

in myths in the *Into the Black* 'verse)". The term is from Latin combining the words for horn and wing.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 03, 2014, 05:17:19 pm**

"You can have anything you like!" exclaimed Lily. "Maybe some strawberry ice cream in case it gets too hot?"

She looked at Rio. "Of course he can stay the night with us. And then we'll give him what he needs to live for a while wherever he turns up." She said this last bit hesitantly, as she knew that Axel had been saving up in hopes of upgrading their current living situation, and that slush fund is obviously from where Rio's gift would be coming. Also, she suspected Rio would probably misuse most of the money and wind up in his original ways, not due to any fault of his own except youth and inexperience. But the alternative was letting him live with them longer than part time, and she couldn't ask that of Axel. While part of her had been wanting children for a while now, this neighborhood was hardly the healthiest place for a child to grow up, and she could never bring herself to ask Axel. She suspected he was too busy trying to keep their own lives afloat without having to care for yet another.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 03, 2014, 07:15:21 pm**

Axel smiled grimly. "Take it. Ice cream's off limits though." He was trying to make jokes, but inside his stomach was turning knots. "Be careful, alright?" he said, putting a hand on the ferret's shoulder. "And when it's done, give us a call so we know you're okay."

"Can I have a beer?" Rio piped up.

Turning, Axel frowned. "No."

A sulky look passed across the boy's face. "Fucking bullshit," he said quietly.

"Hey! Do you know what a risk this guy is taking? *For you*? You haven't even said thank you."

Rio looked at Tony holding the bag, his dark hair falling over his eyes. All he saw was someone taking off with the money he'd worked so hard to get, the money that could have spelt a new life for him. "Thank you," he said eventually. It didn't sound sincere.

Axel sighed. "Just... sit there and be quiet," he said, pointing to the corner of the bed. The rat turned back to Tony. "We owe you for this. Thanks Tony."

"You could say that. It was time I found some new friends, anyway," Triste said drily. She slid the knife from the man's back and wiped the blood from its surface on his shoulder. Sliding it back into the strap on her forearm, she looked down at the bodies around her. "Kalis' men, probably. They've been stepping up their attacks lately, and that makes me uncomfortable. Something big's coming, Vergil. And we're going to need your help."

She looked up at Vergil and tilted her head. "You still haven't lost it, I see." A smile played across her face. Gesturing, she started to walk back to the elevators. "Let's go. You won't find your answers if you're dead, Vergil." ***We were just attacked. Likely Kalis' men.***

You can't allow any harm to come to the target. Hurry back.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 03, 2014, 11:18:49 pm**

Tony nodded, and hefted the bag over his shoulder. "Friends can't be in debt to each other." he responded simply, and began heading for the kitchen, swiping the beer on the way out. "I'll be sure to call when I'm out of harm's way!" he shouted back into the house, and made his way quickly down the path to the Delahaye. Finally finding the number of "Rory" Zhao, he decided to try the Bak Long Triad first. They were by far the most prominent triad in Corona, after all.

Sliding behind the wheel, he started up the engine and got the expensive car rolling. Chugging the beer, he dialed Rory's number to find out what was up, and if he knew anything about the missing money. Of course... he'd need to tread cautiously. If it wasn't the Bak Long Triad's money, they might try and hunt him down anyway once they learned he was in possession of quite the amount of creds.

The tayra peered cautiously around the bookcase again, watching the two head for the elevators. He didn't make any sudden moves though.

Vergil nodded as he followed after Triste. "I still haven't lost it?" he smiled back. "Good to know I'm as good as I was... and Kalis? I knew it!" he snarled. "He made an appearance in Lanthae a half a year ago, and mostly leveled the place! I'm convinced he's part of my past and I was right! I've been meaning to try and seek him out for answers but... he doesn't exactly seem like the type of person you find... more like he finds you, and seems I'm not too far off. At least you and the others can provide me with answers." he confessed gratefully.

Something about how she said something big was coming unsettled him, and the gecko figured the faster they got to wherever she wanted to take him, the better. As the elevator doors closed and they began heading down, the tayra finally spoke into his headset. "They're on the way down! You'll have to work fast!"

"Copy. Police are already on their way. No point in wasting time." was the response from the second team's leader.

Inside the elevator, Vergil looked over at Triste. "So... how well did we know each other before the whole... thing on Rex's ship?" he inquired.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 04, 2014, 04:38:51 am**

Lily was silent as Tony left the place. A few awkward moments passed.

"...so, uh, what did you say your name was?" asked Lily, coming up with the best icebreaker she could. "Do you want anything to...drink?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 04, 2014, 03:13:40 pm**

What the heck is she doing/ rose started as she rushed to the wiondow. the next building was roughly 3 stories taller than their building ' is she dealong drugs again?
- you know anne, its how she pays her portion of rent' Marita sighed.' We need to get her attention! Soren! does she have a phone? call it!' she said to him. marie gasped as she saw Anne on the roof, apparently ready to jump off..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 04, 2014, 04:08:37 pm**

"Something tells me that she went scavenging and blew her creds on something!" Soren grabbed the radio transmitter that Anne had scavenged from somewhere.

"Anne!" he said into the radio handset. "Back away from the edge! Step back from the edge!"

Soren's voice, distorted by radio static echoed in her head, courtesy of her antenna horn.

"Ehh, Soren? Did you ascend too?" she asked aloud and transmitted.

By this time, numerous spectators were crowded around the ground floor and staring at the spectacle.

Soren covered the handset with his hand. "I'll keep her talking. You three get to the next building and grab her."

"Anne," he said. "So tell me what you 'ascension' is like?"

"Oh it's wonderful! I can see for miles!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 04, 2014, 04:21:01 pm**

Marita , Rose and marie ran out of the room, and headed down the stairs. it would probably take them a few minutes to get to the top of the building. hopefully Soren could keep Anne occupid long enough for them to grab her. marita rushed in and reached an elevator which took a couple minutes to open. the three of them entered, she punched the button that said' roof', and the elevator began to ascend.' wonder what drugs shes on to do something that.." Rose said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 04, 2014, 04:48:52 pm**

The boy looked up at Lily as he sat on the corner of the bed, his lower lip threatening to protrude in a pout. "Rio," he said sulkily. "And I don't know why I *can't* have a beer..."

Axel grimaced. "Because you're... like, what, 10 years old? No way."

"I'm 13!"

"Whatever. You can have, ah... juice or something instead. This is Lily, by the way, and I'm Axel." Rio shrugged his shoulders. Gritting his teeth, Axel turned to Lily. "Can I speak to you for a second?" Leaving the bedroom, he walked with her to the kitchen and pulled open the fridge. "I'm, ah... I know I kind of said he could stay without asking you," he said as he took out a carton containing the last of the orange juice and poured it out into another glass. "I'm sorry. But, ah... you know... I'd feel pretty bad if we just kicked him out." Axel put the carton back and gave Lily a smile. "Tomorrow, I'll figure out what to do. It'll be okay."

Triste gave Vergil a sideways glance as the elevator traveled down. "Well, now I'm offended if you don't remember *that*." Her tail snaked out and lightly brushed up against his leg. "Let's just say we had our own... special training program. Maybe now that you're back, we can make sure we haven't gotten rusty."

Taking her tail away abruptly, she crossed her arms and faced forwards again. The numbers

above the door continued to drop as they approached the ground floor.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 04, 2014, 05:24:27 pm**

"Axel," Lily smiled, "of course I want to help out Rio. I'd never turn away a guest, especially one in need."

She quickly prepared Rio's juice. "We can do what we can for him while he's here. This could be his first opportunity to try out a more normal life. We'll make it the best one we can."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 04, 2014, 08:43:41 pm**

Tony got no response the first time he called. OK, time to try the next one. After calling the Red Lotus Triad and informing them in very vague terms that he might have something of theirs in his possession but getting only a negative response to his prompts, Tony began to think that perhaps Rio had been screwing with them. Sighing, he drove the Delahaye down another residential street in the next neighborhood over. It would be a waste of to time to call every single triad out there, so he decided to do the next best thing he could think of.

The ferret slowed the Delahaye as his eyes scanned the street for what he was looking for. Finally pulling the car to a halt on a street he judged to be far enough away from Axel's neighborhood, the mustelid exited the car and proceeded to walk over to the nearest storm drain. Acting totally natural, Tony dumped the bag of credits down the opening and walked back to his car. Whistling to himself, he pulled the door open, slid behind the wheel, and started driving off, the bag now out of his possession.

Reaching for his phone, he dialed Axel.

Vergil's orange eyes grew rather wide as Triste's tail gently brushed along his leg with delicate force. Not usually one to think about such pursuits, the gecko had to admit he was feeling a bit of... longing right now. So, it had been like that, had it? They hadn't seen each other longer than ten minutes and she was already looking forward to seeing how in practice with his "special training" he was? He certainly wasn't going to protest that. Smirking, he nodded once. "Heh, very well. I'll see how well I hold up." he said with some measure of confidence.

As the elevator dropped, his hand suddenly lashed out and he hit 2 so the elevator would stop on the mezzanine level first. "They're waiting for us downstairs!" he warned. "I just hope there's a way out on the second floor." he murmured, the elevator stopping with a ding on the mezzanine now.

Upstairs, the tayra was frantically radioing down that the target might be getting off on 2. In the lobby, the second team decided to drop the pretense, and started whipping out high powered laser rifles from bags. Training them up above, screams erupted from patrons as they noticed the weapons. "Remember, take her alive!" shouted one of them.

"Pain in the ass!" a second yelled.

Vergil could see for the moment they were out of sight from the ground floor. "Windows to the right." He nodded in their direction. "You fast?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 04, 2014, 09:33:41 pm**

Axel smiled and kissed Lily on the forehead. "Right. It doesn't look like he's had it easy. And, hey, maybe it'll even be fun having a kid around for a bit. You know, practice for if *we* ever decide to, ah... Well, you know... Later, I mean. Ah..." Axel's ears started turning pink. The phone rang suddenly. Axel started, then took it off the handset and answered it.

"Tony? Is everything okay? Is it done?" he asked anxiously as they started making their way back to the bedroom.

Triste peeked down through the glass to the lobby below. Those were some high grade weapons... and with all the civilians down there, things would be complicated. Shaking her head, she turned to Vergil as he mentioned the windows.

"I guess you're about to find out," she said lightly, preparing herself. Triste motioned to Vergil. "After you."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 04, 2014, 10:51:05 pm**

Tony breathed a sigh of relief when he heard Axel pick up. OK, so far, so good. No problems with the triads... yet. "Yeah... as done as I could make it, at least. I dumped the backpack down a storm drain in the next neighborhood. Its weight should prevent it from being carried anywhere beyond the drain, and even if it's swept away... all the better. We'll have 'em chasing after that instead of poking around here." he quickly explained.

"Anyway, you got things covered over there? Need me to come back?" he asked, turning the Delahaye around and starting back in the general direction of Axel's neighborhood.

Nodding once, Vergil charged out onto the mezzanine, drawing the immediate attention of the team below. "There they are!" one shouted, and began blasting away at the white gecko while another behind him tried to shoot out the glass panels separating Vergil and Triste to cut her off. Vergil looked behind him, ducking as he did so to avoid his head being sliced off. Curious... they didn't seem to be too keen on using lethal force against Triste.

Turning his attention to the windows up ahead, Vergil focused and shattered the one directly in front of them, hoping there weren't any innocents down below, though he was pretty sure these windows opened up onto an alley. Already the sound of sirens could be heard wailing from outside, and he was at least thankful the Corona authorities were on the ball with this.

One of the members of the second team was racing up the stairs to the mezzanine to try and get behind Triste. Keeping low, Vergil skidded to a halt just beneath the window. "Better hurry!" he called back to her, checking to make sure they were still in good standing to escape.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 04, 2014, 11:23:39 pm**

Lily brought Rio his juice. "Here you go," she smiled.

She sat on the side of the bed. "Let's go make the couch in the guest room into a bed. You'll be close to the kitchen, feel free to eat whatever you like, and I'll show you where the restroom is."

She smiled. "And I bet I know something in the living room you'd like to try before going to sleep..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 05, 2014, 12:57:22 am**

(White Dragon Headquarters)

Rory had just came from a lunch banquet with several of his fellow red poles. The meal itself was quite something. White cut catfish with scallion and ginger, soy sauce poached sea bass and a dessert of tofu pudding in a ginger and sugar syrup.

As was tradition, he did not have his cell phone with him.

He passed by the shrine of Guan Yu as he took a seat at his desk. He looked at his cell phone and saw he had a voicemail. And it was from Tony Stracci.

"Fucking hell, it's that *bak gwei* again."

He opened the voicemail and read the message. Tony had found the creds. This was gonna be ugly if his three 49ers met him. And it could lead to a conflict between the White Dragon Triads and the Stracci Family. Which was *not* a good outcome.

The Human opened a channel to the trio. "Lin, Yuan, Zhu! If you encounter a Ferret holding the creds, find out his name before you beat his ass! If he's a Stracci, you ask for the creds back but *do not* harm him!"

(Crown Gardens)

Lin kept an eye out while the two Humans scanned around the Crown Gardens neighborhood. He was aware that he and his fellow 49ers stood out in their business attire but he wasn't too concerned. As a Giant Panda, he was blessed with immense strength. And of course, the business suits were carbon nanotubes, made to be bullet resistant and fireproof.

It wasn't *too* bad. Though there was a lot of graffiti on the concrete buildings, elevated walkways and elevated highways. A few hooligans riding either hoverbikes or wearing flying frames flitted around, either racing or painting graffiti. A few working class men drank beer and chatted on the front stoop of one of the houses.

"The cash is in the next neighborhood," Yuan said, looking up from his tablet. It's not moving.

"Move out then!" Lin barked.

The trio headed up an elevated walkway that was a direct route to the neighboring development. They passed by various working class people who sometimes stared at them but other than that, they were mostly ignored.

(Mott Place)

Soren's heart pounded in his chest. "So Anne, how was ascension?"

Her voice came through the radio. "It was amazing. Your spirit's just floating up, up and away. It's like all your earthly cares just vanish."

Please hurry, he thought. He wasn't sure how much longer he could keep Anne talking. Knowing what happened here, he was sure those onlookers were exhorting her to jump.

(OOC - *bak gwei* is Cantonese for white guy. It's not a polite way to refer to a White Westerner. Rory's not a speciesist. But he is a racist.)

(OOC - If no one minds, I'll name Soren's neighborhood.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 05, 2014, 06:04:54 am**

Rio took the juice, shifting a little uneasily as Lily sat near him. "Uh... thanks," he said as he reached beside him and plucked a pack of *Smokey Bear* cigarettes from the bed. Tapping one out in what seemed to be a well practiced move, he held it between his teeth and slid a cheap plastic lighter from his pocket.

"Yeah, we've got it covered here," Axel said brightly as he entered the room. "Thanks again, Tony. I guess we'll..." He trailed off when he saw Rio taking out a pack of familiar looking cigarettes. He'd promised Lily that he was going to give up smoking, but a few days ago temptation had been his downfall and *Smokey Bears* had always been his favourite. "Oh crap. I'll call you later, Tony." Axel hung up, and took a step further into the room. "*Hey*, what's, ah... what's this now..."

Rio lit the cigarette then paused. "Oh, fuck. Sorry, I'm being rude. Want one?" he asked through clenched teeth, putting away the lighter and holding the pack out to first Lily then Axel. "I guess they're yours. Found them in your underwear drawer."

Axel paled, and now it was his turn to shift uneasily. "What?! That's just, like, ah, not true, honey. I've never seen them..." He trailed off. "Wait, what were you doing in our underwear drawer?"

The boy shrugged and blew out a reasonable attempt at a smoke ring.

Axel walked up to him, plucked the cigarette from his mouth and snatched the pack away, putting it in his pocket and giving Lily a knowing glance. "For safe keeping..." He decided Rio could keep the orange juice.

"Hey! What the fuck!" Rio protested. "I can deal with no beer, but what the hell's wrong with a smoke?! *It's like breathing fresh air, only better!*," he said, quoting a poster he'd seen. Sighing, he looked down dejectedly at his glass. "...What's in the living room?" he asked Lily eventually.

Triste sprinted up behind Vergil, feeling an impact run along the floor next to her as someone fired a round at her feet. She caught up to Vergil and looked over the edge quickly. The window *did* lead into an alley... complete with an open dumpster full of trash. *How clichÈ...*

From behind, she could hear pounding feet as the second team charged up to meet them. The panicked screams of the civilians continued to echo about, a stark contrast to the utter silence that had met her when she'd first arrived at the archives. Triste looked at the gecko beside her. "No time like the present, Vergil," she muttered and pushed him out, aiming for the dumpster. With a last glance at the gunmen who'd finally managed to reach the mezzanine level, she leaped out after him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 05, 2014, 06:30:56 am**

Lily pursed her lips when she saw the cigarettes. "Axel...honestly..."

She ushered Rio towards the living room. "*Nobody* in this household smokes," she said firmly. "Especially young boys."

The living room was warmly lit but a bit sparse. Only a few couches, a threadbare rug, and a

counter containing a television furnished its expanse. The last of these Lily regarded with a smile. "*This* is what boys your age like! Television!"

She flicked the set on and sat down with him on the couch. The current channel was showing a laser golf match. "If you've never tried one of these before, you'll fall in love!" She handed him the remote. "Use these buttons to change what you want to watch. There are all sorts of things on, just look around."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 05, 2014, 07:41:39 am**

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the girls reached the roof and headed out. knowing anne had great strengths, Marita had grabbed a syringe containing a drug anti-toxin, it was used to stop ODs and return users experiencing hallucinations to normal. which, judging from what Marita had overhead from Soren , Anne was now experiencing. Anne thought she could fly, it meant the drug she had taken was a powerful one to form such a powerful belief in the user.' Grab Her! marita said, and she grabbed anne around her waist and began to pull. Rose lent her assistance and Marie did as well.thanks to the element of surprise and their combined strength they had managed to bring Anne back from the edge and were now on the floor of the building roof . Marita could hear disappointed cries and some boos from below. the group down there had wanted her to jump. 'As Rose and Aarie held Anne down, she pulled out her phone and sent Soren a text message ' We got her Soren. Applying anti-hallucination drug now. if she gets nabbed by the cops shes going to spread many years in prison, the cops here are a far more ' law and order' bunch' than those in Lanthae. There you could get people off by greasing a few palms, here not so much. she needs to get into rehab, like Rose did.' Marita finished the text.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 05, 2014, 04:34:58 pm**

Tony hung up after Axel had to go. Grinning a bit to himself, the ferret realized that the rat practically had a kid to take care of now. He had to admit, it would certainly be good practice in case the couple decided to have kids. Well, that was one friend down. He knew Vergil was getting back to Corona today, but the mustelid decided to wait a bit before calling him. So that left Soren and the others... and maybe even Anne.

Reaching for his phone again as he took another swig of beer, Tony dialed Sroen as the Delahaye shot back onto the highway. At least that mess with the triad's money was behind him now.

The gecko didn't have any further time to react before he was pushed out the window by Triste. Crying out as he fell and suddenly found himself buried amidst the refuse, Vergil sputtered and tried to flounder his way to the top. Unfortunately, he wasn't fast enough, and was soon face to face with Triste's not insignificant chest. "Ooof!" He gasped as he tried to pull back amid the massive black bags. "Sorry!" he hastily apologized. "Quick! Get out!" he ordered as he grasped the top of the dumpster and hauled himself out, brushing his feathers rapidly as he did so.

As soon as Triste was out, Vergil telekinetically pushed the dumpster down the alley to the front of the building. It worked to draw the attention of the thug who appeared at the window. "This way!" Vergil called, waving as he ran in the opposite direction, to the street at the rear of the archives.

Behind them, Vergil could hear the dumpster collide with a parked car. He didn't wait around to hear if Kalis's men bought it or not. Rounding the building to the street, the gecko attempted to act as casual as he could under the circumstances. "Well I hope you have some form of transportation, because I'm afraid I'm fresh off the train." he explained. He had to admit, he

was extremely eager to learn about his identity and his link to Rex and Kalis. "Where to from here?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 05, 2014, 05:30:58 pm**

(Mott Place)

Soren's phone buzzed. He breathed a sigh of relief. He texted the girls back. *Good. Now we gotta haul her into rehab and keep her away from the cops.*

When he finished, he got a call from Tony. "Hey, Tony. It's nice to see you again but I really can't chat. Anne just tried jumping off the roof. She just got toasted on some really strong shit. Right now, we have to get her into rehab before she gets arrested and/or kills someone or herself."

Anne struggled against the trio who were pinning her to the ground. "Get off of me! What the fuck do you think you're doing!?" The hallucinations had worn off but she was now quite pissed off.

(Hauer Square)

Hauer Square was a working class neighborhood just like Crown Gardens. Except it was a bit closer to the vertical farms so there it was much less well lit. Despite the seemingly perpetual twilight in the area, children of all species and races played on the sidewalks and streets.

Zhu waved back and smiled as a group of Komodo Dragon hatchlings stopped their game of tag to wave to him.

At Yuan's direction, they turned down an alleyway. "Right, the creds are somewhere in here."

"I think I see them!" Lin piped up. Thanks to his Ursine low-light vision, he could see the bag of creds in the storm drain. Thankfully, it hadn't rained so the drain was dry.

Grunting, Zhu lifted the heavy steel grate as if it weighed nothing. While Yuan kept an eye out, Lin used a piece of rebar he bent into a hook to grab the filthy backpack.

Zhu put the steel grate back in place and retrieved a plastic bag from his pocket. Making sure no one could see them, the trio transferred the creds to the opaque plastic bag.

Tossing the filthy backpack into a dumpster, they exited the alley and headed back to their headquarters.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 05, 2014, 05:39:26 pm**

Marita jabbed anne in the leg with the anti-drug serum and injected it into her ' You were on some serious drugs. you were pretty spaced out' marita said as she finished injecting anne, and put the syringe away.' we're putting you in rehab, the cops here arent very sympathetic at all to druggies, you get busted doing something like that. they arent going to put you in treatment it'll be 20-25 years in jail' Marita said.' come on marie said as she started dragging Anne towards the door that led down to the building.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 05, 2014, 06:54:36 pm**

"I've *seen* TVs before," Rio rolled his eyes exaggeratedly. It was true... sort of. Back where he used to live, there was an old, beat-up electronics store. Through the dusty window there was a tiny, out of date television on display. Rio used to spend time pressed up against the glass, peering through at whatever grainy, black and white image was being projected. He'd never seen one up close though... or one in colour. He took the remote from Lily and flipped the channel. A cutesy cartoon came on, two squirrels holding hands and singing. Axel wandered into the room, and when he saw what Rio was watching he grinned and leaned against the door frame. "*Farm Friends!* I used to watch this all the time as a kid..."

Rio looked back at him and grimaced. "What is this shit?" He flipped the channel and the ending of *Scarface* appeared. A coked up Tony Montana was waving a huge gun around, blowing holes in other gangsters. Rio grinned at the sudden cacophony of gunfire and death. "Whoa..."

Onscreen, Tony Montana invited his enemies to say hello to his little friend. Rio looked from Axel to Lily, delight on his face. "This is *fucking awesome!*"

Triste nodded as they crossed the street, pushing their way through the crowd that had gathered outside the archives, drawn to the sounds of chaos from within. "One of the Ivitz headquarters. It's not far, we'll be there soon." In the distance, she could hear sirens approaching. Picking up the pace, Triste turned the corner. Parked on the side of the road was a sleek, black motorcycle. Mounting up, she looked over her shoulder and waited for Vergil to climb on. "Come on, move it!"

Once he was on, Triste gunned the engine and they sped away, the sounds of sirens and shouting fading. Weaving her way through the traffic, she could see the top of the top of the Ivitz building they were heading for. ***I've retrieved the target. Bringing him in now. He was investigating the Cataract.***

Excellent.

20 minutes later, Triste pulled the bike up outside the headquarters and cut the engine. The stone-white, severe looking building reared up over them. Grass grew around the walkways leading to the entrance, closely cropped trees planted along the paths. Nothing about the building was inviting - even the greenery seemed sterile. ***We're here.***

Bring him in. I'll have someone meet you in the lobby.

Triste climbed off the bike and turned to look at Vergil as she started to make her way up the walkway. "Come on. Everything you need to know is inside."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 05, 2014, 09:15:06 pm**

Lily smiled. "Thought you'd like it."

Though crime dramas weren't really her thing, she sat with Rio and watched the end of the movie silently. She was just glad that everyone seemed to have cooled down somewhat.

A while later, she roused from a groggy half-sleep to see the channels flipping quickly. A western, a Shakespeare play, an antiques auction, a documentary on the 2008 Pelvanida invasion, a tear-stricken lawyer sniveling about a missing kid, a car insurance commercial...

She sat up suddenly. "Wait. Go back. Go back to that!"

Impatiently she wrestled the remote away from Rio before he'd even had adequate time to process her request. Flipping back rapidly, she tuned back to the lawyer.

"It's just...so hard to handle..." the puffy-eyed man, who appeared to be on a late night talk show, sniffed and wiped his eyes. "First my wife disappears, and now my oldest son...I don't know if my heart can handle this again."

"This is a hard time for you," agreed the talk show host. "What can you tell viewers about Ejlert, so that they might be able to help locate him?"

The lawyer shook his head. "There was no reason for him to leave, we all loved him and he had many friends. He was the lead quarterback at Carriage Hills High, and top of his class in mathematics, his passion. I can only assume the worst...the best thing viewers could do is send money to help fund the search parties. We had a very successful fundraising when we tried to find Lily, and if anyone could find the heart to...donate again...I'd be so grateful."

"I'm sure there are viewers who will help you out." the talk show host ruffled some paper as a number appeared on the screen. "Call Denny North and the 'Search for Ejlert' campaign if you know anything or wish to provide support, and show some compassion for a tragedy-stricken family. Up next, warships have appeared on the horizon, and what that means for your weekend--"

Lily turned the television off. She tried to speak several times but couldn't. "Axel.....I...Axel, did you see that?" she stuttered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 06, 2014, 12:37:29 am**

Tony felt his heart sink at the mention of Anne having almost jumped off a roof and needing rehab. "Damn..." he said softly. "Shit... is... is she gonna be OK? What clinic are you sending her to?" he asked, drumming his claws on the steering wheel as he pushed the pedal down a bit more heavily here. He suddenly had the inclination to go and see how she was doing; it *was* his day off, after all. "Oh yeah and I was just calling to see how things were... I think Vergil gets back in town today, and I wanted to discuss well... Kalis, and what he means for the future of Ivitz." Tony outlined.

Vergil had to admit, the ride on the motorcycle was kind of thrilling. He'd never been on one before... or perhaps he had, but he certainly couldn't remember it. Looking up at the rather foreboding building, he kind of doubted Triste at first, but figured it had to be true. Entering the lobby, a stoat with wiry spectacles greeted the pair. "Agent Acyle... Agent Speicher... welcome to Section G. I'm Preston Fugate, special liaison for the special forces. Agent Speicher... it's good to see you back with us." he said seriously but sincerely too, despite his somewhat wooden posture. "This way, please." He motioned with a paw, and led them to an elevator in the rear of the lobby.

Swiping a card he had, the doors opened and Vergil regarded them with a smirk. "Thought I'd had enough of these for one day." he cracked to Triste. The elevator took them down several levels, deep into the heart of the underground beneath the building. Exiting into hallways that appeared as sterile as the greenery had been, the stoat led them down several passageways until they reached a door with heavy security out front. The guards however stood aside and didn't give the newcomers a second glance however as Fugate led them into a large conference room.

A round table dominated the chamber, and a giant screen with the Ivitz Federation's logo on it hung above them. Seated around the table were various species, some dressed in military attire, and some not. They regarded Vergil as if he were a curiosity, but then, curiosity melted away to smiles, though some seemed force while others were genuine.

"Sit down." Fugate instructed the two of them before taking a seat himself. "These gathered here are the upper echelon of Section G, Ivitz's special forces. They were, and hopefully still are your direct superiors, Agent Speicher. First though... I assume you have some questions."

"Do I ever..." Vergil began, looking around the room at the new faces. "So uh... first things first I guess... since uh... Agent Acyle seemed to know... who exactly am I... and what's my connection to Rex Sardolemuel?"

A pause here, and a dignified looking pangolin in a military uniform spoke up after a moment. "I can answer that. You're Vergil Speicher, Agent 127072. You were recruited by us five years ago in the aftermath of the Scorched Earth War. Before that, you had been a soldier in the Federation's service. Rather than me bore you with the details, we could permit you access to your personnel files..."

"Do I have any surviving family?" Vergil quickly broke in.

"No, I'm afraid not. You were orphaned at a young age, and under Federation welfare for some time. But getting back to what I was saying, we recruited you specifically to Agent Acyle's squad to act as a double agent when Rex Sardolemuel began acting... against Federation orders. You had served under him previously, and he trusted you quite a lot. You were reporting to Agent Acyle frequently on any developments that occurred with Sardolemuel. As he began turning more and more rogue and his power grew, your assignment became increasingly dangerous, until we decided to pull you out. No sense in having a corpse on our hands, after all. What you had discovered before that though... was of vital importance." The pangolin tapped a keypad in front of him, and the screen burst into life like the rising sun, bringing new light into the room.

"Sardolemuel and Kalis were starting to hunt for a place where the sea flows into a gaping hole... a place known as Torment's Cataract. We believe a city once stood there, but suffered some great calamity, and sank into the sea, leaving the Cataract behind in its place. The location is notoriously difficult to find, not only because it's one giant waterfall and sinkhole, but also because it sits in a region of massive electromagnetic interference, making locating it remotely impossible, as well as sending any aerial reconnaissance in to be a risky proposition at best. According to our research, the civilization that built their city at the Cataract also constructed a massive battleship, ten times greater than anything we've ever been able to develop."

Concept art appeared now on the screen, and Vergil whistled at the sheer size of the projections. The ship was estimated to be almost 4,000 square miles*, which would rival some small countries in size. "We know this vessel exists from ancient records we uncovered, but so too did Sardolemuel. However, it's believed to sit at the Cataract, and the location of the former city was carefully hidden by this civilization in a series of waypoints they set up across the globe. Sardolemuel had located about half of them before we pulled you out, but before he could finish his quest, we took him down." the pangolin continued. "He grew overconfident, and we were able to bring his fleet to battle before he could find the last waypoints. You and Agent Acyle were part of a team sent to infiltrate his ship and kill him personally. The mission was... mostly a success, as Kalis turned on Sardolemuel and fired on his ship with his own, getting a bit too greedy as it were. But in the destruction of Sardolemuel's flagship... we assumed you were lost. Agent Acyle reported she wasn't able to save you... and much to our relief, here you are."

Vergil glanced at Triste now, then back at the pangolin. "Why relief?" he asked.

"Hm... well you see, Vergil, you're an incredibly valuable asset to us. Outside of Kalis and his forces, you're the *only* one who witnessed the location of the waypoins, and even though you might not be able to remember them, we *know* they're there... buried within your memory. You're the only link we have to those waypoints, and your memory is coming back. Just now you were researching the location of one of them, after all. We think if you could unlock those memories... remember how to find these things, then you could help lead us to Torment's Cataract before Kalis."

Vergil chewed his bottom lip. "But I don't know..."

"But you have to try." the pangonlin reiterated. "It *is* there, Vergil... and if Kalis beats us to the Cataract... it'll spell devastation for not only Ivitz, but the entire world. If he gets his hands on that ship... we will fall... and if we fall... nothing stands between him and total domination of this planet, do you understand? You've seen Kalis at work... you know he doesn't care for life. His only goal is chaos and destruction. There is no alternative to this... we need your help in stopping him. He's had zero defectors since assuming control of Sardolemuel's forces, and has killed every agent we've sent to infiltrate his organization. You're the only one who has prior knowledge of the waypoints. Please... this is really our only hope." he pleaded.

Vergil looked up at the ship's projections again, and then down at the table, thinking carefully. "I have a few more questions but... first..." He looked over at Triste. "Agent Acyle... if we're going to be working together, I'm going to need people I can trust. I'm sorry but working with complete strangers isn't going to fly with me... at least... not right away. Since time is of the essence, I really can't sit on this one, and I know that. Would you have any objections if I brought in a talented group of individuals I've come to trust over the past six months? None of them represent a threat to Ivitz, and as they say, desperate times, right?" he asked, looking around the table. "I can vouch for these guys, and I want to work with them again... provided they say yes, of course. If not... I'll settle for your guys instead. Deal?" he asked, looking back at her now, as he needed to be able to trust her first and foremost on this.

*4,000 square miles or roughly the size of the country of Lebanon.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 06, 2014, 07:37:43 am**

Sitting beside her on the couch, Axel saw. All that time ago, when they'd seen the man on the television claiming to be Lily's husband, pleading for her to come home, he'd believed it was a lie, a trick to lure her in. Or maybe it was more accurate to say, he'd *willed* himself into believing it. But now, with the news report they'd just seen, the truth hit him in the chest like a tonne of bricks. Lily *did* have a husband. She had kids. She had another life, and he'd dragged her away from it.

And now, to learn that one of her children was missing...

Rio, initially disgruntled by Lily snatching the remote away, soon understood that something was very, very wrong. "Uh... I'm gonna... go to the bathroom, I guess..." he said hesitantly, excusing himself from the situation. Axel kept staring at the blank TV set as the boy quietly left the room. When the sound of the bathroom door clicking shut carried over, he blinked as if being woken from a trance and looked at Lily.

"Lily, I'm... I'm so sorry, I..." He started to reach out to touch her, then stopped, suddenly unsure of what to do. Axel swallowed. "Do... do you want to call that number?"

Triste sat calmly as the pangolin explained the situation to Vergil, her hands folded on the table in front of her. As he listened intently, she kept her gaze on him, studying his reactions, his expressions. She was satisfied by what she saw. The voices echoing lightly around the room, bouncing back off the marble walls, lent the situation a vague dreamlike quality.

At Vergil's request after the pangolin had finished speaking, Triste's eyes narrowed ever so slightly. *He'd met others, others that he was willing to trust with something as serious as* this? Triste hadn't been expecting this... Her eyes flicked briefly over to where the pangolin stood on the other side of the room, and she picked up on his quick, curt nod.

The spider gecko turned her attention back to Vergil, and gave him a small smile. "Of course, Agent Speicher. If you deem them to be trustworthy, then I'm sure it won't be a problem." Her

hands, still clasped on the table before her, tightened slightly. "But I *would* need to keep an eye on them. Given the severity of the situation, I'm sure you understand."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 06, 2014, 08:08:33 am**

Lily took a deep breath. "No..." she said. "I need more information first..."

She started to get up, to head to the computer room, but before she could she found herself hugging Axel instead. "I knew about my old life..." she whispered, tears streaming from her eyes. "Of course I did, we saw it on the tele in the clothing store all that time ago...sometimes I wondered if I'd abandoned them...but I thought they must have lived and died in Lanthae...and it was so much easier to just live with you. I love you...I didn't want risk losing you by learning if..." she suddenly drew away from him, burying her face in her hands. "Oh god, I'm a horrible person!"

For several minutes all she could do was cry, as months of repressed guilt finally realized itself all at once.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 06, 2014, 12:17:54 pm**

Vergil nodded and gave her a reassuring look. "Of course. I understand you'd need to monitor them. Perfectly clear." he replied. "No problem with that at all."

"Good! So... any further questions?" Fugate asked.

"Just one... why did Sardolemuel turn traitor? What drove him to do such a thing? I mean... he was one of your best and brightest, yes?" Vergil asked.

"He was... he was a genius... the best we'd had. But he was also ambitious, and didn't like being tethered, so to speak. He desired full autonomy in his operations, and was frustrated with what he saw as government interference. As the war dragged on, he became determined to end it any way necessary, including extreme measures. He did just that, ignoring our orders and doing as he pleased to bring the war to its conclusion." Fugate explained. "Afterward, he was facing legal charges for insubordination, and against our advice, he and Kalis retired before any trial could be forthcoming, and vanished."

"For how long?" Vergil asked.

"A year. When he resurfaced, he declared himself an enemy of the Federation and managed to convince 90% of his old unit to rebel and join him. That's when we recruited you. He was extremely charismatic and very popular. It didn't take him long to start gathering support not just from the Federation's old enemies, but even amongst our own as well. It was a dark time. He promised change, but brought nothing but destruction and misery to thousands. He still maintained his support however, as he had this strange way of looking out for his own and ensuring his followers rarely suffered. By the time we'd finally killed him though, the devastation was rather extensive." Fugate said with a somber tone to his voice, bringing up pictures on the screen now of the aftermath of Sardolemuel's rebellion. Twisted heaps of metal where buildings had once stood greeted them, as did injured people with blood running down their bodies like rivers.

"Any clues as to why he did this, or what he discovered after he vanished?" Vergil inquired, averting his eyes for a moment from the screen.

"None... you weren't present with him for that, and the only other person who knows the answer to that is Kalis, who decided to join his mad rebellion without question. Remember, Vergil. These waypoints are vital... and the fate of millions is quite literally in your team's hands. It's best to remember Rex's story as a cautionary tale... you MUST keep your head

about you during this. If Kalis finds Torment's Cataract first, it'll spell the end for millions. Don't ever lose sight of what that means." Fugate said, giving him a look that could've burned holes through him. "Rex Sardolemuel was a traitor... and it's vital that his legacy ends here... with you."

The gecko nodded, and glanced sideways furtively as he frowned. "While his story interests me, I just wish I knew more about it. Kalis is a monster who needs to be stopped... but I just thought that perhaps... maybe I could reach out to him somehow if I knew more about the past..."

"We'd prefer him dead." the pangolin cut in. "But with that said, we expect you to clearly assess the situation and use your best judgment. Your assignment, should you choose to accept it, will be to find the waypoints that lead to Torment's Cataract before Kalis does. It'll be a race against time, or perhaps I should say, you'll be racing the storm, but it's a race you must win. We'll give you full access to your personnel files so you can find out more about yourself. Unlock those memories and help us bring Kalis to justice! End Sardolemuel's legacy once and for all! Agent Acyle will be your main liaison with us as well as be in charge of handling logistics on this operation. Trust me when I say she has special talents uniquely suited to this assignment." He smiled in Triste's direction here.

"You'll have full access to our resources as well to help you accomplish your objective." Fugate offered. "Do you accept?"

Vergil nodded solemnly, looking up now without hesitation. "Of course. This has to be done... and I accept." Standing up, he looked around the room. "Thank you for the information. I believe I've got the location of the first waypoint, and that's something to start with."

"Indeed, it is. Good luck Agent Speicher on unlocking your memories and finding the Cataract. Remember... keep things in perspective." Fugate told him, and both he and Triste were shown out now.

"So... I guess I'll assemble the team... or at least see if they're willing to help. Now that that's behind us though..." Vergil looked up at her as they headed for the elevator. "First of all, thanks for backing me in there. I know you might not trust them but... they helped me out in Lanthae before Kalis's attack... and I trust them with my life. Second... uh... how... involved were we, with each other? I want to remember as much as I can... including... any past relationships." he gave her a sincere look. "If I hurt you with my assumed death... I can only apologize." he said regretfully.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 06, 2014, 07:07:16 pm**

Silently, Axel held Lily as she cried, an arm around her quaking shoulders. After several minutes, he leaned forwards and gently turned her face towards his, looking her in the eyes. "I love you too. And I know that the woman I love *isn't* a horrible person. She's the furthest thing in the world from that."

Giving her a small smile, he stroked her cheek with his thumb. "And right now, it sounds like your..." Axel swallowed. "Your son needs your help. So that means you have to be strong. For him. Okay?" He hugged her. "I'm here for you, Lily. *You know that.* Anything you need, anything I can do to help, I'll do it."

Triste didn't say anything as they walked to the elevator. As soon as the doors closed behind them and the lift started on its way back down, she turned to Vergil, shoved him up against the side and pressed her mouth against his, firmly, urgently. Her hands started on his shoulders, and then began to move along his chest, her long fingers exploring his body. Moments passed, and eventually she broke away from him, panting slightly. "Does that answer your question?" Smoothing down the front of her shirt, she stepped away and turned to face

the elevator doors. "And you've got nothing to feel sorry for. I wasn't *that* hurt." She gave him a sideways glance and smiled. "But... I'm glad you're back, Vergil." *Men are so easy...*

Clearing her throat, Triste crossed her arms, her eyes narrowing inquisitively. "So... who *are* these people that you have so much faith in?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 06, 2014, 08:04:04 pm**

Lily was silent for a time, just wrapping herself up in Axel's arms. "I've got to do something about it..." she murmured. "Maybe if he'd still had a mother, he wouldn't have disappeared..."

She got up. "Can you put Rio to sleep or occupy him or something? I was going to, but I now need to do some research on the computer. We're going to have to find a way to put him somewhere while we go on a little trip." She headed for Axel's computer room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 06, 2014, 11:31:38 pm**

Vergil was practically smothered as Triste was all over him like butter on bread. She was clearly proving her part, and he struggled to reciprocate, kissing her just as deeply as he could, if making it a bit of a delayed reaction in the end. She was exploring his chest as well, rubbing her hand down his shirt and causing him to shiver a bit before in tingles she pulled back, the gecko gasping for breath as he hadn't been prepared for the kiss.

"Whew! Well... that uh... that answers that question!" Vergil responded energetically. "As for these people I have faith in... better to show than tell..." Digging out his phone, he first dialed Tony...

Tony noticed the incoming call from Vergil, and quickly broke off the conversation. "Oh, sorry! Getting Vergil's call now! I'll talk to you shortly!" Putting the call on hold, the ferret answered the gecko. "Hey Vergil! How'd your trip go! Find out anything new?" Tony asked.

"Tony... you driving from the sounds of it? Pull over... we need to talk..."

A few hours later, Vergil was sitting with Triste at a cafe in Corona's heart, but he'd managed to secure a private table usually reserved for VIPs that was well removed from the other patrons of the cafe. A TV was replaying the afternoon's events with some degree of urgency. It turned out that a firefight had developed between police and the terrorists, which both Vergil and Triste knew were part of Kalis's force. But they had been good... almost too good. They'd been on the verge of escaping when the authorities had blocked off the exits. It was then bombs were detonated under the floors of the archives, showing the level of planning and training these guys had. No trace of them was found after that, and 65 people were left dead or seriously injured. It was the first major terrorist attack in Corona's recent history, and was the biggest news event of the day. Already measures were being taken to prevent something like this from recurring...

Vergil had called everyone, and had told them the bare minimum of details, but had impressed upon them that it was extremely urgent, and that he needed their help to curb the coming disaster, explaining the security of the world was at stake. They were all familiar with Kalis by now, and this latest news item was a refresher, if anything. He'd asked them to meet him in the Cafe Verona, and so here he was, ready to introduce those who showed up to Triste and let her get a read on them for herself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 06, 2014, 11:43:31 pm**

Marita, Rose and Marie entered the cafe as Broadstreet appeared on TV, making clear that the police were examining the video of the incident and were hunting down leads.. Rose noticed Vergil and led the girs over to him ' Hi Vergil, you sounded pretty urgent on the phone ' Marita said as she took a seat at the table. " so what is this all about?' she asked, as Rose and Marie took seats as well.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 06, 2014, 11:52:18 pm**

By this time, Lily had made the trip out to Carriage Hills, to the typical two-floor suburban house whose address was given on the 'Search for Ejlert' website. Gulping softly, she glanced at the warm-colored brass door-knocker and tried to work up the courage to knock it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 07, 2014, 05:48:34 am**

When Lily had emerged from the computer room, Axel was in the kitchen, using the phone to try and find someone who could look after Rio while they were gone, despite Rio's protests that he could stay and watch the house. Unfortunately, the only neighbors who answered were a family across the street who were recovering from an incident involving someone using their dinner table as a springboard. Vergil's phonecall had come just after Axel had hung up. It sounded serious, to put it lightly. With no other options, they'd decided that Axel would go to meet Vergil, while Rio accompanied Lily to the address she'd found, on the condition that he stayed quiet and didn't get in her way. He'd agreed.

"Come on, what are you waiting for?" Rio demanded now, as he stood beside Lily and waited for her to knock. He still didn't quite understand what was going on between her, the rat and the person who's house they were standing outside, but he knew nothing was going to get solved by standing around. "You haven't seen this guy for a long time, right? So he's probably gonna be really happy to see you!" Rio tried.

Axel stepped out of the taxi and made his way across the street to Cafe Verona. Spotting the gecko seated on the far side in the VIP section he crossed the cafe, suddenly feeling a little self conscious in his slightly rumpled T-Shirt and jeans amongst the more well-dressed clients. Raising a hand in a wave, he approached the table and gave the group a nervous smile. "Hey guys! It's, ah... it's been a while..." He nudged Marita's shoulder and nodded at the other two girls. "Good to see you three are still sticking together."

Axel took a seat next to Marita and turned to face the two geckos on the other side of the table. The one he didn't recognise, a light green spider gecko, stared at him unblinkingly, her yellow eyes seeming to evaluate him. The red stripe across her face gave the gecko the appearance of someone who didn't have a lot of fun in life. Axel blinked uncomfortably. "Ah... hello," he said eventually.

Triste nodded at him but didn't say anything for the moment.

"Alright then." Axel looked at Vergil and smiled. "Hey, I came as soon as I could. Lily couldn't be here right now, she's, ah... she has something to take care of for the moment. Hopefully she'll meet up with us later." He swallowed, his fingers tapping on the table nervously. "So, ah... this didn't exactly sound like good news..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 07, 2014, 04:51:47 pm**

Tony pulled up a bit later, still in the Delahaye. Vergil had sounded serious... much more serious than he'd been in the months following Lanthae. Parking on the street outside the cafe, the ferret jogged across the street, making sure to check traffic in both directions before he threaded his way into the cafe, trying his best to move swiftly but not bowl anyone over either.

"Hey Vergil!" he waved, noting the trio was here, as was Axel. Soren was the only one missing so far. He hadn't had a chance to check in on Anne yet, but depending on what this news was, he might get to see her later tonight.

"Hi everyone... it's good to see you again." Vergil cracked a small smile, and looked around at the gathered group. "It's not good news I'm afraid. First off, this is Agent Triste Acyle, with the Ivitz Federation. She found me after my return here earlier today... and that attack you saw at the archives... that was us... more specifically... Kalis's men hunting us. She knows who I am... and about my past. I got answers today, and it turns out, we used to work together as part of an elite squad several years ago. But rather than go into my past... we instead need to talk about Kalis..." the white gecko said gravely here.

"You know the basic history about Rex Sardolemuel's rebellion, but it turns out, while Rex was launching his attacks against the Federation, he was looking for something else. I'll fill Soren in when he gets here, but time is kind of of the essence. I was a spy in Rex's fleet, reporting back to Ivitz on his search for a location called Torment's Cataract. This place has been lost to history... except the civilization that once had a city there created a series of waypoints to find it. They hid themselves well... perhaps rightly so, for they had constructed a warship so massive, just picture the entire sky being blotted out by this thing, OK? 4,000 square miles... making it a virtual small country in size. Its power would be beyond imagination, and needless to say, it could lead whoever possessed it to dominate this planet and everyone on it."

Tony stared wide-eyed at the description of the ship, and nervously ordered a scotch from a passing waiter that he managed to just barely flag down. Vergil waited for it to sink in, then continued. "So anyway, the civilization was wiped out before they could use it, and Rex died before he could find its location, but Kalis is still seeking it. In my mind is the location of about half of these waypoints, since I witnessed them being found. I can't remember everything, but I know where the first one is. I've decided to help the Federation stop Kalis before he finds Torment's Cataract first, but I can't do it alone. I need a team... and since I don't fully trust the Federation at present... who else could I turn to but you guys? You guys were pretty phenomenal in getting Lily her body back, and also helping to attack the Purifier base... twice. I'm gonna need backup... not just because I trust you guys, but because I need people who I know will have my back. This mission isn't about my past or who I am... it's about stopping Kalis from finding this ship. If he gets it... it won't matter what we're doing with our lives. It'll all end. Not just our lives and livelihood, but everyone else on this planet too. I'm sorry to have to ask... you all have lives now... families even... and I'd be taking you away from that. But I wouldn't ask if this wasn't serious, guys."

Vergil looked at each of them now. "Our lives mean nothing if Kalis beats us. None if it will matter. He'll wipe out the Federation, and with it, every person on this planet who doesn't openly submit to him. I understand if you want to say no... I won't blame you, nor hold it against you." Vergil stated sincerely, looking from one to the other. "You have lives... I get it, I understand. If you want out... I'll go with a team from the Federation instead... but I'd rather have people I know and trust with me as opposed to total strangers. You might say it's not your problem, and you're right... it's not. But once Kalis finds Torment's Cataract, it'll be everyone's problem. For the sake of all life... we gotta try, right?" he pleaded.

By now, Tony's drink had come, and he gulped, taking a silent sip as he waited for someone else to speak first to break the tension, which was so thick the ferret felt like a chainsaw would be needed to cut it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 07, 2014, 05:13:45 pm**

i'll help you' Marita said, breaking the silence as a waiter brought the table some drinks.' i will as well Rose said a few seconds later "i've come too far now to let some warlord take over the world! this is my home, and i'm not going to let it be destroyed." well count me in too' marie said' just out of curiosity.. how long do we have to find all these relics? Are we talking days? weeks?"
- we have to find the locations first' Marita replied "given that this ship is 4000 miles in area, and given its power, it will have to be hidden somewhere big enough to contain it and remote enough to make it hard to find. there aren't that many locations on earth big enough to hide something that big. one of the 5 major oceans or the Sahara desert, come to mind." she turned to Triste' Hello, i'm Marita Jones, these are my girlfriends Rose and Marie. we';ll be happy to assist you in finding the locations you are after.this kalis guy well he sounds like a real nasty piece of work. we'll help in anyway we can."
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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 07, 2014, 05:17:28 pm**

Lily swallowed. "You're right...." Slowly, she grasped the brass knocker and rapped the door.

After a few tense minutes, she made to knock again when the sallow man from the television opened. "Yes? How can...?" He trailed off. "*Lily???*"

Lily fidgeted nervously. "Hi Denny..."

Denny was gaping like a fish. He stumbled backwards and almost slammed the door shut on her "How are you...how could you be...?"

"It's a long story..." Lily said shyly. "I lost my memory, so I didn't--and don't-- remember anything about you, our kids, or this house. I came because I heard about Ejlert."

Denny was still dumbfounded. "You're alive! Did you tell anyone? We could make headlines!"

"*Don't* tell anyone!" Lily interjected. "Please Denny. Its more complicated than you think. I came to help find Ejlert. May I come in?"

Denny blinked. "Of course, of course." He held the door open all the way, and Lily walked into her old house.

She marveled at the otherwise unremarkable simplicity of everything. How long had she lived here? How often must she have cleaned every item in this house, items that sparked no sense of familiarity whatsoever?

"Who's the, uh, the boy?" Asked Denny, who had not extended the open door to Rio.

"Rio is a friend of mine," Lily called from the kitchen.

Since Lily was gone, Denny coldly grabbed Rio by the collar and pulled him off his feet with a strength unintuitive from his thin frame. "You touch anything in this house and I will *make you regret it*..." he snarled, his face twisting into a ferocious grimace void of warmth or restraint. Dismissively he tossed the urchin back to the ground and followed his wife.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 07, 2014, 09:41:33 pm**

Axel swallowed as he leaned forwards, staring at his fingers as they flexed nervously against the table. Lost civilizations... a gigantic warship.... being intrusted with a mission like this... It was a lot to take in. He'd barely managed to get out of the last situation alive, and all he'd wanted to do was settle down with Lily and live a quiet life. But Axel had seen first hand what Kalis was capable of... and if Vergil was right, if Kalis was trying to find this warship, then there wouldn't *be* any life to settle down to.

He nodded slowly at what Marita and her girlfriends said, then looked across at Vergil. "So... no pressure then." He sighed. Given what was at stake... it wasn't like it was something he could refuse. "Alright then," Axel said eventually. "I, ah... I guess I'm in. I've got your back, Vergil." He paused. "But, ah, you know. Maybe try to keep it out of danger as much as you can?"

Her hands folded on the table in front of her, Triste looked between the lanky rat, the three women and the well-dressed ferret. Her expression remained blank for the time being. Turning her gaze to Tony, she waited to hear what he would say.

Rio landed with a thump as Denny dropped him to the floor, his knee crying out in pain as he landed awkwardly. A shocked expression was plastered on his face as the adult walked away. He'd met his fair share of violent adults, of course... but the change in Denny's personality had been so sudden that for the moment, Rio was speechless. And the expression on his face...

After a moment of lying on the floor where he'd been dropped, the boy got to his feet and started to make his way along the corridor down which Lily had disappeared, and where Denny had followed. The man's voice kept replaying in Rio's mind. Of course he'd be wary about a stranger inside his house. Even Rio could understand that. But there was something else... something in Denny's voice... Rio's stomach tightened. Something was *wrong* in this house. He just didn't know what. Following behind Denny, Rio kept his arms close to his body, frightened of touching anything, of turning Denny's attention back on him. His eyes darted around, taking in the corridors they were walking down, the furniture, the doors that branched off from their path. They approached a large bookcase set into the left side of the corridor, and he looked it up and down as they passed. The bookcase was thick and heavy, the shelved filled with rows upon rows of old books. Rio's eyes flicked down, and he felt a small jolt run up his body. He slowed his pace, his already quiet footsteps fading to silence as he eventually stopped dead. Ahead of him, Denny continued on in Lily's direction, oblivious to the fact that he was no longer leading Rio.

By the bookcase, scratches had been gouged into the wooden floor, lining up with the legs of the heavy furniture. From the marks, Rio could tell that the bookcase had been pulled forwards, multiple times, the legs of the bookshelf betraying their constant use. *Is... is something behind?*

Biting his lip, Rio held back as Denny continued onwards, rounding the corner and moving out of sight. He waited a few seconds, then retraced his steps, shifting back silently to the bookcase. Rio turned, standing directly in front of it, and looked it up and down. From here, there was nothing immediately wrong with it. It just looked like a normal piece of furniture set back against the wall. So why did he have a sick feeling in his stomach? Glancing back to make sure he was still alone, Rio edged to the side of the bookcase and ran his hands along the back of it. It wasn't set flush against the wall. There was a gap. He pressed his face against the gap between the rear of the shelf and the wall. It was too dark, he couldn't see... *Yes! Something... something was there...* He squinted, but couldn't quite make out what was behind.

Gritting his teeth, Rio hesitantly pressed his fingers against the back shelf of the case and pulled it outwards, slowly, trying to make sure that it didn't make any noise. There was a small, tiny screech and Rio flinched... but luckily, it seemed Denny hadn't heard anything. Breathing a silent sigh of relief, the boy kept pulling, and eventually the bookcase had slid out far enough for Rio to get a good look at what lay behind. A metal, heavy-looking sliding door. Rio paused, trying to understand what was going on. What possible use could there be for this

door? Why was it hidden? Hesitantly, Rio slowly pressed himself into the small gap he'd created and pushed the sliding door open, inch by inch, trying not to make a sound. The door was well oiled, and it slid open silently, revealing an inky blackness behind it. Rio could just about make out a set of wooden steps leading down, and a musty, damp smell wafted up. He wrinkled his nose. His mind was screaming at him to just leave this alone, to just close the door, push the case back and leave it alone. Biting his lip, Rio slowly stepped down into the darkness, feeling his way down, the steps creaking below him ever so slightly.

After about 15 steps, his trainers crunched on a stone floor. The air was cold, frigid. In the darkness, Rio strained his ears, but there was nothing. Even the sounds of Lily and Denny talking upstairs had faded to absolutely nothing. Taking another nervous step forwards, something tapped his face, and Rio almost cried out in shock, stopping himself just in time. After a second, he realised it was a light switch, attached to a string. Swallowing, his throat dry as sand, he reached up and pulled it. The light flicked on, bathing the room in a sickly yellow glow.

Rio felt his blood freeze at what he saw.

He was standing at the entrance to a decent sized basement, rectangular shaped. From the ceiling dangled a bare light bulb. Along the left side of the basement was placed a row of cramped wire cages, the doors firmly shut with padlocks holding them closed. At first, desperate thoughts that perhaps Denny North kept animals in these tiny cages flitted through his mind. Then he looked across the rest of the room. At the far end of the room was some sort of wooden table, metal manacles connected to the four corners by chains. A thick-looking bag had been left on the table's surface, and coiled on the floor next to it was a dirty garden hose, hooked up to a tap in the wall. Water was pooled on the table's surface, and the bag looked damp, as if it had recently been soaked.

Closer to Rio was a wooden chair, bolted to the floor. Leather straps were set into the arms of the chair. Placed neatly on the floor next to the chair was a set of industrial looking clamps, and draped across the back of the chair was a plastic bag, softly rustling from the breeze drifting down from the staircase, worn as if someone had been struggling inside it. Rio felt his stomach churn as he looked closer at the ends of the chair's armrests and noticed faint scratches in the wood.

Other objects in the basement lay hidden in the gloom, but Rio didn't stop to look at them. Feeling his heart starting to rise into his throat, his stomach roiling, he wheeled around and stumbled back up the wooden steps.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 07, 2014, 11:47:20 pm**

Tony realized Triste was looking right at him, and he gulped again. "Uh... yeah! Of course! I mean I'm not about to let Kalis fuck up my life, after all! Not after things finally seem to be getting back on track! I'm in!" he nodded here.

"Great! Thanks, guys! I knew I could count on you... and well yes... we'll watch each others' backs to keep each other out of trouble. But uh... given that it's a cataract, I'd say it's in the ocean somewhere, or a large body of water. It's surrounded by electromagnetic interference though, making any scans on it impossible, so its location is pretty much unknown. But we'll find it... we have to find it. So I know the location of the first waypoint at least... it's the ruins of an ancient civilization... which existed at the same time as the civilization that built the ship. It'll take a bit of trekking so to speak... but we'll find it. Oh and uh... what about Lily, Axel?" Vergil asked the rat here, turning his gaze to him.

Tony downed the scotch, not caring if it would hit him pretty fast. Wow... the final showdown to save the world, huh? Wouldn't be the first time he'd done something like this... still, better order another scotch, just to be safe.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 08, 2014, 02:53:19 am**

Soren sighed as he rubbed his cheek. His body ached all over. He was very thankful he was still wearing his protective gear from when he worked with the augments or he'd probably be nursing several busted ribs.

"CafÈ Verona." The driver parked in front of the very upscale Italian resturaunt.

Soren paid his fare and stepped out. He looked at the suits and fancy gowns everyone wore. A Lexus LF-A passed him.

He sighed. "Let's get this over with."

The man walked through the front entrance without so much as a peep from the waiter. Instead, he was escorted to the table where Marita and the others were. "Sorry I'm late. I just got back from dropping Anne off at the rehab center."

He winced as he sat down.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 08, 2014, 10:00:14 am**

"Hello, Soren." Vergil gave the human a smile, and nodded at him. "Glad you could make it." Vergil began relaying the info that'd been discussed to Soren. Tony was rather eager to hear about Anne, but that would have to wait for the moment. Instead, he struck up a conversation with the others, beginning to talk about life in Corona and some things he previously had on the agenda in the days ahead before his plans were put on hold. However, as he talked, conversation swung round to the Zaloga Corporation, one of the four main weapons' manufacturers in the city. Tony had an appointment with them tomorrow, as his father was trying to secure shipping rights to their goods. So far talks hadn't gone anywhere, but that's why his father was sending him in to try and get a better response.

As Zaloga came up however, Vergil couldn't help but overhear it as he wound down his briefing with Soren. "Zaloga... Zaloga..." he said softly, staring off into the distance. "Why does that...?" Suddenly, the gecko was hit by another memory, this one becoming as fresh in his mind as pine needles on a winter day.

Rex and Kalis were seated in a waiting room somewhere... but as the memory became clearer, Vergil could see the Zaloga Corporation's red and black logo emblazoned on some tapestries. Kalis, who was in his natural gargoyle gecko form, fidgeted uneasily in the chair.

"Rex..." he started to say. "Are you sure about this? Do we really need such power? Something just feels... off about this... it's not right. We could face court martial and death if they find out we're pursuing this..." he stated nervously.

"You sense it too, huh?" Rex responded with a smile. "Don't worry... it'll be fine. And we're already risking it all to end this war anyway, my friend. Chances are pretty good we're gonna face a court martial regardless. May as well take that first step, right? Would you rather another ten years of war?" the red gecko asked with some concern.

"No... I-I guess not." Kalis stammered, shaking his head. "But still... this is... I dunno..." he trailed off as an impeccably dressed blue gecko entered the room now.

"Brother! It's good to see you again!" The blue gecko Vergil recognized as Mace, Rex's brother, and CEO of Zaloga Corporation. "You said you needed my help with something?"

"Yes, brother, and it's a matter of some urgency." Rex rose to standing now and shook his brother's hand. "You told me once about the strange ruins under this building... and what you

had found down there. The map... I need access to it..."

Mace's pleasant demeanor melted into one of uncertainty now, his confident look gone. "Brother it's dangerous down there... I already told you..."

"I know... but it's a risk I'm willing to take. Please, Mace... I need to see what's down there for myself..."

The vision faded and Vergil gasped. "Wait!" he exclaimed to the group now, holding his head. "Wait, wait, wait! I just... I remembered something!" His hand shot out. "Zaloga! I know how Rex found out about the waypoints in the first place! Guys... there's a waypoint right here... in Corona!" he breathed, looking intensely at them. "Rex's brother Mace is CEO of Zaloga... and I just saw him talking to Mace about a map that's hidden under Zaloga's headquarters... Mace must've found it and told his brother about it! *That's* how Rex found out about Torment's Cataract... and the warship! Guys we can start our search right here... in this city!"

Tony bit his lower lip. "Zaloga? Damn... I was supposed to meet with them tomorrow on business..."

"Perfect cover!" Vergil cut in, not giving Tony a chance to finish. "We could go as your you know... attaches, bodyguards, whatever, and while you're meeting with them... or something, we could find a way down there and locate the waypoint!"

"That's... well... I'm sure security..." Tony stumbled.

"But it's our only chance, and a damn good excuse to gain access to that building, if you ask me! What do you guys say?" Vergil asked, looking eagerly around at the group as a smile began playing about his lips.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 08, 2014, 05:18:53 pm**

Denny walked into the kitchen to see Lily examining silverware. "Could I get you something to drink?" he asked politely.

"Um, sure," Lily answered, putting the silverware back quickly. "How about...my favorite?" She was curious to see if her favorite drink, whatever it was, affected her memory.

Denny took some blueberry-pomegranate juice out of the refrigerator, and surreptitiously grabbed a small vial from a hidden drawer under the counter. "So...you don't remember anything of living here?" he asked, keeping his tone neutral.

"Oh no, nothing at all," Lily admitted. "I'm hoping that my visit could jog my memory."

"Your visit?" Denny brought her the glass of juice. "You don't plan on staying? What about your children?"

"The children!" Lily was about to take a drink, but stopped when they were mentioned. "Can I see them? Where are they?"

"They're up in their rooms. Aside from Ejlert of course..." Denny pushed her juice towards her. "Drink up, and then we can go see them..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 08, 2014, 05:54:05 pm**

Soren shuddered. He then took a gulp of ice water. "Let me guess, you want me to come along?"

He then looked at Tony. "Don't get me wrong but I just want to have a normal life."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 08, 2014, 07:24:02 pm**

Axel glanced over at the human. "But Soren, if Kalis manages to get to this... *Cataract*... then none of us are going to be able to have a normal life." He shook his head. "Now that we know about all this, there's... I wouldn't be able to sit out and hope someone else fixes it. Not when the lives of the people I care about... Lily, you guys... Not when they could all be at stake."

He looked back at Vergil and nodded, though his expression wasn't quite as eager as the one plastered over the gecko's face. "Yeah, that... that sounds like it's a lead, at least. But Tony's right. Even if we pretend we're meant to be there with him, it's not like they'll just let us look around. I mean, ah... there's bound to be some sort of security systems in place. How are we gonna get around those?"

Rio reached the top of the basement stairs and quickly wriggled out from behind the bookcase, his chest heaving as he took deep breaths. Down there, the air had seemed dead, lifeless. After a moment, he went to head down the direction Lily had taken, but then considered and pushed the bookcase back first, gritting his teeth as he heaved against its weight. If Denny came back and discovered he'd been down there...

When it was close to its original position, Rio took a step back and pushed his hair out of his eyes. He swallowed, trying to calm himself and adopt a neutral expression, then set off down the corridor. He eventually arrived at the kitchen, where Denny and Lily were stood talking. He could feel his heart thumping at the sight of the man, but he fought to think straight. *She said she lost her memory... I have to tell her about it...* With Denny around though, there was no way he could say anything. He bit his lip as he stood in the kitchen doorway, trying to think what to do.

"Lily..." Rio started to whine as Lily was about to take a drink from the juice. His voice shook slightly but he tried to play off against it, putting on a show of fidgeting uncomfortably. "I... I really need the toilet. I didn't go before we left... could... could you come with me? I'm scared of going alone," he said plaintively. Rio locked eyes with Lily, trying to get his message across. "Please?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 08, 2014, 10:43:37 pm**

Soren swirled his glass of water around. Axel had a point. Not to mention, he recalled what happened to Lanthae just a few months ago.

He templed his hands and let out a sigh. "How bad is this gonna be? Can we just escape from this impending clusterfuck? I'm kinda not interesting in playing action hero again."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 08, 2014, 11:11:44 pm**

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i can n handle security if it becomes a problem' Marita chimed in ' the trick is to get enough info so know where to start looking. As it turns out Zaloga is one of the groups my employer is very interested in. so hopefully i can get us some info from them.. we're in this for the long haul Soren so i suggest we get packed up for a lengthy trip we're going to be going places..'look i rather not be doing this either i'd rather be living a quiet life with my two girlfriends, have a place to live, raise a family down the line, all that normal stuff. ' but this

kalis guy threatens literally everything, we cant ignore that, just because we want to stay out of it,. that die is cast i'm afraid,

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 08, 2014, 11:39:01 pm**

Soren sighed. "Well, when you put it that way..."

He took another sip of his water. *Great*, he thought. *My life's gonna go to shit, again!*

"Anyways, how long is this gonna take? I don't want Anne coming out of rehab and into an empty apartment or worse, coming after me because she thinks I tried to get rid of her."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 09, 2014, 12:37:53 am**

"We'll have to figure that out of course but actually... before that..." Vergil turned to Soren here. "No one's gonna make you come along of course, but we can't run from this. Ivitz is the only nation powerful enough to stop Kalis, and if he gets his hands on that warship, it's over." he explained. "Won't matter where you run to... he'll take that thing to every continent until he has achieved total domination." the gecko said acidly.

"Hey... as for Anne... I don't want her thinking that either... in fact... I was gonna go visit her if it was OK with you... let her know there are people who care about her and want to see her stop destroying her life." Tony put in sincerely. "I want to visit frequently too... no matter how long this takes."

"Could take awhile, depending on how much traveling we'll need to do." Vergil mused aloud. "Anyway, the first waypoint is right here, which leads me to you..." he turned to look at Triste. "Surely the Federation has schematics for Zaloga's HQ... as well as ways of bypassing its no doubt extensive security?" he inquired hopefully, raising his brows here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 09, 2014, 01:48:32 am**

Lily was about to take a sip of the juice, but stopped because Rio entered, clearly needing assistance. "Oh! Of course." She turned to Denny. "Where is the restroom?"

"Head into the dining room, it's the door on the right," Denny replied. His eyes narrowed as he watched Lily put the cup down and cross to the dining room.

"Right over there--" Lily started to say to Rio, when Denny grabbed her hand. "--Come on," he said pleasantly. "Let's go see your children. They're upstairs in their room..."

Lily was a bit startled, but acquiesced. "It's been far too long since they've seen their mother..." she admitted, starting up the stairs with Denny.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 09, 2014, 09:06:20 am**

Triste nodded. "Of course. By tomorrow we'll be able to provide a plan for the building, as well as some form of clearance for each of you. Including the North woman if she decides to accompany us."

Axel blinked. "Just like that?"

"Just like that, Mr. Whent." She leaned forwards and raised her voice. "You're all here because

Vergil's vouched for each of you. Personally, I would have preferred to bring qualified Ivitz agents on this assignment, but we have enough faith in his judgement that if trusts in your abilities, it's worth a shot." Triste looked at each member of the group sitting across the table from her. "But, since I'm sure by now you understand the gravity of the situation, I'll be watching each of you. If I feel that any of you will be a liability to the mission, you'll be out."

Crap... Rio chewed the inside of his cheek. "But... I..." His palms sweating, he followed them to the foot of the stairs. To the left of the bottom step, set against the wall, was a small cabinet on which was placed a vase containing a bunch of flowers. Rio paused by it it, then looked up as Lily and Denny headed upstairs. Both of their backs were to him. So far, Denny had seemed calmer around Lily...

Rio pushed the vase off the cabinet then quickly took a few steps up the stairs, pressing a hand to his mouth as if in shock as it smashed on the floor. The flowers scattered, water pooling around them. "Oh! I'm... I'm so sorry! It was an accident!" he stuttered, turning big eyes to the two adults. *Come on... come clean it up...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 09, 2014, 01:11:21 pm**

Soren rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Well, if you put it that way, then I guess I'm in."

He then turned to Tony. "She's doing inpatient treatment at the Corollis Clinic. She's not allowed to have visitors for the first 72 hours." The Human winced as his body's aches began to act up from Anne's beating when he told her that she needed to go to rehab. Luckily, the rebound effect from the drugs in her system quickly wore off and he was able to get her to voluntarily check herself into the clinic.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 09, 2014, 02:33:13 pm**

"Good... thanks guys... I'll make this up to you somehow... I don't know how yet but... I'll think of something. I promise." Vergil told them sincerely. "Sorry again, Soren. But it means a lot that you're going to have my back." the gecko stated, nodding solemnly.

Tony sighed at Soren's announcement. "Dammit... you know what? I don't care. I'm gonna go see her before tomorrow. She has to know that she has people who care about her before we just up and leave. It's like Soren said... she'll think we abandoned her, and that's not right. Regulations be damned... I'm a Stracci, they'll let me in." he said, pushing his chair back and standing with some determination.

"Ahem... before you uh... do that..." Vergil broke in. "What time are we meeting at Zaloga tomorrow?"

"Oh... right. Uh... my appointment's at 1:00, so be there a half hour early I'd say so we can go over plans." Tony stated.

Vergil nodded. "I'll probably call you guys tonight with ideas. Speaking of tonight..." he looked at Triste now. "You wouldn't mind getting those schematics and clearance to me tonight... would you?" he asked her, once again hopefully. "It's just... I'm gonna need to time to prepare, and look over everything. I'm good at coming up with things on the fly... for some reason..." Vergil explained. "So if you could do that, that would be great. This is my address..." He dug around in his pocket, and finally produced a small chit with his address on it as he held it out for her.

"I think we're all agreed, then. Zaloga at 1:00 tomorrow. I will see everyone then!" Tony replied, giving them a nod. "Heh... seems we're always coming together to save the world,

eh?" he asked with a grin, and gave the group a wave before paying for his scotch and starting to head back out to his car.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 09, 2014, 03:30:53 pm**

(CafÈ Verona)

Soren turned to Vergil. "Okay. Let's finish this off once and for all."

He then turned to everyone else. "So do we need to get any other supplies and stuff?"

(Corollis Clinic)

Anne sat in a dull room. All around her were various patients at the clinic. A steady electronic ticking was heard as the clock counted the time.

She reached up and touched her horn. It was spongy but otherwise unchanged. Upon arrival, they had sprayed it with a special metallized bioplastic-based foam. The foam's purpose was twofold: to prevent the horn's use as a stabbing weapon and to silence her electronic telepathy so she couldn't order drugs or other contraband.

She shuffled her hooves nervously. There was no clatter of steel horseshoes on tile. She had been given rubber horseshoes that were glued on.

Her ears lay back. "So what do you want?"

The counselor, a young Axis Deer buck looked at the mare. "How about you introduce yourself?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 09, 2014, 04:00:13 pm**

Vergil shook his head. "Maybe some supplies but nothing serious right now... let's wait to find out where we go next, since from what I recall, the waypoints reveal parts of the map, and it becomes clearer the more you find. So once we get the first one, we'll have an idea where to go next." At least they should, he didn't add. Vergil knew this was the first waypoint Rex had found so in theory, it had led him to the one after that. Even if it didn't, Vergil knew where they could go next, as he'd found another waypoint at the archives yesterday.

"Once we know our next destination, we can plan accordingly with supplies. And definitely jump back here from time to time too... you know, just to check on things and recharge." Vergil suggested.

Tony had arrived at the clinic shortly after leaving Cafe Verona, and had managed to browbeat the staff into letting him through. What were they gonna do? Refuse the son of a powerful crime boss entry? After finding her location, the ferret went straight to the section of the clinic where the mare was being treated.

Stopping just outside the door, the ferret's face fell upon seeing the state she was in. "Dammit..." he breathed, and pulled his cap off his head, wringing it in his paws. Yeah, he was nervous, and wasn't really ready for this, but he'd driven all the way out here, and no time like the present, right? Steeling himself, he stepped forward and cleared his throat.

"Uh... sorry, doc, but I needed to see her before I leave town... hope you understand." Tony

said, and without waiting for a response, he moved forward, eyes traveling to Anne. "Hey..." He gave her a small wave. "So... I wanted to see how you were doing... jesus... I heard the news and was worried. You almost killed yourself!" the ferret started, his face melting into anguish without him really realizing it. "What were you thinking? I didn't want to see you splattered all over a road! I know you might not think so but..." it was a long pause... much longer than the ferret wanted. "But people care about you, you know? I care about you." he said softly before he could stop himself. He closed his eyes in frustration, but figured he may as well finish. "This isn't what I want to constantly think about every day... whether or not you're going to live to see tomorrow. You've gotta stop, Anne. Not just for your sake... but you know... the people who care..." Tony trailed off here, not wanting to present too much at once. He finally reopened his eyes, trying to will his face to un-contort itself from the knot he was sure it must've twisted into while saying that.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 09, 2014, 04:30:46 pm**

On the second floor around a hallway, three white doors sat nestled between an off-white carpet and adobe wall. Lily quietly pushed open the first door to see a young boy, maybe 12, with light skin and dark hair in a cereal bowl cut.

"Hello!" she beamed. The child just looked at her.

"This is Christian. You don't remember Christian?" asked Denny.

"I...of course I do," Lily lied. She knelt down in front of her son. "How have you been? I haven't seen you in so long, I missed you so much!"

The child just continued staring blankly at her.

"Say hello, Christian," Denny demanded firmly.

"Hello," Christian said to Denny.

Lily's eyes clouded, and she put a hand on Christian's shoulder. "Oh god..." she whispered, eyes growing wide. "He's in...such pain..." She sensed... actually something even worse than pain. It was absence. The lack of having ever felt anything at all. Just feeling it brought tears to her eyes.

"He's mentally retarded," Denny explained. "I should have warned you."

Lily turned suspiciously, ready to tell him that she'd met mentally ill and this felt different, but gasped in surprise when he noticed two young girls peeking at her from the doorway. One was a young teenager, dark-skinned with Denny's hair, and the younger one must have been 7 or 8, with Lily's eyes and complexion.

"Oh, hello! Forgive me, you both...startled me..." Lily rubbed her forehead and reflexively winced. Both of them were giving her the same emotionless stare as Christian. Lily's senses ached, numbed by the congealing sense of repression weighing heavy on the room.

"Aylin and Hannah. Also retarded," Denny said simply. "Ejlert was the smart one. I always figured when he was born he stole all the intellect you had to give, leaving none to go around for these three."

Lily stood up suddenly, looking aghast at her husband. "How could you say such a thing?" Her next line was interrupted by the sound of shattering glass downstairs. "Oh no, Rio..." Lily took one last look at her children, ashamed to admit to herself she was almost grateful for a chance to get away and prepare herself mentally for a more extended conversation. "I'll be right back, I just need to check on a friend..."

She darted from the room. Denny stayed behind, giving Lily's backside a calculating look as it

disappeared. With hardly a glance at his children, he crossed to a broom closet and withdrew a heavyset black rifle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 09, 2014, 06:48:29 pm**

Triste took the card that Vergil gave her, looked it over, then nodded. "Shouldn't be a problem." Slipping it into her pocket, she pushed her chair away from the table and stood up. "I'll see you later tonight then. It was... good meeting the rest of you. Hopefully, this'll all go smoothly." With a final glance around the table, Triste turned and left the cafe.

Axel watched her leave, then turned a bemused expression to Vergil. "I just love the positive outlook she's got. It's, ah... it's just great." He stood up too and rubbed a hand through his hair. "I should get going as well. I'll let Lily know what we talked about." He gave the group a sickly smile. "Can't wait for tomorrow. *Yay*... See you all then, I guess." Raising a hand in farewell, Axel made his way through the cafe and emerged onto the street.

He thought about heading back home... but the idea of leaving Lily to deal with her problem alone didn't sit well with him. He knew her husband would be helping her, but surely it would be okay if he just hung around in the area to make sure she was okay... *Or is that just jealousy speaking?* Axel shook his head, then hailed a taxi that was passing. "Carriage Hills," he said as he climbed in.

Rio looked up anxiously as Lily started to come down the stairs, then grabbed her wrist and started desperately trying to pull her back along the corridor. "We have to get out of here now!" he urged, his voice a low whisper. "This guy is a *fucking psycho*! He's got this death basement with cages and tables and... and chairs!" Rio babbled as he kept trying to pull her. "Holy shit, you actually *married* this fuck?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 09, 2014, 07:32:29 pm**

Rose was the first of the girls to get yup from the table ' its time to go pack up for tomorrow I guess she said to marita and Marie, who got up from their seats as the group began to break up and head their separate ways in preparation for the next day. ' once we get some stuff together, We'll go visit Anne at the rehab center Rose offered ' just to show that we care about her and that we haven't forgot about her.'
_ marita nodded as they headed out of the casfe and headed back towards their apartment to freshen up and get packed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 09, 2014, 10:25:38 pm**

Lily's eyes widened. "...show me," was her only reply.

"I'll be up in a minute!" she called up the stairs. "Rio cut himself, I just need to help him clean this out!"

When Rio had reopened the bookshelf, Lily wasn't even particularly shocked to see the horrific torture equipment behind it. Shackled chairs with asphyxiation bags, cages that didn't leave room to sit down, waterboards... "Every form of torture that doesn't leave a mark..." she murmured.

She realized there was a shadow blocking the doorway. "*What have you done to my children?*" she snapped furiously, whipping around with her fists balled.

With a light *whiff* a tranquilizer dart embedded itself in her chest. Calmly, Denny made to reload but before he got the chance Lily dove forward and grabbed his foot. Concentrating, she channeled the semiconsciousness from the dart into her husband.

Denny gasped as he felt himself getting sleepy. Kicking Lily in the face reflexively, he reached into his pocket when she didn't let go and grabbed a bright red powder.

Snarling, Lily tried to drag him down with her and received a face full of chile dust. She screamed, but stayed focused and transferred the burning blindness to Denny. "*I'm not the same woman you kept locked up in this room for God knows how long*" she snarled, channeling animal fury. Raising her arm, she slashed deep red strips of flesh across his face and elbowed his rifle out of his hands.

Stumbling backwards onto the wooden steps, Denny tried vainly to fight back. Lily could *taste* his fear, his helplessness, as she pumped his own psychological weapons back into his system.

Then she was distracted by crying. Her children were at the top of the stairs, watching with wide eyes. Each of them emanated genuine fear, but not at Denny. At her.

"Children!" she exclaimed, hesitating. "Don't look! Please, it's okay--"

One of Denny's elbows smashed into her temple. With the break in her concentration came his second wind. leaning over, he sent both of them thumping down the stairs, with him on top. With a grunt, he wrapped his arms around her neck, putting in the extra effort to shield his mind from any further psionic attacks.

Gagging, Lily felt her already-inflamed vision going black.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 09, 2014, 11:59:50 pm**

Later that night, Vergil was alone in his flat, rubbing the back of his neck as he peered at the computer screen in front of him. His laptop was sitting on a coffee table while he leaned forward on a couch. He was looking at Zaloga's main website, but the pictures of the building just weren't what he needed. He required more if he was going to lead an operation inside this place. Mace really looked... familiar to him, but he figured that's because he had met him before in the past. He had to have been in that waiting room, after all, but he couldn't remember if he'd made it down into the sub-levels with Rex or not.

Leaning back, he tapped the arrow key a few times, scrolling through what pictures he could find of Mace and the Zaloga headquarters. It was a nice building... that was for sure. Very landscaped outside, it was almost like a castle sitting atop waterfalls and cliffs. He'd certainly give props to the landscaper and architect, no doubt.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 10, 2014, 12:07:05 am**

Anne smiled. She got up and embraced Tony in a hug. "I know," she said. "I knew that the twenty some odd years of drug use will eventually catch up to me. But I just kept ignoring it. Mainly because, I really didn't have anyone who cared or to care about."

She sniffled as he ears splayed in embarassment. "But now, I've got you, Soren, Axel and the others..."

(OOC - Anne will eventually break her habit of drug use...and then continue to use marijuana. Though she'll only use what she grows. Personally, I'm of the belief that marijuana is the least harmful of drugs, but this is not the place to talk about it.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 10, 2014, 12:18:36 am**

Tony was a bit surprised at the sudden forwardness of it all... but he had to admit, he rather liked it. He hugged her back after a moment's hesitation, and smiled. "Hey... I'm glad you know that then. I wouldn't have come here if I didn't care, after all." He patted her on the back. "And I wanted to see you before..." he trailed off here, pulling back, but not releasing her just yet.

"I have to go on a trip... with the others. That bastard Kalis is after something dangerous... something that has the potential to shatter the world with its power, and Vergil's been asked by the government to help stop it, since he kind of remembers how to get to what Kalis is seeking. Because this threatens everyone... I gotta go to help try and stop him... for all of us. We aren't leaving just yet though... we got something to do here first that's kind of dangerous but... I wanted to see you before that... so you knew that I did care... and that we weren't just leaving. I can visit you every day if you want, up till I leave... and when I get back... I'll visit again." He smiled once more, giving her a sincere look.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 10, 2014, 01:29:47 am**

marita and girls reached home about 15 minutes later' marie went into her room and packed together some fruit, candy bars and pretzels. marita typed away at her computer for a couple minutes and printed off something off her computer ' normally rehabv centers are strict about visitors, but these passes will let me pose as her physician and you two will be my nurse assistant ' i'm Wilma Goldgut, Marie you're Marse Panini, and Rose you are Rinna McGury, both you and marse are interning under me ' Marita said. she brought out three laminated ids which showed the 3 girls faces.'rose came up to them, and three of them got dressed in the traditional white coats of physicians(marita had bought a large number of clothes which doubled as disguises, everything from a doctors uniform to a cop getup, to even a military vest) ' just act normal girls and let me do all the talking' marita said as they headed out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 10, 2014, 05:59:49 am**

Rio gaped as Lily and Denny tumbled down the stairs towards him, lurching to the side and almost coming down with them. Shooting a glance upwards, he could see some kids, around his age, just standing at the top of the stairs, crying. "Help her! What the fuck are you doing?!"

They made no attempt to move, or even acknowledge that he'd said anything.

Swearing, he turned and jumped down the stairs after them, landing next to the dazed man as he choked Lily. Punching and kicking at Denny seemed to have no effect as he tightened his grip, intent on cutting off her air supply. Desperate, Rio swung his gaze around the room and his eyes stopped on the tranquilizer rifle, lying on the penultimate step from where Lily had knocked it out of her husband's hands. Snatching it up, he spun and aimed the gun at the side of his head, pulling the trigger. It clicked, empty. Gasping, Rio could see Lily was on the verge of blacking out. Switching his grip on the rifle to the barrel, he raised the butt and swung it as hard as he could. It connected against Denny's temple with a solid *clunk*, knocking the man off balance and loosening his grip on Lily. Darting forwards, Rio grabbed her and tried to pull her away.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 10, 2014, 03:21:23 pm**

Denny cried out and took a swing at Rio. Lily blocked the fist with her arm, then used her legs to push Denny over her, sending him tumbling into the torture dungeon.

"Shut the door!" she commanded Rio, staggering to her feet. Her words were slurred and the tranquilizer was taking its course. using her hands for assistance she crawled up the the first floor. "Hannah, Christian, Aylin, come with me!" she begged. But the three children darted up the stairs. "Please!" she begged.

Downstairs, Denny was ramming the bookshelf. Rio had set the propped the tranq gun to block the bookshelf, but it wouldn't hold for long.

"Rio...we've got to...got to..." Lily could barely keep standing. Her vision and thoughts swam, and her head thudded painfully. She almost dropped to her knees when she attempted to move for the stairs.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 10, 2014, 07:10:24 pm**

"Fuck them! We've gotta get out of here, he's gonna kill us!" Rio shouted, catching up with Lily and trying to support her as best as he could with his smaller frame. The sound of slamming reverberated throughout the house, loud as cannon fire to the boy's ears as Denny tried to force his way out. The floors vibrated and pictures on the wall shook rhythmically with each impact.

Rio awkwardly pulled Lily along, back down the corridor that led to the front door. They had to pass the barricaded door to the basement, and he could see with a sinking in his stomach that the gun had almost been jolted free. "Come on! Hurry!" he urged as the entrance grew slowly closer.

Axel looked out the window as the taxi made its way slowly down Carriage Hills, keeping an eye out for the house matching the one Lily had shown him on the website. "Hey... hey, stop here for a second," he muttered when the car passed the two-story house. Axel chewed his lip as the driver pulled up opposite, trying to decide what he was going to do now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 10, 2014, 07:17:47 pm**

With Rio's help, Lily stumbled over to the front door and opened it by flopping her full body weight onto it. Sprawling onto the front porch, she couldn't seem to concentrate long enough to get back up.

Behind them, a final THUD sent the rifle skittering to the side, and a partially-drugged Denny grabbed it and marched up the stairs, reloading as he did so.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 10, 2014, 10:12:54 pm**

Rio almost sprawled over along with Lily as she fell down onto the porch. Stooping, he tried to pull her up, but she was too heavy. He heard the crash as Denny finally managed to break free from the basement, and he desperately redoubled his efforts. "*Shit*! Get up!"

Across the street, Axel's mouth popped open when he saw Lily and Rio come tumbling from the front door. "The hell?" He hurriedly climbed from the taxi and called across. "What the hell's going on?!"

Rio's head jerked up, and his eyes grew wide in recognition. "Help us! He's coming!"

"I'm on the clock, buddy," the cab driver mumbled as he flicked through his newspaper.

"Jesus!" Axel sprinted across the road, onto the property and up to the porch. He took Lily's arm from Rio and started dragging her up to her feet. "What's going on?!" he spluttered again. Instead of answering, Rio turned and slammed the front door closed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 11, 2014, 12:05:52 am**

Lily shook her head dizzily. "Hannah...Christian...Aylin..." she couldn't concentrate enough to say more than a few names.

Denny peered through the keyhole and saw an unknown rat dragging his wife away. The presence of a taxi stopped him from trying to retaliate. Instead, he chose to cut his losses and lock his door.

For now, he'd reseal everything, ensure his children never spoke of this incident, and report an overzealous Lily-impersonator to the police. That would get him some protection for the time being, and give him time to plan for her return.

Because if there's one thing his twisted activities taught him about *properly* tortured people, it's that they always came back.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 11, 2014, 02:04:46 pm**

Vergil was getting a bit restless, and finally stopped trying to burn a hole in his computer screen with his eyes. No matter how much he looked at pictures of Zaloga, he needed those schematics. He cursed his failure to obtain Triste's contact info before leaving Cafe Verona earlier today. Standing up and stretching his arms over his head, the gecko headed for the kitchen to make himself a sandwich. Without those schematics, this whole operation was in jeopardy.

Pulling the fridge door open with a clink of glasses and cardboard cartons on the door's shelf, Vergil proceeded to make a simple peanut-butter and jelly sandwich, which he found he liked for some reason. Perhaps he was fond of them before he'd become amnesiac.

Deciding to make good use of time, he headed back to his computer after finishing construction on the sandwich, and opened up his personnel files, which had arrived via email and a secure log-in about an hour ago. Smiling to himself, he began poring over the information while he munched, looking at his early life and some of his career with the Federation's military, noting he had been decorated for various operations under Rex Sardolemuel's command. Such an idealistic life, serving under such a famous commander... but Vergil admitted, it made him want to learn about Rex all the more, and why he'd strayed from his path to turn traitor. There was an answer there... he just knew it, and he wanted to find it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 11, 2014, 06:21:27 pm**

Carrying Lily back across the road, Axel piled into the cab with her, then pulled Rio in after them. "Go!"

The cab driver rustled his newspaper, then slowly put it down on the seat beside him. "Anywhere you want to go, in particular?"

Rio thumped the back of the driver's seat in frustration. "Just go, fuckwad!"

Later that night, Axel set a cup of coffee on the table in front of Lily as she sat in the kitchen, and lightly pressed a small bag of ice to the swollen lump on her temple as he took a seat next to her. "Well... swelling's going down at least..." he muttered as he inspected the marks on her face. "Jesus, I... I still can't believe..." The fingers of his free hand ground into the wooden table, and the muscles of his jaw clenched. "I'm so sorry I wasn't there..."

There was a small scuffing sound, and Axel looked around to see Rio standing awkwardly in the doorway. The rat's expression softened slightly. "Hey... thanks for helping out."

Rio gave a small shrug and looked down at his shoes. "I wasn't the one he was trying to beat the shit out of."

Triste reached Vergil's floor, and walked down the corridor until she came to a door with the same number as on the card he'd given her. Shrugging the backpack she wore further onto her shoulder, Triste reached out and thumped on the door briskly. ***About to make contact with him now.***

Good. Be sure to relay his plans to us.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 11, 2014, 08:57:03 pm**

Vergil jumped alert at the sound of the knock, his heart racing. OK... he was overreacting. Trying to collect himself, the gecko moved to the door whilst smoothing his feathers back subconsciously. He wasn't even aware he had done it (and of course, his feathers didn't really get smoothed back, as they popped back to their swept back and slightly upright position), and hustled to get the door open. Stopping himself just before he did so, Vergil finally pulled it back and smiled as he saw Triste on the other side, then tried to get somewhat serious.

"Ahem... I was waiting, but I'm glad you're here now." he said, the smile returning to his face. "So... whatcha got?" he asked, stepping aside and motioning for her to come in.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 12, 2014, 09:49:26 pm**

Lily had been spending a lot of time since they got back sitting at the kitchen table and staring out the window.

"Axel..." she said. "We need to find Ejlert. If he's anything like the other children, he's not suited to surviving on his own. Denny implied that he was 'smarter' than the others, and in that case he may help us rescue the others. Denny will have called the police by now, and Rio's right, there's not much we could do to fight Denny head on, especially since I'm supposed to be dead."

She took a deep breath. "That house had a lot of Ejlert in it. I could sense what he had to go through...and if I got the chance I think I could sense him again. I've got these psionic powers, might as well put them to good use."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 13, 2014, 03:25:46 am**

(Corollis Clinic)

Anne's group session had been finished. Thanks to the effect of the drug withdrawl, her hands began to tremor.

Her door clicked as a nurse entered and gave the mare her the detox drugs and some water. He watched over her to make sure she swallowed the pills, even inspecting inside her mouth. When that was done, the door clicked shut as the man exited.

Anne sighed and peered through the armored window. The lights of the huge skyscrapers could be seen against the dark sky.

(Mott Place)

Soren arrived back home to his empty apartment. He had left CafÈ Verona to go shopping for a bit. In his bag were some fresh catfish filets, some algae crackers and some fruits and vegetables.

The apartment was deserted. He then noticed a note taped on the fridge:

Quote

> Soren:
>
> Me and the rest of the girls are gonna visit Anne.
>
> -Rose

Soren looked out the window. Two frameflyers flitted by, a police hoverbiker in hot pursuit.

Sighing, he headed to his bedroom to do some work on some guy's badly damaged augment leg.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 13, 2014, 12:28:51 pm**

Axel nodded. "We'll find him, Lily. And we'll find some way to help the others. There's no way they can stay with that psycho." He looked down at his hands for a moment. "Did you... find anything at the house? Any clues or... or pointers where Ejlert could have gone?"

"I've got what you asked for. Why else would I be here?" Triste gave Vergil a small smile and stepped past him, looking around his apartment as she made her way further in. "Nice place. A little more... cozy that I would have expected." Walking over to the couch, she sat down and pulled off her backpack, unzipping it.

She pulled out some large, rolled up papers and dropped them onto the coffee table next to the laptop. "Plans for the building. Every floor. Should be useful for your *master infiltration plan*." Triste smirked, then reached in and pulled out a small stack of plastic cards, held together with an elastic band. "And security inspector identification. Identical to the real thing, and they should give us access to *most* areas." Pulling the band off, she spread them out on the table next to the floor plans. Each member of the team had their own card, with a small profile picture on the right, and their fake title on the left. Triste looked up at Vergil. "Remember anything else while you were waiting?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 13, 2014, 01:43:10 pm**

"Oh! Well thanks! I do try and manage on my own, after all. It's all I could afford really but... now that I'm back with you guys... guess my pay's gonna increase." Vergil smiled here as he

followed her over to the couch.

Paying close attention to what she was laying out on the table, the gecko's orange eyes scrutinized it all with a new light. "Well I don't think I used that specific terminology but yes... it is a master infiltration plan." He chuckled here, unrolling some of the schematics to give them a look over. "Hmm... no schematics of the sub-levels... but not surprising, since I'm guessing Mace didn't exactly make that knowledge public." he murmured.

But what he was really pleased with were the security inspector badges. "Oh Triste! I have to say... this is above and beyond what I was expecting!" he exclaimed happily. "This'll get us anywhere we need to go, without having to worry about security too much, AND it provides us with the perfect cover!" Looking over at her now with appreciation, he let a wide smile crease his features. "Great work! I'm really gonna have to repay you for the extra thought..." he trailed off here. He knew technically this part of the job, but still, he felt she had put in an extra touch here that most others wouldn't have thought about.

"Well I haven't remembered too much more about myself, except some things here and there about Rex's meeting with his brother... his brother seems... familiar to me for some reason, but I'm guessing it's just because I was present there. I can't think of any other specific times I saw him, after all. I think we'll have to gain access to the elevators to reach the sub-levels, and I might remember how exactly to do that as well." he nodded.

Seeing everything was in order, he took a seat next to her on the couch. "Well I have to say... this is fantastic! I now know exactly how I'm going to approach tomorrow! Ahem... oh yes, can I offer you anything while you're here? Food? A drink?" he inquired, holding back for the moment until he could gauge what she wanted.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 13, 2014, 09:06:44 pm**

Lily shook her head. "No idea. I don't know if we have the proper skillset to sleuth a missing child out on our own."

She took a deep breath. "But if you remember, there was a mutual acquaintance of ours who, if you recall, used to be employed to find people. She told us so herself..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 14, 2014, 07:26:20 pm**

Axel's breath caught. "You... you don't mean..." He swallowed and leaned forwards. "Are you sure that's a good idea? I mean, she didn't exactly attract the best kind of attention... and besides, how would we find *her*? The last we saw of Emilena, she was running off who-knows-where..."

Rio made a small noise.

Axel turned to look at him. "What?"

"Uh..." The boy stepped further into the kitchen. "Well, you just said you were looking for someone called Emilena. Do you mean *Cock Eater*?"

Axel smirked slightly. "No... it sounds like you're thinking of someone else..."

"Well, how many Emilenas could there be? It's not exactly a popular name," Rio tried, approaching the table and sitting opposite them. "She started up her own gang a few months ago near where I used to live, running drugs around, that kind of stuff. Come on! It's what everyone calls her, you've never heard of *Cock Eater*?" Rio's face grew deadly serious, and he leaned in. "Word is, when she was starting up, some guy tried to fuck her over on a deal. So she cut his dick off with some scissors and made him *eat* it."

The smirk on Axel's face vanished quickly. He looked at Lily. "That, ah... that actually sounds like it might be her," he said numbly as he subconsciously crossed his legs .

Triste smiled and leaned back. "I guess a drink would be nice." ***He doesn't remember anything about Mace.*** Looking down, her eyes passed over the faces of the individuals Vergil had picked to help them on the mission. "So... you actually think they're going to be useful?" she asked doubtfully. "It's just... odd. Before, you never would have wanted to work with civilians."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 14, 2014, 09:16:31 pm**

"Sure!" Vergil hopped off the couch and began making his way to the small kitchen. "Well... to be fair... I had my full memory before. This group of individuals... I trust them with my life. They helped me out in Lanthae, and they're more than capable of holding their own. Sure... one or two had some rogue tendencies but... I think that's beyond us now." Vergil pulled open the door to a small wine fridge he had, and brought two glasses down to the counter top. Pulling the cork out of a red wine bottle, he smiled to himself, and poured the contents into the two glasses, the wine swirling a bit with the pouring.

"They all agreed to help, and they all realize the gravity of the situation, as well as what's riding on this mission." Taking the glasses, he walked back over to her and offered her one. "Here... to a better tomorrow... and to us." he ventured here, clinking his glass against hers and taking a hearty sip from it.

Settling in beside her, he let out a contented exhale and looked down at the notes. "Don't worry... we can rely on these guys to get the job done. They single-handedly infiltrated the Purifier base and extracted a civilian from the facility. They're good to go the distance. But..." he moved one picture of Axel to the side, revealing Tony underneath. "Ahem... I feel like maybe we should reconnect a bit before this assignment. I'd like to know more about you... and us, before we start this whole thing. You seem serious and heavily focused on your work... and that's good... but was it a mutual attraction from the start between us? Did it develop over time? Sorry... if this is too personal right now. I'm just trying to reconstruct my memories from scratch after all." he admitted. "Remembering bits and pieces here and there. Any little bit helps."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 14, 2014, 10:48:02 pm**

Lily clicked her tongue disapprovingly. "She would pick a street name like that." She leaned in towards Rio. "I need to meet...Emilena. Would you be able to organize a meeting for me? We're old acquaintances, she might even remember me."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 15, 2014, 01:11:18 pm**

(Corollis Clinic)

The door on Anne's room clicked open. The mare's ears pricked up as she turned towards the noise. There, she saw three familiar faces in hospital scrubs.

"Rose? Maria? Marita? The fuck are you doing here?" she whispered.

(*Bak Long* Headquarters)

Rory sighed as he looked over the paperwork. The scent of burning joss sticks hung in the air. The three 49ers had recovered his lost creds. But he just had recieved reports from his superiors that Corona was really starting to crack down on street vendors.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 15, 2014, 01:54:57 pm**

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paying you a visit of course' marita said stepping into the room. ' you came within a few seconds of splattering on the ground behind our apartment. they let us in because i showed my id badge, and gave me the list of drugs they have you on to detoxify your system.because you took some bad stuff. Real bad stuff..'
-
we'll been called in to help save the world .. again.. seems some nut job named kalis is trying to take over the world, and we have to beat him to a ship thats the size of Puerto Rico that has the firepower to conquer the planet' marie said she took a seat by Annes Bed.' and just when we were settling in to our life here, stuff happens. i swear its like we're cursed or something..
-
so how are you holding up/ rose said as she took a look at Annes chart.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 15, 2014, 08:44:03 pm**

(Corollis Clinic)

Anne's ears splayed as she heard what the trio were telling her. "Yeah, I knew I fucked up big time."

She turned to Rose and put her feet on the bolted down metal desk. "Not bad. Found out that a lot of the patients are Lanthaeni."

The mare then sighed as Marie relayed the news. "Again?" She gave a bitter laugh. "Well, I'm out of the running. Good luck to you though."

(Mott Place)

Soren had just finished repairing the leg. He looked at the clock: 9:00 PM. He sighed as he put his tools away and picked up his cell phone.

He dialed his latest client's number. "Mister Batty, your leg's finished. Would you like to pick it up now or later?"

"*Now!*" Soren held the phone away from his ear. "Fucking hell, you don't have to shout!" he muttered.

The Human hung up and carefully strapped the augment to a trolley.

The doorbell rang as he wheeled the augment to the front door. He peered through the peephole, revealing a middle aged Green Anole.

He opened the door slightly. And the Anole began to speak. "I'm here to pick up my leg." He handed over his ID card.

"Ah yes, Roy Batty. Your leg is right here."

"Thanks for being open this late." He pulled out two credit chits and was about to pass them

over when something at the far end of the stairwell grabbed his attention.

His demeanor suddenly changed. The Anole suddenly tossed the two credit chits to the Human and bolted.

"Mister Batty! Youró" Soren picked up the two credit chits that had been tossed at him. As he did so, he saw four figures clad in black armor and equipped with firearms.

He shuddered as he closed the door and bolted it. He muttered some profanities under his breath.

(OOC - Lanthaeni = inhabitant of Lanthae)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 15, 2014, 09:11:12 pm**

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rose patted annes face.' we'll we're not going to forget you girl.. how long before you can get out of here and get back to the apartment?
- Rose, honey she needs ti detox, like you did. the stuff shes addicted to isnt as bad as the biproxytol you were hooked on, but if its bad enough to think shes a blooming angel with wings, she needed to be sobered up..' marita said ' she turned to Anne " you'll get a cut of whatever money we get from stopping Kalis, and you'll always have a home with us' ' you're one of us anne don't get too hard on yourself' marie said giving her a phone. fortunately there were no video cameras in patients rooms due tioo privacy concerns..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 16, 2014, 10:24:11 am**

Rio blinked. "You... you actually want to *meet* her?" He gulped. "Well... yeah. Yeah, I know a guy who could set up a meeting. I could find him tomorrow if you want, he used to hang out where I live."

Looking at Lily, Axel squeezed her hand slightly. "Are you sure there's no other way? This doesn't sound... well, it doesn't exactly sound safe..."

He's still hooked up on this? Triste took a sip from the wine glass and leaned back. "Well," she started, looking down at the glass and swirling it, "If I remember right, it was more of a mutual thing. We noticed each other in combat training, and since we were at the top of the class they always used to pair us together. Always used to be a draw though. You had more reach, I had more flexibility."

She took another sip, cocking her head as she stared into the distance. "So we started meeting up after training to... try and come to a clear winner." Triste smiled slightly. "But we still had the same problem."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 16, 2014, 01:09:44 pm**

A thin smile spread across Vergil's lips here as Triste described the start of their relationship. "Heh... must've been quite the... 'rivalry.'" he stated here. He couldn't remember specific instances, but he certainly could picture it very easily enough in his mind.

As she described their meet-ups afterwards to try and settle on a clear winner, it was obvious to him what had transpired afterward. Most certainly there was a desire within him to re-experience it, but he was also debating if now was the right time for it. He couldn't remember

if he was the aggressor or the one being seduced back then. Taking another drink from his glass, he swallowed and gazed out into the distance as well. "Well... that definitely sounds like something we need to settle at some point, wouldn't you say?" he asked here, his orange eyes moving over to her now, testing the waters. "I mean such an indecisive engagement... has to have a resolution at some point. A... 'climax' if you will." he smirked, and took another drink. "Still... thanks for the refresher... every little bit helps."

Tony was still hanging around Anne's room, having kept her company for a few hours. He was reading a book, and had just flipped the page when the trio came in. "Oh... hey again!" he said them, nodding as he closed the book after bending the corner of a page.

He listened to the exchange between the girls, and finally spoke up. "Yeah... and also, if you need anything, I wouldn't mind helping you out, Anne. No strings attached either, not for you." Drumming his claws on the book's cover, he looked over at her here. "I want to see you better, after all, and I won't spare anything in helping you get there. I'll be visiting as often as I can, whenever I'm in town." he reiterated, hoping he didn't sound too repetitive, but felt he wanted to make sure she knew he wasn't just going to leave and forget.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 16, 2014, 10:00:27 pm**

"I'm positive," stated Lily firmly. "Rio, the sooner you can get me in touch with Emilena the better."

She crossed to her room and withdrew a can of hairspray from her bathroom cabinet. Unscrewing the bottom, she pulled out about 9000 credits*. They were the collective tips she received from a part-time job at a Chinese restaurant where she occasionally worked as a waitress. Hopefully it would be enough to sway Emilena...

(*equivalent to $900)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 16, 2014, 10:14:58 pm**

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you're a good guy tony' Marita said giving him a nod.' i can tell you really care about you, and given your family, you're not a guy to mess with. and she has us, as well. i'll cover the cost of her detox, so she wont have to worry about paying for anything.' Marita added giving Anne a firm look, before turning back to Tony " What's the name of the book you are reading? i ask only out of curiosity.."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 17, 2014, 08:37:04 am**

As they waited for Lily to return, Rio looked across at Axel, wide eyed. "So you actually *knew* her? Do you think it's true? About the dick thing?"

Axel grimaced. "No. Probably not. I hope not."

At the sound of Lily's footsteps, Rio glanced up. "I could try and set something up tomorrow. Hal... the guy I know... he always hangs out on the same corner." He saw the bundle of credits Lily was holding, and a small part of his mind noted that these two probably kept more little stashes like that somewhere around the house.

Axel's fingers drummed nervously on the table. "You know I can't go with you, I have to help Vergil. And... and I know this is something you have to do, but... promise me you won't take any risks you don't need to, Lily. Please."

"Don't worry about it," Triste said. "And you might be right. We never *did* find out who was on top." She grinned. "Or at least, top of the class." Triste ran her eyes over him, then looked away and straightened, finishing her glass. "But not now. We've got a long day tomorrow, and I don't want you getting... tired."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 17, 2014, 01:21:09 pm**

Vergil tensed up a bit as he caught her eyes wandering over him, roving up and down his form, but it came to nothing ultimately, and he knew she was right. As fun as a fling would be right now, it wasn't the appropriate time for such things. Exhaling slightly, he finished his wine and got up, stretching his arms out behind him as he headed for the door. "No... you're right of course. I need to be on top form for this. This issue can be settled later, after all." Despite the rejection, he maintained his optimistic outlook on it, and opened the door for her.

"Thanks for the schematics and passes. It was absolutely invaluable and it'll help us for sure, tomorrow... and... thanks for dropping by in general." he told her here now, offering her a small smile. "Well... have a good night, Triste. I'll see you tomorrow at Zaloga and we'll find out what's what with the path to Torment's Cataract."

Tony waved his paw at the others now. "Oh it's nothing. Least I can do for you guys, after all. And hey! I could cover the detox without even batting an eye! Why bother spending your hard-earned cash? Let me cover it... I don't mind." Tony informed them, smiling and tapping the cover of his book with a claw.

"Ah yes... I'm reading a book entitled 'Bremen and Europa: German Speed Queens of the Atlantic.' It's about two liners made by North German Lloyd during the 30s that I would've loved to travel on. Art deco at its finest and all that." he chuckled. "Anyway, I'd be happy to cover the cost for Anne so you girls can save your funds." He got up out of his chair now and looked at the pony. "I think I'm gonna head out for the night, as we got some work to do tomorrow with Vergil, but I'll stop by as frequently as I can." Tony told her. "Not going to forget about you, after all." He shook his head here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 17, 2014, 07:06:14 pm**

(Corollis Clinic)

Anne sniffled and embraced the three women in a massive hug. Despite her being slightly shorter than Soren, her incredible strength was revealed.

"Thanks for being here for me!" She wiped away some tears. The mare then embraced Tony and lifted the Ferret clean off the ground.

Her ears then pricked up and then pinned back and her tail began to swish back and forth as she heard footsteps. She glanced around. "Oh no, the night shift nurse is coming! You four need to hide or we're gonna be in deep shit!"

(Mott Place)

The door shook as someone knocked on it. "Open up or we're breaching the door!"

Soren peered through the peephole. It was that squad of black clad infantry. Two Primates and two Felines. Or at least he could tell from the rough shapes of their helmets and their reflective visors.

"What's your business?" he asked through the door.

"You have something that belongs to Serami Heavy Industries. Turn it over or we will recover it by force."

Soren gulped as he put the pieces together. That's why Mr. Batty was so skittish and willing to leave behind a rather expensive augment. He had stolen it, damaged during the theft and wanted a cyberneticist who wouldn't ask too many questions about it.

The locks clicked as the Human undid them and opened the door. The four armored troopers filed in.
Three of them carried H&K MP-7 subguns at the ready while one of them carried a Kel-Tec KS-CQB shotgun.

Soren undid the leg from the hand truck it was strapped to and backed away. One of the soldiers picked up the augment and placed it in a duffel bag.

"*We've recovered the augment. Returning to HQ now. Recuva Leader out*." The infantryman with the shotgun radioed. Soren couldn't hear the words as it was transmitted via a throat mike.

Recuva Leader then turned to Soren. "Thank you for your cooperation." The four men then marched out of his apartment, even having the courtesy to close the door after themselves.

Soren locked the door and sighed. "Remind me never to agree to repair augments from shifty looking dudes."

(OOC - Kel-Tec KS-CQB is a fictional [and much improved] version of the Kel-Tec KSG shotgun.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 17, 2014, 10:20:39 pm**

"Hey, don't worry," Lily smiled and ran her hand down Axel's cheek. "This is Emilena we're talking about. She wouldn't hurt an old friend."

Her eyes clouded. "Be careful yourself. I don't fully understand what you're doing tomorrow with Vergil, but its your choice to make. Those people just have no sense of self-preservation. Just leave the dangerous stuff to them, if you can..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 17, 2014, 11:34:42 pm**

That sounds really cool.I'd like to read it sometime' Marita said before being hugged by Anne in a crushing grip. when alerted that the night nurse was approaching, she leaned in and locked lips with anne. ' night anne" she said after a few seconds in which she had rubbed tongues with the mare.' we're headed out , once the nurse leaves. ' rose gave anne a good night kiss as well, and marie was the last to lock lips with her. the girls then opened the closet in the room and snuck behind a large crate of supplies.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 17, 2014, 11:42:00 pm**

(Corollis Clinic)

Anne quickly slid under the covers and pretended to be asleep.

The nurse came in and looked around the darkened room. Seeing as everything was in order, she exited and shut the door.

The mare opened one eye as she listened to the footsteps fade away.

She got out of bed and rapped on the door. "You and Tony better leave before the nurse comes back," she whispered.

(Mott Place)

Soren got out of the shower and put on his pajamas. As he got into bed, he wondered exactly what tomorrow was going to bring. All he hoped was that it didn't bring him to meet Emilena.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 17, 2014, 11:48:56 pm**

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rose nodded to anne. ' thanks for letting us visit Anne, we'll be in touch ' she said ' as the girls waved goodbye to anne, and headed out the door, sneaking out past the front desk without being stopped. ' we'll see you soon tony ' marita said once they were safely outside.' Have a good night ' she said.' and thanks for picking up the tab for Anne, its a very generous gesture on your part.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 18, 2014, 01:07:36 am**

"Right! We're outta here, then! It was good seeing you again, Anne!" Tony told her, noting her strength in lifting him off the ground. "Heh... take care of yourself, and I'll see you again soon!" Grabbing his book, he paused as he noted the rather intimate kisses passing back and forth between the trio and Anne. He stared wide-eyed, a big "what the hell" look on his face.

He was about to say "Oh yeah, sure, no problem. I'm paying for her because you know, I care a lot. Sure, I tried to bed her whilst hyped up on pain meds but... the feelings lingered." Now he was just crashing and burning inside worse than a loaded 747 crashing to Earth. So much for his shot at this... damn... struck out again. But when did this happen? He wasn't even aware the trio had feelings for Anne! Luckless in love... that was him all right.

Swallowing hard, he darted out of the room now and gave a quick "Yeah I'll be sure to loan it to you sometime!", he acted as casually as he could, whistling to himself as he sauntered down the hall and towards the building exit. He acted like he belonged there, and it worked. No one stopped him on his way out to the Delahaye, and it was over and done with before anyone could think twice about the strangely well-dressed ferret in the clinic. What he didn't show anyone was the fact he was fighting back tears, which only rolled after he'd gotten into the car and drove off.

The Next Day

Vergil stood outside the corporate headquarters of Zaloga and glanced at his watch. The others should be arriving soon. He'd caught the metro here, not yet owning a car in Corona due to lack of real income. Behind him, the towering headquarters of Zaloga rose up like a black castle perched high atop a cliff.

Like the points on a compass, Corona's Cronin Plaza (which was a cross shape) contained a massive corporate headquarters building at each of its four ends. Zaloga stood at the southern end, and was the second tallest building in the plaza. It was like a layered mountain, built in a stepped back design; waterfalls tumbled from its various pinnacles and splashed into pools on lower levels from which trees and grass sprouted like makeshift botanical gardens. Part of its architecture was literally designed to make it look like it was a building molding with a giant crag. It was certainly one of the more architecturally stunning buildings in Corona.

The west end of the plaza was taken up by the smallest of the buildings (though that wasn't saying much given the height on each): Serami Heavy Industries' headquarters. Heinz Dupette Serami may have been modest in his choice of headquarters, but he was miles ahead of his next closest competitor, Derami Enterprises, whose headquarters stood at the east end of the plaza. Serami's building was mostly glassy in appearance, a pale blue exterior reflecting all around it on a sunny day. Derami's building across from Serami was a plain black affair, all militaristic and spartan. It was practical, and as it stood taller than Serami's building, rumor had it that Derami stood at the top of his tower looking down with envy at his much more successful rival.

Finally, the most ostentatious and overly showy building on the plaza was Judaken Industries' headquarters. Standing at the north point, it was like a giant sword rising out of the ground. Constructed of a crystalline substance, it reflected pinks and greens rather well in the sunlight. It was over a mile high, and surrounded by four smaller "turrets" as it were. Small was a relative term though when it came to Judaken. Nothing about his presence was small. The building resembled a space shuttle in its shape in a vague sense, but looked mostly like a sword because it wasn't bulky like a shuttle.

Hearing the sound of an approaching old "burner" now, Vergil smiled as he saw a beautiful maroon and silver classic car approaching the Zaloga parking lot. The car was one of Tony's finest, a 1951 Daimler DE-36 that he had decided to drive today as it made him look like he was on official business. The car (http://www.barthworks.com/cars/cussler/photos/1951daimlerde36c.jpg) was a convertible, and as it was a pleasant, warm afternoon, Tony was driving with the top down. Honking as he pulled the big British boat into one of the spots marked as "Guest, Tony killed the engine and got out to pull the top up.

"Sweet ride." Vergil smirked.

"Yeah... the Daimler's always been one of my personal favorites. I almost always use it on business trips. Serves to show I'm a serious kind of guy." the ferret replied, looking at the gecko. "And we're very serious today, after all." he added, with less mirth in his tone now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 18, 2014, 01:42:32 am**

Soren was busy making some peanut butter and applesauce sandwiches for everyone. The sun shone brightly through the windows.

"So how was the visit with Anne?" he asked as he poured himself some hot tea. "Is she doing okay?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 18, 2014, 01:47:20 am**

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soon after a modern hovercar powered into one of the guest spots, a couple of spaces away from tonys car, which was beautiful to look at. Marita got out of the drivers seat, rose got out of the pssenger seat and marie from the back. They were dressed in clothes that suggested

business manager or similar professional attire. ' morning Tony, morning Vergil' Rose said in a kind voice ' hope everything is going well with you. ' she added as they gathered around the ferret and gecko. 'so I take it everything is ready/ Marito asked Vergil.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 18, 2014, 03:57:22 am**

Soren drove his antique (and stolen) Fisker Karma into the parking lot. He emerged from the car and locked the door. Unlike the usual uniform he wore, he was wearing a set of khaki pants and a white, button-down shirt.

He looked around and noticed that Vergil, Marita, Marie, Tony and Rose were already present. "Good morning to you all."

The Human looked around in case someone was listening in or otherwise spying.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 18, 2014, 10:37:37 am**

The sun's heat beat down on Rio and Lily as he lead her through the grimy streets that networked their way through the sums, promising yet another boiling day. From somewhere in the distance loud rap music was being blasted from a radio, the sound echoing off the worn down buildings and alleyways coated with graffiti.

"...And the food they do there is really good! Once you pick the bug bits out I mean," Rio was telling Lily as they turned off from the street they'd been following and made their way down a twisting, uneven stairway. He knew he was babbling, but being able to walk through this area and talk to someone who wasn't constantly thinking about the next store to rob, or where they'd get their next fix from was... different. Nice. At the bottom of the stairway was a rusty metal gate, which lead through into a large market square. Several stalls had been set up where people were selling all sorts of things, from dubious looking food to knock-off clothing. At this time in the morning, the market was virtually empty. Rio waved at a vendor he recognised, then looked across to the far end of the square. Sure enough, a thin, dark coloured duck was leaning against the wall, his attention focussed on something he was doing on his phone. Rio pointed him out to Lily. "There he is. Same place as always." Leading her across, Rio nudged the duck on the arm. "Hey, Hal. How've you been, man?"

Hal gasped and looked quickly down to see who'd nudged him, and the alarm on his face lessened when he saw it was Rio, though it didn't vanish completely. Rio wasn't sure Hal *was* capable of looking relaxed. "Oh! Hi, er, hi Rio." His eyes glanced nervously over Lily before returning to the boy. His voice was strained, anxious, and his adam's apple kept bobbing visibly as the duck swallowed almost compulsively. He was small for his age, and unlike most other adults, the jittery duck didn't loom over Rio. "Hey, I, I heard what happened. With the money. What, er, what happened to you? What are you doing here?! They could, could still be looking for you!"

Rio shook his head. "It's kind of a long story. I'll tell you some other time. Look, you know *Cock Eater*, right? Emilena?"

Hal started. "Emilena. *Emilena*. She hates, hates being called that... other thing." He paused. "Yeah, I, er, I know her. Why?"

"We need to see her. It's... it's important." Rio glanced at Lily. "Just tell her Lily needs to speak with her. They used to know each other."

Hal wrung his hands nervously. "I don't know... she doesn't like being, being disturbed..." Twitching, he looked back at Lily, and something he saw in her eyes softened his expression. "Oh... okay, fine. I'll, I'll see what I can do. Just wait here. *Oh jeez*..." Swallowing again for good measure, the duck turned and disappeared up a narrow alleyway that led off from the

market square.

Rio turned back to Lily and scratched his head. "That went well. At least we found him on one of his confident days."

Fifteen minutes later, Hal re-emerged from the alleyway, his eyes blinking rapidly as he beckoned them over. "Come on, she, she says she'll see you."

Rio looked up at Lily and gave her an encouraging smile, then started to make his way across.

Axel payed the cab driver then stepped out. Across the street, he could see Soren, Tony and the others hanging around. He bit his lip, his tail flicking uncomfortably as he tried to stop worrying about Lily. He knew the chances of Emilena doing anything to hurt her were low, especially after all they'd done to save her but... he still wasn't comfortable with the idea of her seeking out a gang of drug runners. *She'll be fine... she can take care of herself...* the rat told himself firmly. Taking a deep breath, he let it out then jogged across the parking lot to where the group stood.

"Hey guys, sorry I'm late!" He waved at them as he drew close. "Lily's still, ah, busy so she can't make it." Axel looked around. "Where's the other one? Er... Tistery?"

"Triste," said a voice behind him, "And I'm right here." Axel jumped, then looked behind him to see the spider gecko making her way over. She made her way around the group and stopped next to Vergil. "So you all turned up. Good." Triste looked at Vergil. "I assume you've got a plan?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 19, 2014, 12:57:36 am**

Tony nodded at the girls but didn't say anything, and he greeted Soren with a smile. "Hey, Soren. Good to see you."

Vergil was pleased to see everyone show up. Good... he knew they had his back, and smirked as Triste suddenly put in an appearance. He nodded solemnly. "Of course I have a plan. Tony's going to have to meet with Mace to avoid arousing suspicion, but once his meeting's finished up, instead of taking the elevator down to the ground floor... he'll keep going, and meet us in the sub-level. He can also tell us if any alerts have been raised. Soren..." Vergil looked at the human here. "Since you seemed reluctant earlier, you may accompany Tony if you wish to the meeting, posing as his aide. Otherwise, the rest of us will act as if we're a security inspection detail... these..." He began handing out badges to everyone. "Will get us in as such. We're conducting a surprise inspection of Zaloga's security systems, and will be acting the part. Once we're inside, we make for the elevators, and I'll..." he paused here. "I know it'll come to me... but I'll recall how to access the lower levels once we're inside. I saw how to do it once... and I know it's there... I know I'll be able to recall it."

"Why not just ask about it?" Tony suggested, shrugging.

"Well I'm not sure anyone outside Mace knows about the lower levels. But if you want to risk bringing it up in conversation as perhaps a potential business deal... maybe a smuggling route or something..." Vergil trailed off.

"Hmmm... nah, better not." Tony shook his head.

"Now then... I don't know what we're gonna encounter down there... it may be dangerous. I think this civilization took great care to hide this waypoint... and possibly even protect it. I asked Tony to bring us some weapons, just in case. With these badges, we'll be able to bypass security carrying weapons, but all the same... I think it's best to conceal them, at least until we're down below the building. Don't want to alarm the employees unnecessarily after all."

Vergil instructed.

"Right... so... without further ado..." Tony went over to the Daimler's trunk and popped it open. Help yourselves!" he declared, standing aside to reveal a weapons crate. "I obviously can't carry anything inside, so I'll probably try and hold down the exit for you guys, or join you depending on what's up down there."

"Might want to take an extra weapon for Tony then when he gets down there, and Soren if he's joining Tony." Vergil suggested. "Everyone following so far?" the gecko asked, looking the group over.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 20, 2014, 02:41:12 am**

"Nice to see you, too." He shook Tony's hand. When Triste arrived and began to speak.", he listened intently.

Soren pondered. He had enough crazy shit happen to him when he was in Lanthae. Figuring that posing as an aide would be a relatively sedate task, he agreed.

"Okay, I've got everything down. So all I do is just essentially take notes or do things like carry Tony's portfolios and other things?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 21, 2014, 09:02:46 am**

Hal led Rio and Lily into an increasingly seedy part of town. Windows were boarded up, shadowy figures loitered in alleyways, and the only sign of friendliness came from the urchins playing Kick the Can in the street.

Hal reached a boarded-up warehouse and knocked five times in a distinct pattern on a rusty door labeled 'KEEP OUT'. After a few minutes, the door audibly unclicked and someone knocked twice in response.

"Don't," Hal warned as Lily stepped forward. "This door shoots you. We use the one around the corner."

After a brief climb up a fire escape, Hal led the two of them into a dingy, cavernous room. Crates, posters and other lived-in makeshift furniture dotted the darkened expanse. It was deathly quiet.

"Hello--?" Lily said tentatively, and was immediately greeted with someone in the blackness hissing "Shhh!" All of a sudden a stagelight snapped on, revealing a thin light-haired fox with his head bowed solemnly and his hand on a microphone stand.

"Nairda!" gasped Lily, pleased to see a familiar face.

Suddenly a beat struck up from the nearby speakers, quick and base-heavy. Snapping up as if in a trance, Nairda busted some passionate raps.

What do you do when you've got a newcomer but no brains to figure them out
You're all wrapped up in the main game, you don't got time for new clout
changing the rules and rewriting the plan
throwing you on your ass harder than a Lazy Susan...

Lily couldn't stop a wry smile from playing across her face at his inane but heartfelt lyrics. A few minutes later, the rap ended and the lights rose up on the warehouse to reveal the other

gang members clapping their hands. Lily quickly joined in, to which Nairda bowed and threw a rose at her feet.

Feeling encouraged, Lily stepped forward. "I need to speak to--" she paused. The only audience members were a bright fuchsia teenage canid and a human running the speaker from his laptop. Where was...

"*Who dares to enter the headquarters of the Black Bullets?*" Emilena hissed in her ear from the darkness to her left, making her jump.

"You know who I am," Lily responded reflexively, stepping away, "and can I say I'm incredibly disappointed in how you turned out?"

Gone was the military-style crewcut and stiffly pressed wardrobe of the Emilena Lily had known in Lanthae. This Emilena wore a tank-top and baggy sweatpants, her hair was scraggy and uncut. About the only familiar thing was her commanding and condescending attitude.

Emilena glowered back at her through bloodshot eyes indicative of casual drug use. "I thought we agreed not to see each other after last time."

"I need your help. And frankly, you need mine." Lily glanced disapprovingly at the stains on Emilena's clothes. "I recently learned that I had children before the events where we met. The oldest, Ejlert, has gone missing. I want you to help me find him."

"I don't owe you anything!" Emilena stalked around her, back hunched and muscles tensed like an animal. "The past is behind me, and I'm not interested in dredging all this shit up again!"

Lily sighed. "I thought you better than this, but fine." She withdrew the 9,000 credits from her dress pocket. "Half once you've accepted, half once you've done everything you can to find him. You don't even have to succeed."

Emilena's eyes lit up, but she maintained her poker face and sniffed derisively. "We get at least twice that much from the most basic of drug runs."

"I'm not bartering with you," Lily countered firmly, eyes narrowed.

Emilena locked eyes with her. Obviously she was used to debating with drug addicts, who were a bit easier to push around. Finally, she smiled, revealing stained yellow fangs. "You know what? Let's put it to a vote. The Black Bullets always use democracy to choose their hits. No way around it."

The human on the computer sighed audibly, and Hal bristled next to Lily. "Votes are always the same..." he whispered when Lily glanced at him. "She's got her girlfriend and boytoy who always side with her, so doesn't matter what we vote."

Lily took his wings in her hands. "Regardless, please. Vote with me here."

Beads of sweat formed on his forehead. "I, uh, vote we do it."

"Well I don't!" Emilena replied defiantly. Sliding a knife out of the seat of her panties, she began picking dirt out of her nails.

The fuchsia canid sidled up to Emilena's side. Lily couldn't quite place her species. "Neither do I," the canid fawned, wrapping her arms around her leader. Emilena ignored her and instead looked expectedly at Nairda.

Nairda stepped down from the stage, giving Lily a polite curtsy. "I vote that we assist the lovely Lily in her time of need."

"What?" gasped Emilena, flinging the purple apostle off of her. She looked ready to throttle Nairda. The final gang member, sensing an opportunity for Emilena to lose a vote, quickly

chimed in "I vote yes too!"

Emilena snarled, suddenly brandishing her knife more threateningly. Lily didn't even flinch. After a few strained seconds, Emilena sheathed her knife. "Goddammit, fine." Stepping forward, she held her hand out expectedly, and Lily handed her half of the credits. Frustratedly looking for someone to display dominance over, Emilena's eyes rested on Rio. "Hey, what do you think you're doing here, tyke?" she hissed unpleasently, eyes glowing. "I never gave you permission to enter our hideout. What do you think I should do about that? I think you should should pay an...entrance fee. How about one ear?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 21, 2014, 12:02:00 pm**

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marita took a handgun in a holster, marie and rose did as well, and latched them to the inner loops in their pants. all 3 wore the ids that identified them as security inspection. the guns were part of the security outfit. ' basically i'll run a scan of their security system, which will double as a chance to check how strong their cybersecurity is' marita said ' that shouldn't take more than a few minutes

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 21, 2014, 01:38:59 pm**

Axel nodded along with Soren, holstering one handgun and taking a spare. "Alright, that sounds simple enough... I guess," he said as he took his badge from Vergil. "So the rest of us get down to the lower levels, and then what? Do you know what we'd be looking for? How these, ah, coordinates are being kept? Computer?"

As he spoke Axel reached into his jeans for his wallet to store the ID, and frowned when he felt that his pocket was empty. He felt the other side of his jeans. Nothing. Hoping he'd forgotten it at home, Axel slipped the badge into his shirt pocket instead.

Rio had been hanging back as Lily and Emilena had their tense conversation, catching sly glances at Emilena's chest when he thought nobody was looking. When she addressed him he started, paling slightly. "I'm sorry, don't cut off my ear! Or anything else!"

Grimacing, he pulled a wallet out of his pocket and threw it reluctantly over to Emilena. As it arced through the air, it opened and Axel's driver's license was made visible. "See, there's probably money in there!" Rio looked shiftily at Lily. "I... found it."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 21, 2014, 03:50:06 pm**

"I know what we're looking for, but I'm not sure where it is." Vergil confessed. "It's going to be a challenge, I'm sure though. It's in an old... projector is the only way I can think to describe it. But not like from the 60s or anything. I mean like... a holographic projector. That I *do* remember."

"OK... good. We're all set, then." Tony shoved the trunk of the Daimler shut, and nodded over at Soren. "Yeah basically just act like you're a member of my family here on business. Take notes, and I might 'consult' you from time to time as well. All right everyone... let's do this!" the ferret exclaimed, and he set off first with Soren while Vergil indicated the others should wait a few minutes so as not to give the impression they were together.

As the ferret and human departed, Vergil looked over at Marita. "All right, but don't get

caught! Zaloga is a multi-billion dollar corporation that has the best security systems money can buy. If they even sense an incursion, they might go into high alert. I don't want to give them a reason to do that. They're well protected against hackers, after all. A look should be all you get." he cautioned.

Checking his watch to ensure enough time had passed, Vergil finally nodded at the others. "OK... let's go!" he ordered, nodding for them to follow him inside. The interior lobby of Zaloga was beautiful, to say the least. It was like an homage to the great rococo palaces of the past. Colorful black and green marble columns rose up like trees, and a waterfall cascaded down from a hole in the ceiling into a pool in the center of the lobby.

Heavy security checkpoints were at every door however, and the receptionist behind the desk greeted them with a nod, but grew alarmed at the pistols strapped around the trio's legs. She went for the alarm but Vergil held up his pass. "Sorry for the overtness of this, but we're conducting a security check on your systems. Unannounced, so carry on as you were." Much to his chagrin, the gecko's head just barely came over the top of the desk.

"Let me have the card, please." Vergil handed it over, and the receptionist scanned it on a machine. Tense minutes ticked by as the machine read the minute details on the card, and finally, it was over. "Your credentials check out. Sorry about the suspicion sir, but I saw guns and immediately thought the worst."

Vergil smiled as his pass was handed back to him. "Not a problem. Zaloga hasn't been around as long as it has by taking foolish chances, after all." he answered her reassuringly.

"One thing... if you're gonna carry your guns around on the outside, you need your badges visible at all times." the receptionist reminded him.

Marita and the trio had blatantly ignored his advice about keeping the guns concealed, so Vergil nodded. "Of course. We'll mostly be out of sight though, so you'll hardly notice we're here. No worries on that end, as we're only checking a specific section of building security."

She nodded, and temporarily deactivated the scanners as she waved them on through. Fortunately, the elevators weren't too far away, and they would soon be out of sight of building security. Pushing the down button, Vergil waited along the banks of elevators patiently before one dinged and they were able to board.

Vergil stared intently at the set of buttons now as the door closed. OK... time to remember the sequence... what was it? His mind was hazy, but as he glanced at the familiar rows of buttons and numbers, the fog began to lift. "Yes... that's it..." he uttered softly, and he reached out and hit floor 67, B2, 45, 72, and emergency stop in that order. The elevator did nothing at first, then a grinding noise sounded, and suddenly, the elevator began descending. Basement levels 1, 2, and 3 all ticked by, but the elevator didn't stop, and continued descending, going deeper than the B3 level, which was the last one on the indicators. "It worked!" Vergil exclaimed happily.

Barely containing his excitement, he was all grins as he looked at the others. "Oh! So I guess I should ask... Triste and Axel... and hell even Rose and Marie too, since I barely know you, what would you say your skill sets are? When we get down there... we might be tested by defenses or some other thing the civilization left behind. We need to be on our toes down there, and knowing what you're good at will help me out as we proceed forward." he stated. He was particularly interested in Triste's answer, for being one of the government's top agents meant you were no slouch, and he figured she could probably not only kick ass and take names but perhaps bring some other things to the table as well.

The elevator carrying Tony and Soren up passed the floors rather rapidly as they drew higher and higher. Zaloga's headquarters was the second tallest building in the plaza, and Mace's office was on the top floor, along with his penthouse suite. "Hey Soren... you've been living with Anne, right? She ever mention me?" he asked here, tapping his claws on the handle of

the briefcase he carried. "Oh! I should probably give this to you, since I don't typically carry my own baggage... it'll make you look official too, like one of my legal aides or something." the ferret suggested, holding it out for Soren to take now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 21, 2014, 06:41:43 pm**

'i wont really risk it then' marita said before they entered. she showed her id to the receptionist and waited for the all clear. after thatt was given she followed Vergil down the passageway '
well i'm pretty good with getting through small spaces. and i'm pretty good with a firearm. had to show you were competent with a taser to get the job. sometimes players try to pocket and run and then you had to tase them before they leave. ' she said
_ well i'm pretty good with a club, i guess' marie said. i havent had much opportunity to use it though.. so this will be a new experience,, see what i'm made of, so to speak.
 marita watched them descend well past the B3 listed on the dial ' so how far down does this elevator go? she asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 21, 2014, 11:43:19 pm**

Soren nodded. "Yeah. Usually when she was sleeping off a high or something."

He then picked up the suitcase. It was surprisingly heavy for something that was ostenibly filled with papers. He didn't put it above Tony to make the suitcase bulletproof, weighted so he could bludgeon someone with it or even tuck a gun or two in there.

"Anyways, how's Corona treating you?" He shot a glance at the elevator's indicators. They had already climbed past the 70th floor.

Muyee "Marion" Wu was in the company cafeteria of Zaloga Cybernetics. Her powerful metallic arms deftly handled a set of metal chopsticks as she used them to scoop some fried rice with dried fish into her mouth. Of course, she was far from the only Augment in the cafeteria.

While she was clad in the visible ballistic vest of the other security officers, she did not have a holster. Instead, her standard Beretta 92 pistol was tucked inside her prosthetic right leg.

"Hey, Mary," a Vulpine said as he sat down at her table.

Marion gently put down her chopsticks and shot him a withering gaze. "My name is Muyee, or if you can't pronounce it, call me 'Marion'. Get it right." Her voice had the faint Chinese accent that hinted at her birthplace of Shanghai, China."

The Vulpine raised his hands in a defensive posture. "It's cool. I forgot!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 22, 2014, 04:59:31 am**

"What are my skills? You mean, apart from my winning smile and kicking ass at Sudoku?" Axel grinned awkwardly at the others. There was a pause.

Triste crossed her arms and stared up at him. "You're an idiot."

"Yeah..." Axel sighed. "Ah, I'm good with computers, so I guess that makes two of us," he said, indicating Marita. "I'm also pretty good with anything electrical." Axel's eyes changed from blue to bright red. "I used to use this when I worked with augments. It lets me see in,

ah... energy, I guess you'd call it. So if you want me to find, fix or disable anything electronic, I'm your guy."

"At least it's a little more useful than your smile, rat."

Axel looked down at Triste, and saw a light orange pulse emanating from her form. He flipped his vision back to normal. "Well, what's *your* deal?"

Triste rolled her eyes, and the next second she was gone. Axel blinked and looked around. "Did she..." The spider gecko reappeared on the other side of the elevator, leaning against the wall. She waggled her spindly fingers. "Peekaboo."

Axel grinned as he realised what caused the orange glow he'd seen. "Cloaking aug..."

"Right. Implanted into my skin." Triste nodded. "Bends light around me. It needs time to recharge, so I can't use it for long stretches of time but... I'm sure it'll come in useful." She neglected to mention it already had, when she'd scouted out each member of the team that Vergil had recommended the night before the meeting.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 22, 2014, 08:26:18 am**

"Rio!" gasped Lily indignantly. She folded her arms. "I don't know which of you is worse!"

Emilena caught the wallet, withdrew the money out of it, and tossed it back to Lily. "Eh. Guess that'll do. But you better have more next time," she sneered at Rio.

Lily didn't feel like defending him. "Now, what's your plan on--?"

"Have you visited?" interjected Emilena.

"...I beg your pardon?"

"His house. Where his room is. Or met him. Or anything."

"I did visit the house. After he'd gone missing."

Emilena sighed and snapped her fingers. "Flora, I'm gonna need help focusing..." The fuchsia canid came rushing, holding a needle. Without flinching, Emilena grasped it and stabbed it into her arm. "Alright, ready to hear the whole story," she sighed, relaxing her muscles and giving Lily a languid look.

Lily bristled. "Maybe I should come back--"

"The story, sweet cheeks. Now," snapped Emilena. "Or you can take your money and get the fuck out."

Lily wrinkled her nose, but sat down and told the entire story of hers and Rio's visit to her children's house. Nairda, Hal and Flora proved to be an excellent audience, wincing and gasping at all the right moments. The still-seated human, the last gang member whom Lily had not caught the name of, seemed to have better things to do on his laptop than listen.

"Luckily, after that Axel arrived with a taxi after we'd locked Denny in his own dungeon..." she concluded. "It killed me to have to leave my children, and by now he's almost certainly obtained police protection--"

Emilena cut her off dismissively. "Christian's room. What furniture was there?"

Lily thought. "A bed, chest of drawers, um, and lamp."

"What size was the bed?"

"Just twin."

"Describe it."

"Uh, white blanket. Two white pillows. Wooden headrest. Four legs, I don't know."

"Decorations?"

"A few. Some model planes on the ceiling. *Top Gun 3* movie poster. Why does Christian's room matter?"

"Did Christian strike you as the sort to care about movies or planes?" Emilena asked pointedly. "You mentioned three doors on the second floor. Logically, we can assume a bedroom for the master, a bedroom for the girls, and a bedroom for the boys. Beds with legs can store an extra mattress under them, and he had two pillows, Denny must have gotten rid of Illard's bed when he scampered off. Illard liked planes, and he abandoned a high school education. You know who doesn't require a high school education?"

Lily folded her arms, not going to grace Emilena with guesses.

"The Air Force," Emilena supplied her own. "Our first step is to check the local recruiting office and see if Illard approached them. Hell, if they accepted him he could have gotten himself overseas in a week, they're desperate for coast guard and border patrol after all the weird shit happening on the news with warships."

Emilena got to her feet. "Let's move out in five. Foley, by then I want a map printed of all the recruiting offices in town. Hal, you hold down the fort while we're gone. Anyone asks, we're signing tyke up for the Army."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 22, 2014, 04:56:18 pm**

"Beats me." Vergil responded, shrugging. "I don't think even back then I knew, as I can't really measure distances from inside an enclosed space." he commented. They were descending for a good few minutes, and Vergil was able to hear everyone speak, and was particularly impressed with Triste's ability to vanish. "Heh... bet that comes in handy for more than one function." the gecko chuckled here, smirking. "Augments are useful... surprised I wasn't augmented to be honest with you... unless of course my mental abilities are an augment in my brain." He tapped his skull now.

After what seemed like maybe three or four minutes, the elevator finally stopped, and then did nothing as the power was cut, plunging the group into darkness. "Uh..." was all Vergil said before the customary "ding" sounded and the doors ominously slid open, revealing a dimly lit corridor stretching on ahead of them. The walls were stone, and sported carvings of ancient buildings and spires that rose to the sky, many pyramidal in design. The carvings were primitive, but still had a certain artistic quality to them that Vergil couldn't help but admire. "Well... let's go." Vergil nodded, starting off at the head of the group and unsure what else to say.

The floor was cold to Vergil's bare feet, and it definitely felt as if no one had been down here in awhile. A brighter light could be seen ahead of them, shining at the end of the tunnel. It drew the gecko forward, like a moth to a flame. Perhaps it was because he didn't like the confined space down here, or perhaps he wanted to get into a more well-lit area, but the gecko quickened his pace down the corridor.

At the end, the tunnel widened, and opened up to reveal a sizable room, much better lit than the tunnel. The source of light however was a mystery, as surely it couldn't be natural light filtering this far down. But nonetheless, beams of what looked like natural light poured in from

holes in the ceiling, illuminating several murals on the walls. "Get a load of this!" Vergil gasped, eyes wide as he looked around the room. The murals depicted various things, including what looked like cities and paintings of everyday life from this old civilization. But the dominating feature was the mural in the center. The paint still looked as if had been applied yesterday as a great representation of a massive aerial battleship dominated the entire wall. It ran Vergil's blood cold to see its gray sides, angular and sharp, like knife blades conjoined together by a massive pyramidal structure in the middle of it all. Well it was more like two pyramids joined at the base, one right side up, the other upside down. But it was definitely the central structure of the ship. Painful flashes suddenly entered the gecko's mind, and he clutched his head, closing his eyes and bending over a bit. "Agh! Dammit!" he uttered, trying to shake his head to clear it.

"That's it..." he pointed. "That's what we're looking for." The sheer size of the mural was awe-inspiring, but Vergil noted too that the smaller murals in general were extolling the civilization's accomplishments... including their military conquests, which appeared quite brutal, and very prominently displayed.

Beneath the central painting, Vergil could see a computer console, and beyond that, two heavy steel double-doors led deeper into the facility. To their left and right were doors as well, but much smaller than the ones in their front. "OK... let's see..." Vergil said softly, approaching the console now. Before he could even touch it, it sprang to life, clicking and beeping at him in what Vergil could only assume was some sort of computer language. A garbled voice sounded out, but Vergil couldn't recognize the language. As he glanced down at the command prompts on the screen, he sighed in an exasperated fashion. "Uh... I don't suppose any of you computer whizzes can reprogram this thing to speak English?" he asked hopefully.

Looking behind him at Axel, Vergil nodded at the rat. "Axel... can you get any energy readings behind these doors?" the white gecko inquired, an uneasy feeling washing over him now.

"Sleeping off a high?" Tony asked here. "Yeah... I guess I could settle for that. Huh... well Corona's been pretty fantastic so far. A lot of opportunity here, and it's a lot safer than Lanthae was too. Lanthae you only had designated areas for the rich, and sure, to an extent Corona's got that too, but it has a lot more areas you can walk around in without fear of being mugged or jumped by some drug dealer." he commented, smiling dryly.

As the elevator reached the 200th floor, it opened to reveal a suite just as pleasant as the lobby, almost 3,500 feet below them. Plants grew out of the floor, kept healthy through some sort of biological process contained within the very heart of the building. All the nutrients were fed into the greenery from conduits that ran upward, and sunlight was provided through a glass ceiling directly above their heads.

Another reception desk (this one marble) greeted them at the exit of the elevator, with a female human secretary busily tapping away at a computer. She didn't even look up at first to acknowledge them, nor did she need to, as standing before them was a dignified looking blue skinned gecko. He wore a confident smile on his face, but it was warm as well.

"Tony Stracci! In the flesh! It's so nice to finally meet you!" Mace Sardolemuel extended his hand warmly in greeting, his natty business attire looking sharp on him, but he was always wearing a slightly dress-down style too, as if he saw this meeting as a more casual affair.

Tony heartily shook Mace's hand, and responded. "Yes! It's great to meet you as well, Mr. Sardolemuel!"

"Oh please, call me Mace!" Mace replied humbly, as if he were no big deal. "And this is?" he asked, looking at Soren.

"Ah yes, one of my most trusted legal attaches..." Tony didn't name Soren though, in case the human wanted to present his own false name to Mace as Mace held out his hand for Soren.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 22, 2014, 07:51:46 pm**

I'll get working on it ' Marita said crackling her fingers and headed up to the console. ' 'shouldn't take me more than a couple minutes to get a rough translation' she said and began typing away at the console, her claws flying over the keys. Gradually the console and voice changed to English ' those who would enter , speak the code' said the voice in a soft, garbled and distant voice ' speak the code? great, Vergil do you remember any sort of password that was used to get past those doors?' Marita said motioning to those doors 'think, Vergil, we need to move quickly and locate the other waypoints..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 22, 2014, 08:26:35 pm**

Rio frowned. "Hey, I've got a name, you know!" he protested, feeling a little more confident now that he could see Emilena really was going to help Lily. "It's Rio, not tyke. Tyke, tyke, tyke!" Spying an open crate at the top of a large stack, he wandered over and scuttled up, spider-like, to the top, perching on the edge and sifting through its exposed contents.

"I think there's some kind of army recruiting place about fifteen minutes from here," Rio called down to the rest of them over his shoulder, as he dragged out a handgun that seemed practically as big as he was. "I'd be *awesome* in the army," he muttered to himself as he hooked the trigger around his finger and started spinning the gun, just like the actors in the old westerns he'd seen. As the barrel rotated towards the people stood in the room, the gun clicked several times - luckily, it wasn't loaded.

As Marita worked on the translation, Axel walked around the console to the large set of double doors. He blinked and his eyes clicked, swapping to red. He didn't see anything - no pulse, no signs of anything beyond. "Hmn... I'm not picking anything up..."

Standing beside Vergil, Triste crossed her arms. "So there's nothing waiting for us on the other side? No traps?"

Still looking the large, steel doors up and down, Axel eventually shook his head. "Not that I can tell, but..." He reached out a hand and gingerly knocked on the door's surface. There was a heavy, dull clunk. "Yeah, these doors are, ah, pretty thick. Could be blocking out any signal behind them. We should probably be careful, just in case." He shrugged, starting to turn. "Whoa!"

"What?" Triste demanded, her hand edging cautiously towards her knife.

Axel was looking at the smaller set of doors to the right. "There's definitely something behind *here* though..." Something on the other side of the door was emitting a bright orange glow, almost taking up the whole doorway. "Whatever it is, it's got a *lot* of energy." He turned to look at the doors to the left. "Crap... same here, too." The rat looked at the rest of the group. "Should we, ah... open them?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 22, 2014, 10:58:16 pm**

Soren looked around the elevator for any traces of bugs or other potential . Ever since the incident in Lanthae, he had become much more paranoid. While the augment worker's gear he wore underneath his loaned business suit wasn't bulletproof, it was capable of dispersing any impact short of getting hit by a car.

The elevator emitted a gentle *ding* as it reached the 200th floor.

He stood back as Tony introduced himself to Mace. This was for two reasons: 1.) to further reinforce his role as Tony's subordinate; 2.) to react if something wrong.

When the Human was introduced to Mace, Soren took the Gecko's hand in his own and offered a firm shake. "James Miardan."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 24, 2014, 01:06:09 pm**

The gecko shook his head at this. "No... I don't remember anything like that!" he insisted. "There was no code last time! It was... it was something else... more like a trial or test..." he murmured, trying to remember.

He looked over as Axel reported high energy readings on both side doors. "Mmm... I don't see how they can be opened without interfacing with the computer." he responded. He nodded for Marita to stand aside, and he looked down at the screen. "Hell if I know about any code... nothing like that sounds familiar to me at all." He noticed now that one of the command prompts was a bypass, and he reached out and selected that option. "Screw it... just bypass the code."

"Only the worthy may proceed." the computer stated, this time in a stronger, more resonant voice that echoed throughout the room. A light blue beam shot out from the terminal and danced over Vergil's white form, lines playing about him as it was no doubt scanning him. "Welcome, traveler. Those who seek the awesome power of the Retarans must prove themselves worthy. Three challenges await for those wishing to prove their worth. The worthy shall proceed... the unworthy... shall *die*." the machine stated coldly, and the doors on the left and right began to slide up and into the wall now with a hiss.

Vergil turned to glance inside the right-hand door, and could see another computer console within, but also something else... something moving within the darker room. Spindly legs unwound from a circular body as the sickly pale blue light of the console revealed a multitude of robots. They each sported a single red eye that glowed like a burning fire as their heads rotated to fix the party with deadly glares. Deadly indeed, for a red beam shot out right for Vergil's head, and the gecko just barely managed to flip backwards and upwards over the beam before it caused a small explosion in the floor behind him.

Landing with a pant, Vergil could see the machines advancing on them from either side of the room from the two doors, marching out in formation and into the light, fully revealing their bodies to the party. They stood on six legs, and had a circular body of some material that looked like polished chrome. A long, serpent-like neck extended from the top of the body atop of which rested the head, which was flat and resembled an arrow-head and was a duller tan in color. The tip of the arrow-head contained the eye, which whirred as it moved.

It was like a grotesque combination of an insect and snake and like nothing found in nature. At the "knees" of each leg rested what looked like a laser cannon of some sort, and they began leveling themselves at the party.

There were three on each side, for a total of six surrounding the group. Pulling out his energy blade and igniting it, Vergil adopted a combat stance. "Whatever it is they're selling, I don't want!" he exclaimed. "Let's take these things out!" he shouted, and leaped towards the nearest one as the machines began to open fire...

Tony commenced the proceedings with Mace as Mace had his guests sit across from him around a coffee table in his suite. It was in stark contrast to what was going on thousands of feet below the ferret, human, and gecko as they talked. It was the absolute lap of luxury up here, and Mace was negotiating with Tony for his company's shipping rights whilst offering them tea and select finger foods.

Tony was attempting to negotiate a reasonable rate for his services, and for the most part, Mace seemed interested. During a lull in the conversation, Tony asked if he and his "aide" could take a restroom break, and the request was granted. Tony was shown towards the bathrooms for visitors, but before they entered, he motioned for Soren to stop. "So I'm not sure if he bugs his own suite, and while I doubt it, I don't want to take any chances. I want to know how things are going below us, so maybe once we return, you could pretend to get a call and excuse yourself, then see if you can reach the others just to check in. Text me what you've found out before returning back, OK?" the ferret asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 24, 2014, 03:41:52 pm**

So i;m guesing these.. things' are the test" marita said as the robots entered the roof. after one of them fired at tony, marita pulled out her gun. Rose and Marie drew their weapons as well, and began opening fire on the Machines bullets impacted against the chrome covering the central parts of the bodies, and casings began falling to the ground. the girls were forced to shoot on the run as they dodged the machines return fire. with 36 cannons and all, they were being forced to constantly move..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 24, 2014, 11:17:06 pm**

Soren took notes throughout the meeting. He maintained a detached but yet confident expression as he watched Tony and Mace. Most of the conversation, he barely understood but all he needed to do was record and "consult" with Tony.

Of note was that he politely nibbled the finger foods and drank the tea. But fearing it might have been laced with drugs, he took very small bites and sips, taking care not to swallow but to keep the food under his tongue.

When the request for the bathroom break was granted, the Human went inside to relieve himself ó and spit out the food and drink he had secreted under his tongue. After washing his mouth out, he exited and listened to Tony's command.

"Gotcha," he said to Tony, programming his smartphone's alarm to go off, hoping everyone would assume it was a call. He then looked around the opulent hallway to make sure no one was coming. "You didn't touch any of the food or drink, right?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 25, 2014, 08:04:24 am**

While waiting for Emilena to come back, Lily became aware that the fuchsia canid, whom Emilena had called Flora, was sneaking up behind her smiling.

"Er, hello...." smiled Lily weakly.

"So you and Emi promised not to see each other *again*..." murmured Flora, winking coyly. "Were you two...an item?"

"*No*, no we weren't," Lily clarified hastily. "That is not what we were. Also, I'm happily married.

"I figured," Flora giggled softly. "You're not really her *type*, no offense."

"None taken." Lily took a few steps back; Flora had rather obliquely invaded her comfort zone. "So, uh, what do you do around here? For the gang? If you don't mind me asking?"

Flora blushed shyly and covered her mouth. "I'm the team driver. I'm certified to drive over

fifty different types of vehicles, including most construction equipment, trains, and school buses."

"Are you? Where exactly did you get certifications for all of those?"

Flora only giggled. Lily didn't quite like the looks she was getting.

"Um, nice talking to you Flora, but I'm...gonna go say hi to Nairda. It's been a while."

Flora sidled off acquiescently, leaving Lily to gratefully go greet the light-furred fox resetting the microphone back up. "Hey Nairda!" she smiled.

Nairda's eyes lit up. "I am blessed to have your beauty grace my sight again!" he bowed and chivalrously kissed her hand. "I wish only that our meeting could come under less strenuous times."

"Maybe after this Emilena will be more interested in keeping in touch." Lily glanced at the other gang members. "Quite a crowd you two have wound up with."

"Too true..." chuckled Nairda. "They're all supportive friends. How did you like my power ballad?"

"It was very...powerful."

"My goal in life is to be a rapper. I've been performing on the streets, waiting for the day a record label exec hears me and gives me the venue to show the world my passion!" A single tear trickled down Nairda's cheek at the thought.

"That's the spirit!" Lily patted him on the back. "You put your mind to it, there's nothing you can't accomplish!"

Nairda beamed appreciatively, but just then Emilena returned. Gone was her baggy sweatpants and tank top, now she was dressed in crisp officer's fatigues, smartly pressed with gleaming buttons and golden epaulettes. Even Lily had to admit she'd cleaned up quite nicely.

Nairda beamed appreciatively, but just then Emilena returned. Gone was her baggy sweatpants and tank top, now she was dressed in rugged black jeans and a crisp dark jacket over a white button-down shirt. Even Lily had to admit she'd cleaned up quite nicely.

"At attention!" barked Emilena, drawing a riding crop and smacking Nairda across the face to encourage everyone to actually follow her order. Even Lily jumped in line and straightened her back. "Now, the story is that we're from the Rockwell Community College, hoping to get community service hours at the dig site. Young Rio Grande is our trump card; to get another sap into the ranks they'll ignore everything to let us through the front door. Once we're in, Nairda and Flora, you are in charge of doing something stupid to give Foley a chance to get his hands on some tech. Lily, your job is to get Rio back when we leave, before he signs something and writes off the rest of his life. Ideally we do this clean, keep it simple, and get out with what we need to know. Now move!"

"Is she always like this?" Lily whispered to Nairda, as the gang members marched out the warehouse door.

"Only when there's money or an orgasm involved," Nairda muttered back, smirking, then got hit with the riding crop again.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 25, 2014, 10:19:03 am**

As the doors slid up and the machines revealed themselves, Axel stared up at them blankly. Standing between the two groups, he was quickly surrounded, standing amongst their spindly legs. He blinked at the warning given by the console. "Ah, Vergil... I think you pressed the wrong button..." The cannons mounted on the legs started to swivel towards the group, and Axel's ears flattened. "Aw, fuck!" They opened fire and Axel, having nowhere else to go, jumped up and wrapped his arms and legs around the underside of the machine's body, hanging on for dear life as the cannon fire exploded beneath him.

Triste dived to the right as one of the beams flew towards her. Rolling on her landing, she started running around the perimeter of the room, keeping her eyes on both the machines and Vergil. "I feel like this is probably something you should've remembered!" she shouted across, keeping her speed up so she wouldn't be an easy target. One of the beams came too close for comfort, tearing a chunk out of the wall next to her. Triste leaped through the dust and stone chips. "How the hell do we kill these things?!"

Hearing her shout, Axel forced his eyes open. His back felt red hot from the cannon fire exploding just beneath him. He flipped his vision and looked up at the robot, searching its body. *There!* He could see what appeared to be a denser area of pulsating energy, on the top. Panting with exertion, Axel struggled to pull himself up along the side, and up onto the top of the machine's body. Seeming to sense that something was on top of it, the machine started to buck, trying to throw him off. Now a more exposed target, the others had started firing shots at him too but thanks to the machine's thrashing, none of them found their mark. Swearing under his breath, the rat wrapped an arm around the robot's neck and looked down for the source of energy. Protruding slightly from the smooth surface was a darker coloured compartment, what appeared to be a power source for the machine. Yanking his handgun from beneath his shirt, Axel pressed the barrel against the compartment and pulled the trigger, again and again, the impacts jolting his arm until the gun *clicked*. The machine he was riding on jerked then suddenly stopped moving. After a second, the legs collapsed beneath it and the main body dropped heavily to the floor, causing Axel to bite his tongue as he landed with it.

"Yougottashootthethingontheirback!" he cried as he rolled off it and scrambled under for cover.

"What?!" Triste yelled back over the explosions reverberating around the room.

"*You have to break the things on their backs!*" came Axel's panicked reply, slightly tinny beneath the metal he was hiding under.

Gritting her teeth, Triste dodged another round of fire then jumped onto the nearest machine, using her hooked knife to swing herself up on it. Catching sight of the compartment, she raised the knife and plunged it back down as hard as she could.

Rio watched from above as Emilena rounded everyone up and went through the plan. When she ordered them to move out, he dropped the gun back into the crate and jumped down, landing nimbly beside Lily and Nairda. He grinned up at the two adults. " This is fucking awesome, I've never been a trump card before."

Glancing at Lily's pocket where she'd stored the rest of the credits, he turned hopeful doe-eyes towards her. "So... am *I* gonna get paid? I *am* helping..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 25, 2014, 12:27:38 pm**

Vergil's blade sliced through one of the legs of his opponent, but much to the gecko's chagrin, he found the other five were more than sufficient to hold the mechanical creature upright. The sharp points at the ends of the legs were potent weapons, as Vergil soon found out. He shortly found himself on the business end of one of the sharp points, and ducked to avoid getting slashed or impaled.

He shot his blade upward, burying it into the underbelly of the drone, but found he couldn't maintain this position long as he was soon forced out from underneath the robot by its legs. Skidding to the side, he wondered about weak points. The carapaces seemed to be bulletproof, as evidenced by the sounds of ricocheting shots he could hear from around the room.

Damn! They must have a weak point somewhere! Their underbelly didn't seem to be as vulnerable as he thought, unlike most creatures who struggled to constantly protect their underbellies in a fight. Leaping up onto the backside of his opponent, he swung his sword violently and sliced off the head from the neck, the neck flailing like a loose garden hose as its head clattered to the floor. But apparently it didn't need its head to see, as the laser cannons swiveled over to him. Damn thing must have cameras or sensors all over its body.

But then the sound came of a machine thudding onto the floor, lifeless. Snapping his head in the direction of Axel, Vergil was surprised to see the rat had triumphed. He yelled something incoherent at first, and Vergil strained to hear. It sounded like something on the backside. Fortunately, Triste asked again what the rodent had said, and it was repeated. The things on their backs?

Tearing his gaze downward, the gecko could indeed see the small hump on the back. There! Crying out, he jammed his sword downward, and shoved it deep into the back of the mechanical death machine. Watching as sparks flied out like a torch to steel, the creature began twitching violently, and finally had its legs give out from under it as it collapsed. "That's it!" Vergil shouted. "Great find, Axel!" he called over.

Triste's opponent began seizing violently as well, and it too fell to the ground. "It's the weak spot on the back!" Vergil yelled, sliding down off the circular body before running towards the other three that were still up and standing, and still very much a threat.

Tony tensed up as Soren mentioned the food. "Well... Mace was eating and drinking too... I didn't see the harm. Why?" the ferret asked now, looking down the hallway to make sure they were still alone. "I mean... Mace Sardolemuel is I'd say one of the more honorable CEOs of the Big Four, or at least, that's the impression I got. You don't think..." Tony trailed off here, hoping their suspicions weren't true. He felt fine so far...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 26, 2014, 03:28:53 am**

Soren narrowed his eyes. "I dunno. Anything's possible here. But either way, something just feels 'off' to me." He pulled out his smartphone and checked the time.

"Speaking of which, we should return before Mace gets suspicious."

The duo made their way back to the boardroom. "After you," the Human said, stepping aside to let his "superior" through first.

Marion was positioned inside one of the watchtowers that ringed one of many manufacturing plants owned by Zaloga Cybernetics. Next to her was Morris Ailee, a Baseline Shorthair Feline. Like her, he was clad in a helmet, ballistic vest and carried LR-24 magnetic accelerator rifle. Topping the gate and high, electrified walls were coils of electrified concertina wire.

"Slow day, today," Morris said, peering through his comp-noculars. For fun, he locked onto a hoverbike that screamed through the airways with a frameflyer in pursuit.

"Don't tempt fate," Marion replied. She kept her steely gaze on the road to the factory. The Human was sitting at a desk that allowed her to remotely control the .30 caliber machine gun turrets that flanked the gate.

"Oh come on, the last time we had a major issue was three days ago when we caught those Derami Enterprises saboteurs at one of railyards."

"Don't. Remind. Me." The words were spoken between gritted teeth. That particular incident earned her a commendation and a 35,000 credit bonus...and a busted right arm that had been locked in the "open" configuration, exposing the deadly blade.

(OOC - comp-noculars are binoculars that combine a rangefinder and zoom functions as well as video recording and still picture recording function. Expensive models have night vision, infrared, UV, HUD displays and even echolocation/sonar capabilities.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 27, 2014, 06:58:49 am**

Triste grunted as she yanked the knife from the back of the machine, sparks flying upwards towards her face. Looking across the room, she could see there were still three more up and about. Leaping off, she sprinted behind Vergil towards them.

From under the body of the machine he'd 'killed', Axel could feel the ground vibrating slightly as one of the others approached. If he was spotted, he'd be as good as dead. Swearing, Axel started to crawl out from beneath his cover, and he was almost free... when an explosion from nearby rocked the circular body of the machine, rolling it over and down onto his leg, pinning him down. Axel yelled, leaning back to try and push it off but it was much too heavy. Around him, canon fire continued to explode as the others battled the machines. He struggled to pull himself free, his fingers scratching against the floor's smooth surface as they tried to find purchase. Suddenly, there was a mechanical whirring behind him. The rat turned over apprehensively. Standing over him, another machine stared down at him. The eye focused on Axel, and it raised one of its legs with the point angled downwards.

Axel gasped and pulled out his gun, aiming it up at the robot and desperately pulling the trigger repeatedly. The gun just clicked uselessly - he'd already spent all the bullets on the last one. "Oh, son of a bitch..." The machine darted the razor edge of the spike down at him and Axel cried out, throwing up his arms pointlessly.

Triste rocketed out of nowhere, slamming into the side of the machine's leg and throwing off its aim. The spike crashed into the ground next to Axel's head. Holding onto the leg, Triste wrapped her limbs around and shimmied up to the top of the body. Yelling, she sliced through the robot's neck-like structure, then stabbed the power source on its back repeatedly. It jerked, then started to fall too. She jumped off and landed next to Axel as the machine hit the floor with a crash.

Axel blinked up at her, his ears splayed. "Holy shit... thanks..." Triste rolled her eyes at him and darted off. The rat struggled around. "Hey, wait! I'm still stuck here!" he cried.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 27, 2014, 10:03:21 am**

Marita had found the weak point on the machines and had felled one with a volley of well-placed shots. she was headed towards the other pair which were still standing.Rose heard Axel's cries and had cut back towards him, reaching him in about a minute. ' these things mean business dont they ?' she said, reaching under the machine and began straining to lift it off Axel enough so he could get out from under it. Marie was climbing up one of the two surviving machines. she had snuck up behind it and jumped onto it while it was distracted by the others. once she reached the weak point in its back, she opened fire, sending 4 bullets into the machine and causing it to stop with a shudder, wobble then fall forward with a loud crash and kick up a row of sparks as pieces of the machine snapped off on impact and rolled away ' just one left' she called out to the others as she landed safely in front of the defeated creature.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 27, 2014, 03:34:57 pm**

Vergil could see Rose struggling to lift the machine off of Axel (and good luck with the weight these things must be), so he helped her out by throwing out his hand and lifting the dead weight up slightly telekinetically as he ran, and then shoving it backwards a bit, giving Axel hopefully enough time to scramble out from underneath.

OK... just the one left... but Marie handled it, though in the chaos of the moment, she accidentally announced there was one left, but there wasn't. All six had gone down at this point. Panting, Vergil was finally able to skid to a halt, and refocused on moving the rest of the machine off Axel, picking it up again with his mind and moving it further off the rat. "Whew! Well... that's one challenge down! Two to go!" he announced. "You all right, Axel? Anything broken?" the gecko asked as he began walking over and extinguished his blade.

He noted now that the two side doors were open and available for inspection, and could also see another computer console apiece in each room. "Hmmm... wonder if these are the two remaining challenges." he stated thoughtfully aloud. "Maybe we should divide up and take 'em both at once." he suggested, glancing down at Axel now.

Up above, Tony nodded, and pulled out his phone as he thought of something last minute. He didn't know if Zaloga had cameras monitoring their parking lots, but he wasn't going to take any chances. He couldn't leave the Daimler loaded with weapons sitting outside for long, so it was time to change cars. Fortunately, he had a service back home for this, and promptly dialed it.

Upon getting an answer on the other end, Tony spoke quickly as they walked. "Hi. I'm gonna need the Daimler to be picked up and brought back to the garage. I'll need a replacement car ready for me at Zaloga though. Let's make it the... Delage." Tony settled on, going with one of his father's luxury French brands. "As soon as you can, OK? Thanks." Hanging up, Tony knew they'd drive the Delage out for him, leave it at Zaloga, and take the Daimler back with one of the spare sets of keys. Of course, Tony could unlock any of his cars by inputting a code on his phone, so he didn't have to worry about them locking the keys in the Delage when they dropped it off.

Reentering Mace's meeting area, Tony wrapped a smile back on his face and sat down. "All right... now that that's out of the way... let's get back to business." Tony recommenced the conversation with Mace, being a tad more aggressive here now that they were down to the nitty-gritty details, and waiting for Soren's phone to "ring."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 27, 2014, 04:09:04 pm**

Just give us a couple minutes to recuperate' rose said beathing heavily as she took a seat on the ground. Marita and Marie came up to them ' nice work guys' Marita said. vergil i'm going to need you to have me trabslate the two challenges into English and give us an idea of what we will be facing. I'll translate the one to the left first-v we can have a few folks tackle that- then i'll translate the right.' She Said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 28, 2014, 06:32:29 am**

Triste moved up to stand with the group as Axel pulled himself upright and put weight on his leg gingerly. "No, I think everything's alright... Ah crap!" He bent down for a closer inspection.

"Are you hurt?" Triste demanded. If he was, it could be a serious liability to the group.

Axel straightened. "I broke a shoelace." Kicking the shell of one of the machines, he made his way across and peered into one of the side rooms cautiously. Given what the previous one had summoned, the consoles in these rooms now seemed positively ominous. "Call me crazy, but if that was the first challenge, I've got a bad feeling about the rest of them..." He swallowed. "But hey, what's a Monday if there aren't giant killer robots trying to murder you?" Axel turned. "Splitting up *would* save us time, I guess."

Sheathing her knife, Triste nodded. "Agreed. Seems like three for each room would be fair." She glanced at the three women. "I take it you don't want to split up? If that's the case, that makes the second team Vergil, Whent and me." Triste looked at the gecko. "Unless you had other ideas?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 28, 2014, 06:30:29 pm**

Soren took notes and listened as Mace and Tony negotiated the finer points of their potential business deal.

It was then his phone went off. "Excuse me," he said, rising from his seat and exiting the meeting room.

He entered the bathroom and looked around to ensure that no one was coming. Satisified that all was clear, he took out the phone and texted Axel and the others: "*Tony's in meeting with Mace. Status down there?*.

He then switched over to the Internet browser, checking the local news.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 28, 2014, 07:27:16 pm**

Vergil was only breathing slightly heavier than normal, his body still in good shape despite having been in that tank for who knows how long. He regarded Marita in profile as she suggested she translate the other two consoles. "You translated the master console, so I don't think any further translation is necessary. But I'll let you know if it is or not." he informed her.

Vergil chuckled at the joke Axel made after initially letting concern wash over him at the prospect of the rat being injured. "Heheh... oh no! Not the shoelaces!" he exclaimed, smiling here. "How are your shoes gonna stay on now?"

Triste interrupted him with a question about who should go where. "Uh... nope! That sounds good to me!" Vergil responded, nodding. "We'll take the one on the right, and you girls can take the left-hand one." the gecko suggested.

Leading the way, he stepped into the door on the right hand side. He was acutely aware of something above him, and shifted his gaze upward, noticing hundreds of gleaming bodies above him. Even in the dim light, they were unmistakable. He froze in his tracks, his eyes wide as he gazed up at the shiny ceiling. Hundreds of those robots they'd just fought were above them, but not moving... they almost appeared like they were sleeping. They didn't seem to react to his presence either, and Vergil immediately surmised that they only activated as part of the first challenge, and it certainly explained how this place had plenty to challenge potential seekers of the warship. Gulping, Vergil inched forward, but still got no reaction. "I guess... they only wake up on certain triggers." the gecko stated nervously. "Still... let's not make any sudden moves." he suggested.

He closed his eyes, trying to remember this and yes... it did ring very familiar with him. He felt certain he was right about this. He wasn't sure how... he just knew. Approaching the console cautiously, he touched it, and it sprang to life. A foreign language quickly dissolved into English as Vergil read the screen.

Greetings, traveler. Only the worthy my proceed. Answer the question and proceed on your quest: What three biomes most support life?

Oceanic
Desert
Volcanic
Arboreal
Grassland
Tundra

Vergil smiled here. "Heheh, a biology lesson it seems. I guess the Retarans valued uh... biomes?" he asked here. "Anyway, I'm guessing oceanic, arboreal, and grassland. What do you guys think?" he asked, looking behind him now, and then glancing warily upwards.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 28, 2014, 08:18:05 pm**

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marita followed trieste suggestion and turned her attention to the left console and headed over there ' the question it asked was similar to the question asked on the right, but with one big difference... "which three biomes support death?" Marita said staring at Rose and Marie as they crowded around to look at the possible answers ' volcano' marie said holding up a finger ' because when one erupts it destroys anything in its path' ok that makes sense marita said punching it in. desert' Rose said ' especially if you get lost iin it. ' there are hot and cold deserts, but yeah thats another' marita saisd selecting it, and for her last selectuion she picked tundra ' it gets to 100 below in parts od the arctic. you get caught out there without protection you're dead within a few minutes.' marita said and presed the button for that, and waited for the console to reply. the three girls looked up at the hordes of quiet machines above them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 28, 2014, 09:30:00 pm**

Axel followed Vergil and Triste into the room, grimacing as he followed Vergil's gaze and took in the mass of robotic bodies above them. "Holy crap..."

Triste folded her arms as she thought over the question posed by the console. "Sounds about right," she nodded at Vergil's answer, keeping her voice low. "Tundra, volcanic and desert biomes would offer more extreme conditions, so..." She looked over at Axel. "What do you think?"

The rat tore his eyes from above and blinked at her. "Erm."

After a pause, she muttered, "You don't know what any of it means, do you?"

"Not enough to risk, like, a million machines dropping on us."

Triste sighed. "Would it kill you to open a textbook every now and then?"

"Hey! Biology was never my... you know, thing," Axel hissed. "You two sound like you know what you're talking about. Go for it." At that moment, Axel's phone chirped happily as a text message came through. The beep echoed around at the room, and Axel felt his fur stand on end as he snapped his neck upwards, expecting to be met with a deathly hail of cannon fire. But it seemed like the machines were still inactive. Letting his breath out slowly, he looked down at the two geckos and grinned sheepishly. "Guess I should put this thing on silent..."

Triste gritted her teeth and resisted the urge to slice his head off.

Pulling his phone out, Axel read the text from Soren and quickly tapped out a reply. *Big killer death machines down here, but we're all okay. Looks like we're getting close. Place is weird as*

hell. Keep safe, should be done soon.

"Oceanic, arboreal, and grassland," Triste said, turning back to Vergil and shaking her head. "It has to be those." Even so, she kept a claw on the hilt of her knife, cautious of a trick to the question.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 28, 2014, 09:36:34 pm**

The phone buzzed as Soren recieved the text. He exited the web browser and read the text.

He then texted Tony. "*Others okay. Fought machines. Think they're getting close.*"

Flushing the toilet to divert suspicion, he pocketed the phone and washed his hands. A Fruit Bat businessman exited the other stall and washed his hands as well. Soren avoided eye contact as he deliberately took his time in washing his hands. It worked; the man left.

That finished, Soren exited the bathroom and returned to the meeting room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 29, 2014, 12:13:17 am**

"All right... let's go with it." Vergil stated, and pushed down on the three choices. The options disappeared, and the words on the screen appearing now read "Congratulations. The worthy may proceed." The console shut off, and while there was a tense moment before when Axel's phone went off, it didn't seem to disturb the mechs above them, fortunately.

On the other side of the room, opposite Axel, Vergil and Triste, the trio's answer was also correct, and the console deactivated. The middle doors began to grind open now, a deep rumbling sounding as they parted and started to slide away from each other. "Hey! I think that did it!" Vergil exclaimed, moving out of the side room and towards the center now. "Good work!" he called over to the girls, and began walking towards the center doors. Inside, he could see what looked like a holographic projector which matched the one from his memory, and the white gecko couldn't help but to smile widely at it. "Excellent! I think this is it!" he declared, growing excited as he quickened his pace.

The projector suddenly sprang to life, and a decent sized projection of the planet Earth was suspended above then now, blinking to life slowly as various continents were mapped with thousands of dots to create images. As the map came into being, it started to rotate, much like the Earth. Vergil narrowed his eyes, and noted the emergence of four red dots, bright and prominent upon four separate locations of the globe.

One was in the deserts of Egypt, but not near the famed Great Pyramids. Instead, it was further south, in Upper Egypt, and might even possibly be in the Nubian Desert. The second appeared in the jungles of South America, and Vergil had to guess it was around Bolivia or Peru; he wasn't great on geography of that region of the planet. The third was located in a remote region of the Atlantic, about midway between Brazil and Africa. Finally, the fourth one was over in southern China, and if Vergil had to guess, he'd say Hong Kong.

"OK... yes... I remember this now... we got the first one... all five will reveal the location of Torment's Cataract... now... I remember we get to select one at each waypoint... but only one. The coordinates will be revealed, and then the map shuts off. So... the question is... where do you guys want to go next? We can select any one of these... but only one. We'll need to go to all four eventually, but we need to start somewhere. Now if I recall... I've been to the ones in Egypt, South America, and the Atlantic. I can't recall anything about the Chinese one, so I'm unsure if I've been out there or not. It's possible that's the one Rex didn't locate before he was killed. So yeah... what's it gonna be, guys? Any preferences?"

The globe continued to slowly spin in front of them, doing nothing until it was interacted with.

"By the way, who sent the text message?" Vergil asked Axel here, raising his brow.

Up above, Tony received Soren's text, and knew he'd have to start wrapping this up. Machines? Damn... it must be serious down there. "Ahem..." he nodded as Soren reentered. "Well, Mace. I think we're getting down to the final details. I'd be willing to go at a rate of 35% of the expected cargo value, plus you cover tolls and fees. In return, you get clean shipments, no questions asked, and of course, the added bonus of having the mob come down on anyone who screws with your shipments. Wouldn't be anyone alive out there who'd be willing to touch your stuff after that, what with your power and our power joined. What do you say?"

Mace frowned here thoughtfully, and tapped a finger on the glass table. "Well..." he said, trailing off.

"I'll throw in a 5% discount for the first three months as a sign-up bonus to give you an idea if you like it or not! How's that?" Tony quickly put in, seeing Mace was hedging.

The gecko continued to hesitate, and then finally nodded. "Deal!" He reached across the table, and Tony shook his hand firmly.

"Excellent! You won't regret it! My aide will present you with the necessary documents to sign. Thanks for the consideration! It'll be a real pleasure doing business with you!" Tony looked over at Soren here. "Let the others know the deal was a 'success.'" Tony stated, giving the human a look the ferret hoped he would catch. The others being everyone down below, as Tony would of course be breaking the news to his family himself.

Aboard the *Red Castle*, Kalis stood on the bridge of his mighty flagship with narrowed eyes, gazing out into the sky as he plotted his next moves. He needed to get his hands on two things: the warship at Torment's Cataract, and Agent Triste Acyle. These two things would ensure his total victory over the Federation's forces, but so far, both had eluded his grasp.

Suddenly, Admiral Carrack was beside him. "Lord Kalis." Carrack began. "The tracking device we installed on the waypoint under Zaloga has activated. Someone's accessing the waypoint as we speak."

Kalis's interest suddenly rose, and he looked over at his fleet admiral now. "Really? It's been years... any information on who is doing the accessing?" Kalis inquired, his eyes alight with fire now.

"Mostly unknown neural signatures, but one in particular has a 95% chance of being Agent Triste Acyle." Carrack responded, glancing down at his datapad.

Kalis's breath came out in a wheezing exhale of satisfaction, and he nodded. "Goooooood!" He clasped his hands together in front of his chest. "Find out where she's going next... I'll dispatch one of my newest and brightest to hunt her down."

"And the others?" Carrack asked.

"They'll be killed. They're of no use to me." Kalis said dismissively, waving his hand. "This is perfect... I can kill two birds with one stone. Summon Varanus. I want him here within a day." Kalis ordered.

"Yes, my lord." Carrack bowed his head respectfully, and headed off to complete the order. Kalis shifted his gaze back out the front viewports. If his mouth wasn't concealed by that metallic lower jaw, he'd be grinning right now. But as it was, he settled for an intense look forward, towards what he knew was his destiny.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 29, 2014, 12:41:40 am**

Which one is the closest?' Marita asked " we'll go to that one.. ' she looked at the map ' the South American one is in Peru near the Bolivian border, which means its in very thick jungle.. i prpose we go there.. how long would it take for us to reach South America?" she asked vetrgil " south america sounds fine to me.. one step at a time i say" marie said.'vergil' why dont you press the location, and get the coordinates?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 29, 2014, 01:30:20 am**

(Zaloga Cybernetics company HQ)

Soren opened the briefcase and presented the papers to Mace. He glanced at Tony.

As he watched Mace look over the papers. He hoped that things hadn't gone horribly wrong down there.

(Corona streets near Zaloga Cybernetics Manufacturing Plant #21)

A klaxon wailed as Marion and a Baseline Cheetah sprinted after a saboteur. While Mace was negotiating a deal with Tony, a few *Bak Long* 49'ers had managed to bypass the factory's defenses by having frame-flyers fly underneath the elevated platform the factory was on and using plasma cutters to cut through the concrete floor. Once they were in, they proceed to plant explosives.

Marion looked around. She raised her rifle and fired a few shots at the 49er who was flying above them, using the elevated walkways and highways for cover. The bullets sliced one of the flying frame's control lines, causing him to careen into the side of a building ó with messy and fatal results.

Marion slung her rifle across her back and sighed as she activated the throat mike in he uniform. "We killed one suspect."

Her prosthetic feet began to reconfigure themselves from a metallic "hoof" into something that resembled a a Human foot clad in a combat boot.

She sighed and began to lope back to the factory, the actuators on her robotic feet morphing them back into a hoof as she picked up speed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 29, 2014, 12:26:49 pm**

"It was Soren," Axel answered Vergil as he stared at the globe spinning in front of them. "Sounds like the meeting's going okay." He rubbed his chin then shook his head. "I have no idea where we should go first, but... maybe for now it'd be safer to go somewhere you remember. Save the one in China for when we're more... I dunno, prepared." He shrugged his shoulders. "South America sounds as good as any to me."

"Makes no difference to me. We'll need to visit each in any case." Triste dropped her gaze from the globe to Vergil. "I'll go with the majority." ***Mission is a success so far. We've found four more locations which are going to help us locate the Cataract.***

Excellent. And his memories?

Still fragmented. Don't worry - I'll keep it that way. Triste cocked her head at Vergil. "So, South America then?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 29, 2014, 11:12:25 pm**

"What the hell! South America it is!" Vergil declared, noting the decision seemed to be unanimous. He selected the dot, and immediately, coordinates appeared on the screen, blooming up like flowers as Vergil quickly snapped a photo with his phone. "That's it... all right..." he said softly, watching as the map faded and shrank back down into the projector. "One down... four to go!" he exclaimed. "Guess we can bounce our way around to the others, and find out where the final resting place of the ship lies."

"All right... let's get the hell out of here." Vergil suggested, and turned to begin making his way back to the elevator. "I don't know about you guys, but this is one creepy place. If I recall... I don't think the one in the jungle is like this. I think it was something different. We'll find out when we get there, though. I'll let Tony know we're good to go down here."

Mace looked the documents over, and began signing after showing them to an attorney that suddenly appeared out of seemingly nowhere. Tony affixed his own signature to the papers, and it was a done deal. "Great! Well then, on behalf of my father, it was a pleasure, Mr. Sardolemuel. We'll start shipments in one week's time! Thank you so much for your hospitality; it was overwhelming!" the ferret stated, heartily shaking Mace's hand.

"Well it was the least I could do for the Straccis." Mace responded, smiling warmly. Tony's phone began ringing, and he politely excused himself as he let Soren collect the papers. "Excuse me for a moment..." he said, holding up a claw. He saw it was Vergil. "Yeah?" he asked, being vague.

"We're done down here. Got the coordinates for the next waypoint. Meet you out front." The gecko's deeper voice sounded in his ear, and Tony smiled for effect.

"Great! See you see soon! Everything went smooth here! Looking forward to catching up!" The ferret hung up, and nodded at Soren. "Well Mr. Sardolemuel, I'm afraid I have a previous engagement, but we'll be in touch!"

Several minutes later, all concerned were once more out in the parking lot. Tony's Daimler had been replaced by a gorgeous silver 1937 Delage D8-120 (http://files.conceptcarz.com/img/Delage/37_Delage_D8-120SS_DV-07_AI-03.jpg). The weapons were now gone, just in case Zaloga monitored its lot. Vergil brought Tony and Soren up to speed on what had happened below the building, and Tony listened in almost disbelief at the story. "Jeez... glad I wasn't down there." the ferret commented. "Not of course to say you guys couldn't take care of yourselves... but still. So... South America?"

"Uh-huh. I'm gonna plug in the coordinates and find out exactly where we need to go." Vergil informed the ferret.

"Well I can arrange transportation, no problem on that end. Speaking of which..." Tony grinned here and motioned to the Delage. "Anyone need a ride home?"

"Heh, I'll think about it." Vergil replied, wanting to give some others priority if they really wanted to ride in the fancy car. "Hey Axel... what's Lily gonna do?" the gecko asked, turning to the rat now.

Up in his penthouse, Mace Sardolemuel received a security call from his chief coordinator. "Sir... it seems someone accessed the lower level."

"What?" Mace gasped, surprised at this revelation. "Who?"

"We're not sure, but looking at the records, we think it may have been a team masquerading as a security check on our systems... which we haven't authorized for today, by the way. Whoever they were... they were good. Their badges checked out and everything."

"Goddamn government pukes!" Mace replied acidly, gnashing his teeth. "They'd be the only ones capable of pulling something like that off! Get me their faces on the security feed!" he ordered, and in seconds, the team's faces sprang up before him on a ceiling mounted HUD. Three dogs, a spider gecko, an augmented rat, and a white gecko with... wait were those feathers? Squinting, Mace narrowed his eyes at that last picture. "What the hell?" Mace asked. This was only the second time in his life he'd seen feathers on a gecko. And eerily enough, this gecko seemed... familiar to him somehow, but Mace couldn't place him. He was positive he'd never seen this particular gecko before recently. But there was something else Mace found disconcerting about his face, and he wanted to rule his suspicions out. "OK..." Mace replied into his headset. "I think I've got a new project for you to work on..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 29, 2014, 11:41:42 pm**

We'll take you up on the offer tony' Rose said " we need to get packing for the trip. When are we leaving?" she asked ' cause Marie Has the card tournament tomorrow.' that usually goes for 3 days. although only the really well scored dealers stay past day 2' Marie said, ' so hopefully by friday, i'll be free and clear..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 29, 2014, 11:49:58 pm**

Tony tried hard to suppress a smile here. "And what about the car you came in?" he asked, motioning to the car Marita had driven the trio here today with. "Surely you don't intend to just leave that here. I know my wheels are nice but, hopefully not so nice you'd sacrifice your own ride." he joked. "I meant more for those who didn't have transportation coming here. However... if one of you would like to ride with me that's fine." he offered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 30, 2014, 12:12:58 am**

Oops right" Rose said, slightly embarrassed. " thank you tony, some other time" She said with a smile. The Girls climbed into their car and drove off, heading back to their apartment to get ready for the trip to South America. marie practiced her card dealing in the back, while marita drove .

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 30, 2014, 12:37:03 am**

(Zaloga Cybernetics HQ parking lot)

"You're fucking kidding me," Soren said, shaking his head in disbelief. "You fought battle droids a few thousand feet below where Tony and I were negotiating business deals?"

He then let out a whistle at the mention of a trip to South America. "Well, if that's what it takes." Inwardly, he knew that most of South America was *de facto* owned by a few large mining conglomerates. And these conglomerates were not above literal hostile takeovers ó and civilians were often caught in the middle.

(Zaloga Cybernetics Manufacturing Plant #21)

Marion fumed as she undid the latches of the suitcase containing her company issued flying frame.

Soon a blinking green light appeared on the suitcase and two footprints were projected on the hard tile floor of the armory.

The Human Augment stepped into the footprint and the frame began to unpack itself, matte grey struts and tubes emerged from the suitcase and began to encase her in a metallic shell.

After a minute, Marion was inside a skeletal framework of metallic struts. Folded against her back were two metallic wings with engines and manuevering thrusters at the tips. Two more engines were at foot level. Her flight helmet was already on.

She casually loped out of the entrance and onto the sidewalk. Her wings unfolded and with a roar and a whoosh, she shot into the sky, leaving behind a small section of scorched concrete. And in total defiance of a nearby sign that read: "No takeoff zone".

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 30, 2014, 06:41:55 am**

Axel frowned, rubbing a hand through his hair as Tony mentioned Lily. "Ah... that's going to be complicated. I mean, I guess she's going to stay..." He knew now wasn't the time to go through the problem in detail, but he felt the group deserved at least some explanation. He looked at Soren. "Remember that time, back in Lanthae, when we saw someone claiming to be her husband on the TV? Well, it... turns out that was true, and now one of her kids is missing. And to top it off, her husband is a *complete freaking psycho*." He bit his lip. "And there's that other kid who was staying with us... Shit. I need to talk to her." Axel looked at the ferret and nodded. "A ride would be good."

Triste shrugged and turned away, apparently not too interested in the rat's problem. Starting to walk away, she pulled out a small, torn piece of paper with a number on it and placed it on the Delage's bonnet as she passed, tapping it with a claw. "Here's my details. I'll be preparing. See you all soon," she called over her shoulder as she made her way over to her motorbike and hopped on. Gunning the engine, she looked back at the group. "If any of you need anything, you can contact me. If it's important enough, I'll see what I can do." It was directed as if to the group as a whole, but her eyes flickered over to Vergil as she said it. Raising a hand in a lazy wave, she pulled away, shooting out of the parking lot and speeding away out of sight.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 30, 2014, 08:22:43 pm**

"Yeah, believe it or not. Battle droids came to life and attacked us. Pretty sophisticated security for an ancient civilization." Vergil chuckled here. He nodded as Triste caught his gaze for a moment, and gave her a small wave as well, watching her speed off. "Uh... hate to ask then, but I guess I could use a ride too." Vergil confessed. "I'll take backseat though... I'm smaller and Axel can stretch out in the front."

"Not a problem." Tony replied, shaking his head.

Walking over to the Delage, Vergil picked up Triste's contact information and stowed it away in his pocket. He opened the driver's side door and folded down the seat so he could slide into the back. "Right, well you're getting shotgun then, Axel." Tony stated, and slid behind the wheel of the luxury French car. Sliding the key into the ignition, the ferret listened with satisfaction as the straight-eight came to life. "All right... let's get outta here before they catch on. Soren, we'll see you soon I think for South America!" the ferret suggested, and threw the

car into gear to exit the parking lot as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, they weren't stopped, and the Delage was able to exit the parking lot and head for the highway, though not completely unobserved. Mace Sardolemuel was interested to learn that his new shipping partner had some strange bedfellows, what with his offering to transport government agents away from his headquarters. It was information he'd have to file away for later, as he never figured the Straccis were government sellouts, and he'd have to dig further into this to get to the bottom of it and find out if any coercion had been used or not, or if Tony Stracci had been in on the whole infiltration. He hadn't given any indication of it during the meeting, but that didn't mean anything necessarily.

The sun was beginning to set by the time Tony pulled the Delage around to Axel's street and idled in front of his house. "Well... here we are. Stay in touch, and we'll let you know where in South America we'll be heading to. Let me know what's going to be happening with Lily." Tony told the rat. "And hey... it was good to have you along today. From what Vergil told me, sounds like you guys were in a real scrape, but it was you who figured out that weak spot after all." the ferret pointed out with a nod.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 30, 2014, 09:13:01 pm**

"Well, I, ah... I guess it was about time I did *something* useful," Axel grinned, fiddling with his ear awkwardly. "But hey... we all worked well together. None of us even lost a limb! Here's hoping it'll go this well every time, huh?" He smiled again, then turned to look out the window at the house. "Alright, well.. I'm going to go explain things to Lily." He glanced back at Tony and Vergil and nodded. "When I know what's happening, I'll get in touch. See you both soon and... you know, be careful until then."

With a final nod, he got out of the Delage and shut the door behind him. Waving goodbye, Axel turned and started making his way up towards the house. He ran a hand through his hair, wondering how he was going to explain the upcoming trips. He knew it was for an important cause, but leaving her to deal with her own, huge problem by herself really put him on edge. Taking a deep breath, Axel opened the front door and stepped through. "Hey, I'm back! Anyone home?" he called into the corridor.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 31, 2014, 12:03:55 am**

Marita and the girls made it home to their apartment safely. marita began packing for thier trip,, with things Rose And Marie might like.Rose put in a pizza in the oven and set it to bake for 15 minutes.. ' you think they suspected anything? Marie asked Marita as she folded clothes ' well, they go over each guests with a fine tooth comb.. so its likely they noticed something when we didnt come back for awhile ' fortunately we wont be headed back there anytime soon' Marita said "but i would not be surprised if Mace sends people after us ' when you take security as serious as the Big Four do, any hackings or break-ins are dealt with , shall we say, in house ' they wont turn us over to the cops, they'll deal with us personally if they catch us. which in this case, means a bullet to the base of the skull.' 'Marie shuddered " you dont make billions in revenue each quarter by being nice, you do it by crushing the competition." marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 31, 2014, 12:33:32 am**

(Zaloga Cybernetics HQ)

Marion landed on a platform several hundred feet off the ground. The transponder in her suit caused the bulletproof dome to retract and allow her to land.

Upon landing, the wings on her flying frame retracted and folded up against her back. she took off her helmet,letting it dangle from its strap and exposing her short cropped black hair and the face of a woman in her mid-fifties...despite being only in her late 30s. The Human casually strode through a door that opened in response to the transponder in her uniform. Despite the fact that the flying frame weighed over sixty pounds, it fit so well and supported its own weight that Marion moved as if it weren't present at all.

She passed by several office workers and guards on her way to Mace's office. When she arrived, she knocked on the ornately decorated wooden door.

(Mott Place)

Soren took off his suit and pants and hung them up. He was now clad in the STF inpregnated long-sleeved shirt and track pants that kept him from injuries when working with augments and now served as impromptu armor.

"I hope that Mace didn't find out that Tony and I had other motives that weren't related to a business deal."

At Marita's words, he glanced to the rifle, armor and combat helmet in the bookcase, ready in case things went to shit. He swallowed.

"Okay, I have something very important to say. While you were visting Anne, four corporate security troopers from Serami Heavy Industries came in here and took an augment I was working with. They claimed that it had been stolen from them."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 31, 2014, 03:22:48 am**

"I'm in the kitchen," called Lily. She had just finished a large bowl of pasta with sauce and stuck it in the middle of the table; not her greatest dinner she'd ever prepared for the two of them, but she'd had a rather long day. "How has your day been?" she smiled.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 31, 2014, 06:08:50 am**

Axel smiled and hugged her, kissing the top of her head. "Hey." He looked down at the table and saw the pasta she'd prepared. "Aw, you didn't have to. We could have ordered something in." He paused. "As long as it wasn't from that Italian place up the road. That didn't... go down so well last time." Shuddering, Axel sat down at the table and sighed. "Eh, today was... different..." Haltingly, he started to explain what had happened. About how they were trying to find the location of the Cataract, and how today they'd managed to determine the first clue of its location. He left out the part that included killer machines trying to rip him apart, deciding that probably wasn't something that would calm her down.

"So... I'm going to need to go away for a bit. The coordinates pointed us to somewhere in South America so, ah..." Axel reached across the table and touched her hand, then swallowed. "But how did it go for you? Did you find anything to go on? Where's Rio? Is Emilena still as, ah..." The rat tried to pick the right word. "...Intense?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **May 31, 2014, 08:16:29 am**

"She is her same insane self..." Lily shook her head. "Drugged up and psychotic, and her gang is some of the most eclectic people I've ever met. Rio stayed with them, he wants to join, and

somehow everyone seems warm to the idea."

She grabbed another serving of pasta. "I will give Emilena one thing; she's got this gang of hers wrapped around her finger. She had this stupidly convoluted plan to break into the army recruitment center to get information on Ejlert, and the whole thing somehow worked like a charm. We found out he was rejected by the Air Force for flat feet, but his cockpit evaluation demonstrated extensive prior flight training. Emilena only knows one other place where someone could get flight training for free. Kalis..."

She took a deep breath. "I think you and I might be searching for the same thing. Is there room for one more person on that flight to South America?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 31, 2014, 08:31:51 am**

((Sorry for briefness, but not much time!))

Mace heard the knock on his door, and an augment in his brain allowed the door to open seamlessly. "Come in." he ordered warmly. "May I offer you a drink of something?" he asked Marion, motioning with his hand to a table of refreshments, including alcohol.

Vergil was doing research back at his flat. He'd plugged in the coordinates, the blue of the monitor bathing his white face in eerie light, and his expression was twisting into confusion as he saw where exactly the waypoint was located. "Ohhhhh man." he murmured, studying the exact position of the waypoint on the map. Well... this would make things... interesting.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **May 31, 2014, 08:58:23 am**

"No thank you, sir," Marion replied. She sat down in a chair and looked at Mace. "I had recieved reports of an infiltrator in the headquarters. What are my orders with regards to them?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 31, 2014, 07:28:41 pm**

"You... you're going to come with us?" Axel asked, taken aback. He knew where they were going could, or more likely *would* be dangerous... but then again, since her son was linked to Kalis somehow, the chances were that her own mission wouldn't be without its own dangers. And if that was the case, he was glad he'd be there for her. Axel grinned. "Well, sure! Of course there's room for you! I mean, I'm not sure where exactly in South America we're heading yet... still need to wait for word from Vergil... but I'm happy you're coming. And you know I'll do whatever I can to help you."

"Oh!" Axel blinked. "I just need to let Tony know..." He pulled out his phone and dialed the ferret's number, leaving a message. "Hey Tony, it's Axel. Turns out that Lily... ah, she's actually going to be coming with us. It looks like Kalis messed with the wrong mother... anyway, let me know if Vergil finds anything more on where we'll be heading."

He hung up, then reached across for a second helping of the pasta, feeling a lot better. "So, Rio's staying with Emilena's gang?" he said, chewing. "Doesn't seem like the most, ah... child-friendly place to be..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **May 31, 2014, 08:13:18 pm**

Marita looked at Soren."its quite possible it was in fact stolen. laundering augments is big business. better to let then think you didnt know it was hot, and it got to you by mistake.. as for Mace, well i dont think it would be wise for any of us to go back there, any time soon. they have cameras all over the place, so its likely they have images of us now. this is why i prefer to do business - electronically, shall we say.. nothing to put a face to. if i were you Soren, we're going to need to bring your stuff with us . we had to fight 6 murderous machines, that was a small taste of whats to come..i have no idea what the next waypoint has in store, but i'd guess things are only going to get harder going fiorward.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 31, 2014, 11:39:26 pm**

Mace swirled a drink around in his hand, and studied it, as if it fascinated him. "I'm downloading profiles to your phone, but the one you need to focus on is the lead infiltrator: the white gecko with the feathers. I suspect he's a government agent so... no messy interrogations... or any interrogation really until you can ascertain who he is. You are to follow him, and try and learn as much as you can. If he's not government... bring him in... if he is... await further orders." Mace instructed her.

"I have personal reasons as well for not wanting him harmed... I'm sure I've seen him somewhere before... I just can't place him. Until I remember or you find out for me... just make sure no harm comes to him, understood? And DON'T make it obvious that you're with Zaloga, got it? Do you think you can handle this?" Mace asked her now, looking over at her as he took a sip. "This assignment requires a certain degree of... discretion after all. I'm not out to antagonize the Federation after all, but I need to know why they're suddenly interested in me... or if it was just to find..." he hesitated here, not finishing that sentence. "Anyway, are you up for this?"

Tony got off the phone with Vergil, an ashen look on his face. "Shit...!" he exclaimed slowly, now knowing where they were heading. Looking down at his phone for a moment, the ferret dialed Axel, who he'd gotten a message from a few minutes ago. As soon as the rat picked up, Tony began speaking. "Axel, it's Tony. I know where we're heading... but you're not gonna like it. The second waypoint is uh... in a really remote region that you can really only reach down the Camino de la Muerte or... the Death Road. The North Yungas Road in Bolivia. There's really no other way to get to it. And it's OFF the damn road, so we're gonna have to do some jungle trekking it seems." Tony explained, letting that sink in for Axel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 01, 2014, 05:58:59 am**

"The North Yungas Road?" Axel wrinkled his face. "Sounds familiar... hang on." He put the call on hold for a second and flicked onto his phone's internet. "He says we have to get to it through Death Road," he reported to Lily across the table as he searched for it. Axel snorted. "What's so deadly about a road?" Then he found pictures, and his face dropped like a bag of rocks - or, potentially, like him over the edge of the road. "Well... that's actually pretty deadly..." he croaked after a pause.

He re-connected with Tony. "Oh no. This might not be the thing you want to hear but, ah... well, I'm not exactly the best with heights. Actually, that's being generous. I'm really, really bad with heights," Axel groaned, turning a sickly expression to Lily. "But hey, maybe this could help me overcome it. Maybe. And I'm sure the jungle trek's going to be *awesome* too. Ah, thanks for letting us know anyway, Tony. Any ideas when we'd be leaving?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 01, 2014, 12:25:22 pm**

Lily silently waited patiently for Axel to finish his phone call. In her mind she was trying to picture what could possibly be so scary about Death Road, and her imagination proved more than up to the task of filling in all sorts of terrors. "Ejlert, I hope you're okay..." she murmured.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 01, 2014, 02:53:58 pm**

I'd give it two days. I'll try and secure us flights to La Paz... unless of course the Federation's paying for it, which very well may be true." he chuckled here, trying to lighten the mood. "Uh... about the fear of heights... let's not worry too much about that. I'll be driving... and you know I'm a good driver. We'll try and keep you on the side away from the cliff. And Lily's coming? Really? Well... great!" Tony was happy for the morale boost this would be for Axel, and would help to keep both of them going in fact.

"Her son... is with Kalis? Really?" the ferret was stunned by this news. Of all the forces to join when you run away from home... he picked Kalis's empire? "Hey... we'll find him then. Something tells me our quest for the waypoints isn't going to remain secret for long so... I expect to see some appearances put in by Kalis's forces at some point along the way. Anyway... I think we'll leave in two days; give everyone a chance to pack and prepare and get the households in order. I'll let you know when our flight is. I'll take some cash so we can equip ourselves down there... it's pretty much dominated by mining conglomerates, including our friend Zaloga having a presence down there as well. So yeah... we're gonna need some hardware. I'll keep in touch, OK?" he asked. "We'll accomplish both our objectives and try and find Eljert. Talk to ya soon." The ferret hung up, looking at the phone after he did, unsure about this new information, but knowing that before long, they'd be face to face with Kalis. He had no doubts about that...

On the bridge of the *Red Castle*, Kalis saw a black-scaled monitor with yellow underbelly approaching now. He too was clad in robes similar to Kalis's, but these were pure black instead of the red Kalis wore. Bowing his head respectfully to Kalis, he stood before his lord serenely, though with an intensity in his eyes. He was a killer, plain and simple, and looked as if he had no respect for life. He was a Nile monitor, and a fierce looking one at that.

"Lord Kalis, you summoned me?" the monitor asked.

"Yes, Varanus." Kalis responded. "It seems Agent Acyle is accessing the waypoints to Torment's Cataract. This is perfect... we can use this to plot her movements and take her. Remember... she must be taken alive. She is traveling with companions however... companions you may terminate. I have no use for any of them except her. And... should you fail to seize her here... we can simply use this to locate the Cataract as well."

Varanus smiled here in a deathly fashion, grinning as he bowed again. "Yes, my lord. Such a task will be... simple, I think."

"Do NOT grow overconfident!" Kalis chided him. "She's a strong opponent, and we know at least one of her companions is worthy of respect as well. Don't blindly rush into this!"

"Of course not, Lord Kalis." Varanus apologized, bowing his head again and closing his eyes.

"Good... now... assemble your team... they're going to Bolivia... I want you there." Kalis ordered, narrowing his eyes.

"As you wish... my lord." Varanus nodded, and turned to depart. from the bridge. Kalis

watched him go, his eyes still narrowed. Varanus had to learn to curb his enthusiasm in some regards, as impatience would be his death if he wasn't careful. Still... he was fiery and ruthless, and was most of what Kalis looked for in a subordinate. Time would tell if he would live up to the expectations Kalis had placed on him or not.

La Paz's El Alto International Airport was a bit crowded to start the week, but as summer was right around the corner, vacationers were coming down to Bolivia to get a taste of the Amazon and enjoy the start of their breaks, as well as escape the heat. Escape the heat? La Paz was up in the mountains, making it cooler than one might expect for June in Bolivia. Heading downhill on the North Yungas Road would be another story, as they'd be getting closer and closer to the sweltering jungle the further down that road they traveled, but for now, Tony wasn't going to knock on the pleasant weather here in the capital. Temperatures stood at an almost chilly 60 degrees, but Tony knew that would go up the further downhill they went.

Vergil found he rather liked the climate of La Paz, and thought that South America was nothing but a hellhole of a jungle before this, so he was pleasantly surprised to find he was wrong. "Well... this isn't half bad." Vergil commented with a smile as he picked up his bag from baggage claim.

"Not half bad at all!" Tony responded. "Hey Axel, want to go rent a vehicle with me? I think we'll be needing something all-terrain and big enough to hold everyone. Just a shame I couldn't import one of my cars down here." the ferret joked. "Still, we might even need to make it two vehicles since we have uh..." Tony did a mental count real quick, "Nine with us now. Probably WILL need two vehicles in fact."

Vergil unzipped his bag and retrieved the GPS out of it. He'd programmed it before they'd left with the coordinates of the waypoint, and he powered it on again to make sure the thing was working. "Hmm.... so it's about an hour's drive down the highway towards the North Yungas Road and from there... another hour and a half to two hours to the waypoint... depending on how fast we go... which I doubt will be very fast given that road's... layout." the gecko stated, tapping his chin with a big bulbous finger.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 01, 2014, 06:05:00 pm**

Soren shivered as the cold air bit through the short sleeves and shorts he wore. He knew Bolivia would be hot and humid. Except he had counted on being in the jungle, not high in the mountains.

He looked around the airport. Snatches of rapid-fire Spanish punctuated the air as artisans hawked locally made crafts and cuisine. Tourists mingled with people in business suits and obviously armed soldiers (probably from one of the many mining conglomerates that had a stake in the country). He was well aware that while the nations and governments existed, they were pretty much government in name only. The mining conglomerates were so powerful that they pretty much became the *de facto* government.

"Well," he said, leaning on his luggage. "Shall we get going?

A few meters away, a middle-aged Chinese woman dressed in a long sleeved shirt reading "Jungle Sky Tours" and shorts was apparently playing with her cell phone.

Thanks to the advanced directional microphone in it, she had recorded Vergil's every word. She had also taken his picture and matched it with the photo Mace had uploaded to her phone.

Marion smiled. She could easily beat the group to North Yungas Road. All she had to do was get her luggage with its flying frame and other gear. It had been an easy task to get them into

Bolivia. All she had to do was pose as an extreme sports junkie. The augments helped as it led people to assume she had lost her limbs in various extreme sports misadventures.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 01, 2014, 06:23:41 pm**

Axel looked around the airport and took a deep breath, enjoying the crowded atmosphere, the loud voices, the energy of the place. Shrugging his bag, which contained such life-saving essentials as plasters and bug spray, further onto his shoulder he turned to Lily. "This place seems nice! Maybe when this is all over, and your kids are safe and the world isn't going to be taken over by a crazy guy, we could vacation here?"

At Tony's suggestion, he turned and nodded. "Yeah, sure. Like a, a big Jeep or something?" He looked around at Soren, Marita and the others as he started to head off with Tony. "We'll be back soon, guys. Meet in the parking lot?" Axel glanced at Lily. "Want to come, hon-" He was cut off as a large, elderly man in a wheelchair rolled over his foot.

Triste looked over at Vergil and spoke up over Axel's wails of pain. "So when we get there... you have any memories of what we'll be up against? Anything at all?" Behind the dark sunglasses she wore, her eyes searched the gecko's face. Her hands were bunched into fists. Unlike Axel, the crowds made her extremely uncomfortable - it was perfect cover for anyone following them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 01, 2014, 06:31:32 pm**

Marita was wearing a summer shirt, jeans and a camera, mostly as a ruse so onlookers would think she was just a tourist. ' at least we have a wide open period now, Roses show doesn't open until November' Marita said. Both Rose and Marie were dressed for the jungle, but their fur provided insulation from the cold air. Rose had a brochure with facts about the country snd a map with roads.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 01, 2014, 11:50:52 pm**

"Dammit!" Tony exclaimed as he saw Axel's anguish. "Hey! Watch it!" he reprimanded the guy in the wheelchair, who profusely apologized to the rat. "Ugh... come on, let's try and arrange our transport." Tony said, helping the rodent for the first few feet until his foot started to feel better. "We'll try to get two Land Rovers, maybe." he suggested as they started making their way toward the rental row, as Tony liked to call it at every airport, as all rental agencies were lined up in a row typically. As it turned, Vergil's agency was paying for it, which was nice as Tony didn't have to worry about family funds... though his father wouldn't hesitate if it meant saving the world of course.

Vergil noticed Triste appeared... nervous, but whether that was just her cover or not he wasn't certain. He knew agents were trained to blend in... and she certainly was doing that. "Uh... well as far as I remember... not much." he stated. "I don't think there was much to it aside from uh... you know I can't remember, I'm sorry." he sighed, looking down, then back up at her. "You uh... all right?" he asked, noting her anxiety.

Nodding at Soren, the gecko agreed. "Yeah... let's head out to the parking lot, let the others pick us up." he suggested, pulling up the telescoping handle on his bag and beginning to roll it towards the airport exit now.

As Tony headed for one of the rental agency desks, a large monitor bumped into him. "Hey!" Tony said again, snarling a bit as the lizard brushed past him. The big fellow had a baseball cap pulled down low over his eyes, and gave an apologetic wave.

"Sorry!" he hissed, moving on without a glance backwards.

"Dammit... what is this, run into our group day?" Tony asked, shaking his head as he watched the monitor walk off, then turned to continue on his way with a sigh.

Behind him, Varanus smirked, and nodded to a group sitting around a newsstand about 50 feet away in the airport. One raised a magazine in front of him, as if he were reading, but that was the signal for acknowledgment.

Tony managed to secure rental of two Land Rovers, and as each could seat five, it was enough to carry the group. After filling out the necessary paperwork, Tony looked over at Axel and grinned. "Let's pull up and screech the brakes like we're some big important limo service in front of our group. What do you think?" he asked, teeth flashing.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 02, 2014, 09:29:30 am**

Lily was waiting patiently for the cashier of the small funnel cake stand to return so she could buy a post-flight snack.

"Sorry for the wait, ma'am!" A perky fuchsia folf in a tight apron bounced back over, holding a round clear-plastic tin containing her food.

Lily double-taked. "Flora! What--?" Gingerly, Flora put a paw over her mouth, grinning.

"We took a lil' road trip," she whispered, "After you told us where you'd be going. Things got a bit hairy, at one point we were lucky Foley knew how to hotwire a tow truck with a pair of nail clippers--"

"I can't talk right now!" Lily interrupted, glancing surreptitiously at her teammates near the cars. "Whatever you're up to, great, let's find a way to communicate later! but I gotta go!"

Flora winked. "Stay safe. I miss you when you're gone..."

Lily walked back over to the group, slightly shaken but hiding it well. "So, I never found out why it's called the road of death, or whatever," she said through mouthfuls of dough. "What life-threatening hazards will we be facing?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 02, 2014, 10:27:19 am**

Axel was leaning on the counter as Tony finished signing the forms. When he handed them back, Axel stood up straight and grinned back at the ferret, holding out his hand for one of the sets of keys. "You read my mind... I call dibs on the black one though. It looks cooler."

Triste glanced over at Lily as she returned from the vendor. "You haven't heard of La Carretera de los Yungas? It's a road that winds around the La Cumbre mountain pass, and... well, I'll put it this way. It's *really* narrow, and *really* high up. If whoever's driving isn't careful enough, we'll be sent plunging over the edge to our deaths. So you'd better hope that our drivers are up to it."

She looked back at Vergil as they emerged out into the parking lot. "I'm fine. Just... we're not exactly inconspicuous, and if anyone's following us, this crowd'll make it even easier for them. Keep your eyes open." Triste sighed. "As long as we don't do anything to draw attention to us, I'll feel better."

At that moment, a pair of Land Rovers roared up and screeched to a halt in front of the waiting

group. The driver's window of the rear car rolled down, and Axel poked his head out, tooting the horn loudly. "Did anyone order a taxi?" he grinned, putting on a mock southern drawl. The crowd milling around all started to turn their heads towards them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 02, 2014, 12:45:06 pm**

"I'm not the best when it comes to world knowledge," Lily confessed. Losing her complete memory from before 2 months ago will do that to a person. But after what she went through to get her human body back, she couldn't see herself being particularly scared of anything.

"I don't believe we've really met," Lily held her hand out to Triste, smiling. "Axel said you were pretty awesome at Zaloga Corporations. Thanks for keeping my husband safe, he does tend to jump into things a bit over his head."

It'll be nice to get to have a girlfriend who isn't psychotic for once, she thought happily to herself. Speaking of which, she wondered where Emilena had gotten off to. She, Rio and her gang hadn't even contacted Lily after the recruitment center raid. It's quite possible they decided to make off with the money they'd already gotten.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 02, 2014, 12:49:27 pm**

Tony practically did the same, driving a light blue Land Rover right up to the group and blaring the horn at the same time Axel did. Vergil closed his eyes and dropped his head, shaking it in disbelief. There goes the not drawing attention to ourselves...

"All right, your rides are here!" Tony exclaimed, getting out to open up the trunk of the Rover so the others could load up their luggage. "And ah... we're gonna need a driver for the second Rover, since Axel's afraid of heights... and probably won't want to be doing the driving down the Yungas Road."

"Count me out." Vergil chimed in as he placed his bag into the trunk. "I can barely see over the steering wheel on most vehicles, and have a problem reaching the pedals on good days." he explained.

"Yeah well... I didn't mean you." Tony replied, looking down at the white gecko with a smile. "So yeah... any volunteers to drive one of the world's most dangerous roads?" he asked, half-joking but mostly serious. Vergil climbed into Tony's Rover and took one of the three backseats. Each Rover could sit five, so it would require five in one, four in the other.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 02, 2014, 01:14:47 pm**

I'll Drive Marita said " so who wants to ride with me she said to the others ' i'll go with the larger group " Marie said. " then that leaves besides me and Marita" rose said as she climbed in the passenger side and Marita climbed into the drivers seaty. Marie climbed in next to Vergil..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 02, 2014, 01:35:55 pm**

Vergil looked over at Marie and cleared his throat. "Ahem... don't mean to interrupt your plans, but would you mind if I sat next to Agent Acyle? I have some things I need to go over with her." he stated as politely as he could.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 02, 2014, 01:52:49 pm**

Certainly' Marie said and she moved over to the other side of the car to give Vergil and Triste some room to talk. the car had a slight smell to it, but nothing too obnoxious..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 02, 2014, 05:39:19 pm**

Triste looked at Lily's hand then shook it, returning the smile slowly. "Nice to meet you too. And you're welcome. Gets himself in over his head, you say?" She looked across to the second vehicle, where Axel was hopping out and sticking his tongue out playfully at Marita as she took over. "I'd... never have guessed.." Triste said hesitantly, turning back.

"Hey girls!" Axel said cheerily, making his way over to them. "Ready for our date with crazy thin roads and disgusting bugs?" Triste's expression darkened, and he shrank away slightly. "Ok, not a 'girls' type of person... good to know..."

Rolling her eyes, Triste looked at Lily. "I'm going to join the others. See you at our destination, and good luck with..." She pointed a claw at the rat, then turned and made her way over to the first vehicle, stepping aside as Marie made room for her. "Any strategies in mind?" she asked Vergil as she settled in next to him.

Axel watched her leave with a critical expression. "She's a real ray of sunshine, isn't she." Bending down to pick up their heavier bag, he grinned at Lily and started to walk back to the Land Rovers. "Want to take Marita's car? I'm almost 90 percent sure she won't send us over the edge to a painful death."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 03, 2014, 02:10:50 pm**

Tony started up the Land Rover, and pulled out onto the airport loop once he was sure the others were set and ready to follow. Vergil passed the GPS up front to Tony, who set it up along the dash. "OK..." Tony said as he read the route. It wasn't just a GPS, but a navigational assistant as well, as it could take one right to an off-road spot deep in the jungle if one wanted, and that's just what it was going to do now. First though, they had to exit La Paz, and get onto the highway leading to the North Yungas Road. It was fairly straight-forward, and wouldn't require much navigating once they left the city. They could get on Ruta Nacional 3 right from the airport, and from there, almost three hours later, they'd reach the Death Road.

Of course, Ruta Nacional 3 also bypassed the North Yungas Road, and if only such a thing could be done, Tony would gladly take that option, but as it was, the waypoint lay off the Death Road, so the Death Road was where they needed to go. As he passed the row of cars loading and unloading their passengers, two Jeeps in particular pulled into the lane behind them, but at a good enough distance that it wasn't suspicious. They had been loading up bags and passengers, and looked like any other vehicles pulling out behind the Land Rovers. They continued to maintain their distance, keeping at least six car lengths back as Tony pulled onto Ruta Nacional 3, which was one of the major highways that serviced the airport.

Inside the lead jeep, Varanus tapped a claw on the passenger door's side panel, smirking to himself as he instructed his driver to maintain a safe enough distance behind the Land Rovers. No need to crowd them after all; it was a long drive.

"Thanks." Vergil thanked Marie after she had moved over. "Well... in regards to my strategy... I seem to recall Rex reprogramming this waypoint... and I'm trying to remember..." he said distantly, closing his eyes and rubbing his forehead with his fingers. "He wanted to make sure no one else could follow this path... yes... he uh... he reprogrammed it to speak English... and he... he uh... I think he put in a program that would lock anyone out that wasn't him... which

may be problematic... but I'm hoping anyone in his group, myself included, would be part of the 'access group', so to speak." The white gecko explained. "Which would be me, Kalis, and himself. I'm hoping it'll recognize me and allow me access."

"He reprogrammed it?" Tony asked, glancing at Vergil in the rearview mirror. "What an asshole."

"Yeah well... he was a smart cookie, from what I remember. He wanted to ensure only he would be the one obtaining this battleship. And this jungle one I specifically remember as the one he reprogrammed. I don't think... he did that to any others." Vergil commented here, looking out the windshield at the highway ahead. "At least... I hope not." he murmured.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 03, 2014, 02:50:30 pm**

Lily smiled. "Sure. And I like Triste. She speaks her mind, and she seems very competent. A lot like I pictured from what you'd told me of her."

She beamed when she saw Marita again. "Marita! Long time since we last met! How have you been?" Lily had mostly kept to herself during the plane ride, but now that they were assembling into cars she hadn't much of a choice.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 03, 2014, 03:12:21 pm**

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lilly! So good to see you again!' Marita said as she looked at her before pulling out after Tony " as for What I've been up to, well i've been living with rose and Marie and making ends meet really. Corona is much much better than Lanthae, you can actually make a decent living there. So what have you been up to, and what brings you along on this little journey?' she asked the car moved on down the road..
-
 a hooded figure entered Kalis room. " Sujeno, reporting for duty, my Lord" he said in a low voice. ' what do you have need of me for? he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 03, 2014, 08:00:31 pm**

Triste swallowed and looked concerned as Vergil mentioned Rex's reprogramming. "Well... we'll just have to hope you're right. If the three of you did share such a relationship then it *does* stand to reason you'd have access. And if not, then..." She shrugged. "We'll think of something." ***He's remembered that somehow the waypoint was reprogrammed. It'll only give access to select individuals, but as we have one of the select few, it shouldn't be a problem.***

She shrugged again. "Well, at least we won't need to translate it to find out if we fail," Triste said drily.

In the back of the second Land Rover, Axel smiled as Lily started to open up. He knew she'd been feeling slightly self-conscious about seeing the others on the trip over, but he was happy that she was starting to get more comfortable. Leaning back, Axel looked out the window and tried to keep his thoughts from the road they'd soon be trundling down. The rat's stomach started to knot regardless.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 04, 2014, 12:28:17 pm**

Soren watched for threats as the convoy moved through the grimy urban areas that Ruta Nacional 3 serviced. Amazingly, the city looked just like Lanthae. Except with Spanish and Quechuan instead of English. A Scarlet Macaw clad in a t-shirt and jeans, his normally brilliant red and blue feathers muted and greyed with dust and grime, waved at them.

Soren waved back but watched carefully. He noticed that this city's billboards and advertisements mentioned "Dorado Minerals" quite a lot. The Human entered the name of what he presumed to be a mining company into his smartphone and searched for it.

After a wait of several minutes, the results came back. Dorado Minerals was a Bolivian mining comglomerate that controlled half of the country.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 04, 2014, 11:30:51 pm**

((Sorry about the "meh" post. This tour's been a friggin' nightmare so far and it ain't over yet. Didn't have time at all today to plan my post out, so had to improvise.))

Vergil nodded, taking in Triste's words as she tried to reassure him. "Yeah... we will. Cause we're not going away empty-handed. And yeah heheh... least this time no translation needed." he commented mirthlessly, though cracked a smile all the same. It *was* kind of funny, in a demented sort of way.

"So uh... you know there's something I've been meaning to ask, Agent Acyle." Vergil said, growing a bit more formal now. "When Kalis's guys attacked us in the Archives, were they after me... or you?" he asked. "I mean I kind of get me but... he doesn't even know you, right?" the gecko asked here. "Or... does he?"

Tony studied the road they were heading out on. It was a two-lane highway that was winding its way through the mountains, but at least it was a paved road. The ferret knew pretty soon they'd be traveling on dirt and rocks and hanging dangerously close to the edge...

An olive green Jeep tore by them and passed them in the opposite lane; a dangerous move, but a common one here in Bolivia. It slowed down a bit after passing them and kept on ahead, gradually pulling further away but staying within sight for the moment. About six cars back, the second jeep was keeping well behind them as well.

In the lead Jeep, Varanus smiled to himself as he adjusted the sideview mirror and gazed at the leading Land Rover. "Thaaat's it. Got 'em sandwiched now... but no crowding. No need for that right now. Put that backhoe in between us and them!" the Nile monitor ordered his driver.

"Right, boss!" Speeding up again, the leading jeep overtook and passed a truck hauling a backhoe on a flatbed ahead of the Rovers. They knew where the group would be headed after all, so there was no need to stay close. Even if by some chance they weren't heading for the North Yungas Road, eventually they would be.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 05, 2014, 01:06:04 am**

Marion soared over the jungles of Bolivia with her flying frame. No one paid her any heed, thinking that she was just another tourist enjoying the jungle. Indeed, a few other frame-flyers waved at her; she of course, ignored them.

Obviously, she made sure to avoid the no fly zones that the mining conglomerates established ó the last thing she wanted to do was piss them off and get shot down in the process.

Her GPS indicated that she was en route to North Yungas Road, right where her targets were headed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 05, 2014, 02:05:25 pm**

Triste frowned at Vergil's question. "No... no, that wouldn't make sense..." Although, thinking back on it, Kalis' men *had* seemed more focused on her during the attack, rather than Vergil. And they'd seemed more intent on capturing her than killing her outright... Triste's eyes narrowed. *Why? Why would Kalis be concerned about me? Especially when* he's *here*, she thought, her gaze flicking over to Vergil. *Unless... no. No, there's no way Kalis could know about...*

Exhaling slightly, Triste met Vergil's eyes and shook her head, not paying any attention to the green Jeep that overtook them. "As far as I know, Kalis doesn't know anything about me. Before the assault on Rex Sardolemuel's ship, where you were... lost, he never discovered you were working as a double agent for the Ivitz. At least, not to our knowledge. So I don't see why Kalis would pay any particular attention to *me*." Her lips tightened. "In any case, my assignment is to protect you. You're the only one who has knowledge of these waypoints, our only hope of finding the Cataract before Kalis. I can be replaced. You can't. So the priority is protecting *you.*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 05, 2014, 07:50:23 pm**

(OOC: In order to get Emilena back into things, I've edited this old post (http://www.gangoffive.net/index.php?topic=13105&view=findpost&p=22064175) with their reappearance. Just FYI)

Lily nodded slowly. Above the car she noticed an individual on a flying frame whiz past, but she didn't pay them any heed, thinking that she was just another tourist enjoying the jungle.

"I've been fine," she replied to Marita. "Just living. Something I hope to continue doing...why are you and Rose going on this expedition anyway? Just wondering what stake you've got in it. Marita, how are you enjoying your job?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 05, 2014, 09:38:23 pm**

because we were involved in the business in Lanthae, and stopping a crazy dictator from taking over, well you better believe we'll do our part to stop him.' Marita said ' as for the job, it keeps a roof over my head and pays the bills. so are you married to Axel now, or are you two dating?' she asked as she continued driving.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 05, 2014, 11:25:00 pm**

"Oh... I see..." Vergil trailed off. He wondered if Rex had found out he'd been a double agent, and had somehow also found out his contact was Triste... but she didn't seem to think it plausible. He chewed his lower lip as she told him she was expendable, and he wasn't. He frowned, his brow furrowing. "No... that's a terrible thing to say." he said now, looking up at her to meet her eyes. "You're no more expendable than I am." he said sincerely. "What good am I if all my companions are dead? They're all I have... and you... you're the only link to the past I have." he admitted here. "I feel like if I lose you now... that link will be gone... but not just that... I don't see you as expendable. Maybe I used to but... not anymore." He shook his head here, lowering his eyes and gazing at the floor of the Rover.

He wasn't sure what to say after that, so he just kind of remained quiet and let her take that as she would. He barely knew her... barely remembered her... but still, every one of his teammates was valuable to him now... he'd hate to think of even one of them dying.

Tony turned on the radio, and adjusted the volume so it permeated the car in a mellow sort of atmosphere. The region they were driving through outside La Paz was mostly dusty and brown, and quite mountainous. They were in the Andes after all, and to see snow-caps on some of these mountains was truly awe-inspiring for the ferret. To be this high up and and to feel how chilly it was but knowing they were heading for a jungle was something he just couldn't wrap his head around yet.

Kalis turned around to gaze upon Sujeno with a look of death. "Not presently." he responded in his rasping metallic voice. "However, I may require you as backup should Varanus fail. Of course, you may be sent in to replenish any of his group should they fall. Still... I have confidence in him to handle it." Kalis informed Sujeno. Of course, he also knew Varanus to be brash and impulsive, but he'd wait to see what the monitor would accomplish first before leaping to conclusions. This would be his real test after all... to see if he was truly worthy of succeeding Kalis one day.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 06, 2014, 06:35:05 am**

"Well...we can't legally get married, since I'm supposed to be dead..." Lily responded softly. "But we're as close as you can get without a minister saying so."

She debated passing out photos of Ejlert to the girls; you never know what they might find. But ultimately she decided against it. The odds of Marita or anyone chancing across Ejlert was slim, and she didn't want news of her looking for him getting around. It might even put him in danger if Kalis were to learn that his mother was an active ally of Vergil's.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 06, 2014, 11:27:45 am**

"You might not like it, but it's the truth. It's what we have to live with." Triste raised her eyes and looked at Vergil as he stared at the floor. The gecko's tone sounded genuine, like he actually cared, and it was so unlike how he'd been before that it threw her. Looking at Vergil now, he appeared so... *vulnerable*. For a second, she felt almost sorry for him. Triste's jaw clenched. *What the hell's the matter with me?*

After a second, her expression softened. "Hey... I'm not exactly planning on getting killed. And I'll do my best to make sure everyone else stays safe too... although I've got to admit, they're more competent than I thought they'd be." Triste glanced at Tony and gave a thin smile. "Except for their taste in radio station, maybe. Look, as long as we keep focused, we should all be fine."

Axel nodded. "Right. And besides, planning for it would be a nightmare." He grinned. "We've just been living quietly, keeping to ourselves. I, ah, never thought we'd get involved with anything like this again. Lanthae was crazy enough..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 06, 2014, 01:54:00 pm**

Vergil looked up, and smiled here. "Well, I'm glad to hear that." he stated with some relief. He looked at Tony and Marie here and nodded. "Yes well, we've all been through a lot. A ragtag bunch but we're a good crew. I'm just glad to know you'll look after yourself in addition to me. It's kind of our creed, yea." He nodded again here. "I'd hate to see anything happen to you." he added in a much quieter tone, averting his eyes again in a shy fashion.

Tony frowned. "Hey! No backseat driving!" he chided humorously to Triste. As the group rolled on, the minutes turned into hours. They began descending, and entered into a more tropic region of Bolivia. Lush greenery surrounded them on the mountain slopes, and Tony was forced to crank up the AC as the temperature started rising. "Hoo! Remind me never to move here!" Tony exclaimed, wiping his brow. Vergil had spent the past two plus hours asking Triste about his life, and soaking in as many details as she could offer him. From what he'd gathered, he'd had a pretty good if dangerous life. He was courageous, if not a little reckless, and generous too.

The white gecko also spent time researching more of Rex's life, but felt he still wasn't gaining a better understanding of why he'd turned traitor in the first place. This story needed further study.

"Holy shit!" Tony said slowy as he took the exit for the North Yungas Road. "I gotta drive through that?" he asked reluctantly. Ahead of them lay a small dirt road carved out of the mountainside. On the left was a sheer drop, and Tony poked his head out the window to get a better look. "This... Is insanity! Whoever built this road should die!" he exclaimed in a choked voice, noting the jungle was hundreds of feet below, like small emeralds in deep bowl.

"Many of them did." Vergil murmured. He knew the Bolivians had used Paraguayan prisoners to construct this road, and many had fallen to their deaths. It used to be the only way to descend to the Amazonian lowlands until Ruta Nacional 3 had been built. Behind them, Tony could see Marita's Land Rover and a green jeep, with a second jeep approaching too. The jeeps had gotten mixed into the order, so that a jeep was behind each Rover. Great... Tourists.

Tony called Marita in the other Rover. "Uh... You uh... Ready for this?" He asked hesitantly as he gripped the steering wheel tightly, exhaling slowly to try and soothe the adrenaline racing through him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 07, 2014, 07:08:59 pm**

Axel turned his head to the left and looked out the window. He perked up at the view that stretched out on that side. "Hey! Hey, honey!" he nudged Lily and indicated. "Look at the..." His eyes wandered down, and he saw how far the drop was. "Oh." Looking away, he caught a glimpse of the road ahead... and how narrow it became. It looked like a small breeze could blow them over the edge, sending them to a fiery, violent demise on the sheer and deadly cliffs stretching below. "*Oh*..." Sinking lower in his seat, Axel's normally white face took on a green tinge and his ears flopped limply.

Weakly, the rat looked over at Lily. "Maybe I shouldn't have taken this side... Marita, please don't go, ah... you know, *off* the road."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 07, 2014, 08:55:41 pm**

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marita listened to Axel and Lily explain when they had been up to before tony called ' just calm down Tony ' hug the side of the mountainsiide until the road widens, and take it slow' Marita said as she approached the rapidly narrowing road. she shifted slight to hug to mountainside, and slowed her pace.
- once this is over ' you guys can have a real wedding..' Rose said hopefully 'I've got a good thing going with Marita And Marie. and i'm clean. kicked my drug habit' she said with pride.."Marie won a large payout at the slots after work, that wy shes coming with us..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 07, 2014, 10:18:43 pm**

Lily glanced outside. To be honest, she was perfectly okay with heights. "Just wondering, why do you think Axel and I could be married after this?" She asked. "I'll still be a fugitive hunted by the government, thought dead, and I'll still legally be married to another man."

Further behind the convoy, a tow truck bearing the logo of a company that only operates in Mexico drove along the road.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 08, 2014, 12:36:31 am**

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if you are considered dead, that voids your marriage to your husband' Rose replied. hes free to remarry, and you'll be free to marry Axel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 08, 2014, 12:29:26 pm**

Tony gulped, and nodded (a pointless gesture since Marita couldn't see him anyway) before hanging up. "Oh man... uh... here we go..." he said slowly, and began pulling out onto the Death Road as slowly as he could, but noticed he couldn't exactly hug the mountainside either due to not wanting to damage the Rover against the rocks and Bolivian rules of the road stating those going downhill had to take the side closest to the cliff to allow those coming up to hug the mountainside. The ferret of course was only going to follow these rules if he saw an oncoming vehicle.

He glanced in his rearview mirror at the olive Jeep following after him and Marita's Rover behind that. Feeling the rocks slide and tumble out from underneath his wheels was a very unsettling feeling and caused his stomach to leap and flop all in one sickening motion He glanced over the edge again but then jerked his vision back to the road. Stupid! Great way to get vertigo here! He felt like his Rover would just slip off the road at any moment and plummet to a fiery fate below them, but these were mostly silly fears he'd have to get on top of. He had to face them if he was going to conquer this road.

According to Vergil's navigator, the waypoint was about halfway down the North Yungas Road. Greaaat. That's exactly what he wanted to see... not. But the ferret didn't have much to think about it: the rear window of the Rover suddenly exploded in a burst of glass that sent shards sailing into the rear seating areas, causing Tony to duck down and Vergil to cringe as fragments struck his right arm and his backside, scrapes forming that crisscrossed his otherwise white skin. "What the HELL?" Tony shouted, peering behind him to notice a shotgun sticking out the window of the olive jeep. "What the shit is these guys' problem?" he asked, realizing as his heart rate increased that he'd need to pick up his pace if they weren't going to get shredded.

Pushing the accelerator down, the ferret let the Rover pick up speed as he started driving faster down the Yungas Road. The Jeep followed suit, starting to accelerate as another blast from the shotgun was fired, this one impacting with the back of the Rover with a sickening thud. "Grrr! My luggage better be safe back there!" Tony yelled as he increased speed, trying his best to avoid having a heart attack as he slid the Rover around the edge and continued downhill with a slight screech of the brakes.

The second Jeep had opened up heavy assault rifle fire on Marita's Rover behind the first two vehicles, and unlike the first Jeep, which was looking to slow the first Rover down, the second Jeep was looking to kill the occupants of the second Rover.

Varanus grinned wickedly as he kept after the leading Rover that he knew contained Agent Triste Acyle within. Opening up the top of the Jeep's roof, the big monitor hauled himself out onto the top of the Jeep and balanced himself as he shouted down to his driver to get him close to the Rover. The driver complied, pushing the pedal down to pull up fast behind the

charging SUV. When he judged the distance sufficient, Varanus leaped off the roof of the Jeep onto the top of the Rover, landing with a thunk before his energy blade ignited and began slicing off the top of the roof like a can opener peeling back the lid of a can of sardines.

Vergil glanced upwards as he could see the roof of their vehicle being torn into, the heat of the blade a mere inches from his cheek as suddenly most of it was ripped off and thrown over the side of the cliff, Varanus having used his telekinetic abilities to shear off the bulk of it and toss it away with a mighty roar. Glancing down, he sneered at the occupants within, glaring right at Triste. "'ello poppet!" he exclaimed, and immediately thrust a small syringe downward right towards her.

"No!" Vergil's eyes widened and his tail lashed out, looping itself around Varanus's wrist and forcing it up against part of the roof, causing him to cry out and drop the syringe on reflex, where it rolled into the back passenger foot wells.

"You little rat!" Varanus shouted, and overpowered Vergil's tail before backhanding the gecko fiercely across the side of his head, snapping it off to the left and causing the lizard to almost black out. Lights danced in his eyes as he gave out a gasp and slumped a bit forward against the back of Tony's seat, temporarily dazed from the force of the blow.

"Son of a bitch! I am SO not insured for this!" Tony said with exasperation, struggling to keep the Rover on the road. He wanted to turn around and help, but he was powerless to do anything without giving up control of his ride, and that kind of chance was way too risky to take on a road like this. The only thing he could think of was to slam on the brakes, causing them to screech and throwing Varanus off his feet, but the Nile monitor held on, his claws shooting out to grip what was left of the roof before hauling himself up as Tony sped up again, dirt and rocks flying out behind the Rover's tires in a great spraying gush that dinged off the windshield of the Jeep behind them...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 08, 2014, 04:19:02 pm**

Marita ducked as the windhield shattered into pieces from the gunfire and glass flew out of the broken backseat window. It was all marita could do to keep the jeep on the road, as she could only spare a few spluit second peaks out of the now windshield-less Jeep " looks like we have company, and not the friendly sort! she shouted. Marita stole glances at Rose who was curled up into a ball her claws covering her head. blood trickled down from cuts in her arms.. ' Axel' take the gun out of my purse and return fire ' she said looking back at him and Lily' Just hold them off us long enough so we can get to where the waypoint is ' As if this road wasnt hairy enough' she thought to herself

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 08, 2014, 09:04:50 pm**

"You have a handgun in your purse?" gasped Lily as the jeep hit a bump and set her sprawling. "How did you get that onto the airplane?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 08, 2014, 09:17:21 pm**

Triste threw herself back as Veranus plunged his hand down, the syringe glinting in the sunlight - but in the confined space of the Land Rover, she could barely move to avoid it. Luckily, Vergil's tail jerked it away from her just before the needle could pierce her skin. She heard a heavy *thwack* as the monitor's hand connected hard against Vergil's face, and in the corner of her eye she saw the gecko slump over... but she didn't have time to check on him. Using the distraction to her advantage, she jerked down and made to grab the syringe lying on the floor - but Tony hit the brakes to try and shake Veranus off the roof, and the momentum caused the needle to roll further up, out of reach underneath Soren's seat in front. Triste

herself was thrown forwards, her shoulder twisting painfully as she fell awkwardly into the foot well. "*Damn it!*"

Looking up, she saw that the monitor was starting to turn his attention back on the rest of them. Triste tried to pull her knife out, but her arm was still numb. Swearing, she activated her camouflage augment and rolled over, underneath Veranus. Leaping up, Triste wrapped arm around the lizard's neck and swung her head forwards, headbutting him as hard as she could in the face.

Slouching back in his seat, Axel was trying to distract himself when around them the windows started shattering, glass raining down on them. From in front, he heard the unmistakable rattle of gunfire. Gasping, he leaned down even further and reached out with his right arm, making sure Lily was down too. "What... *what the fuck*?!" he yelled. Why did this have to be happening here, now, of all places?!

"Jesus christ... alright, I'm on it!" he shouted back to Marita, looking around desperately for her purse, but he couldn't see it. "Where?! Where is it?! I don't..." Craning his neck, he suddenly caught sight of it on the floor. Lunging, he snatched it up and ripped the handgun from it. Blinking in the dust that was being thrown up from the Jeep in front and flying through the broken windscreen, he tried to get a good aim... but another volley of bullets tore through the Rover, pounding the rear seats and he was forced back down out of sight. *Damn it... never gonna get a good shot like this...* Feeling sick, he glanced back at Lily. "Hold my shirt! And stay low!" Lying flat in the foot space, he reach up and pushed open his door, then started to lean out precariously. Craning his neck, he could just manage to peak under the door and catch a glimpse of the Jeep in front... and its tyres. "Oh, son of a bitch..." Trying not to think about the deathly drop meters from his face, or the fact that a bullet could rip his head off at any second, Axel squeezed the trigger, trying to aim for the rear left tyre. But the Rover was jolting around over the rough road, throwing his aim off, and the first few bullets slammed uselessly into the side of the Jeep.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 08, 2014, 09:59:15 pm**

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now's not the time for asking questions' marita said as she struggled to keep the car on the froad..' lets just say i'm good at hiding stuff, and leave it at that' as said as she ducked and fresh flurry of gunfire just missing her.
-
marie was huddled down behind the pasenger seat, her eye squeezed shut..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 09, 2014, 12:19:37 am**

Varanus grunted as Triste slammed her head into him and sent him reeling, but his foot claws tore into the third of the roof that remained on top of the Rover, and he snarled at her, sweeping his tail out to try and fell his unseen assailant. He knew it had to be Agent Acyle, since he'd seen her vanish using some sort of adaptive camo no doubt.

Vergil groaned and held his head just as Varanus activated his energy blade again and began hacking in the direction Triste had attacked him from. "Triste..." Vergil said weakly, not seeing her anymore. "Triste!" he yelled out, snapping back into consciousness in a rush. He searched frantically for her, but not seeing her, he steeled himself as he leaped onto the roof of the Rover and ignited his own blade, Varanus just barely able to block it in time as Vergil attacked him. "What did you do with Triste, you bastard?" the gecko demanded angrily as the monitor swung on him and Vergil ducked aside and parried the blow, using his agility to his advantage. Of course... he also had to be careful not to topple over the side, as standing up on this vehicle was hard enough as it was without it bouncing and swerving as Tony struggled to keep it on the road.

"Why don't you ask her yourself!" Varanus growled back as their blades locked, bounced away and locked again.

Behind them, the gun battle still raged, though Axel's first shots had been pretty ineffective. That being said, many shots went astray as the vehicles rattled on down the road. One of the assailants tried to hose the passenger areas of the Rover in front of him, but only about half made any real contact. Still, they got the same idea, and started attempting to target the tires of Marita's Rover, hoping to at the least disable it and at the most send it over the edge out of control.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 09, 2014, 10:34:21 am**

Soren screamed profanities as the gun battle raged in and around the Land Rover. Rose was huddled in a ball next to him.

"Not this shit again!" He ducked down and dragged his automatic rifle from its position under the rear seat. Slapping a magazine into the weapon, he chambered a round and set the fire selector to burst.

He took aim at the jeep behind him. Not an easy task considering the bouncing and swerving that Axel was doing to try and evade the gunfire and stay on the road and he was leaning out the now shattered rear window. Neverthless, he managed to draw a bead on the center of the windshield and fire a 3-round burst.

Unbeknownst to everyone below on North Yungas Road, Marion was watching the gun battle unfold. The Human was clinging onto a sheer rock face several hundred feet above them. Her left arm had morphed into a set of four diamond tipped claws that dug into the rock and anchored her in place. Her legs also extended their grappling claws, anchoring her onto the rock face.

She nodded as she peered through the compnoculars. She spotted the white Gecko fighting with a Monitor atop one of the lead vehicles. Behind them, a few other vehicles were in a rolling shootout.

Marion snapped a few photos with the compnoculars and sent them to Mace. She then stashed them inside her bag.

"And now, time to fly." She released her anchors, allowing her to fall backwards from the rock face. The flying frame's wings extended and the engines sputtered slightly before she rocketed ahead of the battling vehicles.

But as she fell, her frame's wings briefly cast a shadow over the vehicles.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 09, 2014, 12:12:56 pm**

Marita was forced to weave as the cars in front of her tried to shoot out her tires. rocks and debris trickled off the sheer ledge, as the cars swerved back and forth. here the road was getting slightly wider but not by much.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 09, 2014, 07:25:43 pm**

Still cloaked, Triste ducked underneath Veranus' tail as it swung viciously towards her, falling back onto the seat. She winced as her hand came down a shard of broken glass, the jagged edge slicing into her palm. Beside her, Vergil called her name but she didn't respond - at the moment, her cloaking was one of the only advantages they had over the attacker. Jerking the sliver of glass from her hand, Triste pulled herself forwards, moving further up in the car as Vergil and the monitor battled above.

Clambering across the front passenger seat, she swung herself out the open window and onto the bonnet. Resisting the wind that was buffeting her from behind and the wild momentum of the car, Triste crept up behind Veranus as he swung his energy sword at Vergil and brought a knee up between his legs, hard. At the same time, she wrapped an arm around his right leg and tried to throw him off the roof... but the car suddenly swung to the side and she lost her balance, sending the two of them tumbling backwards and onto the bonnet. Triste felt a tingle as her cloaking augment deactivated. Staring into Veranus' eyes, Triste snarled and shot her elbow forwards, aiming to crush his trachea.

Axel fired off another shot, swearing loudly as it missed the Jeep completely. "*Godammit!* Marita, try and keep it still-" he started to yell. Then he cried out as the Rover swerved to the right and he slid forwards, almost tumbling right out of the car. Just before he did, his wildly kicking feet caught up in one of the seat belts and he was jerked to a halt, the rat's face inches from the rough dirt road speeding past.

Shouting, Axel's arms flew about wildly as he tried to reach back to pull himself back in, and his finger squeezed compulsively on the trigger of the pistol. The gun fired, and the rear passenger window of the Jeep in front shattered, blood spattering across the glass as one of the gunmen was hit. Axel didn't notice. "*Gah!* Help me!" he shrieked, tensing his caught leg and praying the seat belt didn't give out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 09, 2014, 07:33:39 pm**

Rose jumped across the Car and her claw grasped onto Axel's Leg ' Hold1" she called outr. the cuts of her arm,s were starting to stop bleeding, leaving crimsons streaks crisscossing her arm. Rose managed to get her other paw on his leg and began top pull him back into the car. ' got.. you' she grunted..
- marie tried to keep herself as small as possible as she wouldnt get shot.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 09, 2014, 08:09:27 pm**

Soren ducked down as bullets whizzed past him. He grabbed Axel with his free hand and helped pull him into the vehicle.

"It's okayóshit!" He fell back into the seat as a bullet smashed into hia chest. Luckily, he was wearing the ballistic vest that had been helpfully provided by Tony.

The Human was scrunched against the backseat and breathing heavily. He clutched his injured ribs. Even through the ballistic vest and the augmentworker's shock absorbant clothing, the impact was still quite harsh.

"Rose, take my rifle and return fire. I'm not sure if I have a bruise or busted rib," Soren said between gritted teeth. He unslung his rifle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 09, 2014, 08:21:22 pm**

Rose Grabbed the rifle from Soren ' Stay down " she said." She checked the ammo to see how much ammo the gun had left then she took a position Rose took aim at the Jeep and fired. and was rewarded with a loud pop as one of the jeeps back tires blew out. the jeep began swerving erratically.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 10, 2014, 01:06:38 am**

Even though the Jeep's tire was out, the driver was skilled, and slammed on the brakes to prevent any skidding or swerving. The Jeep ground to a halt broadside to the road, and even though the gunman in the front passenger seat had been killed by Axel's lucky shot, the other gunmen exited with perfect, stationary shots to make at Marita's vehicle. Squeezing off a burst, one of the attackers was rewarded with the satisfying sound of both rear tires on Marita's Rover bursting, despite the moving target.

Above the first Jeep (the one Varanus had come from), one of the gun-toting assailants glanced up to see Marion high above them. "The hell?" he asked, pulling the slide back on his rifle and pumping rounds off into the sky, trying to down this mysterious "newcomer."

Up ahead, Varanus suddenly found himself keeled over from a blow between his legs. Vergil backed off, wondering what had happened, and then watched as both Triste and Varanus were thrown onto the bonnet, Triste suddenly becoming visible to him. That's what she had done! Used her cloaking device! Of course! But unfortunately, the swerving of the Rover caused Vergil to lose his balance as well, and as Varanus and Triste went down, so too did Vergil, the gecko flying off the side and just barely managing to grab on to the Rover's mostly open roof with one hand. Yelling out as he looked below him, he could see the fall was not insignificant... it was a *long* way down.

Varanus grinned wickedly and swiftly caught Triste's hand as she tried to go for his trachea. Roaring out, he smashed her hand down onto the roof and held it fast, squeezing it as he tried to crush it. "Not so fast!" he called, throwing a punch at her head now with all the strength behind it he could muster, which was a lot considering his build.

Vergil ground his teeth as Tony began slowing to see what was going on with Marita's Rover in the back. Groaning, Vergil stuck his sword on his belt and hauled himself up, getting a better grip thanks to the slower speed, though Tony wasn't backing off too much just yet. "Get off her you son of a bitch!" Vergil said through clenched teeth in his threateningly deep voice as he pulled himself back up onto the Rover.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 10, 2014, 03:50:18 am**

Triste yelled as something popped in her hand and she felt a sharp pain run up her arm. Throwing up her remaining free hand, she tried to stop Veranus' attack, but his fist powered through her defense, crunching against her cheek and slamming her head down against the roof.

Dazed, tasting blood, Triste tried to pull away, but the monitor still held her firmly by the hand and she couldn't move. Numbly, she reached for her pinned forearm. If she could only get to her knife...

Axel gasped with relief as he felt hands pulling him back into the car. "Th... thanks!" Pulling the door shut, he bent down and checked how many shots left in the pistol. Three more, and he didn't know if Marita had any spare clips - they were going to have to count.

He heard a rattle of gunfire from the driver's seat, and he jerked his head up to see Rose fire off a burst at the Jeep in front. Axel heard the tyres burst, and he cheered. "Yeah! Nice one!"

As they passed the slowing vehicle, he held a finger up to them. "Fuck you all!" he cried, a slightly unhinged grin plastered across his face. The gunmen opened fire, and he ducked down... and heard a loud pop as the rear tyres on *their* vehicle were torn apart. Swearing, Axel held on tightly as the car started to swerve, veering dangerously close to the edge. "Aw, crap! Don't stop!" he yelled to Marita, firing the last three bullets off at the gunmen as they disappeared in the distance. If they stopped here, he knew how quickly they'd be outgunned... and there was only one way that could end.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 10, 2014, 12:14:19 pm**

Marita Swore on both rear tires blew. metal scraped against the ground as she struggled to keep the car on the road ' up ahead the road was widening as it headed down, it was maybe 100 feet to go before they could breathe a bit easier.. and try and ditch the jeep.
Rose checked how many rounds were left in Sorens Gun ' Ok, I have 9 shots left' she said as Axel fired off a few more rounds..' better make them count..' she said. She took aim and fired at the Jeep ahead of them, the one menacing Tonys Rover. the back window of the jeep exploded in a hail of glass, who tricked both out of the vehicle and inside. screams from the vehicle indicated there had been some injuries from flying debris ' but Rose wasnt ready to celebrate just yet.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 10, 2014, 12:48:55 pm**

Vergil grimaced as he saw the monitor's fist connect with Triste's face. She seemed to be clearly dazed now, and Varanus had the upper hand. Swatting her free hand away, he went in for another blow before Vergil stood over him. "I said... *get off her!*" he ordered, igniting his blade again as Varanus was forced to roll to the side as Vergil swung at him (carefully though to avoid Triste).

Bringing his own blade out, Varanus once more connected with Vergil's sword, but this time, momentum wasn't on his side. Vergil used the blow of the two swords to cause his own to rebound and slice downward, connecting with Varanus's right leg, causing him to scream out in pain as he went down on one knee. Vergil didn't aim to cripple, but he did aim to disable, and the gecko was able to move to interpose himself between Triste and Varanus now, the monitor hanging on in this fight as he swung again, but much weaker this time. Vergil easily turned aside the blow and sliced into Varanus's arm, causing a burn that led to the bigger lizard dropping his sword off the side of the Rover.

Vergil saw his chance, and raised his hand even as the persistent Varanus moved to both telekinetically grab his sword and throw his fist into Vergil's chest. The gecko wasn't anticipating it, and the two of them connected almost simultaneously: Vergil managed to psionically throw Varanus off the back of the Rover right as the monitor's fist connected with his chest. The gecko had barely managed to beat Varanus though, making Varanus's blow less fierce, but it still knocked Vergil backwards and onto Triste with a big "Oooof!" escaping him as he went down.

Varanus was tossed backwards and slammed into the windshield of the Jeep behind him, cracking the glass and causing the driver to swerve dangerously as Veranus toppled and rolled off the Jeep. Both turned towards the cliff's edge, and the Jeep's momentum carried it onwards even as its brakes screeched. "SHIT!" the driver yelled, seeing oblivion before him as the Jeep drove right off the cliff and tumbled over the edge to impact with trees and vegetation on the way down, the force of the blows rattling, severely crippling and outright killing the occupants before the Jeep crumpled into a compact shell as it finally struck the bottom with a sound like a thousand panes of glass shattering at once. By the time it was over, the Jeep looked as if a giant's fist had slammed it into the Earth, and there was no way any of the occupants could've survived; the Death Road had just added even more victims to its record.

Tony began slowing the Rover down now to help out his companions behind him, as he saw

they were in serious trouble with their tires. Varanus was nowhere to be seen: he had managed to roll over the side but had fortunately for him landed in a smaller tree growing off the side of the mountain. He'd managed to break his fall somewhat, but was still badly injured. He decided to remain stationary to avoid detection, and was barely conscious at this point anyway, the warrior struggling to remain aware of his surroundings even as blackness threatened to engulf his vision.

Tony fumbled with the trunk of the Rover, throwing it open and tearing into his luggage to retrieve a pistol he'd packed away in there. He'd opted for an older projectile weapon, since lasers would've raised more questions at the airport. "Come on!" he shouted to Marie. "We've gotta give the others some cover!" Taking shelter behind the Rover, Tony fired at the second Jeep off in the distance, doing his best to avoid Marita's Rover in between the two.

Vergil was winded, gasping for breath as he lay on top of Triste. "Damn..." he managed to wheeze. "Are you... are you all right?" he asked her, thinking only of her first as he battled to regain his breath. Some drops of water fell on his face from a small nearby waterfall that cascaded down over the Yungas Road. The water felt good to the gecko, and he closed his eyes, just barely having the strength to roll off of Triste and onto his belly.

Only the rearmost Jeep remained, but they weren't going anywhere with a blown tire. Although they continued firing on Marita's Rover, the distance was gradually increasing, and they were taking fire now from Tony up ahead as well. Suddenly, they heard Varanus's voice in their ear buds. "If any of you assholes are still alive, I'd really appreciate an extraction!"

"Uh, right boss!" the driver responded. "Get a new tire on this thing!" he ordered, and one of the three surviving gunmen moved to get the spare off the back of the Jeep and change it out, even as Tony managed to hit one of them in his neck, causing him to fall backwards behind the Jeep and leaving only two remaining.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 10, 2014, 01:09:44 pm**

Marie searched around in her belongings before locating a handgun buried underneath her makeup kit. ' got it' she shouted as she took a spot alongside Tony and started peppering the jeep behind Maritas Jeep. You take out the guys I'll go for the tires" She said to Tony.Marie managed to get in a hit after a few misfires, hearing a pop as the front left tire went out. ' thats one down' she shouted as she saw the two survivors trying to change out one of the back tire.
- marita saw Tonys Rover stopped on the side of the road, and pressed down on the accelerator/ sparks shot out from the ground as the jeep lurched forward, it was maybe 50 feet to the other Rover. " just a little further' Marita Grunted.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 10, 2014, 02:26:38 pm**

Lily's eyes went wide as she noticed Soren take a brutal hit to the chest. Quickly she reached around the passenger front seat and grasped Soren's hand. "Just try to stay still," she whispered softly in his ear.

Closing her eyes and seeming almost oblivious to the gunfire and the car chase, she traced his chest with her hands and took a deep breath. Slowly the pain in Soren's chest began to siphon away, the swelling going down and the skin over the rib regaining its normal color. At the same time, blood started to trickle down Lily's nose as an identical bruise started to discolor her chest underneath her dress. She gasped and shuddered in pain, but continued healing Soren.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 10, 2014, 07:27:25 pm**

Soren gasped as he saw what Lily was doing and from the fact that his chest no longer ached.

"Lily, stop before you harm yourself! I'll be fine!" he exclaimed.

The gunfire mostly missed Marion, but one bullet lodged itself in her flying frame's wing but doing no damage. She engaged the boost on her frame and sped forward, quickly taking her out of range.

"Mace," she said into her throat mike. "I have located Vergil. He is with the other infiltrators. However, they were attacked by a group of unknown alliegence. I am sending over the photos now."

She then pressed a button on her compnoculars to send the contents of the memory card to Mace via an encrypted satellite uplink.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 10, 2014, 07:43:02 pm**

Groaning, Triste sat up slowly, ignoring the sounds of gunfire as Tony covered the approaching Rover. She extended her arm outwards, and winced at the unnatural angle that her dislocated index finger was pointing. "Yeah. I'm fine," she muttered lowly, gripping it tightly and snapping it back in place with a *crunch*, breath hissing through her teeth. "Bastard." Triste paused, and probed the interior of her mouth with her tongue. One of her teeth was hanging loose, the gum torn from where Veranus' fist had knocked it out of place. Rolling her eyes in frustration, she reached in and yanked the tooth free with a grunt of pain, dropping it on the floor and spitting a mouthful of blood beside where it fell. "Bastard," Triste growled again.

She rose to her feet and staggered over to where Vergil lay on his front. "Are *you* okay?" Looking down at him, the gecko didn't seem like he was hurt too badly, at least. Triste offered a hand down to him. "Thanks for the help. He was... stronger than I thought he'd be." The acknowledgement of her failure left a sour taste in her mouth.

Axel glanced ahead through the broken windscreen, and saw with a rush of relief that Tony's Rover was drawing steadily closer. Looking back, he saw the gunmen from the second Jeep, dwindling in the distance, take cover from the bullets rocketing their way courtesy of Tony and the others. The rat grinned. "Holy crap... maybe we're actually not about to die..."

He turned to look triumphantly at the others in the car - and his expression froze when he saw Lily using her powers on Soren. "Hey!" Axel said quickly, sliding across the seat and putting a hand gently on the arm she'd extended to Soren. "Come on! Look, he's fine! You don't need to..." His mouth tightened at the sight of the blood trickling down her nose. "Please Lily... stop. You know I don't like it when you do this..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 10, 2014, 09:42:46 pm**

"Yes I'm... I'm fine." Vergil nodded, a bit breathless in his speech as he pushed himself up painfully to his knees. "Oooh! I think... I think I'm OK." He held his side, and was pretty sure it'd be bruised. It didn't feel like any of his ribs were broken though... which was probably a good thing, considering they'd most likely have another challenge at the waypoint. "I'm glad you're mostly all right." the gecko told Triste sincerely, noting the fire was starting to die down the closer Marita limped her Rover to the group. "He was... very strong, yes." Vergil nodded here, chewing his lower lip as he got shakily to his feet and look down the cliff. "Much stronger than I was anticipating. We didn't get him... don't ask me how I know... I just do." the gecko stated with concern, scanning the jungle below but seeing nothing.

"Let's get these vehicles around the bend up ahead! We can change out the tires up there!" Tony shouted to Marita as she got close. Fortunately, each Rover had a spare tire on the inside of the trunk... he just hoped neither of them had been punctured. Emptying his clip, the ferret backpedaled and headed for the driver's side of his Rover, sliding in and putting it in gear so they could move around a bend in the cliff and get some protection. That was the nice thing about the North Yungas Road: it had plenty of curves and turns offering concealment.

Leading the way, Tony drove ahead until they were around the corner and then pulled up a bit so Marita would have room to stop in shelter. Exiting his vehicle, Tony rounded the Rover carefully and headed for Marita. "Who were those assholes?" he asked Vergil on the way. Vergil, having managed to stay low on the roof as Tony drove, shook his head. "I have no idea. No!" he said suddenly, light coming into his eyes. "They were... yes the big fellow... he was... um... he was with me back when I served with Rex! Uh... can't remember his name but... he was pretty friendly with Kalis, if I recall. Yeah! So he must be one of Kalis's then!" Vergil exclaimed, pleased he could remember such details.

"Damn... how in the hell did he find us?" Tony asked, shaking his head as he walked over to the second Rover. He put on a grin for the others in the second vehicle, trying to keep morale up. "Lovely afternoon so far, eh?" he asked, shaking his head in amazement as he came around to Axel's side. "You all right?" he asked the occupants, looking inside. "I think we should get those tires changed and continue on our way as soon as we can... no use sitting out here, after all." he pointed out, noting they were still pretty high up on the mountainside.

Vergil hopped down from the roof now carefully, as too far and he'd fall. "Well... Kalis is clearly tracking us somehow... I don't know how but he's tracking us." He looked at Triste in profile. "So... it seems he wasn't after me though... why would he be after you?" he queried, finding this to be most curious. "That's twice now it seems he's tried to nab you. What gives?"

On the cliff side, Varanus was grunting as he was hauling himself up hand over hand, using his claws to their full advantage. He'd slide down every so often, but he was *not* going to die on this mountain! Snarling, he pulled himself the last few feet and up over the side. Panting, he stood slouched for a moment, catching his breath. Those... those *bastards!* No one got the better of him like this! How dare they! He was far superior to these worms! But that white gecko... who was he? Varanus thought he looked vaguely familiar... but he couldn't exactly place him. He was skilled with a blade... that was for sure... and was a psion to boot... perfect. But he'd been told Agent Acyle was psionic too. She hadn't demonstrated any of that in the fight... but perhaps that was smart... this way, he wasn't sure just what she was capable of.

Looking up the road to his two survivors, he growled in his throat. No... it wasn't over yet... he'd regroup... kill these bastards and take Agent Acyle to Kalis... he'd accomplish his mission. But first things first... he couldn't fight in such a diminished capacity like this... he'd need to recuperate... and then he'd get them... every last one of them... they'd all die slow and painful deaths for this!

Wiping blood from his mouth, the Nile monitor began heading back up the road towards the Jeep, a look of deep anger in his eyes.

Mace pulled the pictures up on the HUD in his office, and frowned. "Hmm... well hello... who are we here?" he asked, running some of the faces of the attackers through his database. Most of them were matched to soldiers in Kalis's army... perfect. So Kalis was getting involved in this. Mace had met him only once... years ago, and he'd been very timid and shy back then. Now he was a crazy nutcase hellbent on destroying the world. How times change...

Sighing, Mace tapped his chin thoughtfully. "I see... well... those are Kalis's goons. Interesting that Kalis would be after them... are you all right?" he asked Marion. "Were you spotted? You

know... I'm thinking of something..." Mace said in quick fire, trailing off and not elaborating at the moment.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 10, 2014, 10:01:54 pm**

"Soren is...more useful than I am right now..." gasped Lily, suddenly having trouble breathing from her bruised rib. Nevertheless at both of their insistence she allowed herself to be pulled away from Soren. "Sorry..." she said to both of them quietly, not intending to have frightened them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 10, 2014, 10:57:46 pm**

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marita pulled alongside Tonys Rover and staggered out of the Rover' just give me a minute to catch my breath ' she said, before looking at the shredded back tires 'geez' she said ' boy we're we lucky they didnt hit the front set' she said 'do we have a first aid jkit?' She asked Tony' i'm sure if theres one in my Rover or not.
' marie and Rose went over to help get the spare out of the back of the Rover.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 10, 2014, 11:03:20 pm**

"I was shot at but I don't think they recognized me," Marion replied. "Probably thought I was from one of the mining corporations in Bolivia. Anyways, what are my orders?" She was perched on a ledge of rock no wider than a Human hand. Her prosthetic legs had reconfigured into spiked "hooves" that gave her maximum grip. Her left arm had extended its grappling claws, anchoring her to the rock face.

Soren climbed out of the vehicle with the jack in hand. "I got shot but I'm okay thanks to the ballistic vest we packed." He slipped the jack under the Rover and slowly began to jack up the vehicle. "Anyways, anyone know those assholes?"

As he was jacking the vehicle up, he got a glance over the side of the road. He visibly shuddered.

He averted his gaze to avoid losing his lunch or fainting. He turned to Rose who had his rifle. "Could you keep watch, please?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 11, 2014, 01:50:05 am**

Sure,I'll keep watch ' rose said keeping an eye on Soren as he jacked up the Rover.
-No, I didnt recognize them, but obviously someone wants us out of the way. they were clearly targeting us' Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 11, 2014, 12:47:12 pm**

Triste shook her head, climbing down and landing next to Vergil. They really *were* after her.. But why? She was sure Vergil would be the focus of their attention - if he wasn't, then there was only one reason why Kalis would be interested in her. *But how the hell could he know?*

She turned to look at the waterfall, her eyes fixing on the water as it thundered down. If the Ivitz found out that she was about to let this information slip, the repercussions on her could be... substantial. But the way things were going, maybe revealing why she could be of so much interest would be safer. She swallowed and glanced at Vergil. *Even to him*.

"I... might know why they'd be after me." Rubbing the side of her jaw where Veranus had struck her, Triste turned to Vergil. "If the Ivitz knew that I told you what I'm about to, I could be in *serious* trouble." After staring at him to make sure he got the message, she took a deep breath. "Kalis might not be interested in *me*, exactly. It's more the... information I could present him with. My brain's been modified to give me a neural link to the Ivitz Federation's entire defense network. It lets me communicate with the lead members of the Federation, and - more importantly - gives me direct access to the information passing between the various fleets and defense forces. So if Kalis ever managed to get his hands on that kind of data... he'd know everything. All the Ivitz's strategies, all plans taking place - Kalis would be one step ahead of us, and the Federation would be powerless."

Triste clenched her jaw. "It's the Ivitz's greatest secret, how they've managed to secure their power. There's a number of us that have the ability, but nobody else is meant to know - not even other agents working for the Ivitz. So when I was trying to think why Kalis would be interested in me, I didn't think... I still don't know how he could have found out. But we have to work under the assumption that if he's going to this much trouble, then he must know." She looked Vergil directly in the eyes. "Kalis *can't* be allowed to gain access to it. At any cost. Even if it means..." she pointed a finger to her temple and mimed pulling a trigger. "And if for some reason I'm not able to, I want you to promise that *you* will."

Axel blinked. "It's okay, don't be sorry. Hey, you're okay, aren't you? Nothing hit you?" He quickly looked her over, but apart from some small glass fragments on her dress, she seemed alright. He brushed it off and gave her a shaky smile. "Okay... it looks like we're fine."

He looked at Tony and grimaced. "Oh yeah... lovely... but not enough bullets and close calls, if you ask me." He saw his legs were shaking, and he willed himself to calm down. They weren't out of the woods yet, and losing his nerve now wouldn't help anyone. He took a deep breath and scratched his head, nodding across at Soren. "Alright, I'll, ah... I'll help put on the other tyre." He flashed a grin at Tony. "Thanks for the cover back there... for a second I thought I was gonna have to get used to looking a lot more, ah... holey than usual."

Axel walked around the car to the second shredded tyre and shrugged his shoulders. "I've got two ideas who those guys were. They were either the worst tour guides in the world or -" he gestured in Vergil's direction, where the gecko was talking with Triste - "It was Kalis' guys trying to stop him. Though I'd be willing to bet on the tour guides idea." He looked over at Lily. "I hope Ejlert's friendlier than *they* were. Especially when he finds out I'm involved with his mom." The rat stopped himself, realising it probably wasn't the best time to make a joke like that. "Sorry."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 11, 2014, 01:40:04 pm**

Vergil could tell what Triste was going to say needed to be kept secret, so he allowed her to pull him aside so she could relay the information. The gecko habitually chewed on his lip as he listened, taking in the information with a steely gaze, looking for all the world as if his brain were processing it all with the efficiency of a super-computer. "I see..." He said slowly here, digesting it. "You... my god... the entire defense network... that would explain it!" he gasped softly, shaking his head. "So... it's not just the warship he's after... he wants it all... to know our every move before we even make it! That... that makes sense... but how did he find out?" he asked, more to himself than to her, as he knew she didn't have the answer to that.

He tapped his fingers on his snout, drumming them thoughtfully. But then she asked him to kill her if she was threatened with capture if she wasn't capable of doing so herself. "What?" he gasped, going paler than usual as his eyes bulged out at this. "No! I-I couldn't!" he shook his head, almost fearfully here, his voice stammering. "I don't believe in... sacrificing others like that... that's... terrible." he said softly, lowering his eyes and averting his gaze from her.

Swallowing hard, he finally looked up at her again after a moment. "Triste... I can't promise you that... but... I promise if it comes to that... which it won't because I'm going to keep you safe no matter what... then I'll assess the situation and make a judgment based on what I think the best course of action to be. It won''t come to that, OK? It won't." Vergil said sternly. "Because I'm going to keep you safe... all right?" Vergil told her sternly, the conviction of a steel wall behind his words. "No one gets left behind... no one." he said resolutely.

He then turned, and headed towards the others now, flexing his wrist to crack it and exercise it after having been using his blade for the past several minutes.

Tony was smiling at Axel's jokes, and shaking his head. "Yeah... if you can't laugh at your imminent death, what *can* you laugh at?" the ferret asked, chuckling here at Axel's "holey" comment. "I dunno... maybe they *were* guides pissed off we didn't take their tour... somehow though... I doubt that." Tony stuck out his tongue and jogged over to the back of his Rover to get the tire out and roll it over to Axel.

As he was performing this task, Vergil spoke up as he rejoined the others. "They were Kalis's men... that monitor... he was friends with Kalis... I remember a little about him. Makes sense he'd be one of Kalis's best after Kalis killed Rex. They were after me." he lied to the others, keeping Triste's secret safe for now. "The waypoint is a few miles ahead... but we're gonna have to reach the top of the mountain... Tony brought some climbing equipment, so hopefully none of you are too banged up to do some rock scaling." the gecko commented here, looking around at the group.

Tony had by now rolled the tire over to the rat. "Sure! I mean what are we gonna do? Turn around and go home? We came this far after all..." the ferret commented wryly.

Mace continued pondering his next move, then finally spoke to Marion over the comm link. "Would you be comfortable making contact with them to gain further information?" he asked her here. "I know you're more a security agent but... is that something you could do?" he inquired.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 12, 2014, 01:09:38 am**

Lily crawled out of the Jeep, holding her chest and wincing. "Is anybody wounded?" she asked. She glanced at Soren. "How are you feeling?" she asked him.

Still, she couldn't help smirk at Axel's joke despite the situation. *It's nice to see most of us still have the same survivalist spirit that got us through last time,* she thought.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 13, 2014, 06:47:44 am**

Triste stared out at the waterfall as Vergil walked away, his words replaying in her mind. *He... really has changed...* She looked over her shoulder and watched him walk towards the rest of the group, chewing her swollen lip thoughtfully. After a moment, she sighed and shook her head, almost irritably, and turned to make her way over and join the group.

Axel pulled the ruined tyre off, slid the new one onto the frame then started tightening the lug nuts back on. After several minutes, he stood back up and rolled his shoulders. "Right, that's done. I guess I heard wrong down there, but it sounded like you said we're going to use climbing equipment?" He chuckled.

"You've got a problem with that?" Triste asked as she came up behind the others, folding her arms.

Axel's chuckle was cut off with a strangled sound. "You... you're serious? We need to climb?" He gulped. "Climb *high*?"

"So? You've never gone rock scaling before?"

"Oh no... as a technician, we've all got to pass the rock scaling exam. I'm an expert, trust me." He rubbed a hand through his hair, unknowingly messing it up with black grease, and blinked. "Okay... can't, ah... can't hurt to try new things, I guess." Axel looked at Tony. "Just as long as the equipment doesn't make my ass look big," he tried weakly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 13, 2014, 08:23:51 am**

Seeing that everyone else was just kind of standing around, Tony sighed, and went to change the second tire while Axel worked on the first. "Oh I don't think you'll have to worry about that." the ferret grunted, beginning to pull off the nuts with a spanner from his Rover. "Besides... strong guy like you with those augmented arms... climbing rocks should be a piece of cake, right?" he asked, grinning as he looked over at Axel from the other side of the vehicle. "You can't get muscle fatigue like the rest of us, right?"

Vergil shook his head at Lily's question. "No... just some cuts and bruises." He indicated the cuts on his arms from the glass, and rubbed his side a bit from where Varanus had struck him. "Thanks, though." He gave Lily an affirmative nod.

Tony swapped out the tires and began tightening up the nuts. Vergil gazed straight at Axel now, his large eyes calm and reassuring. "You'll be fine, Mr. Whent. If you can survive killer droids and the Death Road, you can survive a less than 150 foot climb. Just remember to stay calm... panicking leads to more chances of an accident occurring. Maintain your cool and stay collected. Just think of making it through... for Lily's sake." Vergil suggested.

"And... theeere we go!" Tony grunted, making sure the last nut couldn't move any further to the right. "Provided we're all good, we got about another 20 minutes down this road and then we'll be at the spot. As for a first aid kit... uh it's one of the bags. Can't remember who packed it though." Tony confessed, scratching his head and wiping his brow. Damn it was humid in this jungle! His fur was practically matted to his body and his clothes were matted to his fur; not a pleasant situation.

Vergil looked to Triste. "Need any patching up before we go?" he asked her, knowing she'd gotten the worst of the exchange between herself and Varanus, unless of course Varanus was dead... but Vergil didn't sense that.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 13, 2014, 08:42:49 am**

I suggest we patch up any injuries that we can, cuts bruises, and the like, before climbing.'' Marita said . ' Who's hurt the worst?"
- Rose went to working digging through the bags and finally dug them out of Vergils bag. " found it, she said, wiping sweat from her brow. the humidity made it feel like it was close to 90. Roses clothes stuck to some of her cuts, leaving streaks of red where the clothes absorbed the blood from the cuts, sweat caused streaks to run down her arms as some of the

blood trickled off her arms onto the ground.
_ Marie was helping to sweep out some of remaining glass out of Marita's Rover. There were bullet holes in the seats, and the windshields and back windows were gone, the remaining windows had holes in them from debris hitting them..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 13, 2014, 10:22:42 am**

"I'm fine," Soren said as he gently lowered the car back down. He then winced as he heard the mention of scaling a sheer cliff.

"Wait, we climb up there?" He pointed to one of the peaks high above the ground.

"Affirmative," Marion replied. "Marion out."

She released her anchors and fell backwards from the cliff. As she did so, her flying frame's engines revved up and propelled her forward. Thinking that posing as a tourist with a broken flying frame would arouse the least suspicion, she cut the engines and activated a smoke charge in one of the engines.

The Human soon glided towards the group. Thick black smoke trailed from her right wing engine.

Soren happened to look up as he wiped sweat from his brow. As he did so, he saw a line of thick black smoke in the sky and it appeared to be heading for them!

"The fuck!?" He snatched a pair of compnoculars from the bag and trained them on the object trailing the smoke. His jaw dropped. "Shit! Guys! We've got a frame-flyer coming in for a emergency landing!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 13, 2014, 11:06:28 am**

Vergil shook his head. "No, no. We're climbing up there." Vergil corrected Soren, pointing to the top of the sheer sides above the road, about 100 feet above them. "The waypoint is on top of the Yungas Road... so technically, we only need to climb above the road." he explained.

But his thoughts and speech were interrupted by the personal glider belching out black smoke. "Shit!" Vergil exclaimed, noting the troubled look of the flying frame. "Get back!" he ordered, waving everyone back. "Give it room to land!" He held up his hand, ready to telekinetically catch the glider in case it threatened one of the Rovers, and to save the reckless tourist's life.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 13, 2014, 11:31:25 am**

Lily glanced at all the climbing equipment. "Thank you'd be able to help me figure out what I need to put on, and how?" she asked Triste. "I've never willingly gone rock-climbing in my life, at least as far as I know."

While Lily used to be quite fit before she transferred her conscience into a clone body in Lanthae, the logistics of the clone body having never exercised a day in its growth-accelerated life had taken away her muscles and left an awful lot of baby fat around the curves. She'd since repeatedly learned that a body lacking in fitness was far tougher to work out in than the toned, decently muscled one she'd had before.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 13, 2014, 07:55:34 pm**

Triste shook her head at Vergil. "No, I'm fine. It wasn't my favourite tooth he knocked out. Let's just focus on getting up there." In truth, the torn area of her gum where it had been torn out hurt like hell, but there were more important things to worry about.

She looked at Lily. "Of course. It's not hard to get the hang of." Her eyes flicked over to Axel. "Well, not for most people."

Axel, who'd been staring up open-mouthed at where Vergil was pointing, heard her tone and snapped his gaze down to her. "Hey!"

Triste gave a small smirk at him, wincing at the pain it caused in the side of her mouth, and headed over to Lily. She was about to start explaining what piece of equipment went where, when Soren warned the group about the inbound glider. Turning, the spider gecko eyed the figure warily as they approached.

Moving around the car to stand closer to the group, Axel bit his lip as he gazed up at the smoke billowing from the broken craft. Something tightened in his gut. It could be completely innocent... but after all they'd been through he'd learned that it was worth being suspicious around the unexpected.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 15, 2014, 12:50:59 am**

Marion circled around to bleed off speed from her "broken" flying frame. When she had bled off enough speed, she descended in preparation to land. While most flying frames relied on an exoskeleton to absorb the impact of landing, Marion opted to use her artificial legs instead.

Unfortunately, she miscalculated and came in too fast. She deployed the anchoring spikes on her legs, carving small gouges in the road as they slowed her down. To further slow herself down, Marion used her left arm (which had a line thrower built in) to launch a projectile that embedded itself deep into the nearest rock face.

She breathed a sigh of relief as the cable grew taut and stopped her mere inches from the edge. Tumbling over the edge was not exactly a problem because of her flying frame but if she flew off, that instantly blew her cover as a tourist with a broken flying frame. Marion grabbed the cable with both arms and carefully reeled herself in.

Once she was safely on solid ground, she severed the cable, leaving it to dangle from the rock face.

Soren put the compnoculars away and rushed to help Marion. "Are you okay, sir?"

Marion took off her helmet and tucked it under her arm, revealing a middle-aged Chinese woman. "I could be better." She retracted the wings on her flying frame.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 15, 2014, 01:52:23 pm**

The pilot was revealed to be a woman of Asian origin, and Vergil relaxed upon seeing she posed no immediate threat. With their string of luck lately, you never knew. Clearing his throat, he stepped forward. "Yes well... I'm glad you're safe, but if you need a ride I'm afraid you're out of luck if you're going back to La Paz. We can't retrace our steps at this point unfortunately thanks to some crazy gunmen back the way we came. Bandits most likely." Vergil lied, but didn't feel ashamed in doing so. They were losing enough time out here as was, and they weren't ultimately here to run a charity service after all.

"To be honest..." he continued here. "We aren't going much further down this road, so I'm not sure we're your best bet for assistance out here. But other motorists should be along at some point if you need a ride somewhere. If not, you'll have to wait until we're done with our 'sightseeing' before you can hitch a ride with us back to La Paz, and we'll gladly take you. Sorry for the abruptness, but we're on a bit of a schedule here..." Vergil stated, glancing back down to the bend, behind which he knew Varanus's men lay in wait, repairing their Jeep to quite possibly continue the chase.

Tony finished changing out the second tire and stood up, wiping his brow again and giving Axel a nod. "Right! I think that about does it for the repair. I couldn't find a lug wrench, so I had to make do with a spanner, but I got the tire on there." Brushing his paws off against his pants, the ferret gave out a "hoo!" of satisfaction that the job was over with.

"Good... then let's get moving." Vergil stated. "However..." he regarded the large flying frame with skepticism. "I don't think we can fit that thing into our Rovers. You'll have to ditch it here, so I hope it wasn't too expensive." the gecko commented. "Oh yes... and I'm Vergil... Vergil Speicher." he introduced himself.

"Tony!" Tony waved, not bothering with his last name for the moment, as he knew some tended to react negatively to the Stracci part, even in this corner of the globe.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 15, 2014, 02:20:03 pm**

Marion sighed. She stepped out the frame, leaving it standing on its own. She pressed a button on the frame and watched as it folded in on itself, leaving a heavy but ordinary suitcase.

"It's a foldable one," she replied.

Soren went to pick up the "suitcase" but couldn't even budge the object. He grunted with exertion but only suceeded in moving it an inch.

Marion chuckled and effortlessly picked up the "suitcase", her powerful mechanized arms whirring slightly. "It's a bit heavy. Anyways, I'll follow until I can find an airport or bus stop."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 15, 2014, 02:50:42 pm**

Axel squinted at Marion's mechanical arms as she lugged the compacted flying frame with apparent ease. "Why couldn't *I* have been fitted with arms like those?" he asked wistfully, noting how heavy it appeared to have been for Soren. Shrugging dejectedly, Axel leaned forwards and folded his arms across the front of the car. "We should hurry. The faster we get there, the quicker we get this climb over with. And the more distance between us and the... ah, bandits." He waved a hand at Marion. "I'm Axel, by the way."

Triste frowned at the newcomer, not giving her name for the moment. "We're not exactly tourists," she told Marion, her brow knitted. "I'm not sure you're going to like where we're heading." Triste looked over at Vergil and lowered her voice. "Letting her follow us to the waypoint isn't a good idea, Vergil. We have no idea who she is - and even if she's just a civilian, we can't risk her screwing things up for us."

"Guys!" Axel called over anxiously, drumming his fingers against the car's bonnet. "We going?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 15, 2014, 08:59:39 pm**

"Of course not, I know that." Vergil responded to Triste in hushed tones. "I'm not gonna let her accompany us up the cliff, after all. She'll have to wait until we get back." he quietly informed the spider gecko. He noticed Axel impatiently calling for them to get moving, and the white gecko nodded his head. "All right! We're coming along then! Let's reach this point!" he called over, jogging back to Tony's Rover. Marion would have to go with them, as there was no room in Marita's Rover.

Starting up the engine, Tony got the Rover rolling again, glad to be moving away from the gunmen as quickly as they could. It wasn't much further on. Only about 20 more minutes of fur-raising driving along the edge of the North Yungas Road, and they arrived at a hairpin turn. There was a slightly wider area here to safely park off to the side to allow for traffic to still move by them while they left the Rovers to go rock-scaling, and Tony graciously pulled over.

"All right! This is the spot!" the ferret declared, putting the Rover in park and killing the engines.

"Right... let's go!" Vergil exited the vehicle now and moved to the trunk to retrieve the climbing gear. "Sorry." he told Marion. "But this is where we're going to leave you for a bit. This is something we've come here to do, and it doesn't concern you." the gecko stated as he raised the trunk's lid up and began rummaging through the luggage. "We'll be back in a few hours, by my estimate. Just wait here... or flag down a passing motorist if you desperately need a ride; the choice is yours."

Taking out several piton guns, the gecko began passing them out to those gathered around him. "We have four of these, so we'll have to make several trips, but basically just point, fire them at a spot close to the top... they have a range of 200 feet, so we should be fine getting them up there. Then..." He pulled out several harnesses. "Put these on, attach them to the ropes, and begin the ascent. Make sure you get good handholds as you go... if you slip, the ropes should hold you, so there isn't TOO much worry of plummeting but... be careful all the same." he instructed them, then turned, took aim, and fired off the piton. The rope lanced out into the air and upward, the metal spike becoming embedded close to the top of the cliff with a satisfying *clink*.

"Right... here we go." Vergil murmured, beginning to strap on the vest and fit it snugly around his smaller form. It was like a youth wearing an over sized life vest. He was almost engulfed by it, but he did manage to get it on tightly. Attaching the carabiner to the rope, he gave it a tug a few times and then set off on his climb, jumping up and getting both handholds and footholds. Grunting, he bared his teeth and began hoisting himself up hand over hand, climbing higher to start his ascent a get a pace going.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 16, 2014, 01:55:27 am**

"Pleased to meet you. I'm Mariah Yin," Marion said, shaking Axel's hand.

Soren was strapping himself into the harness. His rifle and a few spare magazines were strapped across his back.

He took aim with the piton gun and launched the metal harpoon. When he heard the *clink* of the harpoon penetrating the rock, he gave the cable a gentle tug. "Here goes," he muttered clipping himself into the harness and slowly climbing up the rock face.

Marion watched as the group began climbing. She needed to make sure they were all out of sight before she went digging through their cars.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 16, 2014, 04:46:55 am**

Triste was helping Lily fasten her equipment. "Just do what... he says... and you'll be fine. There." She finished tightening the harness around Lily's body and stooped down to pick up her own piton gun. "And just keep looking up."

Axel had been watching, and strapped his own harness on to match how Triste had done it. "Oh really? We were going to spend the whole time looking *down*," he muttered, attaching the equipment to the rope.

Looking back at him, Triste fired the gun up the cliff and heard a clunk as the point hooked into the rock. "That looks good on you."

Beaming, the rat looked down at himself. "Really?"

"No." Triste quickly fastened her straps, and looked between him and Lily. "See you at the top." Giving one last suspicious glance at Marion, she turned and started the climb up.

Axel scowled and poked his equipment. "Would this look good on *anyone*?" Reaching up, he tested the rope's strength - it seemed to be holding well. "Alright... well, let's do this," he sighed, wrapping his mechanical fingers around two handholds and pulling himself up. "Shout if you need any help, honey," he called across to Lily, climbing higher. "20 credits says I reach the top first!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 16, 2014, 04:26:04 pm**

The climb wasn't particularly strenuous, but it was challenging, Vergil would give it that. He grunted as he pulled himself up, figuring the faster he got this done, the sooner he'd reach the top. The rocks were mostly well embedded into the cliff face, but there was a lot of vegetation to navigate as well. Spitting a plant out of his face, the gecko brushed it aside and continued on climbing, hauling himself up as he exerted himself to make this effort.

Suddenly, he found his fingers suctioning on somewhat well to the sides of the rocks. "Hey!" he exclaimed, noting the effect. "I didn't know I could do this!" But then again, it did make sense, as he was mostly a gecko. "Oh this'll make things easier!" he grinned, practically walking up the side of the cliff now, albeit on all fours. Putting his head down, he moved much more rapidly up the side of the mountain's face, not hesitating as he set his sights on the lip above him.

It wasn't too long before the nimble gecko reached the top, pulling himself up into dense jungle before him on a gradual upward slope. Unbuckling himself, he smiled as Axel proposed a 20 credit competition with Lily. Who knew which of the two would make it up first? He dropped his harness down to Tony, who took hold of it and began strapping himself in. "That was quick!" the ferret called upward.

"Yeah well... never knew my fingers could stick to surfaces like that!" Vergil shouted back down.

Pulling the harness over himself, Tony exhaled heavily, looking up at the wall before him. "OK... I can do this..." he said, and ran forward, jumping up and getting a hold on the rock ledges and closing his eyes for a moment to let it sink in that he was securely on and not plummeting back down to the road. "OK... ha! I did it!" he declared happily, grinning widely as he held himself on. But he noticed he still had a ways to go, so he stopped congratulating himself and pushed on, his muscles already starting to burn as he began scaling the mountain, reaching out for a plant that snapped off in his paw, causing his left side to flail outward a bit dangerously.

"OK! Don't grab the plants!" Tony reminded himself, talking to himself to keep him calm. Lashing out with his left arm, he caught hold of a rock, and pressed onward, not intending to quit; he could rest at the top after all.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 16, 2014, 08:21:16 pm**

Lily smiled. "You're on!" she retorted, mainly to keep him in a good mood. Fashioning her harness, she began climbing arm over arm.

In a few minutes she was huffing and puffing. She couldn't see where Axel was, but her completely unfit body was not taking this hike well.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 16, 2014, 08:51:15 pm**

(Congrats on 6000 LBT!)
Rose Marie and Marita began climbing up, each wore a harness and were making decent progress up the cliffside. Rose ripped out some vegetation so Marie, who was beneath her could get a firm hold. Marita huffed and puffed as she climbed up, her claws not really suited for grabbing holds for very long.. but she made do..they were about a third of the way up the cliff now..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 16, 2014, 10:32:33 pm**

Tony was about even with the trio, struggling to keep up his pace. "God! I'm so not in shape for this!" he bemoaned, noting how difficult it was to keep going. "Hey Vergil! I don't suppose you could like... levitate me up there, right?" Tony asked, grimacing as he battled to hold on.

"Sorry! Not really!" Vergil called back down. "I still need to carry your weight mentally the whole time... not something I can sustain for prolonged periods!"

"Dammit!" Tony cursed under his breath. That would've been way too easy. Looking over at Marita, he decided to try and make conversation to keep him distracted from the climb. "So Marita... you uh... you used to be a stripper, right? And I know you like... are with Marie and Rose... but like... do you like guys at all, or not really?" he asked, grunting again as he pulled himself up a bit further, moving onto a small outcropping of rocks which gave him a foothold. Of all the things to distract himself with... but the ferret supposed there were worse things to be distracted by whilst climbing a practically sheer cliff face. But still... why he was thinking of Marita in this moment was a bit strange, but he'd just roll with it... the words were out of his mouth after all, and there were no take-backs.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 16, 2014, 11:10:45 pm**

An Interesting set of questions Tony. To answer your first question, no I was never a stripper, that was Rose' Marita said as she kept climbing.' We both had drug addictions, but went about sustaining our habits in different ways. She sold her body, I sold my talents with computers. As for guys, well I've had relationships with guys before, in high school and college, but I've found my relationships with girls to be.. well more fulfilling, in an emotional sense. In the strictest sense, I'm bisexual, with preference towards women. So I don't hate guys, if that's what you are thinking. And Tony, if you're wondering about that kiss the girls and I gave Anne, fret not, it was just a friendly goodbye kiss, nothing more than that. We're not involved with her in anyway, other that the fact shes a roommate of ours and is a friend. " Marita continued as she kept climbing up. she was approaching the halfway point "So you can rest easy on that score, and I promise I wont kiss Anne like that again."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 16, 2014, 11:22:45 pm**

"Oh uh... well no, actually..." Tony responded, trying to keep pace with the girls. "The thing with Anne... I dunno if I have a chance with her or not. She didn't really seem... well I dunno. Maybe when I go back I could ask her again but... actually I was asking out of interest for you." Tony admitted now quickly, wondering just what he was saying. "Thought had just crossed my mind really... an innocent little flight of fancy, I guess." he stated nervously, sweating profusely from the heat, humidity, and exertion he was subjecting his body to.

He tried to laugh it off or act like it wasn't a big deal. He guessed the mind could do strange things when it wasn't sure how much longer it had to live. "So just thought I'd ask is all..." he stammered, wrestling with the rock face as he got higher. Vergil was clearer now, and getting closer in his vision.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 16, 2014, 11:46:21 pm**

"Are you interested in me Tony?" Marita's face soon had a smirk on it.. ' Well, if you're asking me out, Sure, I'll give you a shot. Pick out a place to eat and dinner time and I'll mark it on my calender. First things first though, we need to finish climbing.. looking down from heights isnt good for the appetite " She said as she kept climbing. Marita was slightly ahead of Tony now, which Marie and Rose a bit behind him. it was probably another 25-30 feet to the top now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 16, 2014, 11:57:07 pm**

"Oh! Well uh... sure!" Tony responded with some enthusiasm, or at least as much as he could muster climbing up a near vertical face of rocks. "I uh... how about after the waypoint, before our flight back?" he suggested, straining a bit as he suddenly felt his legs slip. "Whoa!" he exclaimed, fighting to hold on. Closing his eyes, he waited for the dizzying sensation of vertigo to pass, and stared back up the cliff with determination.

"Dammit... not getting stuck on this mountain!" he snarled, and began hoisting himself up paw over paw. "I hear La Paz is nice generally all year..." he said with trepidation evident in his voice. But he was only a few feet away now, and with a last cry, he pulled himself up and over the ledge, Vergil grabbing hold and tugging him up the last few feet. "Thanks!" Tony breathed, rolling over onto his back and gazing at the sky as he placed a worn paw on his belly, stomach rising and falling as he caught his breath.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 17, 2014, 12:04:02 am**

Soren was sweating profusely as he hauled himself up the cliff face. He wasn't totally out of shape but he wasn't used to this degree of vigorous exercise. Luckily, being a Human and thus of Simian heritage, he didn't find it as hard as he thought it would be.

"Hey Tony, you get a weird feeling about Mariah?" he said as he clung to a small handhold in the cliff face. "Like she's not who she says she is?" Being an augmentworker, he knew that the woman's augments were a bit overbuilt for simple jungle adventuring. Especially how he saw her effortlessly lift the folded flying frame with one arm.

Marion noticed that the group was out of sight. Double-checking to make sure no one else was around, she retrieved a lockpick from a compartment in her left arm. Heading over to the trunk of Tony's rover, she got to work picking the lock.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 17, 2014, 12:09:31 am**

Sure, thats fine. Never been to La Paz, or Sucre for that matter. ' Marita said as she finished her climb, just before Tony finished his. Rose and Marie climbed up a few minutes later, but were worn from the long climb and needed a couple minutes to recuperate.. ok' we've made it..' Marie said, wiping the sweat from her brow.. ' How far until the waypoint?' She asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 17, 2014, 12:18:32 am**

"Cool!" Tony responded to Marita breathlessly. "Me neither... uh... yeah! Totally!" he replied to Soren now. "I don't trust her at all! Way too convenient and she had some pretty sweet augments for a clueless tourist. I don't think... I left anything in the Rover that'd give us away though..."

"The really important thing is this." Vergil stated, pulling the locator out of his pouch now. "It shows us directly to the waypoint, which at this point is..." He fiddled with it, adjusting the resolution and studying the distance on the screen. "Half a mile in that direction!" He gestured with his hand, chopping it downward and straight out in the direction they needed to head. "But let's wait till we have everyone, shall we?" he suggested, looking down the cliff side to see if he could spot Axel and Lily and especially Triste, who was foremost in his mind right now.

"Well... I don't think I have anything in my luggage aside from clothes and guns... and she's welcome to either, though I might have something to say about that when I get back down... hoo!" he sighed as he rolled over and tried to push himself up to standing. "OK... time to... do this..." he said with reluctance, groaning as he got to his feet. "Ugggh! That was... a workout." he confessed, shaking his head here and brushing his paws off on his pants.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 17, 2014, 12:44:33 am**

Soren hauled himself up to a small ledge and took a seat to rest and recover. He nodded. "We need to get rid of her."

Marion popped open the Rover's trunk and dug through the cargo. "Clothes, hiking supplies...just a bunch of...hello!" She retrieved a 12-gauge automatic shotgun. She smiled. Maybe these guys were government operatives.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 17, 2014, 06:20:32 am**

Axel kept putting one hand above the other, reaching up to grip handholds in the rock and pull himself higher. He resolutely kept his eyes above chest level, the wind starting to buffet his hair into his face distractingly. The climb wasn't as hard as he'd thought it was going to be... but he'd still feel a lot better when there was actual ground beneath him, rather than the small, narrow ledges that he was precariously pushing his feet into. Axel raised his eyes and saw that the top of the cliff was getting close. Ahead a short distance, he could see Triste almost up and over. "We're almost there!" he called across to Lily, picking up speed. He felt a small sprinkling of dust and dirt shower his head, then a small pebble bonked him between the eyes and he yelped. "Hey! Watch it!"

"Sorry!" From above, Triste could see she'd arrived at the peak. Reaching up, she clasped the edge of the cliff and pulled herself over with both hands. Standing up and brushing herself

down, she leaned back over the edge, grasped the spike and yanked it out. Turning back to the rest of the group that had already arrived, Triste nodded. "That went well." Removing her gear, she made her way over and leaned next to the others as they recovered. "I suppose it'd be too naive to hope the rest of this goes just as easily."

From behind, Axel's faltering voice drifted up. "We're there! Afterburners engaged!" One hand came over, then the other, and the rat heaved himself into view. Shaking his hair out of his eyes, he looked up at the others and grinned. "We did it! I feel like I could conquer a mountain!" He looked back over the edge, and instantly looked unsettled again. "But not right now..." Flattening himself on his stomach, he reached down and stretched a hand out for Lily.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 17, 2014, 03:22:08 pm**

"Get rid of her, eh? Well then we can always dump her with the next motorist that wanders by, and she can be someone else's problem." Tony suggested, straightening up and looking back down the cliff. "Heh... she's going through our stuff... looks like you were right, Soren." Tony nodded. "Anyway, let's get Lily up here and press on. We got a waypoint to find."

"Right... here..." Vergil reached down, and began hauling up Lily's rope, straining a bit as he wasn't terribly physically strong, but he used his mental abilities to provide short lifts to her, making it easier for her to reach the top and reduce the strain on himself. Finally, Axel was able to get her the rest of the way up, and they were good to go. "Let's bring the ropes up with us, so we can't be followed all that easily... though I'm not sure of course what her capabilities are." Vergil stated, yanking the piton out of the cliff and beginning to pull his rope up.

Tony started doing the same with his as well. "Look, if she somehow still manages to follow us, we deal with her then, all right? No need worrying about it if it won't happen just yet."

"Right... well let's press on. We have a bit of a hike through the jungle, and then we'll be there. I imagine we'll start seeing some ruins before long." Vergil commented, slinging the rope over his shoulder. Taking point, he held the navigator out in front of him, starting to follow it as they entered the thick jungle on top of the mountain now. Insects buzzed around them, and the cry of birds could be heard in numerous trees. Vegetation crunched under his feet as he walked, and he noticed by now the sun was sinking as late afternoon wore on. It would be evening or perhaps even after dark by the time they arrived... hopefully that wouldn't complicate matters. "Lovely stroll through the jungle, eh?" Vergil asked, slapping a mosquito on his neck and killing it with a satisfying splat. He didn't have to worry about picking up any diseases down here: the Federation had provided vaccinations for all of them before departure.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 17, 2014, 05:14:59 pm**

Soren followed. A quick yank on the rope and the piton came free. He placed it back in the gun and tucked the launcher back into its holster. "All I can safely say is that we can assume that her strength and stamina are significantly above Baseline levels. Also, judging from what I saw of her arms, she might have tools in them."

He swore as a mosquito landed on him. He flicked it off before it did anything. Sighing, he sprayed himself with more insect repellant.

Marion sighed as dusk approached. All she found were some weapons and usual travelling gear.

"Mace. This is Marion," she said into her throat mike. "The group I'm with is quite heavily

armed but there is nothing that suggests they're government or corporate operatives. Right now, all I know is that they ascended a mountain that I'm currently at the foot of. What are my orders? Over."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **yeswonderful** on **June 17, 2014, 10:16:54 pm**

"Well, they're an exuberant bunch."

In the dense undergrowth several hundred yards from the top of the cliff, a dark form crouched. Sweat rolled down Kaien's back and insects buzzed about her face, but she remained still, watching and listening. She had heard the voices of the group filtering up from the bottom of the cliff, and then watched as each hauled themselves over the precipice. The woman continued to watch as they moved away from her, their conversation fading into the forest. One word, however, caught her attention as they left the cliffside.

Ruins.

So, that was their purpose.

"How interesting," she murmured to herself. Kaien unfolded herself from a crouch and made her way through the jungle behind them.

"Lovely evening for a jaunt, isn't it?" she called nonchalantly, a hand on one of the shoulder straps of her pack. Her jacket was open, and a pistol could be seen clearly at her hip, her augmented right hand resting upon the grip of the weapon. Over her left shoulder an energy blade handle protruded. Her expression was that of light amusement, her body posture seemingly relaxed despite being faced with the heavily-armed group in front of her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 17, 2014, 11:04:46 pm**

Soren scowled. He kept his hand near his piton gun. While it lacked the range of his rifle, the hardened metal harpoon it fired was just as deadly as a bullet. "I suppose it is a nice evening for a walk. So what brings you here?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 17, 2014, 11:15:15 pm**

"Yeah well... we'll deal with her when we get back down. I agree though... she seems more heavily augmented than normal." Vergil gave a nod here. A noise came from behind them now however, and a voice to match. Whirling around, Vergil went for his blade, but didn't draw it just yet, his hand only hovering near it as he gazed upon the newcomer.

Tony had to admit, Kaien had caught him by surprise, and he jumped a bit at the voice, spinning around as well with his paw shooting down to the pistol he'd brought along strapped to his side. "Jeez... a lovely jaunt you say?" he asked, noting the temperature was starting to drop as the sun set. They may be in the jungle, but they were still on top of a mountain, and night could bring rather chilly temperatures up here.

Another one Vergil thought to himself, eyes narrowed a bit here. "Ahem... and you are?" he asked. "What brings you to the top of such a remote peak?" he asked at just about the same time Soren did. Somehow, he thought he already knew her response though. He tapped a finger on his blade, ready to draw it if necessary, but noticed she was rather relaxed, and hostile action was not likely to follow given her posture.

Mace heard Marion's query, and sighed a bit here. "No... I suspect rummaging through their belongings wouldn't confirm their status as government agents. If they do work for the Federation, they'd be much too careful to leave IDs lying around after all. I take it you didn't worm your way into their good graces, then? I can't say I expected you would though, given your augments. Hmmm... have to earn their trust somehow... but before that... is it possible for you to ID their attackers? Did you pick up anything useful about them?" he asked here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 18, 2014, 12:06:11 am**

Lily staggered to her feet, panting heavily. "Thanks..." she groaned.

"Hey. Turn around."

While Marion was talking and searching, a motley gang of five had crept out of the woods and had an array of handheld rifles and shotguns aimed at her. Their leader, a heavily scarred female fox, pointed an unwavering pistol aimed perfectly between her eyes.

"We're claiming these vehicles and everything in them. You have one chance to turn and walk away, or lock yourself in a trunk and we'll ditch you somewhere. Do I make myself clear?"

Emilena had made it clear to her gang members; if the stranger did anything that they merited to void her one chance, they had the right to fire without waiting for approval. Flora in particular seemed yearning to take that opportunity.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 18, 2014, 06:13:24 am**

"Lovely?! That's what you call this?!" Axel stood slouching at the edge of the group, his face twisted in discontent. After only a few paces into the jungle, the oppressive humidity had started to work its way through his clothes, making him feel sluggish, and in an attempt to keep cool he'd taken off his shirt and tied it around his waist. Unfortunately, this had made him an even easier target for the bugs flitting around, and he'd spent most of the time cursing and slapping his body with disgust.

The rat fixed a glum expression on Kaien and shook his head. "Lovely... lovely isn't the word..." He felt a tickle, and out of the corner of his eye Axel saw a spider scuttle into view on his shoulder. His face twitched.

Triste folded her arms and stared back at the woman, her expression not changing at the cries and slaps coming from Axel behind her. Eyes narrowing as she focused on the pistol and energy blade, Triste nodded at Vergil's question. *She's not here for a 'jaunt' through the jungle...* "Have you been following us?"

"Yeah, bitch. Take a fucking hike," Rio reiterated, waving a small pistol towards Marion with one hand. The other was clasped around a blue ice lolly, which he was licking with satisfaction. Still pointing the gun, the boy turned to look up at Nairda and popped the ice lolly out of his mouth. "Can't we just lock her ass in the trunk anyway?" he asked. His tongue had taken on the same colour as the sugary treat.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 18, 2014, 08:42:36 am**

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a lovely hike is not what i would call this.' Marita said looking at the newcomer. " We have business of our own to attend to, so you are free to go on your way." Marita was not keen on adding another to the group.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 18, 2014, 02:09:29 pm**

Marion frowned. There was no way she'd be able to take on all of them and come out unscathed. She decided to cut her losses.

"Fine, you win." She picked up her compacted flying frame and walked away from the vehicles. Routing around a large tree, she looked up at the high mountain and sighed. A climb would be too slow but at the same time, if she flew, her cover was blown. Making sure there was no one around, she unpacked her flying frame and donned it.

The metallic wings unfolded and the engines spooled up with a quiet cough. The woman then began to slowly rise into the humid air.

Soren looked over the woman. He didn't recognize the Augment nor could he tell what class of augments she had. Regardless, despite the weapons she carried, she seemed to be harmless.

"We're a bit pressed for time," he said. "So pardon us for not wanting to chat. The sun was already below the horizon and only the faintest slivers of light could still be seen.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **yeswonderful** on **June 18, 2014, 09:02:13 pm**

Kaien did not attempt to suppress a chuckle at the reaction of the group. Ranging from surprise to discontent, they responded to her appearance on the trail behind them. She shrugged and tilted her head to the side thoughtfully.

"I heard you come over the cliff. Seems an odd place, this jungle, to go for a group foray." She motioned to their weapons. "Even more odd to be loaded down as you are. It's not often I see anyone here, much less those such as yourselves. So, as a wanderer, currently of these parts," her tone darkened, and her eyes narrowed in the slightest, "perhaps it's best that I inquire as to why *you* are here."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 18, 2014, 09:16:09 pm**

Vergil stepped forward now, softening a tad. "Well to be frank, it's not your business. It's something we have to take care of, and it doesn't concern outsiders we don't know, I'm sorry." he apologized here, not being confrontational, but making it clear she wouldn't be coming. "We'd prefer it if we parted ways here with you, no offense."

Tony noted her announcement about how heavily armed they were. "Take our word for it... we aren't up to no good... if we were, we wouldn't be talking right now but most likely engaged in combat so... yeah. Time constraint, as said." the ferret reiterated what Soren had stated.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 19, 2014, 04:45:17 am**

Triste kept her eyes fixed on Kaien, waiting to see how the woman would respond. Something about her set Triste on edge, and she had no qualms about displaying her suspicion openly and unapologetically. The corner of her mouth tightened - in the brief time they'd been speaking to

this newcomer, the jungle had darkened slightly. They were losing light. "We really *are* in a hurry, and we're on important business. So if you know what's good for you, you'll turn around and forget about us." Her eyes narrowed. "And you won't follow."

Rio watched Marion go with a disappointed frown. "Aw. I wanted to lock her up." Looking towards the vehicles, he saw they'd already been broken open and his expression brightened again. "I call dibs on any of the good shit!" he grinned, dropping his lolly in the dust and running over.

Reaching the closest car, he made his way over to the boot and reached in, grasping one of the travel bags kept inside and pulling it closer. Unzipping it eagerly, he started rifling through the contents. "Shit. Crap," he muttered as he went through, pulling out various items of clothing and dumping them unceremoniously around him. "More shit." His expression creased as he realised that all these clothes seemed to be straight out of an old gangster movie. Rio pulled out a fancy looking cap and turned back to the rest of the gang, waving it around. "Who the fuck *dresses* like this?!" Turning, he tossed it like a frisbee and watched it sail over the edge of the road. Grinning, Rio turned his attention back to the contents of the car and started rummaging through other bags.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **yeswonderful** on **June 19, 2014, 11:21:03 pm**

Kaien motioned them onward with a waving of her augmented hand.

"Go on then, off with you all. Enjoy the bugs."

With a fleeting smile and tipping an informal salute, she turned and retreated into the undergrowth, quickly disappearing in the gathering darkness.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 19, 2014, 11:29:39 pm**

Soren swatted a mosquito away. "Call me suspicious but I think she's up to something."

He shook his head as it became dark. "Anyone remember to bring the headlamps?"

Marion flew partway up the mountain but then perched on a rock outcropping as she retracted her wings. Her grappling claws were extended to anchor her in place.

Thanks to her helmet having an inbuilt night vision system, the darkness posed no hinderance to her.

Her left arm's panels slid back, revealing her built-in piton gun. She took aim at one of the rock outcroppings and fired.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 20, 2014, 01:25:06 am**

Vergil watched her go suspiciously, knowing there wasn't something right about this, and he didn't need to tap into her mind to read that. He was wary and on edge, knowing they were getting close to the ruins. "She might be close by, so don't drop your guard. We've had too many newcomers for this to be a coincidence." he commented.

Tony nodded, and the group pressed on into the jungle, the temperatures falling as darkness began overtaking the mountainside. Tony cursed his lack of foresight, but at least he had his fur to keep him warm. As for Vergil, he didn't seem to mind it so much, pressing on with determination in his orange eyes as they followed the navigator.

Before too long, upon a gradual slope, black forms rose up like teeth in the night. The moonlight bathed them in a soft glow, revealing them to be stone ruins that had mostly collapsed over the years thanks to the elements. A large, open area stretched out ahead of them, with some of the same paintings from before clearly visible on what remained of the walls. "Here we are!" Vergil declared, grinning as he made his way forward. He almost stumbled as blocks of stone came out of the Earth to meet his feet, the remnants of an ancient stairway leading up to the ruins clearly visible to him now.

It was strangely serene up here, but foreboding as well. The night air didn't stir as they advanced. The silent ruins were watching them, or at least that's how it seemed to the gecko. The remains of the walls were more like bared teeth or silent sentinels as opposed to a temple. The years had not been kind to this place, and it showed. It was like they were walking through a cemetery for giants, the massive stone slabs resembling tombstones 20 feet or more in height. It was unnerving to say the least.

"So this place looks cheery." Tony cracked, half expecting zombies to suddenly pop out of the ground. He kept his hand on his pistol, planning to go right for the headshots if that did occur. He'd played enough Left4Dead and Resident Evil to be ready for it, after all.

Vergil could clearly see the waypoint in the middle of the ruins. It's chrome-like surface glinted dully in the moonlight, the metal sphere sitting silently atop its podium. There was also a console that was badly rusted in front of it, and Vergil stopped upon reaching it. "Well... moment of truth... let's see if Rex is the only one capable of accessing this thing... in which case we're shit out of luck." Placing his finger on the activation screen, a sickly blue light suddenly burst in his face, causing him to blink. A garbled voice emanated from the console, slowly becoming coherent as the ancient device came to life.

"Greetings, travelers. Parameters prevent me from allowing you access to this place. Initiating neural scan now." Vergil silently prayed that either the machine was too broken to effectively perform this, or else he was one of the few who could gain access. A light-blue beam shot out and struck his forehead, but otherwise no other sensation was felt by the gecko. After a minute of this, the beam faded, and a green light appeared on the screen. "Neural pattern recognized. Welcome back, traveler." Vergil sighed gratefully, and relaxed visibly.

"Yes!" he whispered, but the sphere wasn't activating for some reason. Suddenly, a red light washed over the screen.

"Warning: Differences detected in neural patterns. Inconsistencies perceived. Conclusion: you are not the same traveler who programmed these parameters. Access denied."

"What?" Vergil asked, surprised. "Wait a minute! I've been here though! You said that! Isn't there some way to prove that?"

"I am only programmed to allow access to the one who programmed me. Processing... processing... unable to reconcile neural inconsistencies. Access denied." the console repeated.

"Dammit! Isn't there some way to show that I was one of the ones here before? Some way to prove it? Some way to unlock these parameters?" Vergil figured this machine was seriously malfunctioning, or worse, it did recognize him, but only accepted Rex as its programmer, which meant they were screwed anyway. "Some sort of other test? I can prove I was here before and that I can access the waypoint!" he demanded.

"Processing... processing... please wait... solution confirmed. You must face a trial by combat to prove you are a match with my data banks. Succeed, and you may progress. Fail and you will die." With that, the console blinked red over and over again, and suddenly, the ground began shaking.

"Oh shit! The hell?" Tony exclaimed, struggling to keep his balance as panels in the ground began to slide back, splitting the Earth and throwing up dirt as they moved away. Out of the ground, giant insects began to crawl. But not organic... they were metallic as proven by the glint they gave off in the low light. They weren't like the previous droids, however. These were agile looking, with four legs, long, thin bodies, and once again the arrowhead featured craniums. Long, prehensile tails whipped gracefully behind them, and they let out unearthly shrieks in the night that split the ears and caused Vergil to temporarily hold his hands over his ear holes to block out the banshee wails.

"Agh!" he gasped, noting two green lights blink to life on each of the creatures, creating ghostly sets of "eyes." There were nine in all this time, their tails cracking in the night and their legs digging into the ground as they got ready to charge. These roughly resembled cheetahs, or at least to Vergil they did. "Well... here we go again!" Vergil declared, igniting his energy blade, its red glow lighting up the night with an eerie ambiance. "I guess I have to prove I'm the warrior I was when I first visited this place with Rex and Kalis. I do remember we had to fight... but that's about it. All right... let's do it!" Vergil shouted, charging forward now towards one that sprang right towards him, its pointed front feet bared outwards. Suddenly, the feet sprouted multiple spikes, and Vergil just barely managed to dodge to the side in time. "Whoa!" he exclaimed, landing in the dirt a few feet away.

Tony pulled out his laser, figuring it'd be more useful here than his old-fashioned pistol. "Well Soren... you get your first taste of the killer droids... and I guess I do too!" Tony said now, gritting his teeth as he fired off a blast at the nearest one, only to watch in horror as the light beam refracted right off the surface. "Dammit! Must have weak points, like the other ones!" he shouted as the entire group was charged now by the machines...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 20, 2014, 03:02:45 am**

Figuring that a steel harpoon that was designed to dig into solid rock would be more effective against an armored war machine than copper jacketed lead bullets, Soren opted to use the piton gun. He grunted as he dropped to avoid one of the droid's lunging at him.

Swearing profusely, he took aim at one of the glowing green eyes and pulled the trigger. The gunshot echoed painfully in the dark chamber.

(OOC - I'm picturing the droids as lean anthro Cheetahs but they're hunched over.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 20, 2014, 03:55:21 am**

"Smart girl." Emilena sheathed her pistol. "Alright, ladies, its all ours. Tuck in."

Foley immediately popped the trunk and began checking the make and model of the car. "Steering column is locked, but I can get around it," he said to nobody in particular, as technicians have an annoying habit of doing.

Flora giggled as she grabbed the coat Rose had left in the backseat. "Ooh, doesn't this look splendid on me?" she curtsied sultrily at Rio. "Tell me I look *darling*..."

Nairda was busy stealing all the loose change from the glove compartments and drink holders. There wasn't much, this being a rented car, but he was certainly giving it his best shot.

Emilena glanced at the direction Marion had taken. "I think she's following the group. Well, that's our best chance of figuring where they're going. Nairda, with me. The rest of you, get these cars somewhere else and hold this position unless I radio you otherwise."

"Wait...we're staying behind?" asked Flora, lip quivering.

"No complaints here," shrugged Foley, who was already unscrewing the metal casing covering the wiring harness connector. Nairda seemed ready to volunteer Flora for his position, but knew better than to argue, and nervously exhaled and followed the leader.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 20, 2014, 07:20:55 am**

"Oh *come on*! What the hell is it with these places and killer robots?!" Axel yelled, grabbing Lily and tugging her over to the side, out of sight behind one of the small, jagged ruins. Bending down, he quickly patted his pockets, feeling for a weapon - but he had nothing on him. "Shit..."

Gritting his teeth, he peeked over the top of the stone and saw Tony trying to shoot them. "That doesn't work!" he called over. "You've gotta break the weak points! They're at... hold on..." Axel switched his vision and focused on one of the machines charging around. He instinctively looked on their back... but there wasn't anything there. "What..." Then he saw a bright glow lower down on the robot's body, on its underside between the two rear legs - protected by its hunched posture and spiked legs. Axel glanced quickly at the other eight and saw the same glow in identical locations. "Guys, the weak points - they're between their back legs! In the... ah, special place!" He looked down and Lily and grimaced. "What kind of *weirdos* built these things?" Raising his head, Axel's face blanched when he saw one of the machines turn and fix its set of green 'eyes' on him. Swiveling its body, it charged across the grounds towards their position. "Aw, crap..." Scrabbling to his feet, he ran out, waving his arms, trying to lead the machine away from Lily. It started to close with him, quicker than he'd anticipated. Swearing, Axel swerved and scrambled up a tall, moss-covered pillar that had toppled over, leaning at an angle against one of the crumbling walls.

Reaching the top, Axel looked back... and his stomach dropped when the machine arrived at the base and kept going, creeping lithely up the stone towards him. The rat tried backing up, but his hand closed on empty air. There was nowhere else to go... and the fall down to the floor didn't look inviting. Three quarters of the way up now, the machine hunched down, preparing to leap at him. Axel gritted his teeth - then gasped as a spike slammed into the side of its head, causing it to lurch to the side. A rope was attached to the end of the spike and as he watched the rope looped up and around its neck, again and again, pulling the robot down and holding it fast to the pillar.

As the robot struggled, Triste shimmered into sight on its back, holding her piton gun. Cutting the rope and slinging the gun over her shoulder she jumped back, landing on the pillar behind the machine, and stabbed her knife up between its legs. Sparks flew out from the energy source, and the robot slumped over, the green lights on its head dying out. Triste looked up and met Axel's eyes. "That's twice," she muttered, stepping off the pillar and sprinting away.

"And I'm... I'm grateful every time!" Axel called after her numbly. "Holy shit..." Taking a deep breath, he slid down and wrapped his hands around the spike embedded in the machine's head. Straining, he managed to tear it free and ran down the rest of the pillar to try and help the others, holding the spike as an impromptu spear.

Rio looked up from the mess of belongings around him, and smirked at Flora. "Makes you look like a fucking lesbian," he told her breasts, as he fished out an expensive looking pair of sunglasses and slipped them on.

When he heard Emilena's command, the boy looked up at her. "What? We just wait here?!" He grimaced and brushed his hair out of his eyes. "That sucks..." As the pair headed off, Rio sighed and rushed over to Nairda. "Be careful!" he said, hugging his waist.. and snaking thin fingers into the fox's pockets, fishing out all the change Nairda had found. Surreptitiously palming the loot, he broke the hug and grinned up at him. "Good luck!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 20, 2014, 09:27:17 am**

Great' More robots for us' To kill' Marita groaned as the machines rushed at them. these were smaller than the robots they fought at the first Waypoint, they were also faster. Marita moved around the ruins, ducking behind the stone pillars and making her way over the uneven ground. Rose tried shooting at the Machine pursuing her, but the shots simply pinged off the robots midsection. marie was throwing small rocks at her pursuer, and not having much luck.. Rose finally managed to get a shot on the inside of the machines legs and destroyed the energy source keeping it alive.. ' shoot.. well its privates!;' she called to the others. ' those things dont have privates! Marie retorted as she ran ' Well, where its privates would be if it were a living breathing thing!" Whoever designed these things sure had a sick sense of self preservation' Marita muttered as she looked for a way to attack the machine pursuing her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 20, 2014, 01:03:19 pm**

((Not anthro; they're kinda like this: this (http://img3.wikia.nocookie.net/__cb20130929030903/finalfantasy/images/a/aa/Klikk-enemy-ffx.png)))

Vergil lunged at his opponent, thrusting his blade forward to have it knocked aside by the sharp tail, which the gecko was discovering could be used just like a sword. He'd need to get force behind his swing to shear it off, he reckoned, but right now, he went for one of the legs. Ducking under the slashing tail, Vergil ran forward and cried out, hacking off the right foreleg of the machine and watching it totter before it righted itself.

The thing must've utilized nanotechnology however, for a new leg began sprouting from the stump of the old one, a process that was curious to watch as it seemed to simply grow out from the remnants. "These guys regenerate!" he shouted out to the others, finally hearing Axel shout out where the weak spot was. Perfect...

Dodging another lightning slash from the creature, Vergil leaped up, and landed upon its back. This was short-lived however, for an electric jolt suddenly passed through his body, hitting him like a brick, the force of which threw him off the back of the creature and deposited him unceremoniously on the ground. "Agh!" he cried out, his backside burrowing into the dirt. "Ugh... OK... these things don't like you touching them..." he murmured, getting back up as the droid advanced once more upon him.

Tony meanwhile was feeling a bit in over his head. He wasn't able to line up a shot on his opponent, and was fleeing across the ground, trying not to stumble and break his leg on any of the numerous stones poking out of the ground. He came up with the idea to get the creature to pass over one of the numerous piles of temple jutting out of the ground, hoping it'd rip its vital spot open. The first attempt was interesting, if unsuccessful. Tony vaulted over a block in his path, the droid followinghim right over it and demolishing the ancient stone as if it were nothing more than a toy, rocks flying everywhere in the process. One struck the ferret in the back, knocking him to the ground with a sharp exhale.

He'd just barely managed to avoid having the wind knocked out of him as he rolled over on to his back and attempted to struggle his way back to standing, something he failed at as the creature loomed over him, its spikes extending from its hands as it went for the killing blow. Tony flinched, and then took his shot, noting that as the creature reared up it exposed itself. Firing off multiple shots with a shout, he missed the first few times, growing more and more desperate, his heart pounding in his chest with fierce hammer blows before his fourth shot finally scored. The laser beam lanced into the creature's underside and it screamed out, toppling forward onto him.

Tony shut his eyes and shut down, crying out as the thing's head landed on top of him. "Ooof!" Opening his eyes, the ferret saw he was still alive, and began fighting to lift the thing off of

him. He was slowly succeeding, groaning with exertion as he managed to start to wiggle out from underneath.

Vergil meanwhile was still battling with his first opponent. He was attracting the attention of another one though, and knew he had to finish this first one off quickly. Spinning underneath the droid, he drove his sword upward, slicing into the thing's underbelly as he ran along the length of it, slashing through the weak point and clearing the creature by its tail as it shuddered and then collapsed onto the ground. Four down, five to go...

He barely had time to catch his breath however as the second droid attacked him, Vergil feeling the rush of wind on his back as the creature missed within centimeters of his skin. Vergil spun and sliced off the spikes, which quickly regenerated.

The piton that imbedded in the eye of one of the creatures from Soren's shot was quickly electrified, the charge shooting out down the wire and right towards Soren, even as the droid advanced on him, claws flexed for action, and a laser bolt shooting out of the only functioning eye it had left right towards him...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 20, 2014, 01:42:26 pm**

Soren screamed in agony as the electric shock forced his muscles to contract, locking the gun in his grasp. Luckily, the shock was also strong enough to throw him away from where the droid had aimed with its laser as well as rip the piton from its eye.

The Human groaned as he lay prone on the rocky ground. It was then he heard someone say that the robots' weak points were where the genitals on a living creaturw would be.

He reached for his piton gun and removed the wire spool, leaving just the ten round harpoon magazine. Normally the gun could not fire without both components but he decided to shove a piece of debris into the spool holder in an attempt to bypass the safety.

He lay down in the rocky debris field. Soon, he felt the ground shudder as one of the war machines crawled over him. By the light of the energy blade Vergil was using, he was able to see what looked like a battery pack between the droid's hind legs. He only had one shot at this, seeing as the machine's tail and legs were out of the way.

Muscles screaming in agony, he braced himself against the rocks, raised his piton and pulled the trigger, sending the metal harpoon flying *sans* cable to its target. Unfortunately, the recoil of the projectile forced out the rock Soren had lodged in the spool holder.

"Well, I guess I could try tripping them with the cable," he muttered as he slowly searched for the discarded cable spool.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 20, 2014, 03:25:05 pm**

Trying to move as quietly as possible, Axel sprinted through the ruins, trying to avoid coming into direct contact with one of the machines. The night air was filled with sounds of shouting, shooting and the bizarre, piercing screams that the robots emitted. He swallowed, and was about to start making his way back to check on Lily when he heard another robotic scream, this one much closer than the others, and a reverberating thump as something hit the floor. Picking up his pace, Axel vaulted over an old slab, rounded a section of wall... and almost fell flat on his face as he caught his foot on the machine Tony was trapped under.

"Jesus!" he gasped, steadying himself then quickly bending down to help Tony struggle free. "Never thought... I'd say this," he panted as he heaved the 'dead' machine up. "But... fuck robots..." Tony had just managed to crawl out when Axel was struck hard from behind. Flying forwards, he landed heavily on his stomach. Struggling around onto his back, the rat gaped as

he saw one of the machines looming over him. It swiped a spiked limb down, aiming to skewer him. Yelling, Axel raised the spike he'd retrieved before, stabbing the point into the limb and stopping it inches from slicing into him. Straining to keep the machine at bay, Axel shouted across to Tony. "Kill it! Fucking kill it!"

Across the other side of the ruins, Triste was ducking out of the way as a robot lunged at her. Rolling on the floor, a cloud of dust flying around her, she turned to face the machine as it started pacing. Triste was waiting for an opening, a way to get at its energy source, but the machine wasn't making it easy. Gritting her teeth, she activated her cloaking... but the machine's eyes tracked her, and as she tried to move in for the kill it swiped its tail at her, forcing the spider gecko back. *Okay... so that's not going to work...*

Deactivating the cloak, Triste looked around for something that could help... and her eyes settled on Soren as he searched for something. Swallowing, she darted across towards him, feeling the ground vibrate as the machine gave chase. She reached the human and, unceremoniously seizing the back of his shirt, Triste threw him over to the side. The pursuing machine swiveled its head towards the sprawled human, and started approaching him instead. It reared up, and just when it was about to strike him Triste darted in from the side, running beneath its body and skewering the power core. As the robot toppled to the side, Triste made her way over to Soren and offered him a hand up, frowning. "Had to be done."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 20, 2014, 04:47:24 pm**

Emilena gritted her teeth as she pulled herself hand-by-hand up the rope. "You better not be falling to your death back there!" she snapped over her shoulder at Nairda.

"Doing my best! Hehe..." Nairda shivered as the air got thinner and colder.

"Whatever you do, just don't look down!" Emilena advised.

"Gotcha!" he replied nervously. *Don't look down...* he thought to himself, *don't look down...*

And then they reached the top and to his delight he had managed to restrain himself from looking down.

"Now where'd that overgrown hang glider get off to?" Emilena muttered to herself.

Flora sniffed at Rio's suggestion. "Well, I never!" she scoffed, mimicking a British noblewoman's voice. "I am a refined gentlewoman, you scurrilous whelp!"

"Could you two be dumb somewhere else?" groaned Foley, still tinkering under the steering column with a long thin silver instrument. "I'm working here."

Flora walked further away from the Jeeps, and noticed a waterfall not too far away. "Oh, Rio..." she whispered coyly, so that Foley couldn't hear. "It was an awful long trip to get here. How about we take a little...shower? Hmm?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 20, 2014, 11:18:35 pm**

They were down to only three opponents now, but one was hotly engaged with Vergil, and the second was approaching Tony and Axel. "Thanks!" Tony grunted, crawling out as Axel lifted the deceased robot's head off of him. "Fuck robots? Heheh, Fucktherobots.com, right?" he asked, chuckling a bit at the joke they'd developed about the Purifiers half a year ago, which seemed like forever now.

"Oh shit!" the ferret exclaimed, eyes going wide as he saw another one aiming to attack them now. Axel managed to block the blow however, and the rat yelled at him to kill it. "Uh... right!" Tony replied, quickly springing back into action. The moonlight certainly lent an unearthly feel to this battle, with light sources dancing and being snuffed out, then reappearing and swirling about in the darkness.

Tony darted forward as Axel held the droid off, moving underneath rapidly as he raised his laser and fired just as the droid multitasked like a boss and whipped its tail underneath its body to strike at Tony. The laser burned into the sensitive area of the droid, causing it convulse and shudder but not before its tail struck Tony, tossing the ferret into a stone pillar and causing him to fall painfully to the ground with a brief cry and look of anguish on his face, his arms drawn in close to his body as he lay sprawled on the ground.

Vergil twisted and spun in his "dance" with the penultimate droid. His sword flashed here and there, looking almost like a glow stick at a rave as the gecko tried to get in and deal the finishing blow. He ducked low to avoid incoming spikes, hacking the hand off only to have it reform. He felt a sharp pain in his back this time as the claws didn't miss, and raked across his backside, drawing some blood. "OK you son of a bitch..." Vergil replied, skidding in the dirt with a look of intense concentration on his face. The droid was suddenly lifted off the ground, though it was clear Vergil was exerting himself greatly to do so. Sweat ran down his skin, and what muscles he had bulged as he telekinetically held the droid in place in the air.

Roaring out, he threw it backwards against part of the temple, the thing rattling and shattering a bit as its spine broke and it was nearly torn in half. Vergil struck like lightning, darting forward as the droid began repairing its midsection, and plunged his sword into the now very exposed weak point, watching the robot writhe and die in front of him like a mortally wounded animal. One to go...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 22, 2014, 10:02:59 pm**

Marion was at the top of the mountain. "What the..." She trailed off as she watched the fight between the robots and Vergil's crew through her compnoculars.

"Mace," she said into her throat mike. "Do you see this?" Thanks to the encrypted satellite uplink, Mace was seeing everything that Marion saw.

Soren accepted the hand. "Thanks," he said with a grunt as he pushed himself to his feet.

He looked at his piton gun. "So did I kill it?" His bosy twitched a"slightly as an aftereffect of the electric shock.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 23, 2014, 07:02:08 am**

Axel heard a cry from Tony, but with the robot shuddering and convulsing above him he couldn't see what had happened. "Tony! You alr- Argh!" The disabled machine's body collapsed down on Axel, winding him. Struggling, he stretched out a hand and hooked his fingers into the dirt, managing to drag himself out from beneath the metal shell.

Rolling over and stumbling to his feet, Axel darted his head around. He couldn't see the ferret anywhere. "Tony? Where'd you go?!" He suddenly saw a dark shape huddled on the floor, and his eyes widened. "Oh crap..." Rushing over to Tony's side, he crouched down and gently shook his shoulder, starting to help him up. "You okay? Come on, we need to get moving..." He knew trying to move Tony probably wasn't a great idea in case anything was broken... but they were exposed out here, and he had no idea how many more of those machines were roaming around - he didn't fancy their chances if another came across them.

Further across the grounds of the ruins, Triste helped Soren up. "Yeah, you got it." She noticed his twitches, and cocked an eye. "You feeling alright? Keep your guard up, I think most of them are down..." From behind, she heard a sudden rush of movement. Triste spun around to see the final machine rushing across the grounds, almost on them. Swearing, she shoved Soren out of the way and raised her knife to try and go for its weak spot... but too late. The robot slammed into her and she sailed backwards, flying up and over one of the ruined walls and landing none-too-gracefully on the other side. Grunting, holding her side as she rolled over and stood up, Triste caught a flash of white and glanced to the side to see Vergil standing over a 'dead' robot. "I can't say this is the vacation I hoped it'd be..." she muttered, wincing at the pain in her ribs.

She was about to say more, when the wall she'd been thrown over crashed inwards in a rain of dust and broken stone. The machine charged through, and darted towards them.

Rio shook his head at Flora's voice, annoyed at being interrupted from his game of 'Flick the pebbles at Foley'. "What? No. I already had a shower a few weeks ago." After a second he paused mid-flick and looked up, sensing the tone of Flora's voice. "Wait... are you..." He beamed. "Well, shit! Yeah! I want a shower!"

The next time Flora blinked, Rio had already shot past her, tearing off his grimy T-shirt as he practically flew towards the waterfall.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 23, 2014, 10:51:47 am**

Soren grunted as he was thrown aside. He swore as something dug into his side. He silently cheered as he realized it was the cable reel for his piton gun.

Loading the reel, and waiting for the harpoon to attach to the cable, he took aim at the creature's battery pack between its hind legs. Seeing as he had only one shot, he pulled the trigger. But mindful of what happened last time, he immediately cut the cable. This time, the steel harpoon went towards the target trailing a remnant of the cable.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 23, 2014, 11:55:44 am**

Mace could see the battle on-screen, and nodded to himself. "Yes... yes I can... it's not the first time I've seen these... creatures, either." he added. He knew full well what was below his building. His brother had told him, and he'd investigated it himself, but had decided after losing some personnel that it wasn't worth pursuing. It had led to his brother's defection and demise after all, and that was something that still rankled with him. He didn't elaborate just yet though, silently watching the battle unfold as Marion broadcast it back to him.

Vergil, though exhausted, noted that Triste was in trouble, and shook his head. "No... no!" he exclaimed, trying to stand up straighter so he could spring back into action. "Dammit... get out of there!" he called, but that didn't help, as the machine advanced relentlessly on her. Soren managed to fire off the piton at the droid, and though it found its mark and impacted on the soft spot, it had no visible effect. Vergil immediately realized it hadn't had the strength to penetrate the still considerable armor these things were sporting, most likely due to the greater distance this time.

"No!" Vergil gasped as it continued moving on Triste and Soren. "Dammit!" He ran towards its back, knowing he'd only have one chance or he'd be spent. He held out his hand, focusing on the spike, and trying with all his might to drive it up further into the belly of the beast.

Tony coughed a bit, regaining his breath, and was helped up painfully by Axel. "Oh!" he winced. "I... I dunno... I can stand... maybe..." But he instead wobbled, almost toppling if not for the fact Axel had him. "Ow! That... that really hurt..." Tony said, feeling as if his back had been struck multiple times with a sledgehammer.

He looked up in time to see the piton Soren had imbedded in the beast get telekinetically pushed upwards into the creature, as if by magic. Vergil was there, straining himself visibly as he managed to drive the spike upwards, causing the machine to start convulsing, its arms gyrating violently before it collapsed in a scrap heap on the ground in front of Triste and Soren. Panting, Vergil stumbled over towards them, making right for Triste. "Are you... are you all right?" he asked her, concern on his features before he sank down to his knees in front of her, gazing up into her face with hope.

"Ugh... I guess we did it!" Tony exclaimed painfully, having Axel move him over to a stone block so he could sit down. "That was... pretty tough. Hey uh... Rex didn't reprogram any more waypoints, did he?" Tony asked, with Vergil shaking his head.

"No... I don't think so." he replied breathlessly.

"I think I'm... I think I'm OK..." Tony informed Axel. "I think... I'll tell you in about ten minutes, how's that sound?" he asked.

"Neural pattern recognized in combat scenario. Deactivating security parameters. Have a nice day." the console spoke up now, its screen turning green and then going off as the waypoint activated. The chrome sphere lit up like a Christmas tree, millions of points of light shooting out of it to form a 3D projection of the Earth that began rotating, like before. Now only three red dots blinked into existence on the surface: one in the Atlantic between South America and Africa (though it was closer to Brazil than Africa), the second either in southern Egypt or the northern Sudan, and the final one in the southern China region.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 23, 2014, 08:47:49 pm**

Lily had found somewhere to hide. This wasn't exactly her forte. She glanced at Axel nervously. Why couldn't he demonstrate some amount of self-preservation?

Flora grinned and raced after him. At the edge of the water she stripped off her shirt, revealing her fluffy white chest.

"Why can't Emilena be more like you?" She giggled, keeping only her skirt on for the time being to toy with him. "We're going to have so much *fun*!"

She paced towards Rio, muscles arched, herding him into the water. Her bright blue eyes were inflamed with expectation, and her hands were quivering.

Emilena and Nairda stumbled back to the cars. "These mountains are impassable..." she groaned. "Did you crack them yet?"

"Yes, ma'am!" Foley sat up, wiping his brow on his shirt. "These vehicles are driveable and humming! You're welcome, by the way."

"Excellent, let's get moving." Emilena hopped into the driver seat of the first one. "Where's Flora? Driving is her only blasted job."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 23, 2014, 10:31:23 pm**

maerita, Rose and Marie slowly approached the others, their clothes stuck to them, from the exertions of avoiding the machines..' so whixh one do we tackle next?' Marita asked ' The one in the Atlantic looks closest.' She said ' Course getting a flight out there woill be tricky.,. we could get a boat and ride it out there although that might take awhile' She said.
- the first one had 6 machine, this one had 9, well if the patterm continues, we'll face 12 at the next stop, 15 at the 4th and 18 at the 5th and final one.." marie said.'I'm not loing forward to that..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 24, 2014, 01:08:46 pm**

Axel looked down at Tony and nodded. "Alright. Well... just take it easy, okay?" He tried to give a small smile. "If you need a band-aid, you know who to ask. First one's free." Scratching his ear, he turned and made his way over to Lily. "You okay, honey? I think they're all dead." Sitting next to to her, he sighed and rubbed her shoulder. "Hey, you know what I was saying before? About taking a vacation here?" Axel frowned. "I, ah.... I think I've changed my mind. I want to stay at home, where the only thing that could kill us is my cooking."

A short distance away, Triste leaned down and gently pulled Vergil up to his feet. "I'm alright... just disappointed I can't get my hands on whoever built these things." She tilted her head. "How about you? Your psionics are useful, but... I know how exhausting using them can be..." Triste said quietly, her face looking concerned as she saw how worn out Vergil appeared.

The voice coming from the console interrupted her before she could say anything else. She looked around to see the globe spring into existence and start rotating slowly. Her eyes flicking between the three remaining waypoints highlighted on the hologram, Triste shrugged. "I'll go with what the majority vote for. The waypoint in the Atlantic's as good as any."

"I, ah, vote for somewhere that *doesn't* have killer robots trying to blow our asses off," Axel called out.

"Hell yeah, we are!" Rio agreed vehemently with Flora. He reached the small water pool just by the waterfall and started hurriedly kicking off his trainers. "This is gonna be -" he started, hopping around on one leg as he pulled his shorts off. He glanced over one shoulder and froze mid-hop when he saw she'd taken her top off. "*Fucking awesome...*" Rio finished, staring with wide eyes. His foot skidded on the wet rock, and he tumbled backwards into the water pool with a splash, the cold hitting him like a brick wall.

With a splutter, his head cleared the top of the water and he shook his wet hair out of his eyes. "C... come on, hurry up! It's not cold!" Rio lied, trying to stop his teeth chattering as he reached down and pulled his shorts all the way off, then threw the wet clothing next to his discarded T-shirt.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 24, 2014, 02:49:59 pm**

Vergil sighed as Triste helped him up to his feet. "Yes... I... I just exerted myself too much, that's all. I can't remember the last time I had do something like that." he stated, shaking his head. "But how would you know...?" he trailed off here, flashing back to her battle with Rex on the bridge of his ship. "Wait... wait you... you have those abilities too... don't you?" he asked, remembering specifically her combat against Rex now. "I just... remember seeing it... but you never mentioned it before." he stated, being interrupted by Axel chiming in about where they should go next, as well as Marita.

Looking over to the globe, Vergil watched it spin pensively. "I don't care!" Tony piped up now. "I just... we gotta do this after all."

Vergil considered this a moment. "Yes... yes we do. If I recall... the ones who made these robots are long dead so... no chance of vengeance there, I'm afraid." he chuckled now. "Anyway... let's go to the Atlantic." Vergil concluded, nodding here. He approached the waypoint now, gazing at it as it spun around, but taking no action. He only stared, as if entranced by all the lights. Finally, he reached out, and touched the one over the Atlantic. Coordinates sprang up on the screen now, but oddly, it didn't look as if the waypoint was on an island... or any landmass for that matter. Pulling out his phone, Vergil snapped a picture, and the map, after completing one rotation, disintegrated and faded from view.

"That's strange..." the gecko commented here, looking down at his phone. "It didn't look to be on land..." Pushing the coordinates into a finder on his phone, the finder quickly sent back the relevant information. "Huh... you know it's funny but... I don't remember anything about this waypoint. It says the coordinates are the location of a deep sea mining platform run by Judaken Industries called Voltaic Station, but a floating resort has also sprung up around it, also run by Judaken. It's capable of submerging itself to give visitors 'a view of the ocean they won't forget.'" Vergil read from the wikipedia article. "Apparently, in 2009, Air France Flight 447 crashed in the vicinity, and the discovery of the wreckage during the investigation also unearthed an incredibly rare substance buried on the sea floor: koltonium. Koltonium is extremely rare but extremely useful in the production of high-powered lasers, so Judaken naturally filed a claim and now owns exclusive mining rights to the site. Well... if it's a resort, it at least gives us cover for being there, but I also read that Judaken takes security there very seriously, so we'll have to tread carefully." The gecko chewed his lower lip now, glancing up from his phone.

"Really? It's the site of the Air France crash? I remember watching a special about that. Scary shit... but still... the waypoint... is what? On the bottom of the ocean? How in the hell...?" the ferret trailed off here.

"I'm not sure... perhaps a straightforward approach would be best here. Talk to the Judaken executives directly when we get there to avoid tension. I don't remember anything about this waypoint... it's possible Rex accessed it without me." Vergil commented. "Is everyone ready to head back to the SUVs? At least we can simply ride the ropes down, this time." he commented on a lighter note.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 24, 2014, 05:24:19 pm**

"She was here a minute ago..." Muttered Foley, suddenly realizing he had been all alone in camp.

"Well, go find her then!" Snapped Emilena. "They could be back any minute!"

_____

As Flora's excitement grew, her skirt slowly stopped hiding the one last surprising part of her bizzare body.

Hungrily she tore her skirt off and combat-rolled into the water. Springing up and looming over Rio, she gave him an all-too-good look at her fully-functioning male genitalia.

"All right, little boy..." She panted with expectation, her every muscle quivering with lust, "*bend over!*"

"Yeah," I don't see much reason to hang around here," agreed Lily.

She had been particularly useless on this trip. She began to wonder whether it was worth the group even having her around.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 24, 2014, 08:22:30 pm**

"It's underwater?" Axel shook his head. "Well... that's something. At least this time, we're gonna have the choice of getting ripped to pieces *or* drowned if everything goes wrong." His tail flicked nervously. "Alright. I'm good to head back when you all are." Axel started to rise up when he noticed Lily's despondent expression. "Hey... are you okay? You know, I was only kidding about the 'getting ripped to pieces or drowned' thing. We'll probably get shot way before then." The rat started to grin, then realised it probably wasn't the best kind of comment to make. "Uh, I... I mean, you only live once, right?" He paused. "Actually, that's not really much better..."

As Axel comforted - or, at least *tried* to comfort - Lily, Triste glanced over at the couple, her eyes narrowing thoughtfully as she watched the human woman. After a second, she rubbed a hand over her still aching jaw, and turned her attention back to Vergil. "So, we'll be going in blind for this waypoint. Let's hope our luck'll hold out." All things considered, they *had* been extremely lucky - after all this combat, none of them had lost so much as a digit.

We've decided on our next destination - the Atlantic, near a deep sea mining rig called Voltaic Station.

Good. Anything else, Agent Acyle?

No. He still can't remember, and... I'm keeping it that way.

"You're right... about my psionics," she said out loud to Vergil, nodding. "I do have *some* ability, although it's not really anything to write home about." She shrugged. "And I never mentioned it because... well, I'd only ever use it as a last resort. Using them takes a... toll on my body. Besides," Triste said, pulling out her hooked knife so it glinted in the moonlight. "This works for me. And it's more personal... just how I like it."

As Flora rose up from the water, Rio's grin broadened as his eyes moved down, over her shoulders, her chest, and then lower, to her... His grin suddenly froze. "What." He stared at Flora's decidedly non-female body part for a moment, before finally his brain registered that yes - it was, in fact, a penis. Rio's expression transformed into one of horror. "What the fuck that's a fucking are you kidding me you've... *what?!*" he spluttered, his words a dumbstruck ramble.

Rio's stomach churned at her command, and he took a nauseated step back. "*No!* What the hell is this? You're packing heat?!" Stumbling, he floundered in the water for a second before managing to start splashing his way towards the side of the pool. "How is that even... even a thing?! *You* were meant to be the one bending over!" Rio wailed sorrowfully over his shoulder as he tried to scramble up the rock to dry land.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 24, 2014, 10:07:17 pm**

"Let's get going, then." Vergil stated, beginning to head off now towards the exit of these ruins and back towards the cliff. It was pretty damn cold up here, that was for sure. He wanted to get back into the car and off this mountain; back to a hotel in La Paz for a long night's sleep.

"Yeah... ugh..." Tony groaned, standing up now, and beginning to slowly follow.

"Hmmm, well... it certainly tires me out if I use it excessively, as you saw." the white gecko commented as he walked next to Triste. "But still... good to know you're one too. Varanus was one as well... Kalis must be collecting them or something." he mused aloud bitterly. "Makes sense though... Rex was one of the best out there." he stated. "At least of what I remember of him. Still... glad to know I'm not alone in this. I guess I just feel... a bit isolated sometimes." he confessed.

"You guys hear... shouting?" Tony asked, hearing distant voices off down on the Yungas Road. "Sounds familiar actually..." He clutched his side as he quickened his pace a bit here.

"Hmmm... not to me." Vergil responded, moving ahead a bit here towards the edge of the cliff. Stopping near the drop, he crouched at the edge and looked down. "We got some company it seems." he informed the others.

"What? Lemme see!" Tony moved over to the edge as well, looking over. "The fuck? Isn't that Emilena and... that brat that was in your house a few weeks ago?" Tony asked, motioning for Axel to join him. "The hell is she doing... messing around near our vehicles... and... why are all my clothes on the ground?" he demanded, angrily, eyes flashing a bit as he stood up here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 24, 2014, 11:33:04 pm**

Soren scrambled up through the entrance to the hole. "What's all theóHey! That's my stuff!" He exclaimed as he saw the group rooting through their vehicles.

Sure enough, Soren's spare ammunition and his various personal goods were strewn all over the rocky ground. What's worse was that his wallet appeared to be missing too.

Marion was perched above the group and listening in with her directional microphone. The conversation she recorded was transmitted straight to Mace.

"Mace, Marion here. It looks like the group's heading to Judaken's Voltaic Platform out in the Atlantic. I have transmitted the whole conversation to you. Marion out."

Unfortunately, just as she ended the transmission, the weathered rock face that her diamond tipped grappling claws had dug into finally gave way. Swearing profusely as her flying frame automatically deployed its wings and ignited its wngines, she quickly veered behind the rock face to avoid being seen or having the moon cast a shadow.

Soren scowled as he heard the distinct whine of a flying frame engine. "Do you hear that?" He looked skywards. All he saw were stars and the moon.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 25, 2014, 12:31:39 am**

'Lets just get down there and grab our things and get going' Marie said ' I dont know why they are here, but its obvious our little quest isnt exactly a secret. I wager we're being marked, if not by them, then by others. I just want to get back on the road ' She finished. " Havent seen Emilena in a long time ' Marita said. ' as I recall we were not exactly on good terms the last time I saw her. so its not as if we can count her as an ally." Marita began working her way down the cliff, going doing was easier than climbing up, the trick was not to descend too fast.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 25, 2014, 01:18:12 am**

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." Vergil said, shooting the piton into the cliff for anchorage as he clipped on the harness. Marita was sure jumping the gun here, but whatever. They'd need to crash this party at some point. Activating the descent, Vergil began to drop down the cliff face. In regards Soren's comment about the flying frame, he looked up as he dropped down, noticed Marion with his keen orange eyes, and pointed her out to Soren. "Might be her again!" he called up to the human. "Doesn't look like she's attacking yet so..." he trailed off as Tony got ready.

Tony did the same as Vergil, setting up the piton and strapping on his harness as well. "Forget her for now, let's deal with these clowns first!" Descending, he drew his laser and leveled it down at the group below them. "Hey! The hell you doing with our stuff?" he demanded angrily, snarling a bit as he dropped down at a controlled rate, not wanting to go too fast. "And the fuck are you doing here in the first place? You can just back away nice and slow, you got that?" And if you go over the edge, not my problem, he didn't add.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 25, 2014, 02:29:20 am**

Soren saw the faint outline of the frame. "Ehh, she's flying off."

He fired his piton, anchored himself to the rope and slid down. When he reached the ground, he had his rifle out and leveled at the group. "Drop whatever you've got and step away from our vehicles!" he ordered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 02:52:47 am**

"Not you too!" screeched Flora, eyes bulging. "First Emi, now you! *I can't take it any more!*"

She darted forward, snarling, cornering Rio so he couldn't escape the lake.

"Flora!" Foley, who had just arrived on the scene, quickly gauged the situation and darted forward. "Flora, you get the hell away from him!"

Flora ignored him until he drew his sidearm and fired it in the air. "Flora, I'm not fucking around!"

Flora growled threateningly, but Foley splashed into the lake and, defending himself with his sidearm, wrenched Rio away. "Go jerk off or something!" he snapped angrily at the seething folf.

Just then Emilena appeared behind him. "I have a better solution," she responded grimly. "Run."

"What's going on?" asked Foley, confused, as the others followed Emilena's lead and booked it.

"The group returned with inhuman speed," Emilena responded. "I literally don't think anything but light particles were capable of moving at that velocity. Regardless, our cover is blown."

Nairda waved his arms excitedly at the people pointing guns at him. "Oh, hello! Hello my friends!"

He started jumping excitedly. "Soren! How I've missed you! I haven't seen you in *ages*! Marie, my darling damsel! Shame you and Zula didn't work out!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 25, 2014, 03:34:33 am**

Soren's eye twitched; Nairda was no less annoying than he was at Lanthae. "Shut the fuck up, drop our stuff and get the fuck away from our cars!" The rifle was trained on Nairda's chest.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 03:39:26 am**

"Soren, Soren, Soren...don't be that way..." Nairda smiled and approached him. "You know...I never told you.....but I kinda...have a crush on you..." he squealed and blushed. "I never...had the courage to tell you. You're still single, right?"

Lily groaned. "The, uh, others are getting away," she pointed out. Maybe if they were captured she'd have an opportunity to debrief with them. She hoped Nairda (and Axel, for that matter) was smart enough not to reveal her association with them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 25, 2014, 09:17:28 am**

Axel blinked at Nairda, then watched with a frown as Emilena and the rest of her gang tried to make their escape. "What..." He glanced at Lily out of the corner of his eye. *I know they're working with her, but... did they need to go through our cars?*

Stepping to the front of the group, Triste shifted her position. "We can still catch them... Did they take anything important?" she said, looking around at the others, not asking how they knew these individuals for the moment.

Axel paled and ran over to the car he'd been riding in. He quickly rifled through the compartment he'd stored his wallet in. Of course, it was gone. "Oh godammit, Rio! Not again!" he called after the boy as he sprinted away with the others.

As he ran, awkwardly pulling on his clothes while moving, the weight of all the wallets he'd snatched making it even more difficult, Rio shuddered. "What the hell Foley?! You could've told me I was going to a fucking sausage party!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 25, 2014, 11:39:37 am**

Tony quickened his pace down the mountain, trying his best to rappel and not hit anything. The terrain wasn't always even, but it wasn't a gradual slope either, and mostly just straight down.

Vergil seemed to be doing it much easier, but he was a nimble little bugger, Tony would give him that. Vergil reached the ground before the ferret, and unclipped himself quickly. "Hmmm... Rio... is that the... 'brat'"? the gecko asked, referring to Tony's term for the kid.

"Yeah! That's him!" Tony said as he hit the ground a bit harder than he wanted to. He was in no position to chase after the fleeing group, so he lined up a shot on Emilena, who was already a good ways down the road. He dialed back the power level on the laser, leaving it just enough to stun her if it hit her, but not kill her; it was rather a low setting. Firing off, he unclipped himself and headed for the Rover, stopping to look down at all his stuff scattered about. "What the hell?" he exclaimed with exasperation. "What the fuck were they looking for?"

"One way to find out!" Vergil responded. "They're fleeing on foot... and we have cars. May as

launch an effective pursuit!" He threw his hand out, and effortlessly tripped Rio with a single thought, causing the kid to go sprawling out face first. "Axel, you want to do the honors of retrieving your wallet?" he asked the rat, turning to him.

"Well I can't just..." Tony was bending down now, starting to collect his stuff.

"Forget it! Get to the other Rover! The one that hasn't been searched!" Vergil insisted, looking behind him.

"Right!" Tony dropped a pair of his pants, and started to make his way over to the Rover Marita had been driving before.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 05:05:19 pm**

Emilena skipped through a fern, accidentally bushwacking Flora in the process. "Head for the trees," she commanded. "It'll be tougher for their vehicles to navigate there!"

Foley sighed at Rio's statement. "You really need to stay away from her," he cautioned, "she's absolutely insane. Psychotic."

As if to drive the point home, Flora was pleasuring herself as she ran, tongue lolling happily. Then, in a sudden whirlwind of leaves, a noose tightened around her ankle and dragged her into the boughs of a tree, dangling from one leg.

"What the...?" Emilena gasped, before ducking away from automatic fire. As she hit the dirt, she got a glimpse of heavily armed men hiding in the bushes, reloading for another salvo. "Oh goddammit. We stumbled across *poachers*..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 25, 2014, 06:03:17 pm**

Axel winced as he saw Rio go sprawling, just as he reached the treeline. He glanced back at Vergil. "You bet. This is the second goddamn time he's taken it!" Shaking his head, he ran towards Marita's Rover and slid into the passenger seat. Just as the car door slammed, the rattle of automatic gunfire drifted towards them, from the direction Emilena and her group had run in. Axel froze and looked around at the others.

Tilting her head at the sound, Triste sighed and jogged up to the car. "I'll back you up," she muttered, sliding her knife out.

Skidding face-first along the dirt, Rio rolled over and looked down at his knee, where the rough ground had scraped the skin. "*Son of a bitch* -" he started to yell. Then two things happened almost simultaneously. Flora flew up into the air with a crashing of leaves, and gunfire exploded from nearby, kicking up clouds of dust from the floor all around him.

Swearing, he scuttled crab-like along the ground until he bumped into Foley, who was taking cover behind a thick tree trunk. "What the fuck?!" Rio yelped, pressing himself into Foley's bulk as the bullets started to tear apart their cover.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 25, 2014, 06:44:43 pm**

Gunfire erupted as Soren grabbed his ammunition and threw them into a suitcase. "Not this shit again!"

He looked around. He didn't see anything. Nevertheless, he took his positikn in the backseat and clicked off the safety of his rifle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 25, 2014, 06:45:07 pm**

Tony winced as he heard the sound of gunfire. But the road really had no trees except shrubbery growing on the side of the cliff, and he could see that this was a terrible place to run into... well who were they? Freedom fighters? Why anyone would lie in wait on a road only about seven feet wide with a sheer cliff on one side and a sheer drop on the other was beyond him. It made zero sense, but he supposed it was in line with what they were encountering so far. Was this Varanus returning? He couldn't tell at the moment.

"What?" Vergil asked, noting the newcomers. They were coming around the bend in the road that the party had parked behind, though they'd apparently set traps along the cliff as well. He flipped backwards, towards the Rover.

"Well shit! What do you want me to do?" Tony asked now as Triste stood by his window. "I can't exactly turn around on this road!" the ferret pointed out.

"Just back up! Run 'em over! We'll sort 'em out later! But watch the kid!" Vergil cautioned.

"Run 'em over?" Tony asked, gulping, but Vergil was right. His vehicle could be used as a deadly weapon against people on foot on this road. They had seven feet maximum on either side of them. They'd either have to climb the mountain or drop to their deaths down the cliff. With such choices, it made vehicles all powerful on this road. Turning the Rover on, he threw it into reverse and began backing up, creating a wall that would force everyone behind him to start running down the road or else jump to their deaths. Looking behind him, the ferret began "plowing" the road, backing up towards where Flora hung from the tree.

He hit the brakes before he ran over Rio however, and nodded at Axel to open his door and pull him inside. "Grab him!" Tony ordered.

Vergil was following after the Rover, but saw there wasn't much he could do. He couldn't really walk around the Rover while it was moving without getting crushed against the mountain, since Tony was playing it safe and sticking to the wall (nor would he want to walk into the fire of the gunmen either). "Why don't we let these assholes kill Emilena and her group?" Tony shouted out to Vergil as he popped his head out the window and began returning fire to cover Axel.

"Up to you! I barely know her, after all!" Vergil pointed out, considering briefly leaping over the Rover to cut Flora down... but he'd wait for this firefight to die a bit first before taking part. Why lend Emilena any assistance after all? She was now sandwiched between the Rover and the gunmen. It was an ideal situation for his group at this point. There was literally nowhere she could go. To her left was the sheer sides of the mountain they had just climbed down, to her right was the cliff that dropped hundreds of feet to the jungle below, ahead of her were the gunmen, and behind her was the Rover, completely blocking the road.

"I suggest you come towards us... without your weapons!" Vergil called over the Rover to her. "You've got nowhere to go, and we're you're only way out!" he pointed out the obvious. "Or you take your chances with whoever's shooting at you!" As he spoke, Tony managed to score a hit on one of the gun toting poachers and watched as he fell off the road and down towards the jungle.

"Score!" he shouted, grinning here as he kept it up.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 06:51:43 pm**

Emilena sent a combat knife twirling towards the rope binding Flora, who fell to the ground with a crash.

"What are...?" asked Flora, dazed.

"You sprung a poacher's trap," Emilena said crossly, "And now we're trapped."

Foley took one look at his options and decided, "Screw that!" He made a run for Vergil's group.

Emilena dragged Flora behind a tree. "Where the hell are your clothes anyway?" She opened fire with her pistol. Flora didn't respond, busy watching Emilena's beast heave with barely-hidden excitement.

The poachers, realizing that they weren't fighting for a successfully captured victim, began retreating.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 25, 2014, 07:45:30 pm**

Axel reached out and dragged Rio inside the car as Tony covered him. "Got you, you little douchebag! Where the hell's my wallet this time?!" he demanded as he dumped the kid in the back next to Triste.

Rio blinked as he saw who it was, then swore loudly. "Aw, fucking hell. Alright, here - take it back," he muttered, fishing it from his pocket and holding it out. "I left your credit cards in the other car though! I'm not a total dick!"

Outside, the gunfire had started to die down as the poachers retreated. Snatching the wallet from Rio's fingers, Axel saw an overweight human dashing towards the car, and from his appearance, guessed he must be the 'Foley' that Lily had told him about. He was about to yell for the human to hurry up when he heard Triste speak up behind him.

"Why *don't* we just kill them? They know you... they could be a threat."

Axel turned, and saw Triste pressing the edge of her knife painfully against Rio's throat. His eyes widened - without Emilena and her team, the chances of finding Ejlert were slim to none. "What the hell are you doing?! No! We can't kill them!"

Triste squinted at him, not lowering the blade, the hooked edge curving neatly around the boy's throat.

"*This is the worst day ever!*" Rio wailed.

Axel swallowed. "Look... Emilena helped me and Lily before... back in Lanthae. We *can't* just kill her. Or her team. We owe her that much."

After a moment Triste sighed and lowered the knife, and Rio scrambled to get away from her. "Fine. But if we're bringing them back, let's get on with it."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 25, 2014, 08:24:20 pm**

Marita Rose and Marie had joined the others after climbing diown the mountain. seeing Tony had grabbed her rover, Marita went for the other Rover, the one that had been searched. ' Better Buckle up girls' This is going to be a hairy ride' Marita said as she strapped into the Drivers seats and started the engine. the lights of the rover turned on and Marita crouched, hoping they weren't hit by any stray gunfire. Marie and rose had done the bare minimum of cleanup, basically all they had done was pull clothes off off the road and thrown them onto the

floor behind the front seats before climbing in and getting buckled. " so whats the next move?' Marie asked as they looked forward at the shrubbery where the remaining members of Emilena's group were located. ' so what do we do with them?' Rose asked " bring them back with us into town , I guess' Marita said ' thats what I would do, but I dont think I get to make that call.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 25, 2014, 09:09:22 pm**

Soren was more or less blindly firing in the direction of the poachers' gunfire. He ducked down and changed magazines.

As the poachers retreated, he watched as Foley and Rio climbed aboard. The Human watched as Emilena retreated. As much as he wanted to put a few rounds into her, he decided to follow Axel's wish and let them escape.

"All right, now what?" he asked as he let his rifle dangle from its sling.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 25, 2014, 09:14:39 pm**

"What the hell?" Tony asked, noticing that Marita was backing up the first Rover to join them. He was afraid she'd block him in, and having two Rovers was completely redundant to plug the road, so he did the only thing he could. He blared his horn at her, and waved at her to move the Rover up so she wasn't blocking him in in case he needed to accelerate. He wasn't going to go back any further, after all. "Move up a bit!" he called.

Vergil allowed Foley to pass by him, noticing the poachers were retreating. "Oh sure! The hell we CAN'T KILL HER!" Tony snapped at Axel. "She helped us in Lanthae and then loots our stuff? Screw her, I say! She's probably working with Kalis! And I swear to god kid..." Tony swiveled to look at Rio now. "If I find my hat isn't in my luggage, you're gonna be eating your own brand of sausage tonight, get my drift?" he snarled.

"Just hold on, Tony." Vergil said, attempting to calm him. "Now let's think about this. She wasn't with Varanus's crew."

"Still, she's NOT coming with us." Tony shot back. "We seat 10 here, so unless any of you want to volunteer giving up your seats and hitchhiking back to La Paz, we don't have room for them since last I counted, we're at nine right now." the ferret pointed out to Triste.

"Right... anyway..." Vergil stepped from behind the Rover now. "Care to explain what you were doing going through our things?" the gecko asked as he approached Emilena.

"Who cares? Let's just search 'em and ditch 'em!" Tony muttered, gritting his teeth as he gripped the steering wheel. He wanted to be back in La Paz on a bed relaxing... not... dealing with Emilena.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 09:22:11 pm**

Emilena stashed her pistol and stepped out, hands raised. Flora did the same, giving everyone an uncomfortably good view.

"We were hired by a government agent named Marion," Emilena said slowly. "She was the woman in the flying frame. I don't know what her agenda is, it was a simple escort mission. But I heard her mention someone named 'Mace' over the radio."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 25, 2014, 09:37:33 pm**

Vergil narrowed his eyes. "Well then you're an idiot for thinking she was a government agent, or a liar. Mace is CEO of Zaloga Industries. I see he's keeping tabs on us. Well it's not worth the money he's paying you." he told her bluntly. "We'll let you go this once, but we catch you tailing us again, we'll ensure you can't follow, do I make myself clear?" the gecko asked, giving her a steely glare. "Also, hell of a way to repay your former comrades, wouldn't you say?"

"She's scum!" Tony cut in. "Soren, don't you have a grudge to settle with her? Now's your chance! Skin her alive! Hold her over the edge of the cliff! Drop her sorry ass! And remember... a dead woman has few secrets! A flayed woman has none!" Tony goaded the human on in the back seat.

Veril's eyes widened a bit, but he said nothing at the moment.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 25, 2014, 10:01:08 pm**

Marita heard Tonys horn and moved forward by about 10-15 feet, enough so tony could squeeze past her. ' Marita stopped the Rover and waited for the 'meeting' to conclude so the group could get back to La Paz. she had a date scheduled with Tony, which truth be told, she was looking forward to.but for now, she could do little but wait.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 25, 2014, 10:23:18 pm**

Soren recalled what Emilena did to him in Lanthae. How she attacked him for simply calling the cops. How she did jack shit when the Purifiers burnt his house down and nearly killed him.

He smiled as he stepped out of the vehicle with his rifle at the ready and approached Emilena. "Strip and throw all your possessions in a pile."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 25, 2014, 10:58:38 pm**

Emilena removed all her clothes, looking blankly at him. "I'm sorry, have we met before? You seem really mad at me."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 26, 2014, 05:28:42 am**

"Tony, shut the fuck up," Axel glared at the ferret, then stuck his head out of the window. "Soren... we can leave her behind," he called out as the human forced Emilena to strip down, "But you *can't. Kill. Her*."

Triste slid the knife back into the sheath. "If you want to kill her, Mr. Almaya, I don't see why not." She shrugged, ignoring the look Axel threw back at her, and rested her chin in her hands as she waited for whatever Soren was planning to play out.

Rubbing his throat, Rio sneered towards Tony. "That was your hat? It made a better frisbee, believe me."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 26, 2014, 12:03:40 pm**

"The hell we can't!" Tony shot back, ignoring Axel. "She's NOT a reliable ally! I don't know why Axel insists she is!" He glared right back at the rat. "But he apparently forgets she was willing to lead Lily into a trap! I don't care if she helped us in the end... the only thing that proved is that she's not reliable to start off with. She's working with Zaloga! You really want THEM following us around from now on! Make an example of her!" he shouted to Soren.

This could've continued, but then Rio opened his mouth, and that was it. Tony opened his door, and went around to the back door. "Move it, Triste!" he ordered, reaching over her and roughly grabbing the boy. "A frisbee, huh? Let's see how good of a frisbee you make!" Pulling Rio out and purposely holding him low so he'd be dragged over the ground, Tony walked to the edge of the Death Road.

Vergil would've intervened, but he sensed no intent to kill the boy just yet within Tony, so he held up his hand towards Axel in case the rat got any ideas and lightly shook his head. He was standing near Axel's door, so was in good position to catch his attention.

Holding him out over the edge of the Yungas Road now, Tony snarled, then dropped Rio without warning, but quickly caught him, though by now, Rio was about level with Tony's knees. "You now owe the Straccis, kid. And if you've never heard of them, you'll know who they are soon enough. You won't be able to take a piss without one looking over your shoulder, making sure you're working hard to repay me, got it? If I don't hear a 'yes sir' out of your mouth RIGHT NOW, I'm gonna send you on a way one trip to look for that hat of mine, got it?" he asked, shaking the kid a bit here.

Vergil could sense Tony's irrationality building now, and prepared to catch the kid should Tony make good on his threat... and hope he didn't miss.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 26, 2014, 02:10:00 pm**

Rio's teeth rattled as Tony shook him. He could feel the wind whipping at his hair, tearing at his clothes. Holding onto the ferret's wrists, he looked down, and saw the huge fall stretching beneath his dangling feet. Then his eyes focused on a thick branch just a short distance down the cliff, almost exactly beneath him, poking out over the drop. It looked sturdy enough to take the weight of an adult.

Looking back up at Tony, Rio narrowed his eyes. "The Straccis? Why the fuck would I give a shit about them?" Tightening his grip on the ferret's wrists, he grinned. "And seriously? You're threatening me with *heights*? Bad move, fucker." Hooking his trainers on a small rocky outcropping beneath him, Rio pulled down with his legs, sending him and Tony tumbling over the edge. As they fell, he angled Tony so he'd slam painfully into the overhanging tree branch. Letting himself fall slightly below, he shot out his hands and hooked his fingers into the cliff, sticking himself to the side.

Still grinning smugly, he climbed spider-like up and past Tony. Near the top of the cliff he turned, and dangling one-handed, flipped the bird at Tony. "Now, you owe *me*, cocksucker. Hope *you're* not afraid of heights!" Reaching up, he flipped himself nimbly over the side and back up onto the road.

Axel had been gaping ever since he saw the two of them vanish over the edge. When Rio lifted himself back into view soon after, Axel leaned out the window. "Rio?! Oh my... what the fuck did you do?!" he gasped.

"Relax... he's hanging in there," Rio said, stepping away. He looked around. "Someone might want to help him before he goes on the fall of his life," he smirked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 26, 2014, 02:43:29 pm**

There was nothing Tony could do. One moment, he was standing up, the next, Rio played it suicidally, and sent the two of them toppling over the edge. Despite it looking as if the branch would be large enough to support an adult, the branches here weren't particularly strong, growing on the side of the cliff as they were. They held the mountain together, but their roots were stronger than their branches. Tony could only cry out in pain as the branch struck his side, and then... began to snap. It seemed as if Rio had miscalculated rather badly...

The ferret's arms flailed out, but they couldn't grab hold of anything but the branch as before Rio's eyes, it broke, and with an incomprehensible shriek, the ferret plummeted into the jungle below.

Vergil didn't have time to react. His eyes widened as he charged forward, sliding over the roof of the Rover but it was too late. He couldn't see Tony... and with no visual, it was impossible to catch him. "NO!" Vergil cried, shoving Rio out of the way as he bent down on his knees, but could see nothing but jungle... green as far as the eye could see, and no ferret.

"No!" Vergil slammed his fist into the ground, tears starting to stream down his cheeks as he searched desperately for Tony's life force. But there was so much down there... it was confusing him with his anger and anguish. He couldn't get a lock on anything solid... plenty of animals... but where was Tony? It was too dark to see anything... far too dark, even with his vision.

Getting shakily to his feet, his mind clouded over. He drew his blade and ignited it, then walked over to Emilena. Without warning, he brutally sliced into her hamstring, bringing her down on her knees. He then gripped her chin with one hand, and looked straight into her eyes. "If I ever see your face again... I'll cut it off and feed it to the catfish, you got that?" he asked, then beaned her with his own head. "She's all yours." he said to Soren.

Deactivating his blade, he gazed darkly at Axel. "Well... you insisted on saving the brat before... now Don Stracci will flay him alive... speaking of flaying. We're leaving him to his fate. We're not sheltering him, end of discussion. I don't need Kalis AND the mob down on me for this. You can be the one to make the call and explain why his son is dead. Let's get out of here..." Vergil stated, heading for the Rover now. "You better find a place to hide kid, and fast... but it won't do you any good, now that I think about it. His father will find you no matter where you go. You can stick with miss hamstring over there, except I don't think she's done much for you to start off with."

He slid into the seat where Tony had been only moments before, tears welling up in his eyes. "Marita! Start driving! We'll proceed down the road and get to Coroico, then turn around and pick up the highway to La Paz!" he ordered, gripping the steering wheel tightly, his hands shaking violently as he struggled to control his emotions. Flashes of red... the desire to kill Rio on the spot were murderingly strong. Something was in him... a part of him he didn't know existed... it was fighting for control, urging him to kill everyone and face Kalis himself. He could do it... he was strong enough... he could kill Kalis...

But he knew leaving them out here with no transportation and with Emilena having a sliced hamstring meant they were as good as dead anyway. If the mining conglomerates didn't get them, the rebels would. Throwing the Rover into gear, he gave one final look at Rio, being within inches of mentally crushing his skull. Perhaps the kid would feel a headache, or perhaps not, it was hard to say. Vergil didn't care. It was time to get out of this hellhole.

Down the road, Varanus watched the whole thing. He could see perfectly in the dark thanks to his eyes, and smiled wickedly to himself. He could sense Vergil's anguish and frustration... but something else as well. Something he hadn't felt in a long time. He could see what Vergil couldn't, and it was delicious. Positively delicious. It also made Vergil vulnerable, and could perhaps be something they could exploit later on.

"Kalis..." He opened up a direct channel to his lord now via an implanted comms link in his throat, speaking softly. "You need to hear this... you'll never guess what I just saw..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 26, 2014, 03:16:11 pm**

"Aaaauuugh!" screamed Emilena, falling to her knees as often happens to those who have had their hamstring cut. "Jesus, what did I do to you? What's with people I don't know being violently mad at me?!?!?"

Lily ran over and grabbed Rio. "Oh, Rio...what have you done? Are you okay?" she asked nervously, eyes misting over. She tried to sense Tony, but her powers weren't nearly powerful enough. She could only feel people within tactile range.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 26, 2014, 03:20:00 pm**

"Because you brought him here in the first place!" Vergil called back to Emilena. "And you meddled in our affairs! I don't need to hear surprise from you!" He then turned his attention to Lily as she got out of the Rover.

"I already told you... we're not taking him with us! You want to stay with him and face the don's wrath, fine! But this is where you get off!" he shouted over to her sternly. "Who cares if he's OK? He just KILLED our friend! Isn't Tony a little more important here? Are you coming or staying?" he asked, drumming his fingers impatiently on the steering wheel. "That brat doesn't set one foot in either Rover though... final warning."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 26, 2014, 03:58:51 pm**

Soren's heart raced. Anger, fear and pretty much every emotion possible ran through him. In just a span of minutes, he had seen Rio kill Tony and Vergil cripple Emilena.

It was then he realized something terrible. Rio was going to get them all fucked. First he had pissed off the *Bak Long* Triads by stealing creds from one of their low level black marketeers. And now he had killed Tony Stracci. He did *not* want two powerful organized crime syndicates after him. And there was of course, the fact that he considered Tony and Axel to be good friends of his.

His arm twitched as he slung his rifle across his back. He headed for one of the rovers but instead of getting into the backseat, he grabbed the metal jack handle from the trunk.

Without warning, he swung the metal pipe at Rio's head. "You cocksucking brat! We helped save your ass from the *Bak Long* Triads! And this is how you repay us!?" he shouted. "By stealing Axel's wallet, *killing* Tony and marking everyone else as targets for Don Stracci!?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 26, 2014, 04:12:04 pm**

"Tony was *dangling him over a cliff*, I'm not sure what you all were expecting him to do!" snapped Lily. She stepped in the way of Soren. "Soren, put that pipe down! You'd hurt a little boy? And Vergil, I'm ashamed of you! Letting your aggression and anger get the better of you! Where I come from we don't solve our anger problems by hurting people weaker than us!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 26, 2014, 04:26:52 pm**

"Ashamed of me?" he asked. "TONY JUST DIED!" he roared at her. "All his help he gave you meant NOTHING to you? If you think that's 'just a little boy', you are seriously fucked in the head, lady! Tony should've dropped him! Better the kid than Tony! Now what do we have?" he asked, feeling his rage boil over. "We're now down a member and for what? Huh? For what? Get your priorities straight!" He exited the vehicle, slamming the door now.

"You know what? Screw this! Kalis can have this world for all I care! We're not gonna make it now! It's over!" He began walking forward, towards Marita's Rover, but didn't stop, and kept walking on past it. "Find your own damn way to the waypoints! I'm done with this. There's no hope left..." He shook his head here, the tears rolling down his face.

Walking a bit beyond the first Rover, he finally stopped, and sank to his knees, trying to crawl forward, until he finally exploded, shrieking out in anguish. The ground rumbled, as did the Rovers, shaking as if Bolivia were experiencing an earthquake. Wailing, he let his emotions out, unable to stop them. He finally devolved into a crying heap, assuming a fetal position, and trying to will himself away from here...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 26, 2014, 04:38:44 pm**

"Look," Lily said, as Vergil left. "Tony was my friend too! But he wouldn't want us devolving into barbarians just because we lost him! If you don't want Rio to come with us, fine, Emilena can take care of him, like she has been."

"I, uh, don't think Emilena's capable of caring for anything right now," noted Nairda, glancing over at her.

In response, Lily walked over to the fallen vulpine and put her hands on her slashed legs. Slowly, the hamstring tendons and muscles reformed, until Emilena could painfully walk again.

Emilena glanced at her functioning legs again, in shock. "Why would you...?"

"Go," Lily cut her off firmly, tears welling in her eyes. "Just take your team, take your stuff, take Rio, and please go. And *don't* follow us to the waypoint in the Atlantic."

Emilena's eyes narrowed in understanding as Lily gave her the name of the next target. Shakily she got to her feet. "Let's move out, gang." she glanced at Soren. "You're a bigger coward than I thought. Remind me to buy you a dress when this is all over."

Then, with Flora's and Nairda's help, she began limping into the forest. Foley gathered the scattered equipment and silently followed them.

Watching them go, Lily suddenly staggered and fell to the ground. Blood was seeping from both of her calves.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 26, 2014, 04:56:08 pm**

Soren's eye twitched as he heard Emilena. He dropped the pipe and raised his rifle. He then shook his head. "Fuck this, let them do whatever!"

Fuming, he climbed in the backseat of one of the Rovers. "Just mark my words, if I see them again, I'm shooting them."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 26, 2014, 07:03:01 pm**

Axel rushed to Lily, shocked tears blurring his vision as he gently scooped her off the ground. Tony was dead... He couldn't quite believe it, the thought refusing to process. The shriek Tony had given kept replaying over and over in his mind.

Rio stood still, his gaze flicking between his gang as they headed out, and Vergil's group, the side of his head cut and bleeding from where Soren had hit him before Lily stopped it. He'd never killed anyone before... but given the circumstances, he didn't feel too torn up about it. From his own time in the slums, Rio had learned that most people who worked for a gang - as the ferret apparently did for the Straccis, whoever *they* were - deserved whatever they got. That being said, he could see the group cared for each other, and the reaction of the others rattled him, especially Lily and Axel's, the only two who'd actually helped him so far.

Walking up to the two, he blinked the blood out of his eye. "I'm... sorry," he said quietly as Soren climbed into the backseat of one of the Rovers. "I didn't do it on purpose... but he was gonna throw me off a fucking cliff..."

"Rio, just... look, just go, alright?" Axel said. Looking back to make sure the others couldn't hear, he added quietly, "When you and others follow us... make sure you don't get seen."

Rio nodded and turned, jogging towards Emilena and the others as they headed away.

Letting out a shaky breath, Axel stood up and carried Lily to the Rover, putting her in the backseat carefully so he didn't hurt her bleeding calves. "Jesus, I... I can't believe that happened..." he whispered. Axel looked out of the window to where Vergil had wandered further down the road, and was about to go and try to talk to him when he saw Triste approaching the gecko.

Taking slow steps towards Vergil, Triste carefully stretched out a hand. Tony's death meant almost nothing to her - except perhaps for the fact that now they were down a man, and now at a disadvantaged situation. But she'd seen the look in Vergil's eyes, heard the tone of his voice... and for one of the first times in a while, she was afraid.

He was closer to remembering the past than ever before.

Triste's hand gently touched Vergil's shoulder. "Vergil... I'm sorry about what just happened. I'm so, so sorry," she said softly. "But we can't give up. We *can't* let Kalis win. Tony was trying to help us stop that monster - and if you stop now... if you decide to run away, his death will have been for nothing. And all the innocent men, women and children that're going to die if Kalis reaches his goal..." Triste ran a hand along his cheek. "I can't imagine how you're feeling right now... but all that hate, the anger - you have to focus it. *Use* it. Against Kalis." She stared into his eyes. "Okay?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 26, 2014, 08:18:17 pm**

Vergil could barely focus. His memories were clawing their way back to the surface, and he couldn't stop them. Her words were reminding him too much about the past... and it was there...

He was standing on a shore... a beach somewhere. He was tired. Rex and Kalis were there as well, panting, as if they'd just outrun something. "We have to... we have to warn them!" Kalis was saying. "If they conduct their descent their troops will pick up the virus too, and they'll spread it across the planet! I know they're our enemies but... we can't let them turn this war into a pandemic! We have to warn them!"

Rex placed his hands on his knees, and nodded. "Yes... yes you're right. If they contract the virus, it'll be all over! This war won't even matter! But... but be careful, Kalis! I'm afraid... something within me... is making me very uneasy..."

"I will!" Kalis said, nodding. "Open channel to Admiral Schreiber's flagship!" Kalis yelled, and

soon, his communications device sprang to life, and the face of Admiral Schreiber, commander of the Alliance's fleet, could be seen sneering.

"You two again?" he asked. "What is it this time? Come to beg me to stop our offensive? Finally surrendering, are you? Realized the futility of your position?"

"No! Admiral Schreiber, we just left Hafta, and there is a plague rampant in its borders! Your recruits are being turned into monsters! If you land the transports, you'll infect everyone! The disease will spread! There will be no stopping it! Do NOT land in Hafta! I repeat! Don't land!"

Schreiber continued sneering. "Well... this is an unusual development, isn't it?" he asked. "Thank you, for bringing this to my attention. I have a simple solution to prevent this virus from ever spreading beyond Hafta."

Kalis's eyes widened, and he looked up to see Schreiber's fleet hovering overhead. "NO!" Kalis shouted, turning his head upwards to scream as a bright flash emanated from the center of Schreiber's ship and streaked downwards.

"No!" Rex gasped, realizing what was happening. "No he can't!"

The glowing missile left a burning trail in the sky before it impacted with the ground, shaking them to their cores. And then the sky burned. The nuclear warhead went off, thundering its blast outward in a force that sent Rex and Kalis backwards in their tracks, unable to resist the power of a thousand suns exploding in front of them. Everyone on the beach was thrown backwards as the mushroom cloud grew.

"NOOOOOOOO!" Rex cried, powerless to do anything to stop this. Millions of men, women, and children... vaporized in an instant... and it didn't end there. The nuclear bombardment continued, Schreiber relentlessly pumping nuke after nuke into Hafta. "NOOOOOO!" Rex cried again, sinking to his knees in anguish as the screams started filling his mind... the screams of the dying... those burning, their flesh stripped from their bodies in searing heat as they called out for help... for someone that would never arrive... it was too much, and he held his head in agony, unable to stop their screams. The red gecko collapsed into the sand, Kalis standing over him, looking worried and trying to get him to move into the ocean, to get away from the spreading blasts.

"We have to escape the radiation Rex! Come on! All of you..." Kalis turned to look at Vergil now. "Get back! Into the sea! Get back!"

Vergil blinked, his lower jaw trembling. The pain... the death... it was terrible... he'd sensed it back then... just as painfully as Rex and Kalis had... it was the worst feeling in the world. He couldn't recall anything that felt worse than tens of millions of lives snuffed out at once. He closed his eyes, trying to block it out, and focus on her hand rubbing his cheek. "You don't understand..." he said softly, shaking his head sadly. "You were right..."

He stood up slowly, as if doing so were an effort. "We can't bring them along... I got Tony killed... worthlessly... he was killed in such a needless way... none of them... can stand up to Kalis. He'd kill them all with a thought... what's the point of having them with us? I'd only watch them die before me. He's too... powerful. Tony couldn't survive a simple accident... what chance do any of these non-trained, non-psionic, everyday people have against him? If he ever caught us... he would torture them beyond their endurance... they would die horrible, miserable deaths. And that would be my fault for bringing them along. We've already lost one, and Kalis wasn't even here. Varanus wasn't even here... it's over." He shook his head again here. "They'll all... die... and I can't subject myself to that. We need to press on alone... without them. You defeated Rex... but what chance do they have?"

He was trying to sense Tony again, but his mind was too distracted. He couldn't focus... other things in his mind were vying for attention, including his memories, and he didn't look at Triste, but gazed past her shoulder, out into the distance at something else far away.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 26, 2014, 10:02:11 pm**

Marita rose and Marie had gotten out of their rover when the accident happened. maritac gaped as she heard Tonys primal scream as he fell off the cliff. 'NO!" she cried in anguish, the full realization of what had happened hit her in a split second. she remained rooted to the spot through the scene, staring at the cliffs edge. finally after a couple minutes she moved towards the edge and stared at the broken branch below that had failed to stop Tonys descent. she looked down for a minute or two her head bowed her eyes red from crying and her face stained with tears Once her silent vigil was over she turned and headed back towards her rover" Alright, those who want to come with me, climb in back. we now have a new motivation- honoring Tony, and his memory. we will now need each other more than ever, so if anyone thinks of leaving, think again.its too late to back out of this, the chance for doing so was before we left the country to come down here.I... was planning to go out on a date with Tony, once we had returned to the city,and truthfully i was looking forward to it.' she said to the others.' but now, well, everythings changed...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 27, 2014, 05:40:05 am**

"Wow, and I thought *we* were psychotic," remarked Foley wryly once the vehicles were far enough away.

"So, umm...what exactly are we going to do about the whole mafia thing?" asked Nairda uncomfortably. "Cause I've seen the Straccis before, and they're ruthless. They'd kill us all trying to get to--"

"--We stick by our own," Emilena interrupted firmly, as she began putting their clothes back on. "Kid did nothing wrong, he was being held over a bloody cliffside. Frankly, Tony was one of the most arrogant people I'd ever met, I can't think of a more karmic death for him."

Flora hadn't lost her erection throughout everything that had happened, and looked incredibly vasocongested. "If you all don't mind, I need a moment to..." She trailed off, then crawled gingerly behind a large fern.

"Look, I don't mean to throw Rio under the bus here," pointed out Foley, as heavily panting started emanating from Flora's fern. "But the mafia can be bad news, and we're on thin ice as it is."

"I've survived the Straccis before," Emilena assured him. "They're not that tough." She reloaded her pistol and started hacking vines out of her way with her katana. "For now, we try to reach civilization and secure passage to the next waypoint. Lily wants us close by once Koalas or whoever shows his face."

Lily painfully crawled over to Marita's side of the vehicle. "I'm sorry..." she said softly, wrapping her arms around Marita. "I'm truly, truly sorry. Tony was in the prime of life, and you two would have made each other so happy. If you want, when there's some downtime, I'd love a chance to console together. I've actually lost someone very important to me as well recently, we could help each other through this rough time."

Tears stung her eyes. With all her healing powers, she could still do nothing to alleviate the pain in Marita's heart.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 27, 2014, 09:21:19 am**

Thank you Lily' Marita said hugging her back ' fresh tears brimming in her eyes. ' I think, once we reach the city and find a place to crash for the night. we'll just let it all out, I guess. it would be good for both of us.'

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Marie and Rose climbed into the back of the Rover. neither of them felt like making conversation, they had come to know Tony during the events at Lanthae, and had come to respect him, not just because of who his dad was, but because of how he carried himself. to use the past tense to describe him was still very surreal at this point, and it would not get easier.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 27, 2014, 11:01:02 am**

Crouching down next to Vergil, Triste didn't say anything for a moment. "They know what they signed up for," she sighed after a while. "They knew the risks. Look, what just happened to Mr. Stracci... Tony... Nobody could have seen that coming. But no matter how powerful you are - no matter how prepared we are - we're going to need help to finish this. The more people we have working with us, the better our chances." *Even if we have to lose a few more to succeed.* Rubbing his shoulder again, she stood up and glanced back towards the vehicle. "Vergil, if you really want to go on without them, we could bring it up to them. But something tells me they're not going to want to give up so easily."

In the back of the Rover, Axel ran a shaking hand through his hair as he watched Lily hug Marita. "I'm... Jesus, I'm so sorry, Marita. I know you and Tony had a connection. I... I just wish you two could have had more time together." He took a trembling breath, the shock of what just happened still leaving him numb. "Maybe if we get time we could... make a toast in his memory or something." He swallowed. "He deserves that much."

Rio edged away from the bush Flora had ducked behind. "You guys aren't going to throw me out?" He didn't really know how to react - in all his time doing jobs for sleazy gangs in the slums, he'd never met any who'd acted like this to him. "Thanks... I guess..." he said finally.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 27, 2014, 03:00:39 pm**

Emilena grinned. "You're one of the gang now. Where we're going, you won't be able to trust a damn thing, so you better hope you can stand by your teammates."

She clapped him on the back and gave him her combat knife. "And in the future, if another wackjob holds you over a cliff and threatens to drop you, do the *exact same goddamn thing*. You hear me?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 27, 2014, 03:26:28 pm**

Varanus could clearly see he was dealing with a pack of idiots. They were already breaking apart on their own, and that was perfect. It would make them easy to shatter later on. As Emilena approached his position now, the big monitor stepped out from the wall he'd been leaning against and centered himself with his group, which had grown in size thanks to a hovering dropship that whined overhead but kept itself dark.

"Oh bravo." He mockingly applauded her group now. "Thanks for killing one of them for me. You're doing a fantastic job at dividing them while I come in and conquer. Now one half won't trust the other half, and before long, we'll have an out-and-out civil war on our hands... while I come in and mop up. Brilliant! Ever consider a job working for the world's most powerful warlord and future global leader? Benefits are great after all, but meanwhile, I've got a job to

do, so you may go on your merry way, and just keep doin' what you're doin'." He grinned wickedly here, and stepped aside for the group to pass, signaling his goons to do the same. There were now about ten of them, as opposed to the two that had been left alive before.

Varanus kept an eye on them all the same, as he had no idea who they were, and if they tried anything stupid, he'd take them down quickly and quietly.

Vergil shook his head here. "They aren't going to agree to that. Hence why it'd be better to ditch them at some point and continue on our own. They may have known what they signed up for, but we can get assistance just as easily with you calling in a Federation strike team. You had elites taking on Rex after all, and they succeeded. We can do that again. I just don't have any faith in this group anymore." he said softly, turning his eyes back to her. "I don't trust Axel and Lily, since they clearly have some agenda they neglected to mention to us regarding Emilena and her group, and how can you trust someone who's not being honest with you?" he asked her now, eyes searching her as he didn't realize the irony of that question.

"We're breaking into our own little factions, and the same thing happened before when we took on the Purifiers. This is MY mistake... I brought them into this knowing our force wasn't unified enough to constitute a threat to Kalis. It was my error, and it's a recipe for disaster. They're not the types that inspire confidence. If anything, they're only making it worse." he hissed, shaking his head. "I need people I can rely on... the only problem is, I just don't have that right now." he pointed out to her. "I regret getting them involved... and if this is how it's going to be like... what hope is there for any of us? What if we ARE all like Rex and Kalis in our own way? I'm remembering more and more about them... and they suffered... a lot. From what I know of the Scorched Earth War, it was NOT pretty, but to experience what they did... I'm beginning to see why they'd turn traitor. It's enough to make anyone a little crazy; it's maddening even. While I still don't have the full story... it's starting to become more clear." he stated gravely, looking at her with almost dead eyes. There was a deep sadness in there, as if a light were slowly starting to go out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 27, 2014, 03:53:09 pm**

Emilena blinked. "Uh, okay. Thanks," she replied to whoever this was. Not being in any state to fight, she hoped to part ways with...whoever this is...still as congenial as he is now. "Yeah, good luck to you as well."

Nairda suddenly piped up. "Would you be able to direct us in the closest way back to civilization? Other than the road? The road's kinda occupied."

There was suddenly a loud squealing coming from behind Flora's fern, which continued unabated for quite some time.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 27, 2014, 03:57:36 pm**

"I'm afraid this road is your only way back to La Paz." Varanus sneered. "However, if you're looking to avoid the group you just left, there's nobody behind us... I made sure of that." he stated, without elaborating. "Of course, it'd take you about a day on foot... it's a three hour drive from here to La Paz. There are some villages you might be able to steal a car from on the way though, choice is yours. Either way, that direction is the only way to go." He pointed down the road, in the opposite direction she had come from. "Just keep heading that way."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 27, 2014, 04:13:38 pm**

"We can handle that," nodded Emilena. All things considered, she'd prefer not to have to deal with people right now. "Thank you for your help."

Flora crawled out from behind the fern, panting heavily. "I'm...heh...ready to go now," she blushed.

Nairda curtsied to the newcomer. "May the wind be at your back and the road rise to meet you, good sir."

Foley helped Flora to her feet and, at Emilena's encouragement, the group began their hike down the road.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 27, 2014, 06:39:48 pm**

Triste's throat grew dry at Vergil's comment about things becoming clearer. *This is bad... fragments, pieces of his memory... if they keep coming back to him, everything could be lost...* She blinked. *But this group... this group consists of some of the only people he's known since the incident. If there's a chance keeping them around can keep his memories... can keep Vergil from how he was* before*... can I really take the risk of sending them away?*

She swallowed. "Vergil... do we really have time to arrange a new team? Every minute we waste is a minute Kalis gets closer to the warship. And so far, they've seemed able enough to me... at least, as far as dealing with the waypoints. Apart from what your friend just did, they've shown they're capable. The only time something went wrong was when Tony decided to... hold a child over a cliff," she said softly. "Come on, Vergil. We've come this far."

Rio stared back at the group of strange men standing before them. Whoever they were, they made him uncomfortable - but the weight of the combat knife Emilena had given him, tucked into the back of his shorts, gave him some degree of assurance.

As they passed, Rio stumbled over a loose stone and bumped against one of Veranus' henchmen. "S... sorry!" he mumbled, rushing ahead to join the others.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 27, 2014, 08:07:37 pm**

Thank you Axel' Marita said, turning to him. ' we'll need to come together now even more. we cant afford to fall to pieces.One of us is going to have to break the news to his father and that is not going to be pleasant at all. but it must be done. a toast in his honor would be appropriate, and we need to finish the job, for him and everyone else.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **June 27, 2014, 10:09:40 pm**

Soren fumed as the vehicles headed down the road. "Fine," he growled. "I'll call Don Stracci and tell him the news."

He was still sore about not getting to kill Emilena and Rio.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 28, 2014, 12:17:17 am**

"A child who was part of a group who showed up under suspicious circumstances and whom two of our own seem completely fine with letting go, despite knowing they're working for our opposition. I'm sorry but you've failed to convince me." He brushed past her now, heading for the second Rover. "However you are correct. Standing on this road is only wasting our time. Whatever we choose to do, I'll decide for myself later on." he stated. Walking past the first Rover, he hesitated, then climbed into the back.

No one had offered to drive the second Rover yet, and Vergil clearly couldn't with his height.

The soldier that had been bumped into roughly knocked Rio away from him. "Watch it, punk!" This elicited a laugh from everyone gathered around them, pointing out the pipsqueak and how out of place he seemed, plus the blood gushing from his head from where the pipe had struck him. They had all seen him get knocked up, and it seemed to amuse them greatly. They all had killer in their eyes, and every one of them had killed multiple times in both the Scorched Earth War and Rex's Rebellion. None of them looked as if they'd hesitate to shoot Emilena's group dead if they detected so much as an improperly placed comment.

Varanus smirked as he watched the group go, pleased with the progress they'd made at dividing Triste's group. Another encounter might finally seal the deal, and that'd be it. Already he could sense them breaking from afar, and it was just getting better the more time passed. Nodding upwards, he signaled at the dropship above them, and suddenly, all of them vanished, teleported instantly into the dropship as it began flying back in the direction of the Rovers. It kept its lights off for now, keeping itself well out of sight as it proceeded on its mission. For now, Varanus had business to attend to, and then he'd have to heal up before his next encounter with them. He had been weakened by his ordeal today, and knew he couldn't face that white gecko in his current state, but give it a few weeks, and he'd kill all of them in a most painful fashion. They wouldn't be escaping next time...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 28, 2014, 07:13:22 am**

Emilena's gang continued on their way.

"Nairda, I know you hide your social insecurities by sounding like an idiot when with people you don't know, but those goons outnumbered us two to one." Emilena reprimanded. "Let's leave out archaic Irish idioms the gentleman might not understand."

Nairda's ears drooped. "It was just a polite thing I thought of saying..."

"Then in the future, don't say anything at all!" Emilena smacked him in the head. "Asking for directions on a cliffside road with only two directions! When talking to people like *that* you don't try to draw attention to your own stupidity!"

Foley glanced at Rio. "Hey, kid, you all right? That's a pretty nasty head wound. Sorry we don't have anything like a first-aid kit, but we'll make it top priority once we reach the nearest town or village."

"I would like that," Lily smiled through tear-stricken eyes at Marita. "I think we can help one another."

She hugged Axel, Tony's death having reminded her how lucky she was to have her husband alive and with her. "This road is awful; let's get out of here before anything else horrible happens..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **June 28, 2014, 12:46:00 pm**

As Vergil walked away and headed across to the second Rover, Triste sighed and stared out at the horizon, rubbing a hand across the top of her head. Things were getting complicated... and that was the worst thing that could happen in a situation like this. After another few moments of staring out thoughtfully, she turned and made her way to the same Rover Vergil had climbed inside. *I need to keep a closer eye on him...*

In the other vehicle, Axel hugged Lily back. "Yeah, let's... let's get the hell out of here," he said softly. Glancing back at the other car, he could see there was nobody in the driver's seat. Axel looked over at Rose and Marie. "Do you think one of you could take the other one? I'm, ah... I'm still not too good with these roads..."

Rio looked up at Foley as they walked. "It's alright, it probably looks worse than it is." He pressed a hand against the gash on his head, and hissed breath painfully between his teeth. At least the bleeding seemed to be slowing, although the area felt like it was swelling to the size of an egg.

He swallowed then let his hand fall away, and stretched out the other to reveal the credits he'd swiped from the pocket of the henchman he'd 'stumbled' into. "Drinks on me at the next village?" he grinned at the gang.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **June 28, 2014, 06:56:01 pm**

"You cheeky bugger!" Emilena couldn't resist grinning. "God, you're even worse than Nairda!"

Flora began laughing, long chortling howls interrupted by sporadic snorts, and somehow it spread across the other gang members. Even Foley couldn't resist when all of his comrades were rendered hysterical by Rio's ballsy caper.

Only Nairda's laughter didn't seem completely genuine.Eventually it was he who broke the respite and continued the long hike, and the group followed suit in far better spirits than they should be.

Lily nodded tearfully. "My legs aren't reactive enough for this sort of driving, I'm afraid..."

But the bleeding had gone down considerably. She was beginning to note that her advanced healing methods appeared to apply to herself as well. Though to be fair, she only ever gained lessened version of whatever ailment plagued her victim, and she'd only healed Emilena to the extent that she could walk.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **June 30, 2014, 10:20:16 pm**

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i'll drive ' Rose said going over to the second Rover and climbing in the drivers seat.' Whats the quicjest way to town?' she asked as she looked over her shoulder at Vergil and Triste, then started the engine.
_ Marita sighed as she started the engine of her Rover and began driving forward.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **June 30, 2014, 10:23:45 pm**

"Straight down this road to Coroico, then we turn around, pick up Ruta Nacional 3, and head back to La Paz. Can't very well turn around here after all, so I'd think that'd be fairly straight forward." Vergil replied with disinterest. "Should take about three to four hours to get back."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 01, 2014, 12:26:43 pm**

As the vehicles slowly trundled down the treacherous road, Soren retrieved Tony's phone and dialed Don Stracci's phone number.

"Come on," he muttered as the call tried to get through.

Marion had watched the fight from her perch. Including Tony's death.

Hoping that he might have something useful, she detached herself from the rock face and let herself enter freefall and glide into the darkened jungle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 01, 2014, 03:01:50 pm**

The phone rang twice, and finally, the don's voice sounded on the other end. "I don't have a lot of time right now, Tony, so make this quick." Don Stracci seemed busied with things, but of course wasn't expecting news to break in the form of a microburst over his head.

Vergil, for his part, was looking out the window and trying to determine how he could best proceed. He felt no particular affinity for his task at hand, and began to muse over Rex and his life. He had been a hero... but what had he seen deep in the Unknown Regions that had made him turn against his country and everything he had fought for? He would need to find others who knew him in life, and see what he could discern from them... nothing like eyewitnesses after all. Most of those who had known him were currently fighting for Kalis, he knew that much, but there had to be other witnesses.... non-combatants, or defectors who no longer shared Kalis's view of the world. They just had to be out there...

As Marion glided down into the dark jungle, she could see a disturbed area of trees that looked as if something had ripped through them recently. At the bottom was the body of Tony Stracci... or at least, it should've been the corpse of Tony Stracci, but something was off. Movement could be detected from the prone form. He lay stretched out on his right side, but his arms were showing slight signs of spasms and his tail was flicking from left to right.

If Marion looked carefully, she could also see signs of breathing as the ferret's sides rose and fell in very slow, almost relaxed motions that made it look as if he was asleep, though his eyes were just barely open. One paw was grasping out for... something, but it wasn't doing anything aside from flexing and relaxing.

It was impossible. No one should've been able to survive a drop of over 3,000 feet the likes of which the ferret had just taken, but regardless, there he was, lying on his side, bleeding, barely conscious, but very much alive. Perhaps it had something to do with that dropship that was starting to descend into the valley now, and was at this juncture very much lit up, its lights glowing like a UFO in the night as it dropped downwards, though Marion beat it in terms of descent, both because the dropship was making a controlled descent and also because it seemed to be in no great hurry.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 01, 2014, 03:23:57 pm**

Soren gulped. "Don Stracci, sir," he said. He tried to keep his voice neutral. "This is Soren Almaya. I have terrible news. Tony...he was killed by Emilena and some street punk." He held his breath awaiting the inevitable explosion through the phone. He assured himself that Don

Stracci was a reasonable man, but he *was* a powerful crime lord.

Marion wrinkled her forehead as she spotted the disturbed area thanks to her helmet's built-in night vision equipment. She banked around and circled to bleed off speed.

As she approached the now brightly lit clearing, the woman activated her flying frame's thrusters to slow down further and landed, letting her prosthetic legs and exoskeleton take the impact.

She then folded her flying frame's wings as she approached Tony Stracci. Her helmet's enhanced vision allowed her to see him twitching slightly. She shook her head, a fall from that height was almost always fatal ó even to an Augment, let alone a Baseline.

As the dropship approached, she ducked behind a bush and got her compnoculars out to record the scene ó and scan the dropship.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 01, 2014, 03:36:35 pm**

"WHAT?!" Came the inevitable roar on the other end. "Emilena and some street punk? Who?" he demanded now, snarling. The don was fuming, and with good reason. Emilena had escaped his clutches once before, and while he hadn't been actively hunting her ever since thanks to his son, she apparently decided to celebrate by taking away his underboss and his only real hope for a continuance of his family. "Where are they now? Please tell me you at least wounded them to the point they can't get away..." he said now, seething, the explosiveness evident on his end.

Tony attempted to raise his head from his neck, but couldn't accomplish this, only lifting a centimeter or so off the ground. "Is someone... there...?" he could barely ask, but couldn't turn his head to look at Marion. "H... help. Help..." he trailed off hoarsely.

The drop ship was continuing its descent, and was beginning to fly towards the two of them now, but whereas Marion was now concealed, Tony was not. Marion's scans would reveal a standard Scarab Mk IV dropship that was pretty prevalent during Rex's Rebellion. It was armed to the teeth with lasers, rockets, and heavy caliber machine guns. It was also armed with a sonic emitter, the waves of which were capable of bringing down a formidable high-rise.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 01, 2014, 08:56:09 pm**

Marion scowled as the compnoculars revealed what the dropship was. A Scarab Mk IV. Nothing short of artillery could bring one down. Or for that matter, do more than superficial damage.

A panel in her right leg slid aside as she grabbed her pistol. Right now, all she planned to do was watch the scene unfold. And possibly intervene if they decided to abduct Tony.

Of course, this was not because she liked the Ferret. She wanted information from him.

Soren held the phone away from his ear as Don Stracci exploded. He wiped some sweat away from his forehead and took a breath to calm his racing heart. "Last I saw them, they were at the top of North Yungas Road in Bolivia."

He then took another breath. "The two came in with a gang. I was blindsided by one of the

fuckers and by the time I was done with him, the two had already vanished. I'm sorry sir, but there was only so much I can do. If it's any consolation, the area is extremely remote. There's a high chance that the natives, the mining conglomerate security forces or just the environment itself will kill them."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 01, 2014, 09:10:57 pm**

As it was, the dropship's target was indeed Tony, as a beam of blue light shot out and snagged him in its light. The beam was an anti-gravity device, being able to lock on to specific objects and start to bring them back up. So it was with the ferret, who began to levitate up into the air towards the Scarab.

The ferret, who was wounded beyond belief, could do nothing to resist, and went limp in the beam as it brought him upwards...

"Well did you at least place a tracker on them?" he snapped. "If you did, I could at least dial into the frequency! While I may have people in far-flung regions, I have nobody in Bolivia, and it would take a few hours to get a team on the ground there. I don't trust random assholes finishing the job for me. NOT with her!" he said insistently.

"What was the name of this little shit, then? I'm gonna attach him to four SUVs and have them rip his limbs off whilst burning his entrails in front of him." he asked Soren again for the name.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 01, 2014, 09:30:55 pm**

Soren smiled. "Rio. His name's Rio. The guy's a nasty little thief. That's all I know of the gang." He knew that he was betraying Axel by placing Rio in Don Stracci's crosshairs but Rio was pretty much expendable to the group. Axel was not. There was also the matter that Rio was a kleptomaniac who would steal everyone's underwear if he could do so.

He then debated whether or not to tell Don Stracci that he didn't get a tracer on them. After a few seconds, he decided to tell him, figuring that honesty was the best policy with the powerful crime boss. "No sir. The cars got worked over by the gang. The fuckers stole everything."

Marion scowled. There went her source of information! She holstered her pistol and the plates on her left arm slid back as she deployed her piton gun. She aimed at a low hanging antenna on the ship and fired.

The cable sped through the air and the soon, the metal tip lodged itself into the dropship's armor. The woman gave the line a tug.

Satisfied it was secure, she reeled the line in and began the slow climb aboard the ship.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 01, 2014, 09:58:43 pm**

"Rio, eh? Should be easy enough to find with a name like that... we'll start in Corona and work outwards. If it was Emilena's group, she's based in Corona, so should be a simple process of elimination." the don stated.

He exhaled heavily upon hearing no trace. "Never mind. We'll figure this out. By the time we get there, they'll be out of Bolivia I'm guessing... but they gotta come back at some point. No

sense in wasting effort if it's not needed after all... thanks for the info... " The line abruptly went dead as the don hung up.

As Tony rose into the air, his body seemed to vanish in a flash as he was teleported on board. Once he had been clear of the ground, the teleporter had worked perfectly and "beamed him up."

Varanus had saved Tony at the last second, reaching out with his mind to arrest the ferret's fall to prevent it from being fatal, but leaving him injured enough he'd barely be clinging to life. The Nile monitor normally wouldn't give a shit, but Kalis needed living bodies for Devastation's Inception, and he would get living bodies. Of course, not just any moron would qualify, as Inception required the energy of those who were particularly noteworthy, violent, pure, or otherwise not your average run of the mill jackass off the streets, and Varanus figured the son of Don Anthony Stracci certainly qualified.

"Stabilize him!" Varanus ordered, and nodded at the Scarab's pilot. "Let's get out of here, we've got what we came for."

"Yes, sir!" responded the pilot, who began taking the dropship up and out of the valley. Tony meanwhile was hustled off to the Scarab's med bay, where he would be hooked up to life saving equipment to keep him stable but comatose for the trip to the fleet.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 05:31:17 am**

Axel stared dully at the back of the seat in front of him as they drove away, the vehicle bouncing and shuddering over the rough dirt road. He tried to imagine how Soren was breaking the news of Tony's death to his father, feeling sick to his stomach at the whole situation. He swore under his breath for what felt like the hundredth time. "*Godammit*..."

Suddenly, his ears picked up a faint, distant rumble, over that of the tyres. Slowly, he looked back in the direction they'd came - and caught a brief glimpse of something dark moving far away, up through the clouds. Axel frowned and wiped the back of his hand against his eyes, blinking away tears. There was nothing. He swallowed. "Did... did you guys see..." Trailing off, Axel shook his head. Whatever it was, he hadn't seen it clearly... it was probably a bird, or a plane. "No... never mind," he sighed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 02, 2014, 08:10:16 am**

Emilena's gang had finally made their way to the next town, and were crouched behind a large set of ferns.

"All right..." groaned Emilena, finally getting off her feet. "My legs are not interested in hiking any longer. We'll need to rest here for at least ten minutes."

Foley glanced at the unlit houses. "So, which one of us gets to sneak into a house and grab some food for the rest of us?"

Emilena groaned. "Certainly not me. The rest of you draw straws."

Nairda held up a collection of broken branches from the ground. But he did a poor job of hiding the short one so everybody drew around it. His eyes went wide and his lip tremored.

"Rio, go with him and make sure he doesn't knock over a rack of silverware or something," Emilena groaned.

"I don't need Rio!" snapped Nairda. "Stop implying I'm incompetent!"

"I imply nothing," Emilena frowned. "I'm outright saying it. Rio, go with him whether he likes it or not."

Lily took some deep breaths to calm her pounding heart and the pain in her legs. She hoped they would be out of the forest soon.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 09:07:53 am**

Rio twirled the stick in his hands and smirked at Nairda. "On it. Hurry up, I'm starving." He tossed the stick into the foliage and darted across to the closest house, keeping low. Hopping over a worn down wooden fence, he crept close to the building, shoes sliding soundlessly over the grass growing in patches around the perimeter. He made his way around the side of the house, towards one of the only open windows. It was cracked outwards a little, but a latch on the inside prevented them from opening it any further. The gap was just wide enough for Rio to slip through.

He listened carefully, but there was no sound in the room beyond. "Hang on a second," he whispered back to Nairda as he jumped, reaching for the window-sill and pulling himself up. Silently squeezing through the gap, he unhooked the latch and eased the window open all the way then looked over his shoulder. "Think they have pizza? I could kill for a fucking pizza." Mouth watering at the thought, he turned and dropped through quietly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 02, 2014, 09:23:27 am**

Nairda scowled. "Why does she always rag on me lie that?" he muttered. "Am I not everpatient with her many quarrelsome attributes? Do I not labor for this team as she does? I note that we're doing her dream of sticking it to the system, but *my dream* of becoming a rapper is, quite literally, still in the gutter..."

He slipped through the window with all the skills of a cat burglar, putting his powerful combat techniques into his unnecessary diving roll.

"I'll show her!" he whispered fiercely to himself, hardly registering Rio's presence. "I'll show them all just what an Augmented hero like myself can do!"

He crept into the kitchen.

"*Here's a little song I wrote...*" cooed a voice from above the door.

Nairda's heart leaped into his throat and his Augmented part of the brain disconnected from the organic part of the brain and he slumped to the floor in shock, eyes blinking the blue screen of death. On the way down he hit a rack of silverware and sent its contents tumbling everywhere.

The motion-activated novelty bass above the kitchen entrance continued flapping its tail to kitschy music. "*Don't worry...*" it informed the twitching prone figure surrounded by spoons. "*Be happy...*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 09:52:44 am**

Rio had spied an expensive looking gold watch resting on a drawer, and was in the process on pocketing it when he heard Bob Marley's silky tones drifting from the kitchen. He frowned. "The fuck..." Then there was an almighty crash, and Rio leaped a foot in the air. Shooting towards the kitchen and willing his heart to lower back into his chest, he almost went sprawling over the convulsing Nairda. His foot kicked against a fork, sending it skittering over the kitchen floor as the Bass continued crooning. "*Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style...*"

Rio jumped up and tried to knock the Bass to the floor, but he was too short. "*Ain't got no gal to make you smile...*"

"Fuck you!" he hissed, scooping a fork from the floor and flinging it towards the singing fish. The three prongs impaled it right between the eyes, and for a second the singing stopped. Rio started to breath a sigh of relief, but then the Bass shuddered to life again. "*But don't worry, be happy...*" Throwing his arms in the air in frustration, Rio crouched by Nairda and shook him. "Wake the fuck up! We gotta hurry, they..." From the floor above, Rio heard a door opening. Face blanching, Rio straddled the adult's chest and started slapping his face. "Wake up! Wake up!" Between slaps, the bass was now telling them that a frown brings everybody down.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 02, 2014, 09:57:36 am**

Nairda was out cold and not getting up.

A portly man dressed only in a white wifebeater came sprinting down the stairs from the second floor, holding an AK-47. He quickly scanned the living room for intruders, and then began stomping his way into the kitchen.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 10:15:41 am**

Rio heard the heavy footsteps thumping their way towards the kitchen and he re-doubled his efforts, pounding his fists ineffectually against Nairda's chest. "Come on..." The footsteps stopped suddenly. Rio looked up slowly, meeting the eyes of the portly man. He tried to smile innocently, still sitting on top of the twitching Nairda, surrounded by scattered cutlery while the novelty Bass sang away happily. "Er... I'm just a little boy..."

The man's grip shifted slightly on the AK-47, and Rio's eyes widened. Scrabbling off Nairda, he scuttled across the kitchen, through the adjacent room and dived through the open window. Landing with a roll, he jumped over the fence and started running up towards the ferns where the others had been hiding.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 02, 2014, 10:32:09 am**

The man's eyes opened wide and he aimed his rifle at the escaping boy, but he didn't fire. His curiosity was piqued by the semiconscious figure on his floor.

He tiptoed forward and prodded the body with his gun barrel. When nothing happened, he kicked it in the head.

Nairda gave a full body heave and sent the guy stumbling backwards in fright. As Nairda came to, the man began screaming in angry rapid-fire Portuguese and pointing his rifle wildly.

All of a sudden he felt a pistol barrel embed itself in his back. Then a katana pressed ever-so-gently against his neck.

"Stop moving," Emilena demanded firmly. "Drop the rifle, nice and easy now, and you get to keep your appendages."

The man didn't speak English, but he got the gist and let go of the weapon. Now that he wasn't in danger of accidentally shooting Nairda, Emilena pistol-whipped him across the head and let him crumple to the floor.

The lovers looked at each other from across the kitchen. The bass started up again and Emilena bisected it.

"Ummm...I..." Nairda tried to start.

"Check upstairs," Emilena cut him off, as Foley and Flora crept into the house. "See if this gentleman had family. Foley, go get Rio and start preparing us some food. Flora, tie up our host and make sure to gag him. We're resting here for the night."

With that her wounded legs once again sent her tumbling to the ground. Nairda inched towards the stairs to the second floor. He hesitated at the base and opened his mouth to speak. "Quiet!" she hissed exasperatedly. Her hands shivered from drug withdrawal. "You've made more than enough sound for one night..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 02, 2014, 10:45:17 am**

They reached La Paz about four hours later, and by then the night was well advanced, and Vergil retired without saying much to his comrades. He knew they needed to arrange transportation to Voltaic, but also knew no planes flew out there: there wasn't enough room for aircraft aside from helicopters and dropships to land, and those were strictly prohibited by Judaken, who would blow any such thing out of the sky with Voltaic's formidable defenses. Thus it rested on securing passage on a ship out to the mid-ocean station.

Vergil's sleep was such that it was much disturbed and interrupted. Tossing and turning, he was dreaming of his past. But there was something darker too... deep within the heart of the Unknown Regions... it was reaching out for him, calling him to join it in its mad crusade. It was powerfully seductive, enticing him despite his best efforts to resist... he'd already seen so much death, destruction, and needless sacrifice, and this wasn't helping. It was telling him that could all go away if he helped locate Devastation's Inception...

He awoke with a start and a cry of *"Fuck!"* Breathing heavily, the gecko looked over at the clock, and could see it was just after 5 in the morning... he'd only gotten about five hours of sleep. "Ugh!" he groaned, holding his head in his hands as he closed his eyes, feeling his face drenched in sweat. Running his fingers through his disheveled feathers, Vergil rolled out of bed and headed to the bathroom, both to relieve himself and splash some cold water on his face. A minute or so later the toilet was being flushed, and the gecko began to douse his face in cold water, staring at himself in the mirror. Why was his past coming back with such a vengeance?

A white gecko with large orange eyes stared back at him, and for the first time in a long while, he was starting to not even recognize himself anymore. Who had he been back then? Had he joined Rex in his crazy rebellion willingly? No... NO! That couldn't be true! He wasn't like that! He knew he wasn't! If he was, why did he feel that taking a life was only necessary in self-defense or to protect the weak? Why did he feel that Rex's Rebellion was wrong? Triste had told him he'd been loyal to the Federation even while he was in his deep cover mission of spying on Rex and Kalis. He had to hold on to that... it was all he had... but somewhere deep down, a part of him understood Rex to an extent... not fully of course, but it was there.

Drying his face with the hand towel, the gecko figured he may as well go down to the front desk and see about arranging transportation out to Voltaic Station. Already he was becoming horrified by his own inner musings, and how he'd acted only a few hours ago on the Yungas Road. He'd let his anger consume him, but why? He wasn't like that... there was something wrong with him. He was... changing...

Padding down the stairs of the sleepy Bolivian inn, the gecko picked up some brochures and

sat down, trying to clear his mind and pick out a way to get out to the middle of the Atlantic in one of the more remote regions of the ocean.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 11:10:43 am**

The front door bumped open as Rio followed Foley back into the house. He locked it behind him then joined the others, his glancing cautiously towards the kitchen doorway. "The... the fish..." he started, but then trailed off, nodding in approval when he saw the Bass' body parts strewn on the floor.

There was a creak as Nairda came back down the stairs. "Nobody else." His face lit up. "But there is a *fabulous* karaoke system upstairs..."

Shaking his head, Rio made his way across the kitchen, stepping on the man's unconscious body, and slumped over on a badly stained couch in the adjacent room. "Wake me up when dinner's ready," he mumbled over, angling his face away from a suspiciously crusty white stain.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 02, 2014, 11:31:20 am**

Foley sighed. "Because we want the neighbors investigating the house because the karaoke is on..."

Flora had dragged the man's body into the bathroom, and now came skipping out in a white shower robe. "Look what I found!" She held out a wide array of over-the-top pills and cough syrups.

"Oh thank god." Emilena swiped the codeine and took a long swig.

"Hey, I want any sleeping pills!" Foley darted forward. "Dibs!"

"No way, I found them!" Flora snapped her stash away and stuck her tongue out. "Blow me!"

"We're all going to need to share the sleeping pills if we're hoping to get any rest before sunup," Emilena interjected. "Let's be cooperative here."

So the three drugged themselves into a lazy stupor. At one point Emilena pegged Nairda with a bottle of Robitussin in an unspoken offer to join them, but he had spent the majority of his time dragging the karaoke machine down two floors and into the basement.

"Guys?" he finally panted, coming into the trashed kitchen. "The basement is soundproof, we could do one of my private concerts? Like old times? I've got some R&B queued up..."

Every one of his teammates was out cold. The pot Foley had put on the stove had completely melted into the stovetop and was giving off smoke. Clicking the stove off, Nairda sadly walked downstairs to karaoke alone but tripped on the Robitussin bottle and bounced all the way downstairs, slipping unconscious for the second time that night.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 02, 2014, 11:39:52 am**

In front of Vergil a brochure suddenly lifted itself up into the air and drifted across, stopping just before the seat next to him. It opened up, and with a shimmer Triste appeared in the seat, flicking through the brochure with disinterest. "These things always make the destination sound ten times better than the crap it usually is," she sighed.

Moments passed. A clock, ticking above the front desk, was the only thing disturbing the

silence. Letting the brochure drop beside her, she turned to look at Vergil. "I'd ask if you're feeling better, but... it looks like you didn't exactly get the best night's sleep."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 02, 2014, 11:51:59 am**

Vergil glanced upwards, noticing the floating brochure, and furrowed his brow until Triste appeared sitting in the seat next to his. Recoiling a bit, he finally relaxed, and sighed. "No..." he confessed here, shaking his head. "I didn't. Nightmares really... about my past." He frowned, and gazed downwards at the floor, as if trying to scrutinize it. "I keep dreaming about... well no I don't keep but I did start to dream about my past with Kalis... and Rex..." he trailed off here, sighing again. "There was something dark... something hidden... deep in the Unknown Regions..." He looked up at her now. "I think Rex and Kalis went to go find it... the 'truth'... behind the Alliance's attack on the Federation. Someone was pulling the strings... manipulating the war for their own benefit... and whatever it was, or whoever it was, Rex and Kalis found it... and it changed them... by the time they got back, they were working for it, trying to find Torment's Cataract and... what I now believe to be the warship's name, Devastation's Inception." he explained, the mere name sending a chill down his spine as he spoke it.

"Triste... I'm sorry... Agent Acyle," he corrected himself, shaking his head. "I didn't... I didn't willingly follow Rex... did I?" he asked, his voice turning hoarse. "I stayed... I stayed loyal to you... to the Federation... up till the moment you assaulted Rex's flagship... right?" he asked, eyes searching her own now for hopeful answers.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 02, 2014, 08:51:34 pm**

As the dropship began to fly off, Marion used her flying frame's engines to push her closer aboard the ship. Once she was aboard (and safely away from the various weapons mountings), she deployed her grappling spikes and latched onto the ship. Her plasma cutter lacked the power to slice through the ship's armored hull but it would pierce a thinner interior bulkhead or door with no problem.

Soren was sitting on the toilet and frowning. The inn the group had chosen was rather dingy with a fine layer of grey dust coating every inch. Judging from the number of armed personnel around, it appeared to be quite popular with the workers from the mining conglomerates.

Right now, he was actually surprised how violent he had become a few hours ago. If Lily hadn't stopped him, he probably would have killed Rio and went after Emilena next.

He sighed and got up; right now there were probably more important things to do.

The pipes creaked and gurgled as he turned on the hot water tap.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 03, 2014, 05:37:09 am**

"Triste is fine," she said, shifting her position in the chair. She stared down at her hands, keeping quiet as someone in the inn used the taps, the water pipe's groaning reverberating through the building. Finally, it died down and Triste looked up, meeting Vergil's eyes.

"Rex was... a persuasive person," she started. "Charismatic. He had ways of twisting things around, bending the situation so people started flocking to *his* way of thinking. It was a... a gift, I suppose you could call it. When you were working as a double agent for us, we were... Alright, I'll admit it. We were worried he'd get inside your mind, turn you against us. In some

of your communications with us, it was something even *you* were concerned about." Her expression darkened for a moment. "It wouldn't have been the first time Rex turned one of our agents."

She reached out and briefly rested a hand on his shoulder. "But Vergil, listen to me. You stayed strong. I can't imagine how hard it must have been... but you didn't turn against the Federation. You didn't let Rex inside your head. Right up to the attack on his ship, you were completely on our side." Triste tilted her head. "Don't doubt yourself. You'd be doing a great agent a disservice."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 03, 2014, 12:49:21 pm**

The dropship accelerated once it had risen out of the valley and began making for the northwest, which wasn't the direction of La Paz, Bolivia's capital being further to the southwest. It was a curious turn, as the only things in this direction were Peru and Ecuador, but whatever the reason was, it seemed they weren't going back into Bolivia's interior. The dropship whined as it started making its way over the mountains and jungle, heading for its so far unknown destination.

Vergil looked up as the pipes could clearly be heard dumping their water through their innards. Jeez... was it always this noisy in the lobby? He briefly wondered if he'd made as much noise simply running his sink and flushing his toilet.

But he diverted his attention back to her as she reassured him he'd been strong, and hadn't fallen under Rex's influence. He'd maintained his loyalty throughout the mission, right up until Triste's team had conducted their infiltration and had killed Rex on the bridge of his flagship.

He relaxed visibly under her touch, and closed his eyes. "I'm... glad to hear that. I'm also glad I woke up before the Purifiers had completely erased my memory." he confessed to her here. He placed his own hand over the one she had on his shoulder, patting it, though whether this was a conscious effort on his part or not wasn't initially clear.

"So I'm thinking of booking us passage on the Bremen II, a replica of an old liner from the 30s that makes regular runs out to Voltaic Station." He held the brochure out for her to look at. "Cruise the oceans in Art Deco luxury, or so the add says. I think... I think Tony would've appreciated it." Vergil said sadly here, taking Triste's hand off his shoulder but keeping it within his own for now. "Think the government would approve of us taking first class?" he asked here, trying to put a light on the situation by offering a weak smirk.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 04, 2014, 07:30:28 am**

"Honestly, I don't think the government would approve of anything more than third class travel with cabins so small you couldn't turn around without getting a pipe up the ass," Triste muttered as she flicked through the leaflet Vergil had passed her. "But I don't see those tight fisted bastards around to stop us."

We heard that.

She gave a thin smile. The ship *did* look pretty nice... and she figured that they'd earned a little luxury on their journey to the next waypoint. Triste glanced sideways at Vergil... and gave a slight frown as she realised that her hand had sub-consciously clasped Vergil's tightly. Loosening her grip, she dropped the brochure back down on the table and cleared her throat. "So... should we wake the others up soon? Get an early start?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 04, 2014, 11:58:59 pm**

Lily was abruptly roused from a dream of being tortured by shadowy unseen forces. She took a couple deep breaths. Her sleep had not been an easy one, and she was covered in a cold sweat that reminded her unpleasantly of the inhuman body she'd used to have.

She stumbled to the bathroom and took a cold shower. It was supposed to be a warm shower but after thirty minutes the water still hadn't risen above lukewarm.

In the bathroom mirror, she glanced at her bedraggled self. Two life-threatening events later, and she didn't seem any closer to accomplishing her goal. *Ejlert Sulus North, am I any closer to finding you?*

Emilena groggily stirred awake. What time was it?

She groaned as she got up; her legs still hurt like hell. She regarded the dim light the window was casting over the horrifically messy kitchen; looks like she managed to get up at sunrise like she hoped. But then why did she feel so rested?

Foley was still out cold; Flora had her arms wrapped around him in a spooning position, which Emilena suspected was unrequited. She staggered to the sink and splashed her face with tepid metallic water.

As she got a glance outside, she noticed with alarm that the fruit shop across the street was closed. There were no pedestrians, not even early-morning ones. Odd.

She checked on the bathroom. Flora had done a good job on the ropes; their captor was wiggling and screaming into his gag, and his eyes went wide when he saw her. She closed the door behind her.

She found Nairda lying in a crumpled heap at the bottom of the basement stairs. 'Hey, get up..." she nudged him. He didn't budge. She groaned, and fondled him. Annoyingly it was the one way he seemed to respond to stimulus.

"Oh, hey, Emi~" he muttered weakly, eyes opening a crack.

"We need to leave," she told him. She turned to go get the others.

"...Emi?"

She stopped. "What?"

"I'm...I'm sorry about last night. I really screwed up."

"You just did your normal thing," she said crossly. "I should have omitted you from the options to raid the house. I was the one who made the mistake."

"But that's the thing...I don't want to be so useless..." he ears drooped. "You know my dream is to be a rapper, but if I can't accomplish drug running...how am I going to do that?"

"Then get better." Emilena turned to leave again.

"Why can't you be nice to me?" Nairda whined, tears welling in his eyes. "You were nice to Rio last night. Hell, you're nice to the whole gang except me."

"The gang accomplishes what I tell them to." Emilena rubbed her temples in frustration and sat down. "Look. Maybe the problem is that you haven't figured out what you're good at yet.

Maybe experiment and try new things. Or work at getting better at the old things. Just *try* to get better. Then people will respect you."

Nairda hung his head. "Okay..." he said, in a dismissive way she knew meant he wasn't going to do any of that. "Would you...karaoke with me? Just one song?"

She growled in frustration. "Make it quick. *Her Majesty* quick."

Nairda skipped over to the karaoke machine and queued up the R&B still in the track. "Tonight's song is for all those lovely vixens out in the audience today," he crooned in a deep falsetto. "*They been spending most their lives, living in a*--"

"Wait, what do you mean 'tonight'?" interrupted Emilena. She noticed the clock on the karaoke machine read 17:42. They'd all slept until *sundown*, not sunup!

"Everybody up!" she called, dashing up the stairs towards the kitchen. "We need to get out this town stat!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 05, 2014, 11:43:58 am**

Marita stirred from the lumpy bed. she, Rose and Marie had squeezed into one bed, nearly upon arriving at their room. all three of them were exhausted and barely paused to look at the pitiful state of their accommodations before going straight to bed. Marita was still coming to terms with Tony's death, the shock of it was starting to go away, replaced by regret and deep sadness. she took a seat in a chair and looked over the window who looked out ionto the street below. ' how do i keep getting dragged into these situations?' she sighed. She promised herself she would avenge Tony, and if that meant Rio spent his entire life in prison, then so be it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 05, 2014, 02:08:33 pm**

Vergil seemed to become cognizant that he was gripping Triste's hand, so immediately released it when she relaxed her own grip. "Uh... yeah, sure." He smiled now, nodding. "Let's do it. We'll get them started and we'll fly to Rio to board our ship, which fortunately leaves tomorrow. So plenty of time." he informed her, giving her another nod.

Turning, he headed over to the desk to book flights and tickets on the Bremen II and make the final arrangements.

It was a day later when they boarded the sleek looking liner bound for Voltaic Station in the Atlantic. The trip would take three days, so they had some time to unwind before they reached the floating resort/mining station. The cabins aboard the ship were a real delight, a marvel of Art Deco throwback that aimed to be as close to the original as possible. While the ship may have looked like she burned oil, she had a modern engine, as oil was too scarce to be used in massive ships.

She as was close to the original as possible in design, both on the inside and outside, and provided relatively fast transport out to the station, being just one of several ships that made the voyage.

It was the first night out of Rio, and Vergil was standing outside his cabin on one of the promenade decks, taking in the warm evening air and gazing out at the vast, black expanse of the sea. It was calming to him, but he still feared the nightmares he knew were coming. He hadn't slept well last night either, despite being in a relatively nice hotel in Rio.

His dreams, or memories were now the better term, were only getting worse. He wasn't liking

what he was seeing, but he had to try and stay calm, and not lose sight of who he really was. But sleeping terrified him now... as much as he wanted to remember, he also didn't want to remember as well.

Sighing, he pushed off from the railing and began slowing walking down the deck, letting his mind wander as the air caressed his face and soothed his nerves. Heading in one specific direction, Vergil turned and entered the interior of the ship, walking down the carpeted hallway, his footsteps echoing a tad as he headed to Triste's cabin. Pausing outside, the gecko rocked back on his heels a bit, rolled forward then rocked back again, forward and back, before he finally knocked upon her door.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 05, 2014, 10:49:55 pm**

Triste sat behind an expensive looking desk. Quiet, regular grating sounds drifted across her cabin as she drew her knife rhythmically against a sharpening stone, the edge of the blade scraping against the instrument. There wasn't really a need for it - her weapon was about as sharp as it was going to get. But she found the action helped her to relax... and right now, Triste needed to clear her head. This was meant to be a simple... or at least, relatively simple mission. Exploit Vergil and use him to reach the warship before Kalis. But things were becoming complicated. She'd known Vergil would be different, but still... something about him threw her, and she wasn't used to that feeling.

The large mirror fixed to the wall in front of the desk reflected her grim expression, and the expanse of her cabin. There could be no mistaking the large room for anything other than first class - huge wardrobe, a plush double-bed behind her, a window that stretched across the length of the cabin and gave a stunning view of the ocean. A round table was positioned before the window, and adjacent to it a drinks cabinet was affixed to the wall. To her left, a large flat-screen TV was hooked up, facing towards the bed. But Triste wasn't paying attention to any of these things. Her eyes were focused on the weapon as it grated against the stone.

Footsteps outside her door. Triste ignored them, but paused at the knock. She glanced up. It didn't sound urgent... After a moment, she sighed and slipped off the chair. She made to leave the knife on the table, then considered and slipped it back into the sheath near her wrist. Crossing the room, Triste unlocked the door and pulled it open, then tilted her head when she saw who was on the other side. "Vergil... Is everything okay?"

The carpeting along the ship's corridor ate away the sounds of Axel and Lily's footsteps as they made their way along the hallways to Marita, Rose and Marie's cabin. He had his arm around Lily's shoulder, and while this was partly a gesture of affection it was also to help keep himself steady as the ship rocked slightly against the waves - as they'd been preparing to go out, Axel had discovered their drinks cabinet. He'd taken perhaps a few too many sips of the whiskey.

"You know, they should really put a warning up about how strong that stuff is," he complained to her as they approached Marita's cabin, his ears drooping slightly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 05, 2014, 11:00:14 pm**

Lily grinned. "Well, considering Vergil's paying for our trip over, I don't think you've had enough," she joked.

Being able to eat in fancy restaurants and enjoy the ocean had done wonders for her psyche. She'd always held a bit of a fascination for the rich life, and this cruise was the closest she'd been to really experiencing it.

But she put on a somber face. "Now, our goal in this dinner is to help Marita and her friends

recover from Tony's death," she reminded her drunk husband. "So we need to very respectful for their feelings and memories."

Once they'd reached the cabin, she knocked several times.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 05, 2014, 11:12:02 pm**

Marita opened the door after the fourth knock' Lily! Axel! Do come in!" she said warmly. ' The girls had found their room to to be quite easily the most luxurious place they had ever stayed in, with the possible exception of Don Stracci's house. the girls were starting to feel good about themselves. there was a large drinks cabinet, but none of the girls was a heavy drinker, so they had just picked out a bottle of nice wine and took a glass each.' please, have a seat, Maries making up something quick in the microwave" Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 05, 2014, 11:23:03 pm**

Vergil shifted his eyes to look directly at Triste's. "Uh... I wanted to drop by... see how you were doing." he informed her, shuffling his feet, and averting his eyes nervously. "Truth be told Triste... I'm terrified of sleeping. My dreams haven't been the most pleasant as of late... so maybe I'm looking for something to do before I turn in... something to avoid sleeping. Call it fear... call it... superstition, call it whatever you want, I don't know... I just want to talk to you... get my mind off things... stay up as long as I can before I sleep..." He sighed here, closing his eyes and bowing his head. "I hope I'm not intruding."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 05, 2014, 11:30:34 pm**

"Is there time to stop the microwave?" asked Lily, smiling. "I actually reserved a table for five at the *Fancie D'Fare*, this beautiful little restaurant just off port bow. I was thinking we could all eat and watch the sun go down."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 06, 2014, 12:02:25 am**

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sure' Marita nodded and motioned at Marie. ' you can take it out Marie We;re going out to eat tonight." Marie nodded and obliged by stopping the microwave- she had just startedit so nothing was actually cooked- she had put in some hot sandwiches , akin to Hot Pockets. but going out to eat was better than microwave food." what time did you reserve the table for?' Rose asked Lily.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 06, 2014, 12:10:50 am**

(*Breman II*)

Soren vomited into the toilet between profanities. He had overestimated his tolerance for alcohol by a large margin. If it weren't for the pre-cocktail alcohol metabolic enhancement pill he had taken before his drinking, he'd would have ended up in a coma ó or dead.

After yet another round of vomiting, he got up and flushed the toilet. Spitting a few times in the elegant ceramic sink, he looked at himself in the brushed bronze Art Deco mirror. The mirror was a representation of the sunrise but it had the technological and kinetic edge of Art Deco.

Staring back at him was a bleary eyed and obviously drunk black haired Human. Soren sighed and flopped back onto his plush bed.

Maybe everything will be better in the morning. He looked out at the starry sky that spread over the ocean like an artist's canvas.

(Scarab Dropship)

Marion quickly hauled herself up and out of sight as two guards hustled down the desolate metal hallway. Last night, she had managed to climb aboard and cut through an exterior door. The guard who had caught her in the act was soon swift to find out that her plasma blade was more than capable of slicing through flesh and bone.

Once the footsteps died down, she lowered herself down and retracted the cable and piton she had fired into the ceiling.

She yawned under her helmet; she had gone more than 24 hours without sleep. Nevertheless, she had a job: get Tony and any information.

The Human looked at a plaque on the wall. She sighed; the medical bay was on the floor below.

(OOC - I kind of pictured it the other way around. Synthetic algal oil was used only for heavy vehicles like large cargo ships, trucks and planes because there weren't electric motors powerful enough to move them. Oh well, I can imagine the *Breman II* being at the edge where electric motors are still practical.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 06, 2014, 07:34:30 am**

Triste blinked. "Oh... Well, of course. Come in." She pulled the door open fully and stepped aside, then closed it behind him after he'd stepped through. Stepping past him, Triste walked across the room and indicated the drinks cabinet and mini-fridge. "Can I get you something to drink? Or eat?"

She was trying to keep her tone neutral, her expression amiable, but her insides were knotting. *It's getting worse... his memories... this is bad...*

Axel swayed slightly as Marie walked over to stop the microwave. "It's, ah..." He raised his wrist and squinted intensely at his watch. "We need to be there in like... ten. Ten minutes." Axel nodded sagely and lowered his arm. "We should hurry, they probably won't like it if we're late." He looked around at the others and blinked, one eyelid slower than the other.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 06, 2014, 10:00:38 am**

Vergil headed into the cabin, gratefully accepting her offer to come inside. He walked over to the chair she'd been sitting in to sharpen her knife at her desk. The knife of course was no longer there, so he slid into the chair, threading his tail out behind it and clasping his hands in his lap as he rotated the chair around to look at her.

"Yes a uh... drink would be nice, but no thanks on the food... I already ate." he informed her, taking advantage of the free food on board earlier. "Preferably liquor as opposed to beer but... whatever you have." he added quietly.

Tapping his thumbs together, the gecko gazed across to her as she went about the task. "I know I probably received training to deal with stress on missions but... I can't remember much of it." he confessed here with a sigh. "You're pretty hardened to it it seems... wish I had your resolve." he admitted to Triste here, raising his orange eyes a bit to study her face.

The dropship was starting to descend now, having traveled a long distance to the northwest. They had arrived at the Ecuadorian capital of Quito, and were touching down on the fringes of Mariscal Sucre International Airport. In this particular corner of the airport sat a large military cruiser with Kalis's logo emblazoned on the side. In fact, it seemed Kalis's forces owned this part of the airport, judging from several military APCs driving around and other Scarabs sitting on the ground.

Varanus stretched a bit and rose from the chair on the bridge he'd been sitting in. "I'm gonna go aboard the *Falchion* and report. Once I get confirmation we can bring the ferret aboard, we'll do so and blast out of here." the monitor grunted, heading for the exit of the dropship as the ramp slid downward.

"Yes sir!" replied the pilot.

"Order the crew to keep an eye out... Williams failed to report in this morning... he might be drunk on duty, but if he doesn't report in in 20 minutes, go to his bunk, rouse him, and execute him if he's sleeping. I suspect we might have an intruder on board... or a traitor. Conduct a thorough sweep of this ship while I'm gone. Keep in touch."

"Will do, sir." the pilot nodded, clutching the control column to patch into the ship's communications system.

Stalking down the ramp now, the Nile monitor headed for the cruiser sitting on the tarmac, intent on reporting his success to Lord Kalis.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 06, 2014, 03:02:13 pm**

Marie took the food out the microwave, set it on a plate and wrapped it. ' Alright, lets head out guys' She said, as Marita headed towards the door ' What name do you have the reservation under Lily?" Marita asked as she opened the door.' So we know who to tell the person at the front desk.' Rose was the first to leave the room, she turned and waited for the others to join her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 06, 2014, 06:15:58 pm**

Triste couldn't help but give a bitter smile. "You have to learn to deal with it, but... Well, it's not like I'm made of stone," she said as she reached into the cabinet and poured them each a glass of scotch. Her expression darkened slightly as she recalled some of the things her previous assignments had required her to do. "But feelings don't matter. You *can't* let them get in the way," she said softly. "The only thing that can count is the mission."

Shaking her head, she turned and offered him a glass, then walked over and sat at the table by the window. Taking a sip, Triste stared across at Vergil, her eyes meeting his own. There was a soft *thump thump thump* overhead as the ceiling fan rotated. "I know it's been hard on you, Vergil... but you're stronger than you think," she said eventually. "These... nightmares you're having... I can't imagine how terrible they are. The things you must have seen and done whilst acting as a double agent... But you have to remember, that's all they are. Nightmares." She gave the gecko an encouraging look. "And the agent I knew wouldn't let

something like that deter him from his mission. Hell, you were such a bastard, the recruits were having nightmares about *you*," Triste added with a small grin.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 06, 2014, 07:35:07 pm**

As they walked to the restaurant, Lily opened her mouth to reply but stumbled and bumped a worker who was vacuuming the carpet.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she exclaimed. "Are you all right? I didn't mean to--"

The worker looked at her, bewildered, and hastily retreated from the hallway. Lily blinked a few times, confused and offended.

"Sorry about that," stated a maÓtre d' who was passing by the restaurant opening. "Madam, he was part of our Workpaid Immigration Program, and probably didn't speak English."

He explained that any worker with a yellow-bordered name tag was an immigrant paying for their transport across the ocean through working a single voyage along the cruise ship. They are not allowed to speak to passengers unless authorized to do so, and are subject to incredibly restrictive quartering and behavioral rules.

"So do not be offended," he smiled revealing gleaming white teeth. "Can I ask the name your reservation is under?"

"Whent," Lily replied, blushing. As a fugitive, she couldn't exactly go giving her real name around to cruise liners.

"Well, Mrs. Whent, let me upgrade you to an oceanside view on the deck, to make up for that little altercation. Free of additional charge," the man led the party to their table. "A waiter will be with you shortly to take your order."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 06, 2014, 11:58:26 pm**

Vergil took the glass of scotch and swished it around, looking at it before downing the first gulp but deciding to act conservatively for the moment. Taking another swig, he let it burn his mouth for a bit in bittersweet taste before swallowing. He listened to her speak, finding himself comforted by it for some reason, but found himself skeptical of him being a bastard in training. He raised his brow, and gave her a quizzical look.

"Really? I was really that hard on others?" he asked, shaking his head. "I can hardly picture that but... I guess maybe I was, heheh. Still... funny how time can change someone... I'm more unsure of myself than anything else." He swirled the scotch around slowly again. "I've seen death before... but this was different... one of our own is gone... and it just kept reminding me of all the shit I saw in the Scorched Earth War... that was NOT a conflict worth remembering but... there it is." he said, swallowing hard.

"I wish I could be tough as nails like you, but that captivity changed me, I guess. I'm no longer that hard-boiled agent you remember me as. For better or for worse... still, how do you just switch yourself off like you do? You don't seem to get emotionally involved in anything... don't you ever get lonely, living such a life?" he asked sincerely here, and frowning a bit sadly. "I think... I don't think companionship is a weakness. I think we need at least someone to rely on in life... because I feel like I'd collapse under the strain of trying to do everything myself otherwise..." He sighed here, looking over at her. "And it helps knowing someone is out there to catch me if I fall... call me sentimental, but I don't believe we can stand on our own."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 07, 2014, 09:02:18 pm**

"How do I switch myself off?" Triste took a sip. "I guess... I just remember what's at stake if I don't follow my orders. Working for the Ivitz *can* be hard, but they've always got the future in mind. And that's what always gets me through. Knowing that, as difficult as it might seem, the greater good is always the most important thing. More important than getting... emotionally involved." Staring off to the side she smiled, almost sadly. "It's what the Ivitz teaches you. And the Ivitz is... well, it's the only thing I've ever known."

Her eyes lowered to her glass. "Yeah, I guess it can get... lonely," Triste shrugged. "I've never really thought about it before. Getting close to people on your team just makes it harder if something goes... wrong. Back before you went missing, you were the only one who made me feel like maybe I could take the risk," she lied, glancing up at Vergil. "But then... Well, you know what happened next. We all thought you were dead, and..." She shook her head and took another drink. "Sounds pretty pathetic when I say it out loud."

Axel lowered himself gingerly into his chair and looked out at the view the deck offered them. After all that had happened, something this relaxing seemed almost unreal. The rat stretched his legs under the table and sighed contentedly. "I could get used to this..." He glanced at Lily and grinned. "Mrs. Whent! How about we buy a big boat like this? Just for ourselves! We can sail the seven seas! You know, when we're not, ah... trying to stay *un*broke..." He trailed off and looked confused for a moment.

He looked over at Marita and the other two, and remembered why they'd arranged this meeting in the first place. "So... how are you taking it, Marita? We haven't really had time to talk since Tony..." Axel grew quiet, his expression morose.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 09, 2014, 07:01:05 am**

Lily nodded in agreement. "He was a dear friend, and it was so sudden..." she bowed her head, tears welling in her eyes. "But we couldn't have been hit as hard as you were..."

A jet black wolf walked up to the table, dressed like a waitress and wearing a nametag with a yellow border. "Heya! I was told you all get a free alcoholic drink cause of something that happened. What'll it be?" She whipped out a notepad and pen from between her breasts.

"Just water, please," said Lily politely.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 09, 2014, 09:10:21 am**

"And?" Vergil asked her here. "I mean... so you're saying companionship and getting close to your team members is just a weakness? That assignments are all just statistics and numbers? That really sounds... like a cold existence." he commented here ruefully. "So I should just... switch off, not care, and only think about the outcome of my actions?" he inquired, looking up at her here as he took another drink.

"If so... what separates me from Rex and Kalis? Rex took his emotions for others out of the equation after awhile... too much death and pain he'd suffered, I guess. He took greater and greater risks, and was willing to kill others as collateral damage if it meant ultimate victory over the Alliance. And that point of view changed him over time... and I don't think it was for the better. Kalis, who was already a hothead, simply played off that the more erratic Rex became; that much I do remember. The mission and victory at any cost... it just doesn't

sound... right... or conducive to mental well-being." He sighed here, looking down into his drink as he watched the ice cubes drift in the bottom of the glass.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 09, 2014, 10:16:06 am**

Soren entered the resturaunt and gave the name that Axel and Lily had made their reservation at. He was dressed in casual clothing. From all appearances, he appeared to be slightly drunk ó thanks to the pills he had taken earlier before his previous overindulgence in alcohol.

"So, how has everyone been?" He took a seat next to Axel. A Vulpine waiter gave him a glass of ice water, which he quickly drank.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 09, 2014, 03:36:36 pm**

"This mission... defeating Kalis... You don't think it's worth any cost? What'll happen to the world if Kalis wins - we *can't* let that happen." Triste put her glass back down on the table. "Vergil, what drives me is always the greater good. Achieving that goal... it can mean some hard choices. *Impossible* choices. But at the end of the day, sometimes those decisions need to be made. Killing ten to save fifty... Logically, don't you see it makes sense?" She shook her head. "That's what separates us from the likes of Kalis and Rex. The sacrifices *they* make are influenced by power. Greed. The need to... dominate others. You saw first-hand what Kalis did back in Lanthae. The slaughter of thousands of innocent lives... for no discernible reason. People like *us* are needed to stop people like *that*."

Triste sighed. "I know it's not easy to hear. Or think about. But sometimes, sacrifices just... they just have to be made. I don't *like* it. And whenever I can avoid it, I do. But sometimes, those choices just need to happen," she repeated, almost to herself. Pausing, she turned her head and looked through the window, out at the darkness of the sea. "Don't think I'm criticizing you, Vergil. I can tell you care about everyone on the team. It's... admirable." She sighed again. "It's just been so long since I've worked with anyone like that."

Axel looked sideways at the person who'd just joined them, and his expression brightened slightly once he recognised the human. "Soren!" he smiled, putting his arm around him and ruffling his hair slightly. "We're just, ah... just trying to feel better about what happened with Tony. Him and Marita were almost... you know..." He stopped and peered closely at him. "Hey, are you... are you drunk?"

The waitress arrived, and Axel regarded her appreciatively. "A free drink? Sweet! I'll have a, uh..." He looked down at the menu, his eyes slightly glazed. "...A Sex On The Beach..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 09, 2014, 04:06:38 pm**

"But that's exactly what Rex was saying!" Vergil came to his feet now. "During the Scorched Earth War he kept saying it was the only way to victory... we sacrifice here so that we gain later. It was for the greater good. It was to defeat the Alliance, who cared nothing for life and nuked every region they could if it stood in their way. They had NO qualms about killing millions! They were little better than animals! Rex wasn't getting the support he needed from the Federation at first, who ordered him NOT to engage... that the Alliance posed no significant threat." Chugging the rest of his drink, he set it down hard upon the table.

"But Rex didn't believe them! The Alliance initiated outright genocide on entire cultures of people! They didn't care! Rex too swore he'd defeat the Alliance at ANY cost... but was the creation of Rex's Rebellion afterwards too high a cost? Look at what the war turned Rex and

Kalis into! Rex became the very thing he swore to defeat! Even then the Federation still officially refused to sanction his efforts, despite them seeing with their own eyes the atrocities of the Alliance! He formed a compromise: his supporters would fight as an independent unit under Federation supervision. But what did he do? He began taking 'moral shortcuts' in order to ensure victory. He became just as brutal as the Alliance in order to beat them, because that was the ONLY way to beat them! He knew the Federation had massive reserves he could burn through in order to achieve victory, but he sent hundreds of thousands to their deaths in stopping the Alliance because he knew he could... and because he felt it the only recourse. He placed valuable generals... some your former superiors, in dangerous positions as traps to lure top Alliance fleets into ambushes where he could wipe them out, but at the cost of the bait being sacrificed as well! Is that... is that the kind of warfare you prescribe to?" Vergil asked shakily, his legs wobbling a little here.

"Is that the kind of tactics you believe in in order to achieve victory for the 'greater good?'" he asked, eyes searching her desperately for an answer. "Everything's expendable for the final goal? Is that really all there is to it? Then... then we're no different from Rex! He achieved victory through the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of lives! He'd send out units to get purposely wiped out so they could expose the weak points in the Alliance lines, then he'd capitalize and annihilate the Alliance defenses based on his findings... findings which cost ten Federation soldiers for every one Alliance soldier killed. It wasn't for greed or power back then... no..." Vergil whispered that last bit, shaking his head. "He fought so the Federation wouldn't lose, and he won... sure he won, but he left the Federation a shell of its former self, barely able to hold him off when he turned traitor and started his own offensive. He didn't truly change until after he killed the Alliance's leader in personal combat and defied his orders not to pursue their beaten remnants into the Unknown Regions. He said he wanted to make sure they'd never pose a threat to the world ever again. But by the time he came back... something had changed him for the worse... I don't..."

Vergil paused here, shaking his head as he began backing away from her. Was he really starting to remember all this? It was like his mind had opened up, unlocked a deep part of itself it had forgotten for years. The cob webs were coming off... sure he'd read about the war and Rex plenty of times, and maybe that was it, but there was a clarity to his speech as well... almost as if he was reliving it.

Sinking back down into the chair, he stared ahead, as if dazed before coming back to himself. "How does... how DOES what you just said make you or me any different from him and what he was doing? He was doing it for the greater good too... to stop the genocide and nuclear strikes... but was he any better than his opponents? Huh? Was he?" the gecko almost demanded, and it was evident he was hurt and struggling with his inner feelings.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 09, 2014, 11:22:46 pm**

Marita ordered a glass of Hot Sands Wine, and stared at her water glass ';' Well its slowly starting to sink in' she said finally.' Tony and I were not an official couple, the date we were going to go on was to be our first. still, I was looking forward to it, to see what he was like when he didn't have to bear the legacy of his family. And he would have been the first guy I'd have dated since college, which was , oh about 8 years ago. I've dated Great Danes, Newfoundlands, Bernese Mountain dogs, cats, badgers, and a few other species, and for the most part, they were good guys and girls, but well, there wasn't that 'click' you get when you meet someone who compliments you very well. What hurts the most about Tony, is the lost potential, to learn if there was something there between us. I'll never know now, of course." Marita breathed heavily, as she swirled the water in her glass. "I appreciate you doing this for me Lily and Axel. This is something I needed."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 10, 2014, 04:07:23 am**

Lily nodded somberly. "But what you have to remember is that you're not alone," Lily smiled at her. "We're here for you. Especially Rose and Marie, your best friends.We can support you and we can remember Tony together." She took a deep breath. In a few minutes she planned to tell the others about Ejlert...

The waitress returned with Axel's and Marita's drinks. She also had a bubbling light green liquid in a can she gave to Soren and two warm cream-colored cocktail glasses for Rose and Marie. "I thought I'd throw these in here. This does wonders for a hangover," she said kindly to Soren, noticing his countenance with an air of understanding. "And for you madams," she smiled at Rose and Marie, "the Hibiscus Extract is our most popular drink. Has a powerful, deep flavor. We just didn't want your friend to drink alone, and don't worry, they're on the house."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 10, 2014, 05:53:37 pm**

He sure does love listening to himself speak… Triste arranged her features into a sympathetic expression, and put on a soft tone. “Kalis and Rex were always monsters. But back then, before they turned traitor…” She crossed her arms in front of her. “I can understand the choices that were made. I already told you that I don’t like having to make those kinds of decisions. And if there’s a way around them, I’ll always try to find another way. But what if that isn’t an option? The needs of the many will always outweigh the needs of the few.”

She raised her eyes to meet Vergil’s, staring at him evenly as he sank into the chair. “We can argue the ethics of how they handled the war before they betrayed us until we’re blue in the face, but the fact is that now Kalis is the one threatening the world with genocide, and we’re the ones trying to stop it. We can’t afford to be weak. If – and I’m saying *if* – there’s a difficult choice to be made, and there’s no alternative, we have to be prepared to make it. Because otherwise, we lose.”

"Right... we've gotta stay together if we're gonna get through this," Axel nodded, sipping his drink contentedly through the little straw he'd been given. As the waitress handed the exotic looking drinks to the others, he looked over at Lily, and saw she seemed slightly anxious... probably about the news she'd told him she was going to break. Axel reached across and touched her hand, giving her an encouraging, if slightly shaky, look. *It's okay.*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 10, 2014, 06:12:08 pm**

"No... I refuse to believe that they were always monsters. There's no way the Federation would've recruited them if they had been. Rex and Kalis were called heroes at one point... they were the best of friends, and remained inseparable, even after their treason. They didn't start out that way... that's where you're wrong." he told her flatly, shaking his head. "And that's what makes me worried the most about the outcome of this mission. If we're willing to compromise our own values to defeat Kalis, there's nothing stopping us from becoming just like him or Rex. Nothing separates us from them..." He stood up again here, crestfallen.

"Those are choices I'm not willing to make. I know what's at stake, and I'm admitting to you right now that I can't see it through if it comes to that... I thought I could rely on at least someone in this group... but it turns out... it turns out I was wrong." he said with dejection, and turned away from her now. "I can't follow ideals that place ones I love below my mission." He began heading for her door now. "Tell Fugate to send me a new team... ones I don't know and won't have time to grow attached to. If you don't, I will. There's no reason for any of you to continue this insane mission any longer. You'll only be liabilities to me, or hindrances, if that's the term you prefer. I need to do this without distractions... and without interference. I'm sorry Triste... but the mission has changed. If I wasn't so involved it'd be fine... but I made a promise to protect you, and others, and I'm not even sure I can keep that promise

anymore."

Turning as he reached her door, he glanced back at her sadly. "I wish... I wish I could fight these feelings... suppress them... but I'm not like you... I just can't switch off. Already I'm growing to care about you in a dangerous way... a way that could compromise us... I need to stop it here." he informed her, almost pleadingly. Tears were forming in his eyes, and it was clear he was trying to fight off these new feelings within him, struggling to keep a level head about him. It was clear he wanted desperately to do something else... to not have to put up this wall between himself and her, but his own inner regret was winning out, and this struggle for dominance was faltering on the side of caution.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 11, 2014, 08:35:12 pm**

"Remember the briefing we had with our superiors all that time ago? Do you remember what you were told about Kalis?" Triste asked as Vergil headed for the door. "'His only goal is chaos and destruction'. You don't just become that kind of person. You always are that person," she disagreed, her eyes narrowed. "Monsters can have friends. And the Federation can make mistakes." *You naÔve fool,* she added silently.

As he turned around, Triste's expression flipped back to its concerned and sympathetic faÁade. "If you want to replace the other members of the team, that's your prerogative." Keeping the original members would have been safer in preserving his memories, but if he truly wanted new individuals it was no skin off her back. "I can arrange to have replacement members waiting for us by the time we arrive at our destination. Though I wish you would have considered this sooner. You must have known the danger you'd be placing them in when you requested them." She stood up and took a step towards him. "But I'm going to have to correct you on one thing. You said there's no reason for me to continue this mission? I can think of one reason that's in this room. You. I was put on this mission to protect you, and that's exactly what I intend to do. You have to stay alive for us to succeed. But more than that…" Her fists tightened. "Godammit Vergil, I told you I'm not made of stone. I already lost you once before. *Not again.* I'm going to stay and help keep you safe, and there's not a damn thing you can do about it." Most of this was pure fabrication, of course… but somewhere deep, deep inside, the feeling she was pouring out, the desire to keep him from harm, rang true – and the realisation made Triste hate herself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 11, 2014, 10:35:14 pm**

"But that's the thing... Rex wasn't a monster at the start... and never would've befriended someone who was... I just don't believe it." He shook his head here. "Impulsive and hot-headed maybe... but monster? No. I specifically remember Kalis cautioning Rex ABOUT finding the waypoints, as he feared it would lead to their court martial by the Federation. He strikes me as someone who started off much the same way Rex did... and I believe there might still be a fragment of his old self left within him. Whatever changed Rex out there changed him too... for the worse. I'm just trying to remember what it was... or if I went out there at all with them."

He paused here to listen, his hand falling from the doorknob as she explained a few things. "Well I DID consider it sooner, remember? I made the request in Bolivia, but you overruled me." he pointed out. But there was more. She finally admitted it... she didn't want to lose him again... and it wasn't just because she'd been ordered to keep him safe... there was more there... genuine concern, and the gecko relaxed visibly, his face melting into a softer expression.

A smile began to play on his features here, and he pushed off from the door and walked back towards her. Stopping before her, the gecko's tail swished from his right to his left as he adjusted his weight in the same manner. "Well... I'm glad... I'm glad I'm not just some statistic for you to protect." He smirked here, then, without much warning, he thew his arms out and

embraced him, pulling her against him, or himself up against her, as he moved his feet as well. Without waiting for her permission, he closed his eyes and leaned in, going for a kiss. It was abrupt, but he no longer cared. This was how he'd been hoping things would culminate, but only if she wanted it; he hadn't been joking when he'd said he needed something to keep his mind off darker thoughts.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 12, 2014, 12:43:44 pm**

Thank you' Marie said as she took a sip of the drink. it was as the waitress said, a powerful drink, one that had fruit overtones, Marie thought it tasted somewhat like punch. Rose drank from hers , looking over at Marita, who smiled at Lily ' Yes, it is times like this where you find who your real friends are. We must persevere through this. Tony would not have wanted us to leave this mission because of him, and I'm not leaving. We have to find the rest of those things, before that madman does. Otherwise, our world, quite literally, will cease to exist, in any civilized form. We are playing a dangerous game with dangerous enemies, with very high stakes, and in games like that you lose people. We may lose others in our group before the end, its a real possibility. But I, for one, am going to see this through, no matter what."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 12, 2014, 03:09:53 pm**

"True true..." nodded Lily solemnly. "I'm glad you don't want to give up." She took a sip of her water to calm her nerves. Her allies had proven that even the death of a beloved colleague wasn't enough to sway them. They had earned the right to know why Lily was on this mission.

She took a deep breath. "There's something I should tell you all.....uhh..." she trailed off for a second. She felt *weird* all of a sudden...

The waitress returned to the kitchens, sliding her notepad back into the top half of her dress.

Nodding once to a cook, she ducked past a walk-in freezer to a large set of wafflers, which were used during breakfast but at the moment were deactivated. Crouched behind them was Emilena, dressed in a security guard's outfit.

"Did you do it?" Emilena whispered expectantly.

Flora grinned. "Yes ma'am." She scratched her scalp; the black dye was giving her a bit of a rash. "Nice dose of powdered biproxytol in each of their drinks, especially Rose's. Had to drug Lily too, sorry."

"Oh, I'm sure!" But Emilena couldn't hide the sneering grin spreading across her countenance. "And Soren?"

Flora nodded perkily. "He got the green stuff! Hallucinogenic blend, right?"

Emilena snorted. "God, this is gonna be hilarious. Too bad we can't be there to see it."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 12, 2014, 04:52:59 pm**

Marita suddenly began convulsing, as the biproxytol began to take effect. ' dear God..' she grunted 'someone spiked our.. drinks..' Rose' was forced to her knees , her body visibly shaking ' Marie's face began working, she had never used biproxytol, even though several of the girls on staff at the Black Sheep had drug habits, she hadnt been one of them. so this packed a special punch for her."What..' she grunted ' stuff did they put in there.'

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 12, 2014, 06:23:22 pm**

Triste gazed back at him as Vergil drew closer to her, as he pulled her up against him. She smirked. “Hey, don’t get all high and mighty just because you’re not a statistic.” *Alright, you’ve been here before. If this is what it takes to keep him* – Then Vergil leaned in closer, and her thoughts were interrupted as his mouth pressed against hers. She stiffened slightly… and then relaxed a moment later, allowing it to happen.

But it was more than that, more than just acceptance. She was pressing herself against him, firmly, insistently, wanting this to happen. The feeling hit her like a jolt of electricity. Almost as a reflex, her fist shot forwards, hooking under his arms and driving powerfully into his stomach, winding him. Grabbing his shoulders roughly, Triste spun him around and slammed Vergil’s back against the wall, trying to take out her frustration, to drive the confused thoughts from her mind. “You lost the last time we tried to get in some *extra training*,” Triste growled as she pushed him back and kissed the side of his neck. “Feel like trying to give it another go?”

Axel took another sip of his cocktail, then glanced to the side as Lily trailed off. "What? What's the matter, are you okay hon-" Grunting from across the table made him swivel around, and he blinked as the three women opposite him started shaking. "Marita, come on... What are you talking about? Why would anyone spike our drinks?" He was about to say more, when he realised that the table was too big for them to hear him. How had they been able to talk before? They looked miles away. Axel's eyes widened, turning as big as saucers. The drinks! All their drinks! They were melting, melting into the atmosphere like a rainbow made of honey and dreams! *Wait... What if rainbows ARE honey and dreams?!* The rat nodded solemnly to himself, as he pieced together the puzzle. This was *huge*... fuck, he needed to write it down.

"Lily! Lily, get me something to write with!" Axel stammered as he spun back to her. "I understand it now..." He gaped, sniggered then burst out laughing. "When... when did your... head turn into... into a robot?!" Axel managed to gasp between hysterics, wagging a finger towards her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 12, 2014, 07:11:09 pm**

At a table near the group, a taller man with slicked black hair and a small ponytail watched the ordeal over a glass of water. The other man sitting at his table was there simply for the onlookers and to nod every time he said something, but they weren't having a real conversation. Instead, the first one was reporting back to Kalis's flagship. "So far nothing... no clues as to where the last waypoint is... but... we need two still, don't we?" he asked, getting his confirmation a second later. "Mm... we might need to employ another strategy... didn't we capture one of them earlier?" he asked quietly, getting a subdued nod from the other guy at his table. "Perhaps we could use him... get the information we need. Hold on... something's happening..."

And so something was. "Drinks were spiked" was going around the table, and from the way the group was reacting, it was clear they'd been drugged. Smirking to himself now, he pyramided his fingers and watched with amusement inconspicuously. "You'll never guess what just happened, but it seems our competition continues to give them fits... this'll be interesting..."

Out in Quito, Varanus walked back onto the dropship. "Seems we have a change of plans." He muttered, nodding at the doctor they had on board. "Give him this..." Varanus held up his

datapad for the doctor to read, and while the doctor seemed surprised, he nodded wordlessly, and moved to the medical bay, to where Tony was still in his chemically induced coma.

"Too bad we can't just kill him... and the don." Varanus mumbled, shaking his head.

"I figure there'll be time for that soon... I can always inject him with nanomachines that'll stop his heart on our signal." the doctor suggested.

"What's the point? He's the least threatening of their group, and we need to find information on those waypoints. Just inject him with what you've been ordered to, or I'll snap your neck." the monitor threatened.

"Calm down... take it easy..." Pulling out a syringe and loading it into a gun, he placed the gun squarely on the unconscious ferret's head and injected it right into his brain. "There... all set."

"Load him onto the *Falchion*... now." Varanus ordered, and the doctor motioned for two soldiers to start pushing his levitating gurney out towards the ship while the monitor went on ahead, his job done for now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 13, 2014, 10:10:13 pm**

Lily tried to push back with her chair and succeeded only in tumbling heels over head as the chair tipped backwards. Nursing her head, she looked blankly at Axel and tried to reply. "I don't...uhhhh...."

What am I doing? she thought blankly. *No...it's not what I'm doing...It's WHAT I'm doing...What am I doing? Out here...doing this...why am I doing this?*

How do we perceive our own deaths? she thought, and an icy flash of panic shot through her. She could see it...eternity...the endless void of nothingness that awaits us all...the annihilation her real body has already encountered. *When I die, will I finally be one again? Will it finally be over? Even more over than usual when one dies?*

What if I'm already dead? What if I've ALWAYS been dead but just never noticed? What if everyone here is dead...RIGHT NOW.

All this time she was staring glassy-eyed at a seashell nailed on the ceiling beam as part of the decorations. Just staring at the seashell with drool coming out of her mouth.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 14, 2014, 03:51:41 am**

"Yeah, slightly," Soren replied to Axel's inquiry.

A few seconds later, the Rat suddenly burst out laughing. "What's so funny?" he asked. He looked around. The resturant was subdued and quiet with patrons eating dinner and enjoying cocktails. Several stares went their way.

It was then when Axel started talking about robot heads that he realized something was terribly wrong.

Namely the moment a lithe dark haired woman in fatigues emerged out of the bread basket.

"Carson, what are you doing here?" He seemed totally oblivious to the fact that a Human had emerged from a place that was physically impossible to fit into.

"You're never there for me!" the woman demanded.

"It's not true! I was there to greet you once you returned from your tour as a civilian augment repair tech for the military!"

"Yeah once! You live in your cushy house and do easy jobs while I get shot at amd other such shit! Well this ends now!"

With a snap of fingers as loud as thunderclaps, the landscape began to melt and twist. The elegant resturant had been transformed into a bombed out ruin.

Marion watched the whole scene from behind a tree. Her night vision gear had allowed her to see what had just transpired. She moved closed and ducked behind a landing strut.

Her hear raced. As tough as she was, she was outnumbered by a large margin.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 14, 2014, 03:18:12 pm**

"Dammit, just... hang on..." Triste muttered as Vergil pulled at her shirt. Pulling her knife out she sliced through the buttons, letting the clothing fall to the floor. Moving back to him, she felt a stiffness pressing against her thigh. "Well... at least you're not *totally* useless," she smirked, glancing down and giving him a squeeze. Raising her knife-hand, Triste touched its point against the side of his throat briefly, then drew it down, the blade cutting through his top. Tearing it off Vergil, she pushed up against him, her tail wrapping around his legs. She moved her hands up, exploring his bare chest.

Abruptly, Triste's tail tightened around him and she twisted, knocking Vergil off balance and throwing him to the floor. Dropping the knife and letting it land point-first on the floor next to his head, she straddled him, gripping his wriste and holding his arms down as she bent closer. "Think it still works properly?" she breathed as she leaned in and bit his shoulder, her sharp teeth not quite piercing the skin.

Axel giggled at the robot next to him, then gasped as he realised he was letting too much of his drink melt. Too much! Reaching out, he snatched up the amazing capsule was was somehow able to contain the beautiful colours. Ramming the straw in his mouth, Axel sucked the glass dry then leaned back, sighing contentedly.

This is... this is amazing.... Wait, why did I think that?! Or that?! Or that?! Axel shuddered. *Godammit, why did I shudder? I didn't choose to... Who's telling me to do all this stuff?* Desperately, he turned to Soren and grasped his shoulders. "Soren, I... I don't know how to tell you this, but... but someone's controlling me! I'm... I'm just someone's plaything! Some sick fucker's *puppet*! Look, I'm going to hit you, and *someone's making me do it*!" Axel slapped Soren around the side of the head. Fireworks exploded outwards from the impact. "Ooooh!" He gasped.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 14, 2014, 10:10:06 pm**

Tony was taken aboard the cruiser, which sat there on the tarmac for the moment, though it seemed the crew was making preparations to lift off.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 14, 2014, 10:35:47 pm**

(*Breman II*)

To Soren, the playful slap felt more like a vicious punch. He staggered back and shook his head to clear his mind.

He looked around the battered restaurant. No one was here except him and an Augment Rat trooper. That asshole must have been the one who sucker-punched him!

"The fuck's your problem!?" Soren thundered.

The rest of the patrons filed out of the fancy restaurant as Triste and Vergil began to make out. At least, the patrons who didn't leave when Marita, Marie and Rose began to show the effects of acute biproxytol intoxication.

Of course, there were a few who were hanging around out of morbid curiosity to watch this clusterfuck unfold.

(Unknown Airfield)

Marion felt the landing strut shake slightly as the cruiser prepared to lift off. Deploying her grappling spurs, she dug them into the metal strut and clung to it.

She would wait until the strut began to retract after takeoff, latch onto the ship's hull and get Tony's body.

As the ship shuddered again as the engines warmed up, the Human swallowed. She only had one chance to do this!

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 15, 2014, 08:39:46 pm**

(**ooc** - Vergil and Triste aren't in the restaurant, though now that you mention it, that would have been awesome)

Triste stared deep into Vergil's eyes as she felt his arms tighten against her. Her claws dug into him, an attempt to drive away the feelings of genuine pleasure she was deriving from doing this with... *him*. "You'd better hope it works... or we can chalk up another loss for you," she muttered, her breathing getting heavier as she reached down with one hand. Gripping him tightly, Triste guided him in. Her breath caught as he entered her, and gritting her teeth she started grinding her hips on top of him.

"You... you don't remember any of this... from before?" she grunted between thrusts. "Well I guess... it can't hurt to... try new things..."

For us both...

Axel gasped as Soren's voice roared in his ears. "No, you don't understand! I'm the master of my own destiny now!" He closed his eyes tightly. *Okay, you can do this! I... ah, I mean, Axel stood up and struck a heroic pose, his huge muscles bulging out of his shirt!* Slowly, he opened his eyes and looked down at himself. *Yes! Standing up... check. Heroic pose... check. Bulging muscles... well, two out of three isn't bad. Alright, um... Axel did a star-jump!* He did a star-jump. *This is amazing... I'm in control here! And now, to use my powers for good. Axel flipped across the table like a... a ninja, and helped Marita and the others be happy again.*

He flopped on the table, floundered for a second, then wriggled across to the other side. Tumbling over the side, Axel approached Rose and shook her by the shoulders. "You look sad! Be happy! *Happy!*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 15, 2014, 10:00:55 pm**

Marita and Rose were now fully aware of the drug they had been exposed to- and damn it all if they didnt have the anti-biproxytol serum on them. Rose had been given some as part of her treatment, but she hadnt brought it with on the trip, as she got very nauseous from using it. that decision was now coming back to bite her. Marie was vomiting loudly, and writhing on the floor in agony. Maritas grunted from a fetal position ' that psychotic bitch.. is going to pay...' she hissed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 16, 2014, 12:22:51 am**

The *Falchion's* engines suddenly roared into life, and she began to lift off vertically from the tarmac. Her struts began to retract, and it seemed as if the vessel was on her way to who knew where.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 16, 2014, 12:45:00 am**

(*Breman II*)

Soren watched as the Augment Rat suddenly vanished. And a horde of hideous biomechanical undead emerged from the ground.

Heart racing, he looked around for something to use as a weapon. He kicked one of the monstrosities that tried to grab him as he groped around for something.

The Human felt his hands wrap around a hard metal tube. Seizing the metal tube, he belted one of the zombies across its decaying skull. The impact splattered brain matter as well as bloody wires and other circuitry across the floor.

"Come on you fuckers," he growled, brandishing his weapon.

By now, the restaurant had emptied out as patrons and staff began to call for medical attention.

Two Vulpine waiters rolled Marie on her side so she wouldn't choke on her own vomit. Two burly Augment Humans removed all furniture away from Marie. They didn't bother restraining her because their metallic limbs were likely to cause severe injury.

(Mariscal Sucre International Airport)

Marion remained with *Falchion*'s landing strut until it retracted to the point she could cling onto the hull. Or at least she tried to. She swore upon receiving an electric shock upon contact with the ship's hull. The Human was unharmed by the jolt but her flying frame and associated suit were not electrically insulated.

Deciding to take a different tack, she jumped off the the landing spur moments before it retracted and ignited the flying frame's engine. Thanks to the noise of the ship's engines, she

was unheard as she flew at an upward angle.

A quiet *thump* was heard as she landed on the ship's deck. She looked around. No one present.

Good.

She froze as she heard a door open. Ducking behind a cooling stack, she carefully watched as a large Bison lit up a cigarette and took a deep puff.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 16, 2014, 10:28:33 am**

The maÓtre d was nervously loitering around the area, trying to figure out how best to alleviate this disaster more than it's already been.

A paramedic waved his hand in front of Lily, who had frozen on the floor. "Ma'am? Ma'am?" he quickly alerted a friend. "This one's unresponsive. Get us an oxygen mask and Benzodiazepines."

Sailors began clearing the hallways that connected the restaurant to the infirmary.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 16, 2014, 07:00:14 pm**

Despite herself, Triste felt a grin play across her face. "It's gotten better," she breathed, wincing slightly with each thrust. Her tail darted out suddenly and snaked around his neck, tightening slightly as she drew him up, pulling his head towards her chest. "Flexibility isn't bad either," Triste whispered as she kissed him back, her thighs gripping his waist.

Soon, she started to pick up the pace, pushing back against him insistently. Triste gritted her teeth as she felt her climax building. Her breaths became quicker, urgent as a pressure within her grew. It was almost unbearable... and suddenly, it washed over her - an explosion of feeling, tuning out everything except for the two of them, in this one moment. Unable to help herself, Triste let out a small gasp. Her claws raked across Vergil's side and she sank her teeth into his shoulder as she shuddered on top of him.

Axel shook his head in disbelief as he heard Marita grunt the words 'psychotic bitch'. "Hey, no need for that... I'm just trying to help you understand that you're being con... uh, controlled..." He turned away sadly, his feelings deeply hurt, and saw that a merman dressed as a paramedic was trying to sort out Robot-Lily.

"No, no," he scolded, staggering towards him and putting a fatherly hand on the paramedic's shoulder. "She's a robot. Oxygen and that other thing you said aren't gonna work. We obviously need oil or something. *Stat!*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 16, 2014, 09:30:42 pm**

A lizard paramedic raced over with a can of oil.

"Are you listening to the juiced-up rat?" exclaimed the first paramedic angrily. "Where are my Benzodiazepines?"

"You're not the boss of me!" shouted the lizard angrily, who started doing push-ups to assert his dominance.

"Dammit, without Benzodiazepines we're going to have to get creative," grunted the first paramedic. He pulled out a defibrillator. "We're jumping straight to electrconvulsive therapy. Apply nodes!"

"Applying nodes, sir!" reported a lemur nurse.

"Apply paddles!"

"We're on non-sovereign waters!" cried the lizard. "Your authority is not recognized!"

The first paramedic applied the paddles. "*Clear!*"

Lily's body convulsed as repeated electric shocks blasted through her. With each shock she hiccuped and sent drool flying everywhere.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 17, 2014, 01:09:06 am**

The *Falchion* began heading east, across South America. It seemed to move slowly, as if the crew were in no rush. While it could jump between gates with the technology it had on board, there was no immediate need to so, apparently.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 17, 2014, 05:38:43 pm**

Several of the paramedics were pondering how to get close to Soren, given the fact that he was in the middle of a hallucination and swinging around a fire extinguisher.

The first paramedic who had tried to help him had been moved to the infirmary after Soren knocked him unconscious with said fire extinguisher.

"I say we tackle him," one of the medics said.

"And end up like Freidson?" a Percheron medic countered. "Every time someone gets close to him, he tries clocking them with the fire extinguisher!"

One of the medics, a lean Common Krait swayed back and forth as he pondered the situation. She then turned to two of her fellow emergency workers. "Grab the net launcher from the security office."

She then turned to a Human medic. "Get the syringe with the azylperidol."

(OOC - Azylperiodol is a fictional analogue of the real life antipsychotic haloperidol. The fictional version is stronger and faster acting than haloperidol but its effects persist for longer. It is also more toxic. In addition, its effects are strongest in Primates and Swine.
It has limited effect in Canines but there are safer medications. It is useless and causes serious toxicity in Bovines. On Equines, it causes agitation instead of sedation.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 18, 2014, 06:10:42 am**

Triste let out a shaky breath, her eyes closed as she leaned forwards over Vergil. For a moment she didn't say anything. She just lay there, feeling strangely... peaceful, for the first time in a long while. But then, slowly, it dawned on her what had just happened. No, more than that - she'd had sex plenty of times with marks as part of her cover in the past. But this had felt different. *She'd* felt different.

Swallowing, she straightened and looked down at Vergil. "Yeah... yeah, it was..." she said eventually. Reaching down, Triste yanked the knife off the floor from beside him - and for one instant, one crazy instant, was almost tempted to drive it through his eye and into his brain. For getting into her head. For making her feel like this. But instead, she simply tossed it over to the desk, the weapon clattering as it struck the wood, and sighed. Rolling off him, Triste stood up and walked over to the window, still nude. More than anything, she was angry at *herself*, for allowing herself to enjoy it. *What's the matter with you? Have you forgotten who... Well, at least it seems to have settled him down...* "It's been so long, I'd forgotten how it... how it felt with you," she said quietly, looking out into the darkness. Suddenly, she felt like she couldn't stand to be in the same room as him. "Vergil, it's getting late. We should get some rest for tomorrow," Triste muttered, looking over her shoulder.

Axel watched with fascination as the merman paramedic used the paddles on robot Lily, unmindful of the chaos around him as Soren engaged in battle. Robot Lily convulsed with the shocks, and Axel threw his hands up in the air dramatically. "It's alive!" he cried. "How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to perform?!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 18, 2014, 08:45:50 am**

Murcitol" Marita gasped to those helping Marie to not choke on her own vomit' it.. was.. biproxytol.. we.. cough.. need.. an antidote. Now.. Ow" she said, her limbs shaking. while it had been several years since she had taken biproxytol, Marita remembered only too well the symptoms from a large dose. how well you tolerated it depended on your prior use and tolerance of the drug , those who were unused to it, were in serious trouble, as Marie was..Rose , who had been using biproxytol longer than Marita , was panicking, as the very drug she had worked so hard to free herself from had suddenly come back into her life through a spiked drink. and she was not reacting nearly as well as when she was addicted to it. Rose was swaying to and fro, almost like a very drunk person.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 19, 2014, 01:43:20 am**

"Can I tase him?" asked the lemur nurse, holding her defibrillator at the ready in case Soren struck.

"That's not a taser!" exclaimed the head paramedic. "And no! Wait for the net!"

"Net, sir!" reported an intern, running into the room.

Disappointed, the lemur walked up to Axel and pushed him to the ground. "He's being non-cooperative!" she shouted, "I want it on the record! Tasing!"

She whacked Axel with the defibrillator repeatedly. Behind her, Lily had been placed on a stretcher and was being wheeled to the infirmary.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 19, 2014, 02:06:06 pm**

Vergil pushed himself up, watching the still nude Triste walk over to her window and admiring her backside. It almost sounded like she was dismissing him. "Uh... we're... done?" he asked her here, moving over to get his clothes. "But it was... it was good, right?" he asked, starting to fade a bit as his body wound down. "I was uh... kind of hoping to maybe just stay here for the night... bed's big enough if you'd have me... I mean if you're... if you're concerned about tomorrow, I won't keep you up. I'd just love to spend the night here... that's all." he stated.

"Still... if... there's something wrong... I could go." he added softly, picking up his mostly torn shirt and shaking it out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 19, 2014, 08:24:49 pm**

Triste sighed softly, her breath misting up the window. "It was. It was good," she said quietly, still looking out. "It was *really* good." Turning around, she looked Vergil in the eyes and shook her head. "There's nothing wrong... at least, you've done nothing wrong." Crossing the room, Triste gently stroked his cheek, then kissed him on the lips. "I promise. It's just... you've been missing for so long. And I'd just gotten used to the idea that you wouldn't *be here* anymore. But now... now you're back. And I guess I just... after what we just did, it really, finally hit me," she lied. "You're really here. You're alive."

Triste gave a small, sad smile. "I just need to be alone. To think." Lowering her arm, she clasped Vergil's hand. "We can talk about this tomorrow. I'll be *ready* to talk about it tomorrow. Okay?"

Axel yelled as the Lemur began her vicious, nefarious attack. "Non-cooperative?! I'll show you non-cooperative!" he cried between blows. He started mustering his strength to begin the long process of climbing to his feet. "I warned you! *Ninja-Axel leaped to his feet, eager to do battle-*"

Then the lemur clocked him heavily on the side of the head, and Axel settled back down on the deck, suddenly feeling very sleepy as he watched pretty stars dance in front of his eyes.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 20, 2014, 09:05:17 pm**

He kissed her back, but mostly let her do the work on this one as she explained that it had finally hit home for her that he was still alive. "All right... I understand. We'll... talk tomorrow... then." he stated, and still clasped her arms, but slowly let her go now, releasing her from his affectionate grip, and turned to depart. "I'll uh... yeah... speak to you tomorrow." he stated, giving her a small wave, and departed her cabin, moving quickly to his own as his clothes were kind of barely on thanks to how she'd slashed them up.

Getting into his room, he pushed the door shut with his back and smiled a bit, thinking on what had just happened. It was odd... he couldn't remember ever sleeping with her before... no rushing memories, nothing flooding back... but it was a great sensation all the same... one he wanted to repeat and repeat if he could.

Heading over to his bed, he glanced briefly out the window at the black sea, then proceeded to stretch out and clasp his hands on his stomach, closing his eyes and regulating his breathing to attempt to fall asleep, though his mind was still full of thoughts of what he'd just experienced.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 21, 2014, 01:54:33 am**

(*Breman II*)

The intern with the net launcher took aim at Soren and fired. A large carbon-fiber net flew out and expanded to its full ten foot diameter.

Soren saw the net and tried to dive out of the way but he tripped over a dead zombie (really his own foot).

Upon impact, the net wrapped itself around him, completely entangling him. He swore profusely as he tried to free himself.

The medic with the syringe ran up and jabbed Soren in the thigh with it. Soon, the thrashing Human became still. He motioned over four more medics who removed the net from him and strapped him down to a gurney.

He too was wheeled off to the infirmary.

(Mariscal Sucre International Airport)

Marion waited until the Bison had finished his cigarette. As soon as the red light of the cigarette went out, she made her move.

The door to the ship's interior locked shut with a dull clank after the crewman had passed through. It was no obstacle to Marion though.

A pale pink glow radiated from the plasma cutter hidden in her right forearm extended. She plunged the blade into the metal door, sparks flew and molten metal dripped as she quickly sliced through the door.

Retracting her cutter, she lifted the cut apart door and carefully leaned it against the bulkhead.

She stepped through the threshold, revealing an austere stainless steel hallway with two doors labeled "closet" flanking a stairwell heading downwards.

Marion shrugged, removed the pistol from her right leg's internal compartment and headed down the stairwell.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 21, 2014, 05:16:51 am**

Triste smiled at Vergil as he left - and it quickly vanished once the door had clicked shut behind him. Her expression darkened as his footsteps faded, and once she couldn't hear them anymore Triste turned and stalked across the room, grinding her teeth as she sat down heavily at the desk again. She stared at her reflection in the mirror opposite, eyes narrowed as she regarded herself with something approaching disgust - and suddenly her teeth bared as she felt a hot burst of anger run through her.

"*Son of a bitch!*" she hissed in frustration, her fist darting out and slamming into the front of the desk, the impact rattling the mirror. There was a sharp pain in her hand, and Triste glanced down to see blood welling from where the skin had split open. "*Fuck,*" she spat. Putting her elbows up onto the top of the desk, Triste slouched forwards and rested her head in her hands as she let out a heavy, bitter sigh.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 21, 2014, 01:42:07 pm**

In the infirmary, the ship captain sorrowfully shook his head. "Looks like I picked the wrong day to stop smoking," he observed solemnly.

The paramedics sedated Marie, Marita, and Rose, as they were the worst cases.

"Once we reach our destination we can get them to a proper hospital," reported an underling. "We don't really have the proper equipment on board to really deal with a breakout of this nature."

"Sir," a security guard snapped off a salute. "We've completely shut down the restaurant, and will be investigating the food to find the source of the drug, and whether any other customers were harmed."

"Very good, ensign Foley," the captain nodded. "I look forward to seeing the security footage."

"We've already got the most important part," Foley handed him a printout of the waitress. "This appears to be our culprit, a black fox. She's not on the roster of any staff, but security footage shows her leave the restaurant before the lockdown and return to Cabin 213. We're sending men there now."

"Dammit, we're not apprehending her without me!" the captain snapped. "On the double!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 22, 2014, 10:07:12 pm**

Axel gurgled on the stretcher he was stretched out on, waving his arms in front of his face and muttering something unintelligible. The side of his head was starting to swell impressively from where the lemur had put the defibrillator to good use. Snickering to himself, Axel rolled over onto his stomach, and as his foot twitched he lapsed into what was either a deep sleep or a mild coma.

Outside in the hallway, as the Captain rushed from the infirmary, he bumped into a small boy, dressed immaculately as one of the cruise ship's attendants, who was balancing a large bottle of champagne and two glasses on a metal tray. A small sticky note was pasted to the bottle with *Cabin 159* written on it. The boy staggered from the impact, the champagne bottle wobbling precariously. "I'm very sorry sir! So sorry!" he stammered in a voice that wouldn't melt butter, bowing profusely as he backed away. The Captain hurried away, and as he turned out of sight the boy stopped bowing and glowered after him. "You fucking prick."

Turning, Rio flicked his head back to straighten the little cap that was placed over his neatly combed hair then continued up the corridor, turning right and eventually stopping outside a door with the number 159 on it. He started to raise his fist to wrap on the door... then stopped, eying the alcohol. Blinking, Rio looked up and down the corridor. Nobody. "Fuck it," he said, shrugging, then made his way further up to a door marked *Storage Closet*. Nudging it open, Rio heaved the champagne off and tossed the tray in. Peeling the foil from the top of the bottle, he stepped through and started to pull the cork out as the door swung shut behind him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 24, 2014, 04:21:08 pm**

"This isn't how I trained you, Nairda!" the special agent reprimanded harshly.

"But-but...Kojurro I don't..." The young ensign shivered in the drafty midnight wind of a desolate canyon two miles out from boot camp.

"Remember what I taught you." The agent threw a shovel at him. "I chopped her up, now you have to bury her. Your parents would be so disappointed if they knew you never learned how to be a team player!"

"oh god, oh god oh god....." Nairda stammered--

Abruptly Nairda was awakened from his stuporous dreams by a pounding in his head and on the cabin door.

Where was he? As he slowly came to, he answered his own question: the cabin Emilena rented for him. Specifically, laying on the bed reeking of paint.

"Open this door up right now!" someone yelled. "In ten seconds we're kicking it down!"

Nairda stumbled to his feet. His tongue burnt with an acrid aftertaste he recognized as biproxytol. Emilena must have drugged him. But why?

As he opened the door, abnormal air movement between his legs and a heaviness on his chest informed him that he was dressed in women's clothes with a stuffed bra. In any other situation, this might have aroused him somewhat, but the captain busting in, shaking him by the collar, and shouting "WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO YOU SON OF A BITCH?" dampened his loins somewhat.

"I...er...huh?" Nairda stared blankly.

"You heard me asshole," glared the captain. "What in the world inspired you to go wreck one of our finest establishments with your little prank. Who the hell are you anyway?"

Lieutenant Foley wrinkled his nose as he entered the cabin. "Yikes! I don't know if he's higher on paint fumes or drugs."

"Do you know what that stint cost us?" the captain shouted, shaking Nairda like a Cornish game hen. "Answer me you bastard!"

Nairda stammered the first thing that popped into his head. "Oh god oh god oh god oh god..."

Foley searched the room and came up with docking credentials. "Nairda Kibagami. Part of the Workpaid Immigration Program. Looks to be homeless with no assets. You know the type."

"You worthless bitch!" snapped the captain at the crumpled figure still clasp in his iron grip. "You're not even worth suing! How the hell did you get past our vetting process?"

"I--I--I..." Nairda stammered, wide-eyed. "I--I--I..."

"You what?" muttered the captain through gritted teeth, and stopped shaking him long enough to hear a reply.

"I--I'd just wanted to give her a tip..."

"I don't think you're getting anything intelligent from him," Foley remarked, as Nairda began hyperventilating. "Shall I escort him to the brig?"

The captain glared at him, wild-eyed. "You think *the brig* is good enough for this...this *dog?* NO. I'm wiping his worthless carcass off the face of this Earth!" With that he began dragging Nairda down the hall towards the deck. Foley followed, quickly sounding objections, and the security team followed excitedly.

After a few minutes of silence, Flora peeked out from under the bed. Crawling her nude body over to the door, she flipped it shut and then crept to the shower to wash the black paint off her upper body and legs.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 26, 2014, 12:47:20 pm**

The next day, the *Bremen II* approached Voltaic Station. Vergil knew security was insanely tight here. Everyone getting off the ship was subjected to thorough screenings and checkpoints were set up to prevent infiltration to any of the more sensitive areas of the station. There was no way they could even think about going underwater right off the bat, as the defenses down there were formidable enough to repel an outright military attack on the valuable mining facilities. Judaken kept a tight watch over its mining operation, and jealously guarded it with what some said was the most sophisticated security system on the planet, second only to the security at Judaken's corporate headquarters.

He hadn't yet heard about what had happened to his comrades last night, nor was that his priority this morning either. Already, announcements were being made throughout the ship about proper security procedures for disembarkation. Knowing he'd have to surrender his weapons upon entering the resort, the gecko tried to remember how deep the ocean was here. He googled Air France Flight 447 on his smartphone, noting the depth of its debris field to be at over 13,000 feet down... so over two miles. Lacking such deep sea equipment necessary to reach those depths, he figured there was only one way to get down there. What he didn't know was that security was extra tight today, as the ship had reported last night's incident to the station.

Exiting his room with his rolling bag and donning a pair of shades, the gecko headed for Triste's cabin. The sooner he got off this ship, the better. In order for his plan to work, he'd have to execute it swiftly. A quick get-in, get the waypoint, and get out. Thanks to a government search executed by Fugate last night at his request, the gecko now knew something about the station that no one else did, or at least, something that anyone who wasn't on Judaken's payroll would know. It was key to his plan: a real trump card, so to speak for accessing the waypoint.

Stopping outside the spider gecko's room, visions of last night flashed before his eyes as he rapped on her door.

Unfortunately for Marion, the security systems on the *Falchion* were more in-depth than they were on the dropship. As the cruiser needed to maintain pressurization throughout its flight, an alarm immediately alerted the bridge that someone had cut through an outer bulkhead door and was now present inside the ship. "We've got an intruder!" the ship's captain announced. "Airlock 18! Detachment 19, report to that sector immediately and secure her!"

"Who's the unfortunate imbecile who decided to infiltrate my ship?" Varanus asked, striding forward here.

"Unknown currently, sir, but we'll find out soon enough." the captain assured him.

Varanus grinned. He was looking forward to torturing whoever this was and finding out who she was before he killed her. Detachment 19, a special security force on board the ship, began making their way towards Airlock 18 as the captain lowered a secondary bulkhead door in place to secure the breach and maintain pressurized flight.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 27, 2014, 06:45:07 am**

Triste jerked awake at a sharp knocking noise. Sitting up, she groggily realised she'd fallen asleep slumped over the desk, the side of her head aching from where it had been pressing into the wood. Glancing to the side, she blinked in the sunlight pouring through the window and saw the ship was approaching Voltaic.

Cursing quietly, Triste pushed herself to her feet and headed for the en-suite bathroom, quickly splashing water over her face. "I'll be right there, just... just give me a moment," she called out, drying herself off with a towel. Leaving the bathroom, she hurriedly pulled on some new clothes, purposefully avoiding looking at her torn shirt. Crossing the room, Triste tugged the

door open, blinking when she saw Vergil standing on the other side.

"Oh... Vergil. Hi," she said, forcing a smile on her face. "Sorry, I just... Ah, I didn't get a lot of sleep last night. Just give me a few minutes to pack, and I'll be ready." Backing away, she gestured as she headed for the wardrobe. "You can wait in here if there's something you wanted to talk about," Triste said over her shoulder.

Axel groaned, stirring on the stretcher. Sitting up slowly, his face turned an alarming shade of green at the sick sensation in his belly, his stomach feeling as though it was doing back flips. Blinking and wiping drool from the corner of his mouth, he looked around and tried to understand where he was. What *was* this? Some kind of... infirmary? What *happened* last night? He could remember drinking, drinking... and drinking some more, then heading out to the restaurant with the others. After that, the only thing he could recall was a strange mixture of happiness and shame.

His attempts at recollection ended abruptly when his bleary eyes settled on the other shapes in the room. Grunting, Axel rolled off the stretcher and staggered across unsteadily to where Soren and Lily lay. "Eugh... Soren? Honey?" he tried, gently shaking their shoulders. "I think... I think we ate something bad last night..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 27, 2014, 12:54:42 pm**

"Hm." Vergil chuckled lightly, accepting her offer to step inside. "Too busy thinking of last night?" he asked, joking. "But no, there's nothing I really wanted to discuss. I've got my plan for getting to the waypoint thanks to a report Fugate sent me last night. It should be fairly straight-forward, and far less risky than trying to just go in there and crashing the party. Their defenses are far too formidable for that. So I've got a simple yet perhaps elegant solution to our problems." the white gecko stated.

"Anyway, I want to debark as soon as possible. Sorry if I caught you at a bad time." he apologized, noting her rushing about. "I thought you'd be up by now in all honesty. But it's all right. Remember... we can't take any weapons in so... best store them now, as they'll only be confiscated on the way in." he reminded her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 27, 2014, 01:38:57 pm**

(Voltaic Station Infirmary)

Soren groaned as he heard Axel's voice coming though his drug fueled haze. As his vision cleared, he found himself in a room smelling of disinfectant.

"Motherfucking hell, what happened?" he asked. He tried to move his arms, only to find that they were strapped to the bed. That immediately cleared his mind. "The fuck is this!?"

At his shout, a Fruit Bat nurse ran into the room. "Mr. Almaya," he said. "Please calm down."

Soren bit his lip to keep from screaming at the man. He took a breath and slowly exhaled. "Okay," he said. "But I want to know why I am strapped to a bed and in the fucking hospital!"

The nurse was unfazed. "You were suffering acute psychosis from an overdose of fenazomide hydrochloride. Luckily, your body seems to have cleared the drug from your system."

"All I had was some green cocktail to drink."

The nurse nodded. "That cocktail tested positive for fenazomide hydrochloride."

Soren's eye twitched. "Can I leave now? I came to Voltaic Station for a vacation, not a hospital stay."

The nurse brought up the Human's medical chart. "Everything checks out. I'll go get Doctor LeBlanc." The nurse then exited the room.

Soren then turned to Axel. "I have a feeling this goes beyond a case of bad food poisoning. And right now, I want some answers, namely who spiked our drinks."

(OOC - fenazomide hydrochloride is the name of the hallucinogen that Emilena spiked their drinks with. It's normally used as an anesthetic for Avians and Reptiles but it causes serious hallucinations in mammals.)

(*Falchion*)

Marion swore as a secondary bulkhead closed off the area that she had cut through. They knew she was aboard! And she had no desire to meet up with the armed guards.

Sheathing her plasma cutter, she took a few steps and her feet morphed into their hoofed "running configuration" as she bolted down the stainless steel hallways.

Heart racing, she eventually came to a y-junction. The sign to the left read "Reactor Silo". A stairwell heading up was the right fork. A sign next to the stairwell read "Crew Quarters".

She made her decision, she began to rapidly climb the stairs. Whereupon she ran into one of the reactor technicians. Time seemed to slow down as she tried to finagle her way out of this situation. Unfortunately for her, there was no way she could do so. The man's hand was on the collar of his uniform, so she assumed he was speaking into a lapel mike. Left with no other option, Marion slammed her metal fist into the man's head. Flesh and bone proved no match for solid metal driven by powerful electroactive memory metal muscles. The man's head practically exploded under the powerful impact.

"That was close," she muttered as she wiped the gore off her augments. She looked down; there was some blood on her flying frame and suit but she could clean that up later.

Leaving the nearly headless corpse in the stairwell, she continued upstairs.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 28, 2014, 03:02:02 am**

"They threw him overboard?" exclaimed Emilena. She and the other gang members were having one last meeting before the time came to disembark.

Foley nodded. "Like a sack of potatoes. Captain even registered it in the official log; it turns out that those papers we signed gives the cruise liner pretty healthy leeway to do as they please with problematic members of the Workpaid program."

Flora fidgeted. "That could have been me sleeping with the fishes if the plan hadn't worked perfectly..."

Emilena thought. "For all his faults, Nairda has a strong survival sense. Once we dock, we should find our way down to the shores and try to rent passage out."

"'Strong survival sense?'" interjected Foley. "He was thrown into the middle of the ocean! While high on biproxytol! That's beyond 'survival sense'!"

"Yeah, if his survival sense was that good he would have stopped hanging around us long ago,"

noted Flora.

She was interrupted by a knocking on the door. "Are you almost packed?" an irate cleaner snapped. "I need to be done with this hallway in under ten minutes!"

Lily slowly awoke feeling incredibly nauseous. "Urgghhh..." As her head slowly cleared, she remembered the past night and the drug-induced existential crisis it had wreaked on her.

A nurse came running. "Don't get up just yet," she cautioned. "You've got some pretty potent cocktails running through your IV right now, you'll throw up everywhere."

Lily groaned and relaxed her muscles. "Where are my friends?" she asked.

"The boys are giving the doctors a hard time in their own room. Both should be fine. The girls were hit far worse than y'all, and have been sent to the Voltaic ER immediately for rehab. Hope they got some nice medical insurance," she remarked wryly.

"Medical...oh god, we have to pay for this, don't we?" Lily shut her eyes, cheeks burning. "What's the penalty for failure to pay Medical bills in this country?"

"You don't wanna do that," the nurse added hastily. "Just warning ya. Also, you've been perscribed these." she handed her a small white box. "Cessation patches. You're gonna be feeling some severe biproxytol withdrawal for...could be the rest of your life to be honest, and these really take the sting off. They're a bit pricy but I suspect you'll soon find it worth it."

Lily groaned again. Her mouth felt like parchment. How could this get any worse?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 28, 2014, 02:02:54 pm**

“Fenazomide Hydrochloride?” Axel frowned slightly. “I don’t know… the aftertaste seems more like 2,5-dimethoxy-4-bromophenethylamine to me. Ah... don’t ask how I know that,” he added shiftily. “And who’d want to spike our drinks?” Axel considered, running through the list of potential enemies they'd made. “Who on this ship right now would want to spike our drinks?” After a moment, he shrugged and held a hand down to Soren. “Well… we’re not gonna figure it out down here. Let’s see if we can find the others.”

The nurse quietly re-entered the room and cleared her throat. “I almost forgot, here’re your medical bills.”

Axel took the slip of paper she handed across, and blinked down at the number printed on it. “Ah, I… I can pay by card, right?” he rasped, his throat suddenly dry. “I just, ah…” Axel patted the side of his jeans. His pockets felt alarmingly empty. “No… no, come on…”

“Are you looking for your wallet?” the nurse asked. “Sorry to tell you this but up on the way here, you started struggling and… well, your wallet kind of flew out. It fell overboard. There was nothing we could do.”

“Son of a bitch!”

She smiled helpfully and turned to leave again. “Well, I’ll let you two get on.”

“We’ll be out in a minute!” Rio barked. His voice was slightly garbled from the cigar clamped between his teeth which he’d found whilst relaxing in the storage closet last night. “Take a hike, fucktard!”

"… *You're* a fucktard," came a despondent reply from behind the door.

Inhaling, Rio plucked out the cigar with two fingers and puffed out a cloud of smoke. "If only we'd put some kind of tracker, or bug on him," he noted, tapping off the end and kicking the ash away from him. Looking up at Foley, Rio grinned. "It's a pity they didn't throw your fat ass overboard. You could've floated in, no problem."

There was another knock on the door. "Rio! Room 159 never got their champagne, they're making a complaint! What the hell did you do with it?!" a different voice called through. "And I gave you money to get me something from the vending machine, where's my *Nutrageous* bar?"

Blanching, Rio stubbed out the cigar and quickly zipped up his bag, hoisting it over a shoulder. "See you guys up on deck," he told the others as he pushed open the small port-hole window and wriggled through, climbing up and out of sight.

"Well, there's nothing wrong with your ego," Triste said over her shoulder as she threw her belongings into her bag. Zipping it closed, she turned and heaved it from the bed then reached for her knife. "Don't worry, I'll stash this away before we go in." Taking one last look around the cabin to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything, Triste nodded to herself and crossed to the door, pulling her bag behind her.

"So, there's a plan this time," she said, standing aside so Vergil could step out and closing the door behind them. As they walked down the corridor, she glanced out one of the windows, taking in the heavy security outside. "Looks like we'll need it… having these guys come down on us wouldn't be too fun."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 28, 2014, 07:18:04 pm**

Vergil noted too the heavy security at all the gangways. Voltaic Station was a massive mining station/floating hotel. Passengers got off the ship nowhere near the industrial side of things. The hotel itself was a modern marvel, as all the suites were underwater, the hotel itself partly submerged and moored to the ocean floor via giant pylons. Above the Atlantic's surface rose 15 stories of restaurants, shopping plazas, offices, and entertainment centers. For the truly adventurous, a water slide ran from the roof all the way down to the ocean, twisting around and dropping multiple times before it deposited its rider with a splash into the sea.

While guests could move relatively freely about the hotel, the mining station was another story. Security checkpoints at every conceivable entrance had been set up, and if your DNA wasn't recognized passing through one such place, there'd be little left to identify you as a living person afterward. Of course, ample signs were posted to warn guests not to enter these areas, and the hotel was designed in such a way that no real access could be gained to the mining station except via a few corridors, all heavily monitored.

As Vergil got in line, no less than six scanners had been set up for this gangway of the ship, and the gecko was able to move up rapidly enough. "No fun at all..." Vergil agreed with Triste softly. As he was waved forward to a scanner, the security officer presented him with the usual question. "Reservation please." Digging around in his pocket, the gecko pulled out his confirmation number and held it out for the officer to scan.

"I'm afraid there's a problem with my reservation." Vergil said simply as he stepped into the scanner with his bag, which immediately detected his energy blade. Opening the zipper up and tugging out his weapon, he held it out for confiscation. Holding his arms above his head as the scan continued, the officer gave him a quizzical look. "See it turns out I'd like to cancel my stay here... or at the very least, shorten it. I'm changing my plans. As a matter of fact, I came here to help you out with your sub-aquatic problem." Stepping out of the scanner now and taking his bag with him, the officer seemed beyond puzzled.

"Huh? What problem?"

"You wouldn't even know about it... you don't handle that division. Contact your chief of security. Tell him I'd like to speak to him. Tell him I'm here to clear up the issue the station's been having; he'll know what I'm talking about." Vergil said simply, as if it were the most normal thing in the world to discuss.

"What in god's name are you..."

"Are you going to contact him, or should I?" Vergil asked, looking directly at the officer from behind his shades. "Just tell him exactly what I told you. Well go on." the gecko pressed.

Shaking his head and turning sideways to him, the officer radioed in. "Uhh yeah we got a crazy down here asking to see the chief. Claims he can solve the station's 'sub-aquatic issue', whatever the hell that means." A pause, then a look over to Vergil. "You have credentials?"

Vergil pushed his sunglasses down a bit and gave him a "Really?" look. "This isn't exactly the type of job you have credentials for." he responded sarcastically.

"He says it's not that kind of job. He insists the chief will know what he's talking about. All right... hold on." He informed Vergil, waving Triste to move into the scanner. As the process started, the guard seemed surprised by something, and he looked over at Vergil now. "Turns out you just got an appointment with the chief. Drop your shit in your room and we'll escort you to him."

A smile began to spread across Vergil's features. "Thank you." he responded simply.

"She's heading up towards the crew quarters." the ship's captain reported. "Seal off the area! Ensure she can't escape!"

The countermeasures were put in place, with heavy bulkhead doors starting to slam shut throughout the crew quarters' areas. "Heading up, eh? Well why don't I start heading down to meet her?" Varanus asked. He still didn't feel as if he could vigorously enter into combat, but what could a pathetic augment do against the likes of him?

Turning from the bridge, he moved rapidly to one of the lifts, cramming himself inside and hitting the button to descend to the crew deck.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 28, 2014, 07:50:20 pm**

"Just be careful about what you've got on you!" Emilena hissed hurriedly as Rio disappeared. "They check *everything* at the security doors!"

"Yeah, how we sneaking past those?" asked Foley, grumbling slightly as he regarded his excessive amounts of fat. "I was hoping to butter up the captain so he let me skip those, but I wasn't buttery enough. Somehow."

"Hard to believe!" giggled Flora, missing Foley's self-deprecation completely. "You know, cause you're so fat!"

"That was the--" Foley started, but Emilena silenced them both by opening the door to the hallway. "Sorry for the delay," she said dismissively to the cleaner, and led the way off the boat.

Lily tried to get to her feet again. she did indeed feel a burning desire for what she could only guess is more drugs, but it wasn't as bad as the nurse claimed. Perhaps her psionic self-healing is alleviating that. Well, thank god.

"I'd like to go see my husband," she stated firmly, staggering to the door and ignoring a proffered wheelchair. "Will you take me or must I find him myself?"

At the security checkpoint, every member of the Workpaid program was aggressively patted down.

"What's this?" one guard asked Flora gruffly, roughly grasping her crotch.

Flora moaned huskily and blushed. "Mmmm. I call it my 'Venus Flytrap'..."

Suspiciously, the guard took her in the back rooms and it was almost an hour before they let her out again.

"For god's sake, what happened back there?" asked Emilena, as Flora finally emerged into the post-security waiting area, clothing rumpled and with a satisfied smile plastered on her face.

"Wouldn't you like to know," she stuck her tongue out.

"Hrmmm. I'm going to go try and find Rio." Emilena marched away to customs.

Flora and Foley sat quietly for a few moments.

"...so really, what happened back there?" asked Foley.

Flora shrugged. "Strip and full-body cavity search. Then they had a bunch of questions about how I look like I do."

"Oh." Foley paused, hoping she'd elaborate. "...So, how *did* you come to look like that, anyway?"

Flora smiled. "Wouldn't you like to know..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 30, 2014, 03:29:00 am**

(*Falchion*)

Marion swore as bulkheads began to seal the area off. She looked at them; they appeared to be too thick to cut with her plasma cutter.

She then looked at the ceiling. It was good ten feet off the ground but it was too narrow in this area for her to fly. Not to mention, there was a high risk she could end up severing a fuel line ó and with the hot plasma in close proximity, a fire was sure to result.

"Well shit," she muttered. She sprinted towards the other door only for a bulkhead to seal it off.

She shook her head. "Fuck this!" Her left arm's piton gun deployed and she shot the metal spike into the ceiling. Reeling herself up, Marion deployed her grappling spikes and clung to the ceiling.

(Voltaic Station Infirmary)

Doctor LeBlanc, a dour-looking Sand Viper, slithered into the medical bay with his tablet tucked under his arm. He bought up Axel's medical chart and nodded.

"Well, Mr. Whent, it seems that the hallucinogen has been removed and you no longer show symptoms. Now if you'll please read and sign these forms, we can get you released." Doctor LeBlanc slithered up onto a nearby chair to hand the Rat the tablet so he could read and sign the discharge form.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 30, 2014, 06:23:20 pm**

Ashen faced, Axel took the tablet and scanned the writing on it numbly. The information leaked straight out of his brain as soon as it went in, his mind per-occupied with trying to process the streak of bad luck he'd been having. Ears drooping, he signed his name and handed it back to LeBlanc with a disheartened "Thanks."

"The others who were brought in with us... they're around here, aren't they?" Axel asked as he started to make his way towards the door. "I need to see Lily... Ah, I mean my wife." Turning around, he locked eyes with Soren as he started backing through the doorway into the corridor beyond. "I'll see you outside?" Axel said, assuming Soren would be good to go as well.

Stepping up to the scanner, Triste pulled out her knife and held it out handle-first for one of the officers. "Make sure you don't lose it," she said drily as a thick, beefy man took it from her, the corner of his mouth seeming to tighten as lights overhead gleamed on the razor sharp edge. As she raised her arms, the scanner making a faint hum as it set to work, she caught the story Vergil was spinning.

Keeping her expression neutral, she stepped forwards as the scan was completed, hefting her bag behind her. Taking position beside Vergil, she gave a brisk nod at the officer he'd spoken too. "I'm his aide," she said, seeing a smile stretch over his face in the corner of her eye.

At customs, Rio was standing before a smaller scanning machine, through which his bag had just passed. An tall officer sitting just to the side frowned as the scan revealed something, then leaned forwards and snatched Rio's bag off the rack. "And what is this?" he demanded in a thick Russian accent, unzipping the side and drawing out a small, pink teddy-bear.

"Mr. Snuggleshoes, my best friend," Rio said as the guard shook the toy in front of his face, little arms and legs flailing.

"There is something inside of this... Mr. Snuggleshoes," the man sneered.

Rio blinked. "Er... love and dreams, and all that shi... I mean, stuff?" he tried as the officer turned the bear over in his hands and plucked a Swiss Army knife from his pocket.

"No, I think not, little boy," the officer said, flicking out the blade attachment. His fingers brushed against a small button on the bear's foot. "*I love you!*" the bear warbled in a sickly sweet voice. The knife darted down, cruelly ending the bear's crooning as it sliced up across the chest, fluffy white stuffing spilling out. Rio gaped, appalled. Then, all of a sudden, something brown poked out, and the officer whistled enthusiastically. "Aha... as I thought." He plucked out the cigar that had been shoved inside. "I do not know how you got this, little boy, or why you try to smuggle in. But this is very dangerous. Hazard of fire. Hmn... and very expensive." He held it up, and sniffed it. "And *good*." Looking around, the officer tucked it into his shirt pocket. "I take as... evidence." He tossed the butchered remains on the bear onto of the bag and jerked his thumb. "Now go!"

"Hey, that's not -"

The officer squinted. "Where is mommy?"

"Ah, she's..." Turning, Rio gave a small start when he saw Emilena heading through the crowd. "There, she's... she's over there." He swung back, quickly picking up his bag as he pointed out the vulpine. "I'm adopted."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 30, 2014, 08:20:23 pm**

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marita came to slowly, finding herself strapped to a bed. She felt like a weight was pressed on her chest and her mouth fe;t like iot had been stuffed with cottopn balls.. ' ah'' she muttered as a girafee nurse came in' good you're awake Miss Jones, Miss Rose and and Miss Marie are still not fully conscious yet. the three of you were exposed to very concentrated doses of biproxytol, fortunately thanks to our treatments your bodies have now flushed them out. our tests showed that your had some resistance to the drug..
-
I used biproxytol when i was younger.. its.. not something I'm proud of "Marita admitted. " Well it saved your life, as that level of dose would have been fatal for someone who wasnt used to it. marie over there is lucky we got her the antidote in time. she was redlining.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 30, 2014, 08:31:06 pm**

The process was repeated with Soren. Fuming, he signed the discharge form.

He got out of bed and headed out to the entrance of the infirmary. Pouring himself some water from a water cooler, he sat down and slowly sipped it to calm his churning stomach.

He then turned to Axel. "I don't know about you but I want some fucking answers."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 30, 2014, 11:16:17 pm**

Vergil headed to his room... or more correctly, *their* room, since Vergil had booked himself and Triste into the same room, both on a whim and to maintain their cover. The suite was sumptuous, with an upper loft and a lower level with a kitchen, sofas, big-screen TV, and lounge area that looked out onto the expansive window that offered a stunning view of life under the sea. While all hotel rooms were under the water, not all had views of the ocean of course.

Their bed was up in the loft, which was accessed via a small spiral staircase that led up; it too looked out to the majestic vista. Fish of all kinds swam by the blue waters, which were made bluer by lighting along the hotel's sides.

Propping his suitcase up on one of those hotel holders, Vergil unzipped it and retrieved his credentials, stowing them away in a pocket as he nodded at the view. "Lovely suite, isn't it darling?" he asked Triste, as if they were a vacationing or honeymooning couple. They were listed under false names of course, making their stay here rather anonymous. Still... their stay wouldn't be that long, if Vergil could help it. Perhaps just one night, and that would be all.

Outside their door, a security officer waited patiently. "Ahem." He cleared his throat. "I'm Jenkins... one of the senior security staff here at Voltaic. I'll be taking you to Chief Grierson's office. You'll need special steps to pass through security though. You'll be vaporized by our sensors if you pass through them without your DNA being put into the system, so... if you don't mind..." he held out a small needle now to take a sample from each of them.

"Not at all." Vergil replied, spinning around now. "Darling that thing you can do with your skin... is that embedded in?" he asked curiously he held out his finger for Jenkins to prick, which he promptly did so, the gecko's hand recoiling a bit from the sensation.

"Sorry... should've warned you it stings a little." Jenkins apologized.

The lift carrying Varanus reached the level Marion was on, and the big monitor stepped out, beginning to stomp purposefully through the corridors. "Fee, fi, fo, fum! I smell the blood of a bloomin' coward!" he crowed. "Come out, come out... wherever you are... I know you're on this level..." With a loud hum, his blade was activated, and he began stalking towards her position, which was currently around the corner from where he was. "You may as well give yourself up now! If you talk... I'll make your death painless! Of that, I promise you!" he declared, snarling as he began rounding the corner...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 31, 2014, 02:17:14 am**

Lily noticed Axel in the hallway with relief. "Axel!" she ran up and hugged him. "Are you all right?" She glanced at him. He had bloodshot eyes as well. "You were drugged too...how are you feeling now? Where's the girls?" she asked.

She noticed Soren too. "Are you all right, Soren? Do you have any idea who did this to us?"

"Rio, what have you gotten yourself into now?" sighed Emilena. "He's with me, sir," she hastily told the officer.

"This is your son, then?" he inquired.

"He..." Emilena paused. "...yes. My son."

"Why is he not with you?" the guard asked, handing the disemboweled bear back to Rio.

"He must have gone back for his sister's teddy bear! Which we'll have to buy a new one...but that's okay," Emilena added hastily.

"He said it was *his* teddy bear..." the guard added suspiciously.

Emilena smothered Rio in kisses. "I was so worried when I couldn't find you at customs!" she cried tearlessly. "I was afraid you'd been...raped or sold for your kidneys! I can't thank you so much for finding my darling boy safely!" she exclaimed at the guard, palming him a hundred credits. "Take this and my eternal thanks!"

She hustled Rio away. "You never tell anybody what just happened," she warned under her voice as they approached Foley and Flora.

"Rio!" Flora came in for a hug. "Where were you? What happened?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **July 31, 2014, 09:37:40 pm**

His legs still feeling a little shaky, Axel staggered slightly as Lily hugged him. "Hey... I'm alright. Just don't ask me to do the limbo anytime soon," he said, smiling a little queasily as he wrapped an arm around her. "I was worried... I'm glad you're okay too," he added, not mentioning that she didn't look like a million dollars either. At her question, he shook his head. "I... I've got no idea where they are. I was hoping you'd know, they put me and Soren in our

own room."

Sighing, Axel glanced between Lily and Soren and shrugged his shoulders. "Alright, ah...well... Look, I say the first thing we should do is find the girls, and Vergil and Triste, wherever they are. Whoever drugged us was on the boat, so they're probably somewhere around here. And if they were trying to, ah... harm us, we'll be safer in a group. Once we do that, at least we'll be in a better position to think what to do next." Axel blinked and looked around. "Agreed?"

Rio squirmed uncomfortably in Flora's embrace, trying to keep away from her lower half. "Nowhere, just by the machine... things. Some cockmunch stopped me." He slipped from her grasp and scurried next to Foley. "Good job my mom was there." Rio glanced at Emilena, smirking at how uncomfortable it had made her. "Thanks for that, by the way. Next time I make a score, I'll pay you back."

Looking around, he saw they were still a man short. "Still no Naird... There's gotta be something we can do, right? Some way to find him?" Now that he'd found a group of people who seemed like they might actually *care* about him, Rio was determined to do what he could to help.

"Yes, sweetie," Triste said, nodding as Jenkins withdrew the device from Vergil and moved towards her. "Fairly deeply, actually." She looked at the officer and gave a shrug as she held out her hand. "Just a small party trick." The needle sank into her flesh, and she winced slightly at the jolt of pain.

After a moment, the procedure was completed and the needle was lifted away. "Mr... Jenkins, is it?" Triste said, glancing down at the drop of blood welling on her finger. "I must say, I'm *extremely* impressed with the security at Voltaic. Most places would be satisfied with the use of armed guards. But these DNA sensors..." She flashed a small smile at Jenkins. "I wonder if you have any other tricks up your sleeve."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **July 31, 2014, 09:54:51 pm**

Soren nodded as he looked around. "Good idea, but I'm unarmed right now. I left my weapons in the luggage since we can't bring them on the resort."

He then turned to Lily. "I'm not sure. I don't recall hearing any other cases except our group so that rules out a malicious prank. And kind of doubt Vergil and Triste want to poison their allies."

He then watched as a Dhole with her two pups in two passed by them. The Human then rubbed his forehead. "And furthermore, why a hallucinogen instead of a poison?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 01, 2014, 12:54:30 am**

"Plenty, miss, but they're all proprietary, of course." Jenkins chuckled here, leading the way as Vergil locked the door behind him with his card. "And well, we take security here very seriously, considering what we're mining about two miles down. It's some of the rarest element on the planet, and our competitors would love to get their hands on it... so we're very well protected from external and internal attack."

"Good to know your parlor trick is good to go." Vergil stated as he walked alongside Triste here. "And yes, the facilities here have so far been very impressive."

"You should see Judaken's headquarters. It's the most secure building on the planet, even more so than some of the government buildings in Corona. But you know what they say about money... you pay a man enough, and he'll walk barefoot into hell. It makes the impossible, possible." Jenkins commented as he led them down a service corridor. "No wing is without cameras, no... ah but I couldn't say more even if I wanted to." he chuckled here as they rounded a corner to a scanner. "Just step on through like so..." Jenkins demonstrated. "And you should be good to go. I uploaded your data to the computers while we were walking... so hopefully everything goes as planned, right?" He asked here, laughing at the two of them as Vergil hesitated.

"Oh come on! I'm mostly joking! You should be fine."

"Didn't Don Stracci employ something like this around the perimeter of his house?" Vergil asked uneasily. Gulping, he nodded at Triste. "I'll go first..." He stepped forward before she could protest, and closed his eyes, but nothing happened.

"See? It's accurate, it is! Nothing to worry about!" Jenkins chuckled again.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 01, 2014, 01:20:28 am**

Marion ignored Varanus. She held her pistol steady with her free hand as her helmet took in the surroundings.

Once she had a shot at his head, she would take it. All she had to do was wait.

"Come on, round the corner!" she muttered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 01, 2014, 11:21:42 pm**

"I guess they didn't want us dead," murmured Lily. "Only distracted..."

She snapped her head up. "Have any of us seen Vergil and Triste since the drugging? They didn't even come to visit us in the hospital! We need to check and make sure they're okay!"

Flora's eyes lit up. "You're Emi's *son*? I should have guessed!"

"No no no...for god's sake," Emilena cut her off. "To answer Rio's much more intelligent question, we are going to make our way to the beaches and rent a boat. Then we'll see what we can do on the deep blue sea. Foley, you're in charge of navigation, do you think you could map out the currents and wind directions to figure out where Nairda most likely washed ashore?"

Foley's mouth went agape. "...*No?* Why in the nine levels of hell would you think I could do that?"

Emilena waited silently for the punchline.

"...but I bet if I asked my buddies online we could find someone who can," he concluded.

"Great. That's what I want to hear." Emilena led the way towards the non-checkpoint exits. "Any questions?"

"Do you think you ever actually could be a mother?" Flora asked excitedly. "Have some cute little cubs with a dashing gentleman...or equipment-compatible gentlewoman?"

Emilena wrinkled her nose. "I assure you I'm as infertile as they come. Thank god."

She glanced at Rio and almost added, "No offense, Rio," but figured he knew what she meant. Truth be told, he was significantly more likeable than she thought any child ever could be.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 02, 2014, 04:23:19 pm**

Rose stirred in her hospital bed, and soon realized she was strapped down. ' Where.. am .. I?' she said in a tired and strained voice. "In the medical wing at Voltaic Center' the Giraffe nurse said " Good to see you are awake Miss Rose.." My drink.. was spiked ' Rose muttered ' Yes,with a very high dose of Biproxytol. your body had some Resistance to the drug, indicating past use ' yes I was heavily addicted to the stuff, but had been sober for the past several months.. why do you think someone spiked the drinks?' Rose asked the nurse. " well, whoever did it either knew a lot about you, or knew that biproxytol is one of the worlds most addicting drugs- its lethal in high doses to those who have not used it before- and wanted to get even for something, who knows."
Marie stirred a few minutes later and moaned' gods , i feel like i was walking barefoot over a course full of red hot coals. " the nurse turned to her ' ah good, you're awake Miss Marie. the toxin is out of your system and you should be free to go in an hour or so.' Marie sighed as she sett;ed back against the pillow.
The Nurse then went over and unstrapped Marita allowing her to get out of the bed and get to her feet.' Thank you' Marita said ' just have a seat and be quiet for a bit, while i tend to your friends ;' the nurse said as she went over towards Rose and Maries beds.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 03, 2014, 06:30:51 pm**

Axel's eyes widened as he took in what Lily said. "Son of a bitch..." What if she was right, if whoever had drugged them had done it in an attempt to get them out of the way to isolate Vergil? *Are Kalis' guys behind this?* From what he'd seen of them, it was more likely his men would put a bullet through their skull while they slept... but it was the best explanation they had so far.

"Shit... alright, well, if they *are* okay - if nothing's wrong - they'll probably be in their room, getting ready for when we look for the..." Axel looked around nervously, making sure nobody else walking through the corridor could hear them. "Well, you know." He nodded at Lily and Soren, his tail flicking anxiously. "We should try heading down to the rooms, look for them there."

Rio caught the quick glance Emilena gave him and he looked down at his feet, almost smiling. He kept quiet as they passed the exits and walked up to the artificial beach. As they emerged, Rio squinted his eyes against the glare thrown up from the sun reflecting off the golden sand. Before them, people were stretched out sunbathing, swimming in the ocean or playing in the sand with their friends.

The relaxed, familial atmosphere made Rio feel intensely uncomfortable.

Clenching his hands, he scanned the beach and saw a small dock just up ahead where guests could rent out boats. Hoisting his bag further up his shoulder, he turned to the others and pointed towards the small line of people waiting their turn. "Hey, looks like that's what we need." There was a light impact against the back of his leg, and he turned to see a yellow beach ball rolling to a halt near his foot. A short way away, a young child was running towards them. From his excited expression, he clearly expected the ball to be passed back to him. Gathering his strength, Rio kicked the ball as hard as he could, causing it to soar far over the kid's head, fly across the beach and splash down in the sea a fair distance away where it quickly started to float away. The child looked shocked then started to cry, turning and running

back to his parents who hadn't seen anything.

Triste clenched her jaw as Vergil stepped forward through the scanner... but he didn't melt into a puddle of gecko goo. She let her breath out slowly, her fist itching to break Jenkins' nose at his chuckle.

Shaking her head, she took a tentative step forwards - and ended up standing next to Vergil, also unharmed. Breathing a sigh of relief, she glanced at Vergil. "Alright, well... it looks like they *are*accurate." Still, she wasn't exactly looking forward to any other scanners they'd have to pass.

Glancing up the corridor, Triste gestured then turned and met Jenkins' eyes. "Shall we?" She was keeping a neutral expression, but inside she was uneasy. In such an enclosed environment - and without their weapons - any potential attacks would leave them especially vulnerable.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 03, 2014, 09:00:25 pm**

"Of course..." Jenkins responded, smirking as he led them onward towards the facility. They were in more like a tunnel now it seemed, as it ran from the hotel into the mining facility. As they entered into the station, a faint hum could be heard from deep within, and the dirty and grimy corridors were a stark contrast to the cleanliness of the resort they'd just come from. Red lights cast sickly glows on the walls, and before long, Jenkins led them into what appeared to be a break area or conference room. This whole area reminded Vergil of old WWII ships' interiors he'd seen pictures of. Spartan and militaristic.

"Have a seat." Jenkins indicated. Vergil sat down, clasping his hands together on the table as a large monitor blinked into life. An older man with a thick gray mustache appeared, staring at them.

"So... these are the two who claim they can fix the problem?" This must be Grierson, the station's head of security. "I hope for both your sakes, you're not full of shit."

"Ahem... as a matter of fact... we aren't." Vergil stated flatly, looking at Grierson as best he could. "We know you've been having problems with your mining operation beneath the waves... seems the entire ocean is turning out to attack your deep-sea mining..." Grierson twitched a tad at this.

"There's no way you'd know that... how did you find out?"

"I have my sources... just like you." Vergil responded simply, narrowing his eyes. "Anyway I figure we can cut a deal." the gecko stated.

"A deal? What kind of deal?" Grierson asked suspiciously.

"We handle your little problem, and in return, we get access to something you're sitting on top of down there. It has no value to you, or anyone in your organization. We get full access to it, and the use of one of your deep-sea submersibles to assist in getting down there. We clear up your problem, it's ours, deal?" Vergil asked.

Grierson narrowed his eyes. "What exactly is it?"

"Not as valuable as what you're mining, take my word for it. It's a map..."

"Pfft... like what a treasure map?" Grierson asked sarcastically.

"Something like that... but I get to access it... and your defenses don't blow us out of the

water."

"You realize there's sensitive equipment down there, right? Proprietary mining equipment registered solely to Judaken Industries."

"Sure I know." Vergil answered. "I'm not interested in any of it. I'm just interested in the map." he assured him.

"It's suicide heading down there... three of our teams have already been taken out, and the machinery itself is being threatened." Grierson explained.

"Well then you got nothing to worry about. Still... I know you're on the verge of total collapse... so you either take your chances with us, or you risk your entire operation." Vergil put it simply.

"You know way more than I'm comfortable with about our situation..."

"Perks of what I do." Vergil responded plainly. "I'm here to solve your issue... so you either go with us or you get shut down. What's it gonna be?"

Grierson hesitated a moment here, eyes narrowing again. He sighed. "So you need a submersible?"

"Preferably one capable of defending itself. Deep sea suits would be nice too. We might need to get out." Vergil explained.

"Heh... fine. You're welcome to this stuff. You get whatever it is you're after, and in return, you fix our problem."

"Deal." Vergil stated, smiling here.

"Heheh... cocky little lizard, aren't you? You won't be so cocky when you get down there... anyway, Jenkins will provide you with the equipment you need... I hope the rest of your stay on Voltaic Station will be... superb and relaxing." Grierson commented, his voice dripping with sarcasm, and he cut the video feed.

"Wait here... I'll be back with your permits." Jenkins stated icily, and left the conference room. Vergil grinned at Triste.

"Well that worked. We get access to the waypoint, and see what we can do about solving their problem." he stated. "Pretty brilliant, eh? Oh and if you're concerned they're listening in, don't be. There aren't any microphones in this room." he told her simply, though he showed no visible signs of having scanned the room beforehand.

Varanus rounded the corner, not concerned in the slightest if his quarry had set a trap for him or not. He wasn't Lord Kalis's heir for nothing, after all... fixing her with his beady eyes, he began stomping towards her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 04, 2014, 04:34:48 pm**

Lily led the way to the receptionist. "Hello, we'd like to know what room our friends are staying in," she smiled warmly.

Receptionist didn't look up. "We don't give out room numbers."

"Can you at least call Vergil Speicher or Triste..." Lily realized she'd never learned Triste's last name. "Just Vergil Speicher, see if he accepts our call."

The receptionist held the phone up, dialing four digits. Lily noticed that Soren was standing in such a way that he should have been able to see what numbers were dialed. "Nope," said the receptionist, hanging up.

"You didn't even say anything!" protested Lily.

"He's not in his room at the moment."

Lily stepped away. "Something weird is going on here..." she murmured. "Axel, could you call the girls and see if they're okay? Soren, did you see what number the receptionist typed in?"

(OOC: The receptionist typed four numbers because in most hotel phones, the first digit is either Pound or Star to indicate an internal call)

Emilena's team zipped out of the docks on a speedy two-person love yacht named the *Microcosm*.

"Why did we pay for a boat anyway?" asked Foley, who was getting the satellite computer below decks working. "We never pay for, like, anything!"

"We rented it, we didn't buy it!" shouted Emilena over the sputtering engine. *Plus when Nairda bitches about having been framed, drugged and thrown overboard, I can use the fact that I paid for a search boat as proof that I still love him,* she thought to herself. "How are you on navigation?"

"Good, I got a guy on instant message walking me through this!" The computer had a little map of the ocean that was constantly updating with their location. "With online local weather readings, this thing can calculate our direction and position to within 5 degrees!"

Emilena wasn't stupid; she knew that five degrees off was pretty bad when it came to cartographic navigation. "You know the boat came with this telescope thing that keeps track of direction, right?" Emilena pointed her thumb at the glove compartment.

"Yeah, but that would involve looking outside, and it's a full moon right now..."

"What are you talking about? It's the middle of the--" Emilena looked out the windscreen and instantly averted her eyes. "Ohhh...." On the front deck, Flora had taken all her clothes off and was leaning her head over the front bow, panting happily as wind and surf sprayed across her face.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 04, 2014, 11:09:18 pm**

(Voltaic Station)

Soren nodded. He looked around to make sure the receptionist was away. He leaned over to Lily. "She typed in the numbers four-one-five-nine," he whispered.

He then backed off from Lily and looked at Axel. The Human wrung his hands. "Axel, aren't you concerned that whoever poisoned us earlier aboard the ship might try to finish us off?"

(*Falchion*)

A gunshot ripped through the air as Marion fired her pistol the moment she saw Varanus's head peek out from behind the corner. It was a shot nearly impossible for a Baseline Human to

make, as Marion was practically standing on the sheer steel wall.

She detached her piton and fired another shot further down the hallway, swinging into position near some exposed armored electrical conduits. She activated her grappling spikes and clung to the pillar, concealing herself from her attacker.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 05, 2014, 06:08:49 am**

Axel pressed a hand against his left pocket, and was relieved to feel that his cell phone was still there. Fishing it out, he scanned the area around them, searching for anybody who looked suspicious. He couldn't see anyone who looked out of the ordinary, only crowds of relaxed guests milling around, enjoying their vacation. That didn't exactly mean much, though... knowing who was after them, it wasn't as if they'd make it obvious.

Chewing his lip, Axel turned his head in Soren's direction. "Yeah," he murmured quietly, flicking through speed-dial until he reached Marita's number. "That's one of the reasons why I think regrouping as soon as we can wouldn't be a bad idea. I mean, right now we've got no way of defending ourselves, but at least Vergil's got his... you know..." He waggled his fingers. "*Mind stuff*." Axel found what he was looking for and hit the dial button. "Just... keep your eyes open," he whispered as he raised the phone, the dialing tone humming in his ear. "If whoever tried to get us is here... which they probably *are*... it could be any one of these guys."

Someone on the other end picked up. "Marita! It's Axel," he said quickly, his ears perking up. "Me, Lily and Soren are at the reception... look, we can't find Vergil or Triste. Something... something *bad* might've happened. Just... get Marie and Rose, and get here as quick as you can, okay? We don't think we're safe."

Rio held on tightly to one of the seats as the small boat raced over the waves, the motion throwing him around uncomfortably. He heard the commotion and leaned forward to see what they were talking about. "What? Why are..." He caught a glimpse of Flora's not-so-lady parts and flinched back, shuddering. "Aw, fucking hell..."

Gritting his teeth, he slid forwards, popped the glove compartment and pulled out the telescope. Standing up unsteadily, Rio clamped a hand onto Foley's shoulder and peered through the device as he scanned the sea's horizon before them. "I... I don't see anything," he muttered, frustrated. Suddenly, a zoomed in image of Flora's business end appeared in his scope. Rio let out a distraught cry.

Triste nodded at Vergil. "Not a bad plan," she admitted, standing up and looked around the room. The dark, claustrophobic area really *was* a stark difference to the luxury of the hotel. "Although... Vergil, do you have any idea how many of those things're down there?" she asked, turning around. "Fighting these things underwater... it sounds like we'll be at a big disadvantage here."

She shrugged, leaning back against the wall and listening out for Jenkins' returning footsteps. "If we can manage to get access to the waypoint without drawing attention, might be safer to just leave. Do we really need to go out of our way to help these people?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 05, 2014, 12:02:07 pm**

"I was thinking no... we don't." Vergil shook his head here. "I'm not interested in finding out the reason they're having problems down below. As far as I'm concerned, they're probably causing it anyway. Looking at the Federation's reports, Judaken started a new mining

technique last month, and I'm willing to bet it's causing the ocean to go crazy. They're using new sound waves to blast into the ocean floor... the frequency of which may in fact be causing everything in the ocean to attack the mining facilities. They're either too stupid to see it... or they're leading us into a trap; I'm willing to bet it's the former, for what can be gained from trapping us? They don't even know who we are." he commented.

"As for fighting at a disadvantage... what choice do we have? The waypoint is down there after all, and we need all five to locate Torment's Cataract. Hopefully their submarines at least have decent armament, and once we get down there, I'm making straight for the waypoint... unless of course you think we should shut down their machines and see if that quiets the ocean any, giving us a clear run to the waypoint? Naturally that'd most likely turn Judaken against us, but then it's a choice of fighting their mercs or fighting the ocean itself. We fight the ocean we don't have to worry about our extraction after we're done... we fight their mercs our return to the station might not as peaceful. What do you think?" he asked her here, getting up as well and resting his hand on the back of the chair.

Varanus was ready, his lightning reflexes causing his reaction to be perfectly timed. He sliced through Marion's bullet with his blade as if it were nothing, and began charging down the hall now even as she withdrew. "You aren't getting out of this alive!" he called out after her. "But if it's a game you want to play, so be it!" he yelled, now switching over to hunting mode as made for the pillar.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 05, 2014, 04:15:41 pm**

Lily looked at the people around her, spooked by Axel's warning. She tried to read their minds or something, but her psychic powers were orders of magnitude below Vergil's; the only thing she managed to sense was that the man who limped past them on crutches had a pained leg.

"All right," she said softly. "We need to go check on Vergil as soon as possible." She led the way to the room number Soren indicated as fast as possible. As she walked, her imagination ran wild with worry, until she finally reached the door gripped with paranoia.

"Vergil!" she shouted, banging on the door. "Are you all right? Please answer!"

"No, you've got to turn it on," Foley tried to explain how to use the telescope. "There's that button on the left that starts the....uhh, oh let me do it."

He clicked the telescope on and turned a dial while scanning the horizon. "Okay, computer was a bit off on direction, compensating. Oh hey, thing can even locate upcoming atmospheric phenomenon, check this out."

He plugged the telescope's USB10 into the computer, which begin refreshing. After a few seconds of whirring:

(https://lovesicksilverfish.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/infrared1.png)

"*Flora*!" Emilena shouted out the window angrily, making the folf jump. "Get your ass out of the damn way of the--!"

"--Hold it..." interrupted Foley. His face had taken an ashen pallor. "That's not Flora. That's a tropical storm. And it's coming right at us."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 05, 2014, 04:59:02 pm**

Marita felt her phone ring and flipped the screen open, noticing the number was Axels " Hi Axel.we're recuperating in the medical wing . We'll be out in a couple minutes. We .. well we were lucky. that dose of biproxytol would have been fatal in minutes to anyone not accustomed to the drug. Marie's only alive because the docs got the antidote into her in time. I don't know where Vergil or Trieste are, but if I had to guess they're somewhere on this ship trying to get access to the waypoint."
- Rose was unstrapped by the nurse and got out of bed. she took a few deep breaths, she still had a strong aftertaste in her mouth, but once she got moving, that would hopefully dissipate. Marie was the last to be unstrapped and got out of bed. Marita paused in responding to Axel to slide the nurse a credits card for their bill. ' the credits passed muster and the nurse nodded ' Alright, you three are free to go. I've got two Bison and a Leopard coming in here. food poisoning, bad shellfish , I think.' Rose and Marie hobbled over to Marita. ' Axel, we're on our way. we should be there in about five minutes. Marita Out.' Marita hung up the phone and headed out of the room.
' Who do you think put the stuff in our drinks?' Rose asked as the girls began headed down the hallway. ' well, I'm not sure entirely, but if I had to guess, I'd say Emilena. She blackmailed me in Lanthae into assisting in her little investigation, not something you do to a friend. She knew that you and I had been in a relationship and had both used biproxytol, and used you to get me to do her bidding." That little bitch' Roses eyes narrowed.' So you think she knew what dose of the stuff is harmful and slipped us some?" Her , or her associates.' Marita said.' You're not 100% sure though' Marie said, she was leaning on Rose for support, as she walked down the hallway. the trio turned and reached a more crowded hallway. a sign pointed to the receiption area, which was on their left, two hallways down.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 06, 2014, 10:00:39 pm**

(Voltaic Station)

The hair on the back of Soren's neck curled as his heart raced. A lean Krait holding a spray bottle of cleaner and wiping down an ornate mirror. A young Human woman clad in a bathing suit and chatting on her cell phone and with a cocktail in hand as she loped down the carpeted hallway.

Ever since the incident aboard the *Breman II*, everything began to look like a threat.

He had offered to wait in the reception area for Marita, Rose and Marie while Axel and Lily went to get Vergil. As soon as he made that offer, he began to feel nauseous. What if the duo had walked into a trap. He took a breath to calm himself down and munched on a roll procured from the buffet (the chance of ingesting drugged food from a buffet where literally hundreds of people ate was almost nil. At least, if they were trying to target him specifically.)

"Marita! Marie! Over here!" he exclaimed, waving his hand in the air.

(*Falchion*)

Marion swore as Varanus approached. His hyperfast reflexes meant that shooting him was impossible ó unless he was distracted. Luckily, her exoskeleton and prosthetic limbs granted her reflexes that were well above the Human baseline.

The Human withdrew an spherical object from her flying frame's integrated backpack. A stickyfoam grenade. Upon detonation, it would spew out a liquid adhesive that reacted with air to form a hard, glassy substance. She pressed the trigger mechanism and lobbed it in Varanus's direction (thanks to her helmet's enhanced hearing picking up his footsteps). The second the grenade touched the ground, a large burst of viscous clear liquid exploded forth.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 07, 2014, 07:28:58 am**

Triste chewed her lip for a second, mulling it over. Finally, she looked across at Vergil. "Keeping a low profile *would* be the best option... We don't exactly want a shootout in a place like this." She shrugged. "Alright, how about we assume that we're following your plan. That we find the waypoint *and* deal with whatever's down there."

"But," she held up a finger, "If it looks like the situation's too risky, we abandon helping Judaken and just focus on getting those coordinates. If it comes to it, I'd rather fight an enemy when I can stand on dry land." She smiled drily. "And I really, *really* don't want to die at the bottom of the sea."

Axel stood back as Lily pounded on the door, his stomach twisting when nobody answered. "Nothing? Hang on, let me try." Sliding up beside her, he rapped sharply on the door. "Vergil? Triste? Come on, if you guys are there you've gotta answer!" Silence.

Grimacing, he turned to lily. "*Shit*... I don't know how long it's been since we arrived, but it can't have been too long, can it? So why... I mean, if nothing was wrong, wouldn't they have tried to find us?" Visions of Vergil and Triste shot, stabbed and bludgeoned, lying sprawled in the room beyond started to flash through his mind. "Goddammit..." Axel looked up and down the long hallway they were standing in. A fair distance away, a laughing couple fumbled at their door then fell through - and then Axel and Lily were alone in the corridor. Cameras could be a problem though...

Gesturing for Lily to lean closer, he pressed himself up against the electronic lock through which a card had to be slid to unlock the door, obscuring it from the CCTV. "We need to take a look inside. For all we know, they could be hurt, or..." He swallowed. "We just go inside for a few seconds, just to make sure they're not in there, needing our help, then we leave. At least then we'll know, right?" Axel nodded at her, then surreptitiously gripped the protruding lock and flipped his vision. "Keep an eye out... make sure nobody sees us." Grunting, he twisted the lock and eventually managed to wrench it to the side, exposing the wiring beneath. Staring down at the electricity coursing through the small cables, he made a judgement as to the correct path it should take, and snapping a green and red wire he joined the exposed ends together. There was a small *click*. Gingerly, Axel tried the handle and to his relief the door started to open inwards.

Glancing at Lily, he gave a shaky smile. "Okay... that wasn't too bad. Let's just get in, check things out, and leave before anyone knows we were there."

In the security room, a small alarm started to buzz.

Rio blinked. "That's... that's bad, right?" Already, the sea surrounding them had started to get rougher. His gut tightened, the loud voice that was his sense of self-preservation screaming at him to *get the hell out of there, now*. But if Nairda was close by...

"How long do we have?!" Rio squawked, standing up and desperately renewing his efforts of scanning the sea to spot a floating, doped up figure bobbing around.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 07, 2014, 10:56:11 am**

"Call Soren and get him and the girls up here fast!" whispered Lily, who wasn't even sure why she was whispering. She tiptoed into the room. "Vergil?" she called out. "Are you in here?"

Nothing. Her heart leaped into her throat. "We need to find clues on where they've gone!" She began searching the stuff. "I want us all to be back together before....more of us start disappearing...."

"We don't have time!" Foley snapped. "We have to turn around!"

Emilena hesitated. Outside, the winds picked up, and Flora clutched onto the railings with a yelp to keep from slipping overboard. "No!" Emilena snapped resolutely. "We have to find Nairda! We keep looking!"

Foley pointed his finger incredulously outside. "Look through *that*?" The sky had grown dark with clouds and rain was now pelting the windshield. "Emi, if we turn around *right now* I can't guarantee we'll get back in time! Not to mention we lost our internet connection, so if we do anything but turn around we're lost!"

When the boat lurched over a broiling swell, Flora slid down the deck and hit the windshield. Crawling meekly into the cabin, she groaned and proceeded to shake rain out of her fur and coat the others in a fine mist.

"Just...five more minutes!" Emilena pleaded with Foley and the storm. "We can find him! We have to!"

A bolt of lightning struck the ship. Their antenna burst into flames, but almost as quickly evaporated into drenched ash and collapsed the roof on their heads.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 07, 2014, 11:41:27 am**

Marita heard Soren call her namre and made her way over towards him ' " Ah Soren. good to see a friendly face. Axel called me just a couple minutes ago, where did he go?' She asked noticing he and Lily were not there.
_ hi Soren " Rose said with a smile ' so i take it we wrent the only ones who drank the spiked drinks huh . good to see you pulled through.
_ Mariota thinks Emilena or her allies were behind that stunt; Marie said. " first we get everyone together then we go look for that pyscho and pay her and her friends back for nearly killing us.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 07, 2014, 12:09:52 pm**

"There is... something we could try..." Vergil said here thoughtfully now, narrowing his eyes as he folded his arms across his chest and stared at the table. "It'd put a lot of strain on me and might not even work but... I could try and hold off the creatures with my mind... keep them at bay while you piloted the sub and took us right to the waypoint. You'd also have to man the sub's weapons in case I can't hold them all off and some start approaching us. Once we're close to the waypoint, I doubt they'd follow, since if my hypothesis is correct, it's the mining equipment that's driving them insane in the first place."

Looking across at her, he softened. "This way, we get the coordinates, and head back to the surface with a cover story that we found the cause of the problem, but we're going to need more time to fix it. Then we get the hell out of here on the next boat and get on our way." He stated. "What do you think? Shall we try it? Cause I'm with you... we aren't dying underwater."

The security team was pretty swift in responding, as they took theft of personal property very seriously, as they did any intrusion of the security of the station. A few were dispatched with

high-powered rifles and riot gear down the hallway, and headed for the room registered to "Mr. and Mrs. Dorrien." As the two searched the room, the security forced headed their way, less than five minutes from the room.

Varanus managed to leap backwards out of the way of the grenade in time, though he wasn't able to catch it with his mind and hurl it back at her. Letting it explode in front of him, he began attacking the barrier and slicing through it with his blade, shattering it on impact. "Buying yourself some time is only prolonging the inevitable!" he shouted at her, hacking his way through as he continued down the hallway.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 07, 2014, 01:02:00 pm**

As the guards did nothing to mask the sound of their footsteps, Lily heard them coming. "We can't let them take us like they did Vergil and Triste!" she gasped. Grabbing the metal bedside cupboard, she placed it in front of the window and then laid the knife sharpener from the kitchen on the cupboard. "Help me!"

Taking the sofa together, she and Axel rammed it into the knife sharpener, putting all the force of a battering ram onto a single point of the glass.

It was at that moment, as she dizzily regarded the scattered furniture around her prone form, that reality finally clicked and she realized that the window she'd just damaged overlooked the great blue ocean itself. "Uh oh..."

When the security arrived, they were treated to the sight of a spindly web of cracks, and two clearly drugged individuals lying under a window looking more and more like a spider web every second. An instant later, the window shattered, sending an explosion of water and broken glass flowing into the hallway.

The tiny boat was thrashed in the torrential rain and battering waves of the tropical storm.

"We just lost left engine!" cried Foley, whose face could not be more pale white. The water in the boat reached to their ankles.

Emilena knew that any hope of finding Nairda was all but gone. "All right, get us back to the station!" she finally conceded.

"Hate to break it to you, but I've been trying to do that for the last ten minutes!" Foley wrestled with the yoke.

With a crash, lightning struck the boat a second time. sparks flew everywhere.

"And that was our other engine!" Foley threw up his hands in defeat. "We're out of control!"

"We're still moving!" Flora pointed out optimistically. The storm was slowly developing into one large wave, and they were nestled securely in the curl.

Trapped in the vengeful grasp of Poseidon, the helpless boat unknowingly hurtled towards the very station it had hoped to reach...

(EDIT: Edited!)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 07, 2014, 01:13:50 pm**

Quote from: Pterano,Jul 30 2014 on 11:16 PM

> Vergil headed to his room... or more correctly, *their* room, since Vergil had booked himself and Triste into the same room, both on a whim and to maintain their cover. The suite was sumptuous, with an upper loft and a lower level with a kitchen, sofas, big-screen TV, and lounge area that looked out onto the expansive window that offered a stunning view of life under the sea. While all hotel rooms were under the water, not all had views of the ocean of course.

(Hate to have you edit your post and tell you that's not possible but... it's not possible. Good effort all the same though. Would've been totally awesome had the hotel rooms NOT been underwater. :p As it stands, that window's heavily reinforced to prevent the sea from actually entering the room, so yeah)

(Second Edit: Awesome! :DD)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 07, 2014, 01:56:22 pm**

(Done with permission!)

It was an incredibly stupid move on Lily's part, and it quickly showed as the entire room was flooded, which risked the destruction of the entire station. Normally such a thing would've been impossible, but somehow, they'd pulled it off. But the water rushing in was quickly sealed off, as the station had backups and bulkheads to keep it safe. What might've been a catastrophic flood was quickly contained, and the two culprits were swept out into the hall as the room Vergil and Triste were staying in was sealed off.

Pounding the butts of their shotguns into the flanks of Lily and Axel, the two quickly found themselves cuffed and dragged to their feet. "The hell you two DOING? You realize how many millions' worth of damage you just caused?" the chief of the squad shouted. "Sir we've got potential saboteurs in custody, taking them to lock down now."

Shoving the two roughly out in front of them, the squad began marching them off to the high-security facility deep within the hotel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 07, 2014, 02:28:45 pm**

(Voltaic Station)

"Axel and Lily went to room four-one-five-nine. They were looking for Vergil," he said.

He then looked around. "Right now, I'm a bit worried that Emilena or her goons got a hold of them. It's been what, twenty minutes since they went down there."

The Human then finished off his roll and handed his dish to a Peregrine Falcon waiter. to be washed. "Anyways, shall we go down to look for them?"

(*Falchion*)

Marion swore as her sticky grenade failed. She looked up and noticed that the ceiling was thinne than the bulkheads.

Igniting her plasma blade, she plunged it into the ceiling and swiftly cut a small opening. Boiling coolant hissed out as she pierced a coolant line. Thanks to her helmet's air filtration system and far IR lights, she was unaffected by the cloud of hot vapor. Smirking, she also sliced through the power conduits, throwing off a massive shower of sparks in the process.

Soon, she had cut an opening to the room above and hauled herself up through the hole.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 07, 2014, 03:18:17 pm**

Better Go look for them then'; Marita said in reply. the girls would eat later , once they felt up to it, for now the more important task was reuniting with everyone.' just hope they didnt get into too much trouble..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 07, 2014, 07:12:31 pm**

Axel gasped as the guards shoved them along the corridor, his side throbbing. Blood dripped from his nose where one of the squad had disagreed with his face, and the cuffs pinning his arms back were causing his shoulders to twist uncomfortably. As he staggered, Axel's fingers brushed against his pocket.... and he realised his phone was still in there.

Axel bit his lip. These guys acted and *looked* like security... but were they? Even if they were, maybe Kalis had them in his pocket. There'd been nothing in Vergil's room to show that it had been used in any way, and their whereabouts were still mystery. He couldn't help but notice that there were no guests around where they were heading. Being taken to lock down... or led away from any potential witnesses so they could be disposed of quietly?

Praying that the phone still worked, Axel slowly slipped his hand into his pocket and felt by touch to speed dial Soren's number. After a moment, to his relief he heard the very, very faint sound of a dialing tone.

As soon as he heard it end, indicating someone had picked up, Axel halted and spun around, glaring at the guard behind him. "Hey, where... where are you taking us?" he demanded loudly. "You've got us in handcuffs... you've got fucking *guns*... Where the hell is this *lock up*?!"

Triste nodded hesitantly. "That *does* sound like it could work. I can pilot a sub okay, and the weapons shouldn't be a problem. Your psionics should be strong enough too, but..." Vergil's mentioning of the strain his abilities would put on him made her uneasy. She knew the toll psionics could take on the body.

"If you start feeling weak... like your body can't handle it, then you let me know straight away, alright?" She stepped closer to him then tilted her head, frowning. "I don't want you getting hurt." *That could completely compromise the mission.*

As the wave propelled the boat forwards, Rio held on to the flimsy railing for dear life. He was getting soaked through and his ears were ringing, the roaring of the wave that was engulfing them deafening him. The boat started to pitch to the side, and Rio felt his legs skid across the floor.

There was a crunch. Horrified, Rio jerked his head up and saw the railing start to buckle from his weight... and then tear free from the side of the boat. Rio yelled as his feet left the floor and he tumbled across. Just as he was about to fly overboard, his flailing arms caught a hold of Flora. He held on to her, vice-like, not caring what he was brushing up against as long as it saved him from drowning.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 07, 2014, 08:36:27 pm**

"Where do you think, jackass? You just FLOODED a guest's room! Caused millions of dollars worth of damage! You're going to answer for this crime with the Judaken way. Since we make the laws out here... guess what? I'd say unless you can pay us back IMMEDIATELY, well... you just let us worry about the rest." The guard roughly shoved Axel as if he intended for him to fall to the ground, since he'd chosen to spin around and face the security contingent. "Now shut up and get moving!"

Vergil looked at her as she mentioned she didn't want him getting hurt. "Thanks for the concern but... we both know you wouldn't be able to hold them off even if I did start to fail. Our only real alternative would be to blow ballast and rapidly surface. I'm gonna hold on as long as I can. I'll let you know if we need to pull out, though. While I've found out I can even influence the mind of sentients in limited forms, animals should be no problem for me."

He paused as he heard Jenkins coming back. "Ahem." the security officer emerged from around the door. "It seems we've had a minor terrorist attack. Security's even tighter than usual now. Funny because it seems your room was involved in the attack."

"Our room?" Vergil asked, brows raising here.

"Yes... your belongings I'm afraid are probably completely destroyed. We'll move you to another room of course, and salvage what we can... I just find it funny that terrorists decided to break into your room... it might be coincidence, but we won't know until we interrogate them." Jenkins stated calmly.

"I... see." Vergil said slowly. "Well it's of little consequence. My clothes are replaceable."

"Rest assured, we will get to the bottom of this. Mr. Judaken does not tolerate this type of thing on his station. Anyway... your submarine has been secured, as have your deep sea suits. You won't get much time in them though, as you need a special oxygen mixture for being that deep so... choose your minutes wisely." Jenkins informed them.

"Not a problem. Mrs. Dorrien will be piloting the sub." Vergil looked to her now.

"Very good... this way, please." Vergil pulled out his tracker, with the GPS coordinates programmed into them as they were shown the way to the submersible. It was bright yellow, as if it belonged to some deep sea salvage agency, and was sitting in a cradle that would release them into the water once they were inside. "Well you've got your standard torpedoes, but only four of them, coupled with a laser cannon, mines, and side lasers. If you even POINT those weapons in the direction of the mining station, we'll blow you out of the water, got it?" Jenkins asked.

"Loud and clear." Vergil responded, and climbed down into the submersible now, jumping down off the ladder and looking around at the cramped confines. "All right... take the controls... you DO know how to pilot one of these things, right?" he asked hopefully.

Varanus frowned as his quarry escaped through the roof. "Seal off the deck above me." He ordered. "Get strike teams up there. I'm starting to lose my patience." He ordered the ship's captain. Stomping over to the hole she'd cut in the ceiling, he glanced up at it, then hurled himself upwards, using his telekinesis to propel himself through the hole, gritting his teeth as the sparks from the arcing wires burned him slightly. Landing on the deck above, he looked around, wondering where she'd gotten off to.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 08, 2014, 08:42:32 pm**

Lily was unconscious from getting hit with a veritable ton of water. The guards were having to drag her to wherever they were going.

Flora grabbed Rio and hugged him tight as the sound of splintering wood competed with the lightning crashing around them. They were up to their waists in water, the wave's momentum was literally the only thing keeping the boat from sinking.

The buckled floor had trapped Foley in the navigator's seat. He screamed and tried to free himself even as a horrible gravity-shifting plummet indicated that the wave has crested. With a final scream, Emilena saw only bubbles and foam as the ship tore apart in a watery collision between the wave and the sea.

Several confused seconds later, her head had cleared enough to determine that she was underwater amidst splinters and boards. Glancing to the light, she swam to the surface with powerful dolphin kicks and emerged, gasping for air.

To the left, roughly half of the boat bobbed sadly in a spreading pool of wreckage. She didn't see any of her companions, but her mind realized that the half missing contained the cockpit, where Foley had been. *Where Foley had been trapped...*

Taking a deep breath, she dove back underwater. Squinting to see, she made out the rapidly sinking dark shape that could only be the other half of the boat. Kicking until her legs burnt, she grasped the railing and hoisted herself into the cabin.

Foley was still trapped in the navigation's seat, unconscious with blood and bubbles emanating from his mouth. Drawing the katana from her belt, she hacked angrily at the chair, but could only dent it. It appeared the vibrating function had been disabled in the crash somehow.

Crossing to the ship's locker, she pulled it open and came away with a kit of basic survival gear, most notably an oxygen tank. She quickly chomped into the nozzle and took a few deep breaths herself, before slipping it onto Foley's head. His body naturally inhaled and his eyes flew open. *Alright Emilena,* she thought to herself, *you saved him from drowning, now you better be able to save him for real, or else this was the cruelest thing you've ever done...*

She reached into the survival kit and grabbed the flare. Removing the lighting cap, she hesitated. She had a plan for freeing Foley, but this flare could be used so much more efficiently to signal help...

Well, too bad. Using the pocket of air trapped in the corner of the cabin, she struck the flare against removable cap. As it contained magnesium and an internal oxidizer, it could continue to burn even underwater.

For the few seconds her flare worked, she pressed it against the base of the chair and superheated the metal. This weakened it enough for her to warp it away from the wall with a few powerful smashes. Wrenching the oxygen from Foley and taking a few deep breaths, she pried Foley out of his chair and towards the door.

She pulled him out of the cabin and pushed back into the ocean, keeping the survival kit dangling from her shoulder. With every dolphin kick, her vision grew darker. The water seemed endless, her lungs were burning from the abuse, and she felt her muscles one-by-one give up and slowly go limp. There was no way she'd get this fat ass back to the surface...

All of a sudden fuchsia arms appeared, grasping her and helping her paddle. Seconds later she broke the surface of the water a second time and gasped painfully.

Flora steered them to the wrecked half of the boat and helped Emilena grab on to something. "I found you!" she beamed. "And you found Foley!"

"Where's...Rio...?" choked Emilena, swallowing salt water as she tried to take another deep

breath.

"He's here," Flora added hastily. "I pushed him onto the top part of the wreck before going after you."

Emilena coughed and spluttered for a few more minutes. It was difficult to catch her breath when she had to keep Foley above water at the same time. Foley was moaning haggardly and the large cut on his forehead was still leaking blood into the water.

"We have to...get him out of the water..." Emilena panted.

Flora nodded. "Rio! We're gonna push, you pull! Try to get Foley onto what's left of the deck!"

Working together, the three of them eventually managed to get Foley out of the water. Most of the boat's individual pieces were long gone, the light plastic chassis being the only real reason what they had left was still floating.

Using absolutely all of the gauze from her small survival kit, Emilena bandaged Foley's head. "The skull isn't broken, it's just a really bad cut," she explained to Foley, who didn't seem capable of speech. "You should be able to heal even without Medical attention."

"What about you?" asked Flora.

"Me? What are you..?" Emilena glanced at herself. Only now did she notice a long gash running the length of her entire left leg. "Oh. Yikes..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 09, 2014, 12:11:53 pm**

(*Falchion*)

Thanks to her helmet's built-in radar system, Marion was still able to see Varanus through the thick veil of boiling coolant. She raised her pistol and fired off a burst at his shape.

She then sprinted off down the hallway.

(Voltaic Station)

Soren picked up his smartphone and scowled. The number he received was from Axel. He tapped the green phone icon on the touch screen as he held it to his ear.

What he heard made his jaw drop.

"Hey, where... where are you taking us? You've got us in handcuffs... you've got fucking guns... Where the hell is this lock up?!"

It was Axel's voice, muffled but it was his. He looked around and disconnected.

He turned to Marita, Marie and Rose, his face stony. "We need to talk about this somewhere...not here." He gestured with his head to the throngs of vacationers present. "It's about Axel. He's been in...an 'accident'."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 09, 2014, 12:51:30 pm**

' alright. lets try and find a food court or something. We havent gotten anything to eat in a long time. we'll be able to talk there. I'm guessing they went to find Vergil and did something

they went supposed to do. Nothings gone right for this little trip, I swear.' Marita sighed as she began walking down the hallway, and mingled in with the crowd.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 09, 2014, 04:23:00 pm**

Emilena ripped off her shirt and quickly fashioned a tourniquet. "Urrggghhh..." she grunted in pain as she tightened it.

Flora hovered nervously nearby. "Does it hurt?"

"YES it bloody well hurts!" snapped Emilena angrily. "Rio, keep that gauze applied firmly to Foley's forehead!"

Foley wasn't looking too good. He shivered weakly in the corner.

"Foley...?" asked Flora nervously. "How are you?"

"I'm...cold..." he admitted, looking alarmed at the prospect.

"Flora, I'm going to need your help," Emilena informed. Tucking into the survival kit, she found nothing resembling a sewing kit or needle. Sighing, she kicked off her boots and all but flung them at Flora with her feet. "Unlace them!"

As Flora did so, Emilena cast her eyes around for any sort of sharp object to use as a needle. Her eyes settled on the mess of splintered wood surrounding the boat. Her eyes twitched as she realized just how painful this was going to be. "We need to stitch the wound. Do you know how to sew?"

"A...a little..." Flora hesitated. "Is that what..?"

Emilena grabbed the first bootlace Flora had released. Snapping a particularly long and thin point of wood off of the remainder of their boat, Emilena handed it to Flora. "Now, what you're going to have to do is...in the flaps of my skin, you'll make to...make holes with the wood...and then push my shoelace through."

Flora's eyes went wide.

"*And*," Emilena added hastily. "No matter *what*, keep going. Any noises I make, any movements, you've got to finish. Make it as tight as you can!"

Flora nodded speechlessly.

"Well? Go!" Emilena closed her eyes and gritted her teeth.

Grabbing the skin nearest the ankle, Flora readied the sharp wood. Looking slightly sick, she stabbed into it.

"AAAAAUUGHHH!" Emilena cried, arching her back.

"I'm sorry! It didn't break through..." Flora tried again. The wood slipped in the blood. Emilena screamed again.

Breathing heavily, Emilena's head lolled to one side and she suddenly noticed her katana. Feeling stupid for having missed it before, she passed it over. "Be *fucking* careful though, you could cut my leg off!" *Which will probably have to happen anyway...*

Flora prodded the skin with the katana and it slipped through like butter. Suddenly feeling sick, Flora staggered over to the edge of the boat and vomited.

"Flora...? Flora! Goddammit..." Emilena glanced at Rio. "Kid, get your ass over here. Stitch me up."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 09, 2014, 09:01:48 pm**

Triste lowered herself into the sub after Vergil and closed the hatch behind her, eyes narrowing as she took in the interior of the craft. "Cosy..." Her voice echoed tinnily amongst the claustrophobic mass of levers, wheels and buttons.

Glancing around, she made her way over to the uncomfortable pilot's seat and buckled herself in. At Vergil's question, she looked over and smiled sardonically. "Oh, sure. Though I *did* skip out on most of the classes. Which one's the brake again?" Checking to make sure she knew where all the controls were, she nodded. "Alright... now or never. You ready?" Waiting until Vergil had secured himself, Triste raised a hand and threw back the lever that kept them suspended in the cradle. Triste felt a brief rush, her heart rushing up into her throat as the submersible dropped down, then a jolt as the craft hit the surface of the water.

External light rapidly began to fade as the sub sank deeper into the sea, further from the docking point. As darkness started to settle over them, Triste hit the lights and the interior was illuminated in a bright, artificial glow. Swallowing, she turned to look at Vergil. "Alright, let's go." In front of her, through the window, the craft's headlight beams cut through the inky blackness, two insignificant cones of light in the gloom.

Rio looked over his shoulder and nodded at Emilena. "Coming!" He was crouched in front of Foley, pressing the strip of gauze against the man's head as firmly as he could. He wasn't exactly a doctor, but even he could tell from Foley's pale skin and shivering that he wasn't doing so hot. Gently taking his hand, Rio pushed it up against the gauze and took his own away slowly. "I've gotta go for a second, but you have to keep the pressure on it, okay? And whatever you do, don't fall asleep asleep, or I'll kick your ass." Waiting for a moment to make sure Foley's hand didn't fall away, Rio pushed himself up and quickly hopped over to Emilena.

Drawing close, the boy grimaced as he saw the large section of flesh flapped back across her leg. "Aw... *shit*. Alright, I'm... I'll do it." He could feel himself getting light-headed as he stared at the raw, exposed flesh, but he bit his tongue, forcing himself back into the moment. *You can't afford to be a fucking pussy now!*

Bending, he picked up the shoelace and looked at it. The plastic part at the end would make it easier to poke through, and luckily the material wasn't *too* thick. It wouldn't exactly be a walk in the park though. Letting out a breath, Rio looked Emilena in the eyes. "I'll try and be quick..." Taking up the katana, he angled the point towards the skin adjacent from where Flora had already cut. It poked through with no resistance, and as Emilena howled in pain he gritted his teeth, fighting back the bile in his throat. Putting the weapon back down, he held the shoelace tightly between trembling fingers and tried to carefully push the lace through the cuts. He missed, and the hard plastic point scraped against the pink meat beneath her bloodstained fur. This time, Emilena wretched, and jerked her leg back instinctively.

"I'm sorry! I'm really sorry!" Rio cried out, his voice cracking. He held on tightly to her limb so it wouldn't move anymore. "I'll get it this time, I swear!" Trying to steady his shaking fingers, he prodded the lace forwards again, and this time it poked through the hole with only a little resistance. Ignoring Emilena's screaming and squealing, he determinedly kept working, pushing the next flap of skin. The whole procedure took several minutes, of stabbing through her flesh, and drawing the lace through. By the end, Rio was covered in a film of sweat, and his ears were ringing from the screams. Finally, he wrenched the shoelace through the last hole and pulled it tightly, fastening the sliced skin flap firmly against her leg. He sat back, exhausted, his hands coated in her blood. "I... I think it's done. Is it done?" From the state of her limb, he couldn't tell by sight if he'd helped or just made things worse.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 10, 2014, 04:31:16 pm**

As the submarine sank into the depths, Vergil calmed himself, trying his best to focus and clear his mind. He let the sea relax him... it was all muted blues down here, which gradually got blacker and blacker... all light was lost save for the floodlights on the sub as they descended.

"We're gonna see wreckage down there... most of Air France Flight 447 wasn't removed from the seabed... so keep that in mind. It might be a little eerie... but initiate scans for something like a cave or formation of rocks that could hide the waypoint... it's not obviously in the wreckage, since it would've been found in the investigation." Vergil pointed out now. "Once we get down there... I'm going to need to focus solely on keeping those creatures at bay. So it's more likely than not going to be up to you to locate the waypoint. If they built it down here, it can obviously function underwater, so look for faint energy signatures. The mining equipment will be giving off energy readings of course, but if you can isolate a solitary signal... that'll be it." he stated.

He regulated his breathing... and already, he could sense insanity. That's the only way he could describe it as: pure insanity. Creatures everywhere far below them losing their minds. Exhaling slowly, he took in a deep breath, and exhaled again. "It's pretty crazy down there. I can already sense it." he stated. "This isn't going to be easy... but then again what's been easy since starting this quest?" he asked, smiling a little to himself.

Varanus moved aside slightly, the bullet missing him by inches. By now however, numerous security squads were closing in on Marion. The entire deck was locked down and the marines were converging in the hallway. They were creating choke points and kill zones, and with Varanus charging after her, things were looking slimmer and slimmer for her the longer she stayed aboard the ship. "Give it up! How much longer do you intend on wasting my time?" Varanus asked. "You're a pathetic augmented human facing the most powerful warrior on this planet! I can guarantee you you won't last longer than I will!" he declared. Up ahead of her, a squad had set up around the corner, ready to shoot her the minute she appeared. Behind her stomped Varanus, driving her towards them.

He produced a grenade off his belt, levitating it into the air before pulling the pin out and hurling it her way...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 10, 2014, 06:02:25 pm**

(Voltaic Station)

The food court was an open air bazaar selling all sorts of food. Mostly seafood but farmed vegetables and fruit were also available.

Soren looked around. The noise from a calypso band and the crowd provided enough cover for the conversation.

A few minutes later, he returned with three plates, each with some fries and a seal-meat burger. Pouring ketchup on the burger, he spoke. "Axel's been captured. Most likely by Voltaic Station's security forces. Without him and the others, we can't get to that waypoint."

(*Falchion*)

Marion saw a coolant pipe in the corner. She drew her pistol and shot several holes in it, causing the boiling vapor to fill the hallway in a dense choking white cloud.

Luckily, the hallway was just barely tall and wide enough for her to fly. She propelled herself into the air and took off into the dense white cloud just as the grenade detonated behind her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 10, 2014, 06:41:55 pm**

Emilena's teeth were clenched so tight that she'd chipped several of them, and her skin was chalk-white under her matted fur. Throughout the operation she'd tried but been unable to keep herself from crying, wincing, and hyperventilating. Her long history of abuse was the only reason she managed to withstand this without passing out.

When Rio mentioned being done, she cracked her eyes open and reviewed her mangled leg. Like she'd commanded, he kept the laces incredibly tight, and as long as she didn't bend her leg it'll hold for a time. "That's...god...if we survive this I'm putting you through medical school, you're a natural."

Foley had slipped unconscious. Emilena pegged him with the survival kit and he cried out in protest. "Stay awake! I'll be with you in a second!" She glanced at Flora, who was still looking over the side of the boat. "You interested in helping? Cause I know you were just a bit out of your comfort zone, but you're one of the only healthy people on this boat--"

"It's...it's not that," Flora stammered. She continued staring unblinkingly into the water. "We have company..."

Around the boat, darkened shapes circled, smelling the blood left behind by Foley and Emilena. There were no dorsal fins sticking out of the water, but it was pretty obvious who their new arrivals were.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 10, 2014, 07:31:20 pm**

Thats a big problem then ' Marita said as she began munching on her fries ' we'd need to find some way of freeing them and finding vergil and Trieste, and given that they have them in custody and in cuffs we;ll have to make up either an airtight alibi, or we're going to have to come clean about why we are here and hope they buy it. the second option isnt something i relish doing either.'
- rose munched on her burger, which she found was delicious. " so we've been split up. great just great. we cant get down there without the others particularly Vergil.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 11, 2014, 08:00:49 am**

"At least we don't need to worry about getting bored," Triste muttered over her shoulder as she angled the sub down, guiding them deeper into the thick, oppressive darkness. After a while, pieces of the wreckage of Flight 447 started to loom out of the black, illuminated by the lights. A broken wing, a torn section of the main body... the worn parts serving as a ghostly reminder of the lives that had been lost in the crash. As the craft moved past a part of the plane's tail, Triste thought she caught a glimpse of something shrinking away from the light. In spite of herself, she felt a shiver run up her spine.

She flicked on the sub's scanning system, and after a moment, information on the screen in front told her there *was* something ahead - a large cavernous space just off from the site of the wreck. It was at an even greater depth, maybe in some kind of crevice in the ocean floor. "Alright... I think we have something," she called across to Vergil. Turning the sub and accelerating down to where the cave was located, she looked back and cocked an eye at him. "I haven't seen anything out there. Maybe our luck' starting to -" A bleep from the radar system cut her off. Spinning around, she looked at the small screen, and saw with a sinking

feeling that something was approaching from behind. "Goddammit, we've got company!" Triste swore, pushing the sub to go even faster.

Axel stumbled as the guard shoved him, almost tripping over his feet and spawling backwards. At the last second, he managed to catch himself, and he turned without saying anything else. As they were led down the corridors towards lock up, and towards whatever awaited them, he could only hope that Soren had understood that they were in trouble.

Rio looked to see what Flora was pointing out, and his eyes widened at the sight of the shapes moving below the surface, heading for their wreckage. "Oh, *come on...*" Gritting his teeth, he crawled across the floor to a section of the railing that had almost been snapped free. Straining, he pulled at it and managed to wrench it off completely. One end of it hadn't been broken cleanly, and the metal ended in a sharp, dangerous point.

Rio moved slowly to the edge of the boat and peered over, raising his makeshift spear, matted strands of his hair plastered across his face. One of the sharks started to drift closer, and he jabbed the metal down with a yell. He missed, the point splashing down in the water harmlessly, but the shape jerked away. "Help Foley!" he called over his shoulder, scanning the water for any more of them - but the sea was dark, and it was hard to pick them out. "I'll try to keep them back!" There was a thud on the underside of the small, fragile wreckage that was their only hope of survival, and Rio jabbed the 'spear' down again. He still didn't hit anything. "Crap!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 11, 2014, 12:17:41 pm**

Vergil's orange eyes widened as he saw the wreckage of the Airbus... landing gear stuck up before them, and he could only imagine what it must've been like that night on the aircraft; terrifying didn't come close to describing it. Looking around them, Vergil nodded once as Triste said she picked up a cave or crevasse in the ocean floor beyond the wreckage.

"OK... head towards that. That might be it. Perfect place to hide it, after all, given what we've seen so far of them." Vergil commented, but his muted jubilation was short-lived, as all of a sudden, their radar picked up incoming targets. "Greeeat." the gecko responded. More than two miles below the surface and they were under attack.

"OK I just... need to focus." he said. "You just get us to that waypoint safely..." He closed his eyes, sensing everything from fish to sharks to whales headed their way. But there was something else too... something he didn't recognize, and it was big. Furrowing his brow, he projected an invisible wall outward, trying to calm them... trying to stop them. It was bizarre... he could enter their minds, but it was mostly just instincts he felt... and something driving them as well; something so insane, he could feel it clawing at his mind.

A great white suddenly appeared ahead of them, emerging from the murk into their light, but it stopped a good 25 feet away as Vergil managed to arrest it. Vergil's lips pursed, a frown creasing his face as he continued concentrating...

The group was eventually led to lockup, in the middle of the facility. Their possessions were taken, and they were placed in two separate holding cells behind barriers of an extremely durable and clear material. They had a wall-mounted cot and a stainless steel toilet with sink, and that was the extent of their amenities.

"All right... we can do this the easy way, or the hard way." the lead security officer stated. "You

can tell us exactly why you tried to sink this station, damage a room, cost us millions, and otherwise initiated an act of sabotage... or we'll extract it from you via other means." He pulled up a chair outside the cell, and looked at Axel. If he didn't say anything useful, there were various methods to be employed to make him talk of course.

Varanus had to give her credit: she was resourceful... at running at that is. But she was heading right into one of his squads, who promptly opened fire on her the closer she got. They aimed for wings and body, attempting to bring her down either dead or alive. Varanus charged through the steam cloud and this time, reached out with his mind, ripping a part the ceiling off directly over her, hoping to bring it down right on top of her and trap her. He was now losing his patience with this coward...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 11, 2014, 03:40:00 pm**

(Voltaic Station)

Soren swallowed his bite of seal-burger as a waiter passed by them. He smiled. "We don't need an alibi if we're staff.

He looked around. "Here's what we do. We all go to my room and call for room service saying that we need new towels or something. We then jump the staff member and steal their clothes. Depending if the worker's male or female, one of us will then get into the locker room and swipe additional uniforms. Sound like an idea."

(*Falchion*)

Marion's exoskeleton was immune to small arms fire but her flying frame's wings were shredded by them; luckily, the engines were small and shielded and she can fly ó albeit with reduced manueverability even with the loss of the frame's wings. Her HUD warned about the falling ceiling and automatically boosted her away from the falling ceiling slab.

She smiled as she saw numerous cables and pipes. Mindful that Varanus was approaching, Marion quickly sliced through all the pipes and cables, hoping that at least one of them was vital.

She then descended and ducked behind a corner. When one of the troopers rounded the corner, she stabbed him with her plasma blade and took his rifle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 11, 2014, 07:01:55 pm**

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theres only one problem with that, security. these guys dont mess around with security' Marita said. ' so this had better work. ' we can pass ourselves off as new on the job.'Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 11, 2014, 07:13:38 pm**

Emilena furrowed her brow. "We can use the sharks to our advantage," she said. "Give me my katana back."

Dragging herself to the edge of the boat, she waited until a shark attempted to ram the bottom, and sliced it open. "Everybody hang near the middle!" she yelled, realizing she should have said that sooner.

As the wounded shark spilled black blood into the water, the other sharks went into a frenzy. The sea turned pink with bloody froth as the sharks tore apart their comrade. Flora, who hadn't reacted to Emilena's command fast enough, splashed facefirst into the water with a shriek.

Emilena reacted with lightning-fast reflexes. "Rio!" Grabbing Flora by the tail, she pulled at her to get her back on the boat. Rio, luckily, reacted almost as quickly and together they dragged Flora back on the boat.

Flora returned, spluttering and shell-shocked, and only appeared to have skin-deep wounds. But the action had unbalanced the boat, and with a cry the whole thing threatened to tip over.

"Balance yourself! Lie flat!" ordered Emilena. Their best hope was to spread their weight around the boat. *If it tips, we're all done for...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 12, 2014, 05:29:55 pm**

"Son of a bitch!" Triste swore as the great white suddenly appeared in the spotlights. She didn't quite flinch, although her hands tightened on the controls. To her relief, it stopped before it got close to them and she sped past it, ignoring it's black eyes which seemed to follow them malevolently as they passed. She glanced across, and seeing Vergil's face creased in concentration, realised he must be holding it back somehow. Many more dots had sprung up on the radar by now, and although they were following they didn't seem to be getting any closer either. "Alright, keep it up!" she called to the gecko, her voice a little harder than she'd intended. "We're almost there, just keep them back a little longer!"

The ocean floor began to slope down steeply, and Triste pushed the sub hard to follow it along as quickly as the could. The scanning system indicated that the space it had reported was getting closer... closer... The spotlights illuminated crowds of smaller marine life scattering in terror as they followed the floor's surface... when suddenly their light vanished, swallowed by the absolute darkness of the yawning chasm that stretched before them. Triste was taken aback for a moment, the huge opening of the cave reminding her of the mouth of a huge creature, inviting them to come in... before snapping shut.

Shaking her head to get rid of the unwelcome image, she shouted back to Vergil. "We're here! I'm taking us in..." Gritting her teeth, Triste accelerated the tiny craft forwards, through the entrance to the cave and to whatever awaited them inside.

Axel stared back through the clear barrier at the man who'd just taken a seat outside the cell. They weren't dead, so it looked like these guys really *were* the security force. A relieved flutter ran through his chest, although given their current situation relief probably wasn't the right emotion to feel. That being said... it was possible someone here *was* involved with Kalis somehow, and the only thing keeping them safe at the moment was that they didn't know why he was here. Telling this guy everything wasn't a good idea - it could put Lily, himself and the others in danger.

"Look," Axel started, his shoe squelching as he took a step forwards. "I'm sorry about the damage we both caused. We didn't mean to cost you money, and... and believe me, we *didn't* want to sink the station."

He swallowed then continued. "Me and the other woman you brought in were both poisoned during the trip over here. Someone spiked us with some kind of drug, and it was serious enough for us to be taken to the infirmary when we arrived. You can check some kind of record for that can't you?" Axel shook his head. "When they released us, I, ah... I guess the symptoms hadn't worn off yet and then one thing led to another and... well, you saw what

happened." He could hear how feeble it sounded, and spread his arms as if to say *honest mistake, buddy.* "Look, it's… blame me for this, not her. I can't remember why, but… I thought it'd be a good idea at the time. I made her do it." Then he had another thought. *Can't hurt to try...* "Actually, could you let me know if the gecko staying in that room is still around? I'd like to, you know.. apoligise for ruining his vacation."

Rio did as Emilena commanded, his hands still full of fur that he'd yanked from Flora while pulling her back onto the wreckage. He pressed his cheek against the floor, trying to keep as still as he could while the injured shark was torn apart by his buddies. The frenzy caused the boat wreckage to rock, and Rio's fists clenched down on the person lying next to him - his eyes were squeezed shut so he couldn't tell who it was.

He felt a cold sensation running along one foot where he'd lost his shoe, and with mounting horror he realised it was the sea lapping around his ankles. Their wreckage was beginning to take on water. "Oh fuck... we're dead. We're dead!" he cried out, his mouth suddenly feeling as dry as sandpaper.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 12, 2014, 06:32:49 pm**

The boat was indeed sinking due to the increased choppiness of the water. Emilena knew that two things had to be done very quickly; they needed to distance themselves from the shark frenzy, and they needed additional flotation devices.

She mentally cataloged their inventory; other than the outfits worn by Rio, Foley, and herself, they had only a very basic survival kit and her katana. Foley's outfit needed to stay relatively intact in order to keep him as warm as possible, and Emilena's shirt and pants were already occupied preventing her leg from bleeding out. That means...

"I'm sorry Rio, I'm going to need your shirt and pants. Fast as you can!"

The winds were picking up, but the red skies indicated to Emilena that it was merely a windstorm, and not a continuation of the tropical storm that had almost sank them before.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 12, 2014, 11:23:00 pm**

Vergil finally relaxed with an exhale as they entered the cave. "That took more out of me than I care to admit." he stated, rolling his shoulders now as he flexed his arms. "There's something bigger out there... it doesn't feel like anything I've ever read about. I'm not sure what it is... it can't fit in here thankfully but... I'm worried about it on our way out. While blowing ballast isn't exactly advisable, since we'd have to make our way back to the station on the surface, but... still let's just get the waypoint... speaking of which." He nodded ahead of him. Out of the blackness of the cave could be seen the pale blue glow of the waypoint's console. "That's it. Let's hope this one's easy... considering it is by far the hardest of the waypoints so far to reach." he mumbled.

"OK, set us down close by... I'm gonna go suit up... remember, we can't mess around out here. We probably have about 12 minutes of oxygen with the mixture they use at depths like this, so we need to move fast." He reminded her.

Pulling out the bulky diving suit, Vergil began sliding into it, pulling up the sleeves and beginning to zip up.

"That's none of your concern where he is... we suspect you were targeting him... or something

on this station, given he wasn't in his room. And since I just would LOVE to believe your stupid story but can't, due to the fact they wouldn't release druggies from the infirmary, you're down one strike. And since you also stupidly tipped your hand about what's most precious to you, I think I'll start with the woman you seem so keen to protect." He went over to Lily's cell, opened the door, and dragged her by the hair to a unique looking chair out in the main room.

Throwing her roughly into the device, leg and wrist restraints soon snapped into place automatically with smooth hisses. "So here's how this works... you pay us back NOW... and yes we accept bank accounts, houses, cars, whatever you have... OR..." Without warning, he jammed a knife into Lily's left arm, hoping to wake her up. The knife collided with her bone, and he slowly, very slowly, began to peel her muscle from her bone, an extremely excruciating process by any stretch of the imagination as he glanced over at Axel with a wicked grin.

But as Marion rounded the corner and killed the trooper, she was facing thirty others, all with their guns trained on her. "End of the road." One said. "Drop the gun... kick off that goddamn frame, and you don't get pumped full of holes, got it?"

By now Varanus was coming up fast behind her too, having thrown himself down the corridor at great velocity till he landed a few feet behind her. "Oh well this was predictable." the big monitor stated with a yawn as he stood behind her. She'd been slicing through conduits that powered lights to various rooms off the hallway, but nothing serious. "You finally ready to stop this silly nonsense?" he asked her.

At Pelvanida, Kojuuro waited in the tree outside the factory. The city was in ruins around him, reduced to ashes by Kalis's fleet but he was ready with his sniper rifle. He kept it trained on the entrance to the factory. His friends were coming here... his bugs had told him so after all. He was hella ready... hella ready... hella ready...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 13, 2014, 12:41:54 pm**

Triste spotted the console in the distance, and she brought the sub in closer to the ghostly blue glow. "Something big?" she muttered over her shoulder as Vergil started to pull his suit on. "Let's step it up then... the quicker we're out of here, the better." If whatever was out there really was too big to fit into the cave, then she really didn't like the idea of sticking around to meet it. *This is why I hate the ocean...* she thought to herself bitterly.

Bringing the sub up close to the console so they'd only have a short distance to reach it, Triste let go of the controls and sat up, moving across the cramped vehicle to reach her own diving suit. Pulling it off the rack, she spotted a small supply of spear guns lined up beside it, and tossed one across to Vergil. "Just in case," she shrugged. Tugging the suit on, Triste almost felt comforted by the heavy material. Sealing it closed, she threw the strap of her own spear gun over one shoulder and started checking her equipment. Light on her helmet... it worked. Her suit... didn't have any tears or breaches that she could see. Oxygen tank...

Triste blinked at it then swore. "Son of a bitch..." Flipping the meter over, she held it out so Vergil could see. It showed she only had seven minutes of air left. "Whoever's in charge of maintaining the equipment should have their neck broken," she muttered, shaking her head. "I'll do as much as I can to help you out there. Maybe if we're lucky, this one'll just give us the coordinates straight away."

Axel felt his mouth start to twist, his hands start to clench into fists as the guard sank the knife into Lily's arm... but then he forced himself to relax. This bastard enjoyed his work,that much was obvious, and if he showed how much pain it was causing him, Axel was willing to

bet he wouldn't stop straight away.

"You're making a mistake," he said lowly, keeping his voice even. "We *weren't* targeting anyone, and we *were* just released. Check her... her other arm. That's a cessation patch. If you're going to blame anyone for what happened, blame your *fucking* staff for letting us out too early." His voice cracked slightly when the guard twisted the knife, and at the soft squelch of tearing muscle he couldn't prevent a slight wince from creasing the corner of his eye. *She can heal... she can heal...* he kept telling himself, desperately trying to ignore the enraged buzzing in his head, a sensation he hadn't felt since at the Purifier base six months ago. *If you're gonna help us Soren... you've gotta hurry the hell up...*

Terrified, his face pressed against the wreckage, Rio took a second to take in Emilena's words. Nodding, he gingerly sat up, trying not to roll over the side of the rocking boat into a watery, toothy grave. The fancy shirt and pants that he'd been wearing while on the cruise ship weren't looking good, but as he pulled them off he could see they weren't torn enough to prevent them from being useful.

"Here..." he said, holding them out to Emilena with a shaking arm - soaked to the bone and with the wind starting to pick up, he was really starting to feel the cold. Shivering, he lay back down and crawled over to the edge. "If you need me to tie anything to the... to the side of the boat, I'll do it," he called back through teeth that were starting to chatter.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 13, 2014, 12:53:40 pm**

Lily was abruptly awoken by an incredible burning sensation in her arm. Dizzily she tried to pull her arm away from whatever was doing it, only to have the source hold her back.

"Aaaugh!!!" she screamed, when she opened her eyes and realized what was happening. "What the hell are you doing!? *Why!?*" Her eyes went wide and she shuddered uncontrollably.

As soon as Emilena had Rio's clothing, She splashed the pants in the water, thoroughly soaking them, and then tied the legs shut. Waving them through the air, she trapped a pocket of air in the pants, making a rudimentary flotation device. This she stuffed into a pocked of wood on the broken half of the boat, temporarily stopping the steady sinking.

Next, she used her katana to slice the shirt lengthwise, doubling its width. Then she sat up, holding the shirt out against the wind. Had to be the worst sail ever used in the history of maritime voyages, but slowly the wind gave them a direction. Within a few minutes, her whole upper body felt clammy and her fists and back were burning with cramps, but soon the frothy red circle of frenzied sharks was behind them, instead of around them.

Panting heavily, Emilena dropped the sail. She felt like she could barely stay awake. "How...is...everyone?" she gasped. "Rio, can you refill the flotation device?" Already it was deflating.

Foley's eyes were still wide awake, and it appeared that the rollicking boat and pungent smell of blood had done the job of keeping him awake. Flora was still on her stomach, crying and clutching her front.

"Flora, it's okay," Emilena was slightly concerned at Flora's overreaction to what appeared to hve been superficial injuries. But then again, the poor girl wasn't used to life-threatening situations... "We're out. Come on, get up. "

"No..." the folf whimpered, tears streaming from her eyes. "They bit my..."

Emilena sighed and crawled. "You looked fine. Come on, roll over, let me check. Is your tail dislocated or something?" She forcefully pushed Flora onto her back.

As Emilena had noticed before, Flora looked to have suffered a number of minor-to-deep scrapes on her chest, abdomen, and legs. None looked like bite marks, Emilena suspected they were due to scraping against shark skin, which was composed of rows of sharp denticles. Then, she noticed Flora's penis. The top half was completely missing.

"...my flytrap..." Flora sobbed. She curled in the fetal position, clutching her crotch.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 13, 2014, 12:57:19 pm**

Vergil caught the gun, checking it out as he nodded at her. Best be prepared for any contingency, after all. As she began to suit up and tested out her equipment, she held the gauge out to him after she swore, noting it was showing a depleted level of oxygen mixture. "Mmmm..." he said softly, sinking into thought as he stared at it. She mentioned supporting him as best she could but... he shook his head, and started to unzip his suit. "Why don't we switch? This way you have plenty of oxygen, can focus on covering us, and I have more incentive to work fast to secure the coordinates." he suggested.

Certainly there was a degree of altruism here, but he didn't want to admit it. He was more concerned about her than he was himself, so he quickly invented the solution as a viable suggestion. Whether she'd take it or not... that was on her.

The security officer was trained to detect these subtle shifts in emotion from his victims, and could see that while the rat was trying to suppress it, he was clearly affected by this. It was just the ever so slightly detectable twitches he made, the small tells that told him he was accomplishing his objective. "Oooh this is going to be unpleasant... I can already smell the blood and tissue as I start peeling it back..." He continued slicing the muscle from the arm, severing the tendons slowly one by one. "She's not going to be able to move her arm pretty soon." He responded with a smirk.

"Trying to blame us for your sabotage? Nice try... but it doesn't work that way. now once again... what was your objective?" he asked, slicing through another tendon, and angling it it towards the rat so he could take a nice look. It was then his other victim finally woke up, and he grinned sickly at her.

"Hurts, doesn't it? But then again... anytime you cross Judaken... this is what you get. Who are you working for? What was your goal?" he asked again, turning back to the rat.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 14, 2014, 02:31:01 pm**

Triste shook her head, gently putting her hand over Vergil's to stop him from removing his own suit. "No, it's too risky. If I start running out of air, I can just get back in. But we need you out there to open up the waypoint - you'll need the oxygen more than me. Besides, I'm a big girl... I can hold my breath." Taking her hand away, she gave him a small smile which was partially genuine. "Thanks for the concern."

Sealing her suit up to the top, she turned and made her way to the airlock at the back of the sub. "You ready? The sooner we get this done and get back on dry land, the sooner I can relax." She considered. "Within reason, of course."

Axel bit the inside of his cheek to stop himself from shouting out as the officer sliced even deeper into Lily. "Goal? *Objective*?!" he said eventually, his voice sounding oddly quiet against the ringing in his ears. His legs felt shaky, and he was having to force them not to tremble. "We just came here. To have. A holiday... That's the truth. I swear it." *You fucking psycho...*

Lily's screaming tore itself into Axel's brain, and for a moment he nearly lost control, almost flew at the clear barrier in a futile effort to kick, punch, *force* his way through, to wrap his hands around the officer's throat and squeeze. Anything to stop him from hurting Lily.

Still shivering, Rio nodded and moved over to where the pants serving as a flotation device had been stuffed. Pulling them up, he pulled open the end a little and waved them through the air, the movement making him feel as though ice was being rubbed against his skin. With the pants filled with a little more air, Rio leaned over and started to stuff them into the broken section of the boat, his hands brushing against the surface of the sea.

He heard the commotion behind him, and as he worked he looked over his shoulder to see what Flora was crying about. It didn't look like she was *too* badly hurt... Then he saw what state her penis was in, and his stomach started to churn. Gulping, Rio turned to throw up... just in time to see the sea explode in front on him, and the ugly, predatory head of a shark lunge from the depths. Shrieking, Rio tried to scramble back, but before he could yank his hands free, the shark bit down on his right arm, the teeth tearing through skin and shredding muscle like they were paper. He screamed, kicking his legs as he fought to pull free.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 14, 2014, 02:48:20 pm**

Soren, Marita, Marie and Rose were now inside Soren's room. The room itself was very lavsh with replicas of Art Deco paintings hanging on the wall. Most of the furniture had the streamlined bronze and metallic features that were the hallmark of Art Deco style.

Soren sat on a chair and templed his hands. "All right, first things first: we need to look in this room for anything we can use as a weapon," he said. "We'll need all the advantages if we hope to subdue someone."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 14, 2014, 03:25:24 pm**

Lily screamed again at the feeling of the burning pain in her arm. For once, most of the pain in the room was hers.

...*most*. She quickly became aware that the third-most pained individual was Axel, emotionally traumatized at witnessing what was happening to her. But even as she screamed again, she felt her inquisitive side take over. Why was the guard who was torturing her feeling more pain than Axel?

Concentrating on his mind, she used the knife as a bond that connected the two of them. As she searched his psyche, she settled on the problem. This guard had felt chronic and unrelenting chest pains since he was eleven.

"Oh dear..." she muttered, suddenly feeling a pang of sorrow for the man with the knife. Honestly, living a life where every waking moment one's chest would suddenly ignite sounds even worse than her current situation. No wonder he took a job torturing others. He was going to die young, and Lily sensed that he knew and resented it.

Glaring at the guard, Lily took a deep breath and concentrated. Slowly, the next moment his chest panged with a deep aching, she absorbed it. And the next one. Slowly, the guard's failing

heart repaired itself, until he got to experience the first five minutes of his life with a painless circulatory system.

"You aren't going to die at thirty now," she said, her voice quavering but eyes locked unwaveringly on his. "And occupational scruples aside, you'll be able to sleep well tonight." She coughed violently, an uncontrollable croup the guard should recognize all too well.

Flora was sobbing into the deck.

"Flora..." Emilena dragged her broken body over to comfort the folf. "Look, it's not the end of the world."

"No...no..." Flora pushed her away with her elbow; her hands still hadn't stopped clutching her crotch.

"I'm serious! Flora, listen to me." Emilena grabbed her head and forced her to focus on her eyes. "Penises grow back. I swear."

Flora sniffed. "They...they do?"

Emilena smiled hollowly. "Of course they do. Like a lizard's tail. Trust me, you'll heal."

Suddenly behind them, she heard a whirlwind of commotion. Swearing, she dove forward and grabbed Rio before the shark could drag him to a watery grave. The shark lurched dangerously, threatening to tip the whole boat over. Gritting her teeth, Emilena punched it right in the nose, where the majority of its sensory organs are. Suddenly the shark spasmed wildly, and Emilena shouted at Flora, "My sword!"

Flora, to her credit, responded quickly, and Emilena embedded it in the shark's head. "Help me get it on the boat!" she yelled at both Rio and Flora. She didn't want to lose their first source of food.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 14, 2014, 11:37:40 pm**

Marita was going through the drawers looking for anything that might be useful as a weapon. ' you find anything we might be able to use. because All i see is this book about a man called Gideon..' she sighed slamming the drawer shut.' a books arent going to get the job done..' she said, staring at a painting hanging on the wall that showed a neon lighthouse..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 14, 2014, 11:46:59 pm**

Soren looked at the complementary bar. He sighed. "Great and I was hoping to have a drink to relax."

He then opened the bar and found that the only things servicable as a weapon were two glass beer bottles. "I've got two beer bottles in the hotel bar." He looked at the bottles. "Expensive ones too. Since there's four of us, two of us are either going to be brawling or using other weapons."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 15, 2014, 01:22:30 am**

He stopped himself from fully undressing, and pulled his suit back on. "Right... well... I suppose you're right. Anyway... just keep me covered while I access the waypoint and get the

coordinates." Placing the helmet over his head, it was a bad fit. His snout was too long, so he had to angle his head downward to cram into it.

"Mmph... let's do this..." He said, entering the airlock now as he sealed the door behind them and began to flood the chamber. The water entered the sub, seeping around their ankles and beginning to build up now. It rose past their knees, over their chests, and soon, they were submerged within a minute. Pressing the button to allow them egress, the lock slid open and Vergil led the way, the water pressure out here immense and making it next to impossible to move. Exhaling heavily thanks to the exertion, Vergil watched some bubbles ascend from his suit as he turned with difficulty towards the waypoint. Fortunately, these suits were mechanically reinforced, but that didn't mean much at a depth of over two miles.

"Wish I was a fish..." he muttered, stomping heavily and laboriously towards the console. "Amazing this damn thing hasn't been crushed under here. They really knew what they were doing..."

Exerting himself to move forward, it took much longer than he wanted to actually approach the console. "Should've backed up to it instead of faced it..." He commented, as it would've made the walk far less grueling, but at least he'd made it. "OK... let's see..." Reaching out, he activated the console, which sprang to life, throwing the cavern into an eerie blue light. A beam of light shot out towards his head, and he waited for the scan to take place.

"Greetings traveler... the path to power lies within. Hold please for confirmation."

"So uh... China or Egypt?" Vergil asked her, trying to look behind him.

"I don't think so. You ruined a guest's room and tried to sink the station... so let's try this..." Suddenly though, he felt his irritation gone, and he glanced at Lily now, and at her strange words. And then she coughed just like him. "What?" he asked here, raising a brow and suddenly confused.

Wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he suddenly slapped her roughly across her face in a violent backhand motion. "What are you playing at?" he snapped. "You one of those freaks from the Scorched Earth War or the Rebellion? That explains some things!" he harshly said, his voice grating as he wiped his mouth again from the spittle.

"Look... I want answers NOW!" shouted, backhanding her again. Snarling, he grabbed the defibrillator from the medical pod and charged it up, tearing it towards her. He put the electrodes onto her thigh, shocking it and setting her pants on fire. He then proceeded to violently beat the flames out. "Well? What's your objective? Vacation my ass! You're here on sabotage! But you don't tell me now... you'll be telling someone much worse than me, got it? Someone who's a freak like you!" he snarled, whirling around to Axel now as a small flame still burned on Lily's pants. He either didn't notice or didn't care.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 15, 2014, 02:13:52 am**

Triste struggled to follow behind Vergil - she wasn't weak, but even for her movement at this depth was uncomfortably restrictive. The sound of her breathing was tinny and unnervingly lifeless in the closed confined of her helmet. Clutching the speargun tightly, her eyes scanned the darkness all around, the flashlight on the side of her helmet doing little to alleviate it.

Reaching Vergil, Triste clutched onto the side of the console with one hand and scrutinised the waypoint. "How about Egypt? Could give you another chance to tan," she said drily, awkwardly twisting around to look around them. Still clear. Turning back, she glanced down at her oxygen meter and with a feeling of relief saw she had a good amount of air left.

Axel stared through the barrier, horrified, as Lily's legs went up in flames. He saw her pants burning, the blood dripping from her arm... and finally they settled on her own, taking in her pained expression as she stared back at him. Axel blinked.

Suddenly, he ran forward and slammed his fist against the clear barrier. "Just stop it, you fucking prick! Stop hurting her!" he screamed, his voice breaking. "I'm telling you the truth! I... I promise!"

As Emilena stabbed the shark in the head, Rio lay on the floor and looked at his injured arm, at the torn, mangled skin hanging loosely from his forearm, and moaned. Vaguely, from somewhere far away, he heard her telling him to help lift the shark onto the boat, and he turned painfully to look at her. "Arrggh!" he informed her.

Still, he leaned over the side with his good arm, and with Flora doing most of the work they started pulling the dead shark up. "Bastard! *Asshole*!" he shrieked, dealing the corpse a might kick in the side of the head.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 15, 2014, 02:35:47 am**

"I...just *healed you!*" Lily gasped in outrage. "Your chest pains are *gone*, I've lengthened your lifespan! And *this* is how you reply?"

She took a deep breath. "You've been given a new lease on life, and I want to hear you acknowledge that. You have lived with anger and resentment in your heart, and have reacted by living an existence dedicated to hurting others. Well, I've removed the source of your inner pain, so let me know what you're going to do about that." She spat blood on the ground, but continued glaring at the guard. "The only type of person I hold no remorse for is one given a miracle but who refuses to take advantage of it."

Emilena took several ragged breaths. "God dammit. I'm sorry kid." Grabbing his shirt, she quickly wrapped the arm up as best as she could. The shirt soon became soaked with blood, but if she held it there long enough, it should soon coagulate. "I think you're okay. It looks bad, but you just used it fully while dragging that bitch onto the boat, so you haven't lost any function." *Unlike me...* she thought wistfully, as her leg slowly and concernedly grew numb.

Slicing a chunk of meat off, she tossed it to Flora. "Keep that on Flora jr. It'll reduce the swelling." Likewise, she stuck a chunk of meat on Foley's forehead. "Hey there, tecchie..." she said softly. "You still with us?"

Foley nodded. His mouth appeared too dry to speak.

"Emi?" asked Flora in a tiny voice. "...are we going to die?"

"No!" Emilena snapped viciously. "We're all still alive, and dammit I'm gonna keep it that way! We just need to find land, there's got to be islands around here!"

Foley made a sound.

"What's that champ?" asked Emilena. He was whispering something, so she stuck her ear near his mouth.

"...No...land...hundreds...mile...radius..."

"What's he saying?" asked Flora.

"He says there were several dotted islands north of here," Emilena spoke up hastily. "The wind is on our side. Let's just drift and make as much distance as we can from the shark frenzy. If anyone's hungry, we got shark."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 15, 2014, 06:14:01 pm**

Vergil waited patiently for the machine to complete its scans, and finally, the map appeared, which fortunately for him required no fighting or interacting with questions or anything like that. Perhaps his neural pattern had been recognized... he did vaguely remember this after all.

Waiting as the projection rotated around, Vergil touched the one in Egypt, letting the coordinates pop up as he committed them to memory, murmuring them a few times to get them down. "OK... let's get outta here..." He said, turning now as he tried to battle the current that threatened to push them back into the cave. "Certainly one of the least hospitable locations... though I think Egypt will be just as bad..." Grunting, he grasped hold of the sub and began to haul himself along the side rails, tugging himself through what felt like glue as he inched his way towards the airlock.

Finally nearing the door, he looked behind him. "You doing OK?" he asked, pausing at the entrance. "We should get out of here as soon as possible." he informed her, sensing something else up above... though it was very far away...

The interrogator glared down at her as she responded, Axel beating his fist against the barrier rather uselessly. "A second lease on life? That's fantastic!" he responded with mock enthusiasm. "I also get paid exceedingly well to do what I do... you think gratitude is going to change me? I didn't ask for your help... if you even helped me!" He stated. He noticed the fire burning on her pants now, and he grinned, letting it burn.

"You don't realize who you crossed... but you soon will. Even if if this was just some BIG mistake as you claim... you owe us millions... so how you figure on repaying that, huh?" he asked, going over to retrieve a probe from the wall. "So... you want to give us your bank accounts? Homes? Cars? We can start with those to consider settling the debt. Or if you like... you can sign up for work with us... for probably the rest of your lives... with next to no compensation aside from room and board... choice is yours!" He then jammed the probe into the back of Lily's neck, penetrating her spine as he set the voltage to deliver painful shocks throughout her nervous system... which of course would wreak havoc with it even in short bursts.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 16, 2014, 03:42:45 am**

Lily screamed as electric charges wracked her body, but even then she thought, *You...shouldn't...have...touched me...*

Using the probe to form a mental connection, she concentrated on the cells in his brain and quickly caused them to overgrow. Simultaneously she accelerated what problems remained with his weakened heart, and expanded specific muscles in order to pinch shut the nerve tracts connecting his brain and spinal column to the rest of his body. In milliseconds, he was a quadriplegic experiencing lethal brain cancer, a heart attack, and multiple strokes at the same time. She made sure to shut down his nervous system first, so he wouldn't feel any pain.

<*Axel*,> she thought hurriedly, trusting the bond they shared as husband and wife, <*I need you to spit on the other guards. All of them. Fast!*!>

The other guards were still standing outside the bars of the jail. In seconds, the interrogator would show the signs of what Lily had done to him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 16, 2014, 03:44:35 am**

Triste nodded. It was starting to become slightly, just *slightly* hard to breath so it seemed as though they'd timed it pretty well. "Yeah... yeah, I'm fine." Pulling herself along behind Vergil, Triste grasped the edge of the airlock, dragged herself through. Activating the system, the turned to him as the water drained out of the compartment. "No arguments from me there," she muttered. For some reason, this place more than the others truly made her feel like they didn't belong there, and if they could get out quick, so much the better.

Opening the hatch to the interior of the sub, Triste glanced back, and saw Vergil seemed... unnerved. "What is it? What's wrong?" Without waiting for an answer, she hurried across to the controls and started up the engines. If something was making him nervous, it could only mean bad news - and she didn't fancy around to find out how bad it was.

As the officer slumped to the floor, Axel's jaw tightened, his teeth clenching together. If this didn't work... Hearing Lily's quiet voice in his head, he hurried across to one corner of the cell's barrier two guards were standing around, chatting... but the noise the officer had made caused them to start turning around. They looked close enough... he hoped they were, at least. Mustering his strength, and drawing as much spit in his mouth as he could, Axel pressed his face against one of the slots in the barrier, and spat as hard as he could at them.

Flinching back, the guards both turned to look at Axel in disgust. "What the fu-" Suddenly, they both seized up... and after a second, they both crumpled to the floor like a puppet with it's strings cut. Breathing heavily, his heart hammering against his chest, Axel fell to his knees and tried to reach his hand through one of the small slots in the bottom. He just managed to get his fingers around the belt of the guard closest to him, and with a grunt he pulled him slowly closer.

Patting him down, Axel felt his head grow light. He couldn't find anything.. no keys... "Dammit, *come on!*" He felt his fingers close around a clear strip of plastic in the guard's pocket. Pulling it out, he could see it was some kind of key card. Axel quickly stood up and pressed his face against the barrier, scanning the sides of the cell for a slot. *There!* To the right of his cell, he could see a reader for the card. Forcing his hand through, he awkwardly rotated his wrist and after several attempts, he managed to draw the card through. For a second nothing happened, and his stomach plummeted. Then there was a small *beep*, and the clear barrier rose up slowly.

Feelinghis legs start to shake, Axel rushed out and hurried over to Lily. "Oh god... oh god, are you okay?! Are you..." Bending down, he clutched one of the mechanical straps binding her wrists and pulled against it as hard as he could, but it was too strong. Nothing budged. "*Son of a bitch!*" Gritting his teeth, Axel rushed around the chair, looking for some kind of release mechanism. Nothing... nothing... Then his eyes grew wide as he saw a small switch down low on one of the legs, covered in dried blood. Axel quickly flipped it, and the restraints on Lily's wrists and ankles slid back. Putting his arm around her to support her as best as he could, he gently pulled her out of the seat. "It's alright, I got you." He shuddered, nerves in tatters. "Holy crap..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 16, 2014, 03:58:52 am**

"I'll be fine..." Lily panted, getting on her own two feet. Already she felt her body healing. Unlike most people, she could push her wounded body to the limit without fear of permanent

injury. "You were so brave," she hugged him, then left several large kisses on his face in relief. "I love you so much!"

Her bond with Axel was stronger than she thought; he had just proved capable of serving as a conduit for her powers. Even to the limited extent of his saliva, if he could touch someone, she could affect them.

"Oh God, Axel..." Her glance caught one of the men she'd murdered in probably the worst way possible. "I'd always wondered whether my healing powers could be reversed...I mean, it made sense...but I never wanted to actually *do it* to someone...such a horrible death..."

She let Axel lead the way down the hallway. "We need to get back to the residential area; that's where Soren and the others will be looking for us. Were you conscious when they brought us here? Can you get us back there?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 16, 2014, 12:12:49 pm**

But just as Vergil was about to explain they needed to get back to the surface NOW... the feeling passed. The pain was resolved, and he sensed a resolution to the problem. "Never mind... it's worked itself out." He commented. That made things extremely easier on him now. But little did he know, another hammer blow was about to fall...

"Let's just get to the surface. We'll feed them a story that we need more time. We found the source, but it's a tricky solution, so we're going to have to plan this out... then we get out of here on the next boat and don't look back. There's no way they'd agree for us to shut down their operations anyway. We'll let them figure that out on their own." he stated, shaking his head.

Proceeding to remove his suit, he scurried over to his phone and tapped out the coordinates into a note, to ensure he wouldn't have to remember them. He still muttered the numbers over and over again even as he tapped away on the screen. "OK! Got the next set of coordinates! We're good to go!" he informed her. He braced himself, as he knew what was coming next...

In Corona, the sun shone brightly down on the white buildings and created the dazzling effect the city was so well-known for. The government building that housed the secret headquarters of the Federation's Special Forces was as non-descript as they came. It resembled a library, or some other office building. It didn't seem like an important place at all, but important it was.

But someone had talked... or more rather... someone had been *made* to talk. A pale looking gargoyle gecko wrapped in a red cloak stood on the path leading to the building. He couldn't smirk, thanks to the partial mask covering the lower half of his face, but his eyes blazed in determination and triumph. He had finally found them... and he was going to send a message...

Beginning to walk forward now, the red-garbed gecko strode towards the building, looking for all the world as if he belonged there...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 16, 2014, 11:15:37 pm**

I could use a drink' Rose said, spaking up from searching in the closet, which was full of clothes. ' got any ginger ale? nothing in here but clothes. and ghitting someone with a shirt isnt going to get the job done..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 16, 2014, 11:29:44 pm**

Soren went to the hotel bar and tossed Rose a can of ginger ale.

"What about the bathroom?" he asked.

He then looked around the room and whistled. "Right, so how do we want to do this? Call room service and then beat the shit out of the staff who arrive?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 17, 2014, 12:39:05 am**

Marita smirked as she helped herself to a couple root beers. she tossed one of them to Marie as she went inside the bathrooms and looked for anything in the cabinet that might prove useful. ' well theres shaving cream in here"she said pulling out a can of it. ' a blast of this in the eyes should blind them temporarily.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 17, 2014, 03:37:21 am**

"Alright... let's just hope they buy it," Triste muttered, angling the sub away from the waypoint, drifting further away from it's almost comforting blue glow and closer to the cave's opening. Turning her head, she was about to tell Vergil to hold on, but it looked like he already had that covered. Giving a quick smile, she looked back at the controls and pushed a lever.

The ballast tanks fitted to the sub started to fill with air, pushing them back up to the surface. *Not fast enough...* Triste pushed the lever down even more, and the two of them were pressed back against their seats as the craft sped through the cave opening and started to clear the plane wreckage.

Axel grunted, holding a hand against his side where the guard had hit him earlier. "Yeah, I was... it's, uh..." They stopped as the corridor branched into two paths, one to the left and the other stretching off to the right. "It's..." he gritted his teeth. "*Crap*". His ears pricked up as he heard several voices coming from the path that led to the right, getting louder. "Left! Definitely left!" Axel said quickly, making for the left route. He was aware of how their footsteps were echoing fairly loudly against the thick walls and floor, making it easy for anyone who was following to track them. He gulped and made an effort to tread more softly.

Slipping a hand into his pocket, he pulled out a phone that he'd found on one of the dead guards. Flipping it open, he pushed Soren's number into the keypad and hit call. "Soren!" he whispered when he heard someone answer. "Me and Lily got caught by security... the guys here are *crazy*... but we got out. We need help!"

Rio slumped back against the floor, his arm starting to go numb. He'd managed to pick up what Foley had said, and it wiped what little strength he had left in him. His eyes drifting across the horizon, he could see how alone they were. At this point, it'd take a miracle to save them - and he didn't hold too much faith in those.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 17, 2014, 12:15:08 pm**

"Yeah... well it's all we can do." he commented as she began to fill the ballast tanks with air. They were rising slowly now, the wreckage of Flight 447 becoming visible as they began to rise to the surface. Triste increased their ascent though, causing him to be forced back against his seat.

But as they started to rise and he focused on holding everything back, a sharp pain knifed into his chest, and he clutched it as his eyes widened. "Oh my god..." he whispered, frantically shifting his orange eyes from left to right as he tried to get a fix on what he was experiencing. It broke his concentration, and suddenly, a shadow began pursuing them now...

"There's a problem back at headquarters!" he said, turning to her with concern flooding his features. "A lot of death... destruction... something's happened..." He didn't seem to be aware that he'd lost focus, as this new input was demanding his attention.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 17, 2014, 11:11:12 pm**

Lily waited anxiously for Soren to reply. Looking nervously down both sides of the corridor, she reflected gratefully that they haven't seem to have been discovered yet.

She noticed a partially-open door that showed rows of towels on racks. If worse came to worse, they could slip in there, maybe even find housekeeper uniforms.

Flora whimpered, still curled in the fetal position. Foley wasn't much better; his breathing had become haggard and unreliable. Rio's arm was in bad shape and even as the boy fought to keep a strong face, he was losing blood quickly because his arm wasn't sewed up.

Emilena had to admit they weren't in the greatest position right now. Even as the flotation device she'd constructed out of a pair of pants deflated and the boat began sinking again, she couldn't will her exhausted body to slide over and fix it.

Maybe this it it, she thought. *Maybe it's finally my time to see why everyone fusses so much about death.*

It just feels so...anti-climactic. All of it. But then, perhaps everyone thinks that in the end.

Her body shuddered of its own accord. This particular symptom she recognized; she was going into drug withdrawl. As she slowly slipped closer and closer to unconsciousness, she embraced the feeling. It was something she could understand, it was familiar. In her last moments of life, familiarity was a luxury she could accept.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 18, 2014, 12:13:07 am**

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marita pulled out her phone and called room service ' yes i'd like to order two large pizzas, one pepperoni, the other deluxe' she said. she waited for the operators to take the order and ask hoew she intended to pay i'll pay in credits. thank you' Marita smiled and hung up the phone ' The Delivery boys will be here in ten minutes" She said to Soren,. ' be ready.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 18, 2014, 12:38:56 am**

Soren nodded. "I'll be outside." He then opened the door and stood across from their room.

Everyone who passed by him saw a Human chattering away on his cellphone. Eventually, after twelve minutes of chatting to a nonexistant friend, the two delivery people were ready with hot

steaming pizzas.

"Hey, we uh, got a delivery here for a Ms. Marita Jones," the first man said. He was a rather muscular looking Human of South Asian descent. The two paid no heed to Soren, taking him to be another tourist. The second was a dour looking female Dhole.

Come on, just a little longer, Soren thought.

When the door clicked open, Soren exploded from the wall. Diving into a low tackle, he managed to somehow shove both delivery people through the door.

The next few seconds were a blur as the stunned workers began fighting back against what was presumed to be a mugging.

Soren twisted his shoulder to block a punch from the man and retaliated with an elbow to the chin. At the same time, the Dhole dropped low and tried to tackle him. Caught off balance, he fell to the ground. The Dhole mounted him and began throwing punches at his face, which he tried to block to the best of his ability. Desperate, he groped around and managed to grab a hold of the Dhole's tail. Giving it a hard tug, he elicited a very pained yelp from the woman ó and a renewed barrage of blows.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 18, 2014, 01:05:22 am**

The Pizzas flew out of the delivery persons hands and laded on the floor, the box popped open and steam wafted from the hot pizzas. marita stormed into the room and began spraying from a can. the shaving cream hit the woman in the face tenmporarily blinding her temporarily, long enough for Marie to tackle her and get her off of Soren. Rose Grabbed the man from behind and soon held him in a headlock. the struggle was fast and furious as the delivery persons tried to fight off their attackers.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 18, 2014, 01:19:24 am**

Soren staggered and spat out some blood from a split lip as he got to his feet. He shook his head to clear it and reassesed the situation.

Seeing as the Dhole had just tried to latch her jaws on Marie's arm. Soren targeted her first. He grabbed the nearest heavy object, which happened to be a beer bottle he had retrieved from the fridge. Charging at the Dhole, he swung the bottle at her head.

A satisfying *thump* was heard as the bottle connected with her skull. But before he could take another swing, the Dhole managed to block his stroke and grab his arm in an attempt to disarm him. Thinking quickly, Soren kneed her in the groin, leaving her gasping for air.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 18, 2014, 01:34:51 am**

Marita landed a few good punches on the guy Rose was trying to subdue, the first punch caught him on the cheek, the second on the chin and the third on the nose. the man collapsed after the final blow, out cold. ' Rose take off his clothes' Marita said, panting slightly from exertion. ' i'll go find something to tie him up with ' Marita said went over to the nearby closet and found a number of suits hanging on hooks. She took one down and began tearing it into strips as Rose took off the delivery mans uniform.. She went over to the unconscious delivery man, who was now clothed only in his underwear socks and shoes. She bound his arms together using one of the strips. then wrapped another around his mouth gagging him.

—

Marie winced as the dhole had tried to bite her arm, and had left imprints on her arm. she grabbed a bottle from the bar and headed towards the woman, intebnding to knock her out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 18, 2014, 01:42:45 am**

The Dhole had recovered enough of her breath to reach into her uniform. Soren saw the movement and with a suprisingly fast sprint, charged up to her and kicked her square in the head as hard as possible. The impact caused the object to fly out from the Dhole's grasp as she was knocked unconscious by the powerful blow.

He gasped as he saw the object. It was a full-sized pistol just like the one he had once used in Lanthae during the Purifier Crisis. "Uh, guys, I think these guys were here to deliver more than pizza." He held up the pistol.

His phone then buzzed, alerting him to a voicemail. He unlocked it via the touchscreen and found that Axel had left the voicemail.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 18, 2014, 01:56:18 am**

Rose gaped as she saw the gun, then began going through the mans clothes , and pulled out a second gun ' geez, these guys were packing heat ' she muttered as she stared at the weapon ' might as well take these along. ' along with the pizza' Marie said as she put the bottle down on the ground and picked up the pizzas which were still warm.
- Marita went over the the Dhole, pinned her armed behind her back and tied her up, then gagged her." Lets put these two in the bathroom and lock it, then go find Axel and Lily' Marita said " Help me drag this one the bathroom' she said to Rose.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 18, 2014, 01:56:01 pm**

Three solid looking guards, the middle one carrying a box of doughnuts, were making their way along the security corridor. The one on the right was in the middle of speaking, and they were too distracted to notice the two prisoners fleeing up the corridor to their right as they passed the intersection and carried on towards the cells.

"Alright, alright, here's one," the guard said. "What's the difference between a woman and a battery?"

"I dunno... what?" the one on the left chuckled.

"A battery has a positive side."

This was received with meaty, booming guffaws from the three gorilla - like men as they approached the door leading to the cells. It was ajar, and the guard carrying the doughnuts called through. "Hey Roger! I got yer doughnuts here! I know how hungry ya get after a bit'a torture. Couldn't get the ones with sprinkles though."

"Okay, my turn," said the man on the left, flapping his arm for attention as they filed in. "What's the difference between a Jew and a pizza? A pizza doesn't..." He trailed off. "Oh shit." Before the guards, three of their colleagues were sprawled dead on the ground. The cells were open.

Doughnut guard dropped the box he was carrying and hurriedly pulled out a walkie-talkie. "We've got a situation!" he barked into it. "Three men down, at least one prisoner escaped!"

Shrugging, Axel hung up the phone and looked at Lily. "Huh. I could've sworn he answered." Slipping it back into his pocket, he ran a hand through his hair and started to move again. "Alright... we're doing okay. As long as we don't draw attention to ourselves..."

He was cut off by a loud wailing as sirens overheard began to blare, and red lights flickered on and off. "**Alert! Alert!**" a voice droned. His ears flattening, Axel blinked at Lily. "Well, crap."

As she forced the sub to rise up as fast as it could, Triste heard a low whisper coming from Vergil. "What?!" she called across, glancing at him quickly. "What's the matter?" Her eyes widened when he mentioned the Headquarters. "What happened? *Vergil!* What the hell -"

Something slammed into them from the side, and Triste was thrown sideways, almost tumbling out of her chair. "Jesus!" Grappling with the controls and just barely managing to stop them from spinning into the plane wreck. "Something's on us! I need your help!"

As the water started to lap around his feet, Rio first tried to move them out of the way, but after a moment he gave up. *What's the point...* Suddenly, he remembered the small *Nutrageous* bar that he'd stuck down his underwear for safe keeping after he'd stolen it from the cleaner on the ship. In all the excitement, he'd completely forgotten about it. *If I'm gonna die, then at least I can have some goddamn chocolate first*.

He reached down and pulled it out from the front. It was warm, but still eatable. Slyly, Rio started to unwrap it with his remaining good arm for himself... but then he paused. Emilena, Foley, Flora... they'd almost, sort of become a family for him. A messed up, slightly twisted family, but they looked out for each other. They'd looked out for *him*. "Guys..." he called out, his voice crackly. "Want to share this? It's been somewhere kind of... private, but it'll still taste good..." Rio stretched out his hand, presenting the chocolate.

A seagull swooped down from the sky and plucked the bar from his fingers. Dumbstruck, Rio could only watch in shock as the bird sailed upwards and gulped the chocolatey treat down in one. With a final triumphant squawk, it then sailed off into the sunset.

After a moment, Rio leaned back, suddenly feeling very tired. "This is bullshit..." he complained.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 18, 2014, 08:26:13 pm**

Soren took the Dhole, clad only in her underwear and roughly pushed her into the bathroom. He then got a look at himself in the mirror. His face was pretty beat-up and he had a black eye but he could excuse those as he having slipped and fell.

The door did not lock from the outside but a chair under the doorknob kept it in place.

Soren looked at the remnants of their fight. "Guys, it's Axel. He broke out and he wants to meet us somewhere," he said as he hung up his phone after listening to the voicemail.

He then accessed an app in his smartphone that allowed him to remotely control another smartphone so as long as he knew its number. Inputting Axel's number, he remotely activated the microphone. Soon, he heard the sound of sirens and a synthesized recording that warned of a prisoner escape.

He scowled and shut the program down. "Shit! We have to hurry! Axel's been spotted!" He quickly donned the man's uniform. Luckily, the extra padding of his clothes helped fill out the otherwise large outfit. He tucked the pistol in his pocket

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 19, 2014, 12:03:29 am**

But Vergil wasn't able to answer, as the sub was suddenly hit and spun violently on its side. "Dammit!" the gecko uttered, coming back to reality now. "It's that thing I told you about before!" It loomed up in their view now, a hideous creature with skin hanging down in flabby tags. It looked purple in color, but in the darkness was hard to tell. "Holy crap!" Vergil breathed, eyes going wide.

It had arms but no legs, which culminated in a sharp spike apiece that looked like bone. It maneuvered with a giant tail that tapered to a fine point, and had a double row of crooked, yellowed teeth.

"Uhhhh... I can't control that thing..." Vergil stated as it lunged for them now, maw opened wide. Vergil dove forward, slamming his hand down on the fire button for the torpedoes, which launched one straight towards the monster.

The torpedo sped towards its target, the beast crunching down on it before it blew, shattering some of its teeth and causing it to issue a shriek of pain that threw the sub back. "Get us out of here!" Vergil ordered, sliding into the seat next to her now as he realized standing up wasn't the best thing to do right here. It was about fifty times the size of the sub, so taking it head on would be most unwise as its mouth could easily gobble the sub up and then some.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 19, 2014, 01:02:53 am**

Marita threw on the woman's outfit while Rose put the gun into her pocket. ' Time to move everyone' Rose said, regretting for a moment that they really wouldnt have time to enjoy the pizza.' we could use the pizzas as cover " Saying we're making a delivery to some room ' Marie said getting an idea "shoot axel a text mesage try and find a good place to meet.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 19, 2014, 01:33:20 am**

Soren texted Axel. *Axel, we're heading down. Meet us by the security office.*

He then pocketed the smartphone and picked up the pizza.

When the group headed down the hallway, no one suspected a thing. Even though only Soren and Marita were wearing uniforms, everyone assumed the two to be new workers.

They soon arrived at a door labeled "Employees Only". Thanks to the RFID tag inside the sleeves of the uniforms, Soren and Marita were able to gain access with Rose and Marie trailing behind.

Soren looked around. The hallways were a bland insitutional white ó a huge change from the Art Deco inspired furnishings and ornaments of Voltaic Station's touristy areas.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 19, 2014, 11:23:47 am**

arie looked around the hallway as they kept walking, trying tokeep a steady face and make it seem as if she belonged there. here and there passenges cut away from the dry bland walls. so far no one had stopped them.. yet.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 19, 2014, 06:05:16 pm**

Lily led Axel to the closet with the towels. "Try Soren again while we're in here!" she urged. She glanced around and was disappointed to find there were no uniforms of any sort in this closet, unless bathrobes counted.

Her eyes narrowed as she noticed a laundry chute. *Well, if push came to shove we could always jump down that...*

All of a sudden, a harmonious melody drifted across the waves. Flora looked around and cocked her head quizzically.

Riding towards them abreast a glimmering light, a fierce rugged look etched into his features, was Nairda. No longer was he the scrawny twenty-something fox they'd once known. Now he had the chiseled features of a man.

"It's a ghost..." Flora gasped, tremoring. "We're being haunted!"

At her rousing, the others slowly lifted their heads to see what the ghost was. "Nairda?" gasped Emilena.

As he drew closer, it soon became apparent what he was swimming with. Matching every stroke of his with a powerful kick of her tail was a shivering scaled mermaid, her eyes alight with an otherworldly glow. All sharks within a ten foot radius of her fled immediately.

Nobody said anything as Nairda hoisted himself onto the boat. "The silent treatment, eh?" he glowered, in a voice much deeper than before. "Do you all even remember me, or was I that transitory?"

Everyone remained stunned silent. Foley groaned loudly.

By this point, the boat was capsized enough that the mermaid could access the crew. Putting her hands on Foley's forehead, she hissed gutteral, harmonious lyrics in a runic chant no living mortal could translate. Undulating light particles orbited his skull, and he sighed comfortably as color returned to his face and the swelling disappeared.

"One of you say something to me!" snapped Nairda angrily. His eyes flared behind the bushy eyebrows of a rugged survivor. "I want to hear everyone say that you couldn't have lived through today without me! Starting with you!" he pointed an accusing finger at Emilena.

Emilena was watching with awe as the mermaid cradled her leg. Slowly, the stitches floated to the surface of the waves as the skin and muscle repaired themselves amidst a light show of ether. "You're not Nairda," Emilena said matter-of-factly. "Impossible. You must be a kelpie, or a Changeling. Trust us, we don't mind. We honestly prefer you over Nairda."

Nairda's eyes bugged. "I am Nairda you bastard! How can you not recognize your true love?"

"I can; that's the problem!" snapped Emilena. Behind her, the mermaid was whispering incantations as she ran her fingers down Rio's arm. "You made some basic mistakes in your disguise. For one, you look like a Nairda who actually went through puberty."

"I had Aurora beef me up a bit!" he retorted. "She saved me after you had me thrown overboard. She's very powerful."

Aurora was hesitating before healing Flora, but ultimately sighed and put her hands on Flora's junk. Flora's tongue lolled in relief and her eyes rolled back into her head.

"I'm supposed to believe that a mermaid found you in the time between you jumping ship and drowning?" Emilena folded her arms.

"I can't drown, you idiot! I have trans-adaptive conversion lungs, remember? They were one of the many Augments I was required to get after that horrible accident in my backstory." Nairda took a deep breath. "It was three days later that she found me, starving and barely keeping my body afloat. I kept expecting you guys to come rescue me. I figured if my ejection was part of your plan, some further step would involve my rescue, right?"

"What do you think we were doing out here right now, you ungrateful whelp!" Emilena snapped.

As the glowing evaporated and the mermaid pulled her hands away, Flora purred happily and inspected her intact flytrap. "Oh Aurora, you're amazing. Are you seeing anybody?"

"Yes!" interrupted Nairda defensively. "We care about each other far more than any of you ever cared about me! What kind of bullshit rescue plan involves relaxing on the cruise ship for the rest of the voyage and then taking a love yacht from Voltaic in a random direction? I would have been long dead by the time you left the docks!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 19, 2014, 10:18:09 pm**

(OOC - Wat?)

Simply by acting like they belonged, the five were able to walk through the back areas without interruption.

Soon, they found themselves at a door labeled "Security Staff Lounge". Loud industrial rock boomed through the closed door. Soren cleared his throat and knocked on the door. "Pizza delivery!"

The two guards, one a Belgian Malanois Baseline and the other a Human Augment, stopped their card game.

The Malanois peeled his lips back, exposing his fangs. "You order any pizza?"

The Human scowled as she put her cards down and unholstered her pistol. "I didn't order any pizza."

The door slid open, and she was confronted by a Human and four Canines. She wrinkled her nose ó her augmented sense of smell could smell that one of them was a drug addict and all of them had been involved in some sort of strenuous activity ó most likely a fight owing to the chemicals ahe could detect circulating in their blood.

"We didn't order any pizza," she growled, her pistol kept at the ready.

"Uh, sorry. Mistake been made! I get going!" Soren quickly acted like a new staff member, feigning a poor command of English.

"Hold it! You'reó" She took a step closer.

Decidedly *not* wanting to deal with Voltaic Station's prison system, he threw the lukewarm pizza at the guard, distracting her for a moment. That moment was all he needed to pull his pistol and put three rounds into the guard. Unfortunately for him, the guard managed to get off a shot as she fell backwards. The bullet missed him, striking the doorframe and causing fragments to ripinto his left arm.

The gunshot attracted the Malanois's attention. He turned to the group with pistol in hand.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 20, 2014, 12:55:50 am**

Rose stepped forward and fired off two shots into the Malanois, the first hit him in the stomach, the second directly in the chest. Rose froze for a brief second as the guard toppled over, his gun clattering to the ground. ' Marie went over and picked it up.. ' better give Axel a call. tell him to stay where he is if hes hidden, we'll head towards him ' she said to Soren. Rose was shaking, she had never killed anyone before, and she looked at the gun she was holding with disgust ' My.. my God ' she murmured, shock on her face.' Marita stepped up and took the gun from her. ' Come on, no time to beat yourself up.. we need to get out of here' Marita said firmly to her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 20, 2014, 01:16:42 am**

Soren's stolen uniform was starting to redden with blood. He holstered his pistol and he took out his smartphone and dialed Axel.

"Pick up, damn it!" he muttered. When he had gotten through, he spoke. "Hey, Axel. It's Soren. We're currently in the Guard's Lounge. Stay where you are. We'll find you."

He then hung up and opened the same app he had used to eavesdrop on Axel's location. Inputting the phone number, he waited until he got a lock on Axel's location.

He then turned to the two others. Heart racing, he looked around. No activity. Of course, that didn't mean anything. "Keep watch while I see if the guards have anything useful."

He examined the dead woman. There was nothing visible on her uniform, just three bullet holes in her bloody uniform. He shrugged and took the pistol from her hand.

The Malanois had nothing of use either. The ID on a lanyard from his belt was taken as well.

(OOC - Is Soren the only Human in the group?)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 20, 2014, 01:41:32 am**

(Yes, marita , Marie and riose are all dogs)
marie took up a position near the door, hoping Sioren would be quick. ' i figure we've got only a couple minutes to get out of here Soren " marie said "Once you've located what you want from the guards. we need to go.'
Marita was on the other side of the doorway and periodically glanced down the hallway.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 20, 2014, 02:30:14 pm**

"What's the rush? I was gonna hang around, stay for the sights!" Triste snapped back as she pushed the sub to its maximum speed... which didn't seem to be nearly enough. Glancing into the rear monitor, Triste could see the huge creature already beginning to gain on them again, its grotesque face looming closer as it used its tail to propel itself through the water.

Reaching across, Triste wrapped her hand around the trigger and fired off a second round of torpedoes back at the creature. But it had learned from the last attack and it raised a clawed hand, swatting the missiles away without even blinking. “Son of a bitch…” Triste started to

swear – but then the creature sliced its claw back down, and the sub was once again rocked violently to the side. This time, it was accompanied by a shrill bleeping that subsided after a few seconds. Pulling back on the controls, she managed to straighten the vehicle again, and glanced up at the damage report flashing on one of the monitors. The craft had almost been torn wide open. It'd hold together – at least, for now – but another successful attack by this monster and they'd almost certainly be dead. Gritting her teeth in frustration, Triste swerved to the left, and took them through a narrow gap in the plane's wreckage, hoping to lose it amongst the broken machinery and twisted metal.

Scanning the ruins around them and looking at the rear cameras, where the creature's hideous, bulbous yellow eyes were fixed forwards in a dead stare, Triste had a desperate idea. "Your psionics!" she shouted across to Vergil. "Try to lift some of these metal pieces and throw them back at the bastard's eyes! Burst them!"

As they searched around for something useful in the laundry room, Axel heard a bleeping from the phone he'd taken. Looking down at it quickly, he saw it was a call from Soren's number. Answering it, he stuttered in the affirmative and hung up. "Okay… Soren and the others are on their way! We just… we just need to sit tight…"

From outside, he heard the loud rumbling of multiple footsteps and then; "Hey! Did you leave the laundry room open?!"

Throat suddenly closing, Axel looked across and saw what Lily was looking at – the laundry chute. "After you!" he choked, picking her up and tossing her through, trying to be gentle but probably not succeeding given the pressure of the situation. Gripping the sides of the chute, he lifted himself up and started to slide down feet first… but as he was disappearing down, he felt a hand grab his head, fingers wrapping around his hair tightly.

"I got the cocksucker!" a deep voice yelled triumphantly.

Crying out in pain, Axel bucked wildly, trying to shake the grip that was holding him back. He tried reaching his hands back to pry the fingers off, but in the tight confines of the chute he couldn't quite manage. Axel gave one final tug… which must have unbalanced the guard and pulled him off his feet. Suddenly, the two of them were shouting and sliding down the dark metal passage after Lily, to whatever awaited them below.

Rio stared down at his arm, amazed, as his torn flesh started to knit together, and the throbbing pain started to subside. When it looked almost as good as new, aside from the blood coating the limb, he raised his eyes and gazed with an equal amount of amazement at the strange being's chest. "Hey, something… ah… hurt my balls. Yeah. I think you should check them out, too…" he moaned theatrically, starting to pull his underwear down as Aurora tended to Flora.

Blinking, Rio looked across at Nairda, mid – underwear pull, and frowned. "Wait… how did you know we actually got to Voltaic? And how did you know we rented out a love yacht? How is that even possible?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 20, 2014, 11:18:50 pm**

"Are you kidding me?" Vergil asked, shaking his head. "At this depth I'd be lucky to move my own tail if I were out there!" he pointed out. "But I guess I could try... it's gonna be like trying to move a plastic knife through peanut butter though." He saw them zoom by an engine of the Airbus, and he began focusing on that, trying to lift it. "Ugh! Son of a bitch! This isn't gonna be easy! I'm not sure I can get enough force behind it to make it have much of an impact!" he grunted, struggling to lift it now, as he actually reached his hand out, as if he were trying to

grasp it through the glass.

"You're gonna have to buy me time... just a minute or so... until I can build up enough strength to lift this thing and hurl it at his eye... maybe even 30 seconds..." he trailed off, finally lifting the engine out of the silt now and starting to raise it. "Keep him in my line of sight... I'm gonna line it up..." It wobbled and almost fell back down, but he ground his teeth now as he started to sweat, keeping it rising as he fought for control.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 20, 2014, 11:52:38 pm**

Lily cried out as she tumbled down the laundry chute. After tumbling down pipeways for several seconds, she roughly hit a curve that deposited her into the main chute. Ten stomach-churning seconds of freefall later and she landed with a "ploomph!" into a towering stack of linens.

She barely had a few moments to catch her breath before two heavy bodies landed on top of her.

"Axel?" she asked, dazed. "Axel, are you--? *Eek!*"

An enraged security guard bore down on her. He socked her once, twice, three times, constantly losing his grip due to the plushy arena of blankets and towels they were still stuck in.

Grasping out frantically, Lily grabbed his ankle and concentrated on putting him to sleep. *Relax his muscles...* she tried to think even while being assaulted. *Flood the body with melatonin...induce sleep-related nureal patterns...Block the larynx and deprive his brain of oxygen...*

She started panicking as nothing seemed to be slowing the guy down. *Why isn't this working?* she thought wildly as his fist cracked across her temple for the umpteeth time. She began to fear that she'd have to use more lethal force against yet another living person...

Then the guard threw in a kick somehow and she realized she'd been clutching Axel's ankle this whole time. "Oh thank god..." she laughed with relief, before catching the nonplussed guard's fist and putting him to sleep in seconds.

Stumbling towards the side of the chute and getting blood all over the linens, she shoved blankets out of the way until the hatch leading to the laundry room was available. "Hey, Axel, wake up. Sorry about that. Wake up!" she shook him roughly. She had really done a number on him...

Nairda didn't see Rio's question coming. "I--uh...er..."

Emilena's eyes lit up in realization. "You've been spying on us, haven't you?"

When Nairda couldn't respond, she leapt triumphantly onto her newly-healed legs. "You've been spying on us this whole time! Then I'll bet you had the mermaid send that hurricane after us, and the sharks, and *everything* because you wanted to look like the hero when we needed someone to bail us out!"

Aurora looked sardonically at Rio and held up her hand, digits splayed. Electric charges sparked and coursed along her fingertips in a warning display.

"Shut up!" Nairda snapped at Emilena, face flushing red and fists balled. "Don't try and change the subject! Not one of you has said sorry yet for dumping me off the boat!"

"And we're not going to," Emilena cut in. "Because it was *my* decision, nobody else is responsible, and I'm not apologizing to a whiny little shit that decides to put my entire gang's lives in danger just because he needs a power trip to make up for his own crippling self-doubt."

"I don't have healing powers, but I'll massage them if you like," Flora suggested to Rio.

"Could all you please sort out your relationship issues later?" exclaimed Foley incredulously. "We're still stuck in the middle of the ocean, remember?"

"And you can stay that way for all we care!" Nairda spat at him. "Aurora and I didn't have to save you! And we're not going to help you any more until I hear those apologies!"

Aurora looked up, and pointed her finger at the seagull who was still eating Rio's chocolate bar. Abruptly, the seagull squacked in alarm as it suddenly began spasming and growing. Soon, it got over itself and crooned powerfully as it gently landed aside the boat, now the size of a hang glider.

"Okay," frowned Nairda, "I guess Aurora decided to help you anyway. Whatever. You still won't be able to fly without a harness. Aurora can whip one up, as soon as I hear--"

Aurora waved her arms, and the bootlaces turned into long, rugged ropes. The best remaining boards from the boat removed themselves from the wreck and together these pieces assembled themselves into a saddle with five hand-and-foot straps on the seagull's back.

"Aurora, can I talk to you in private for a moment?" Nairda asked under his breath.

Emilena mounted the bird. "She doesn't care about you, Nairda. There are five strapholds; she's expecting you to leave with us."

Nairda's eyes opened wider in surprise, and his lip trembled. "Aurora? Is...is this true? But I thought..."

Aurora indicated the seagull by pointing her thumb over her shoulder.

Foley grunted as he tried to climb up the bird's side. The bird squacked in protest. But eventually, he managed it and inserted his foot clumsily into the closest foothold. "I don't know if I'll be able to do this..." he muttered, looking with alarm at how high he already was above sea level. "Where is this thing even going to take us...?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 21, 2014, 08:57:18 pm**

"*Godammit!* Alright, I'll try!" Triste shouted, swerving the sub so maybe the creature wouldn't have so easy a target to go for. But to her horror, glancing up at the rear monitor after a few minutes only revealed the horrible truth that no matter how fast she pushed the craft, this thing was faster. It started to catch up, growing closer... and closer.

"Shit..." she swore through gritted teeth, firing back another volley of missiles. But Triste might as well of been firing pillows for all the damage they did. "Vergil, I don't think we have 10 minutes..." The creature's gigantic mouth started to stretch open, as if in anticipation of swallowing them whole. ""Just do it! Blind him!"

His teeth rattling as Lily shook him, Axel's eyes blearily creaked open. "Uh..." he moaned. "*Ugh...* I think I hit my... head or... or something." Starting to sit up, Axel saw the unconscious guard lying next to him and started. "Hey, I... think I got him!" he mumbled victoriously, raising a fist and making to thump him, but missing and slumping over the man's back in a daze instead.

Stumbling to his feet when Lily have him a hand up, Axel craned his neck in disorientation, simultaneously trying to pierce the darkness around them and clear the fog in his head. "What do we... do we do now?" he swallowed, trying to keep calm.

Rio winced as Aurora flexed her electrical fingers across at him, and when Flora made her offer he went pale. "You know, I'm good. They're feeling a lot better." Struggling to his knees, he could only stare in amazement as the strange being provided them with the means to escape.

Standing up, he charged over to the slightly terrifyingly large seagull and leaped on, more than happy to be off the floating wreckage. "Hey, don't worry about it," he said, clapping Foley on the shoulder as he clambered over him to get comfortable on the bird. "Thing about heights is, the only thing that can happen to you is you fall. What's worse? I mean... that, or getting shot?" After a moment, he got into position comfortably on the seagull's back, then looked over his shoulder at Foley. "And as long as we get far away from this piece of shit boat, I'm gonna feel pretty good."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 22, 2014, 01:06:57 am**

"Agh! Fine!" Vergil shouted, crying out as he launched the engine through the water, propelling it as best he could with as much force as he could muster under here. The engine began to lose headway almost immediately, but Vergil pushed it onward with his mind, forcing it through the waters as the creature roared again and moved towards their small sub.

But that was all the gecko needed. Manipulating its path right into the eye of the creature, the bulbous yellow sac burst and sprayed a golden fluid out into the surrounding waters.

Collapsing back into his seat now, Vergil closed his eyes, his arms laying limply over the chair, splayed out uselessly as his muscle strength had completely left him. "Ugh..." he exhaled, unable to open his eyes for now, or even feel what was going on around him. He was drained, and even paler than usual, having blanched beyond his normal shade of white...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 23, 2014, 04:45:58 pm**

"We're trying to regroup with Soren...somewhere. You never told me the location," Lily reminded gently. Unconsciousness has medically proven affects on one's memory, but it was important that Axel kept it together. "We first need to get out of--" With a yelp, Lily accidentally unlocked the hatch and sent both of them tumbling to the laundry room floor amidst a wave of linens.

"Hopefully Soren can keep us updated as to his progress..." Lily groaned, nursing a banged kneecap.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 23, 2014, 07:44:22 pm**

Soren finally got a lock onto Axel's location. He scowled. "Hey, Marita, can you get a map of this place? My app says his cell phone's on the floor below us."

He then looked around the room. Not surprisingly, there were no maps in the sparsely populated room. The Human's stomach growled, reminding him that he hadn't eaten much.

"On second thought, shall we eat first?" He gestured to the refrigerator in the room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 23, 2014, 11:08:43 pm**

Grab something out the Fidge and let me get a map up on your Phone mArita said going over and taking the phone from Soren A few quick taps on the phone was all it required of someone of maritas skill to bring up a map' alright Soren i have a map created for you. there are stairs to our left, and Axel and KLily are in a laundry room currently. we head down the stairs take a left than a right and we'll be there in maybe 5 minutes' Marita said."Less, if we hurry. Just grab a sandwich or whatever in there, and then we'll scoot."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 23, 2014, 11:36:48 pm**

Sorent tossed a crab salad sandwich to Marita. At the same time, he helped himself to a catfish salad sandwich.

After gulping the sandwich and washing it down with a bottle of iced tea, he took the phone back. "Gotcha."

He then headed out of the lounge. A few of the guards passing by them waved, assuming that the four were actual guards.

As Soren rounded down the immaculate stairwell, he tried his best to keep calm. This was easy...too easy in fact.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 23, 2014, 11:57:54 pm**

'left, then Right' Marita said, keeping a normal face as they walked past guards, who took no notice of them. ' getting to them will be easy, getting out of here in one piece will be hard.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 24, 2014, 12:06:33 am**

Soren shuddered at Marita's words. "Don't remind me," he whispered.

After following Marita's directions, he found himself at the aforementioned laundry room.

"Hey!"

The shout made Soren's hair stand on end. He turned around and saw a rather large Appaloosa mare dressed in the uniform of the Voltaic Station guards. Like Anne, she too had the unicorn-styled "radio horn" implant protruding from her forehead.

"Uh, I can explain," Soren began.

"Explain why you are taking three females into a laundry room. You know that Judaken strictly forbids sexual activity while on duty!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 24, 2014, 12:43:51 am**

We're not having sex with him. we have to bring up a fresh load of clothes, some of the uniforms got really stained the other day and need to be washed.,. "Marita replied. some drunk passenger spilled something on my uniform and it got really stained." she motioned to a blot on her uniform."Nothing untoward going on here" she said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 24, 2014, 08:23:46 am**

Luckily Lily and Axel were able to obtain pretty decent-looking uniforms from the dirty laundry. With Lily as a maid and Axel as a waiter, Lily peeked open the door and yelped as she saw the standoff. She quickly closed it and looked frantically along the door for a lock, heart pounding.

"What is this, an orgy?" the unicorn guard exclaimed angrily. She grabbed her radio. "Wait until Judaken hears about this!"

"Aurora, my love..." Nairda made the biggest puppy eyes he could. "You don't really want this, do you? Can't we talk about this--?"

Aurora snapped her spindly webbed fingers and a band of magical light wrapped itself tightly around Nairda's snout. Lifting her hand in the air, she deftly propelled Nairda onto the seagull's back and then tied his wrist tightly into the harness.

Flora was the last to board, gingerly mounting over the wing and settling her foot into the last reamining holster. "You know..." she observed. "I feel even better than before we started this trip. I can't quite place it but..."

"It's the drug addictions," Foley noted. "They're gone. I noticed that too."

"She healed our drug addictions?" gasped Emilena. "Give that one back!" she snapped at Aurora, even as the seagull began groaning as it slowly lifted into the air. "I need it!"

Aurora had already retreated in the wake of the choppy waves caused by the seagull's updraft. Groaning, their ride fought bitterly for every inch of air, until it finally caught a thermal and began gliding away from the wreckage site.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 24, 2014, 04:51:16 pm**

A tight smile started to creep across Triste's face as she looked back and saw the creature's eye burst, globules of a thick, yellow pus-like liquid trailing from the ruptured organ. "Good job..." she started to say, turning to Vergil - but her expression died as she saw the state he was in.

"*Shit!* Hang on!" she said through gritted teeth, glancing at the rear monitor. As she'd hoped, the creature was momentarily distracted from pursuing them, twisting in the water in pain. But it wouldn't be put off long... Triste had to take advantage of the brief opportunity *now*. "Just hold on! We're almost there..." Turning sharply, she took the sub through another broken section of the plane, trying to keep as low as possible.

When she thought enough distance had been put between them, Triste started to take the craft up, as fast as she could. In the distance, she could just start to make out the docking area. "Almost there!" she repeated, almost as much to reassure herself as Vergil.

Rio looked back and tried to grin encouragingly at Emilena. "Hey, it's not too bad. Think about how much fun you're gonna have getting all of them back again!" He shrugged. "If I ever get my own stash again, we can split it. Fifty-fifty. Uh... sixty-forty," Rio added after considering.

Turning his attention to Foley, he gleefully started pushing him, pretending he was going to shove him off.

As Lily tried to lock the door, Axel rubbed a hand through his hair. "She already saw us, Lily. Crap, if we draw any more attention..." Suddenly, he snapped his fingers. "I've got an idea," he said, seeing that they certainly looked like staff. "Muss your hair up! Sound like you're out of breath!" Reaching across and popping open her top button, he messed up his own hair then crossed to the door, pausing to reach down and unbutton the top of his waiter's trousers.

"Sorry!" he gasped, panting for breath as he swung open the door, ignoring Soren and the girls for now and focusing on the unicorn. "We didn't know we were needed, ah... we were just..." Still breathing heavily, Axel blinked at the unicorn guard. "Just... sex. A bit. We're almost off duty though!" He grinned appeasingly. "So, ah... we can go, right?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 25, 2014, 02:45:13 am**

The mare scowled. Soren noticed that the guard seemed to be scanning his bruised face.

"I slipped and I fell," he quickly said. "While delivering room service."

The "unicorn" nodded. She cast suspicious looks at Rose and Marie, the two women who were not wearing uniforms. "Why are y'all out of uniform?"

It was then that Axel and Lily got her attention. Scanning over their tousled clothes and hair, coupled with the Rat's statement, she now had ample proof that they had engaged in sexual activity on the clock. "Your ID cards," she demanded. "*Almost* off-duty is still on-duty. I'm writing y'all up. And save the shit excuses for the superviser."

She picked up the tablet from her belt holster and got to work writing a disciplinary report.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 25, 2014, 01:15:43 pm**

"I... that's... that's good..." Vergil responded weakly, trying to recover his strength. He felt as if someone had slammed his chest with a sledgehammer over and over, after of course he'd just run ten miles non-stop. He cracked one eye open, but closed it again as remarkably, even that put strain on him. "I just hope... I won't cut too sorry a state up there... but then again... makes it look convincing... doesn't it?" he asked in a voice that was more a wisp of a question than a strong inquiry.

He couldn't even sense how far they'd risen, and finally, he forced his eyes open. "I see light... that's either very good... or very bad... it's the mining station... right?" he asked hopefully. If she answered, it was... if she didn't... well he'd have to try and fight to stay alive.

A splash occurred above them as the crane was dropped down into the water to hoist them back up. The four pronged cradle couldn't align itself with the sub though, and Triste would have to maneuver them into its grasp.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 25, 2014, 06:58:04 pm**

"My name is Aylin... Jiang. No 'e' on either of those," Lily ad-libbed quickly. "You're spelling it right, aren't you? Here, I just need to check."

She advanced on the guard, attempting to grasp the guard and knock her out with a surge in melatonin and relatively harmless brain oxygen deprivation.

There was nothing Foley could do. One moment, he was strapped in, the next, Rio played it suicidally, and sent the two of them toppling over the edge. Despite it looking as if the harness would be large enough to support an adult, the ropes here weren't particularly strong, jutting off the side of the boards as they were. They held the harness together, but their knots were stronger than their bonds. Foley could only cry out in pain as the rope struck his side, and then... began to snap. It seemed as if Rio had miscalculated rather badly...

The human's arms flailed out, but they couldn't grab hold of anything but the rope as before Rio's eyes, it broke, and with an incomprehensible shriek, the human plummeted into the ocean below...

Once his life was done flashing before his eyes, Foley pushed Rio back angrily. "Watch it! The hell you doing?"

As the distance between their ride and the crash site widened, Nairda's ethereal muzzle evaporated, and he sniffed as tears ran down his puffy face. "Why would she...I thought we..."

"What gives her the right?" fumed Emilena. "I worked hard for those addictions! They cleared my mind, helped my detective work! Like Sherlock Holmes!"

Nairda guffawed loudly. "Detective work? What the hell have you ever solved? You wouldn't recognize a clue if you rolled it up and smoked it in a joint!"

"I'm not the only one here who's clueless!" Emilena shot back. "Doesn't take a detective to know why Aurora dumped you. You're clingy, incompetent, abrasive, uncaring, mopy, and a closet homosexual!"

"*What?*" Nairda's eyes bugged out. "How dare you insult me and LGBT culture like that! I'm bisexual, there's a big difference! Aurora and I had a healthy, albeit sexless, relationship, but that was only because she had a flipper instead of legs!"

"Yeah? Well, I had legs, and six whole months of dating you, and how many times did you sleep with me? *Twice!* I'm surprised you never took Flora up on her repeated offers to stick her dick in your butt; I bet you're into that sort of thing!"

"Fuck you!" Nairda snapped. "You want to break up that badly? Then fine! As soon as this seagull puts us down, I'll go my own way. I'll hitchhike to Hollywood, blaze my own trail. I'll find people who appreciate me for who I am!"

"Why is it *always about you?*" Emilena exclaimed exasperatingly. "Are you capable of not talking about yourself for five minutes?"

The two lapsed into uncomfortable silence. Flora opened her mouth, but Nairda silenced her with a death glare, so she went back to sticking her face in the wind and panting happily.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 26, 2014, 01:44:57 am**

Our uniforms are in the laundry mam. we were headed in to get them out, and unfortunately we didnt have any spare uniforms to wear.. "Marie said.' We apologize for the violation in dress, in the future we'll bring spares to wear in case the uniforms need cleaning again. charge us for an extra uniform and take it out of our next paychecks, if you wish.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 26, 2014, 07:47:30 am**

Triste felt relief flooding her chest when she saw the crane splash down into the water above them, its metallic arms looking like the most welcome thing she'd seen in a while. Speeding

up, she angled the sub so it fitted evenly into the cradle and felt the thump as the prongs connected, holding the craft tightly.

"I'd say you look like just the right amount of hell to be useful," she muttered over her shoulder, still scanning the monitors for any sign of the creature - but the only thing around them was the clear sea. There was a tug, the crane's machinery working to lift them free. As they started to rise, Triste thought back to what Vergil has said just before they'd been attacked. Headquarters had been attacked? *That's... that's impossible! How could...* Triste opened her mouth, starting to speak to Vergil - when something drew her attention. Movement in one of the monitors. Her eyes widened at what the image revealed.

From below, a huge shape was emerging from the darkness. Huge mouth, grotesque face, ruptured eye... the creature was making straight for them. "*Shit...*" Triste snarled. She jumped off her chair, raced across to Vergil and yanked him up from where he was sprawling back in his seat. The top of the sub had cleared the water, just about reaching the walkway... but the rest of the sub was still in the sea and the crane was pulling them up far, far too slowly. The creature's mouth started to gape open, baring its crooked teeth as it drew closer. Pulling Vergil towards the ladder leading up, she tried to ignore the steadily growing rumble as the huge mass bore up on them.

Suddenly, there was an almighty crash, the screaming of metal, and Triste was thrown off her feet as, just by where they'd been sitting moments before, huge yellow teeth tore through the walls of the sub. Water started to spray into the vehicle through the gaps where the teeth had punctured the metal, and as the screaming intensified Triste realised with growing horror that the creature was trying to tear them free and pull them back into the depths.

Scrambling to her feet, she pulled Vergil up and started to force him up the ladder. "Go! Move it!" she yelled as she started to climb up after him, the sub starting to tilt and the walls buckling alarmingly. The hatch was thrown open, and as they scrambled up onto the roof, Triste could see the joints of the crane straining and starting to buckle. They only had moments. Wrapping her arms around Vergil, she roughly threw his weakened body up onto the walkway leading to the station, and jumped up after him. Just as her feet left the vehicle, there was a final, deafening screech and the cradle was torn free from the rest of the structure. With a great splash, the sub was pulled back into the sea, and disappeared into the darkness.

For several moments, Triste could only lay on her back next to Vergil, exhausted, staring up at the ceiling as she listened to the hissing of the settling water. Finally, she rolled over and staggered up, offering a hand down to the gecko. "We almost... almost had the map! We were so close!" she panted. She turned to the dumbfounded guard who was staring at them from the other end of the walkway and nodded. "We haven't been able to solve... the problem," she groaned as she heaved Vergil to his feet. "But we've found the source. We'll need time to prepare."

Axel could see Lily making to touch the guard. "Has anyone told you what a beautiful horn you have?" he said, smiling sweetly as he stepped forward and placed his hands over her own - repulsed, the guard didn't notice Lily reaching out. With a shudder, her eyes rolled up into the back of her head and the tablet slipped from her fingers. Before she could fall to the floor and hurt herself, Axel caught her unconscious body around the waist, pulling her radio from her pocket and tossing it across to Soren. "Nice job," he said, grinning shakily at Lily as he dragged the mare to the laundry room door and tossed her in, slamming the door after her.

Turning back to the others, he blinked at Soren, Marita and the other girls. "We need to get out of here *now*... these guys don't mess around. Thanks for, ah... you know. Coming to help us." As he buttoned up his trousers again, he sniffed the air and flattened his ears as he caught the smell of catfish sandwiches. "Have... have you guys been snacking?"

"You went out with her for six months and you only banged her twice?" Rio looked back at Nairda. "That's pretty weak, dude."

Turning, he scanned the horizon around them as the bird soared through the air. Squinting, Rio could just about make out something far in the distance, although this far away it was impossible to tell what it was. "Land ahoy!" he cried out, remembering a line from those pirate movies he'd seen through the dirty shop window.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 26, 2014, 10:00:44 am**

" Marita tossed him her crab sandwich ' you can have mine. Split it with Lily" for now we need to get out of here' She said. " i created a map of the complex, its in Sorens app.' Marie and Rose opened the door to the laundry room, and came out a minute later with fresh uniforms on." so we dont have a run in like this one again ' rose said, straightening her uniform and breathing on her claws.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 26, 2014, 10:48:18 pm**

Looking down at what had once been their submarine and its dock, Vergil sighed and closed his eyes in relief, though Triste was forcing him to stand now, and he groaned as he was yanked upwards to his feet. "All right... all right..." he held out a hand towards her, but didn't push her away... he was grateful for the support.

"I see you've met Little Nelly, as we call her." This came from Jenkins now, who smirked as he approached the two geckos.

"Little?" Vergil asked in a raspy voice. "Heh... yeah... I'd hate to see Big Nelly."

"Oh she's worse."

"Yeah? So you mind explaining what the hell that was?" Vergil asked angrily, though the exertion caused his legs to wobble like jelly, and he leaned against Triste for support.

"A creature of the Black Lagoon?" Jenkins tried evasively to dodge the question. "So... you need more time? I figured you would." he smirked again. "It's not a problem you would've solved in one go... or at least, I didn't think so."

"Yeah well... we have a good idea of the cause... but we need to confirm a few things so... we're gonna head back to our... new room I guess." Vergil responded.

"Of course. Here are your keys." Jenkins held out their new room keycards now, and Vergil took his.

Glancing over at Triste now, he gave her an apologetic look. "I might need just a little support for a few minutes... sorry." he told her, face falling.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 28, 2014, 04:11:43 am**

"I'm not hungry." Lily regarded the unconscious guard laying at her feet. She looked uncomfortably like the ones she murdered in the interrogation room...

"We've got to locate Vergil and Triste and make sure they're okay," she said to Soren. "Do you have any way of locating them? They weren't in the interrogation room or the jail cells..." With creeping horror, she realized they were most likely dead, but fought to keep from showing her concern on her face.

"We've had sex more than twice!" Nairda snapped hotly. "She's over-generalizing. *Especially* if you factor in all the times she just beat the shit out of me for hours until she got off..."

"If you were even remotely good in the sack, maybe I wouldn't have to," Emilena stuck her tongue out at him. "I'd beat you up right now but you'd probably fall off the bird and defeat the entire purpose of us going out into this damned ocean to rescue you."

Gradually, the seagull reached the coast of South America and did a barrel roll, sending the harness and its occupants crashing into the sand. As he flew off, he slowly shrank back to his normal size, though the superiority complex persisted for the remainder of his life.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **August 28, 2014, 07:50:57 am**

Triste took her copy of the keycard from Jenkins and nodded. "Thanks. We'll try to be as quick as we can." As they walked - or more accurately limped - away, she glanced at Vergil and squeezed his shoulder briefly, tightening her hold on him. "Don't worry about it. I'm sorry I pushed you - I didn't know it was going to drain you so much." She shrugged. "But at least we're not fish food."

Though she acted concerned, Vergil's well-being far from preoccupied her thoughts. All her attempts at trying to contact headquarters had been met with silence. ***This is Agent Triste Acyle, is anyone there? Please respond.***

Nothing.

Triste could feel herself starting to grow worried, and she quickly forced the anxiety back down. *Don't be stupid. That how you make mistakes.* As they started to approach the more public areas of the hotel, Triste looked at Vergil and swallowed. "What happened at headquarters? Who attacked? Was it... *him*?"

Looking down at the sandwich, Axel shrugged then opened the laundry room door and tossed it in after the unconscious guard. "She'll probably need it more than us when she wakes up."

Starting to lead them away, he turned to Soren as they walked. "Yeah... as fast as you can. We've gotta find them and get out quick."

Rio yelled as he tumbled through the air. The ground loomed closer and he squeezed his eyes shut... but when he made impact with an "*Oof!*", the landing was much softer than he'd been expecting. Opening his eyes slowly, he recoiled slightly when he saw he'd landed on top of Flora, his face in her chest.

"Nope! Nope!" Rio muttered, rolling off and sitting in the sand next to her. Looking back out at the sea. he shook his head and sighed. "I could do with a drink right about now. Rum or something."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 28, 2014, 08:59:27 pm**

"I don't know." Vergil confessed to her, slowly regaining his strength, though he wasn't there yet. "I couldn't sense it... only that they'd died... violently." he told her grimly now. "I didn't sense the cause... too far for that. But.. how else would they have died?" he asked her now, finally attempting to push off from her and stand on his own.

He rested his hands on his knees, and huffed a little, but managed to avoid collapsing. "All right... I think I can start walking again... ugh... don't worry about pushing me... it was inevitable, I suppose." he confessed.

"Anyway... we should get back there as soon as we can... find out what happened." he stated. "It's not good... I'm assuming you can't contact anyone... right?" he asked now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 29, 2014, 10:45:17 pm**

Lily creaked the door open and found herself staring at a hallway. The carpeting and lighting implied it was a residential area, where visitors were granted access. "I don't think it's safe to wander around in public," she whispered. Instead, she kicked open another door connected to the laundry room and found herself staring at a much creepier hallway. Metal grating and wispy roped handholds followed an unlit catwalk straight into solid darkness. "Well..." she gulped, "they do have OSHA compliance out here, right? It can't be that unsafe..."

She led the way deeper into the maintenance section of the station.

"Oof!" Flora gasped, wind knocked out of her, and that was the only thing that stopped her from grasping Rio playfully before he retreated with an alacrity that made her giggle. She got to her feet and shook the sand out of her fur, regarding the others. "Everyone okay?"

Emilena was tangled in the harness, cursing and trying to slash the ropes with her claws. Foley was draped over the harness, only moving his head.

"My back..." he groaned, eyes wide. "I can't feel anything...below my neck..."

"Oh, I can help with that!" Flora skipped over. "I once saw a flier on chiropracty!"

"No no no...stay away from me!" Foley stammered hastily, but Flora hoisted him on her knee (freeing Emilena) and smacked her elbows into the top and bottom of his spine with a sickening crack. "*Aaauuugh!*" Foley screamed.

"Better?" Flora smiled.

Foley stumbled away. "Owww!!! Mother of Christ, *Jesus*, that...actually...feels a lot better than I thought it would..." he rubbed his back in dumbfounded surprise.

Flora bounced. "Hooray! Who wants to go skinny dipping? Wash the sand all off of...hey, where's Nairda?" she asked, looking around.

Further away, Nairda was climbing up the sandstone cliff separating the beach from the village above. A single tear sliding down his face, he spared no looks at his former colleagues as he regarded the lonely, solitary life that awaited him.

"Nairda, where in the nine hells are you going?"

Below him, Emilena had kicked her boots off and was angrily climbing after him.

"No, stay away!" he bellowed. "You made your intentions clear!"

"Well, I lied!" She gritted her teeth. A handhold came apart in her grasp and sent a cloud of dust into her eyes. "If I'd wanted you gone, I wouldn't have chased after you into the ocean, would I?"

Nairda sighed. "This isn't about you, Emilena!" He was halfway to the top. "You said so yourself; it's always been be about me. I've made so many mistakes, wasted so much time in the slums with you and the gang...that's not how I wanted to turn out! That's not the person I wanted to be!"

"Then we'll quit!" Emilena almost slipped, but managed to grasp a root before she fell. "We'll go find another town! Go back into crime-fighting!" She paused to catch her breath. "Goddammit, you know I hate to say this, but...I love you! I don't know how you did it, but you made me care about you, and I don't want to lose you!"

Nairda spared a single look down. "I know."

There was a rumble, and with a groan a healthy portion of the cliff collapsed, sending the pair tumbling down the cliff in a small avalanche of sand. Coughing and choking at the bottom, Emilena waded onto her knees and looked up to see Nairda had saved himself with a built-in grappling hook. Slowly he rappelled up to the top of the cliff and observed her.

"Emilena..." he took a deep breath. "If you want to prove you love me...give me your sword."

"What?" Emilena clutched the weapon to her chest defensively.

"Where I'm going...I'm going to need proof of my identity. I have a suspicion that my father, Karl Nairda, worked for the Vulture Scavenger Corps during the Scorched Earth war. Your katana has the Scavenger Corps logo on its hilt."

Emilena glanced at her heirloom katana. The sword she'd practiced for years with, the sword she knew better than her own hands. Closing her eyes and gritting her teeth, she sent it spiraling at him in a perfect reverse javelin. "There! You better not lose it, do you hear me?"

Nairda caught it with one outstretched hand, then disappeared over the cliff face.

"Nairda!" Tears stung her eyes "Nairda! I said, did you hear me?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **August 30, 2014, 11:12:23 pm**

Soren pulled out his cellphone and plugged Vergil's number into it. He shook his head.

"I'm not getting any hits. Either he's out of range or his phone's dead."

He then put the cellphone away and followed Lily. He gulped as he looked at the unlit catwalk over a seemingly bottomless abyss. His heart sped up slightly as he backed away. He scowled. "How about we *not* use a treacherous catwalk?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 31, 2014, 03:23:04 am**

We need to keep moving. use your phones battery as a sort of flashlight ' Marie suggested as she began walking in the catwalk " Hold it high above your head so you can see and hopefully

the rest of us can see as well. just watch your footing. the sooner we get across this catwalk, the better. i figure we've got only a short while before they find the unconscious guard in the laundry room. we need to be as far away as possible by then, and we diont want to attract any more attention than we have too. 'marita pulled out her phone its lit face glowed enough to see maybe a couple feet in front of her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 01, 2014, 08:06:20 pm**

Triste shook her head, her jaw tensing. "No. Nobody's responding." Her right hand closed into a tight fist. For years now, she'd been used to having constant communication with the Federation. The silence that was permeating her head, interrupted only by the list of possible scenarios she was running through, was deafeningly loud and uncomfortably disquieting.

She looked at Vergil as they walked. "We're on our own... for now, at least. I don't understand, Kalis is trying to find his way to the Cataract as well - how would he be able to find the time to find our headquarters too, and then launch an attack as well?" She bit her lip. "Something's wrong... I don't like this. We've got to move faster. We need to find the waypoints *now*."

Blinking at the darkness in which the catwalk vanished into, Axel gulped and looked back longingly at the door leading to the public area. It seemed to promise safety... but he knew how much more likely it was for guards to be patrolling the hallways. Running a hand across his chin, he turned back and tried to smile encouragingly at Soren. "Hey, come on... you didn't think it'd be *that* easy, did you?" Stepping past him, he clapped him on the shoulder lightly. "It'll be fine..."

Stepping out onto the metal grating, his shoes clinked lightly, the sound echoing lightly and then disappearing into the dark. From below came the faint sounds of rattling machinery. It sounded a long way down. Gulping again, Axel's tail drew close against himself anxiously as he took another few nervous steps forwards. "See? It's... it's completely fine..." he called back, his voice oddly wavering.

Axel squeezed past Marita, whose phone light could do barely anything against the gloom encroaching on all sides. Moving up to Lily, he leaned in to whisper. "Hey, I... I don't want to scare the others... I mean, we've all gotta be calm, but... Well, we still have no idea where Vergil and Triste are. If they're, ah, *not alive* anymore, we need to get out as *soon* as we can..." He shrugged, though in the dark Lily probably couldn't see it. "Think we could stow away on one of those cruise ships?"

Rio watched, wide eyed, as Flora cracked Foley's back. "That was kind of gross," he shuddered, turning back to look across the beach to the sea. Flora skipped past into his line of sight, asking where Nairda was. "What d'ya mean? He's right..." Rio started to point to where he'd seen Nairda only a second ago, but he was gone. "Huh..." And where was Emilena? The two of them were nowhere to be seen.

All of a sudden, from further up the beach the was a low rumbling. "What the shit... hang on, I'll go check it out," Rio said, getting to his feet and starting to push his way cautiously through the thin layer of undergrowth between them and where the noise had come from. Large green leaves crackling as he made his way through, he reached the other side and halted. The beach continued on past the undergrowth. Just a short distance up, Emilena was on her knees at the foot of what looked like a collapsed cliff. She tossed up a long, thing object, and Rio saw Nairda, standing at the top, reach out and deftly snatch it from the air. Her words drifted across to Rio, something about not losing it. But when Rio looked up again, Nairda was gone. Emilena must have realised this too, because he could hear her shouting Nairda's name. And her voice... was she crying?

After standing awkwardly for a few moments, Rio stepped out and approached her slowly, quietly. He could gather that Nairda had left the group, for whatever reason. Emilena clearly wasn't taking it well. When he was right behind her, Rio reached out and gently touched her shoulder - being on her knees, it was within easy reach for him. "Hey, he'll okay, Emi. He's one of the faggiest douchebags I've ever met, but he's still kind of tough." Rio shrugged. "He can take care of himself."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 02, 2014, 09:42:58 am**

Soren sighed. "I'd have expected shootouts and chases, not this." He gulped as he tried to steady his shaking hands on a post that a tattered steel cable was attached to.

The watery light of Marita's phone did little to disperse the darkness. *What I wouldn't give for my HMD with its night vision and infrared capabilities* Soren thought. Alas, it like most of his belongings had been destroyed in Lanthae. He decided not to waste his smartphone's battery by using it as a flashlight, seeing as he might need it to contact Vergil later.

Taking another breath of the oily air, he took the first hesitant step forward onto the narrow catwalk.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 02, 2014, 01:26:54 pm**

Soren, the map i created for your app, should tell us where we are and the nearest exit to our location once we get across, use it and see how close we are to an exit ' Marita said as she walked slowly across the creaking catwalk. ' smells like there are machine down there, and i wouldnt want to fall on them from this height.
_ do you guys think Vergil and Trieste are ok? Marie said " They have been separated from us for a long time." " I';m sure they're fine. probably just having fun while they can Marita Said."I'm not physic after all.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 02, 2014, 06:55:57 pm**

"Because he's sending us a message..." Vergil trailed off now as his strength slowly began returning. "He's showing us that even though we're winning... we're not winning at all..." He glanced over at her here. "Find the other waypoints now? Shouldn't we go back to Corona? Find out if HQ is OK?" he asked. "I mean jeez! They could still... could still be alive!" he pointed out now. "I don't know! I can't sense anything but it's too far now! I can't sense life that far away... only death it seems..." he said distantly, staring off into the distance.

As for his thinking into Kalis's behavior... he just knew. This was how Kalis operated... his memories of how cruel he could be... how he loved to taunt others... it was just him. There was no one else it could be. No one's resources even came close to being capable of pulling this off. Corona's security was just too tight after all...

"I sensed our erstwhile comrades in danger before but... now it seems they're fine. I don't sense pain or suffering... it was very brief." he commented, looking at Triste again. "Anyway let's get to our room, gather our stuff, and check out... the Hotel California this is not!" Vergil cracked, beginning to move on his own again, though he was still a little wobbly.

They passed through the security scanner, weren't vaporized, and reached the main area of the hotel. Vergil was having a problem getting a fix on any one particular thing; his mind was being bombarded from all directions at once. "Damn... I have to focus..." he whispered, shaking his head.

Fumbling with his keycard, he inserted it into the door but got a red light. "Dammit!" he

murmured, growing frustrated. He felt like he was quite literally racing time right now; every second felt precious to him. Jamming it into the reader again, this time the light turned green, and he threw the door open.

What was left of their luggage was sitting on the floor. Yanking the handle of his upwards, the gecko gazed at the exit now. "So... I just need to retrieve my blade and we're out of here but... should we pick up the others? We can always give them some bullshit story after all... but I'll let you make that call. And about our next move... I think we should head back to Corona... check on HQ... see if they're OK first... what do you think? We've been running kind of thin as of late." he admitted.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 02, 2014, 08:24:32 pm**

"That's not what happened," Lily chimed in hastily at Marita's suggestion that Vergil could be ignoring them. "They *wouldn't* do that. We're a team. I'm sure they've been captured or detained. They never even regrouped with us in the hospital."

The catwalk eventually ended and they found themselves standing above a large boiler. Their only option was to climb down into the boiler room.

"The people here were just *awful* to Axel and me, they were going to kill us. We might be Vergil and Triste's only hope of survival," Lily continued as she gratefully found herself on solid ground again. "And I wouldn't feel right abandoning them."

"I don't care," sniffed Emilena. "I literally don't care if he trips and breaks his neck in a pothole. I wasn't crying, I was...looking directly into the sun."

She turned and began marching back towards the others. "Let's get into town and start coming up with *some* sort of plan to reach Corona. I think I've had enough sightseeing for one trip."

Back at the harness, Foley was fiddling with his cell phone and jumped when she entered his immediate range. "Oh! Emi! You're back!" He stuffed it hastily into his pocket.

"Are you seriously chatting with your online friends?" Emilena sighed exasperatedly.

"Well, we get signal again."

"Where's Flora gotten herself off to now?" Emilena scanned along the coast and noticed a fuchsia blob bodysurfing. "*Flora!*"

Flora came sprinting back from the ocean.

"We're heading into town," Emilena commanded everyone. "Keep your eyes peeled for either an airport or train station, but I suspect we're going to have to settle for stealing something with 4-wheel drive and reaching a bigger city. Flora, try to keep your head down until we've bought you some clothes, you're way too conspicuous. As a matter of fact, why don't you go back and keep swimming until we've returned with--"

"Nuh-uh!" Flora folded her arms defiantly. "I know what happens to cute girls who go around alone in foreign countries! I don't want to be kidnapped and turned into a sex slave!"

"You don't?" Foley asked pointedly.

Emilena rolled her eyes and silently led the whole group towards the pebbled bluff that led up to the inland.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 02, 2014, 09:26:03 pm**

Axel made his way down after Lily, then nodded at what she said and turned back to Marie and Rose. "Yeah, I'm, ah... I'm sure they're fine. Something must've just, uh, gone wrong or kept them busy. All we've got to do is find them," he said, his voice raised so he could be heard over the rumbling of the boiler. He shrugged and grinned, attempting to keep their spirits up. "Shouldn't be too hard, right?"

Quickly checking through the bag she had left and grunting once satisfied, Triste zipped it closed and yanked the handle out. "The others are our teammates. We need to make sure we leave with them," she said as she started to make her way across to the door leading out into the hallway. "They know why we were really here, which could make them a problem. If, for whatever reason, Judaken finds out they were with us, and they torture them for information once they find out we aren't coming back, they could give some pretty personal information. It'd make things a lot more complicated for us."

Stepping out, Triste waited for Vergil then closed the door after him. "If you still want to leave them behind, it'd be smarter to do it back on land, where there's less chance of them being captured after." She shrugged as they started walking down the hall. "Of course, with communications down, they might be the only spare hands we have to help us. At least for the time being. Might be something to think about." From up ahead, a small gang of armed guards ran around the corner and charged past them. Triste didn't pay them any notice.

"And speaking of which..." she continued. "Are you sure going back would be a god idea? If Kalis destroyed it to send a message, maybe our response is exactly what he's hoping for - that we'd hear about it somehow and come back." She eyed Vergil warily. "Delivering you straight to him with a pretty pink bow and *Please kill me* stamped on your ass. If we -"

All guests, please return to your rooms and do not open the door to anyone. Exits to the port and beach will be sealed temporarily in 5 minutes, a female sounding robotic voice droned loudly, the voice echoing off the walls. **This is for your safety. Thank you for your understanding.**

Triste glanced around at the voice trailed away. Already, several guests were walking briskly up and down the hallway, rushing to their rooms and letting themselves in. Soon, she and Vergil were the only ones left. "Goddammit, what now..." She looked at Vergil and shrugged. "Something tells me that isn't a false alarm... Think the others could be in trouble? We haven't seen them since we got here..."

The robotic voice came drifting through the thick walls, distorted but just audible enough for the group in the boiler room to determine the words. Axel's grin died on his face, and his ears flopped. "Alright, ah... it *might* have just got a little hard."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 02, 2014, 09:43:00 pm**

Marita sighed as she considered what Lilly said we, i think what you say has a lot of truth to it... She began but the sound of the robots voice reached her ears and she stopped " Change of plans. we have 5 minutes to find them, period. Otherwise we'll be stuck in a portion of the hotel. not something we can afford." She started climbing down into the boiler " lets Move

everyone. Rose stopped and picked up something off the ground." Come ON Rose! Marita called from the Ladder " Hey i found some money..' Rose began " You always pick up money.. show it to us when we can actually see it and we're not under a very tight deadline to avoid getting stuck in a hotel with securitv swarming all over the place..' Rose pocketed the coin and began climbing down the ladder.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 04, 2014, 07:02:33 pm**

Soren stuffed his phone into his pocket upon hearing the alarm. "Shit! We better hope the guards don't come this way!"

He grabbed hold of the ladder and swiftly descended, trying his hardest not to look down. Luckily, the ladder was clean and coated in an anti-slip compound. The fact that the boiler room was well lit helped too. A steel cable behind the ladder served as an attachment point for the safety harnesses that were recommended for workers climbing the ladder ó a sign reminding them that access to the catwalk above and the room it led to was forbidden without safety harnesses, hard hats and lighting.

Upon landing, Soren looked around. The boiler behind him was massive. Judging from the massive electrical cables that protruded from it, it appeared to be electrically heated. The low throbbing of vacuum pumps indicated that this boiler operated in a partial vacuum to reduce energy use. Above him was the catwalk the group had traversed some forty feet up in the air.

He then bought up his smartphone and activated the map that Marita had stolen from Judaken's servers. "We're in the boiler room all right and a few hundred feet below sea level. From here, we can head into the reactor silo or the industrial hub.

He then turned to Lily with a slight scowl. "There was elevator that we could have taken straight into the industrial hub. We didn't need to do...whatever the fuck we just did."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 07, 2014, 12:51:24 pm**

"I wasn't talking about them compromising our mission." Vergil shook his head. "I was talking about their trustworthiness in the first place. But as for abandoning them now... I don't think so. I meant in terms of once they're safe... so long as they're not safe, absolutely not. There's no way I could abandon them right now in this situation. I felt pain earlier from one of them... anguish in another... but then it all stopped. Very sudden... that's either very good... or very bad..." Vergil stated. "They're either safe... or they're dead." he commented ruefully.

"As for Kalis laying a trap... I doubt it." Vergil shook his head as he walked with her now. "He was nowhere near as brilliant as Rex, and a trap is more Rex's style... Kalis was raw emotion... utter desire for vengeance, power, and destruction. A desire to leave his mark on everything he did. I just don't see trap in this situation." he explained, his words rapid-fire but also calm and even, his analytic brain processing all of this in a steady flow.

As they exited the room though, they were cut off by the announcement of the station being sealed in five minutes. Glancing over at Triste, the white gecko allowed a hint of concern to flood his eyes. "Mmmm... I don't know if it's them but... five minutes isn't exactly a long time to find them, get to the ship, and hope we're in enough time to make it out of here." Vergil pointed out.

"As for not seeing them since we've arrived yes, quite true, though that's thanks partly to our own design." he admitted.

"Anyway... I don't suppose you could possibly hack a computer or something to learn their location?" he suggested. "I could try and get a fix on their location by attempting to focus on their mental signatures but... since I don't know the full layout of this place, that's a tricky

proposition at best." he informed her. He was still speaking quickly, but still in total command of his thought processes, or so it seemed. Coolly assessing the situation, he was making split-second decisions in the time he had, still sounding as if had the capability to clearly think all this through.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 07, 2014, 09:16:24 pm**

"Oops...sorry..." Lily blushed. "that was really scary, wasn't it?" But part of her suspected she may have noticed the elevator but blocked it out; back when she was a psionic monster she'd developed a fondness for darkness and a fear of cramped spaces.

Still, that was in the past. Time to move. "With the alarm going off, I don't think they're going to pay as much attention to us," she said, flinging open the door that led to the industrial hub. "The reactor silo is further from the security station, which would help us locate Vergil and the docks. Everybody in Voltaic is moving quickly now; let's not be the exception!"

The town was a blatant tourist trap. Colorful signs advertising hotel vacancies and souvenirs dotted the roads. The afternoon timing and roving vacationers had made it completely impossible to hide Flora, but Emilena gave her a disposable camera and foam shark-shaped hat she'd fished out of a dumpster and that seemed to be enough to convince people she was just foreign. Though she had to wear the hat like an incredibly bizarre bathing suit.

"Ooh ooh can I get a snow cone? Can I get a snow cone please!" Flora's eyes lit up at the umpteenth shaved ice vendor they'd passed. "A pink one!"

Emilena sighed. "Rio, go steal her a snow cone. Foley, keep Rio company and be the distraction if one is needed. But Flora, you're coming with me so we can get you some real pants."

She practically dragged Flora away from the vendor and into a swimsuit shop. "What's the cheapest pair of trunks you got?" she asked the baffled cashier. "Not thongs or bikinis."

The teenage clerk stared unabashedly at all three of Flora's goods. "You...I...she's..."

"She's Scandinavian," Emilena explained, but the cashier had still lost his ability to speak for the next fifteen seconds. "Oh forget it!" she finally exclaimed, and frustratedly grabbed a green pair of trunks with a rugby decal off the closest shelf. "We paid for these with my friend's peep show. You're welcome. Have a nice day."

Flora put the trunks on and wiggled her fingers at the clerk in good bye even as Emilena dragged her out the door. "Let's go check on Rio."

"And my snow cone!"

Nairda ducked underneath a scaffolding just as a spotlight passed overhead. He'd made his way deep into the wilderness, and had come across what he originally assumed was a small airport. But the four lone figures crouching in the darkness of the runway seemed anything but official.

Using the night-vision retinas he totally needed installed after his real ones were destroyed during the horrible accident in his backstory, Nairda noticed the first two individuals place a large duffel bag on the ground and back away slowly. The latter pair examined the contents of the bag, then drew guns and shot the first two.

Like a fleeting shadow in the night, Nairda slinked towards the runway. Not a noise was made,

not a blade of grass disturbed by the enigmatic But so entranced was he in his perfect execution of the night shadow that he forgot about the aforementioned spotlight. A figure from the lone watchtower cried out and started firing a stationed machine gun chaotically at Nairda's position, and the two surviving members of the runway transaction went on high alert.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 08, 2014, 09:49:16 pm**

As Lily opened the door leading to the industrial section, Axel half-turned and put a hand on Soren's shoulder. "Hey, take it easy on her," he warned. "At least we're away from the guards. We're all stressed out, we can't turn on each other now. Okay?" Giving his shoulder a calming squeeze, he turned back and followed Lily out.

Beyond, a wide corridor, the walls painted a bright white, stretched off to the left and right. Overly bright florescent lights hung from the ceiling, their glow reflecting unpleasantly off the walls and making Axel squint slightly. A sign fixed to the wall directly opposite them depicted a pair of arrows pointing to the left and right. *Generator Room* was printed underneath the former, *Security* beneath the latter. Sure enough, from the left the hum of heavy machinery drifted up towards them.

Pointing to the sign, Axel looked around at the others. "Alright! So we..." There was a whirring noise above him. Blinking, Axel looked up and his mouth popped open when he saw the security camera swiveling around to settle on the group. Axel blinked, and the camera's lens zoomed in on them with a click. "Well, ah... crap," he groaned, his throat suddenly dry. "We should probably get moving..."

Panicked guests were pushing past Vergil and Triste as the two geckos made their way down the corridor, desperate to get back to their rooms. An old woman knocked into Triste's shoulder, and she glared back at the shuffling guest for a moment before turning her attention back to Vergil. "Yeah, not a problem. If we can just get to a computer... Could try at reception I suppose..."

"... escaped down to the industrial hub! And they've been joined by a male and three females, we've gotta get down there now!" A large group of burly, armed guards charged around the corner and sprinted past them. A little further up the hallway was a metal door marked *Workers Only*. The leader of the group kicked it down and lead his squad through. As the door started to close again, Triste noticed a set of concrete stairs heading down.

"Or we could follow them," she sighed, shrugging at Vergil and letting go of her luggage.

As Emilena and Flora left the swimsuit shop, Rio was shrieking in front of the shaved ice vendor, the balding, middle-aged man looking distinctly uncomfortable as tourists milling around in the crowded street started to turn in his direction.

"He... he was touching me, Dad!" Rio sobbed, hugging Foley tightly and pointing dramatically.

The vendor's face blanched and he started looking around desperately. "It's not... *it's not true!* I have no idea who this boy is!" He looked at Foley, sweat beading his forehead. "I assure you, sir, your son is lying!" The vendor scowled at Rio, lowering his voice. "What the fuck are you doing, you little shit? You're gonna get me locked up!"

Abruptly, Rio stopped crying and let go of Foley, stepping closer to the stall. "Give me a snow cone. A pink one. And a red one."

"What?!" The man blinked, outraged. "You almost ruin me for a free *snow cone?!*" He quickly

scooped them into cones and shoved them roughly into Rio's hand. "There! Is that it?!"

"No, asshole, I want your *I-Pob* too." Rio eyed the expensive music player that was hanging out of the man's trouser pocket.

"What? No way in hell, I had to save up for two years to get this thing!"

Tears instantly reappeared in the boy's eyes. "He put his hand *here*... and *here*... and-"

"Alright, alright! Here! Jesus christ!" The vendor quickly tugged the music player out and pushed it into Rio's outstretched hand. "You're going to get me lynched you little prick! Now fuck off!"

Rio grinned up at the man. "Thanks mister!" Turning around, he smirked at Foley and handed him the red snow cone, then nodded at Emilena and Flora as they approached. Sauntering up to them, he held out the snow cone to Flora while pushing his newly appropriated ear buds in. "So what's the plan? Get a ride outta here? Or stay a while?" Rio hit the play button on the side of the device and scanned the crowd. "There's a lotta wallets around here..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 09, 2014, 04:49:12 am**

Soren took a deep breath. "Sorry, it's just that I've gone through a ridiculous amount of shit."

He then followed Axel down into the t-junction. His eyes widened as he heard footsteps coming from the right. He looked at the sign. It was the security office!

"Shit! I think we just got noticed! The guards are coming!" He beckoned to Lily and Axel. "This way!"

He took off in a steady lope towards the generator room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 09, 2014, 05:00:25 pm**

So now instead of less than 5 minutes to Find Trieste and Vergil, we now have less than 2 minutes before the guards rush in and overpower us.. and then drag us off to do unspeakable things to us' Marita scowled. " Have you never watched any heist movies Axel? NEVER go near security cameras! I thought everyone knew that!" She hissed as she ran after Soren, down towards the Generator room.
_ Hey Calm down girl ' Marie spoke up " He made a mistake.. and I dont like heist films, I prefer comedies.. ' You know what I mean Marie!' Marita retorted ' His 'mistake' just cut the time we have, in half, at the very least. just try and keep up please, we cant afford at this point to have anyone falling behind"
_ Rose hurried down the hallways, trying to keep up with all the others ' the camera had caused her to panic a little bit, given all that had happened . she simply wanted ti get out of here and take a couple days to rest before the group moved ion to the next Waypoint, whereever that might be.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 09, 2014, 11:43:22 pm**

Lily kept pace with the others.

"You lead the way Soren!" she whispered urgently. "You know the most about the layout!"

Reaching the generator room, she hit the door with an "Oomph!" as it proved locked. Whether

due to the lockdown or having been locked initially, she couldn't know.

She looked back down the hallway they'd just exited, fearing the approaching shadows of guards appearing any second. "What now?"

Flora grabbed the snow cone greedily and devoured the whole thing in a few bites. Then she shuddered and clutched her head in a painful groan. "Brain freeze! Augh!"

"No wallets," Emilena replied. Well, actually..." she regarded her crew. She, Foley and Rio still looked a bit odd with their shredded clothing. At least their oceanic adventures hadn't left any room for bloodstains. "Maybe one or two wallets. We all really need new outfits, and somewhere to stay the night. Just don't get caught."

She walked until she saw a hotel with a computer in the lobby. When the group tried to enter the guard stopped them, pointing to a *No Shirt, No Shoes, No Service* sign.

"Flora, keep Rio company outside," Emilena ordered, annoyed, but the guard still stopped her. Only then did Emilena realize that she was still missing her shirt from when she'd turned it into a tourniquet for her leg.

"I'll go get driving directions and info on airports and stuff," Foley assured her, entering unimpeded into the hotel, and Flora grabbed Rio's arm excitedly and dragged him into the crowds. "We're in a foreign country. Let's go get *drunk!*"

That left Emilena standing alone outside the hotel, arms crossed and angrily glowering at everything.

The two men on the runway grabbed the duffel bag and sprinted for the plane. The machine gun on the tower scanned urgently, looking for the intruder.

Nairda had reached the fallen bodies of the initial owners of the duffel bag. They looked to be poachers from their attire, complete with pistols and hunting rifles. Borrowing one and taking aim with the scope, he located the man in the tower and sniped him. Then he raced for the plane as it slowly taxied down the runway.

But even he couldn't outrun a plane. As it slowly gained air and left him in the dust, Nairda fired his grappling hook and locked it into one of the retracting wheels. The plane bobbed dangerously as he rappelled onto its underbelly and then its wing. Smashing out a window with his elbow, he combat-rolled into the plane and came up ready to fire, wielding both pistols akimbo.

Both pilot and copilot had their hands up in surrender.

Nairda looked confused. "Huh?"

"We give up!" the first one announced urgently.

"We've seen this movie!" the second agreed. "Just don't kill us, and you can have the plane and everything!"

Nairda lowered the pistols. "Hmm. That's pretty logical thinking." He reflected on the situation. "Yeah, I suppose that's fair. Just let me tie you up and lock you in the cargo hold--"

"*Typical*," he suddenly heard Emilena's voice in his head. "*Can't even kill two poachers. What a failed excuse for a man.*"

"Yes I can!" he replied angrily.

"*You can't do anything you say you will,*" she continued acidly.

"Shut up!" he yelled angrily, as his captors regarded him with equal parts bemusement and trepidation. Then he shot both of them. "There! Are you happy?" he yelled at the empty ship. "I did it! You said I couldn't do it, but I did!"

The ship buckled due to a lack of pilot. He quickly snapped out of it and raced over to steady and fly the plane.

A few hours into the flight, it finally clicked what he'd done. "...there actually might be something wrong with me..." he realized with a dawning dread.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 11, 2014, 06:26:58 pm**

Vergil nodded, and sighed as well. "Why not? We just have to hope it's them." he murmured, and telepathically slid his bag across the floor to baggage check for the ship. Since his name was on the tag, he hoped they'd figure it out and get it to his cabin... which might be a problem right now because he didn't exactly have a cabin but... oh well. Details.

Pursuing Triste now, the gecko moved down the stairwell and made for what appeared to be passages leading into the power plant of the hotel. The guards were converging on a central point, and as Vergil could finally detect the rest of the group up ahead, he decided to act now. There were four guards ahead of them, none of which had noticed they were being followed yet.

Reaching out, he tripped two of them (the leftmost ones) and decided to let Triste handle the other two in whatever way she saw fit. As he was currently unarmed, he'd have to get in extremely close to do any real damage. The two guards he'd tripped both landed hard, as they hadn't been expecting their legs to be yanked out from under them, and as the floor down here was concrete, it wasn't a pretty sight the minute they smacked into the ground... blood spattered every which way, and at least one looked as if he'd dislocated his jaw..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 13, 2014, 02:44:26 am**

Soren's heart raced as he looked around. All that was available was a toolbox someone had forgotten next to the door. He dumped out the toolbox's contents. Nothing except a large flathead screwdriver. Lacking any other options, he plunged the tool into the seam between thw reader and the wall. Grunting with exertion, he bore down on the tool.

Eventually, the keycard reader was torn from the wall, revealing a mass of wires. He turned to Axel. "Axel, See if you can reroute the wires to open the lock!" Soren threw the mangled screwdriver to the ground.

The Human rubbed his aching arms and drew his pistol and clicked off the safety.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 13, 2014, 08:03:05 am**

Sprinting up the corridor, Triste reached the two guards Vergil had tripped. One of them was convulsing on the floor, blood streaming from his nose and a large gash in his forehead as his limbs flailed. The other one though... his jaw stuck out at an odd angle, and his face wasn't a pretty sight - but that didn't mean he couldn't be a risk to them. Passing him, Triste slammed her heel into the back of his neck, a loud *pop* accompanying the snapping of his vertebrae. *Better safe than sorry...*

From further up she heard yelling, and as she jerked her head Triste saw the two remaining guards approach a right hand turn and raise their guns at something out of sight. Swearing under her breath, she cloaked, disappearing from sight.

"Alright, I'm on it!" Axel flipped his vision and reached for the wires, attempting to control his breathing as the heavy footsteps got closer. He tried to concentrate, to focus his attention, but it was hard - if he couldn't open this door...

"*Freeze! Get down on the floor! Now!*"

Axel squeaked and jerked around. At the end of the corridor, two burly, hardened looking men were aiming assault rifles towards them, thick body armor protecting their torso. *Can't go back to that room again... not again...* "Soren, shoot them!" he gasped. "Fucking shoot th-"

The guard on the left suddenly bucked as if something had leaped on his back. He opened his mouth to shout out - but then his head snapped to the side with an audible crunch. As his body crumpled, the assault rifle he was still holding loosely in his right hand was forced down and opened fire, the hail of bullets tearing through the final remaining guard's knees in a mist of blood and gristle, and then sweeping up to rip through the security camera on the wall. Axel gaped as the shrieking man collapsed like a sack of meat onto his stomach and tried to crawl forwards, but was dragged back. A pistol, yanked from a strap attached to one of his ruined legs, floated up as if by magic and pressed down hard against his temple.

Triste, straddling the guard's back, pressed the pistol hard against the side of his head. "Call off the alarm," she hissed.

Sobbing, the guard tried to turn his head but Triste's fingers held him firmly by the hair, keeping him still. "Wha... what?!"

"Call. It. Off. Or you end up like your friends."

"*No!* Please... please don't. I'll do it..." The man fumbled weakly with his radio and pressed a button, taking a deep breath. "This is Ramirez, Bravo Team. Targets are down... I repeat, targets are down."

It crackled. "*Copy that. Need a recovery team for the bodies?*"

Triste wagged a finger in front of the guard's face. "No... no, we've got them. We'll bring them back through the boiler room. Over."

"*Alright. Make it quick. Over.*" The guard let go of the button and the radio went silent.

"Good. Thank you." Triste lifted the man's head back and pulled the trigger, his body jerking once then going limp. Letting his head drop wetly to the concrete, she stood up and de-cloaked, wiping a few spatters of blood off the side of her face disinterestedly as she faced the group. "Ready to get going? I wouldn't recommend staying - the room service is terrible."

Rio turned to look back at Emilena as Flora led him away. On one hand, they really *should* be trying to help her out. On the other hand... he could be getting drunk. "Alright then!" he said cheerily as they moved further into the crowd.

A short distance away, there was a clothing stall selling an assortment of tacky items that only a tourist would consider buying. As they passed, he noticed the vendor was deep in a heated argument with one of his customers... and in the corner of the stall, out of the vendor's sight, a row of bright, cheerful T-Shirts were left unattended. Seeing one that seemed about

Emilena's size, Rio sidled over, slid it off the hanger and melted back into the crowd. Grinning at the printed message on its front, he tied it around his waist then rejoined Flora. "Are we gonna get wasted or what?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 13, 2014, 04:26:06 pm**

Marita stepped forward, relieved that the guards had been dispatched ' Good to see you guys again. we were trying to locate you, but it appears you found us first. We've been looking for you two for awhile now. someone spiked our drinks when we went out to eat..' Marita said to them. " my drink, along with Marie's and Rose's, had biproxytol in it, and Sorens had some sort of a hallucinogen , in any event we're all quite lucky to be alive, the doctors in this hotel are quite skilled and professional.' Marita said.

- why dont we catch up with them once we are safely out of here? I've had enough adventure for one day ' Marie said " i just want to get out of this place, get back on terra firma, and well, enjoy myself for a bit. i mean, how often do you get to go on a trip to South America..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 14, 2014, 04:09:36 am**

Lily winced when she saw what had happened to the first set of guards. "Hold on..." she said hesitantly; she knew that time was of the essence and she was in no way responsible for their pain, but she couldn't bear to leave a human being in such a state. Then Triste mercy-killed them, relieving Lily's responsibility in the least comforting way possible.

"You're alive!" she exclaimed, eyes lighting up as Vergil and Triste revealed themselves. "Do either of you need healing?"

She glanced at the way they'd come. "I'm sure you've heard the lockdown in progress. Are we hoping to reach the docks, or do you know of an easier way out?"

Flora half-dragged Rio over to the nearest pub. "Just make sure to lift somebody's wallet or we won't be able to pay," she whispered. "Hey bartender! What's the strongest stuff you got?"

He looked disparagingly at Rio. "Get your kid out of here," he demanded.

"What?" exclaimed Flora. "That's bullshit! That's the only reason we left America!"

"Allow me," said a deep voice behind her. A heavyset businessman sat down next to her and smiled. "I recognize your ceremonial fur color. You two are Sapaar missionaries on your holy pilgrimage, are you not?"

Flora blinked. So did the bartender. "What?"

The man fished a book out of his suitcase. "Article 59 of the National Liquor Act states: "*The parent or adult guardian of a minor or a person responsible for administering a religious sacrament, may on occasion supply to that minor a moderate quantity of liquor to be consumed by the minor in the presence and under the supervision of that parent, guardian or other person.*"

The light bulb clicked. "Oh yeah!" Flora beamed. "We're part of...that religion you said. It's customary for our young boys when they come of age to travel the world with a female guardian and sample the drinks in as many countries as possible!"

"You're dangerously close to infringing on an individual's religious rights," the businessman

threatened the barkeep.

The bartender picked up the official lawbook. "Well, I'll be. Guess you are allowed to be in here...vodka's probably the strongest stuff we got, to answer your question ma'am."

"Three Saharan martinis please, and put in on my tab," the businessman ordered.

Flora swooned as the bartender stepped away to prepare the drinks. "*Well.* To whom do I owe this pleasure?"

The businessman eyed her shirtless chest. "Just here on company business. Work things you wouldn't care about. I'm much more interested in hearing more about *you*."

Flora's eyes lit up. "Mmmm. Well, keep the drinks coming and I'll see what I can spill..."

It was twilight when Foley returned to Emilena. "Hey. So we can stay around here for the night, hotel prices are pretty standard for tourist traps, or we have several choices for flights out of a small airport down the road. Earliest flight is in two hours but has like eleven layovers and three transfers; I'd recommend the first direct flight to Cornova at 6 am."

He held out a sweater emblazoned with the hotel logo. "Also bought you this; looked like you're freezing your tits off."

"Why didn't you give me that *first*?" Emilena snatched it urgently and slipped it on. With a final glower at the guard, she finally marched unhindered into the heated hotel lobby. "I am not waiting until 6 am; book us on that crappy one with all the layovers. In thirty minutes if those two idiots haven't returned we'll go grab them and start our hike to the airport."

Nairda crash-landed the plane into the cliffside of the Yungas Road; Nairda had used a combination of extensive gliding periods and over-reliance on thermals to fly the plane much further than its gas tank would normally allow. Climbing up the cliffside was an arduous ordeal but his augments downgraded the struggle from "impossible" to "strenuous." He was always better than Emilena at climbing and endurance, though only now did he reflect on how many times he'd neglected to point this out or rub it in her face.

After some hiking down the road, he eventually came across the site where his gang had encountered their old friends from Lanthae. He paused for a moment looking for the blood stains from when that white gecko had slashed Emilena's legs open, but rain and weather had completely removed all traces of the encounter.

Still, he was able to reach the spot where they'd hidden the Mexican tow truck. Slashing vines and fronds out of his way, he turned the thin sliver of metal jammed through the exposed steering column like he'd always seen Foley do, and to his amazement it started the truck. Inching it onto the road, he began driving back the way they'd first come.

Things were quite perilous as he slowly started realizing just how high up he was on the "road of death." He'd never obtained a driver's license, and slowly the perpetual drizzle evolved into a torrential tropical storm, shaking the car with otherworldly howling and hurricane winds.

As Nairda attempted to navigate turns he could barely register through a rain-blasted windshield looking out into almost complete darkness, for the first time he found himself missing Flora more than Emilena.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 14, 2014, 12:08:51 pm**

Vergil winced as Triste executed the final guard after promising him he wouldn't follow the same fate as his his comrades. She'd also killed the survivor from his group... and it left his stomach reeling. Killing in the heat of battle was one thing but... killing opponents who could no longer fight back... it was excessive. It wasn't right...

His eyes shifted to Lily as his face fell. "No... thank you." he replied simply. He knew Triste would justify her actions to him... but it didn't mean he'd agree with her. In fact... he wasn't sure he agreed with any of this... if they were just as bad as Kalis... what separated them from him? It was something he'd argued with her over before... but she hadn't changed...

He replied to Lily's question. "The docks are the only way off this station. They blow anything else out of the water or the sky. We have to leave in an authorized fashion." he answered. "If you're all ready... I suggest we not waste any time in checking out." He turned to head back to the stairwell now, thoroughly disgusted with everything.

Now of course... he wasn't sure if this group could check out... he and Triste were probably fine but... the rest had been recognized. Still... maybe he could pull one final trick out of his sleeve in the event they were to be stopped.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 14, 2014, 01:01:47 pm**

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then we'd better get moving then' Rose said iin reply : frankly I'm sstarving, when we get out of here I'm stopping at the first pizza place i see..
_ so long as its under 10 credits a pizza right/ Marie smirked " girl you dont need to be so cheap all the time.. " Nlot the time for it Marie' Rose replied.
_
lets just get to the docks first ' maritas interrupted, preventing the girls from arguing, time was of the essence here. She moved towards the stairwell and Vergil ' whats the quickest way to the Docks from here? ' she asked Vergil. " so we can beat it out of here once we check out. ' Marita was dreading checking out, as the camera had caught them in the boiler room, where visitors were not supposed to be. Hopefully the clerks manning the front desk werent linked to the security system. Still playing it cool, was the best choice, she decided.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 15, 2014, 08:35:27 pm**

Triste glanced over her shoulder as Vergil made his way back towards the staircase with Marita, Rose and Marie trailing behind. She didn't need mental powers to tell that he was upset. Sighing, she looked back at Soren, Lily and Axel and gestured. "Come on, let's go. Unless you want to be here when the clean up crew finds the bodies." Triste turned and stepped over one of the bodies. "I wouldn't recommend that."

Axel blinked, his fur still standing up on end. As Triste started to walk away, he shook his head and went after her. "No, wait. Wait! Where the hell have you two been?! We -" His foot caught on the foot of one of the guard's corpses and he almost fell flat on his face. "*Son of a bitch*... The only reason this happened is because we had no idea where you were!"

"*Later*," Triste said flatly, barely sparing him a glance.

Axel's mouth opened and closed. He looked back at the other two, brow furrowed. "What the hell..."

As the sun started to set, the pub began to fill with loud, brash tourists looking to get drunk. Above the heads of the drinking patrons, a small shape swung amongst the wooden rafters. Still clutching the remains of his third Saharan martini, Rio drained it then flopped down on one of the beams above the bartender. "Get me another one. Put it on... that guy's tab again."

Rio still didn't know who the man in the suit was, but as long as he was buying drinks Rio didn't care.

"You really shouldn't be up there you know," the bartender warned.

"It's part of my holy pilgrimage." As the bartender started to prepare another, Rio stared through the fog that was just starting to creep across his vision at Flora and the businessman who were still together. He smirked. If the guy wanted some of *that* from her, he was in for a surprise. Shrugging, Rio reached down and plucked the new drink from the bartender, then started moving across the rafters again, looking down to spot any potential targets he could steal from.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 16, 2014, 03:23:48 am**

"Let's not bug them, dear," Lily added hastily. It didn't take empathic powers to tell they weren't interested in small talk. "We can share what we've all learned once we're off this station."

She double-timed it in order to keep up with Vergil and Triste, who weren't slowing down in the slightest for their wounded and battered teammates. Having had to rely on far too much improvisation to survive up till now, she was content to let the professionals take control of the situation.

Thirty minutes later Foley was still surfing the internet and snacking on a bag of trail mix he'd purchased from the gift shop. Emilena had been sleeping on the couch in the lobby, and finally the cashier walked over and shook her gently. "Ma'am? I apologize, but we can't let you..."

Emilena brushed her off rudely. "I get it. Go away." She groggily stumbled over to Foley. "What time is it?"

"You were asleep for about an hour and a half. Our flight was delayed so I didn't feel the need to wake you." Foley held out his trail mix but Emilena pushed it aside. "Flora and Rio aren't back yet," he continued. "Where are they, anyway?"

Emilena groaned. "Looking for booze, from what I overheard before they left."

"What? exclaimed Foley. "And I wasn't invited?" He thought for a few seconds. "You know, I'm okay with that. I've been thinking...that mermaid gave us an opportunity most don't get. A second chance. I've decided I'm not going to drink and I'm not going to do drugs anymore."

Emilena rolled her eyes. "Stupid."

"Of course you'd say that." Foley frowned. "What I'm trying to say is...when we get back to Cornova I think I'm out." He couldn't look her in the eye when whipped her head around. "I want to go into a legitimate field, actually make something of myself. Not to say you guys weren't fun and all, but...you can't run cheap drugs forever, you know?"

Emilena didn't say anything. She gave herself a minute, mulling her potential responses carefully. Ultimately she just sighed. "Fine. It's your choice. Probably the smarter and less life-threatening option, really. At least you're handling your departure better than Nairda did."

Nairda screamed as he barreled off the side of the cavernous mountain of death.

Drawing his katana to slice the seatbelt off, he kicked the door to the truck open and fired his grappling hook in the direction of the road. Several stomach-churning seconds of free-fall

ended abruptly as he smashed into the thick foliage of the sheer cliff.

He was thoroughly soaked to the bone in chilled mud by the time he next hoisted himself back onto the road. Shivering and weeping Byronic tears of bitterness, he stumbled his way through the stinging rain towards civilization.

Flora was getting increasingly touchy-feely with the businessman; after her third martini she was listening raptly as he explained the logistics of South African class action suites and the case a hypothetical one would have against a multinational conglomerate's alleged use of unreported advertising fees.

"That is so *interesting!*" she exclaimed truthfully, reaching over to unsubtly brush her hands across his chest and almost knocking her glass over in the process. "I'm sorry, I don't mean to change the subject, but..." Her hands shook as they brushed the pleated collar of his travel coat. "Has everyone ever told you...how *handsome* your suit is?"

The businessman grinned and urged her to finish her drink. "You want to come back to my hotel room? I have several suits even nicer than this one..."

Flora hiccuped and excitedly stood up, grabbing him for support. "You'll have to model *all of them* for me!" She'd regained her balance but didn't stop clutching onto him. She stared with glazed awe at his unbuttoned cufflinks.

"Yeah, before you two go anywhere you owe me for like, eleven drinks," the bartender piped up. He'd been impatiently polishing the same glass for the past thirty minutes; they were taking up valuable bar space from the regular evening clientele.

As the businessmen took out his wallet, he glanced at Rio. "What about your kid?"

"Oh, don't worry about him! He'll be fine!" Flora fake stumbled so she could press her body up against his. "Oops...I think I *hic* may have overdid it..." she giggled.

The businessman became more concerned about what he felt pressing up against his leg. He pushed her away and stared in horror at the massive bulge under her bathing suit. "That's...a purse or something, right?" he stammered.

Flora batted her eyes. "Sure, if you want." She stepped forward, but he pushed her into the bar and staggered backwards in disgust. "Ow!" she protested, clutching her head. "Come on, I thought we had a thing going!"

The businessman made a bolt for the door, but at a signal from the barkeep a bouncer stepped in his way. The businessman rammed him and sent him stumbling.

Flora ran forward. "Wait!" She grabbed his arm. "Look, don't worry about my flytrap, that just means I'm really good at pleasuring one! Please don't--"

He brutally slapped her to free his arm and sprinted in a panic out the door. The bouncer got to his feet, enraged, and chased after the man, drawing a pistol.

Flora was lying stunned on the floor, nursing her cheek. "I...I..." Tears welled in her eyes. Before she could say anything else, the bartender silently grabbed her and Rio and threw both of them out the door, slamming it shut behind them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 16, 2014, 04:15:38 am**

Soren loped after the two. His scowl and clenched fists said it all. His pistol slapped uncomfortably against his stomach as he ran. Luckily, the hallways were deserted. But

knowing that an alarm had undoubtly been tripped, he *did not* want to press his luck.

"*Those two get lost. We nearly all got our asses killed trying to find them and they don't even talk to us!?*" he fumed.

"Axel," he whispered as he jogged alongside his friend. "I *really* hope those two don't lead us into another clusteróFuck!"

Soren fell to the floor as he slipped on a recently washed patch of floor. His heart rate spiked as he heard distant shouts that seemed to be coming from the other branch of the y-junction tha Triste had led them to.

He staggered to his feet, trembling slightly. Luckily, nothing was too badly damaged. He looked around the hallway. Just a bunch of pipes and wires lined the ceiling. An alarm box that was labeled specifically for non-security related issues was on the right fork of the y-junction. He smiled; he now had an idea.

"Axel, Marita, I need you to help me cause some problems. If we do that, we should be able to clog up the station's staff," Soren said. He shot a glance at the wires and pipes that crisscrossed the metal ceiling.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 16, 2014, 11:57:51 am**

Vergil by now had neared the top of the steps. He'd mostly recovered his strength from before, though didn't want to test his limits right now to find out. He opened the door leading out into the civilian areas of the hotel, poking his head out and narrowing his eyes to scan for any hostiles. He didn't see any, but he did pick up on the conversation behind him. Sighing, he closed the door.

"It's clear and no... we're not wasting any further time. You want to stay here and dick around, that's your prerogative. Me? I'm getting off this station. The docks are 100 paces away to our right... I'm not causing any more problems and I'm not staying around to risk security bagging my ass." he chided Soren. "They're already on to us... so I'm leaving."

Opening the door with a shove, the gecko strode out into the hallway and made for the front desk to his right. "I'm checking out. The Somerset party I believe it was. Two of us. I believe you had a weapon of mine on hold." Vergil informed the receptionist.

She bit her lip and pulled up his reservation. "It seems you canceled your stay with us this morning sir... when you arrived."

"So I did." Vergil responded, having temporarily forgotten that detail.

"Your weapon will be inserted into your luggage, provided it isn't locked. Have you already checked your bag?" she asked.

"Yes." he curtly replied.

"Good... then in that case... I'll book you a room on board and you'll be on your way. Any class preference?" she asked, looking across at him.

"First." Vergil stated, staring at her.

"Very well... printing a boarding pass for you and your wife now." she tapped on a few keys and the passes were printed.

Taking his, he handed Triste her own, and moved to go stand in line for the security scanners now. The ones leaving the station were to ensure nothing suspicious was being smuggled out, as Judaken was certainly the target of its share of corporate espionage. He turned slightly to

see what the others had been doing, uncomfortably noting the location of cameras overhead. Still... he and Triste weren't inherently suspicious on their own... and their DNA was in the system... which might help out if they couldn't in fact leave this place.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 16, 2014, 12:30:25 pm**

Marita strode to the counter and handed in her room key ' checking out mam " she said politely to the receptionist "The Jones party. all 3 of us ' she added as Rose and Marie put their keys on the counter " we'd like to book second class passage on the next flight out of here. We've had a wonderful time and we will certainly recommend this hotel to our friends and family' Marita said keeping a straight face.
-
Rose wore a smile, inwardly she was hoping that checkout and boarding would be quick and uneventful so they could relax and unwind, and get caught up with what Vergil and Trieste had been doing. "Likely having lots of 'private' time she thought to herself and chuckled slightly ' _ Marie waited for the receptionist to take her key and check her out, alphabetically she was the first name on the group, but marita was the one whose name was in the system.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 17, 2014, 09:12:03 pm**

"Thank you, dear." Triste smiled warmly at Vergil, taking the pass he handed her. Slipping it away, she looked at the receptionist and shrugged, offering her an expression of sincere disappointment. "I'm so sorry we had to cut our visit short. This really is a *lovely* hotel." Shrugging again, she joined Vergil at the queue for the scanners.

Behind, waiting with Lily and Soren, Axel was busy trying to keep his face straight. They were so close to getting out, but if a member of staff recognised them somehow... He looked up for a second, and caught Triste's eyes from the line in front. She locked gaze with him briefly, glanced upwards then turned around as if nothing had happened. Tilting his head slightly to see what she'd been trying to tell him, he caught a glimpse of the security cameras watching over them. "*Shit*... cameras, guys. Keep it cool." The receptionist beckoned him forwards, and forcing a pleasant expression on his face Axel approached, holding Lily's hand and keeping his face angled away from the cameras. "Hello! We're the, ah... the Whents. We'd like to, ah, check out."

"Of course, sir." The woman clicked around on her computer. After a moment, she frowned. "It says here you were booked in to stay just earlier today... Was there a problem?"

"Oh, no! There was, ah.. just some family trouble back home. Can't be ignored. You know how it is."

"I'm sure." The receptionist looked over at Vergil and Triste, and Marita and her girlfriends, then turned her inquisitive eyes to Axel. "Seems to have been happening a lot recently..." She shook her head. "Well, I'm very sorry your stay had to be cut short. I hope you'll be able to enjoy your visit to the fullest the next time. Will that be a First Class return?"

Axel nodded. "Thanks." He took the two tickets she printed out, then turned to walk with Lily to the security scanner that Vergil and Triste were just passing through. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see the receptionist pick up the phone on the desk next to her and start speaking into it. About them... or something completely unrelated? His tail twitched nervously. "I'm really, *really* not going to miss this place..." He whispered to Lily.

"Hey! What the hell did I do, man?!" Rio yelled indignantly through the door.

"*Hey... where'd my cash go?!*"

He stiffened at the muffled voice that drifted across from inside, and turned to Flora. "Yeah, let's get going." Looking at her face, he paused when a dim streetlight revealed the tears in her eyes. "Hey, it's alright... someday you'll find someone who likes your co... your flytrap."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 18, 2014, 12:05:40 am**

Marita took the Ticket print outs for herself Marie And Rose and the three of them headed to the line of passengers waiting to have their tickets scanned to board. Marie was first of the three girls in line just behind Trieste and Vergil. a young lizard couple stood in-between them and the geckos. Rose kept her expression neutral as the line slowly moved. Marie looked at her pass, seemingly interested in what seat she had been given. Marita stared ahead at the scanner in front of them, and the escalator beyond which lead to the ship that would take them from this ghastly miserable hotel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 19, 2014, 01:19:47 am**

Lily shivered nervously as she walked as fast as she could to reach the others.

"Hey!" She nearly leaped out of her skin as a supervisor marched up to her. "Your uniform is a mess!" he exclaimed. "You can't be seen in public looking like this!"

"I--I..my shift is up...I was actually just going home..." she stammered wide-eyed.

The supervisor glanced at her, clearly suspicious at her behavior. Then noticed the bloodstain on the underside of her sleeve. "Did you injure yourself?" he asked, alarmed.

"Yes...it's why I'm not on duty now! But I'd rather make my boat than go to the infirmary!"

His eyes narrowed as he noticed her yellow-tinged eyes and dilated pupils, both indications of drug use. "I think I want to speak with you in my office."

Lily looked in a panic at her allies, silently begging them to help her out.

Flora was so intoxicated she could barely walk; she relied heavily on Rio as they made their way back to the hotel. "Why won't anyone sleep with me Rio?" she sobbed drunkenly. "What am I doing wrong? Am I ugly? Do I not show enough interest in what they say? In who they are?"

She hiccuped and stumbled off the curb. "I just want...just want someone to..." she buried her head in her hands. "Why did I choose to do this to me?" she cried. "I bet my old *ugly* self could have gotten laid by now...but I don't understand *why...*"

Emilena noticed them approaching from a distant street lamp. "Oh for god's sake, they can barely walk. How'd she even get alcohol, aren't they both underage?" She stood up to go buy a sweater for the night guard's sake, but noticed the gift shop was closed. "Drat. Guess we're starting our hike now. Hope you're looking forward to being a drunkcrutch the entire time."

Foley groaned. "This is why I didn't go to college..."

Nairda raced out of the rain and into the locked door of the airport terminal. He was starving, but all the shops were closed and the airport was completely shut down until morning. Narida wasn't aware airports did that, but admittedly his only experience was with huge bustling metropolitan airports, not backwash jungle airports.

This still meant he'd have to wait until morning to take his flight. Finding an empty spot behind a dumpster, he turned on his sensor augments that would warn him of any unwanted activity in his immediate vicinity, and fell into a fitful sleep.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 19, 2014, 03:15:50 am**

Soren stepped up to the supervisor. "Excuse me, but I saw her slip and fall previously," he said. Before he had regrouped with everyone else, he had snuck off to a control room inside the industrial area of Voltaic Station. Exploiting the tiny bit of knowledge he had learned from Anne about industrial computer control, he shut down the main coolant pumps for the distillation columns that purified the solvent used in ore extraction, shut down the output valves and fed false data into the sensors. All he had to do was wait until the reaction inevitably ran away.

A Golden Retriever worker scowled as she looked at the temperature gauge on the nearby pipe. The readings from her tablet and the gauge failed to match up. Not to mention, the distillation column was making some rather unusual burbling noises.

She held up her radio. "Hey, can we get someone down here? I'm getting some fucked up readings for Distillation Column No. 2. It'só"

The worker was abruptly cut off as a massive blast rocked the area. 2,000 liters of the solvent inside the ten meter high distillation column had finally reached its thermal decomposition point ans detonated, reducing the ten meter high column to shrapnel. Rivulets of burning solvent mixed with the silvery puddles of the liquid metal coolant as workers frantically tried to contain the mess and aid the wounded. All as alarms blared through the area.

Soren staggered as the blast was felt on the surface. "The fuck was that?" he asked, feigning ignorance.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 19, 2014, 11:32:57 am**

Vergil was waved forward into the scanner, even as Lily was accosted by a supervisor. The scanner was clear for Vergil, and he proceeded on towards the ship, but stopped as he wondered how he'd assist Lily. As he was about to open his mouth, an explosion rumbled from somewhere deep within the station. Briefly wondering on it, his brow furrowed as he sensed further needless pain. Soren hadn't joined them right away... and the gecko now suspected this latest disturbance had something to do with him... or maybe not, it was hard to tell.

Still... it was needless. And it made him wince as he sensed it, but he figured the situation would at least distract the supervisor... but just in case not... he'd stick around... see what he could do.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 19, 2014, 05:06:37 pm**

As the explosion far beneath them shook the floor, Axel stumbled and threw out a hand to steady himself, his palm slapping against the chest of a woman also queuing to leave the hotel. "Ah... sorry! I'm sorry!" he stammered, ears reddening, but the woman was far too distracted by the panic around them as members of staff rushed around and guests looked around in confusion, trying to understand what had just happened.

"What the hell..." Were *they* responsible for... whatever that was? Axel didn't think so, but he didn't think sticking around to find out was a good idea. Turning back to Lily, he saw that the supervisor who'd been questioning her was facing the other way, distracted by the terse instructions that he was barking into his earpiece. "We need to go *now*," Axel said under his breath, pulling Lily away and towards the scanner. Stepping through, he half expected alarms to start squealing, given how their luck had turned out so far... but he emerged on the other side with no problems. "Alright... okay..." he breathed, glancing back to make sure Lily and Soren weren't having any problems. He was looking forward to never, ever having to see this hotel again.

"Not the holiday you were expecting, Whent?" Triste said behind him.

Clenching his jaw, Axel didn't reply.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Rio muttered, not understanding Flora. *How much has she had?* His knees shook as Flora put her full weight on him, which wasn't helping his alcohol impaired balance, and as he guided her down the road they almost buckled. "That... that guy was an asshole," he grunted. "But, you know, if... if you looked for people who liked getting screwed by dongs, you'd get laid more..."

Glancing up, Rio saw two familiar figures approaching. "Hey, you missed out!" he announced. "Some guy, he... he bought us, like, drinks!" In the gloom, he didn't see the puddle of sick in front of them, and with a squelch his foot slipped, sending him and Flora crashing into the chunky mess.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 19, 2014, 06:30:03 pm**

Marita Marie and Rose quickly filed through the scanner without problems, and joined the others on the other side ' lets get going, and take our seats ' Marie said as she put one foot on the escalator " We have second class seats so we'll be a section behind the first class. anyone else buy second class?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 19, 2014, 09:17:43 pm**

Lily was quite grateful to find the supervisor suddenly had more important things to worry about. Allowing Axel to drag her through the security checkpoint she should have bee-lined to in the first place, she did a quick headcount to make sure the team all there. "Yes, let's go," she agreed hastily. "Thank god for that...whatever just happened. I hope these people run up millions of dollars in repairs..."

"You're right!" Flora agreed with nothing Rio had said in particular. "It *wasn't* fair of him, or Emilena, or any of them!" On a dime her countenance had flashed from drunken sorrow to

rage. "I'm selfless, and understanding, and *gorgeous*, and they're just...just...*assholes*! Who the *fuck* cares what they think???"

And then Rio tripped and sent her sprawling into a puddle of vomit.

Clicking her tongue with annoyance, Emilena hoisted the folf to her feet. "Where in god's name have you both--?"

SLAP!

A piercing crack broke the dead silence that immediately befell the team. Emilena massaged her jaw and stared silently at Flora, who began quaking uncontrollably as she realized what she had just done.

"I'm sorry! I--I don't know what came over me, I don't...please don't kill me!"

Emilena firmly grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her over to the women's bathroom. Flora's yelps and cries echoed back out.

"You don't think she's actually killing her, do you?" muttered Foley, looking slightly concerned.

After a few minutes, Flora emerged spluttering and soaked. "I was just washing her off," Emilena crossed her arms, noticing Foley's expression. "With freezing water. We've got a long hike ahead of us, she needed a pick-me-up."

She threw Rio a large wad of damp paper towels. "Don't get tired yet; we need to make the airport in under two hours. Next time you sleep, we'll finally be on the way home."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 20, 2014, 01:45:21 am**

Soren casually walked through the security checkpoint. His uniform had been exchanged for some casual clothing. Perhaps too casual as he had on a set of board shorts and an obnoxiously loud Hawaiian shirt.

"Have a nice day sir," the Vulpine guard said as she handed him his boarding pass.

"Thank you," Soren replied between clenched teeth.

He watched some of staff shepherding the crowd into safe rooms and others barking orders into radios and scurrying to ensure there were no injuries and the structural integrity of the hotel was fine. The Human had to admit, Judaken was efficient as all hell.

He then sat on an Art Deco styled sofa with brushed bronze ends and sighed. "What a shitty vacation," he muttered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 22, 2014, 11:54:29 am**

With everyone through the security scanners, Axel felt he could finally start breathing a sigh of relief. From the ramp leading up to the Bremen II, a heavyset security guard came charging down and towards the group, and for a moment Axel felt a twinge of panic surge through him. But then the man pushed past him, not even pausing to glance at his face, and ran through into the hotel.

Swallowing, Axel turned and nodded at the others. "Alright... well, if nobody has any objections, how about we get the *hell* away from this place?" He started to make for the ramp, then blinked at Soren's shirt. "You know, ah... if you're gonna keep wearing that, I'll need to buy some sunglasses." Giving a last nervous grin, he scurried up to the ship, eager to set sail.

Rio snatched the paper towels from the air and started trying to rub the chunks off his trousers. "Thanks." With the sorry state his clothes were in, he was almost starting to feel at home again. Having to dress up in fancy, clean attire on the ship had been *horrible*.

Wiping off the worst of it, he straightened up a little unsteadily and dropped the wet paper in the gutter. "Airport? Are we stealing a plane?! Hell yeah!" Hopping onto Foley's back, Rio waved his arm. "Let's go! I'll... I'll carry you next!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 22, 2014, 04:46:53 pm**

Lily couldn't agree more. Badly shaken by her close call, she went way too quickly through security, and only the catastrophe in the base allowed her to do so.

The boarding of the cruise ships was one of the most disorderly in Voltaic history, but people were eager to get off the docks in light of what had just happened. Luckily, it appeared Voltaic was just as eager to keep the fallout as away from the tourists' eyes as possible, and were accelerating the departure as quickly as they could.

"Um, no, actually we are legitimately flying as economy class passengers," Foley answered Rio. "Though I'm sure you nutjobs would have all loved to steal a plane."

"We could have stolen a plane!" Emilena smacked herself in the forehead. "Foley, when I told you to lay out our options, I expected you to lay them *all out*. What the hell."

"Well, since I had to pay for the tickets because you all keep your money in tins under your mattresses, how about you just *make believe* you're stealing a free flight home!" Foley snapped back. "Cause that's actually totally what you're all doing. From me."

"I can pay you back, Foley," offered Flora.

"No, you can't," he responded tersely. "These tickets were not cheap. And I don't accept sexual favors as a form of currency."

"That's not what I meant!" Flora riled up again. "There's more to me than sex, you know! Stop talking about me like that, and treating me like I'm only--*Ow!*"

Emilena whipped her with a wet rolled up paper towel. "Shut up. Seriously. Rio, this is why we don't get her drunk."

She checked the skyline. "There it is. Now, keep your eyes on the ground, let me do the talking, and follow all the directions on signs. *Especially* at the metal detectors, we don't want a repeat of what happened in Mexico."

"I thought we agreed never to speak of Mexico again," Foley shuddered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 22, 2014, 04:59:56 pm**

Marita Marie and Rose went towards their rooms, separated from the others by a flight of stairs. the second class row had nice accommodations, but right now Rose and the others were not looking at the scenery or the quality of their room. they just wanted to recuperate from their experiences on Voltaic as quicjkly as possible and hope nothing else happened.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 24, 2014, 01:35:14 pm**

Soren emerged from the bathroom with a wet towel in hand. His second class cabin would have been a first class cabin on any other ship. A brushed bronze Art Deco mirror adorned one of the walls. Directly below that was an empty refrigerator. Plush black carpet lined the cabin's floor.

His obnoxiously loud clothing had been exchanged for more subdued casual wear ó a black t-shirt and black khakis.

His stomach growled. "Might as well see if everyone else wants a light meal."

The Human picked up his smartphone and dialed Axel. "Hey Axel," he said. "I'm going for a light meal. Care to join me?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 24, 2014, 07:28:48 pm**

Back in his and Lily's cabin, Axel was lying face down on their bed, exhausted, his head buried in the thick pillows. "You know," he started, his voice muffled and indistinct. "I know I said you could choose our next holiday after that nude beach... but I'm calling a veto on all underwater hotels. Deal?"

Pushing himself up on his elbows, Axel looked over at Lily, his face growing serious. "I'm so glad you're okay. Back then, when you were tied in that chair... I was so scared that-" He was interrupted by the cheerful chiming of their cabin's phone coming from the corner of the room. "Crap... I'm gonna need to get a new cell phone when we get back..." he muttered as he pushed himself off the bed and crossed over to it.

"Hello? Oh, hey Soren." Axel rubbed a hand through his hair. "A meal? Ah... yeah. Yeah, I could go for that. See you in a moment." Truth be told, he wasn't actually too hungry... but it'd at least take his mind off the situation for a while, and it *had* been a long time since he'd eaten last. Hanging up, he glanced at Lily and gave a tired smile. "Want something to eat? You know, ah... keep your strength up."

Alone in her cabin, Triste sat in a chair facing the window, once again sharpening her knife with slow, methodical movements. Her yellow eyes gazed out at the sea as it sped past, unblinking and unseeing - her thoughts were elsewhere.

How can headquarters be gone? What happened to our defenses? We knew something like this could happen... She couldn't wrap her head around the fact - and Triste was uncomfortably aware that, without assistance from the Federation, they were sitting ducks... even *with* Vergil's powers, the extent of which were impressing even her.

Vergil wanted to go back to HQ, to check for survivors and see if anything could be done to help them. *Bad move... I don't like this...* Kalis might not be the type to set a trap, but turning up at the site of one of his most recent attacks with one of his HVTs... Sighing, Triste continued scraping her knife, eyes narrowing as she tried to think what their next move should be.

Rio frowned. "Aw, we're *not* stealing a plane? I've never done that before! It would've been so cool..." He continued pouting all the way as they trudged their way towards the airport in the distance.

By the time they'd almost arrive, the sun had sunk and the daylight had vanished, leaving the

group in a murky darkness. The only reason they could see where their feet were landing was because of the light thrown out by the airport that they were fast approaching. "So... when we get home, what next? We still following those guys?" Rio started. "Lily and Axel and... Srensren or whatever the fuck his name is. We could -"

Suddenly, a flashlight beam was aimed at them, blinding the group momentarily. It lowered, revealing a portly security guard, standing next to a gate that lead further into the grounds of the airport. "What's going on, eh?" he demanded in a heavy Canadian accent, looking each of them in the eyes.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 24, 2014, 08:55:08 pm**

Lily sighed. There were so many things she wanted to say to Axel, but if others were waiting for them they should probably save the heavy conversations for afterward. "I'm not hungry, but I don't want to be alone." She climbed wearily off the bed and hugged him. "I was really scared too..." she whispered. "And I almost can't believe we're both safe and alive. I've been thinking..." She gulped. "I've been thinking of honing my abilities to more...offense-oriented styles...I just don't want to be unable to protect you again..."

Emilena's eyes flashed at the guard. "We're getting our boarding passes and then flying on a plane, *asshole*. What does it look like's going on?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 25, 2014, 06:21:27 pm**

Axel hugged her back tightly, a metallic finger lightly brushing against her cheek. He sighed, knowing more than anyone else how peaceful Lily was - thinking about how she must be feeling, to consider using her powers to *hurt* others... it tore at him. But if it meant she'd be safe...

Swallowing, Axel kissed her forehead. "Look... I'm going to try as hard as I can to protect us. To make sure you don't have to... you know, do *that* with your abilities. But if there's ever a reason I, ah, can't be there... Maybe that wouldn't be a bad idea." His tail flicked. "As long as you don't, ah, accidentally hurt yourself when you practice. That would just suck."

Holding her shoulders, he looked down into her eyes. "I... I know you don't like causing anyone any pain. And I love you for that. But if someone... *anyone* is trying to hurt you, you have to promise me that you won't hesitate... that you'll put them down first and make sure they won't come after you again. Do you understand? *Promise me.*"

"Oh, you are, eh? Then why aren't you coming in the main entrance? I'm not so sure aboot this..." Shining his flashlight across the group again, the guard paused when it shone on Flora's face, and squinted. "Wait a moment... Venus! I remember you! Back in... Corona, was it, eh? What are you doing all the way out here? You look like shit."

Licking his lips, his eyes flicked down Flora's body. "If I remember right, us two and your... fly trap down there had ourselves quite a time..." Grinning to himself as the memories flashed before his eyes, the guard stepped aside and swung open the gate, waving the beam of his flashlight towards a side door on the main building of the airport. "Never let it be said that I don't repay favours, eh? Just go through there, and you'll miss all the queues. Be on your place in a flash. And Venus..." he continued, smiling toothily at Flora's breasts. "You make sure you hit me up next time you're in town, eh?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 25, 2014, 06:42:37 pm**

marita , after taking a short nap, decided to give 'lily a call" We never did get the chance to have lunch together' She said to herself as she dialed Axel's room number' She listened to the ringing of the phone and waited for Axel to pick up. Rose was going through her purse on the sofa in the room, picking out the contents ,- spare change- Rose always picked up coins wherever she found them- lipstick, makeup case, a few breath mints.. pictures of Marie and Marita, nothing unusual there. marie was washing her headfur in the room's shower, feeling the hot water run down her face over her breasts, and down her front.. ' she toook a deep sigh " gods am i glad to be out of that hotel' she said to herself as she put shampoo in her headfur..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 25, 2014, 07:10:09 pm**

Soren was at the Ironworks, the *Breman II*'s onboard casual cafÈ.

In contrast to the Art Deco style of the rest of the ship, Ironworks had a near-industrial look with exposed wires and pipes. The tables and benches were heavy polished steel slabs.

A waiter refilled his glass of water. Soren wondered what was going to happen next. He pushed the thoughts from his mind and bit into the warm bread.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 25, 2014, 07:55:03 pm**

Lily shook slightly. "I…I don't know if I can promise that…" Her voice had slight tremors. "I can take getting hurt…I can heal…but if I kill someone who was hurting me…"

She jumped when the phone rang, cutting through her thoughts with a pleasant chiming. Since Axel answered it last time, she picked up. "Oh, hello Marita! Dinner? I guess we never did treat you to that dinner, did we? Soren reserved seats at the Ironworks, let's meet there. Look forward to seeing you and the girls, and…I'm very glad all three of you are okay," Lily smiled, even though Marita wouldn't see it.

She hang up and resumed hugging Axel. "We said we'd talk about all this later. Now the entire team is waiting on us, we need to kick things into gear."

She was dressed and walking out the door when she realized that she'd omitted Triste and Vergil from her mental picture of the 'entire team.' *I guess that's to be expected…they don't seem to consider us part of their team either…*

"Freddy?" Flora stumbled in surprise, and Foley only barely caught her. "Freddy, oh my god what the hell are you doing out here?" She lit up. "You recognized me! I was aquamarine when we filmed those, and my breasts were so new! Do they still have the painting Freddy? You remember the painting!"

"Look, I hate to break up…whatever you two are babbling about, but we are *very late* for this flight!" Emilena practically dragged Flora towards the proffered doorway.

"I'm still in Corona Freddy!" Flora called as her teammates dragged her to the terminal. "My real name is Flora, look me up! I love you Freddy! But then again," she howled as Foley shut the door behind them, "I love everyone!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 25, 2014, 08:38:53 pm**

Marita hung up after Lilly did and turned to Rose " We're headed out to eat at the Ironworks. just put on a fresh attire, nothing too fancy. We'll leave once Marie gets out of the shower.' Rose noddded, went over to her suitcase and unpacked a fresh red dress, and changed into it. Marita wernt into the corner and changed, her new dress was a light green one. Marie got out a few minutes later and changed into a purple dress. she took a deep breath as she came out ' i cant tell you how much i needed that.. sio whats the oplan girls for dinner?
-
We're going toi the Ironworks, meeting back up with Lily and the others hopefully this time the drinks won't have extra stuff in them' marita said.
-

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 26, 2014, 05:02:42 am**

Locking the door behind them, Axel slipped the key into his pocket then turned and put his arm around Lily's shoulders. "Hey... maybe this time they'll go easy on the drugs," he said lightly as they started down the corridor, grinning but only half joking.

A few minutes later, they emerged into the industrial-looking restaurant. "Well, ah... now we know why Soren picked this place," Axel smiled, glancing around at the Ironworks' rather unique decor and waving a hand when he spotted their friend sitting on the other side of the room. "Hey Soren... let's hope the drinks pack less of a punch than last time," he nodded, pulling out a chair for Lily and sitting next to her. Rubbing a spot on his cheek where a small bruise had formed, he blinked at Soren and cocked an eyebrow. "So... I hope you enjoyed your stay at the hotel." He grinned sarcastically. "Was it everything you hoped it'd be?"

Rio nodded at Flora. "See? I told you there's people who like what you're packing!" he announced, then started shuddering as images of what that entailed passed through his mind. The group emerged into a large room, at the end of which was a large row of women sat behind computers, dealing with tourists who were booking their passage home.

As they started to make their way towards a vacant ticket desk, Rio tried to arrange his expression to look as innocent as possible. He was still slightly miffed that they were doing this the legal way. *When I'm older, I'm gonna steal all the planes...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **September 26, 2014, 03:51:11 pm**

Vergil all but collapsed into bed in his cabin. He was worn out with the day's ordeals, and was still feeling somewhat drained from earlier. Headquarters in shambles... his superiors all dead...

Taking his phone out, he could see he had a missed call and voicemail from Fugate. Fugate! He was still alive! Without even listening to the message, he dialed the stoat and waited patiently while the phone rang. Fugate picked up on the second ring. "Mr. Speicher... you're alive."

"I could say the same for you!" Vergil replied breathlessly. "What's going on? Did anyone else at HQ survive?"

"No... they're all dead." Fugate replied sadly. "High command has been crippled. We're calling in our top military commanders to fill in but... things are a mess here. What's your progress? Did you locate the third waypoint?"

"Yes..." Vergil said heavily here, closing his eyes as tears began to streak his cheeks.

"You sound upset. You aren't forgetting this mission's objective, are you? Kalis has struck hard but we have every confidence you'll beat him to the Cataract. Two more waypoints to go..." Fugate urged.

"Yes... I suppose so." Vergil said softly now, the energy leaving him. "I'm thinking of heading back to Corona to regroup... my team has become polarized I'm afraid... but I can't entirely trust some of them either." the gecko stated.

"Not surprising, considering they aren't government operatives. If you need a new team..."

"I don't know yet. I don't even know what I'm doing yet... we lost a team member on the second waypoint... and with him it seems the glue holding this team together has melted. I feel I need to find out more about Rex too... I'm no closer to understanding him and Kalis than I was starting this thing."

"Don't get distracted." Fugate reminded him. "We need efficiency out of you... I'll lend what support I can but... we need you to stay focused..."

"I can't just cut the humane side out of my job!" Vergil snapped. "I'm not a machine! Maybe you all are, but I'm not!" he replied with disgust.

"Calm down... remember to be objective. We need efficiency out of you!" Fugate repeated.

"I KNOW... but this isn't a mission that's like that! Everything's riding on it... I try to stamp out my emotions I become what?" Vergil asked crossly. "I tried doing that, it's only made things worse! I have to go... I'll talk to you later... I'm glad you're alive." Vergil said, and without waiting for a response, he hung up on the stoat.

"Uggggh!" Holding his head in his hands, he flexed his finger joints, rubbing his forehead to try and clear his mind. "What would you do Rex? How would keep your head about you and press on? If only I could remember you more... you kept me even in tough times... that much I remember." he murmured. Slamming his phone into the bed, he let out a cry, then pocketed the device, pushed himself off his bed, and headed for his door.

Exiting his cabin, the gecko decided to wander aimlessly throughout the ship, unsure where he was going or where he'd end up...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 26, 2014, 10:36:14 pm**

Lily smiled at Soren. "How are you Soren? Things got really stressful there at the end…"

A waiter came to take their drinks. "I'll have just water…" Lily said in a small voice. That was her best chance at noticing a drug before she drank it… "But please come back, we've got a few more on the way."

The waiter nodded.

"So anyway," Lily said under her breath as the waiter grabbed everyone else's drinks. "How are you doing, Soren? I've talked to Axel and the girls, but you've been very quiet lately. I just want to make sure you're all right."

Emilena uttered a strangled groan of annoyance. "That was the *correct reservation number* you goddamn machine!"

The machine beeped at her and reset itself to the home screen.

"No! Dammit!" Emilena kicked it.

"Hey hey now," Foley stepped forward, "How about I…?"

"No! I'm not typing that in again!" Emilena marched over to the nearest teller, completely cutting the line. "Give us our boarding passes dammit, we're in a hurry and your stupid machine is a malfunctioning piece of crap."

"Do you have any bags to check?" the woman droned in a monotone voice.
"No!"
"Would you like to upgrade to first class for just $10 a person?"
"No!"
"Would you like travel insurance for all your belongings?"
"No!"
"Do you all have government issued ID?"
"No-Yes!"

The woman handed her the boarding passes. "Please pass through the security checkpoint on our right and proceed to terminal B11. Have a safe flight."

As Emilena grabbed the passes and doled them out, fuming, Foley looked uncomfortable. "Uh… pretty sure Flora doesn't have her passport any more."

Emilena remembered that Flora had lost all her original clothes and belongings in the boat crash. "Goddammit. We'll figure something out." Then she got shushed by Flora.

"Don't worry, guys," Flora's eyes flashed knowingly. "I've got a plan…"

"Oh great," muttered Foley.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 28, 2014, 04:24:47 pm**

Marita Rose and Marie entered the resteraunt " and caught sight of Soren Lily and axel, and made their way toeards their table ' Hi guys' Marita said ' Sorry we're a bit late, we all had to take showers after all the ruunning around on Voltaic' She smiled and squeezed into a seat next to Soren, Rose sat next to Axel and Marie by Lilly.' So how are all of you holding up? rose asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 29, 2014, 02:39:58 am**

A waiter refilled Soren's glass of water. The Human sighed. "I've been doing okay...considering all the insanity that's recently happened."

"More bread?" the waiter asked.

"Yeah," Soren replied as he swirled his glass of ice water, listening to the ice cubes gently clink against the glass.

He then turned to Lily. "It's Vergil and Triste... I honestly can't stand them."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 29, 2014, 12:38:30 pm**

Axel motioned a hand, and the waitress poured him a glass of water too. She didn't look like the waitress that served them before, but he still took a cautious sniff as he raised the glass. *Better safe than sorry...* Taking a gulp, he nodded at Soren. "I don't get it... they just vanish without telling us where they're going? What were they're doing? I thought we were meant to be a team?"

He looked around the table and shrugged dejectedly. "Jesus.. this could have all been avoided..."

Rio grinned excitedly. "What is it? Do it!" he urged as he waited for her to reveal her masterplan. "If you're gonna steal something, let me help!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 29, 2014, 05:41:14 pm**

Lily sighed. "We really, really should have a talk with the two of them," she admitted. "We're all on the same team here, and I think we're letting our responsibilities and the severity of this mission affect us personally. I'm sure if we all sat down and talked out our issues, we could find a compromise and continue onward as a team."

She hesitated as the waiter filled her glass. "Could you, um, drink from that please?" she asked.

The waiter hesitated, but when she continued looking at him expectedly, took the glass and daintily sipped it.

"More. I'd like to see for sure that you drank some…"

He took a huge swig and handed it back to her. Lily tried to will herself to sip, but ultimately gave up and continued being thirsty. "What do you all think?" she asked the others. "Vergil's not talking to any of us, but it could just be stress. Besides, we have no idea what Voltaic did to them while they were being held prisoner. They did some pretty awful things to Axel and me..."

A bird landed on Nairda’s head and tried to peck his brains out. Luckily his sensors warned him, and he woke up in time to save everything but a few chips off his skull.

He glanced at the streets. Activity. It probably wasn’t the best idea to go back to sleep. Instead he groggily stumbled into the airport, whose doors were now open.

He was starving, but he barely had enough to afford the plane ticket. He drank from a water fountain until his stomach hurt, just to distract himself from the hunger.

At the security checkpoint, the burly security guard asked for his ID. Nairda checked his back pocket and found it empty. “My passport! Where’s my passport?”

After a frantic search, he came up empty. “You don’t understand, it was just...I mean…”

They threw him out of the airport. “Can I at least have a refund?” he begged.

The iguana stared suspiciously at the passport. “You’re Nairda Kibagami, huh?”

Flora beamed. “Yup! I came to this country for the dirt-cheap cosmetic surgeries. They were amazing!”

“It says here they you’re male,” he pointed out.

Flora dropped her pants and the embarrassed guard asked no further questions. Then she got could only walk a few feet before being immediately picked out of the line for yet another random body search.

“Look, she’s allowed to do shit like that, and then I get in trouble when I make a sex joke!” protested Foley, watching the scene from the gift shop. Emilena was ignoring him, and looking thoughtfully through a large selection of traveling trinkets. “What are you even looking at, anyway?”

“Like hell I’m getting on that flight without some sort of self-defense.” Emilena selected the largest sized toenail clippers they had. “This’ll do.”

Foley raised an eyebrow. “How is that a weapon?”

Emilena demonstrated by holding it like this. (http://i.imgur.com/9AqnznE.jpg)

“They let you take those on planes?” exclaimed Foley, wide-eyed.

“Yeah, and we’re going to miss ours if Flora can’t stop getting searched at every security checkpoint.” Emilena sighed as Flora finally rejoined them, purring.

“I think I’ve sobered up guys!” she announced. “I’m really, really sorry for how I behaved to you all.” Her face fell. “Especially you, Rio. You should ignore most everything I said; I...wasn’t thinking clearly.”

Emilena ignored her and directed them to their gate, which was boarding soon.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 29, 2014, 07:17:46 pm**

I don't think Trieste thinks much of us, because we're civilians ' Marita said as she took a small sip of water. 'i dont know what happened to you guys or what happened to Trieste or Vergil. we were getting the biproxytol flushed out of our systems. which isnt easy, at the best of times. fortunately the medical staff there was very good, i have no complaints about them. i.. don't think things have been the same since Tony died. for whatever reason, i think he held us together. the whole reason we were together in the first place before our drinks got spiked was to pay tribute to him..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **September 29, 2014, 07:28:24 pm**

Soren nodded as he examined the olive oil that was given with the bread. Suddenly not feeling hungry, he took a tiny sip of his ice water. Satisfied that it wasn't drugged, he took a larger drink.

"Lily's right. We need to have a talk with those two. I'm just going to say it, those two have been treating us like shit recently. And that needs to stop. I don't know what they were trying to do by keeping us in the dark at Voltaic Station. They said that we're supposed to be a team. We can't have team members keeping secrets from each other. One of these days, it'll screw us over."

"Ah, our appetizers are here," he said upon smelling the distinct bready aroma of fried food.

A plate of fried calamari with a sweet and sour tamari ginger dip and some hummus with lentil chips was placed on the table.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **September 30, 2014, 06:48:43 pm**

"Mffmphhff," Axel said as he stuffed his face with some of the appetizers. He swallowed then tried again. "Yeah. If we're going to work as a team, we can't do this to each other." He sighed. Ever since Tony... ever since *that* happened, Vergil's been... I don't know. Distant. You... you don't think that's why they tried to go it alone? That they somehow blame us for that?"

He blinked at the other around the table then bit his lip. "We really *do* need to speak with them..."

"Don't worry about it," Rio said, giving her a gentle shove. He blinked shiftily. "But, you know, you *did* promise me the drinks were on you next time we went out. I mean, a promise is a promise." Soon after, the boarding gate opened. As they passed through, he looked around excitedly at the group. "Holy shit, do you think they'll be showing the new *Spongejack Roundshirt* movie on the plane?!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **September 30, 2014, 07:19:50 pm**

Marita grabbed a bit of calamari for her plate. she didnt bother with the sauces, and just popped the crunchy treat in her mouth. " i dont know how talking about it would go. I dont know if they blame it on us that it happened, and truthfully I dont care. I think it was, well, an accident. but this group has not been the same since , indeed I dont think trieste has ever trusted us. i'm not a physic, i cant get inside their heads, but trieste has always been more well, aloof around us, al least thats how I see it. Who knows, maybe talking about it, will get us somewhere.." she sighed and began drinking more water.
_ Marie tried some of the humus, and found it to be pretty good. she grabbed a few of the chips to munch on while the others talked. Rose helped herself to the Calimari. ' But we're alive arent we/' Rose said to the others ' that has to count for something right?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **September 30, 2014, 10:55:53 pm**

Lily wasn't hungry. She watched as everyone enjoyed their appetizers. "I'll have the garden salad," she told the waiter who had arrived to take their orders; it was the cheapest thing on the menu.

"Let's let them relax on the cruise; they seem really tense right now," she said. "Once we disembark in Corona we'll all be on the docks, and we can talk to them in town. That should give them time to cool off steam."

Why is everything so awful? Nairda lamented. *I must be having the worst luck in the entire world! Emilena never had to suffer through anything as bad as this!*

He was eyeing the Mexican border with trepidation. Some hopefuls had taken him under their wing and taught him the art of sneaking past the border patrol. Seemed simple enough, but he admittedly only gets one shot. Each of them was armed with a spring-loaded pole vault, produced by the Colombian sports equipment black market. Nairda had sold his Augmented

grappling hook for it, and only afterward realized his grappling hook would probably have been much better for the caper they were about to attempt.

Rodriguez looked at him. A beat of sweat dripped down Nairda's neck. He had bonded and loved his Mexican friends, and now their moment of truth was upon them.

Further away, Rodriguez noticed the signal. Leaping to his feet, the two men made a break for the fence, sprinting like their lives depended on it. Searchlights clicked on as the two dozens runners triggered a silent alarm.

At the designated point, each of them planted their vault and went flying through the air. Fighting to keep his form perfect, Nairda's internal altimeter clocked his terrifying ascent. Eighteen feet…twenty-five feet…twenty-nine feet…

Tucking into a ball, Nairda could hardly believe when he barely glanced over the thirty-foot border wall blocking him from the American soil. Activating his shock absorbers, he hit the ground rolling and stumbled to his feet. Other runners landed on either side of him. "°¡ndale!" he shouted, as a helicopter rose quickly into the air and opened fire with a machine gun.

Sprinting like his life depended on it, Nairda saw border patrolmen closing in with automatic rifles. Drawing his katana, Nairda smacked the first one with the blunt of the blade and sent him rolling. Grunting as bullets pinged off his armor, he downed another with a sharp whack to the helmet.

The helicopter fired a single blast directly at him. It hit the katana and shattered the blade, sending painful vibrations rippling through both of his arms.

The patrolmen seemed to decide that Nairda was the highest-priority target, and all bore down on him. With a cry Nairda got one last look at his fleeing friends before a dogpile of sweaty angry Americans blocked his view. "°Corre Rodriguez! °Corre SeÒora Rodriquez y los niÒos! °Yo nunca te olvidarÈ!"

At least a dozen men beat him unconscious with electrified nightsticks.

"Probably, to be perfectly honest," Foley noted. "Nowadays they've got the entire *Etherflix* library and you can sign in with a guest account. The airline has this partnership thing."

"That's great, get on the plane," Emilena repeated for the fifth time. "Honestly, have you people never boarded an airplane before?"

She ushered them into their assigned seats, which due to being purchased last minute were nowhere near each other.

Flora leaned over to the businessman opposite her. "Hey…wanna join the mile-high club once we hit cruising altitude?"

The flight attendant explained how air masks worked and then with a groan the plane taxied down the runway, hitting mach speeds.

The woman's baby next to Emilena began bawling as soon as the plane began moving. "Madam," Emilena informed politely, "I must inform you that if your baby plans on being this loud the entire flight, I will be forced to knock it unconscious." The man to the left of the mother grunted his approval at that plan.

The woman instead took some sleeping pills and fell asleep, leaving her baby's bawling to annoy everyone in that cabin of the plane.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 02, 2014, 11:55:45 pm**

Marita nodded to "Lily' Yeah you're probably right. For Now, Lets just enjoy a nice dinner. She ordered a steak and shrimp combo, she was hungry."if any of you guys like Shrimp. I'll be glad to share" She offered. Marie ordered a pasta entree, and Rose ordered cheese ravioli.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 03, 2014, 12:46:51 am**

As it was, the Bremen II was sailing to Corona, which was the world's busiest port as well as capital city. The convenient thing about Corona was that it was insanely well protected from external attack but an efficient port of commerce and transit.

The large liner docked at its usual dock, having made a two week voyage from Voltaic Station to Corona. It had transited the middle Atlantic to the northern Atlantic with no problems, and fortunately, Kalis's fleet was not encountered. So even though Triste hadn't wanted to go back to Corona, there was little choice, since the Bremen II made a triangular loop: Corona to Rio, Rio to Voltaic, and Voltaic to Corona.

So now it had docked, and summer had turned into fall during the group's absence. The unloading process had begun, though with tighter restrictions on immigration due to the numerous terrorist attacks that had taken place at Voltaic as of late. There was quite literally no place on the planet the Big Four as they were known couldn't reach. Security however wasn't as tight as at Voltaic for the simple reason that terrorist attacks in Corona were next to impossible to stage for any great length without being overwhelmed by the numerous fleets that orbited the city. More than a million troops could be brought to bear, but the city was still on high alert thanks to a recent attack that had gone unsolved publicly...

Still... being a current resident of Corona helped one's reentry into the city. And since every one of the party was indeed a current resident of Corona... problems with immigration would most likely be minimal. The things they had to be looking over their shoulder for were not the legal authorities, but the hit teams Judaken would undoubtedly be dispatching now. Still, they were home for now after a particularly grueling trek, and but two waypoints remained to be found before Torment's Cataract... and Devastation's Inception.

Aboard the Red Castle, Kalis gazed out at the night sky as his fleet drifted over the polar regions on idle. One more waypoint... the one he hadn't been able to secure before Rex had died... or more correctly, Kalis had eliminated him. But his hastiness had proved to be a mistake. Killing his erstwhile boss hadn't been good, as without him, Kalis had unfortunately not been able to locate the final waypoint. So what to do?

The obvious answer was use the fools who were currently finding the waypoints. Let them get the penultimate waypoint, then nab them... torture them... make them give up the location of the last waypoint, then kill them, obtain it, and activate Devastation's Inception. Destroy the Ivitz Federation, rule the world, end of story.

Of course there was one hitch to that plan. How to actually nab those fools at the right time. Kalis hadn't been able to place a tracker on their group yet... but as it turned out, providence had strange ways of working... and providence hadn't let him down yet.

As for torturing them, he wasn't concerned. They were weak. They were a close knit group. Breaking one would threaten the others... and break them all. He wasn't concerned about that. His game plan now thoroughly established, Kalis chose to do something he'd been learning over the past ten years or so... sit down and wait. The world wasn't going anywhere... he could burn it all in due time. Best be patient... let providence work itself out... and it certainly would... of that he had little doubt.

The richest part was of course the irony of the situation. But he'd get to that... all in due time... two gifts he had received as of late... both incredibly useful. Both coming from Varanus... which was the only reason the monitor wasn't dead right now. While Kalis didn't tolerate failure of any kind, he also was wont to forgive his mentor and heir since he'd actually done something productive this last excursion. Both gifts were delicious... but one in particular Kalis was looking forward to revealing. He felt like a chess player right now... the world being his board. But the nice thing about this, is that he was winning... and he reveled in each move he made...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 03, 2014, 01:32:13 am**

Soren rode the elevator up to his apartment. He sniffed the air. It still stank of bums, debris and cheapass cleaning materials.

He unlocked the door and shoved his luggage against the kitchen table. "So you're back from your vacation?" a familiar Shetland Pony said as gave a quick snort to clear her nostrils.

"Anne! Glad to see you! Ióow!" Soren gasped for air as the powerfully built mare embraced him in a bonecrushing hug.

She released him and turned to the three Canines. "So how was your vacation?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 03, 2014, 05:48:07 am**

"Thanks." Axel leaned into the taxi that had driven them from the docks to pay the driver, then stepped across to drag their luggage out from the back. As the car sped away, he stood on the sidewalk, leaning on the bag and taking in the familiar sight of their tiny house, set against the fading light of the evening sky. He sighed and looked at Lily. "Is it crazy that I've never been happier to see this place?"

"Oh, hello you two!" a woman called from across the street as she watered her garden. "I hope you two had a lovely - oh!" She gawped as turned and the streetlight above him illuminated the bruise on his cheek beneath his fur that was starting to fade.

Axel waved back. "Hey Mrs. Kershan! The, uh..." He blinked. "The waiters were really insistent about their tips." Turning, he shrugged at Lily and started to heave the luggage up the small path leading to their screen door. "Have you, ah, heard anything from Emilena? Has she... you know, has she found anything?"

The high powered binoculars revealed everything that was going on in Vergil's apartment. So far, there was nothing of interest. Swearing softly under her breath, Triste lowered them, setting the device down on the small table beside her and slouching forward in her chair, the darkened apartment cloaking her in shadows. The small, cheap room she'd rented since the first day she'd arrived in Corona after discovering where Vergil lived was situated in a complex opposite from his, giving her a good view into his apartment.

After a heated discussion with Fugate, she'd had no choice but to go along with what Vergil wanted, and take a short moment for the group to recuperate in Corona. For a long time, she'd sat in her rented apartment, watching his building as the sun started lowering in the sky, sure that at any moment there'd be trouble, Kalis making a move on Vergil. But here'd been nothing.

She sighed and rubbed her eyes. *Am I getting too paranoid?*

Rio took a deep breath as he stepped into the cavernous room of the gang's hideout, taking in the scent of dust, sweat and shame. The plane journey back had been long and grueling - a huge man, perhaps a few inches off being classified as a planet, had been seated next to Rio, and the boy had spent the majority of the trip buried under the man's overflowing stomach, struggling for air.

Staggering over to the musty sofa, Rio collapsed back into it, propping his feet up on a crate filled with Foley's technical equipment. "Hey Hal!" he called out into the quiet as the others made their way in. "We're back!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 03, 2014, 07:55:39 pm**

"I haven't heard anything from her…" Lily muttered under her breath so Mrs. Kershan couldn't hear. "For all I know she's still in South America."

Lily smiled weakly for Mrs. Kershan's sake, but mainly just focused on unlocking the door, dragging her suitcase into the living room and collapsing onto the sofa. "My god…" she panted. "We're home. Finally."

She glanced at her luggage. *What's the point of even unpacking?* She wearily curled up into a ball right there on the couch. "Let's just phone in for pizza; I'm not making anything…" she murmured sleepily. "Wake me when it gets here--"

She glanced through half-lidded eyes one last time at the window as the setting sun dipped under the porch roof of Mrs. Kershan's condo…and immediately jolted upright when she saw a glint of light in the nearby tree. Racing to the window, she drew the curtains quickly, then peeked out again.

She recognized a police camera. Were it not for her looking at the perfect moment of the setting sun, she wouldn't have noticed the glint of its lens. "Axel!" she exclaimed. "Axel, we're being watched!"

She ran and closed all the other windows. As she locked the kitchen drapes, she got a glimpse at an unmarked van parked near their road. It was revving its engine and driving off.

"Axel," she stumbled backwards. "We can't stay here. It's the police; they've bugged the place." She didn't know if Denny North was responsible or if some other part of her dozens of illegal doings in the past few days had led them here, but she knew that they'd be back soon.

Nairda stumbled through the ashen forests outside Lanthae. The American border patrol had been furious when the computer check revealed that Nairda was an American citizen, and let him go with a free Aloe Vera wipe as an apology for the overnight torture session. They also let him keep the hilt of his shattered katana.

"Emi's gonna kill me…Emi's gonna kill me…oh god oh god she's gonna kill me…" he repeated over and over until he'd managed to effortlessly fit the sentence into his normal breathing pattern. He tried to come up with possible ways of fixing the blade, but Emi would know.

I can't worry about that now… he finally forced himself to shut up. *I'm almost there…*

Rounding a hill and limping through the stale fallen leaves, Nairda got his first glimpse of the house of his parents; Emile and Lena Kibagami.

As he climbed through the back door (the front door was booby-trapped; Emilena's gang never used it), Foley was so tired he didn't even have the strength to snap at Rio to take his grubby paws off the merch. "I'm going to bed." He stamped towards the guest room.

"Me too…" yawned Flora. She followed him in. "Hey, not my bed!" Emilena heard Foley exclaim.

Emilena was as tired as everybody else, but she first checked every square inch of the safe house for traps or alterations since they'd last been there. She didn't notice anything out of place. "Hal?" she called out.

Soon she was satisfied that the safe house was trap-free, but she wondered why Hal was gone. *He should have left a note at the very least…* she wondered. *Well, if he's not back by tomorrow we'll go looking for him.*

She retreated to her private bedroom, undressed and climbed under the covers, having never checked the outside of the front door, where Hal's decomposing head was impaled on a stake.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 05, 2014, 06:06:26 am**

In the bedroom, Axel was busy shaking out a cigarette that he'd hidden in the sock drawer. Shooting tentative glances towards the doorway, he flicked on his lighter and started to bring the flame forwards... then jumped at Lily's shout, dropping both on the floor. "Hang on honey!" he called back, hastily bending down to pick up the incriminating evidence in case she came in. Then he paused, his eyes widening as he realised what she'd just said.

"What? *The police?!* Are you sure?!" Axel cried, dashing out of the bedroom and rushing over to her. "What the hell did we do?" *Actually, that might be a stupid question...* Pushing a hand through his hair, causing it to stick up crazily, he struggled to think what their options were. Obviously, like she'd said, they needed to go... but where? Soren's was the obvious answer, although Emilena's hideout might be more anonymous - but would she even accept them in? He swore under his breath. Either way, they didn't have time to decide here. "Alright, we... let's just go, okay? We can decide where to go when we're not being... ah, you know..." *Spied on.*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 06, 2014, 03:35:57 pm**

It was long" Marita said as one by one the girls came up to greet Anne " so you feeling better? this place.. looks just about the same as well we left, well more or less' She said looking at Anne with a smile.
Rose went over to her room and pulled out her coin jar and tossed the coins she had scooped up during the trip. The jar was about two-thirds full,m and her closet had several others fill;ed nearly to the brim.I Really should count my coins ne of these days ' she said to herself./
 Marie went over to her room to put her luggage away and head in the bathroom to take a much needed shower. the water wasnt very warm, but it was beter than having no running water. after the luxury of voltaic and the cruise, hiome felt small and bare.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 06, 2014, 06:51:44 pm**

Lily's heart was racing as she grabbed her suitcase (the only thing in the house she knew for sure wasn't bugged…) and led the way out the back door.

It wasn't until they were a block away from the house that she felt courageous enough to even speak. "We need to find somewhere to stay..." she whispered urgently. "I'm so tired…our only

real options are Soren and Emilena…" As much as the idea of living with a gang of drug dealers didn't appeal to her, she might get lucky and they weren't even home yet. "It's getting dark and we need to find shelter fast. How about you go ask Soren, and I'll ask Emilena? Then I'll call your cell in an hour and we can decide what to do."

Nairda stumbled across the tended fields of an algae farm, shivering in the twilight wind. The farm was very remote; he could barely see the ruins of Lanthae on the horizons.

He knocked tentatively on the door. After a few minutes, a lithe female Vulpine in a bathrobe creaked the door open a sliver. All Nairda could see was her eye, which he noticed with a pang was the same dark brown color as his own. "Who are you?" she asked firmly, not unlatching the door.

"H-hi…" Nairda stuttered, flushing red. "You…probably don't recognize me, but…"

The Vupline's eyes went wide. "Nairda?" she gasped. She flung the door open and placed her H&K USP on the side table. "Nairdey-poo? Is that you?"

"Hi mom…" Nairda smiled, looking embarrassed as she flung her arms around him and kissed him all over his face. She had snow-white fur, with pale blue hair and black markings on her arms and tail. Her fluffy bathrobe seemed several sizes too small and clung unsettlingly close to her curves. "Uh, where's dad?"

"He'll be back soon; he's hunting in the mountains. Oh, he'll be so glad to see you!" She pinched his cheek and gasped as she observed how cut up he was. "What happened to you? We need to get you cleaned up!"

"Oh, nothing," Nairda blushed as Lena dragged him into the bathroom. "I just had to jump the Mexican-American border with-- hey! Whoa!" Lena was stripping his shirt off. "Mom! Come on!"

Lena glanced at him sideways. "Honey, I am your mother. There ain't nothing on you I haven't seen." She pulled off his boots and pants and turned on the shower. "Now you get yourself washed up and respectable before your father gets home," she ordered. "Don't skip the soap!"

"Okay, mother," Nairda acquiesced, sighing as the warm water washed over his tired body.

"Make sure to use shampoo!"

"Okay, mother!"

"And sweetie," she stuck her head in one last time, causing him to jump and pull the shower curtain shut. "I'm *so* glad you're safe and home…"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 07, 2014, 03:46:31 am**

Anne nickered and nuzzled the girls as they hugged her. "Yeah, much better."

She went over to the kitchen and grabbed a plate with five rather unappetizing looking patties on them. "I'm going to be making dinner. Catfish burgers with toasted seaweed chips for Soren and the three canines. And a lentil and oat burger with with seaweed chips for myself. She offered the Human a toothpick with a small piece of cooked catfish burger on it.

Soren nodded as he took the toothpick. "Thanks!" He ate the meat. He screwed up his face as he choked it down. "Anne! What the fuck did you do to the burger!?"

"Bad?"

Soren shook his head. "It's overcooked and all the flavor's gone! Just stick to vegetarian cooking."

The Human flopped down on the somewhat grungy couch and turned on the TV (an LCD TV they had picked out of a dumpster and he had repaired).

"Good evening Corona, this is Raina Kapoor of Corona News Service." The anchor was a Dhole wearing a bland but tasteful suit. The background behind her changed to show "Suspects in Fishing Tender Explosion Sought. "Corona police are searching for the suspects behind yesterday's explosion at the Corona Dockyards that destroyed the fishing tender *F.V. Tilapia*, owned by Davis Fish Farms. Anti-fishing radicals are suspected but other parties cannot be ruled out. The company and police are offering a 500,000 credit reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the guilty party."

Soren sighed as he rubbed the bridge of his nose with his hand.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 07, 2014, 05:12:19 pm**

Axel chewed his lip. He hated the idea of splitting up... but they had to find somewhere to lay low as quickly as they could, and wandering around until they found somewhere was a sure way to get picked up by the police.

"*Crap*..." he hissed. "Alright, I guess we've got no choice. But..." He trailed off when the sound of a vehicle speeding up the street reached his ears. Tugging Lily behind a dumpster, he held his breath as the car roared past - then let it out shakily. Unless the police were employing tiny, elderly women who struggled to see over their steering wheel, it was a false alarm.

Axel turned his attention back to Lily. "If anything comes up, *anything*, you call me straight away, okay?" He pulled her into a hug. "See you soon, honey..." Tweaking her nose and trying to keep a confident face, Axel backed away and started running in the opposite direction.

Almost forty minutes later, Axel was riding up in the elevator to Soren's apartment. As he leaned back, gasping for air while trying to avoid breathing through his nose - the smell of sweat and cleaning products was really quite strong - he absent mindedly thought about when the last time he'd visited Soren was. *Too long...* Finally, the lift shuddered to a halt and the door rattled open. Stepping out, Axel made his way down the corridor to Soren's door, trying to keep his tail from dragging in the suspicious marks staining the floor.

Reaching the door, Axel swallowed then rapped. "Uh... Soren? Marita? It's Axel, I've, uh... Me and Lily have a problem..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 07, 2014, 08:12:11 pm**

Marita heard the door knock and went over to open it " as she did she saw Axel sodden and panting standing outside ' Axel! Please, do come in" she said kindly " You look like you've been running in a marathon. Whats going on?' She asked as she held the door out for him. " look, just come on in and tell us about it, alright?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 08, 2014, 11:55:07 pm**

Lily nodded. "Be safe," she urged her husband, before he disappeared down the street.

It was than that she looked around and realized she didn't remember how to get to Emilena's hideout. Rio had led her, and he had a distracted, infinitely circuitous way of leading that made replicating the voyage almost impossible.

She debated calling Axel so soon after they'd separated, only to realize she also had no phone or available way to contact him. "I really thought this through…" she muttered sleepily.

Since her desire to leave the wiretapped house was the only goal she was currently capable of realizing, she picked the opposite direction Axel had gone and just started walking. Perhaps she'll find a friendly face by accident.

Nairda finished his shower and languidly grabbed a towel. The water temperature was amazing, and the jets tickled his feet in a wonderful way, and it all combined to make probably the best shower he'd ever experienced. Then he got out and noticed his clothes had all been removed from the bathroom floor.

"Mom?" he called, wrapping the towel around his waist and opening the bathroom door, letting out wispy clouds of steam. "Where are my--?"

"Look dear, I made you your old favorite!" Lena came hurrying, holding a bowl of Astro Flakes. "You used to eat this all the time when you were younger! Wanted to be an astronaut. Remember that?"

"Where are my clothes?" Nairda repeated.

"I put them in the washer, they were filthy!" Lena pushed the bowl into his hands and hurried him over to the living room couch. "They'll be cleaned by tomorrow, don't you worry about those; just relax. You're home."

"Could I…uh…wear some of dad's clothes?" Nairda asked uncomfortably, setting the cereal on the side table. His mother felt far too close in her skimpy bathrobe squeezed next to him on the couch.

Lena smiled and cradled his chin. "Why do you act so stiff, my child?" She ran her hand along his face and pounding chest. "It's been years since I've seen you, and it seems that now we're together, all you want to do is keep away!"

"That's...not true, I just--*hey!*" Nairda yelped as she tugged at his towel. Despite his best efforts, she proved stronger and more persistent than he was able to handle. Not to mention the towel was doing an embarrassingly poor job of hiding his body's natural reaction. "I...Mom…?"

Lena purred and triumphantly threw the towel away. "*Relax*. You're home…let it all out," she whispered softly in his ear. "There's nobody here to judge, just your loving parents who've missed you."

"I…I don't really think this is appropriate…" Nairda protested feebly, then found himself unable to speak as she stroked him expertly.

"I'm so pleased you take after your grandfather," Lena smiled hungrily. "I love Emile with all my heart, but he never could fill me up like I desire…" Putting her finger over Nairda's mouth, she slowly got on her knees in front of the couch and stimulated him with her breasts and tongue.

Nairda groaned and his eyes widened, then he moaned and his eyes shut tight. "Mmmph! Mmph! Mmmmm…" was all the protest he could manage as his mother gave him exactly what she reckoned he needed.

Outside, Emile Kibagami walked up to his front door, hand reaching for the knob...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 09, 2014, 12:55:04 am**

As he heard the knocking on his door, Soren shut off the TV. He got up, went to his bedroom and grabbed the Remington 870 hidden underneath his bed. He chambered a round and headed to the "foyer" of his apartment.

When he saw it was Axel, he let out a breath and let the shotgun dangle from its sling. "Sorry about that, can never beówhat the fuck!?" he exclaimed upon seeing Axel panting heavily. "What happened!?"

Anne saw Axel's distressed state and quickly poured him a glass of water. "Easy, y'all," she said. "Don't overwhelm him."

She gestured to the kitchen table, which was covered with computer disks and USB sticks that had been sent through the mail as spam. Normally, they'd be tossed into the recycling bin but Anne had been using her free time to break open the USB sticks and extract the tiny circuit boards that she could hock for a few credits (the elaborate metal extraction system in her apartment had been destroyed with Lanthae. Not to mention, the bacterial cocktail and nutrients that the bacteria needed were not easy to got a hold of).

Two marijuana plants in the corner provided the only greenery in the apartment. Of course, no one else did anything with them except Anne. The mare had gotten off all other drugs except marijuana. Granted, it was probably the safest seeing as she grew her own.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 09, 2014, 05:27:21 pm**

Axel nodded, waving a hand in thanks as he made his way through the door and more or less fell into one of the chairs around the kitchen table. "Th... Thanks," he gasped, accepting the water from Anne and gulping it down. Draining it, he took a few deep breaths and set it down, pushing aside a stack of USB sticks to make room for it, then glanced at the shotgun Soren was toting. "You must really hate junk mail..."

Shaking his head, he rested his elbows on the table and rubbed his face. "I'm sorry, I... ah, shit..." Axel looked around at the others. "When we got home, can't have been more than, uh, an hour and a half ago, me and Lily found bugs... cameras. It's the police, they're watching us. We... we don't know why. But we can't stay there anymore." He nervously started fiddling with one of the computer discs strewn across the table. "I know it's... ah, I know this isn't what you need right now. You know, with everything else that's happening. But... could we lay low here for a while? Just until it gets... sorted out?"

He blinked. "We didn't know if you'd be here, so Lily went to try with Em..." Axel paused, his ears turning pink as his eyes flicked over to Soren briefly. "Emma, one of her friends. But we'd prefer if it was with you..." He swallowed. "We don't know what else to do, guys."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 09, 2014, 06:09:15 pm**

You were bugged? great. Probably the result of our little visit from Zaloga, we were videotaped entering there after all' Marita sighed. " but sure you and Lily can stay with us. we have enough room to squeeze a couple more folks in.. Just bring in whatever you can spare..' She added. We have an extra foldout couch in Maries room you can use. Its not the lap of luxury but its better then nothing.. Theres also the little matter of rent.. but we'll work that out once you guys are fully settled.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 09, 2014, 08:49:07 pm**

Lily grew more and more tired as she walked. She was practically sleepwalking when a hobo stuck a dirty change cup in her face and jolted her to alertness. She handed him what money she had and kept walking.

Where am I? she thought, realizing with dawning apprehension that it was getting dark and she had no idea where in Cornova she was. "I should have just gone with Axel…" she muttered.

She stumbled into a park. The idea of sleeping on a park bench seemed better and better with every step she took towards the nearest one. Planning on merely recuperating strength, she hardly noticed as she curled up on the bench and drifted off to sleep in the warm city breeze.

Nairda was squealing shamelessly as Lena worked her magic, and didn't notice for several seconds when his father opened the door and stepped inside. "Ahh!" he screeched in dawning horror, pushing his mother away. Emile wore a rugged khaki wife-beater and camo pants, and had 4 dead seals slung over his shoulder. He looked with surprise at the stranger in his home. "Oh god please don't kill me!" Nairda sobbed in horror, staring at the bloody club clipped to Emile's utility belt. "I'm so sorry, I--"

"Honey, it's Nairda!" exclaimed Lena. "He's come home!"

Emile dropped his clubbed seals in surprise. "Nairda?" he stepped forward, squinting in the light. "My god, it is you!" Emile lifted him off the couch and crushed him in a manly hug. "You're home son! You've finally come home!"

"You...you're not mad that I was…?" Nairda was stunned both from his father's reaction and from having the wind completely squeezed out of him.

"Good heavens, sweetheart, poor boy's hardly home for one night and you're already jumping his bones!" Emile chuckled at his wife. "You need to get that libido under control!"

"He was in one of his moody spells something fierce!" Lena defended herself. "There's no faster way to help him when he's all pent up like this. Trust me, a mother knows these things."

Emile took one look at Nairda and nodded knowingly. "She's right. C'mere son, let me show you how a pro does it." He trapped Nairda in a corner and made a grab for the goods. "For some reason your mother thinks she's better at this than me, despite me having insider male knowledge."

"Well I've got years of experience!" Lena folded her arms. "You haven't blown anyone since Karl all those years ago, and he always said I was better!"

Nairda stumbled. "Karl! Karl Nairda!" he dodged under his dad's arm and made a run for the bathrobe now lying crumpled on the floor. "That's who I came to learn about!" He wrapped the robe around his waist like a tunic. "Nobody's blowing anybody until I learn your history with him. Why did you name me after him? And why--" his voice choked, "--did you put me up for adoption if you really loved me?"

Both of his parents grew silent.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 11, 2014, 08:12:39 pm**

"Really?" Axel blinked at the others, then reached over and squeezed Marita's hand. "Thanks... thanks *all* of you. Sure, we... we can pay for any rent. No problem." He sighed, relief flitting across his face, then grinned at Soren and Anne. "And I can... well, ah... maybe it's better for everyone if I don't cook. But Lily can make the best lasagna *ever*. It's insane. Actually, ah, maybe I should call her..."

Leaning back in his chair, Axel pulled out his cell phone and scrolled up until Lily's name and a picture of her face flashed up on the small screen. He hit *call* and held the phone up to his ear. The dialing done droned, and then after a second there was a click as the phone was answered. "Hey, honey, it's all okay. You don't need to see, uh... you know. *Them*."

A pause. "That's great baby. Where's the address again?"

"I..." Axel paused. The voice was female, and it certainly sounded like Lily. Almost... but the pitch was just a little off, the pattern of speech a little too fast. Axel blanched. "Uh, wrong number madame!" he announced in an unconvincing Indian accent. "Very sorry! Goodbye!" He hurriedly slammed his finger down on the *end call* button, then tossed the phone across the table, USB sticks scattering in its wake. "Crap! *Holy* crap! Ah..." Axel blinked. "I don't think we should try calling Lily again..." Whoever it was who answered, it wasn't Lily - it must've been a member of the police force, trying to determine where he was. *Do they have Lily already? Or did they just pick her phone up from our house?* As much as he tried to remember, he couldn't recall if Lily had taken her cell with her when they'd left.

He knuckled his temple and groaned. "Goddamn it..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 12, 2014, 01:53:52 am**

Marita Went over to the desk where she worked, opened a small drawer and pulled out something that looked like a small USB Stick " A little something I invented for phones so i can be comfortable making secure calls . Can tell if the caller is genuine or if its someone like a cop . if its a real caller, its turns green, ifs its an impostor, it turns red. It can also tell if your phone is bugged.' She added ' she went over and Picked up Axels phone, She slid the device into the phones charging outlet, and waited a few seconds, for a couple seconds the device was green, then it started changing color, before turning a bright shade of red. ' Yes Axel, that caller was a cop. They likely have most of your stuff' she said to him."where did you leave Lily? We need to go find her and bring her back here before she runs into trouble. Well, any more trouble that Is " she said taking the device out. "we'll have to buy you guys a whole new wardrobe. new phones, ids, the works.."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 12, 2014, 12:22:27 pm**

Anne looked out the window. It was fairly dark already and she could see the distant lights of the towers of Corona's Business District. "It's getting dark," she said. "Lily could be *anywhere* in Corona."

Soren sat down. "We need to find her." He rubbed his forehead with his hand. "But that won't be easy."

"No shit." Anne took a bite of her own lentil and oat burger. If we don't narrow it down, we could spend days or even weeks, looking for her."

The Human took a bite of his catfish burger. It was dry and nearly flavorless but a liberal application of ketchup and seaweed flakes helped somewhat. "Which is why we need to narrow our area down," he said with a mouthful of food.

Anne turned to Axel. "Do you have a vague direction of where Lily went?" She then turned to Soren. "Bring up the interactive map of Corona on your laptop."

Soren booted up his laptop and did so. "Okay, now what?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 13, 2014, 01:59:46 am**

Lily woke up shivering. From what she could tell, it was still night time, and she was still laying on the park bench. She cast her hand through the darkness, hoping to extract a sweater or coat from her suitcase, and couldn't find it. Somebody had made off with it in the night. She groaned and sat up. The nap had been far too short, but it revitalized her to the extent that she realized just how stupid she was for sleeping out in the open. Rubbing her temples, she looked dizzily around and realized to her horror that there were four to five homeless men surrounding her.

"It was her!" said the first one, holding out a bony index finger and shaking it at her. She recognized him as the one she'd given her loose change earlier. "She did it!"

"I didn't mean to!" Lily said reflexively, not even sure what he was talking about. She leapt to her feet, but there were two more on the other side of the bench.

They squinted suspiciously at her and she drew back nervously. "She don't look nothing special," one grunted.

"Look at me, Seamus!" The first man leapt in the air. "I'm walking! *Walking* goddammit! She did it!"

Lily started putting the pieces together. "When I gave you those coins…I healed you didn't I?"

"My rheumatism is gone!" he cheered, jumping in the air again for the hell of it. "I can walk!"

Lily soon found five more hands shoved in her face. "Heal me please!" one shouted at her. "I'm blind in one eye!" "It hurts every time I breathe!" coughed another. "I don't know what's wrong with me, I just hurt everywhere all the time!" another chimed in.

Lily's face softened. She touched the hand of the third one. "You were born with a malformed central nervous system," she informed him. "These should have been treated when you were a child…let me see what I can do…"

After a few seconds, she took a deep breath, and the homeless man stood up straight for the first time in his life. "I don't believe it…" he breathed. "It…doesn't hurt…"

The heavy smoker grasped Lily's hand impatiently, and in her surprise she cured his black lung. When the half-blind man tried to get his turn, she pushed him away. "Stop!" she coughed. "Give…me a minute…" Instead he grabbed her hand violently, and in desperation she cured his detached retina and pushed him away.

"It's a miracle! It's a bloody Christmas miracle!" he cried in disbelief. As Lily shuddered and coughed violently from her shriveled lungs and frayed nerves, she saw through her one working eye as murky shapes crawled out of the shadows. The ruckus was attracting others…

“Sweetie, this would be a lot easier if you let one of us relieve your tension first,” Lena offered tentatively, But Nairda shook his head fiercely.

Emile sighed. “Years before we had you, your mother and I were mercenaries, active during the Scorched Earth war. To pay for our combat augments, we’d sell our talents to the highest bidder and traveled all over the world on behalf of various patrons.”

“Karl Nairda was a junior sergeant stationed at a Royal Expeditionary Force outpost,” Lena

chimed in softly. She palmed Nairda's cereal bowl and offered it to him pleadingly. Nairda took it. "In the last year of the war, he hired us to help him smuggle his lover out of the country...he planned to go live with him once the war was over. Until then, we kept him company…"

Both of his parents were getting teary-eyed. "He was so passionate…" Emile sighed nostalgically. "Used to sneak out of camp to see us. Had strong opinions on life and politics, demanded we refer to him with female pronouns, remember that sis? Never got the hang of that…"

"He was the only other man I ever loved." Lena was lost in her memories. "We weren't even sure which of you was the father at first. Thank god you turned out to be Emile's. Imagine giving birth to a foal; I would've burst!"

Nairda wrinkled his nose. "I'm taking a shot in the dark and guessing that he died?"

Both of his parents nodded. "He just never came back one day," sniffed Emile. "We learned later he was shredded by anti-aircraft turrets during a raid on a Red Merchant ship. To be frank, all three of us died to some degree that day."

"It was awful…" Lena started sobbing. "We mourned for so long...couldn't bring ourselves to have sex for over a week! But Karl's death taught us how fragile life was, so we cashed out and went to live peacefully as simple farmers. Away from the war and its memories, and with our beloved newborn son..." she smiled at him.

"...Whom you almost immediately put up for adoption," Nairda added.

"We never wanted to!" Emile's visage grew dark. "You have to believe us! Your forced abandonment was the decision and doing of one man...an old Scorched Earth veteran named Yoshihiro Kojurro…"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 14, 2014, 01:46:54 pm**

Axel took a deep breath and rubbed a hand through his hair, then slid next to Soren, leaning over the human's shoulder. "Give me a second... ah..." He slid a finger over laptop screen, tracing the streets laid out on the map. "Yeah... yeah, okay, here's where we split up," he muttered, tapping *Beckerson Street*. "And, uh, I'm not sure where her... friend... lives, but I think it's somewhere in this direction..." He vaguely moved his finger in the opposite direction to where he'd headed. His eyes narrowed, ears drooping as he saw the area it led to. "Crap..."

If Lily had kept walking in the same direction as when he'd last seen her, she'd have hit the seedier areas of town pretty quickly - areas where a woman should probably think twice before going out for a walk on her own, especially if it was dark outside. Axel twisted his neck to look out the kitchen window.

It was dark outside.

"Crap!" he hissed again, pushing away from the table. Axel looked around at the others, his tail flicking fretfully. "We... we should try and look for her! If she's in trouble..." *She* can *kill people just by touching them though... at least she's not helpless...*

Rio was snoring as he slept on the couch in Emilena's hideout.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 15, 2014, 12:24:51 pm**

Soren looked at the map with the markings that Axel drew on it. "It looks like she's gone into the Algae Works District." The Algae Works District earned its name owing to the vast quantities of oil farms present. While it was a vital part of Corona's economy, the farms tended to depress land values. As a result, many unsavory characters lived in and around the area.

He shook his head. "Let's go find her."

He ducked into his bedroom and threw on his augmentworker's uniform (blue jeans and a standard t-shirt). The uniform contained shear-thickening fluid that would greatly dampen blows. Although it was not bulletproof. He grabbed the pistol he had stolen from Voltaic station and checked the magazine. Fourteen rounds. It would be enough for now. It was then he realized that he was in Corona, not Lanthae. And he didn't have a permit to carry the pistol. Seeing as jail time was not worth it, he put the pistol back and picked up a large wrench from his toolbox.

Soren then sat on the table and turned to Anne. "So you coming too?"

Anne nodded. "Definitely. I know that place pretty well."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 18, 2014, 04:24:42 am**

"Alright! Let's do it!" Axel thumped a fist into his palm. Anne certainly looked sturdy enough to deter any potential trouble that might come their way while looking for Lily. He looked around for a weapon, snatching the closest thing off the table to follow Soren's example. It was a pen. Gritting his teeth in frustration, Axel slipped it into his pocket and headed for the front door. *What if she's been caught by the cops?* He shook his head to clear the thoughts. They'd cross that bridge if it came to it.

As he waited for the others, Axel glanced at Marita and the other girls. "Maybe, ah... someone should stay here in case she comes over? We... we don't want to miss her if that happens."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 18, 2014, 03:40:13 pm**

Soren turned to Axel and his choice of weapon. "Uh, you can go take something from my toolbox if you need it."

"Hold it," Anne replied as she ducked into her room.

"Anne, please don't bring your knife or a gun; we don't want Corona PD on our asses."

"I'm changing my shoes and packing something else."

Soren sighed. Anne, being an Shetland Pony, wore horseshoes. Changing her shoes usually took several minutes.

Anne threw a hoof boot and a shoe puller (in the event she lost a shoe) into her backpack.

Opening her drawer of farrier tools and spare horseshoes, she retrieved several road studs from a small plastic container and began screwing them into her shoes.

A minute later, she exited. "All right, ready to go," she said, slinging her backpack over her shoulder.

"What took so long?" Soren looked at Anne's feet; her shoes didn't look any different.

"Screwed in some road studs. They'll help me grip the sidewalks better," she replied.

"Don't you already have borium shoes?"

"Yeah. But these studs will also help if we get into a fight."

Soren shrugged. "Sure, whatever you say." He opened the front door of the apartment. The smell of urine wafted in.

Anne made a disgusted face. "*Again!?*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 20, 2014, 04:09:23 pm**

Tucking a screwdriver into the back of his trousers and pulling his shirt over it, Axel's nose twitched as the smell from outside engulfed him. "Jeez Soren, we could have waited for you to go." Giving the human a quick grin, he glanced back at Marita, Rose and Marie. "We'll be back really soon. If, ah, if she *does* turn up, give one of us a call, okay? We probably shouldn't be out any longer than we need to be." Nodding at Soren and Anne, he stepped out into the corridor. "Alright, let's get going."

A short while later, they were walking the streets, yellow lights overhead dully illuminating the sidewalk in front of them as their breath misted up in the chilly night air. "So... if we hear any cop cars driving past, you won't be offended if I hide behind you, right?" Axel asked, looking around nervously and eyeing Anne - she was considerably bulkier than him, the perfect cover.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **October 20, 2014, 06:23:41 pm**

Will Do' Marita said to AXel Before they left " we'll get to cleaning up this plasce while you guys are out. Marie will pull out the extra cot for you and Lilly" She smiled ' Good Luck Guys.
- Rose went into Sorens room and began picking up some opf the junk that lay scattered on the floor " we keep telling him to keep his place clean , but does he listen?' she sighed and she pulled out a dustpan and broom and began sweeping.
_ Marie went into her room and began pulling out the guest bed from the sofa. it was a couple fluffy pillows and a thin green blanket covering it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 21, 2014, 12:39:24 am**

Vergil stood outside what had been the secret headquarters of Federation Central Command. He was on the sidewalk, and hadn't entered the building. He could sense a lot of pain... suffering that had taken place here only days ago. The building had suffered a subterranean explosion that had taken most of Central Command with it. It was a crippling blow... but for now, Admiral Bryce McCormick had assumed command of the remnants of Federation High Command. As senior admiral in the fleet, he was planning to launch an offensive to destroy Devastation's Inception once it had been located.

While Vergil may have suspected some of his superiors of wanting to obtain the warship for themselves, Admiral McCormick seemed to be on the level. He was genuine... a soldier yes, but a practical one. While not on the level of Rex, Vergil found he still liked the admiral. He'd met with him briefly since returning, and had received the admiral's assurance that the Federation's military resources would be thrown at Devastation's Inception should Kalis get there first.

Wearing a trench coat, the gecko shoved his hands in his pockets and let out a sigh. He was no

use here... there was nothing to see... but he had to get more information on Rex. If he could just remember more... he might be able to track Kalis's next moves. Might be able to understand why they defected... turned traitor. Kalis was always the more impulsive one... the hot-headed one. Compared to Rex, he was reckless, but he wasn't stupid. He was cunning... perhaps not on the level Rex was, but he was pretty close. He knew how to survive and progress...

Turning from the scene, he began walking to the nearest tram station... but he wouldn't be making it back to his flat any time soon... unbeknownst to him...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 21, 2014, 02:31:06 am**

Soren shivered and rubbed his arms; the chilly air sliced through his thin winter coat. Discarded soda cans and drug paraphanalia indicated that this was a rather bad part of Corona. He passed by a sleeping ó or dead ó Komodo Dragon ó sprawled out next to a decrepit looking 24 hour deli. A group of youths (Human and otherwise) were hanging out there. One of them, a rather muscular toung Jaguar watched the trio go by. He smiled as he caught the glint of Anne's horn and Axel's arms.

Anne, clad in light windbreaker, relied on her natural fur coat to keep her warm. She turned to Axel. "Yeah, you can hide behind me...but if I'm fighting, you're joining me!"

After several minutes of walking, she stopped and her ears pricked up and began swiveling.

Soren noticed Anne's ears moving. "What's up?"

Anne scowled as she lifted her upper lip in the characteristic Flehmen of Equines. "We're being followed."

The Human peered back and noticed that a group of youths was rapidly closing in on them. "Shit! Run!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 23, 2014, 05:34:41 pm**

"What? What's the matter?!" Axel glanced at Soren, then spun around to see what the human was staring at. His eyes widened as he saw the gang drawing close. They didn't look like push-overs... and they were moving *fast*. Even with Anne and Soren by his side, Axel didn't think taking them head on was a good idea - he had a feeling they weren't rushing out of an eagerness to discuss the latest political news. "*Crap!*"

Without another word, Axel wheeled back and started sprinting up the deserted sidewalk, his long limbs flailing. Where the hell was everyone? Where were the police?! *Oh right...* Veering to the right, he cut up a short side passage, his heart beating faster as they passed nothing but barred shops and locked doors. They wouldn't be finding any help soon.

Emerging onto an adjacent street, Axel saw a sign indicating the city park - but at the rate they were being pursued, there was no way they could reach it in time. Gasping, his lungs already starting to burn, Axel pointed at an alleyway just coming up. "We... we could try and lose them in there!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 23, 2014, 10:36:10 pm**

Lily wretched painfully, an unknown number of ailments crippling her at the same time. She could hear things, but all it ever amounted to was more hands grasping her and transferring their pain onto her.

"How does she do it?" gasped a traveling businessman. "My ears don't ring any more! I feel young again!"

"She's our savior!" announced one hobo. "The one the Bible promised! She's here to purge our sins!"

"The Bible don't say there's one of those," snapped another, "Jesus was that. And Jesus ain't no woman."

"Then screw Jesus!" snapped the hobo. "What the hell has he ever done for me? I can *walk again!*"

An old woman fondled Lily's shoulder and blinked in horror as her back straightened for the first time in thirty years. "Unbelievable…" she whispered. "A Negro woman...the savior…"

"This can't be…" muttered a man, who glanced at his now un-neutered pet seal. "You know what I think? I think she's a test. To stray us from the path of righteousness."

"How can you say that?" the initial hobo demanded. "She's healing us!"

"Exactly!" the other man countered. "What are our bodies but vessels housing our immortal souls? Her healings are merely temptations! Look at what blasphemous things she got you to say within the last few minutes!"

"They weren't blasphemous, they were *true!*" shouted the hobo. "This woman is the only person whose ever helped me my whole life! What the hell has God done for me?"

"Don't you dare use ëhell' and ëGod' in the same sentence!" a different hobo snarled, stepping forward. "You shut your mouth or I'll put you down."

"Hey, you know what?" the businessman interrupted, trying to scoop Lily in his arms. "Y'all argue about this, I'm gonna take her home."

"Don't touch the savior!" snapped the first hobo, and a different man knocked Lily out of the businessman's hands.

"He's right!" the old woman stepped forward, standing straight. "This Negro is a gift from heaven!"

"She's the anti-Christ, the devil!" the seal-walking man jumped in. "Don't listen to them! They've been led from the path! She means to destroy us!"

"Hogwash! If anyone's the devil, it's a god who hasn't done shit to help anyone on the Earth in thousands of years!" cursed the first hobo, and the second drew a knife and stabbed him in the back. As the man fell, he grasped Lily by the hand and got back to his feet, fully repaired and etched with rage. "You son of a bitch…" he growled. "My savior just revived me, let's see *yours* do that!"

He drew his own stiletto and pounced the other. At the same time, the seal-walking man drew a pistol out of his belt and brandished it for self-defense, but the businessman whacked him with his briefcase when he thought the man was trying to commandeer Lily. The gun skittered into the gathering crowd, and several people jumped for it. A shot broke out. Pandemonium ensued shortly afterward.

* * *

Nairda blanched. "Kojurro? I know that name! He was like a father to me...the father I never had…"

"That was his goal, yes…" Emile's eyes darkened. "Kojurro worked with the Vulture Scavenger

Corps from time to time. He toyed around with us once or twice, but none of us liked him. Karl in particular would pick fights with him, so eventually the three of us collectively severed ties with Kojurro."

"He had his nuts blown off while trying to steal a tank late in the war," Lena chimed in. "He was lucky to survive, but he became...unhinged after that."

"I always wondered why he didn't have any…" mused Nairda.

"We lost track of him after a while, figured he died or something," Emile continued the story. "Then, after less than a month of blissful farming life, he showed up at our door."

"He was holding some unpaid debts over our heads," Lena shuddered. "He said that nobody leaves the Scavenger Corps that easily. He would have brought the whole regiment down on our heads…"

"But he promised to let us go and never reveal where we went...if we gave him you." Emile couldn't meet Nairda's eye. "The only thing he wanted but could never have...a protege."

Nairda's mouth dropped open. "So you did it? You gave your son away just so you could keep farming and screwing each other in peace?"

Both of his parents nodded.

"On the plus side," Lena hastily added. "This would allow you to gain some augments and combat training, we figured. You could continue the family legacy in a way."

"That's a lame justification and you know it!" Tears were pooling in Nairda's eyes. "Do you know how hard my life has been because of what you did?" Do you know just what I had to go through?"

His parents listened silently as he cried his way through his life history. From his years of thievery to his near-death experience in the old robotics factory, surviving the destruction of Lanthae and his close calls as a member of Emilena's drug gang to his messy break-up on the South African beach.

"And now…" he sobbed, "...the love of my life has rejected me, and I broke her sword so she'll never forgive me, and I'm never gonna be a rapper and I'll never accomplish anything…"

His father stepped forward and hugged him wordlessly. For a few minutes, husband and wife stood quietly and merely allowed Nairda to cry it all out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 24, 2014, 01:23:15 am**

Anne's ears pricked up again at the sound of a gunshot. She ignored it, knowing that this was a *very* bad part of Corona. She noticed the alleyway. "No good! They'll corner us in there!"

Soren stumbled on a discarded bottle and landed on his side. He picked himself up. "It's worth a shot!"

He ducked into the alleyway. The scent of alcohol and urine permeated the dirty ground. Anne ducked behind a dumpster. The shouting faded away, much to her relief.

"In here! I saw a metal horn!" The shouts came closer. Anne's tail swished as her ears laid back.

The first thug to enter, a burly Leopard barely out of his teens smiled. His white fangs glistened in the dirty white glow of a damaged streetlight. He cracked his knuckles. "Nowhere to hide, *Gleamer*!"

The three other thugs with him (a Fruit Bat, an Appaloosa mare and a large Iguana) all smirked and stalked into the alley.

Gleamer!? Soren thought. *Oh shit! The Purifiers are here too!?* His heard pounded furiously in his chest as he reached for his crescent wrench.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 24, 2014, 04:57:09 pm**

The first sensation that came into the ferret's mind was cotton... cotton filling his head... groaning a bit, he forced himself into wakefulness, trying to figure out where he was... and what was going on. He was slumped... his chin touching his chest. "What?" he asked, his mouth dry. So lightheaded... he shook himself up, trying to jolt himself into being alert. "What's... going on?" he whispered, looking around. Where was he? He was in some car... not just any car... an old one. One of his father's? But... impossible... his last sensation was of falling... falling to his death...

Studying his surroundings, he could tell he was in a Duesenberg Model J... from the early 30s. Had to be one of his father's cars... but his father didn't own a Model J like this... or at least... not that Tony could remember. He was parked on a side street... it was day... or something... mid-afternoon maybe. Corona? Patting his pockets, he felt no phone... great... no way to contact anyone.

But as he sat there, watching the street he was perpendicular to, the ferret noticed another old car, but this one, unmistakable as one of his father's... or more correctly, the personal gift of his father to his enforcer, Stryker. The black 1936 Cord 810 rolled past, its coffin nose leading the way as it seemed to be a harbinger of death... as it often was. Gazing in confusion as the Cord drove by, Tony hesitated... and noticed the keys were in the Dusey's ignition.

"He drives a Duesenberg..." Tony murmured, repeating the oft used ad the company used to market its top of the line automobile. Turning the keys, he listened to the satisfying roar of the straight eight turn over. 265 horsepower, 120 mph top speed. Pushing his foot on the clutch, Tony briefly wondered if he should follow Stryker or not... or if this was just a freaky dream. He wasn't exactly driving an inconspicuous car after all...

But he figured what the hell? Stryker might be able to tell him what was going on. Shifting into gear, Tony got the car rolling, and muscled the wheel to the right. Without power steering, this car was a bit more difficult to turn than your average model, but once it was moving it was OK. He was used to it after all. Turning right to follow the black Cord, Tony could see it was already a block ahead. Damn... well... there was no telling how he'd gotten here... or even ended up here. A bad dream maybe? No waypoints after all?

Braking at the light, he let the Dusey idle while he thought about what to do. Best just follow Stryker... see what he was up. Didn't want to interrupt after all in case he was carrying out a hit. The light changed, and he got the Model J moving, trying to do his best to just stay back and not draw any further attention to himself... though his car was turning plenty of heads on the street as he drove by.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 25, 2014, 06:28:10 pm**

Crouched down, his nose almost turning inside out against the reek wafting out from the overflowing dumpster he was hiding behind. His breath caught in his throat as the footsteps of their pursuers got closer, a triumphant voice announcing where they were. A scuffing sound, approaching. His eyes wide, Axel's gaze quickly flicked down the end of the alley, where Soren and Anne were hiding a little further in. A dim shadow stretched down the length of the filthy passageway, then a voice, smug, cocky and dripping with self-satisfaction.

"*Nowhere to hide, Gleamer!*"

Oh shit... Axel's teeth bit down on his lip as he leaned back into the shadows. Were these guys Purifiers?! They were back?! He swallowed, his throat suddenly dry as whoever was in the lead of the group drew closer, almost on him. Struggling to control his breathing, to steady his nerves, Axel slowly reached back and pulled out the screwdriver. If these really were Purifiers, he knew they couldn't afford to take it easy, and they had nowhere to hide - they needed to deal with them quickly. A dark shape started to swagger into his viewpoint, and gritting his teeth Axel leaped out. With a grunt, he plunged the screwdriver into the upper body of the leopard.

And paused. The point of the screwdriver started to sink through the leopard's skin - then stuck into the thick, heavy muscle that bulked him up. He struggled to yank it out, then blinked at the young thug who easily outweighed him several times over. "Ah..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 25, 2014, 11:15:09 pm**

Tony drove through the streets of what he now knew was Corona. He still had no idea how he'd gotten here, but he wasn't going to question it. He was here now... that's all that mattered. He kept his eyes on the Cord belonging to Stryker. He always stayed a block behind due to his rather conspicuous car, but fortunately for him, Stryker seemed preoccupied. Resting a finger under his nose and his elbow on the open window frame, Tony ran several things through his mind.

The black car up ahead made a turn, and Tony sped up a bit, making the turn a half a moment later. He braked almost immediately though, noting that Stryker had pulled over to the side of the road. Inhaling, Tony decided to do the same, putting the Duesenberg against the curb and crawling to a halt. He tapped a claw on the steering wheel as he shifted into neutral and watched intently as Stryker emerged from his car. What was he doing here?

Up ahead, the sungazer lizard strolled onto the sidewalk then leaned nonchalantly up against the side of the building, checking his watch. Tony continued to drum his claws on the steering wheel, and looked away when Stryker seemed to glance in his direction. Clearing his throat slightly, the ferret pretended to be looking across the street, as if waiting for someone.

Glancing down, he got his first sight of the Duesenberg's exterior, thinking maybe it'd help him learn more about the car... and why he was in it. OK so from the looks of things... he was in a sleek sedan or phaeton as they were called. It was sporting unique red and black colors on its side, and it wasn't supercharged, from what Tony could tell. It was rakish and beautiful, but whose it was was anyone's guess. Tony's father didn't own one like this... and the year... it was either early 30s or late 20s.

Figuring that the glove compartment was as good a place to look as any, Tony reached over, and popped it open. Aside from the owner's manual, which was in pristine condition, the car lacked registration of any kind... which was bad news for him, in case he was pulled over. It was bad news anyway, since he didn't have his wallet on him either. "Dammit..." he breathed. For all he knew, he was sitting in a stolen car, albeit a beautiful one, and one that was likely to attract attention. That was the great thing about Duesenbergs that also made them very conspicuous... they were all hand crafted to the owner's specifications. The Duesenberg (http://www.velocityjournal.com/images/full/2003/s2003072901/du1929modeljmurphy7502.jpg) idled as Tony glanced back in Stryker's direction. OK... he still hadn't moved... must be waiting for someone... but who and why? He wouldn't have much longer to wait as it turned out...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 26, 2014, 02:06:10 am**

Lily groaned as she regained consciousness. All she could remember was that some sort of fight had broken out, and she eventually passed out from her injuries.

Where was she? It was dark, and musty. She was nude, and her backside felt numb from the cold metal she was laying on.

She tried to sit up and smacked her face on more metal less than a foot from her face. Her hands cast out and quickly confirmed she was in a box.

Her chest tightened. *Oh god, I'm in a coffin. Oh god, oh please no…*

She kicked the end of the box and the end swung open with a creak. As quickly as she could (which was not very quick due to the lack of wiggle room) she abandoned her box and found herself in a morgue.

Her breathing slowly returned to normal. After thinking she'd been buried alive, she could almost deal with waking up in a morgue.

There was a tag wrapped around her left big toe. Shivering in the stainless steel room, she slipped it off and read it.

Name: Jane Doe
Cause of Death: Multiple, see extended file
Organ Donor ☑

It also noted the time and date of her dissection and autopsy. Lily felt nauseous; if they'd already removed her internal organs, there were some receivers who will be getting truly miraculous transplants. She decided not to think about what exactly this is going to mean for the future of medicine.

I need to get out of here first thing first, she thought, wrapping a smelly sheet around her for warmth and then replacing it out of respect for the body underneath. *They weren't able to identify me, but who knows if they had time to try and match DNA or really check things out.*

She had to find Axel. But how?

* * *

Emile picked Nairda up and carried him to the bed, tucking him in gently. Lena brought an extra blanket in case it got drafty during the night.

"It's all right Nairdey-poo," his mother finally said softly. "Emilena sounds like a hard person to live with."

Nairda shook his head. "She's perfect...she is my sun and my moon...my muse…"

"Of course she is," Emile comforted. "The goods ones are always a handful. I think I know what your problem is."

Nairda sniffed. "You do?"

Lena nodded. "You need to be firmer with her. I don't think you're making your priorities and needs clear enough. She sounds like a woman who prefers direct communication."

"Try this," Emile instructed. She slapped his wife in the face. "Get on your knees, bitch. Show me why I keep you around."

Lena purred and followed his instructions, unbuckling his belt and dropping his pants. In a few minutes, they seemed to have forgotten about Nairda.

"Err…" Nairda's eyes bugged out and he averted his gaze. "I'm reasonably certain she'd kill me if I tried to do that."

"Of course she won't," moaned Emile, slightly distracted. "Cause you love each other. Right?"

Nairda nodded fiercely.

“I think I know the problem,” Lena spoke up, taking a break from her husband. “I think you’re just inexperienced in bed. That life story involved a depressingly low amount of nookie before you met your ëtrue love’. You’re probably not satisfying her.”

“She’s, eh, not as sexual as you two are...’ Nairda said apprehensively, but his father cut him off.

“Nonsense! She just says that cause she’s unimpressed with you! Lena has said that to all sorts of guys!”

Lena nodded. “But we can fix that. Lucky for you, your parents are something of experts on this subject.” She stripped off her bathrobe and crawled onto the bed. “Before you see her again, we’ll make you into a *stallion*.”

Nairda drew the blankets over his chest. “Uh, that’s all right...I don’t think that would be… uh...”

Emile took his shirt off and crawled in the other side. “It’s okay, son,” he comforted. “Part of our job as parents is to teach you about the birds and the bees. Just lie back and relax.”

“I don’t, I…” Nairda struggled, but he hadn’t anywhere to go. And after a few minutes, he didn’t feel like he had the willpower to make them stop, especially after they incorporated him into their routine.

“No more worrying, honey,” his mother comforted him. “Just focus on how good it feels…”

Nairda took a few deep breaths, and found it harder and harder to think of anything but the sensations. Finally, he gave in.

“Ohhh...there you go Nairda…” Emile groaned.

“Just like old times, Nairda…” his mother sighed. “Mmm…”

"Old times? We haven't--" His mother put a finger over his mouth so he couldn't talk any more.

The further along they went, the more Nairda felt something was off. It was only when Lena accidentally referred to him as Karl that he suddenly realized he wasn’t the Nairda they were both fantasizing about.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 28, 2014, 12:14:33 am**

Stryker soon vanished into the building, which was more of a warehouse now that Tony thought about it... and Tony wasn't sure what was going on. The ferret stayed in his idling car while Stryker made his way through the sleeping assortment of fools he considered killing all while they slept. It would be so easy... but he had only thing on his mind, and that was his target. Well... almost one thing on his mind.

Pausing over Rio, the sungazer lizard smirked. He took out a small jet injector, which was loaded with a much stronger knock out agent then what he was planning on using on Emilena. Injecting the substance into the kid's neck, he proceeded to strip him naked and rolled his clothes up into a ball, which he'd dump someplace far away en route to the castle. Taking out a marker, he spit the cap off to the side and began to write upon the kid's chest and belly: "I have taken Emilena. If you want her back, you'll have to lynch me for answers. Torture me in the most horrible way you can imagine, or I'm not talking."

Smirking again, he proceeded over to the sleeping fox and took out another jet injector with a much weaker dose. This one would ensure she'd be out for an hour or two... after that, whatever woke her up would wake her up. Injecting her neck with a soft hiss of air, he proceeded to create a bundle using Rio's clothes, and carried her out of the warehouse with no issues.

Tony watched as Stryker reemerged with... hey was that Emilena? What was going on here? The fox was unceremoniously dumped into the trunk of the Cord, and soon, the black automobile was driving off. Pulling away from the curb after shifting into gear, Tony began to follow at a distance. At least the car was easy to keep an eye on... but knew his own was as well... so... best keep it way back.

They got onto one of the highways, and Tony made sure to keep plenty of cars between his own and the Cord. He stayed in the slow lane, which fortunately Stryker did as well. But this road left the city eventually so... where was he going? If he didn't exit... they'd be leaving Corona. So where were they going? "Where are you taking me, Stryker?" Tony whispered, wishing his car had a radio or... some way to communicate. Still, at least he was in a Duesenberg... there were far worse cars to be in after all.

They must have driven for close to 35 minutes before actually leaving the city, with Stryker taking an exit that led onto a small road that wound its way into a forest. OK... this was getting creepy. Tony hung back, letting the Cord disappear into the woods before he started pursuing. This road looked like it wouldn't have many turnoffs, so if Stryker did park somewhere... it might come up on him quickly. Tony therefore eased the Duesenberg down the road, taking it as slowly as he dared.

Fortunately, no car loomed up in his vision as he drove down the road at barely 30 mph. Some shape was rising up from the trees the closer he got to it though, and the ferret gasped as a massive stone Gothic castle suddenly appeared at the end of the road. "What?" he breathed. The Cord was parked in a lot out front, and Tony slowed to make sure Stryker wasn't in the car... but he wasn't; it was empty. Guessing Emilena wouldn't be inside the boot either, he pulled his Duesenberg into a nearby parking spot and shut the engine off. So... what now? He couldn't just waltz in the front door...

Drumming his claws on the steering wheel, the ferret started playing things through his mind now, wondering just what he could do from here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 28, 2014, 11:04:16 am**

The smooth tones of *Mozart's Requiem in D Minor* washed soothingly from the small vinyl player, the music playing across the small, dark, cold room. The only light came from the network of monitors fixed along the length of one stone wall, their harsh blue light spilling across the small desk in front of them and giving clarity to the content of the room. It was sparse - a bed, neatly made. A bare, smooth floor, the pale stone slabs looking freshly scrubbed, the strong smell of bleach hanging in the air lending credence to this fact. Above the bed, a row of photos were stuck along the wall, each showing a different person in profile - a few men, but mostly women. Each had a thick black marker line drawn across their eyes, each except the photo at the end of a smiling young woman. Pushed into the corner at the far end of the room was a large trunk, a padlock hooked through the opening and keeping it shut. Hanging over the trunk was a small shelf lined with various tools; hammer, screwdriver, pliers. There was a window, but the shutters were closed tightly, stopping any potential light from intruding, ensuring the room was kept dark.

William liked the dark, the comfort it offered him, the promise of security. The middle aged man was sitting in front of the mass of monitors, his oddly stretched body hunched over as he stared at each screen, the grainy images hooked up to security cameras all over the property.William brushed a strand of brittle looking blonde hair out of his eyes with bony, grotesquely long fingers and turned his gaze back to the one image that held his attention the most.

The cell containing the gecko and the fox. He licked his lips in anticipation, the corner of his thin, pallid face giving the slightest of twitches. He didn't care about the gecko... but the woman... If Stryker didn't finish her off, and left just enough of her for him to work with, maybe she could become his new project... William's eyes flicked almost accusingly to the trunk in the corner. His current project was becoming a little too *unresponsive*. He studied the flickering image of the unconscious fox and felt his throat grow dry. *Emilena Echo*... He could really have some fun with her...

Movement in one of the screens on the top right. William's large green eyes rolled up to look. He blinked. The image showed the parking lot at the front of the castle. He could recognise the car belonging to Stryker... but there was another. One he *didn't* recognise. An intruder? Nobody else was meant to be arriving...

More movement. Whoever it was, they were still inside the car. Drumming his skeletal fingers on the desk, William considered radioing Stryker to report this new development - but that could delay him getting started with Emilena, which meant *he'd* have to wait even longer. William shook his head. No. It'd be quicker if he dealt with this himself.

He slid his long body from the chair and crossed the room, then bent and slid a case from beneath the bed. Clicking it open, he pulled out an assortment of metal components, and quickly, in a practised and smooth motion, assembled a long, heavy looking sniper rifle. Screwing a silencer to the end of the barrel, William glanced over at the trunk and cleared his throat. "I'll be back soon, dear," he called, his voice light, slightly wheezy. "When I do, well... I'm afraid our time together is going to have to come to an end."

Muffled groaning, gurgling, a few very weak thumps coming from inside the trunk. William smiled. Maybe she wasn't quite as unresponsive as he'd thought.

Opening the door, he stepped out into a long hallway, most of the light provided by the large chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, and turned right. He was already on the top floor, so it didn't take him long before he arrived to a heavy door that opened out onto a walkway running around the castle's roof. Holding his beige jacket shut against the chilling wind blowing against him, William walked around until he came within sight of the parking lot, far, far below. Licking his lips again, he set the sniper rifle up against the stone railing and peered through it's high powered scope... then frowned.

Whoever was sitting in the mysterious car, they were positioned just far back enough so he couldn't get a clear shot at them. But he could still keep them from trying to go anywhere. Taking a slow breath, William moved the crosshairs to the car's front right tire and squeezed the trigger. The gun whispered as the bullet flew out and tore through the rubber. He quickly swiveled the scope across the rear tire and took that one out as well, then fixed his crosshairs back over the driver's side of the vehicle. *Come on... just give me a clear shot...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 28, 2014, 08:26:00 pm**

As Lily prepared to leave the morgue, her eyes caught the body under the sheet she'd almost stolen. It was a middle-aged man whose tag named him Gittsun. He was pudgy but fairly muscular, probably looked attractive when wearing clothes. The sight got her thinking.

Can I raise the dead? she wondered, gasping slightly at even the idea. Was death the cessation of existence, or was it a condition? Could it be healed?

She crept closer to the man, hardly daring to believe what she was thinking of doing. The only thing that made her hesitate was the realization that she might transfer his death onto herself. *But is that any indication I'd stay dead?* she wondered to herself. *I have no idea to what extent I can heal…*

Her hands hovered nervously over Gittsun's chest. She had no way of knowing what could

happen next. *I could leave and test this later…but how often will I have a dead body so easily available? And shouldn't I learn my limits before it's the life of someone I care about on the line?*

Besides, if this kills me and then brings me back to life…I could be immortal…

That realization shocked her to the core and she drew away in fright. *I can't risk it!* she thought in a panic, tripping over an empty table and stumbling to the exit, staring at Gittsun with wide eyes. *Not on a stranger!*

She stumbled out of the morgue, mind swirling with questions and existential dreads, and completely forgot she'd already extensively touched Gittsun while returning his sheet.

Emilena grunted. She'd been having a completely nonsensical dream, but as her body quickly shouted to her brain that things were very, very wrong in the real world, she found she couldn't remember anything she'd been dreaming about.

She realized with a sinking feeling that this was not the room she'd fallen asleep in. Her vision slowly returned and revealed a classic medieval dungeon. Musty chains hung from dank stone walls, as did Emilena herself. Her clothes and any possible form of self-defense were missing, though if she were to escape there were more than enough nasty torture instruments rusting in the dark corners with which to arm herself. But in her current position, she suspected those will be doing her more harm than good.

She regarded the sungazer lizard who was doing nothing to disguise his status as the interrogator. "Hi…" she panted, for the spread-eagle position was making it hard to breathe, "Would you mind reminding me who you are and how I pissed you off? There are so many of you I can't keep track of them all."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **October 29, 2014, 04:12:25 am**

The wound was superficial at best. The Leopard's denim jacket and heavy muscle greatly inhibited the penetration of the screwdriver.

Hania smirked and pulled out the screwdriver as it was a very shallow wound that didn't even need medical attention. "Really?" he said. "I thought you Gleamers were freaks of nature that could do shit like lift cars?" He shrugged his broad shoulders. "Oh well." He turned to his three companions. "Let's take them apart!"

"Not without a fight," Soren muttered. "Hey fuckface!" he yelled. He stood up from behind a garbage can and swung his wrench like a baseball bat, aiming at the Iguana.

The Iguana reacted just in time, barely ducking the blow. He lashed out with his tail, striking the Human on his arms ó which had no effect thanks to his STF laced clothing.

Soren ducked another tail whip. He scowled; the Iguana's long tail gave him a serious reach advantage. And what was worse was that the thug appeared to have slipped a metal sleeve at the end of his tail.

The Fruit Bat was currently scaling a fire escape. Thanks to Anne having hooves, she was unable to climb after him. Of course, that didn't stop her from grabbing an empty can of paint thinner and hurling it at him.

The Shetland Pony mare felt a tap on her shoulder. "Not now, I'mó" She staggered back as the Appaloosa mare kicked her in the back. Pushing off with her hands, she dodged another

vicious kick from the mare.

"Afraid?" the Appaloosa asked with a smirk. She tensed her leg slightly. That was a signal for Anne to charge forward. The kick still landed but instead of the steel shoe striking her, it was just the fleshy part of where her hoof began. The two Equines went down on the filthy concrete.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **October 29, 2014, 04:29:55 pm**

Tony's heart exploded when he heard the distinctive pop of the air going out of one of the tires and the car starting to settle. They were shooting at him? What the hell? Didn't they recognize the damn car? Even if it wasn't one of his father's...

Snapping the keys to the on position, the ferret pushed the starter switch with the front of his foot, even as a second tire began losing air pressure. Get out of here! Pushing the clutch and shifting into reverse, the ferret slammed his heel into the accelerator, and the Duesenberg's powerful engine roared into life. The car rattled terribly as he began backing up, and he jerked the wheel to the right then to the left, throwing up a moving target as he backed out of the lot. Just don't damage the wheels... don't damage the wheels...

Fortunately, he didn't have far to go. The trees soon intervened with any shot, and since they were nice big coniferous trees, seeing the Dusey would be hard once Tony managed to regain the road. The car protested badly, but Tony only had to make it less than 200 yards. If the tires could last until then... the wheels wouldn't be damaged. He knew typical tires could go roughly 400 yards before shredding into nothing if they were flat, so he only hoped the owner of this Model J had taken good care of it.

Already he was muscling the wheel to keep the Dusey as straight as he could, but it was a battle that was fortunately downhill from here. Since the castle was on a hill, the terrain would work to his advantage of getting clear of that sniper, as would the trees.

Listening to the thumps and then hisses of the flats, Tony was completely out of sight of the castle less than ten seconds later. He slowed down then, and began nursing the Dusey backwards. "Come on baby... come on... you can do this." he urged. He didn't dare take it much further. The last thing he wanted was to be stranded out here in the wilderness near a creepy castle. Sighing heavily as he eased the car to a halt on the side of the road, he exhaled an expletive as he tried to get his nerves to settle.

Heart pounding, the ferret knew that fortunately for him, most Duesenbergs carried two spare tires, one on each side, and extra fortunately for him, both spares were present. This was to balance the car as much as it was because roads in the 30s weren't always the greatest to be driving on, and two were often times needed on a longer trip.

Tony ran his claws through his head fur, lowering his head a bit as he thought about what to do next. "Fuck..." he whispered again, trying to calm himself. OK... OK... do NOT go back up to that castle again... at least... not until you change the tires out. He could do that... he did it growing up in his father's considerable garage. OK... just... calm down...

He searched the car one more time for any weapons, and did find a Glock in a box on the back seat... but that was it. OK... so someone had left him a weapon. Someone had wanted him to see Stryker... but why? Exiting the Dusey and shoving the pistol into his rear waistband, Tony noticed now he was dressed like a weird chump. Nothing like what he usually wore. He had a long blue trench coat on, and a plaid shirt with tan slacks. Odd. Wasn't in his wardrobe.

Detaching the right side tire, Tony checked the trunk for the proper tools and saw that fortunately they were all there. OK... time to get to work... and hope he hadn't ruined the wheels in his retreat...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **October 29, 2014, 06:43:12 pm**

"Aaaugh!" Emilena screamed as she felt the blade drive deep into her chest. Within a few minutes her panicked mind managed to piece together that it wasn't a necessarily vital organ that just shut down. "I guess this isn't an interrogation, is it?" She coughed, tasting blood. "Cause you're not providing much of a framework if you were hoping to gain information from me…"

She paused. "Wait a minute…that arrogant tone…bad at torturing…defaulting to rape threats…I remember who you are!" Her eyes went wide as she realized how bad this situation is. *Shit, I was hoping to get through life without seeing this guy again…*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **October 31, 2014, 09:14:51 pm**

William's breath whistled through his teeth as he tracked the car with his sniper rifle, the crosshairs following the driver's side as whoever was in the vehicle reversed, the movement swaying and uneven as they fought for control. *There!* The driver had moved the car back just far enough so he could see a shape behind the windscreen; male, not human. His long finger tightened on the trigger. He drew air into his lungs as he prepared to take the killing shot...

The car reversed into the treeline, and suddenly thick branches and layers of leaves blocked his view of the target. William clicked his tongue irritably, moving the scope to try and catch another glimpse of the intruder, but it was too late - they'd managed to get out of his sight. For now. He let his hand slide from the trigger, leaning back as he lowered the rifle, the gun making a *clack* sound as it settled on the stone handrail. He could try to take another shot, blindly, hoping the bullet would find it's target - but he didn't. Wasting bullets was so... *vulgar.*.

As the wind rustled through the trees, the breeze blowing back his straw coloured hair, William sighed, closing his eyes briefly and feeling a familiar stirring in his lower body as he considered the hunt that could be at hand. Taking stock, William opened his eyes and walked back the way he'd come.

What the fuck... Axel stepped back in shock as around him the others went for each other. Who the hell *were* these guys?!

No time to think about it. As Hania yanked the screwdriver out, Axel jumped forward and slammed a fist into the side of his face. The shock of the impact ran up his metallic arm, reverberating through his body - it was like punching a brick wall. Axel might have the height advantage... but that was about it. This guy was built like a truck...

Before he could react, a fist hammered into his face, the force of a hurtling train behind it, connecting square with Axel's nose and rocking him backwards, throwing him off his feet and causing his back to crack against the hard alley floor. For a moment, Axel could only lay there dazed as blood streamed from his nose. Of course, they just *had* to have the luck of running into the only Purifier sympathizers in Corona...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 01, 2014, 09:47:27 pm**

Soren had decided that he had enough of ducking attacks. He tensed slightly and drove forward like a football player. The metal plate lashed against his back (which he didn't feel due to his STF laced clothing) but it did nothing to slow him down.

He grunted as both the Iguana and him slammed into the brick wall, the Iguana taking the worst of the impact. Soren tried to get in a blow with the wrench, but the thug quickly blocked, stopping Soren's arm with his own. A quick leg sweep and Soren found himself on the ground.

"Myó" Soren reacted quickly, punching his attacker square in the groin as hard as possible. While the Iguana's genitals were concealed inside a slit (as was common to all Lizards), groin attacks were still very painful.

The thug crumpled to the ground, swearing profusely as he clutched his groin.

The Human ooked around and decided who else needed help. Anne was fighting a two-on-one battle. And one of the thugs attacking her appeared to be a rather big Appaloosa mare. And judging from the sounds her kicks and punches were making as Anne carefully weaved around them, she wore brass knuckles and horseshoes.

He turned to Axel, who was lying on the ground. A hulking figure with his back turned to the Human was stalking towards the prone Rat.

The Human picked up an empty metal jug and started pounding on Hania with it.

Anne spat out some blood from a busted lip. She had just broken a beer bottle over the Appaloosa mare but all she did was brush shards of glass from her hoodie. It was then that Anne realized she wore STF laced clothing ó just like Soren.

The Fruit Bat in question was perched atop the fire escape. He silently leapt off and glided towards Hania. A large lump of wood was in his hand.

As Soren was attacking Hania with the empty metal can, the Fruit Bat snuck behind Soren and raised his piece of wood to strike him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 02, 2014, 02:46:14 pm**

Marie had finished setting up the gust bed for Axel and lilly once they arrived at the apartment. Rose had tidied up her room and had gone into Sorens and annes to tidy up, which was not easy to be easy, Soren had supplies abnd bits of junk everywhere, like he usually did " we really should start charging Soren a fee for picking up his room'; she muttered to herself, as she puts some selding tools on a bench.
_ Marita was making dinner for for when the others returned ' she was ly working on a hay-and-oatscake for Anne.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 02, 2014, 06:22:57 pm**

Axel blinked, dazed, raising his head as a huge shadow settled over him. Blearily, his vision focused on the gigantic wall of muscle looming above. His head swimming, Axel struggled to push himself up into a sitting position.

Hania smirked at the figure writhing below him, squirming in the filth of the alley floor before his beautiful, pure superiority. "You gleamers are all the same... you think *those* make you the pinnacle of evolution?" he gloated, swinging a heavy boot back and delivering a powerful kick to the rat's metallic arm, sending him crashing back to the floor. Axel yelled as his shoulder exploded in pain, and Hania's grin broadened, his perfect teeth glinting in the streetlights illuminating the alley. "This is what evolution looks like," Hania continued, indicating his powerfully built body, his impressively toned arms. "Being in touch with mother nature... understanding that you're above everything and everyone else..." The leopard shrugged and cracked his knuckles, then raised his foot again, intending to bring it down on the rat's skull.

"But I guess there's just no teaching those who squander nature's gifts..."

Clang! Something heavy and metallic slammed into the side of his head, and pain rushed through Hania's ear, forcing him to clasp a hand to the side of his head. With his attacker momentarily distracted, Axel grunted and raised himself back up, glancing behind Hania to see Soren preparing to swing again with a metal jug. Desperately, he looked around for something to use, but there was nothing, only empty cans and used cigarettes. Movement behind Soren, and Axel's eyes widened as he managed to catch a glimpse of someone about to strike his friend. "Soren, watch out!"

Hania was starting to overcome the pain from the blow Soren had dealt him and was starting to turn to face the human. Scrabbling to his feet, Axel charged forward and slammed into Hania at full pelt. The leopard lost his footing and, with a roar, collapsed backwards onto Soren and the fruit bat, crushing the two of them against the floor. Yelling, Axel leaped on top on the writhing pile. Straddling Hania, he wrenched the pen from his pocket and stabbed it point down repeatedly at his face, aiming for his eyes.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 02, 2014, 07:08:13 pm**

Corrected to avoid forum violation.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 02, 2014, 08:51:34 pm**

"Well, thank god i got you fired from that carnival then--" Emilena grunted and her eyes grew wide as she felt a searing pain lance into her abdomen. "And here I thought your worst crime was hollowing out your pineapple smoothies. Augh!" She winced and squinted her eyes shut as he smashed against her again and again. There were dark spots interrupting her vision both from the strangulation and the beating she was taking, but she willed herself to stay awake. At the moment, falling unconscious would almost certainly lead to her death.

Someone started throwing rocks against the window on the alleyway side of Marita's apartment. "Soren!" cried Lily, looking both ways down the street frantically and trying to keep as hidden as possible behind a dumpster. "Axel! Please open up!"

She'd had to make the journey from the morgue darting from alleyway to parking lot, and considered it a miracle she'd made this far. But with morning traffic, she was all too aware of the number of people getting a possible chance to see her looking decidedly out of place.

Foley was the first person awake in the warehouse, though that wasn't saying much as it was already late afternoon. Gingerly stepping over Flora's sleeping bag, he made his way towards the computer room to get to work on telling his online friends that he was finally back on a real computer, and logging the amazing stories he had to tell them.

He was ensconced on his chat rooms when Flora stumbled naked into the room. "Do we have any food or no…?" she muttered sleepily.

Foley ignored her lack of clothes; she did this every morning. "Didn't check, but if we do I want one of whatever you make."

"Who died and made me mom?" Flora grumbled, crossing to the mini-fridge. "Got beer…want beer?"

Foley shook his head. "I was serious. I'm giving up on that crap. Healthy as a horse from here on out."

Flora shrugged and popped the pull tab. After a few refreshing swigs, she walked into the next room. "I might run to the store and buy eggs or something, can I have money?" she asked over her shoulder. "I'll have some grub ready for when the others wake up."

Foley's response was interrupted by Flora gasping loudly. "Foley!" she screamed, looking at Rio in horror. "Foley, get in here!"

Foley gaped when he saw the status Rio was in. "Jesus. Is he dead…?" he whispered with characteristic bluntness. Flora was quaking frantically, too scared to touch the boy, so Foley reached out and jostled his shoulder. "Hey, kid…wake up. Rio?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 02, 2014, 09:18:22 pm**

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marita stopped cooking when some rocks began rattling her alleyside window. She set the bowl aside and went over to the window, opened it and looked down, within a few seconds she saw Lily peeking out from behind a Dumpster. ' Lily! good heavens! The others have been looking all over for you. Look Just Give me a second I'll grab a dress you can slip on and be right Down." Marita closed the Window ran over to her closet and picked out a light blue dress that she rarely wore anyway, then tucked it under her arm and Headed for the door. ' lily right outside ' she called to Marie" I'll going down to to bring her in..
"
_ Where the heck has she been? the others went to look for her hours ago?" Marie said. ' Well You can ask her that once I get her in here. be back in 5 minutes' marita replied and headed out the door. marita went down to the elevator and rode it down to the ground floor, then headed out towards the alleyway where Lilly was. " A couple minutes later she caught sight of Lilly, looking tired, worn.. and sans any clothes.. ' ' I brought you something " Marita said Holding out the dress to her ' Just slip that on, and then follow me..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 03, 2014, 02:05:02 am**

"Whaó" Soren turned around to see the thug about to swing a piece of wood. He blocked with his arms, the STF laced clothing dispersing the impact but the blow atill stung. But before the Fruit Bat could take a second swing and Soren could throw a punch, Axel's body slam had pushed Hania on top of him.

The Human went down, his legs trapped under the enormously muscular Leopard. Fortunately, he had also managed to fall atop the Fruit Bat. While he couldn't fight with Hania's muscular bulk atop him, neither could the Fruit Bat.

Unfortunately, the Iguana thug had recovered from the groin shot that Soren had dealt him.

Anne ducked under a blow from the Appaloosa mare's brass knuckle punch. Broken pieces of concrete rained on her mane from the blow. She blocked the second punch and tackled her into some garbage cans.

"Oh, yuck. You know how much this hoodie cost?" the mare exclaimed as she threw a piece of semi-rancid catfish patty away.

"Less than a trip to the ICU!" Anne grabbed a bit of the mare's mane and slammed her, muzzle-first, into the concrete wall.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 03, 2014, 10:58:17 pm**

Hania grunted as he warded off Axel's frantic attacks, waving them away as he attempted to snatch the rat's arm out of the air, but the writhing mass below him made it difficult. Axel, still sitting atop the leopard, yelled in frustration as he kept stabbing downwards with the pen. Trying to fight this guy was like trying to fight a brick wall...

Hania's arm shot out and grabbed Axel's pen arm, his grip tightening around the metallic wrist and causing the joint to creak alarmingly. Grinning at the shock in the rat's face, Hania pistoned his other arm forwards, connecting with Axel's face in an open palm strike that rocked his head back and sent him flying through the air. With a grunt, Axel slammed into an open dumpster and tumbled inside.

Rolling to his feet, Hania snatched Soren off the floor, shook him, then threw the human further into the alley. Putting his hands on his hips, he laughed triumphantly. "You fools have no chance of defeating me! Uh, I mean us! Hurry comrades, make short work of them!" Hania commanded, gesturing to his cronies and flexing his muscles. "Teach them what it means to be a parasite to nature!" With a final, gleeful cackle he spun around and stomped over to the dumpster that Axel had fallen into, throwing back the lid and plucking the rat out by the nape of his neck. "Now, are you ready to -"

"Yah!" As he was lifted free from the metal container, Axel slapped Hania in the face with a rancid seal steak that he'd fallen on top of, the meat leaving a streak of rancid juice across his face and lodging into his large mouth. It was a desperate gesture, surely it wouldn't do anything... But Axel gasped in surprise as Hania dropped him to the floor and stumbled back, a horrified expression contorting his features.

"What have you done?!" Hania howled, clawing at his face. "That was meat! *Meat!* You've... you've turned me into one of you! One of the monsters who devours Mother Earth's creatures, raping the gifts she's given us!" With a crushed whine, Hania sank to his knees, severely weakened.

"*-ey, ki... ake... Rio?*"

The voice floated through from somewhere far away, and Rio groaned. Who was it? Why weren't they leaving him alone? All he wanted to do was sleep... just sleep... A hand shook his shoulder, hard, and slowly Rio felt himself starting to come back into his body. But it was cold... why was it cold...

Groaning again, Rio's eyes creaked open, and he blinked in the sudden harsh glare of the light illuminating the large room he was in. "Urgh... what..." A dark shape leaning over him, and after a moment of solid concentration Rio recognised Foley. "*What...* What the fuck do you want, I'm sleepy!" A sudden roiling in his stomach, and with a gurgle Rio toppled forwards and threw up, just missing Foley's shoes. "Oh god..." Collapsing back into the sofa, Rio noticed for the first time that he was naked, and that there seemed to be writing on his body, although with his head swimming the way it was, he had no idea what it said. The boy blinked, looking at the other two blearily. "Did... did I get into the pills again?"

Cursing under her breath, Triste checked her watch for what felt like the hundredth time. Vergil *still* wasn't back at his apartment... Where the hell was he? *He should know that staying out in public on his own isn't a good idea...* Attempting to contact her higher up had led to nothing, and the same went for trying to contact Vergil himself. It was as if he'd just vanished.

Shit... Was he stupid enough to go back to headquarters? Had something really happened to

him? How could she tell? Hissing, Triste jumped off her chair and headed for the door of her dark, lonely apartment.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 03, 2014, 11:31:21 pm**

Soren grunted as he slammed back first into a metal dumpster. Before he could get up, he felt the Fruit Bat's arms tighten around his neck.

"Had enough?" the thug taunted.

"No." Soren pulled the arm away from his neck and bit his attacker as hard as possible.

The thug immediately screeched as the bite drew blood. He released Soren. "You...you...savage!"

The Human smirked and got up. "Says the one who snuck up on three guys and planned to kill them?"

He blocked a punch with his left arm and delivered a vicious palm-strike to the the thug. He then grabbed the dazed Fruit Bat and slammed him head first into the dumpster, the sound of flesh and bone impacting against metal rung out in the grimy alleyway.

He then turned around -- only to see the Iguana thug squaring off against him. In the faint morning light, he could see something shining in his right hand. "Shit! He's got a knife!"

Streaks of blood marred the concrete wall as the Appaloosa mare slid onto the filthy ground. Anne finally knocked out -- or killed -- the mare attacking her. She flexed her now numb fingers.

She winced as a broken rib began to act up.

Her ears pricked up as she heard Hania screech something about meat. Ignoring the stunned Hania, she trotted over to Axel and lifted him up.

"You okay?" she asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 05, 2014, 12:32:37 am**

Corrected to avoid forum violation.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 05, 2014, 02:43:02 am**

"Heh…Nairda could make me *scream* in bed…" Emilena grunted, wincing and shaking violently as Stryker drove the knife into her side again. "You hear me screaming? You're goddamn *tame* compared to what he does to me every night…and he doesn't forget his damn job cause he's getting pussy either." She spat blood in his face defiantly, gasping for air. "Whole room full of torture devices, and the only one you can think of is your dick…"

Lily wrapped the dress around her like a tunic before quickly darting into the house.

"It was awful!" She gasped, collapsing on the kitchen floor. "I'm so tired…I should never have

split up with Axel…"

Staggering to the kitchen sink, she drank several mouthfuls of tap water before she felt ready to keep talking. "I've been…out all night…" she panted. "I haven't seen Axel since we split up outside out house…"

She made to walk deeper into the apartment. "Where is he? I…have to talk to him about something. Something important."

"Someone was in here!" shrieked Flora hysterically, jumping up and looking wildly around the room. "Someone was *in our safe house!* While we were *sleeping*!!!"

Foley grabbed Rio a wet washcloth so he could clean himself up. "What do you remember?" he asked. "Do you know anything about who did this to you?"

"*She's gone!*" Flora darted out of Emilena's room in a state of panic. "*Where is she?!?*"

"Flora, will you calm the hell down!" Foley snapped. "You're not helping!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 05, 2014, 04:15:07 am**

Just slow Down " Marita said calmly. ' Axel and the others went out to look for you after you got seperated. We're going to let you Axel stay here for awhile, we'll come to an understanding about rent later. First , lets get you something to eat, as I bet you are quite hungry. After yiu eat, Rose will show you to your room, Its Roses reallybut she has a guest bed You can have. Once you get something to eat I'll call the guys and let them know you made it here safely, and that they can come back" Marita said " Now, is there anything You'd prefer to eat?"
_ Rose pulled out a chair for Lily to sit on ..' Where were you?" she asked lily.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 05, 2014, 11:31:10 am**

Tony had replaced one tire, and was working on the second now. He'd decided to keep the flats, even though they were worthless at the moment. They fit conveniently into the holders on either side, and the ferret figured if nothing else they'd make for good shields for the engine block in case he was shot at again.

Straining a bit, he wiped his brow. What was his plan after this? They either hadn't recognized him at the castle or hadn't cared. He didn't even know the date, or how long he'd been unconscious for... nor how he'd ended up back in Corona sitting in a Duesenberg Model J. He continuously scanned the trees just in case, but so far, the forest was silent. He'd pull back for now... look for other roads or ways to approach the castle... and try and find a phone so he could call his father.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 05, 2014, 09:48:07 pm**

Axel grunted as Anne helped him up, turning his head to spit out a mouthful of blood. "Yeah, I'm... I'm just peachy..." In front of him, the huge bulk that was Hania had started to rise, the shock of the meat beginning to fade to a distant memory. "Gather your strength comrades!" he called out. "We must eliminate these -"

Hania's shrill voice was cut off with a sickening *crack* as the sole of Axel's shoe slammed into the bridge of his nose, knocking the leopard down onto his back. Staggering around, Axel drew

back his leg and kicked him again in the temple, rocking Hania's head to the side as his foot connected solidly with his skull. "Eliminate that, you *fuck*," Axel spat, then shot a look up as Soren yelled that a knife had been brought into play. "Let's finish the rest of them off quickly. There's no reasoning with these bastards," he snarled to Anne.

The closest residence to Vergil's apartment was Axel and Lily's house. As Triste made her way over, speeding her bike through the narrow, interconnecting alleyways to save time, she prayed under her breath that Vergil would be there, that they had done something as banal as inviting him over for dinner. Deep down, she knew this wouldn't be the case. There was no way he'd go for something that ordinary... even the way he was now.

She emerged out onto the street running alongside the house and turned left... then slowed her bike down, the engine rumbling beneath her. Two police cars were parked outside the couple's residence, the lights on top of the vehicle flashing. Just to the side, a police officer was speaking to an old lady - a neighbour, Triste assumed. *What the hell's going on?* She stayed watching for another few seconds, her hands gripping the motorcycle handles hard enough to make them creak as she thought what she should do next. *Whatever's happened here, I can't draw attention to myself... But if this is something to do with Vergil...* It was worth taking a short while to see if she could gather what had happened. If it had anything to do with *him* then she could figure out what to do from there. Shutting off the bike's engine, Triste climbed off and moved closer to the small house, activating her cloaking augment.

Rio accepted the wet cloth from Foley with shaking fingers, wiping his face in a vain effort to try and clear the thick fog that was clouding his head. "I don't know, I.. I don't..." He craned his neck around, and some of the words written on his body started to clear. "*Torture* me?!" he gasped. "What the *fuck*?! Who did this?"

The boy flinched at Flora's shouts as she discovered Emilena was missing. He blinked at Foley. "Why the hell would you torture me, I don't know anything!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 05, 2014, 10:40:58 pm**

"*Aaauugghhh!*" Emilena let out a shrill screech that seemed to go on for over a minute. Tears welled in her eyes as she struggled in vain with her bonds. "Eeeurgghhh…" she coughed up another large swallow of blood which splashed on the stones below her and trickled down her chin. Her fur was slick with blood but her face was deathly pale from blood loss.

Then abruptly her heaving was laced with the vestiges of a chuckle. "You…" she panted, but couldn't finish talking without recollecting her strength. "You…you…couldn't finish…" she grinned weakly. "...You might be more like Nairda than I thought…"

"We can't pay you, we have no money and the police are watching our bank accounts. You can have what's in Axel's wallet when he gets back…" Lily accepted the cup of water and drank until her stomach hurt. "Can we call him? When will he get back? Is Soren with him? Where did they go?"

She could barely breathe she was talking so fast.

"I don't know, but that's not important." Foley lowered his voice so Flora couldn't hear. "What worries me is that it's implying they're still watching us."

"*I heard that!*" screeched Flora, eyes going wide. She raced back into her room and threw on as many layers of clothes as she could. "Oh my god we've got to get out of here!!!"

She raced to the front door and screamed again. "Oh my god! *Hal!*"

"Jesus, what is it now--" Foley groaned, but his breath caught in his throat when he walked in and saw the decomposing severed head staked to their door.

Flora stumbled backwards, babbling incoherently. "I we leave must god oh oh oh Emi Hal dead have help we've--!!!" she lapsed into gibberish, curling into a sobbing ball in the corner.

Foley went eerily silent. Then he left to his room and didn't return for ten minutes.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 05, 2014, 11:47:04 pm**

Soren swore as he ducked and backed away from the slashes. He snatched a garbage can lid to fend off the knife strikes.

He pushed forward with his improvised shield, hoping to knock the knife from his opponent's grasp. The Iguana dodged and stuck his foot out, causing Soren to trip.

"Shit!" Anne exclaimed. She picked up a garbage can and threw it at the man, knocking him down.

Soren saw the knife skitter by him. He dove for it at the same the thug did. He yelled as the thug stomped his hand to make him drop the weapon.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 06, 2014, 12:33:58 am**

' We dont know where they are, they could be halfway across town for all we know. Rose said ' Look we'll eat the costs of having you two stay with us. we're friends. Yes soren and Anne are with him " Marita said ' Axel 's phone is bugged, so using it isn't an option. you'll have to use ours. Hold on, I'll call soren and let them know you're safe at the apartment and to come back.' Marie came into the kitchen' Lily! you made it! The guys will be relieved She said with a smile. " your bed is ready is case you want to take a nap.'
- Marita pulled out her phone and dialed Sorens number.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 06, 2014, 06:16:00 pm**

Axel's eyes widened as he saw the final thug stomp hard on Soren's hand, then make for the knife himself. Snarling, Axel sprinted up to the two struggling men, and just as the Iguana's fingers tightened around the knife's hilt, the rat jumped heavily onto his back, forcing him down onto his stomach on the hard cold ground.

As the iguana struggled beneath him, Axel tightened his legs around the thug's arms, pinning them to his sides. Drawing his arm back, Axel pistoned his fist forward, punching the iguana in the back of the skull. With a grunt, the thug's head collapsed forwards briefly. His lips peeled back in rage, Axel punched him again. As the iguana's struggles grew weaker, he grabbed the sides of his head, pulled it back, then slammed it down onto the floor. Again. And again. And again. When he heard a low *crunch*, Axel let his head drop to the floor with a wet splat. Winded, sucking in breath, the rat rolled off the thug's body lay next to him, gasping and looking at Anne and Soren. "I... fucking... hate Purifiers..." he managed. As his body started to shake, the adrenaline leaving him and the reality of what happened started to sink in, Axel heard the unmistakable wail of police sirens approaching - someone must have heard the

commotion and dialed for the cops.

"*Crap*... we need to get... to get going. *Now*," Axel grunted, struggling to his feet. Right now, the cops were the last people he wanted to meet.

Rio heard Flora's screams, heard Foley retreating to his room. "What? Guys, what... what's going on?" Apart from Flora's babbling, there was no reply. Sliding from the couch, he wobbled on his feet unsteadily, then tottered across the room to a large, beaten up armchair on which was lying one of Foley's dark green hooded tops. Still unsteady on his feet, the boy pulled it over himself - it was much, much too large for him, the waist almost coming up to his knees, the sleeves hanging loose - then wandered across to the entrance.

"What is it?" Rio's eyes moved over the open door, and his mouth gaped open at the sight of Hal's severed head. For several moments, the boy stood there, staring at the gruesome scene, feeling horribly numb. That couldn't be Hal, he... he couldn't be dead... Rio had known him for years. How could anyone want to harm that harmless, nervous wreck? *Whoever took Emi...*

He started to move towards the entrance, to... do what exactly? Bury Hal's head? Pay it respects? Rio felt he needed to do *something*... but as he approached, the boy's stomach started to roil. The head might belong to someone he'd known for years - but it was still a rotting severed head. Trying not to throw up, his stomach coiling in disgust and shame, Rio pushed the door shut, leaving the last remains of his friend staked to the outside, and locked the door.

Trying to control his shaking, shocked tears blurring his vision, Rio stumbled across to the sobbing Flora, kneeling next to her and wrapping his arms around her as the tremors finally got the better of him. Someone had *cut off his friend's head...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 06, 2014, 06:33:16 pm**

Soren got up. "Thanks, I owe you!"

He looked around as he heard the sirens. "Good call."

Anne pocketed the dead mare's brass knuckles and trotted out of the alleyway after Soren and Axel left.

By now, the sun was up and the night shift oil farmers were heading home. Several other people were buying things at the many rough looking bodegas, noodle shops and corner stores in the area. Soren bumped into a Komodo Dragon dressed in a blue jumpsuit. "Sorry man," he said. The Komodo Dragon ignored him as he went into a grungy noodle shop. Soren didn't even want to think about how many health code violations there were in the place.

His phone rang in his pocket. Knowing that taking it out in the Algae Works District was an invitation to getting mugged, he ignored it.

The Human sighed as he sat down on a dilapidated bench. A sign pocked with holes and graffiti indicated he was at a bus stop. "So do we walk home or take the bus?"

Anne pulled her hands out of her pocket. "Unless you or Axel have some creds, we're gonna be walking."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 06, 2014, 09:13:37 pm**

Marita waited for a few seconds then hung up she then sent Soren a text " have Lily. shes safe at the apartment. get back here.-Marita" and sent it. " They arent responding, hopefully they get that text I sent.' she said turning to lily. " In the meantime, help yourself to whats in the pantrty.' she smiled.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 07, 2014, 01:26:51 am**

Edited to avoid forum violation.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 07, 2014, 08:36:41 pm**

Emilena heaved as he kicked her in the stomach, gagging and choking violently. It's a good thing she'd been too tired to eat anything after her long plane flight or she would have certainly vomited.

She swallowed shakily, trying to catch her breath, but then the second kick came too quickly and her tongue caught in her throat. Her joints screamed in protest as she writhed feebly in her chains.

"You're going to kill my parents?" she gasped once he stopped kicking her. "Why didn't you… say so in the…first place? You need their address?"

Foley returned to the front room, lugging a large sack of clothes and electronics.

"What're you doing?" Flora uncurled just enough to give him a panicked look.

"I'm leaving. I'm done," he replied curtly. He opened the door to the outside.

"No, Foley, please don't--!" Flora sprang to her feet and rushed forward pleadingly, but he threw Hal's head in between them and she recoiled in horror. He slammed the door behind him.

Flora shuddered, and tears welled in her eyes. Dropping to her knees, she wrapped her arms around Rio and sobbed in equal parts disbelief and panic. "He left us! *He left us!*"

Lily shook her head. "I'm not hungry," She crossed to the window and looked with worry out at the streets below. "I hope they come home soon…"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 07, 2014, 09:44:17 pm**

"I already have their address... don't worry. Plus I know you go back there every time you need to... so don't act like you could do without them. Soon you and your own family will be nothing but a distant memory... but I've got a special toy for you. So just wait there... I'll be back in a few." He wiped his palms again, and headed for the only door in the room, leaving the knife stuck right where it was.

The moment the door closed, Vergil shifted his orange eyes upwards, and he began focusing. "Uggggh!" he groaned out, as the effort felt like he was trying to punch his way through molasses or tar, but suddenly, the bindings on his wrists and ankles snapped off, releasing him with four simultaneous snaps. The gecko tumbled to the floor, exhaling painfully and uttering a soft cry as he simply lay there for a second or two, trying to regain his strength. Panting

heavily, the gecko groaned as he lifted himself up to standing, and began wobbling over to Emilena.

"You've got to get out of here." he barely managed to say as he fumbled with her bindings. "They pumped me full of something... made me tired as hell... I can barely move right now..." He undid one, then another, making sure to do one side first so her lower or upper ends wouldn't smack onto the floor when she was free. Unleashing the last of her feet, he didn't bother getting the last of her wrists, since he figured she could do that now that she had three of our four limbs free.

Collapsing back into a sitting position, he pointed weakly at the door, unable to say anything further.

"That oughta do it." Tony mumbled, having replaced the two flats with the two spares. "OK... now to get this baby rolling and see what I can do." Opening the driver's side door, Tony turned the key, pushed his foot on the starter switch, and listened to the straight eight come back to life. Shifting into gear, he turned the wheel and conducted a U turn away from the castle. Heading down the small road, he kept his eyes peeled for any side roads that might approach the castle from a different direction... or give him some sense of where in the hell he was.

His patience was rewarded, for a few moments later, he saw a road that led off to his left. OK... let's try this. Turning the Model J onto the new path, he slowly drove along what looked like a road that led deeper into the woods... well... it had to end somewhere...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 08, 2014, 12:41:48 am**

Emilena groaned as she fell heavily to the ground. Relieving her imprisoned arm from its bondage, she gave herself sixty seconds to lay exhausted on the floor of the dungeon and catch her breath. "I was hoping you'd eventually make use of my distraction…" she panted. "I did my damnedest to command the bulk of his attention…"

She moaned loudly as she hoisted herself onto her knees and elbows. "You were in…South America, weren't you?" she muttered. She noted with disappointment that he was also unclothed; she would need to find something to bandage her knife wound or she risked bleeding out. "Had something of a temper."

Using the chains to pull herself to her feet, she staggered to the nearest portable torture device; she had to keep the knife embedded in her side until they found some cloth. Picking up a flail made of spiked chains and hefting it approvingly, she nodded at the door at the top of the stairs. "Get up. Magic the lock off and let's get the hell out of here."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 08, 2014, 12:53:10 am**

"I don't remember you being there..." he said hoarsely, still sitting on the ground. "But I can't..." he answered. "I think that was my last... gasp. That thing they pumped me with... it's suppressing my powers... I'd love to throw that door off its hinges but... can't." he replied, shaking his head as he tried to regain what strength he could. The room suddenly spun around him. What the hell had they shot him up with? Bastards...

"I know you might not have the strength... but try removing the hinges... it's a medieval looking door after all... shouldn't be too hard to bypass." He was still sitting, still panting, but they were slower now... more spaced out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 08, 2014, 01:23:31 am**

"You bloody slashed my hamstrings open!" she exclaimed. Staggering over to the door, she observed its thick wooden frame. Breaking it down would be too slow. But Vergil was right, the hinges were far more fragile. Swinging the flail at the top one repeatedly and taking care not to disembowel herself with the chains, she dented the metal until she could get her fingers between it and the door. Digging splinters away from the heavy set nails with her claws, she grunted and slowly got the top hinge off. One to go...

She took a break to pant heavily and glower at Vergil still sitting in the center of the room. "For Christ's sake, get up. You didn't just get raped and stabbed. You gonna be useless and cry about your missing magical powers or get your balls off the ground and help me with this door?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 08, 2014, 01:51:08 am**

"Did I?" he asked with confusion. "I can't recall..." He got wearily to his feet. "Well... the drug... whatever it is... is making me feel like I should just lie down and sleep... physical torture yes... but chemicals acting on my body..." he then gave her a skeptical look as she asked him to help. "I'm a little over four feet tall and not exactly the most ripped guy in Corona. What do you expect me to do, strain weakly at the bolt while you sit there and laugh?" he asked.

But he could see she was in no condition to pull that second hinge out, so he tried with his hands. Straining, he felt even weaker than usual, and couldn't use his psionics to supplement his strength either. "Ugh! This isn't gonna work..." he replied, shaking his head. "Hold on..."

He turned to look around, and found the heretic's fork sitting on a table nearby. "This better work..." he mumbled, shoving the fork under the hinge now. "Urrrgh!" he groaned, starting to lever it up. It creaked and was forced upward, coming out of its slot. He reached down and now that he had a good grip, wrenched it out and flew backwards, landing on his back. "Ooof!" he uttered, lying there for a minute.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 08, 2014, 07:12:18 am**

Rio blinked, tears shimmering in his eyes as he stared first in horror at the severed head now lying on their floor, a single maggot wriggling free from the decomposing flesh, then at the door through which Floley had just stormed. "What the fuck... Foley!" he choked out. "*Foley!*" Seconds passed, but the man didn't have a change of heart, throwing back the door and saying that they should stay together no matter what. He and Flora were on their own.

As Flora came back and hugged him, Rio held on to her tightly. How the hell had this happened?! Just yesterday they were all together... a team, a family... and now... Rio's breath grew ragged as thoughts of who could have done this rushed through his mind, terrifying him. Whoever it was, they'd had no problem butchering Hal - and, somehow, they'd been able to kidnap Emilena while the rest of them slept in the same area. If they came back to finish the job, Rio and Flora wouldn't stand a chance. *We need to get out of here...*

After a few minutes of struggling to get himself to calm down - the body part glaring blankly at them wasn't helping - he struggled to his feet and pulled weakly at Flora's shoulder. "Come on, we've... we've gotta go." But where? It's not like Rio had a huge list of friends who could help out. He and Flora *could* try and hide out in some dump in another part of the slums, but finding them wouldn't be hard if the person was looking hard enough. *We need people watching our back...*

Rio sniffed and pulled on Flora again. "I know where Lily lives. We can't stay here, but maybe she'll help us..."

Axel leaned on the bench and shook his head. "No... I've got nothing. *Goddammit...*" The rat swore, the side of his face a throbbing, swollen mass of pain from the repeated blows he'd taken to the face. Taking a short moment to catch his breath, he spat blood to the side and glanced between his two friends. "I don't know how much longer we... we can keep looking for her like this - and with the cops around..."

He swallowed then nodded at Soren's pocket where he kept his cell phone. "That didn't get busted up did it? Any news from Marita?"

Dead leaves crunched under William's boots as he took light, careful steps down the huge stone stairs leading from the castle to the grounds surrounding it. Reaching the bottom, he scanned the edge of the forest surrounding the property, sighing contentedly as the sounds of the sound of the trees whispering through the trees reached his sensitive ears, branches creaking, animals rustling through the undergrowth. An engine, very distant now, heading even further away... but not vanishing altogether. Whoever the intruder was, they weren't leaving yet.

The corner of his pallid, grey-hued face twitching briefly, William ran a finger delicately along his sniper rifle then slung it over his shoulder, feeling for the satisfying weight of his hunting knife sheathed on his hip as he did so. That done, he moved forwards, quickly, soundlessly, and disappeared into the forest.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 08, 2014, 01:02:25 pm**

Soren took out his cell phone. It appeared to be mostly intact. He tapped the screen and noticed the trio had texted him about ten times.

"Are they fucking kidding me!?"

He pocketed the phone. "Lily's back at our apartment. Would have been nice to know before we ended up in this shithole!"

Several *very* hostile stares came his way and a burly Human clad in the blue jumpsuit of an oil farmer began to stomp towards Soren.

"Hey asshole! You think your rich ass can insult my home and my workplace! I provide the oil you need to produce all your valuable shit!" He pushed Soren against the bus stop.

"Fuck off before you end up like the last guy who pissed me off." Soren replied between gritted teeth.

"Whyó"

"Hey! Cut it out!" Anne exclaimed, getting between the two. She turned to the man. "Sorry, he's a bit drunk."

Mollified, the oil farmer returned to his seat.

"What the hell's gotten into you!?" the Shetland Pony mare exclaimed. "Are you *trying* to start another fight!?"

Soren glared at her. "Well *sorry* for not being in a good mood after getting ambushed in a dark

alleyway in a futile attempt to find Lily!"

Anne shook her head. "Let's just walk home." She hissed as her broken rib began to ache. The mare got up and headed down the now brightly lit but still grimy road.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 11, 2014, 04:54:45 am**

"There we go…" panted Emilena, resting her hands on her knees. "That's what I'm talking about. Just use me as, like, a baseline for how physically competent you should strive to be."

She made to exit, then hesitated and helped him to his feet. Maybe she's being too harsh on him. "Look. I'm gonna be honest; I'm not the nicest person, especially to assholes, which is what you are. You may have lost your memory, but trust me on that. But right now I need…*we* need you to focus on what you *can* do instead of what you can't. You try to do that, and I'll try to stop belittling you for being a psionically-castrated one-trick pony."

Emilena led the way down the hallway. Probably not the most inspirational motivation she'd ever come up with, but she'd been having something of a bad day.

The hallway was very wide and completely devoid of light. It was also apparently slightly slanted; Emilena walked into the jagged stone wall several times, until both of her big toes were as bloody as the hole in her chest. But suddenly the wall was her best friend when the sound of a door echoed and footsteps approached them from the other end of the hallway.

Emilena glanced at Vergil and noticed that she could just make out his white skin in the darkness. Dragging him onto the floor, she pressed him into the wall, covered him with her body as well as she could and held her breath. She feared her heart was pounding so loud they would be discovered. *Hopefully Stryker's eyes haven't adjusted to the dark…*

* * *

Flora's eyes grew wide. "*Omigod you're right we need to get out of here!*" she leapt to her feet, grabbed him by the arm and barreled out the door. "Take us to Lily!" she screamed, not slowing down enough to actually give him the opportunity to lead.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 12, 2014, 11:46:51 am**

"There's no comparison between us physically." he muttered hoarsely as she dragged him to his feet, the gecko letting out an exhale as he listened to her words. "Which would make you an asshole too, wouldn't it?" he asked sarcastically as she described how she treated others. "Only difference between me and you I see is I'm trying to curb those tendencies, nor do I feel I'm innately one. Also, belittling you'll quickly learn has no impact on me whatsoever." he stated curtly. "You won't get one further inch of effort out of me regardless. I know my limits... and right now... it's why I'm insisting you should probably go on ahead now that we're out of here." he stated. "I wouldn't hold it against you." He knew she had a point though... best stick together for now... at least until they could escape from... wherever they were.

He watched her leave, gathered his strength, and kept after her as best he could. Goddamn drug... whatever it was, it made him feel like he'd woken up after getting roughly two hours of sleep... where were the energy drinks when you needed them?

Struggling to avoid leaning against the wall to try and sleep, he stumbled along, hearing every time her feet ran into the walls. After a moment or two, he could feel her blood under his feet, and he knew she was stubbing herself to the point of breaking her skin. He only hoped Stryker would be clothed when he walked back down this way...

Speaking of Stryker, the door at the far end opened, and Vergil's eyes went wide. Crap... but

before he knew it, Emilena was beside him, then pushing him into the ground, and he didn't argue, closing his eyes to conceal the bright orange they would undoubtedly give off in the dark. He dared not say anything, and held his breath as the sungazer lizard got closer and closer... and then passed them by. But he stopped about two steps beyond them, and Vergil was sure they'd been discovered...

Then a sneeze erupted from the lizard's snout, and he continued on his way. Vergil would've exhaled but kept his breath in check until Stryker was well past them.

Entering the torture chamber, Stryker stood there for a moment, staring at the empty chains. He then gave a derisive snort from his nose and grinned before pulling out his radio and buzzing William's ear. "Oh William..." he began. "You mind explaining to me what the FUCK you are doing? You sure as shit ain't watching the monitors, because I'm pretty sure if you were, you would've told me my birds have flown the coop. Quit jerking off and get your ass back to security... NOW!" he shouted, lowering the communicator slightly.

Turning around, Stryker's eyes blazed. He had no idea how those two had escaped... but they wouldn't be getting far... he'd make damn sure of that...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 12, 2014, 02:58:18 pm**

"Soren, just... just cool it," Axel said, nudging the human's shoulder and wincing at the throbbing in the side of his head. "You want to get beaten to death after... you know, you just *avoided* being beaten to death?" He nodded in the direction Anne had just walked off in. "Let's just get back in one piece, okay?"

"*Flora!* I can't... slow down!" Rio cried as Flora raced down the streets, trailing the boy behind her as his feet practically dragged on the floor. "You're going too fast! It's a left down here... *a left!*"

Almost twenty minutes later, they turned onto Axel and Lily's street. Rio glared up at Flora as they slowed their pace, grime smeared onto the front of his top and an old piece of lettuce stuck wetly onto the side of his head. "You didn't need to drag me through that pile of trash..." he muttered, pulling the leaf off. He opened his mouth to say more, then gaped. "Oh fuck, wait!" Grabbing Flora's wrist, he pulled her to a stop and pushed her into the shadows of a front yard adjacent to them, pointing up the road. Parked in front of Axel and Lily's house was a police car. The lights were off, but across the street from the vehicle two officers were engaged in conversation. Rio could see their breaths steaming in the cold air. *Crap... what the hell is this...* Had Axel and Lily been arrested? No, that wouldn't make sense, why would a police car still be here?

He chewed his lip, then glanced at Flora. "Maybe Lily's still there. We should go see..."

"What are you two doing here?"

Rio jumped slightly and turned around to look behind, to see who the low voice had belonged to. He couldn't see anything, just an empty front yard, shadows thrown across by the fencing and the shrubbery. That voice had sounded kind of familiar though...

Suddenly, a short shape materialized in front of him, as if from nowhere, and Rio flinched. It was some kind of... small lizard thing, staring at them with yellow, dead eyes. *Wait... she was...*

"You two were part of the group going through our vehicle in Bolivia," Triste said lowly, confirming what had been going through Rio's mind. She could feel the weight of her knife

sheathed on her forearm - she didn't think she'd need to use it. Yet. These two didn't look like they'd be much of a threat, but if they were going to get in the way of her investigation here...

"What are you doing?" she repeated, switching her gaze from the child to the woman standing next to him.

William's brow creased in annoyance as Stryker's voice cracked through his earpiece, disrupting the peaceful sounds of the forest around him. "They've escaped you? They were chained down." The corner of his mouth twitched. "My, that *is* unprofessional."

Stepping over a dead, rotting log, William continued. "As much as I'd love to... assist you, it seems we have a trespasser. I'm tracking them now." His voice quavered slightly as he considered what he could do when he'd caught up with the intruder. He cleared his throat as he continued to move silently, almost ghost-like through the trees, his voice even again.

"Just focus on getting them back. They won't be able to get far. And if they manage to get out here, I'll deal with them," William muttered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 12, 2014, 10:46:55 pm**

Two hours later, Soren unlocked the door to his apartment. The scent of Marita's cooking made him smile. He rubbed a bruise on his cheek.

Anne went to her room to put her brass knuckles and studs away.

The Human poured himself a glass of water as he turned on the TV. He reached for the bottle of headache pills on the counter. He then saw Lily sitting on the couch.

He sighed and put his head on the table. "I go into a shitty section of town, almost get killed and Lily's right here!?" he exclaimed. "Fuck me! What's next?"

Anne munched on her hay and oat burger. The spicy avocado spread and algae and yeast "cheese" really tied the flavors together. "Hey, who made this?" she asked. "It's really good!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 13, 2014, 11:21:34 pm**

I did' marita said to Anne with a smiler ' As for Lilly we called you as soon as she came in. you didnt answer. I guess you guys were busy doing something and didnt hear the phone ring.' She said to Soren. "It happens. Now thwe question is, what do we do now that we're all back together?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 14, 2014, 01:04:40 am**

Emilena exhaled once Stryker's footsteps echoed out of earshot. "That was close…" she helped Vergil to his feet. "Sorry for getting blood all over you." She kept holding onto his hand and increased her speed towards the end of the hallway; they didn't have any time to lose. This time, she was able to trace the path Stryker had made, which gave her toes a welcome break from percussive navigation.

Before long she walked headfirst into a heavy wooden door. Thankfully it creaked open with just a push, but standing on the other side was a heavyset mafia goon, whose pistol was in his hand the second he noticed she wasn't Stryker.

She buried her morning star in his face before he could fire and kneed his pistol hand so the shot went wide. Swinging her mace again as he fell to the ground, she shattered his skull and didn't let up until he was a bloody, unmoving mass.

She left the mace embedded in his skull and relieved him of his pistol. Then she ripped long stretches of cloth out of his shirt to bandage her knife wound. She gave Vergil the jacket, which was Kevlar-laced and might save him from a bullet in the future.

"I think we should head up." Emilena pointed at one of two directions they had to go; the stairs to the second floor, as opposed to further along the first floor. "Castles have big honking exit gates, and there's no way we're punching our way through one of those. We've got better luck reaching a second-floor window and fashioning a rope, and/or aiming for treetops to cushion the fall. Plus they won't expect us to head up, which could buy us some time."

* * *

Lily leapt up when she saw Axel. "Oh Axel, you're okay!" she ran over and hugged him happily. "What happened to you?" she gasped, observing his wounds. She quickly began siphoning the pain onto herself. "Did you really go looking for me? I'm sorry…" she whispered. "Oh, hi to you as well Soren and Anne!" she remembered the basics of politeness. "Did you all really go looking for me and stumbling into trouble? I'm so sorry…"

* * *

"Emi's gone!" exclaimed Flora, not keeping her voice down. A cop looked over but didn't investigate. "She'd been kidnapped, and the guy said that they were gonna torture her, and then Foley ditched us and we didn't know what to do 'cause Foley was the smart one, and so we came here to ask Lily for help! Can you please help us?" she begged Triste, getting to her knees and clasping Triste's non-knife hand. "I just want Emi to be okay. I'll do whatever you want to pay you back!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 14, 2014, 01:03:18 pm**

Vergil looked down as he was indeed lathered in Emilena's blood, and felt his feathers, noting they were somewhat caked in the substance now too... well... at least he'd look scary when confronting others now.

He watched as she swiftly dispatched a Mafia goon with relative ease, though cringed a little at the excessive force... but still... it wasn't like he was unarmed... which would've been worse. All the same... it wasn't exactly pleasant to behold. She handed him a jacket while she began bandaging up her wound, and Vergil regarded the voluminous vestment with contemplation, noting it was much too large for him at the moment so... easy way to deal with that.

Since it was kevlar coated, it was vulnerable to blades, and Vergil quickly searched the mangled corpse for such a blade while Emilena worked on her wound. Finding a combat knife, the gecko got to work cutting the bottom portion of the jacket off, and as she mentioned heading up and maybe even making a rope, he decided to keep the bottom of his jacket for now. "We can start stringing things together." he stated, holding the piece out for her to inspect. "This is a start." With the jacket now cut down to his size, he slipped it on, pulling his arms through the sleeves and testing it.

He nodded at her plan. "Yeah... we'll do that. Might I also suggest dropping ourselves away from the road they had to have brought us in on. Wherever this is, there's bound to be cover close by. If I recall correctly, Corona is either highly urbanized or else surrounded by water and forests. Since it's a safe bet we're not on the water, that leaves woods, since I don't recall any castles being in Corona proper. We reach the woods, we can at least rest up and regain our strength before gaining the road and either hijacking a vehicle or stealing an unoccupied one we come across." he outlined. He only hoped they hadn't been out for days, and weren't even in Corona's vicinity anymore... though he doubted that. It hadn't felt like he'd been sleeping

for days. Chances were they were still in the general area...

Stryker scowled at William's idiotic response. "I'm going to pretend like I didn't hear that..." He began. William should've known better than to screw him with, but just in case he was having a momentary lapse of judgment, Stryker gave him another chance. "You're gonna head back to the castle and DO YOUR DAMN JOB!" he roared. "Unless of course you'd prefer to be dissected for some snot-nosed 9th grader's science project. Trespasser? Unless the trespasser is right outside our doors, it's not your concern. And don't you EVER forget to whom you're speaking... or you'll become my new target instead of the twerps that just escaped. I need eyes on the corridors, William! I'm not gonna sit on my ass and watch the monitors! That's YOUR job until they get out of the castle! So I'll repeat myself only once more: quit jerking off and get back to your post! I'll expect a status update in ten minutes." He cut the feed now and turned around, still scowling.

All right... so they had to have gone back the way he'd just come; would make finding them easier. They most likely had killed Christianson, so that left... three corridors they could be heading down. Heading out of the torture chamber, he began making his way back up the slanted hallway...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 14, 2014, 11:07:17 pm**

Axel winced as Lily started transferring his injuries onto herself. "Hey, come on. You know I don't like you doing that..." he muttered, pulling her hands away gently even as the throbbing on the side of his face started to fade. Brushing aside a strand of her hair, he kissed her on the forehead then leaned awkwardly against the kitchen table. "Yeah, we, ah... we ran into some trouble. But it's over now. And at least you're okay." His eyes flicked over to Soren briefly to see if he'd kick off again.

After a moment he sighed. "So I guess Em... er, Emma's place wasn't an option?" Axel shook his head. "Crap. We're really in it now..."

Triste narrowed her eyes at Flora as she knelt to her level, then twisted her hand out of her grip. "Keep your voice down!" she hissed, her gaze flicking up to the cops, but they didn't seem to think anything suspicious was going on. Triste looked back down at the other two, her expression flat.

Someone called 'Emi' had been kidnapped... That must be Emilena, the one that most of the rest of the team had... disapproved of back in Bolivia. Most... but Lily had seemed supportive of her. And this woman had just said they were trying to find Lily - so it stood to reason that they had a somewhat understanding relationship with one another.

"So you, and the rest of your group, have some sort of... arrangement with Ms. North. And, presumably, Mr. Whent," she said slowly.

"Ah..." Rio stumbled.

"I don't care what's going on between you and them," she interrupted. "But if it gets in the way of my mission, *then* we'll have a problem." Triste tilted her head slightly at Rio, and the boy gave a small gulp. Somehow, she didn't think this gang of Emilena's would be a threat to their hunt for the waypoints. However... just as Vergil had seemed to vanish without a trace, this Emilena had also been kidnapped. The link was extremely tenuous - for someone like Emilena, getting kidnapped was probably a daily threat. But a link *was* still there - and Vergil had to be found. If there was just the slightest chance this could be related... it might be worth looking into.

Triste sighed. "You said you were told she would be tortured. So you saw who took her?"

"No, the fuckers just... just left this," Rio grunted, lifting up the top he was wearing to reveal the message scrawled on his front.

She leaned in for a closer look, then shook her head. It didn't seem like something Kalis would have anything to do with... but at the moment, she had no other leads. "Where did she get taken from?" Triste demanded, looking between Flora and Rio.

William rolled his eyes as Stryker concluded his rather heated instructions. Threats tended to lose their efficacy when they came from someone who just allowed two chained, drugged and injured prisoners to apparently escape from their cells. If Stryker couldn't deal with two problems such as those, then that really was embarrassing.

And besides... whoever had snuck up to the castle was still out here, in the woods. *His* woods. An unknown variable - the kind that worried William the most. And as enjoyable as the hunt for their head would no doubt prove, William had to admit to a sour taste at the back of his throat. Whoever it was, they had the audacity to trespass in his territory - and that was something William couldn't tolerate.

Ignoring Stryker, he continued on.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 15, 2014, 01:23:34 am**

Emilena nodded. "Fair enough." she limped over to the stairs.

She soon realized just how unsuited she was for stair-climbing at the moment. She had to hug the wall and use its stones as makeshift handrails. At least the dirty blood red carpet might disguise any paw prints they were leaving.

She threw Vergil the pistol. "You can…give that back to me…once we need to shoot somebody…" she panted. "I need both hands for this…"

After far too long she crawled over the apex of the spiral staircase. The first thing she noticed about the second floor was that it appeared to consist mainly of bedrooms…and one had light shining from under the door.

Creeping up to the door, she peered through the old keyhole and saw a series of unattended monitors. She swung the door open. "Gold mine! We found the security room!"

She noted where Stryker was; just exiting the hallway from the dungeon. She explored the room, looking for anything they could use to hinder him, but the room literally was just a hub of televisions receiving feeds from cameras. "Start busting the TVs. And shoot out that lock while you're at it," she pointed at a locker that might contain weapons or supplies.

Her eyes were drawn to a rusted trunk in the corner. She could have sworn she heard a noise come from inside it. Creeping forward cautiously, Emilena turned the latch and opened the lid.

(OOC: The pistol is an high-tech firearm that registers whether the correct user is wielding it. If Emilena or Vergil attempts to fire the pistol, it'll stab her in the palm with knockout spikes instead because she isn't registered to use the gun. Might be something Vergil could recognize since he has a high-tech military background.)

"No, but read it again!" Flora urged. "They wrote as if they could see what we did when we woke up! We think they could still be watching us back at the safe house!" Flora made the

largest puppy eyes she could, and unlike Nairda she was quite good at it. "*Please* come keep us safe and investigate! You're so strong and powerful, I bet you could kill anybody! I'll swear a life debt to you, I'll steal any car you want from anywhere and give it to you, if you can help us bring Emilena home safely!" She began skipping back to the warehouse. "It's over here!" she sang to a bouncing tempo.

"I'm not as worried for us as I am for…" Lily cut off abruptly. She still hadn't told anyone on this team about Ejlert. After a few frantic seconds of deliberation, she took a deep breath and looked at Axel. "I'm going to tell them. They have a right to know the truth after everything we've all been through."

She crossed to the computer and brought up the Missing picture that adorned every news article on the missing boy. "This is Ejlert Sulus North. He's my son. I only recently found out that I had children before the Lanthae incident, and one of them has been missing for several months now." She debated whether to leave Emilena's name out of things and decided that would probably be prudent. "I…was able to find out that he ran away to join the Air Force, and after being rejected he became a pilot for Kalis." She hung her head. "That's the real reason I'm going along with Vergil and the rest of you. I don't care about the waypoints or whatever they lead to or even Kalis himself. I'm just trying to bring my son home safe…"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **November 15, 2014, 02:18:25 pm**

So you have a son?' Rose said taking a seat " why didnt you tell us earlier? Its only natural that you'd try anything to find him and we would have understood.'
_ She had her reasons Rose , like we all do, for being on this - mission, if you care to call it that' Marie said." How many kids do you you have Lily?' She asked.
- Marita took a look at the picture of Eljert " It was handsome, and his eyes sparkled with the light of a keen mind. you said he was a pilot for Kalas right? Well Its slim pickings, but its possible he may still be working for him. The Problem with that is we have no clue where Kalis is at the moment.' She turned to Axel ' You can stay with us at this apartment until you land on your feet, Rose has set up the guest bed in her room. you and Lily can use it while you are here, and dont worry about rent we make enough between the 5 of us to cover heating, li ultities and food.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 15, 2014, 04:30:06 pm**

Vergil looked at the monitors, which were curiously unguarded. Seemed quite the haphazard operation they had going on here. No one watching the monitors... but then that seemed to indicate why they hadn't been pounced on after escaping. Well whatever... maybe they were running a skeleton operation out of this place.

Vergil looked down at the gun in his hand, studying it as Emilena seemed distracted by a wooden chest. He then glanced at the locker, and shook his head. "They made this type of gun during Rex's Rebellion... Rex made sure to outfit his officers with it... impossible for anyone but that officer to use it. Palm signature gun." he sighed. "Efficient to ensure no personal weapons could ever be used against the officers. And before you protest... if you don't believe me, test it out yourself." he put in. "It'll jab you with a knockout agent and you'll be down for the count. But I can at least do this." He smashed the butt into the first monitor, cracking it before smashing the butt down again with the screen finally showering out a fine array of sparks that he backed away from and quickly averted his eyes.

He continued with the chore, hammering the next screen, and the next one, until very few remained. But he paused at one of the last ones, drawing in his breath as he saw Stryker heading towards the staircase now. "Um... we might have to get out of here... NOW!" he said, pointing at the screen. He saw no point in shattering this monitor, as he highly doubted they'd

be retracing their steps now.

Vergil looked at the lock on the locker again, but wasn't sure banging his gun on it would produce any effect: that kind of stuff only worked in the movies after all.

Stryker decided that since William had been stupid enough to leave his post in the first place, he may as well head to the security room first to scan the monitors and see where they were. He had already decided he'd kill William later for dereliction of his assigned duties. He figured he'd set the example that you didn't get away with the kind of stupid shit William was pulling today.

Checking his gun, he could see it carried a full charge... good... the last one would be William's. He'd make sure of that... but first things first... find his quarry, since William was indeed being useless, and hunt them himself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 15, 2014, 05:26:09 pm**

"At least you're safe," Soren said as he slowly ate his catfish burger. He then heard Lily reveal as to why she was with the group.

A scowl briefly crossed his face. The Human then turned to Lily. "Lily, I wish you had told us about this beforehand. If we're going to be working together to find your son and stop Kalis, we cannot keep secrets!"

He threw his arms out. "Look what happened on Voltaic Station! Triste and Vergil kept secrets and it nearly got all of us killed!"

He took a breath to calm down. "First, let's plan." He swirled his glass of water, listening to the ice cubes clink.

Anne emerged from her room with a marijuana joint in hand. It was one of her custom blends from the plants she had on the windowsill. "Anyone mind if I light up?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 16, 2014, 07:58:15 am**

Axel blinked at Anne. "Hey, it's your apartment. Go ahead." Looking at the others, his tail flicked uncomfortably. "I'm, ah... I'm sorry we didn't tell you before. About, you know, her son. We just... we didn't know if maybe you wouldn't want us around if you found out we had another reason. But you're right. When Vergil and Triste did their own thing... it was stupid. So no more secrets," he said, nodding at Lily and nudging Soren's shoulder.

Leaning next to him, Axel rubbed a hand across his ear - it was still slightly bent from one of Hania's blows. "Alright. A plan. Well, has anyone actually heard from Vergil? If we're going to keep going on this mission, the sooner we leave the better."

As they walked back, Triste frowned at Flora as she bounced along, leading the way back to the warehouse. She glanced sideways at the scruffy looking boy following nearby... although he seemed to be keeping his distance from her. "Right now, I think the best way she could repay me is by keeping quiet."

Rio scowled at her. "You were going to stick a knife in my fucking neck." He pointed at the side of his throat. "*There's still a mark!*"

Triste shrugged. "It just seemed like it was going that way. Nothing personal."

Shooting a glare her way, Rio picked up his pace, hurrying to join Flora's side. "Bitch."

A short while later, the grubby looking warehouse loomed up before Triste as they neared the entrance. They stepped through the front, and the pungent odour of rotting flesh forced itself into her nostrils. She glanced around the large, dark room but couldn't see what was causing the smell. She could see the silhouette of a couch, a mass of computers... "Nice place you have here," she said dryly over her shoulder.

Ignoring her, Rio walked over to the light switch next to the door and flipped it. Above them , the handful of bare bulbs flickered on, bathing the room in their dull glow. Hal's severed head was revealed, facing away from them.

Triste tilted her head. "Friend of yours?"

Rio swallowed, looking purposefully away from it. "He was nailed up on the door when we got here."

"And he decided to roll his way over there?"

"No, Foley was just kind of... angry when he left," Rio said, glancing at Flora.

Triste walked up to the head and knelt by it, ignoring the smell. "He's rotting pretty well," she noted. "He's been dead for a few days." Leaning over, she saw the flesh around the neck was ragged. "This was messy. Not a clean cut. So whoever did this, they either didn't know what they were doing... or they wanted him to feel it." Triste shrugged. Beyond hinting at the character of the person responsible, there was nothing else the head could tell her. "Where were you when you woke up?" she asked Rio, getting to her feet.

"Uh, just over there," Rio pointed to the couch on the far end of the room. "But I don't think they left anything there," he said as they headed over for a closer look. "All they did was write on me and take my clothes for some reason."

After a few more steps, William found what he was looking for. Tire tracks, the ground broken up, branches damaged. They'd been through this way, and they were heading... William focused his vision, and his surroundings snapped into a clarity far beyond normal human levels, every detail become abnormally clear. The path the intruder had cut through these trees had been messy, uneven. So the tires had still been shredded by this point - but when he's listened out for the sounds of the engine, it hadn't sounded like the driver was struggling for control. *He must have found time to change the tires...* William raised his eyes and followed the path that the vehicle had taken. It continued on for a time, then cut to the left.

William knew that in that direction a road led first away from the castle, then looped around, heading further into the forest. He hadn't heard any of his... surprises being activated yet, so chances were the intruder had found the road, and was now following it. If he was in a functioning car, on the road, then William knew even he wouldn't be able to catch him on foot. But he could be waiting when he returned.

As William turned to head back to the outskirts of the woods surrounding the castle, the wind started to die down, and the sounds of the forest became even clearer, more crisp. William smiled. The forest knew it belonged to him, and it would tell him everything he needed to know to hunt his prey.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 18, 2014, 03:04:00 am**

(OOC: Description of the contents of the trunk provided by bushwhacked, just keep that in mind voting for the "Most Likely to Someday Write for *Saw*" awards next month)

"Yikes…well in that case you can keep holding onto the pistol--" Emilena's words caught in her throat as she beheld the tortured figure within the box.

It was a mutilated middle-aged woman. Along with numerous lacerations, puncture wounds and missing strips of flesh across her entire body, her eyes, legs, lips and teeth all lay beside her, rotting beside their former owner. She must have been in this box for months, and her shuddering and responsiveness indicated that she was still alive.

Emilena couldn't speak for several seconds. Finally, she wordlessly took the pistol back from Vergil and handed it to the woman. The woman immediately put the barrel to her own temple and pulled the trigger, sighing with a gasp when the tranquilizer injected her palm. In the suffering state she'd long been forced to endure, the numbness was the greatest gift Emilena could have given her.

Emilena used Stryker's knife to slit the woman's throat once she was fully unconscious. "…We really need to get out of here…" she murmured, feeling nauseous and once again grateful her stomach was completely empty. Grabbing the sheet off of the bed, she rat-tailed it as well as she could and returned to the hallway. "While there isn't remotely enough time to knot this into a rope, it might--*Eep!*"

She gave an embarrassingly surprised yelp as a large stone brick from the ceiling crashed to her feet and almost caved her skull in. This was an old castle, and it appeared it wasn't structurally sound. "We need to find a way around--" she started, before the floorboards beneath her, weakened by the impact with the brick, splintered and sent her dropping to her knees. As the hallway buckled, Emilena had just enough time to grasp the corner of the sheet and throw the rest of it at Vergil before her left leg punched through the rapidly-expanding pothole beneath her. If Vergil were to walk onto the hallway, he would only hasten its collapse.

"I didn't tell any of you because if Kalis catches and tortures us, I didn't want anyone spilling the beans and putting Ejlert in danger," Lily replied to Soren with the harsh truth. "*If you would keep your secret from an enemy, tell it not to a friend.*"

She slumped dejectedly. "But considering if it comes to that, Ejlert and the world are pretty much dead anyway, I guess there's not much to lose at this point." She sat down at the table with the others. "Vergil and Triste know the location of the next waypoint, and they didn't tell us where, or how they know it for that matter. I know y'all hate the two, but they're the best chance I have at finding Ejlert, and that's why I want to stick with them despite how little they care about our contributions or survival."

Flora was whimpering and cowering behind Triste when they returned to the warehouse. Keeping her frame small and footsteps muted, she looked around with wide eyes at what used to be the one place she felt completely safe.

Then her eyes noticed one interesting thing amidst the commonplace litter. "Look!" she whispered, dropping to her hands and knees. Fishing under Rio's sleeping couch, she came up with a soft plastic marker cap. "This is the same color as the writing on Rio's stomach!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 19, 2014, 12:16:34 pm**

Vergil stared down at the woman, pity and pain washing over him at seeing her. He didn't protest when Emilena mercy killed her; it was the right thing to do after all. Sighing, he nodded, and moved aside for her to take point. His head swam right as a brick crashed down

in front of Emilena... most likely alerting Stryker below them too.

But there was little time to worry about that before Vergil reached out to catch the bed sheet that was flung at him. Crying out as he grasped it, his free hand shot out to the doorjamb and grabbed hold, preventing himself from being pulled down with her. Grunting, he tried to take a few steps backwards to pull her up, but his feet slipped at first until finally, he managed to get a foothold and backpedaled ever so slowly.

"Agh!" he cried out, managing to yank her up enough so her feet could do the rest. "There was a door on the other side of the security office... let's try that!" he exclaimed, knowing they'd lost enough time in here already, and that Stryker would be heading up that spiral staircase at the double quick.

He quickly ran over to the other door after releasing the sheet, his strength slowly returning to him despite his fatigue, and he yanked the wooden door back to reveal blinding sunlight which temporarily forced his head to jerk away. Keeping his eyes shut, he pried one open, and peered out, noting it seemed to be a parapet (the same one William had shot at Tony from). A walkway wrapped around the walls of the castle, and Vergil nodded at her now. "We could move around outside... using the battlements for cover!" he suggested, even as he could hear Stryker's steps on the stairs that led right up to their door...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 22, 2014, 08:27:50 am**

Emilena shuddered as Vergil pulled her to relative safety, jagged splintered wood tearing huge stripes out of every side of her leg. She was phonating an endless guttural groan, beyond pronunciation or her mental control.

She limped after him, trailing splinters from her leg. "He's faster than us..." she panted. "He's armed..." Stumbling into the open air and shielding her eyes, the hugged the merlon of the nearest parapet and gulped desperate ragged breaths. Her stomach flip-flopped when she glanced down at the moat below.

"The moat..." she gasped at Vergil. "*The moat*...we could..." she tried to enunciate their most obvious escape route but her vocal cords failed her as she struggled to catch her breath. But she couldn't imagine they'd last long trying to dodge Stryker on the castle parapets, and he might not readily guess where they'd disappeared to.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 22, 2014, 05:55:58 pm**

Anne pulled out her hot-wire lighter from the kitchen drawer. The glowing red wire touched the end of her joint, quickly lighting it. She took a few puffs.

Soren chuckled as he watched her curl her upper lip back in the characteristic Flehmen of Equines. Soon, the smell of marijuana mingled with the scent of catfish burgers and spices.

He turned to Lily. "You have a point. It doesn't mean I like it."

The Human templed his hands. "I don't think the two ever gave us contact info. So we're fucked, bricked, hosed or whatever you want to call it."

(OOC - "bricked" basically means "screwed". It comes from the electronics slang that means "to render an electronic device inoperable". In this near-future 'verse, the term has extended to refer to any situation that had been rendered hopeless or otherwise bad.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 22, 2014, 10:25:53 pm**

"Hang on, I think I did get Vergil's home number a while ago when all this was getting arranged..." Axel said, his brow creased as he flipped open his phone and scanned through the contacts. "But since we were always together I never needed to use it... Yeah, here it is! Using my phone's too risky though..."

Crossing the room to the landline, Axel tapped in the same number as the one on his cell and waited. It rang once... twice... three times... Eventually, it just cut to the answering machine. Grimacing, Axel hung up and turned to the others. "No answer. I, ah... I guess we can keep trying until he picks up? Apart from that, though..." He shrugged.

Triste squinted at the pen cap as Flora brought it up, then swore under her breath. "*Shit*... Just stay like that, don't fiddle around with it!"

Rio moved up behind flora and peered around her as she held up the lid. "What? It's just the top of the pen he used, what's so special about it?"

Ignoring him, Triste twisted around, scanning the room. After a second, she darted across the room, pulled a sheet of plastic wrapping from one of the crates on the far side, and carefully tore a small piece from it. *It's not perfect, but...* Crossing back over to Flora quickly, she reached up and gingerly took the lid from her, wrapping it up in the plastic.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Rio complained again.

"Fingerprints," Triste muttered, distracted as she put the pen lid away carefully. "Or DNA. Something that we... *I*... could use to try and figure out who did this. It's a long shot, this probably got contaminated to hell, but... well, it's all we have so far. Whoever was here, there's a good chance they touched this. I'm staying somewhere that's not too far from here, where I could analyse this. Maybe it'll give us *something* to go on."

Rio blinked. "D what?"

"Forget it," Triste sighed. "You two need to come back with me. So I can protect you." *Or get rid of the two of you more easily if I think you'll be a problem.*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 22, 2014, 10:28:16 pm**

Vergil didn't need a second urging; he merely nodded at Emilena and prepared to jump. "All right... ladies first!" he said, giving her a soft push towards the edge. Not a moment too soon, as Vergil went to shut the door right as Stryker rounded the corner and entered the room. He heard an audible series of curses as the sungazer lizard discovered the now sabotaged and wrecked security room.

Heading back to the battlements, he gulped, then leaped from the heights, his arms and legs flailing as he plummeted the not considerable distance (perhaps 100 feet or so) into the moat. The water splashed around him as he landed with enough force to nearly knock him unconscious thanks to his weakened state. More asleep than awake, he struggled towards the shore, heading for a bank of reeds that were growing along the edge of the moat. It wasn't perfect, but he could at least conceal himself. He looked around for Emilena, wondering if she'd made it. If she wasn't visible... he'd have to assume the worst...

Stryker growled as he noticed the bank of smashed screens. Great... so... they were here? But where? He hadn't passed them on the way down so... they must've gone out. All right, time to find out. He headed for the door now, yanking it open and stepping out into the bright sun...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 23, 2014, 11:16:51 am**

Do furries even have fingerprints? wondered Flora, but since Triste was finally seeming to warm up to them she just smiled and said "Yay! I was able to help!"

She rushed into the back room. "I just need to grab something before we go!" she called back. Pushing the mattress to the guest room aside, she withdrew the collective sums of money she, Emilena, and Hal stored under there. Emilena would kill her for taking her money...but at the moment, the image of Emilena alive and beating her to death was forlornly happy one.

She openly showed the stash to Triste when she returned. "I'll pay for any expenses incurred in the search," she said with resolve. "If I can't help with the detective work, I'll help fund it!"

Emilena hoisted herself over the merlon and ungracefully tumbled over the edge. She had just enough time to curl into a ball before hitting the water with a thud; as she was the one to break the surface tension, an uncontrolled fall would have felt more like hitting concrete than liquid.

Her lungs almost immediately filled with water; she hadn't managed to stop gasping since her climb up the stairs. She began to wonder if she'd punctured a lung at some point. Casting her arms out, she hit the sandy bottom of the moat and dragged herself towards the inner wall where she'd be less visible to Stryker on the roof.

Hugging the wall and breaching the surface, she looked for Vergil. *Hope he took off that Kevlar coat or he probably sunk...* She spotted him on the far side of the moat, hidden among the reeds. A high wall separated him from escaping the moat, but the mossy reeds growing along the edge still provided adequate protection from being seen.

Taking a deep breath, she resubmerged and dragged herself along the sandy bottom of the moat with her hands; her lacerated leg was not interested in swimming. Taking care not to break the surface and become visible to anyone who may be watching from the roof, she reached the reeds and caught her breath as quietly as she could manage given the circumstances.

"Can you see him?" she whispered, even though whispering was likely unnecessary. She glanced at the wall. "One of us is going to have to hoist the other up this, and I don't know if I have the leg strength to support you..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 23, 2014, 07:02:08 pm**

Triste was taking another look around when Flora returned. She hadn't seen anything else that could help them determine who'd taken this Emilena woman - this pen lid might be their only chance. *And maybe my only chance of finding where Vergil's gone...* She eyed the money Flora offered, then shrugged. "I won't turn that down. Just hang on to it until I can find a good place to store it." She looked around the large, grubby looking room then turned and started to make her way back to the front door. "If there's nothing else, we should go. This needs to get done as soon as possible. And the two of you probably shouldn't come back here again."

"What? Why?!" Rio demanded. "This place is *ours*!"

"I'm not saying you can't ever come back. But until we know who we're dealing with, staying somewhere they could come back to isn't a good idea." She tilted her head. "Just some advice. You can stay if you want, but then you won't be coming with me, and I won't help you. I don't want you revealing anything about me if... *when* you get caught." Triste shrugged and walked out the door. "Hurry up and choose. I'm not waiting," her low voice called back through the

doorway, growing fainter.

Rio glanced anxiously around the warehouse, then looked at Flora. "Shit..." he muttered, hurrying out after her.

A short while later, the three of them rumbled to a stop outside Triste's rented apartment, atop her motorcycle - Rio's small frame allowing him to be wedged awkwardly between Flora and Triste. She'd driven fast, taking frequent detours to make sure they weren't being followed. Dismounting, she took a final cautious glance around, she lead the two of them up to the cold, bare apartment she'd been using. Flicking the light switch so the bare bulb flickered on, she crossed over to a box tucked away in the corner and started pulling it out. "Make yourself at home," she muttered over her shoulder as she started to open it up. "This won't take long."

Rio glanced around at the furniture-less room. It wasn't the sort of place that inspired comfort. Awkwardly, he sat on the floor, leaning against the wall.

William cocked his head when he heard a splash. It came from the castle, just a short distance up, yet to his ears the sound was as clear as if it had happened just next to him. *The moat... has someone been careless?*

Emerging from the trees, he crossed the short distance across the grounds, approaching the rear of the castle where the sound had come from, but purposefully heading for the far corner . Silently gliding up to the edge of the deep moat, he crouched and leaned over, scanning the water along the bottom.

There you are.

Much further up from him, he saw two figures struggling at the bottom. Leaning out, he shrugged his sniper rifle from his shoulder and peered through the scope. The two helpless individuals enlarged, and for a moment William just stayed still, enjoying their expression as they looked about themselves in panic. *Emilena...*, he thought, moving the sight over her, the crosshairs holding perfectly still on her head. *She looks perfect... a fighter. I'd have to work hard to break her in...*

Sighing, William lowered the rifle. Killing them here would be too easy, like crushing ant underfoot. There was no fun to it, no sport. Getting back to his feet, he backed away quietly from the edge. There was no point in giving himself away yet. Better to prepare. If they somehow managed to escape and make it into the woods, they wouldn't get far.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 23, 2014, 09:34:10 pm**

"Yes!" Vergil whispered, seeing Stryker peering down at them now... or not really. He was simply peering down and looking about at the expanse surrounding the castle. "Don't... move..." he urged, keeping his eyes trained on the lizard well above them. The only reason Vergil hadn't drowned was the moat had mostly run dry, and only the center was very deep... still... that's not to say Vergil could actually touch the bottom with his legs, which made Emilena's comment all the more poignant about not being able to hoist him up herself.

He looked around, noting the bank practically met the moat from where they were, in fact the moat flowed over it in this instance. "We can get out over there..." he nudged her, and pointed to where he'd been looking. As Stryker looked away and began heading along the battlements and eventually vanishing (no doubt looking for them up along the walkway), Vergil let out a sigh of relief. "We can go... let's go! Make a break for the woods!" He began paddling weakly through the reeds to the lower, marshy area of the bank. He kept his eyes above him, just in

case Stryker decided to peek down from his perch.

Crawling up through the reeds onto the muddy ground, Vergil's white body was caked in brown slime as he collapsed face forward before looking behind him to make sure Emilena was still following...

Tony sighed as he seemed to be getting further and further away from the castle. "Dammit..." he breathed, slowing down and downshifting to first. Maybe he should just stop... but as he proceeded slowly, he noticed the road finally curving to the left just slightly. Hmmm... maybe he should keep going... and hope he wouldn't be driving forever.

He needed to find a phone or some way of communicating. Fortunately, he was in quite the powerful car. Even for 1929, the Model J was the most powerful car on the market. Capable of reaching top speeds of 120 mph, it was known for being extremely fast. Second gear topped out at 94 mph, indicating just how well built the engine was. The only thing Tony didn't like about this car was its unsynchronized gearbox. In order to shift into any gear, he first had to shift into neutral, then shift into the gear he wanted. It was one thing Duesenberg had NEVER improved on during their long production run. By the 30s, they were hopelessly outdated by synchronized gearboxes on most other cars.

Deciding to just go with it, Tony pressed the clutch, shifted into neutral, then pressed the clutch again and shifted into second gear, picking up speed as he accelerated. He'd just have to get used to this method of shifting. He had no idea if this road would take him anywhere... but just best to play it out and see... he really had no other choice right now after all.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 24, 2014, 01:58:27 am**

Soren tipped out his glass of water. "Well, we could call Tonyó"

"A dead man doesn't answer his phone." Anne blew out a puff of smoke.

The Human then looked at the phone. "Shit! Why didn't I think of this before! We know that Vergil's phone is actually hooked up because it went to his answering machine. We may actually be able to trace it."

Anne smirked as she brought up an online telephone directory of everyone in Corona on Soren's laptop. "Way ahead of ya!" She turned to Axel. "Care to do the honors?" A blinking cursor on the screen was inside a text box labeled "phone number".

Marion fumed as she walked out of Zaloga's in-house augment repair workshop with an estimate for her repairs. Her bill for the repairs (and a new left arm) totaled an astounding 100,000 credits. And that was not counting the flying frame that had to be patched up.

She looked at her left arm. It was a hideous looking class 2 "augment". Instead of sleek composites and hybrid crystalline-amorphous metals, it was a ugly titanium pincer that looked like it had come off a cargo handling robot. Of course, electroactive metal actuators gave it enough strength to crush steel. Of course, she'd get to have her old arm back; it just took about a week for it to be nanolathed.

All around her were Zaloga employees casually milling about and chatting about the weather, sports or other boring subjects. Her stomach growled.

"Well, cooking's going to be a fucking pain," she muttered. "Might as well go to *Dai Wong* for dinner."

The Human Augment headed for the lockers to grab her belongings and clock out. But first, she'd go talk to Mace.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 24, 2014, 02:15:30 am**

Emilena wasn't swimming; her body couldn't handle that at the moment. Instead she was using a reed as a snorkel and crawling along the bottom of the water with her hands. The water turned to mud at the same time her backside broke the surface, but by that point they were both thoroughly camouflaged and on basically dry ground.

"Why couldn't we have escaped at night?" Emilena shielded her eyes from the piercing daylight sun. She couldn't see anything approaching the road. "We can either strafe around the castle, which increases our chances of both finding a road and being recaptured, or take our chances with the forest. Personally, I'm more interested in starving to death in the wilderness before chancing Stryker regaining our trail..."

Flora bounced. "It's so homely!" she skipped from one side to the other. "Reminds me of where I grew up!" She tried the faucet in the kitchenette. "...except it has *running water!*" she gasped.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 25, 2014, 12:39:25 am**

"Or..." Vergil brought up. "We could settle on a compromise: circle the castle whilst in the woods. That way we pick up the road, but can parallel it for awhile, since that's obviously the first place they'll be looking. We've bought ourselves time though... he thinks we're still in the castle... so... we cut for the woods, get deep enough to just see the castle from where we stop, and begin circling." he suggested. "Paralleling the road also gives us the advantage of being able to amply hide should any vehicles from the castle travel down it. So let's go while we have an opening..." he nodded back at the walls, noting Stryker wasn't visible just yet. It was about 100 yards to the woods... which of course seemed greater than a football field thanks to how weak Vergil felt but... no time like the present.

"You ready?" he asked, starting to catch his breath a bit.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 25, 2014, 09:05:15 pm**

"I think that compromise is stupid..." panted Emilena, "but I don't have the energy to figure out why so let's do it. Go!"

She burst out of the waist-high mud at a crippled limp, making less than stellar time. If she didn't give Vergil enough time to prepare, he should be more than able to compensate with his undamaged body. *This is giving me flashbacks to that Detroit sting with Agent Walters...* she thought ruefully. *Why am I always the one who gets the life-threatening injuries?*

She slipped on a wet patch of leaves inches from the forest perimeter and went tumbling into the darkness of the foliage. "Eerghh..." she grunted, gritting her teeth and getting to her knees. "You know what I want to know?" she muttered in Vergil's general direction, not checking to see if he was even in audible range, "They had a security room with cameras and everything...but how come nobody was *manning* it?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 26, 2014, 11:29:04 am**

You're stupid Vergil thought but didn't say to her whole "compromise is stupid" line. *You didn't exactly serve under a world shattering strategist now, did you?* Still, when she bolted, he was ready, and got up after her, running as best he could and ignoring the lancing pain in his side as he stumbled along... that was new.

He tried to figure out where it was coming from, but came up short, finally chalking it up to the fall he'd taken into the moat. Emilena went down shortly after gaining the treeline though, but Vergil didn't see it, as he was looking behind him in that instant to see if Stryker was scanning along the walls... he didn't see anything, so that was good... right? Unless of course they'd already been spotted... Vergil briefly wondered if Rex and Kalis ever had to deal with a situation similar to this; probably, given their many adventures and misadventures.

Then Emilena tumbled, and Vergil slid as well trying to reach her to help her up, sliding in a somewhat split-legged position as he brought himself to a halt beside her. "Ouch..." he said simply to his legs being split. Pushing himself back up, he reached down to help her to her feet. "They obviously don't have their shit together here... as we might say. Stryker seems to have idiots working under him. Or perhaps no one at all save for that single guard we killed on the way out. While you might call our escape easy... I ain't taking anything for granted. We are quite literally not out of the woods yet, and nowhere as far from the castle as I'd like to be. So..." Having helped her up, he looked around him now, brushing leaves off his body before pausing, and figuring it was a good idea to just leave the rest on him in case he needed to flatten himself out.

He looked like quite the crazy creature now, with leaves poking out of his white feathers and mud caking most of his body from his midriff down; he could've been shooting a bad horror movie for all anyone knew. Panting a little bit, he nodded forward. "Well... let's go... get to so the castle is just barely in sight, then try to find a freaking road." he breathed. "Should stay alert though... they might have guard posts out here... or something." He said. As it turned out, they did have something... but not quite what either of them were expecting...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 26, 2014, 04:22:25 pm**

Staring at the pair through his scope, William smiled. Perched high up on an overhanging branch, he'd been watching as Vergil and Emilena ran... or rather, hobbled to the treeline. As they reached the forest, some distance away from him, William tracked their progress, slowly turning his head to follow them. Leaves crunched under their feet, branches snapped, the sounds as loud and crisp as gunfire to him. A gasp from the woman, then a crash as she lost her footing. He almost winced. *Don't they know how loud they are?*

His smile broadened as Emilena spoke. *They had a security room with cameras and everything...but how come nobody was manning it?* "Because I can't hear the screaming through the cameras," he said softly to himself. As the gecko spoke, William shifted the crosshairs to the side, pinpointing his position from his voice. *You won't get to the road that easily.*

He pulled the trigger. The bullet flew from the silenced barrel, rocketed across the forest, tearing through foliage as it traveled along its downward trajectory... and hit its mark, piercing the gecko's leg, the metal tearing flesh and ripping muscle.

Triste didn't say anything as she pulled the DNA profile machine free. Carefully, she took the pen lid from the plastic wrapping and gently swabbed the edges of the pen lid. "Come on..." *No way this is going to work...* Chewing the inside of her cheek, her sharp teeth almost breaking the skin, Triste inserted the swab into the profiling machine, and leaned back, waiting

as it extracted the sample and began preparing it automatically. The machine was state of the art - whereas normal profiling would take some time, the Federation had enough money to develop the technology so it only took 5 minutes. Once it was complete, it would then compare the DNA sequence it obtained to a database compiled by the Federation... and it was extensive - though it wasn't public knowledge, most of the population of Corona and it's neighboring cities were on there... whether they'd volunteered it or not.

5 minutes later, the machine started to hum as its run drew to an end. "How long is this going to take?" Rio complained loudly from across the room for what seemed like the hundredth time. "I'm bored fuckless."

Triste gritted her teeth, picturing how easy it would be to toss him out the window. "I *told* you. It'll be done..."

The profiling machine beeped. "...now." Sighing, Triste wandered back over and leaned over the machine's display screen. Her eyes widened. There was a match. She pressed a button, and the individual it matches the sample to appeared on screen, with what information the database had on them. Triste's eyes widened, and slowly the pieces of the puzzle started to come together.

"What? Did you find something?" Rio asked, wandering over.

"*Shit...* If this is true, this is bad..." Triste stood up, and turned to face Flora and Rio. "It's matched it to... well, we don't know his real name. He goes by the name of Stryker, and he's... dangerous. Very dangerous." She shook her head. "This is bad. I have no idea why he might want to take your friend, but he's been known to work for a powerful family, the Stracci's." She stared at the two of them, her yellow eyes narrowing. "Tony Stracci was a member of our team. He was helping us in our mission when -" her gaze flicked to Rio - "You pushed him over a cliff." Triste shook her head again. "There's no way this is a coincidence."

Axel looked between Soren and Anne, then grinned softly. "Not bad." Nodding at Anne, he punched the numbers in, then rubbed a hand through his hair nervously. "Let's hope this works..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 26, 2014, 05:17:32 pm**

No sooner had Vergil finished badmouthing Stryker's hired hands when one of them sniped him.

"Now I realize why that was a stupid plan!" exclaimed Emilena as she dove for cover. "Because it's depressingly obvious!" She grabbed him and did her best to drag him down into the brush and out of the line of sight from the direction the bullet had come from. "We have to keep low and we got to be less predictable in the future; someone's onto us, and they've got a goddamn sniper rifle. I *hate* fighting snipers..."

She checked her wound. It was still bleeding badly, but Vergil's leg needed the wrapping more than she did. "And don't scream!" she cautioned as she tourniqueted and covered the bullet wound. "It's just a gunshot, take it like a man. You don't see me complaining about my knife wound, or my concussion, or my vaginal tract, or my leg or my feet..."

"Emilena had a run-in with the Straccis before!" gasped Flora. "She'd always brush it off when I asked, but Nairda told me the whole story!" Her voice hushed, as if telling a scary campfire tale, and she even dimmed the lights for dramatic effect. "Last year, the two of them were part

of a group that had just rescued Tony Stracci from the Purifiers, and were bringing him home to his father's mansion in the forests outside Lanthae. When they got there, the don thanked them for rescuing his son, and offered to let them stay the night. The don promised hospitality...but delivered *death*."

Flora paused so her audience could supply a gasp, but they did not. "Just because they could, the mafia decided to tie them up as 'loose ends.' Nairda says they broke his knees with thumbscrews and strapped his eyelids open so he was forced to watch as Stryker tortured Emilena in all sorts of horrible ways. They were going to gouge her for information and then kill her. But then...Emilena just disappeared. Poof! Right out of the clutches of the mafia, from the most secure dungeon of the mansion. Nobody knows where she went...and nobody has *ever learned* how she did it."

Flora ended her story with spooky hushed inarticulate whispers, hoping to drive home the atmosphere of the thing.

Lily watched as the others messed around with their gadgets. Technology had never been a strong suit of hers, but she hoped Axel was enjoying himself. For a computer software support technician he'd had very little opportunity recently to spend surfing the web, she hoped he wasn't suffering from internet withdrawal.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 26, 2014, 08:27:21 pm**

"It wasn't stupid!" Vergil shot back through clenched teeth! "This was random! They have a perimeter NEITHER of us noticed! YOU could've said something ANYTIME!" he pointed out to her. "We don't find a road, we wander for miles in these stupid woods, which is way more of a stupid idea." He ground his teeth as she began bandaging him. "Don't waste your time..." his hand shot out, resting on her own as she got to work. "I can't move with torn muscles... or at least not as far as you can. Your muscles are still intact... at least the vital ones are. You don't like snipers? Best way to deal with snipers is live bait... get them to reveal themselves, and snipe them in return... but since we don't have a gun... the ground dips a bit here... you can get away. I'll stay behind... and before you say it's a one way trip, I'm well aware of that. Me limping or crawling after you isn't going to get us very far. You can move faster than I can right now. We've got this far... no reason for you to stick around and get killed on my account."

He looked at her seriously, not expecting she'd argue with her own self-preservation instincts. He was giving her a much better way out than she'd get by currently sticking with him, that was for sure. He wasn't exactly sure how he'd get out of this one himself, but better one life be saved than both lives killed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 26, 2014, 08:56:58 pm**

"Christ, you talk a lot!" Emilena grabbed a stiff branch and lined it up with his leg. "And like hell you get to lie back and relax after your first injury, you big baby." Grabbing the knife, she sliced long ribbons off of his coat and double-tied the thick branch to his leg, making the worst splint she had ever seen. "There. Your hip still works, right? Put your weight on that and don't bend your knee. Grab my back if you need to."

She glanced at the ground. "You're right. It dips. Bottoms up." With that she rolled him down the small ravine to further shield them from the sniper's line of sight. "I'm serious," she winced as she banged her elbow on a fallen tree trunk, "I'm revoking your whining and dying privileges until you have at least three life-threatening injuries. Start crawling!" She gripped the knife and covered the rear; with the trunk and the ravine behind them, the sniper would have to significantly alter his position to see them, and if he got close enough, she might have a shot of ambushing him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 27, 2014, 01:42:13 am**

Soren yawned. "Excuse me," he said. he got up from the seat and ducked into his room.

Bypassing the shotgun that was leaning against the back wall of his room, the Human made his way to a small cabinet. He opened the cabinet and popped a moziafil tablet from its blister pack. He sighed. Three tablets left. He'd have to buy another pack soon.

Popping the tablet in his mouth and washing it down with a bottle of water on his workbench, he sat down for a moment. In just under thirty seconds, his tiredness melted away and he felt as if he had a full night's sleep.

"Hey Soren," Anne said. "You may want to look at this." She turned the computed towards him.

On the screen were the words "no match".

Soren rubbed his eyes and frowned, certain he had to be seeing things. "This thing shitting me!?"

He sat down with a sigh. "Well, any more ideas?"

Anne rubbed her horn and let out a breath of air. "Well, we could always go to the *Bak Long* Triads for info. I've bought drugs from a few of their low level gangsters; I'm sure they'll sell us info."

Soren sighed. He did not want to deal with more organized crime but the way things were going, he didn't have a choice.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 27, 2014, 06:27:35 pm**

William sighed contentedly as he heard the loud, pained shouts of the gecko he'd just wounded, as he argued with his companion. Loudly. *You're just making it easier for me...* More rustling now. William tilted his head as he overheard their hasty back and forths. The woman was right - he'd have to move. But...

Shifting his position, William slid from the branch and dropped to the floor, landing soundlessly on the forest floor. Focusing his vision, he caught a brief glimpse of Emilena before she dropped out of his sight, down the ravine. Licking his lips, he pulled the bolt on his rifle to load another bullet and started to follow. *But they're heading further into the forest... my forest. And that's where the real fun starts.*

There was a couple seconds of silence after Flora finished her tale. Clearing her throat, Triste crossed the room and turned the lights back on. "I know that place. But I thought the property had been abandoned since..." She narrowed her eyes. "Are you trembling, kid?"

Rio wrapped his arms around his legs to stop them shaking, a pale tinge to his face. "N... No! I'm just... It's..." He bared his teeth. "It's just really fucking cold, alright?" He blinked, trying to take his mind off Flora's spooky storytelling.

"Yeah... In any case, it's worth checking it out. But we've got to move as fast as we can."

Turning her back, Triste started packing a few things into a small backback in preparation.

Standing, Rio moved close to Flora and lowered his voice. "So Emi just... disappeared? So she's like a wizard or something! I *knew* it!"

Axel swallowed as Anne mentioned the *Bak Long*. "Are you... are you sure that's a, ah, a good idea?" he asked nervously, putting the phone back on the cradle and turning to look her and Soren. "I mean, I like dealing with ruthless gangs who'll cut my throat while they eat their cornflakes as much as the next guy, but..."

His eyes flicked over to Lily. "I just want to make sure we're not just... stepping into the volcano over this."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 28, 2014, 09:55:00 pm**

"It's called knowing when you're beat." He grumbled as he started crawling. "There's quite literally NO point to keeping me with you. I'll slow you down from this point on... we both know that. You can run. I can't. Ergo you're the one who should escape instead of wasting your strength ensuring I keep up. I don't fear death... never have. I accepted I was dead the moment I enlisted in Rex's unit. I've been through some of the worst hells you could think up... including nuclear war... and I'm saying you're better off on your own now that we've escaped."

He decided to cut this short though, as she'd most likely chide him for talking too much again, in which case he'd probably kick her in the jaw to shut her up. He smiled at that though... every time she had something to stupid to say, she'd get a kick... he wondered how long she'd tolerate that. Anyway, he was leaving a blood trail, even despite the bandage (which was slipshod enough it was barely that), and he knew they'd be tracked quite easily. Still, he could see what she was going for, and decided to just let her attempt her ambush if it worked out.

He managed to make it behind a second tree, and kept going. Oddly though, his thoughts drifted back to his nuclear war comment... maybe that's why he was sterile... ah well. There was no point in worrying about it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 28, 2014, 11:26:43 pm**

"If you have enough energy to prattle on like you are, you've got enough to keep moving!" Emilena scanned the foliage. "Why do you care if I live anyway?"

She scanned the trees. "On the other hand...if you're that motivated to lie around and look pathetic we could use you as bait. You monologue at any guys to come close and I scale a tree and drop on them. I didn't see anyone on those cameras in the castle so we might actually have a chance of picking them off one-by-one. But we're going to need to get further into the forest where the trees are larger, taller and thicker."

She hoisted Vergil onto her back and dragged him. "You keep saying you're a highly-trained soldier," she panted, "so *act like one* goddammit! Were you the company water boy or something?"

"That's the mystery!" Flora exclaimed. "Nobody knows! Of course, she's got a soft spot for you, so maybe if you ask she'll tell. But you better tell me if she reveals her secret!"

She jumped up happily when Triste mentioned checking out the forest. "Yay, road trip!" she

bounced happily to the door. "To rescue Emi!"

She grabbed her coat from the rack by the door and regarded Triste packing. She realized that the gecko was packing almost everything she owned into her backpack. "Not to jinx how lucky we've been in finding you," she said in a small voice, "but...why are you doing all this for us? Did you know Emi or something?"

Lily gulped. "Asking the Chinese mafia?" She wasn't sure why they would do that, but she didn't want to disagree with Soren and Anne. Lily had noticed that they tended to wind up on opposite sides of issues leading all the way back to when Lily invited Emilena to join their party at the parking lot outside the clothing store in Lanthae, and this was a good opportunity for her to side with them in a meaningful way that could enforce group solidarity. Especially since she'd just revealed a major secret she'd kept from them... "If you really know them that well, Anne, this could be our best hope for information. I'm willing to defer to your judgment, as you'd know far more about this than me."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **November 29, 2014, 12:20:06 am**

Soren immediately picked up the tension in the air and let out a breath. "I don't like doing this any more than you do but what other choices do we have?"

Anne tapped her horn. "Well, I may be able to tap into a secured wireless network with my horn and project it to a radio but since there are terabytes of data flowing through government wireless channels...well, we'd be wading through a lot of useless shit. Or we can hack into the phone company's databases and swipe all their records and then browse through them at our leisure."

"If Marita or hell, any of us, get caught doing that, we're bricked. We can't afford bail."

Anne shrugged and snorted a bit, shaking her head and sending her mane flying in all directions. "The only other way that doesn't involve breaking into every house in Corona would be to repeatedly call his house from a cellphone. Then I could possibly use my horn to find out where the nearest cell tower to landline link is. Then we break in and we eavesdrop on every line inside. Once we find a hit, we can then look up where that line goes to. If everything goes right, that *should* lead to Vergil's house."

"That's assuming the nearest link to his house even services his house or if he even has a landline phone. Seriously, those things are fucking *old*."

Anne smiled and tapped her horn. "If his home phone's wireless, I can also use my horn to grab the signal it sends to the phone company. I can then use it to pinpoint his house."

Soren nodded. "What's the range of your horn?"

Anne took a seat and grabbed the instruction manual for her implant off the bookshelf. The book was rather beat up but it was legible. She opened the book and began reading. "It depends on signal strength. With something like that, I could probably get a kilometer. Maybe two."

"Not helping." Soren rubbed his forehead. "Fuck it. I don't think we have any choice."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **November 29, 2014, 02:25:43 am**

It was at that that Emilena received a sharp whack on the back of her head from Vergil's elbow as he slid off her. "No... for your information." he responded bluntly. "Now then... first off,

apologies. Second, I don't remember my role specifically, only that I was a soldier of some sort. Third, I care that you live because all life, even your own, is precious. Death is a part of life, yes, but right now, you're the fittest in our group. If one of us HAS to survive... better you than me. The cripple gets picked off... the non-cripple survives. That's just the way things go... I've seen it happen more times than I care to remember. Acceptable losses and all that... it's what Rex lived by. Anyway..." he looked around them.

"The trees tend to be thicker in the center of the forest... which judging from the direction we're heading, isn't this way. The older trees are off in that direction." he pointed to her left. "So we should be heading that way." He began hobbling forward, grinding his teeth as he did so. "Ugh! Sonofabitch! I'll have to repay that guy one for this..." he murmured. He looked quite the sight, half caked in mud with leaves sticking to him at odd angles. He certainly looked like a swamp creature of some kind.

"Shouldn't have hit you..." he said now, shaking his head. "It wasn't... necessary."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **November 29, 2014, 06:57:05 pm**

The ground was uneven, disturbed, and as William looked down, he could see the broken twigs and shifted dirt led up to the slope in the forest floor, the ground dipping down into the ravine and sinking into the darkness of the thicker foliage. William closed his eyes and took a deep breath, his nostrils flaring, pallid face creasing in pleasure. He could smell, *taste* the two of them, those who had been here only moments before. Of course he could detect the rich, copper of the gecko's blood, but more than that - their confusion, their fear, their panic and frustration was tangible to him. And it made William feel *alive*.

He felt a pleasurable shudder run through his body, and he turned his face upwards, feeling the light breeze on his skin. William let his breath out slowly. "Thank you," he whispered, feeling a rush of genuine gratitude towards the two that he was about to hunt down. After a moment, he made his way down the slope, and started on their trail. He didn't need to bother with his augmented hearing - the blood leaking from Vergil's wound was more than enough for him to go on.

Triste zipped up her bag and hoisted it over a shoulder, turning to look at Flora. "I'm not doing all of this for you. I don't know Emilena, and I don't care what happens to her. But the fact is, both her and Vergil, the person *I'm* looking for, were there when Stracci's son died. They went missing almost as soon as my team arrived back in Corona, close by to one of Stracci's old bases of operation. And now, we know that Emilena was taken by one of Stracci's men. This can't be a coincidence."

She tilted her head. "I can't afford to take my time on this, and *you* want your friend back. So we both stand to gain from this." She frowned. "What's confusing is why they'd take Emilena when *you* were the one to kill him," she said, glancing at Rio as she moved past and started for the door. "But I don't have time to think about it. And on the subject of you, you're staying here, kid."

Rio's eyes widened. "What?! But I've gotta help, she's -"

"No. You're about 7 years old. You could screw up the entire thing."

"I'm *12*!" Rio grimaced. "And I won't screw anything up. I'm not new to this kind of stuff, trust me. If you need someone to sneak into somewhere, to break into some shit, I can do it. It's what I'm good at. Flora can vouch for me." He clenched his jaw. "I *can* do it, and I'm coming. Emi's my friend, and I have to help save her."

Triste paused for a second, then sighed. "If you do anything, *anything*, that compromises us, I'm taking you out of the situation. However I feel is best." She walked out the door. "Let's

move."

Axel's ears curved uncomfortably. "Alright then, I, ah... I guess we've gotta do it." He looked at Anne. "So... how do you contact them? What're you gonna say? It's not like you can just dial up the Chinese mafia advice helpline."

He glanced around at the rest of them. "And we should probably prepare for if something goes wrong because... I mean, our track record of things going smoothly isn't exactly, ah... well, it's non-existent."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **November 30, 2014, 11:43:59 am**

"If that's what it took to get you moving again, you can hit me a few more times," groaned Emilena. "Hardly matters at this point."

She crawled forward and then yelped as she tripped over an almost invisible wire strung across two tree trunks. The ground in front of her collapsed instantly, greeting her with the sight of a spiked pit. The only thing that saved her was that she kept her foot locked inside the wire, which left her dangling precariously over the edge with a twisted ankle instead of with a dozen new perferations.

She didn't recatch her breath until Vergil had her back on solid ground. "The bastard *booby-trapped* the forest..." she panted. "We need to be more careful..." She tried to put her weight on her ankle and yelped. "Dammit, this is only going to help them catch up to us faster..."

Flora was not present, having already exited quickly to the parking lot. *We need the best car possible for this trip!* she thought resolutely. *Emi's life depends on it!*

Before meeting up with Emilena's gang, she had spent most of her youth breaking into cars, driving in random unknown directions until the gas ran out, and repeating. She may be partially responsible for some much fiercer automated detection systems that were being installed in newer models coming out in these areas of the country, but at a glance she saw a number of cars in the lot that were clearly still ripe for the picking.

Low mileage for the size of the tank...cannot handle off-road travel...no radio... As she walked past potential targets she noted to herself missing features that could jeopardize the success of the mission.

Then she saw a jet black Zwingz 381-hp V-8 SUV with remote reservoir shocks and coil-link suspension and got such a huge erection she almost passed out.

"Ohhh my god..." her hand shuddered as it caressed the massive 265/75R16 tires wrapped around beadlock wheels. The car was new, produced smack-dab in the middle of the era of tighter security, and she'd never tried to break into a car like that before.

First she checked under the SUV for a magnetic box containing a set of spare keys. Some people have those; this owner did not. Then she tested the back door to see if there was enough room for her to wedge a removed car antenna through and jimmy the unlock rod. There was, but before she inserted anything she scanned the dashboard. She noted a subtle black circle of glass embedded into the rearview mirror and recognized it as a motion sensor. She'd never broken into a car with a motion sensor, but she'd seen them advertised on TV, and she'd always wondered about the most obvious way she could think to fool them.

The sensor can't go off just because it's nighttime, right? she thought, borrowing the car cover

(and antenna) from another vehicle in the parking lot and draping it over the SUV. Now in the dark, she bent the tip of the detached antenna into a hook and slid it between the door seal and the chassis. But after unlocking the car door she held it open only a crack; some cars have shock sensors that notify the owner because the interior lights turn on, simply due to the ease of the car checking for that status. Rolling the car window down, she fingered the inside until she found the button that, like the one inside a refrigerator, turned the lights on once depressed. She held it down with her finger until she could close the door behind her.

Now inside the car, she checked the steering column and quickly determined that it was safe-guarded against hot-wiring. After allowing herself a few minutes to sit in the driver's seat and imagine the sheer power of driving such a whip, she borrowed the jumper cables and maintenance kit in the glove compartment and left the car, taping the light button down. Popping the hood, she located the plug and coil wires at the rear of the engine and ran the jumper cables from a positive battery terminal to the wire leading the coil. This activated the dash-board, which let her locate the starter solenoid behind the steering wheel. Delicately connecting the solenoid to the positive battery terminal, she skipped with excitement when the 12 volt shock activated the solenoid and the starter cranked the car.

"Oh you glorious stallion, you're *mine...*" she moaned throatily, stroking the steering wheel and rubbing herself against the powerful vibrations of the engine. Then she realized Triste and Rio were standing beside the car staring at her. "Here we go!" she announced happily, whipping the cover off the SUV. "Check out the six-speed automatic transmission and locking differential on this thing!"

Lily yawned. "Let me know when we're leaving...I need to relax for a time..." she politely excused herself from the room. Physically, a night in a morgue rested the body but mentally it only exhausted her more. She knew they'd probably be leaving soon, but even five minutes of meditation can do wonders.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 02, 2014, 02:55:47 pm**

Vergil reacted quickly, his reflexes only marginally slowed by his pain. He lashed out, grabbed hold of her and preventing her from meeting her certain demise in the spiked pit.

"Ugh!" he groaned out, hauling her back up. "OK... well.... way I see it... two options..." he said, looking behind them now. "We keep going at potentially greater risk to ourselves trying to escape but possibly blundering into traps OR... we figure out a way to confront this guy, and kill him. Get him off our backs and that way... we can take our time with the escape." he outlined.

Looking down, he noticed he was already partly camouflaged from all the leaves and mud covering him. "I dunno... maybe I could blend in. He's gonna have to approach over that rise in order to see us... might be able to get the drop on him."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 03, 2014, 07:25:03 pm**

Reaching the bottom of the slope, William bent and ran a long, thin finger through a small spatter of blood on the ground. Smearing it between his finger and thumb, he smiled to himself. The gecko was bleeding nicely. He wouldn't be able to keep going much further...

He tilted his head as, from further on, he heard a cry of surprise from the woman. *So she's run into one of my surprises...* He could only hope she hadn't been hurt too badly. Or at least, not so badly that he wouldn't be able to play with her for a bit. William cricked his neck and stood up slowly.

"That's awesome!" Rio exclaimed, running up to join Flora. He climbed up and peered into one of the windows. "Fucking cool!"

"Yeah. It's a car. Good," Triste said flatly as she walked around the car and pulled open the front passenger door, climbing up. "As long as it gets us there, that's what matters."

Rio followed her. "Hey! I want to ride shotgun..." He trailed off when Triste turned around and fixed her eyes on him. "I'm sitting in the back," he stated after a moment.

Climbing in all the way, Triste pulled the door shut and called across to Flora. "You're driving. Get us there as quick as you can." She paused. "Actually... we need to make a detour. I'll give you the directions." *They've already shown they're somewhat dependable in a firefight... and it's better to be prepared...*

Axel sighed as he leaned back on the counter. Well, we've gotta make up our minds quickly, if -" The phone besides him suddenly rang, and he jumped with a slight squeak. Hesitating slightly, he glanced around at the others and picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"*Whent?*" Triste's voice came through, momentarily confused, but then returning to its business-like tone almost instantly. "*I assumed the police had arrested you. You and your wife must be taking refuge.*"

"Yeah, we... we saw that our house was bugged so we left..." Axel squinted. "How did you have Soren's number? Why're you calling? What's -"

"*Vergil's in trouble,*" she interrupted. "*I think he's been taken, and I think I know where he is, but if things go wrong, I need to know that I have back up I can rely on. Will you help?*"

Axel's tail flicked. "Wait... hang on..."

"*Good. Get down to the street as soon as you can. I've already got what you'll need. And there's only space for 3 of you, so choose who you want to come quickly. I'll explain more when you're here.*" There was a slight pause. "*And we've got some help.*"

The dial tone buzzed in his ear as Triste hung up. Frowning, Axel stared at the phone for a second, then put it down. "Alright, ah..." He looked at the others. "I guess that solves the Vergil mystery. That was Triste. She, ah.. she says that Vergil's been taken and she needs help to get him back. And there's only room for three of us to go. So... yeah." He blinked, his brain trying to process the information that had just been thrown at him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 04, 2014, 08:37:18 pm**

"The traps...changed things, I agree..." panted Emilena. "We could try an ambush."

She regarded Vergil. "You could blend into the ground, yeah," she nodded. "But I might need to be a bit more out-of-sight." Despite all the foliage they'd dragged themselves through, her blood-stained orange fur was still a bit too bright to easily blend in with the forest floor. But the setting sun was another matter entirely...

Her gaze steeled. "Let's do it. If he targets you, try to get shot in the coat." Grasping her dagger in between her teeth, she dug her claws into the tree trunk and hoisted herself up the first yard of trunk. Then she fell off of the trunk reflexively as a pressure-activated spike strip swung out of the tree and embedded itself where she'd been seconds before. "Always spikes with this bastard..." she gritted her teeth, but the strip also gave her the handholds she needed to assume a hiding place in the canopy. She kept the sun behind her so that anyone

approaching from the castle would find it even harder to spot her.

"Quick as you can, got it!" Flora switched the radio to a heavy metal channel and popped the car into gear with a wild whoop.

The SUV peeled out of the parking lot before anyone even the chance to even look at their seatbelts. Grinning, Flora revved the engine and careened through a red light directing traffic in the wrong way. A tow truck swerved to avoid her and she flipped it off as she pumped the brakes and sent the car spinning in a perfect bootlegger's turn to hop an island and face the freeway.

Cutting off of the road and barely making a 270 degree spin onto an off-ramp, Flora took a bridge just long enough for it to level out with the highway below and allow her to drop onto the traffic flow in the opposite direction. "We'll be there in five minutes!" she announced, when even the most optimistic GPS would predict a 25-minute drive at best.

Lily returned, yawning. "Who was that on the phone?" she asked, before the shredding scream of tires outside made her jump.

A jet black SUV went from peeling into the parking lot at 60mph to an almost perfect parallel park in the closest space to the apartment. "Hiiii!!!" waved the fuchsia folf in the driver seat, rolling down the window so the heavy bass could reverberate the parked cars in either direction. "Did Triste warn you we were coming? C'mon c'mon we gotta go, Emi's counting on us!"

"Flora?" gasped Lily. She looked at the other occupants of the apartment. "Why is she here?" Another part of her brain realized that because Flora had mentioned Emilena, it would be in the rescue team's best interest to distance themselves from Soren as quickly as possible, so she wasted no time booking it to the car.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 04, 2014, 08:50:45 pm**

I'll come too ' Marita said ' there hadnt been really time to absorb the info about Vergil's capture when the loud music announced the SUVs arrival, and since there was only room for 3, Marita figured that she volunteer.' Hold down the Fort girls ' She said giving Marie and Rose a Hug and kiss each before throwing on a coat from the rack near the door . ' Hopefully We'll be back soon, although with our luck to date, i doubt it.' she pulled her phone from her pocket and checked, it was fully charged. " I'll call you guys when we get more information about what exactly is going on. " She said before heading out of the apartments front door. Within a few minutes she was outside. the SUV was parked close to the curb, so it was a simple matter of walking up to it.' She cast Flora a smile as she got in. ' Hi I'm Marita' she said as she got in the back seat." I'm friends with Lily." she paused as she got in.' nice car." She moved into the middle of the seat, to give enough room for the third member of the rescue group to squeeze in.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 06, 2014, 02:50:57 pm**

The sound of another trap activating reached William, and he smiled again. It sounded higher up, not like the previous one... *Trying to climb trees? They usually try that last...* As he approached the source of the sound, the smell of blood grew stronger, almost overwhelming. Either they were slowing down, or the traps had killed them.That would be a shame.

The ground started to slope up. William followed, tracking the stumbling footsteps and

disturbed dirt left behind by his new friends. Higher... and then the ground dipped down again, leading into a small clearing. There, almost in the middle, one of his floor traps yawned open - and inside, nothing. On one of the trees creeping into the clearing, a spike panel had been activated. But again, no body. William stopped at the top of the rise and took another deep breath. The blood was thickest here. *They* were here. Even their tracks stopped, and he couldn't hear any more movement... He paused, then looked up slowly at the spiked tree. William winced. The sunlight bore into his sensitive eyes, blinding him. Looking away, he shook his head to clear the pain shooting through his skull, then crouched down.

"Clever," he whispered. *But it won't be that easy.*

Reaching a hand back into the small pouch around his waist, William pulled out a fist-sized metallic canister, then pulled back the pin on its lid. Sliding his sniper rifle off and propping it in the crook of his elbow, he tossed the can lazily into the center of the clearing - listening and watching closely for any movement as the tear gas started to leak out, spreading out in a noxious cloud.

"Alright... crap." Axel looked at Soren and Anne. "I'll go as well, but... well, if this turns out to be a waste, we might still need our friendly neighborhood yakuza. It might still be worth trying them..." He rubbed his ear. "Alright, we'll be back as soon as we can. We'll let you know if anything comes up. Be careful guys."

When he emerged out of the building, he didn't exactly need to take a long hard look to see where the others were. Approaching the car with the booming music pouring from it, wincing from the noise, Axel squinted as he saw who was in the driver's seat. She looked familiar... wasn't she one of Emilena's gang?

"What's going... Rio?" Axel grimaced as he climbed in next to Marita.

"Hey fucker," Rio called back, squashed on the other side of Lily.

Shaking his head, Axel pulled the door shut behind him and look up front at Triste. "What the hell's going on? How do you know Vergil's been taken?"

"It's almost certain that he's been taken by a member of the Straccis," she shouted back, struggling to be heard over the heavy metal music.

"What?!"

"I said..." Giving up, Triste slammed her palm on the radio's off button, shooting a glare at Flora before glancing back at Axel. "I'll explain it on the way. Just get us there quickly," she instructed Flora.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 06, 2014, 05:38:07 pm**

Emilena's eyes grew wide as she recognized the unmistakable sounds of a gas grenade. *God, I'm glad I'm not Vergil right now...* Luckily, since she was off the ground she had a few scarce minutes to possibly escape the cloud radius. Plus the cloud itself might provide the cover she needed.

She leaped from her current tree to the next one and bit her tongue when a razor sliced through her bicep. This tree was filled with razor-sharp wires to dissuade attempts at hiding in them. Only her thin frame gave her the area she'd already obtained. *Who the hell booby-traps a forest to this degree?* she thought in amazement. With no other options, she tumbled out of the tree and went crashing into a bush. A bear trap smashed shut on her tail and she almost bit her own tongue off in a teary attempt at keeping silent.

As the vestiges of the gas sent tears running down her face, she blindly tried to free herself from the bear trap and recollect her senses.

"M'kay!" Flora pressed the pedal to the floor and sent the car squealing out of the parking lot.

Lily yelped as her forehead smashed into the headrest of the shotgun seat. "Could someone explain to me how the three of you wound up in the same place?" she asked bemusedly, staring at Rio, Flora and Triste.

"The hands of *fate*!" Flora pulled up to a red light and revved her engine suggestively at the muscle car beside her. The driver revved his engine in response, and the second the light turned green they sped out of the city limits. The muscle car soon found itself outmatched as Flora cut him off during a turn and he had to hit the brakes to avoid plowing into a chevron.

"Flora, your turn signal!" Lily suggested meekly.

"Turn signals are giving information to the **enemy**!" Flora gained a few seconds of air time when she bounced off the paved road and began plowing through a cornfield. "Lanthae forest in exactly fifteen minutes!" she announced, hitting the radio back on and increasing the volume as high as it went.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 06, 2014, 06:11:02 pm**

Would you please turn down the radio?' Marita called out . the loud noise making her ears hurt. " its hard to talk and get acquainted if you can't hear each other>" the suv bumped through the cornfield, sending jolts though the vehicle to the passengers. it was not fun, and marita was quickly forming an opinion that flora was not a very good driver.' ' Could you .. please,.. slow.. down?' she called out, her teeth chattering as the combination of the loud music and bumpy driving surfacte was starting to make her nauseous.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 07, 2014, 09:27:43 pm**

"Triste wanted to get there as soon as possible!" Flora shouted back, swerving the SUV and shredding a scarecrow with her back tires. "This is the quickest possible way!"

Lily grasped Marita's arm and instinctively began healing the ringing in her ears. It was practically a free heal considering she was suffering from them herself.

"We have to decide what strategy we're going to use when we find them!" Flora shouted, sending the car off a small precipice and flip-flopping everyone's center of gravity. "Stealth or loud! Personally, I vote for stealth!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 08, 2014, 12:15:49 pm**

While the tear gas was certainly a nuisance as it began to drift out of the grenade, Vergil had been through far, *far* worse on Rex's campaigns, and had endured greater torture than a little burning of the eyes and tears streaking down his face. While it would be a hindrance for sure, Vergil knew it wouldn't be a major stumbling block.

He was below Emilena, trying to hold in his breath and avoid from choking on the gas. He had to keep low, but he also knew keeping stationary was the best thing during a gas attack; the wind would soon blow the gas over and beyond them, so staying still was the best bet in times when there was even a slight breeze, which there was this day; gas attacks were far more

effective indoors after all.

Waiting it out patiently, the gecko closed his eyes, even as he felt Emilena fall to the ground somewhere off to his left, and the snapping of what sounded like a gruesome bear trap going off. Cringing, he fumbled his way through the now dissipating gas to where Emilena was struggling with a trap that had seized her tail. The cloud had drifted more toward her, so Vergil was crawling back into it, but he dealt with it as he kept his head low, and began pushing on one of the springs to release the trap enough for the fox to free her tail. "Go!" he urged, pressing it down. "And try to stay stationary... the gas will be over us soon!" he whispered heavily, the fumes stinging his tongue as he spoke.

Tony noticed the road had to be taking him back to somewhere around the castle. He was heading in what he thought was the general direction, and was cruising along at a leisurely 40 mph, not wanting to come up on the castle without warning and risk getting shot at again. As it was though, his path was taking him closer to where Emilena and Vergil had run into the woods, though he wasn't close enough yet to see the tear gas through the trees.

But someone else was close by now as well: Stryker had left the castle and was heading into the woods. With no way of being able to track the escaped targets, the sungazer lizard figured he'd murder William first, then hunt down the other two, who would be too badly injured to move far. He was decked out in forest camo gear, his body painted thanks to a device they had in the castle, and his gear reflecting the shades and shadows of the nearby wood. Besides... his two targets would be making for these woods eventually... and since there was only his Cord in the parking lot, he knew they hadn't taken that, as it was still sitting safely in its spot.

Having retrieved a high-tech sniper rifle from the trunk, the lizard was also carrying combat knives, throwing knives, his laser pistol, and flashbangs. He also had a handy set of goggles that would allow him to track William's trail through the forest... but as it turned out, he also picked up a good deal of blood on the leaves, so he knew William was hunting them. Very well... perhaps they could pool their efforts... or of course let William take care of it, then shoot William after he was done. There was no way Stryker was being denied his revenge after all...

Right before the sungazer disappeared into the treeline, Tony just barely made him out as he approached the castle from the rear. He slowed the Duesenberg, and narrowed his eyes. Stryker heading into the woods fully dressed in combat gear? Had Emilena escaped? Finding no other explanation for the lizard's behavior, Tony decided to pull over to the side of the road. Shutting the Dusey down, he exited the car, tentatively reaching for the Glock in his waistband.

Pulling the pistol out, Tony began approaching Stryker at a right angle, but paused when he saw the lizard wearing some sort of goggles. Trackers most likely... the ferret stood stock still, waiting for the lizard to pass ahead of him before he slowly started following, but even then waited until Stryker had advanced quite a ways ahead of him. No sense giving himself away too soon...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 09, 2014, 12:40:10 pm**

Stealth requires quiet!' Marita shouted as the drop caused her to float in the air for a brief second before falling back down. ' which means 1: you turn the music off and 2: you dont drive so fast through a cornfield. try and get back on the road Flora.Please! We need time to come up with a strategy and having half the passenger throwing up from being nauseous isnt a good way to form a plan. Please? I'm asking nicely."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 10, 2014, 10:31:41 pm**

As the light breeze started to blow the gas forwards, washing it over the clearing below him, William heard light, urgent whispering, coming from the same area where he'd heard the bear trap snapping shut. Drawing the bolt back on his rifle, he waited as the last wisps of the tear gas drifted away... then frowned as he made out Vergil trying to free Emilena from the trap.

His pale, watery eyes hardening, William aimed at the spring just as Vergil started to push it down and pulled the trigger. The bullet slammed off the metal, causing the bear trap to snap back down on Emilena's tail, the teeth biting back through her flesh and crunching the bones in her tail. A split second after, William turned the barrel back on the gecko and fired again, this time putting a round through his left shoulder.

"I like her where she is!" William called out, an ugly, amiable smile stretched across his face as he took a step down the slope leading to the clearing.

Axel nodded, a thrilled grin on his face as Flora flung the car around. "Yeah, I - *ow* - vote we go stealth too - *ow*," he winced as he was thrown repeatedly sideways, his head slamming into the window.

"Agreed," Triste said, tight-lipped as she clutched the backpack tightly. Unzipping it, she pulled out a small, silenced handgun and tossed it back to Axel when the car was relatively level. "That's why I brought these." As she reached in and pulled out another identical gun, Triste tilted her head at Marita. "And agreed." Turning the handgun on the radio, she pressed the barrel against it and fired, blowing it apart in a shower of sparks. The booming heavy metal tones faded away to a whimper then died away. Triste tossed the gun over her shoulder to Marita, and another to Lily then nodded, staring ahead as the countryside started slowly giving way to forest. "We're getting closer."

Rio stared expectantly up front, then frowned when Triste didn't pass him a gun. "Hey! What abo-"

"No way."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 11, 2014, 12:54:08 am**

Thank you' Marita said as the radio died and Triste Tossed her a gun. " both for the gun and er.. 'turning off" the radio. And as for you" she looked at Rio, and her eyes narrowed as she recognized him' After what you did in Bolivia, theres no way in hell i'd ever trust you with a gun, unless that gun was a squirt gun .there are certain things 12 years old should never possess. guns are one of them. She then turned to check the gun she had been given " so how much ammo do each of these guns have? Are we talking 5-6 shots each?' she asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 13, 2014, 10:07:38 pm**

"My stallion!" gasped Flora. "*Nooooooooooo!*" she howled just as loud as the radio had previously been.

"Oh, I...!" Lily fumbled and dropped the pistol, where it bounced to Rio's feet. "No no no, I can't. I'm sorry, I can't fire a gun..." she held her hands up meekly and blushed.

"Now how are we supposed to return the car without the owner knowing we borrowed it?" Flora asked angrily. "If you don't do that, the cops will start investigating! I might as well just drive this straight into that tree!" She pintailed and beelined straight for the tangled trunk of a towering oak.

"Noflorapleasedon't!" Lily grabbed Axel defensively, but Flora spun the wheel and braked so

deftly that they stopped an inch away from the tree.

"Relax," Flora stuck her tongue out. "I had complete control of things the whole time. I'm the best driver your eyes have ever seen!"

Lily stumbled queasily out of the car. She was so focused on not vomiting that she didn't notice the deep dark forest that had haunted her nightmares for months since the Lanthae incident.

Emilena cried out as she heard several of the vertebrae in her tail snap. "Goddammit..." Pulling the jaws apart by an inch, she dragged her tail out slowly and bloodily, leaving a trap full of skin and lumps of fur.

"Vergil, get up." The Kevlar coat deflected the bullet. She hobbled behind the tree. "Keep the trees between us and him!"

Her pace was far slower; she'd never realized just how much she relied on her tail for balance.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 14, 2014, 05:55:47 pm**

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marita slowly got out, and bent over. ' ok.. next time I'M driving' She said as she slowly gathered her wits and glared at flora ' in the meantime i suggest we get looking for vergil. she said and looked at the gun in her claws.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 14, 2014, 08:35:17 pm**

Flora crossed her arms in defiance. "Girlie, I drove a sixteen-wheeler down the Yungas Road while high as a kite. You drive when I'm *dead*!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 14, 2014, 09:12:39 pm**

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high as a kite huh? well I think Flora you'd be a very interesting dinner companion..But.. try hacking into a top flight building security while fighting the effects of biproxytol...? not fun, not easy, but the pay was real nice, so I took it..' Marita said shooting Flora a smirk. after this is over why dont we get acquainted over drinks, my treat? Girls like us need to have some fun after all."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 15, 2014, 01:12:27 am**

As it was, the shot this time did nothing to the kevlar jacket he was wearing, and the gecko managed to stumble back to his feet after Emilena yanked him upwards. He'd have a bruise, sure, but that was the worst of it. "Yeah, yeah!" he replied in a hoarse voice, getting behind a thick trunk even as she said that. Their hunter had exposed himself when taking his step down the slope, though that mattered little since they had nothing to shoot him with.

Behind William and closing fast was Stryker, who took up a position behind a tree once he spotted William's form standing on the slope ahead of him. Inhaling slowly, he steeled himself, calming his heart rate, and slowing his breathing by forcing himself into the technique he'd learned in the Scorched Earth War. The two were certainly making enough noise down in the dell, which was providing enough distraction to fix William on them. He'd kill them after he took care of the human.

Activating the digital cross hairs on his scope, he waited patiently. He'd shoot him as he moved down... or if he stood still. No way was he exposing himself early... just in case...

Behind him, Tony was forced to freeze and duck behind a tree as Stryker flattened himself out against one as well. He was looking back towards the ferret now, so Tony was pinned until the lizard shifted his gaze. Stryker was quite hard to see, mashing up against the tree like that with his insanely good camo. The ferret panted and gripped the Glock tightly in his paws, sweat accumulating on his paw pads the tighter he held the gun.

He'd only get one shot at this... Stryker was far too good to miss more than once... though Tony briefly questioned why he wasn't just approaching the lizard. He was his father's employee after all... but still... he was clearly after someone in these woods, and Stryker was the shoot first, ask questions later. Hell that castle wasn't even owned by his father... which seemed to indicate the lizard was acting alone regarding Emilena... so something was fishy here. He intended to find out just what... then get to the bottom of everything surrounding her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 15, 2014, 05:09:19 pm**

Emilena was so focused on getting Vergil forward she only had a split second to leap back when a Happy Birthday trap swung a board of spikes at her head. As she dodged backwards her foot stepped into a noose which quickly cinched her and swung her through the air, away from Vergil and dangling from her ankle.

"Son of a..." Grasping the rope, she sliced through it with her knife and crashed to the ground. Said ground instantly revealed itself to be hiding a greased ramp that sent her skidding towards what she could only guess was another death trap.

With few other options, she slid the few feet of rope off her ankle and lassoed a tree branch sliding by. As her slicked hands tried to find purchase to get her off the ramp, she hardly had time to catch her breath and figure out whether her slide had delivered her closer or further from William.

"Well, I'm not a hacker, I'm a driver!" Flora stuck her tongue out. "Hacking is easy, Foley hacks shit all the time. Bet you a blowjob you couldn't get us back to the apartment as quickly as I got us here, nerd!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 15, 2014, 06:50:17 pm**

Nerd? i take offense to that..' marita said her face showing a smirk nonetheless. :' Still a challenge huh? alright. how long did it take you to drive us here, in minutes? she asked, ' because getting out of here will probably require driving really fast, especially if vergils captors are on his trial.. now come on. we need to go find him.." marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 15, 2014, 07:27:48 pm**

William tracked the two of them as Emilena dragged Vergil into cover. He hissed in irritation as they disappeared behind the thick protection of a tree trunk... but his scowl twisted into a smile as he heard several of his traps being activated at once. Emilena suddenly swung back into view, upside down, her foot twisted up in a rough coil of rope that stretched up into the trees. Licking his teeth with a slug-like tongue, William was preparing to put a bullet through the kneecap of her caught leg when she suddenly sliced through the rope, falling to the ground and tumbling out of sight down an adjacent slope, crashing through the leafy undergrowth.

Resourceful... William was about to start after her when he heard a slight whisper of movement behind him. Only one person was skilled enough to get that close without him knowing. *But you aren't as quiet as you think you are.* "Nice of you to turn up, Stryker," he called lightly over his shoulder, not turning around. "The lizard's behind that tree," William continued, waving a hand absently towards where Vergil had been taking cover - before suddenly dashing forwards, the trees obscuring him from Stryker's view. *The woman's mine.* Leaping over the edge, he slid down the slope after Emilena.

"There'll be no blowjobs until we get this done," Triste snapped, hopping out of the car and staring into the woods.

Rio smirked at Flora as Marita invited her for drinks. "Go on, why don't you show her how... girls... have fun?" His eye caught Axel trembling as he exited the vehicle. "What the fuck's wrong with you?"

"That was *amazing*!" Axel gibbered excitedly, still shaking as he looked at Flora, his face twitching slightly. "You need to drive more, you need to..." He trailed off as the adrenaline started to wear off and he remembered where they were. Taking a deep breath, he blinked at Lily and put a tentative hand on her shoulder. "Are you... okay? This probably isn't your favourite place in the world..."

Clicking the safety off on her pistol, Triste glanced back, her jaw tightening impatiently. "She'll be fine. We've got to get moving. *Now*. Before it's too late." She tilted her head. "The property should be in that direction."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 16, 2014, 05:06:54 pm**

Emilena saw her captor skidding down towards her. Realizing she had no possible chance of eluding him, she decided to instead tank the percussive damage and wrap herself around him, pinning his weapons to his sides. "Let's see what trap you built at the end of this slide," she growled in his ear, letting go of the rope and sending them both sliding to an unknown fate.

"Oh don't worry," Flora flashed Rio a smirk. "I'm going to leave her *gasping* from all my girl love."

"Come on now, let's stay civil," Lily protested. "We're all on the same team here."

She quaked, looking at the forest. "It's okay..." she whispered to Axel. "I'm all right." She took a deep breath. "Some scary things happened to me in this forest...but I focus on the one thing that was wonderful." She wrapped her hand tightly around his. He knew what event she was talking about.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 16, 2014, 07:29:50 pm**

William and Emilena continued skidding downwards, splashing through patches of wet dirt and mud as they hurtled towards the bottom of the slope. She was *stronger*... stronger than any of the other women he'd entertained. Why hadn't he met someone like her earlier?! He giggled, a high and reedy sound, as she leaned in to growl in his ear. "I hope you like it!" Still grinning, he suddenly lunged his face forwards, his teeth clamping down on her cheek and biting through, tearing away a large strip of flesh.

The end of the slope was fast approaching... along with the concealed, spiked pit. Spitting out a mouthful of blood, William felt Emilena's grip loosen briefly from around his arms. Taking advantage, he slammed his forehead into her nose, then shot an arm out to catch the side of a tree that was shooting past. Pain jolted up William's shoulder as he managed to swing himself free from the slide leading down to the trap... although, as Emilena was still gripping him, she was also dragged free. Together, they tumbled to the bottom and landed with a crash - just to the side of the pit.

Rolling over, William quickly crawled towards Emilena, grotesquely insect-like, grabbed a handful of her hair and dealt her a savage blow to the side of the head with his knee. Clambering on top of her, he wrapped his fingers around her throat and started to press his thumbs inwards, hand shaking from the force he was applying. "*Thank you... so much... for this...*" William panted, his pallid, grey face still stretched in a wide smile. "*Haven't enjoyed myself like this... in so long...*"

Axel gripped Lily's hand back and pulled her into a hug. "Yeah, it was... it was really something. First time I climbed a tree in 15 years!" He smiled and kissed her nose. "And the rest was pretty amazing too." Over Lily's shoulder, Axel saw Triste starting to edge her way into the forest, the shadows thrown by the trees swallowing her up. "Let's get going. The sooner we get this done..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 16, 2014, 08:26:05 pm**

" Is she always this feisty?' Marita asked Rio, before she noticed Trieste heading into the woods. " Better not answer that until this is done with. Need to rescue Vergil after all.' She said as she began walking towards the edge of the forest, her paw now gripped tightly onto the gun Trieste had given her. She followed after Trieste trying to make as little noise as possible as she entered the woods.' the sounds of wildlife were few and far between, this place had the feel of a forest that had been there a long time, and there was somewhat of a dusty smell to it.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 16, 2014, 08:39:21 pm**

Emilena shrieked as his teeth dug into her cheek. With a horrible tearing sound she suddenly felt the wind whistle through her tongue from the wrong direction. Blindly she headbutted him just to clear some space, her hands being too occupied blocking his arms and weapons.

Then abruptly he broke free from her embrace and Emilena cried out as her center of balance shifted and suddenly she was airborne again. A second of free fall and she slammed into the solid dirt with a bone-jarring thud. "God...dammit..." she crawled blindly, disoriented with blood from her wounds stinging her eyes.

And then he was on top of her again. Her vision was filled with stars as he kneed her in the head and jammed his fingers into her windpipe. His guttural hisses sent hot breath across her face, and as her vision transitioned from red to black she got a brief glimpse of his stretched sneer centimeters from her face.

Desperately she clawed his face, but she wouldn't be able to get a handhold before suffocating. She lashed her leg out, but the angle wasn't right for a kick and as the last of her strength ebbed, her foot sank back onto the ground.

...or, onto the wall of the pit beside them. She realized she had one last hope.

Quickly wrapping her arms around him again, Emilena jolted him over and rolled both of them into the pit. William was on the bottom when they crashed into the spikes, and Emilena winced

as his blood stained her fur.

"Hope you...enjoyed it...while it lasted..." she panted in his face, fighting to keep him balanced. He was the only thing keeping her from meeting a similar fate among the second layer of short spikes. "Though you should know you got Stryker's sloppy seconds..."

Lily smiled back at him. "Hopefully this time there will be fewer interruptions from German doctors..." Abruptly she realized they were moving out and followed along nervously behind the others, as this wasn't exactly in her skill set.

Maybe... an odd idea played across her head. Before, when she was in this very forest, her mind connected with Emilena's. She could feel her pain, and used it like a beacon to locate her. Perhaps she could do so again?

She cleared her mind and focused. She tried to feel every soul in the forest. Searching for a soul she'd touched before. Searching for a soul in pain...

After roughly fifteen minutes of walking she gave up. "Well, that didn't work..." she muttered to herself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **December 17, 2014, 01:03:59 am**

Anne had led Soren to a rather grungy looking Chinese eatery in Corona's Chinatown section.

A battered neon sign glowed dimly in the chilly rain. It read "Big Wong's Authentic Cantonese Eatery" in both English and Cantonese. The area around it was best described as "unclean" with bags of garbage ready to be hauled off to the processing facilities to be recycled and reprocessed and rivulets of dirty water running down the streets. Other neon signs advertised stores selling Chinese herbal medicines, food and cybernetics of dubious quality.

"This is the place?" Soren asked as he shivered from the cold air that sliced through his thin jacket.

Anne, wearing a light hooded windbreaker (all of her tops were button-down or had zippers to compensate for her horn implant. Of course, she could just have a horn that she could unscrew from its base) nodded. "Yeah."

The door jingled as she entered the eatery. All around her were various patrons enjoying the filling and cheap Cantonese fare that Big Wong's served.

"Seat yourself," a Panda waiter said as he rushed a large plate of lobster to a group of rough looking Chinese men.

Probably Triad members, Anne thought.

She led Soren over to a battered wood table. In the corner was a shrine to the Kitchen God.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 17, 2014, 11:40:14 am**

William coughed, warm specks of blood spraying out and across his chin. As Emilena lay on top of him, pushing the spikes even deeper into his body. A strange dull feeling started to spread over his chest, numbness that slowly started to give way to an aching burn.

So this is what it feels like to fall in one of these. He opened his mouth to laugh, but his lungs flooded with blood, and all that came out was a choked gurgle. William let his head flop back

as the strength in his neck went, red bubbles foaming through his grinning teeth. The sounds of the forest started to grow clearer, more crisp. The wind rustling through the leaves, branches creaking, insects buzzing and clicking... William closed his eyes and let them wash over him - and then everything went black.

Waiting by the trunk of the tallest tree they'd come across, Triste folded her arms and stared up into the thick, leafy branches as the sound of twigs breaking drifted down. A mist of detritus from the tree rained down, and suddenly Rio stuck his head down through the foliage. After 15 minutes of walking, Triste had sent the boy up into the treetops to scan for any point they should head towards. *No point in wandering around aimlessly.*

Rio nodded his head. "Yeah, I saw something. Some big fucking castle thing. To the..." He waved his hand to the side. "What's the thing between north and west?"

"Ah... north-west?" Axel chipped in. Glancing over in his direction, Rio nodded again enthusiastically.

"Alright. Good. We need to pick up the pace." Gesturing to the others, Triste resumed the trek, moving faster now. Looking over her shoulder at Rio as she walked, Triste pointed up into the trees. "Follow us, but stay high. Come down if you see something else - movement or some other sign of people."

"Got it." Disappearing back into the branches, Axel could make out the sound of Rio scrabbling higher up, the slight groaning of the branches as he used them to swing between the trees monkey-like. The rat cocked an eyebrow at Lily as he started following behind Triste. "That night would've been a lot easier if I could climb stuff like *that*."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 17, 2014, 02:22:37 pm**

At Least we have a direction to head towards' Marita said as she followed after Trieste. 15 minutes of walking had been fruitless, so the only thing she could figure to do was stick close to the others and not get lost. hopefully the folks at this castle are friendly..' She muttered to herself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 20, 2014, 08:21:35 pm**

Vergil was unable to affect the events that unfolded before him. He'd have ran after Emilena, but it was pointless... they were on a slope leading into a trap, and if he chased them, he'd have fallen in as well. He looked around for a way to stop this or save her but it was too late... they rolled over the side. Flinching, Vergil began edging towards the pit, but stopped as he sensed something off...

Tony suddenly spun around from behind the tree, but found his target had 'deserted' his post. "Shit!" he whispered, panning around for Stryker. Where was he... where was he...? His heart pounded in his chest as the ferret desperately sought his quarry. Darting forward, he hoped he wouldn't get shot... but stopped as he saw Stryker taking aim a bit ahead of him, pressed up against the side of another tree as he lined up what looked like... wait was that Vergil? What was he doing out here? Oh shit! He knew what this was!

Bringing his Glock up, the ferret cringed, and fired, striking Stryker squarely in the right backside and most likely puncturing his lung... except for his bulletproof vest. Throwing the lizard against the tree with his shot, Tony fired again, this time hitting the reptile in his throat,

blood spurting out even as he whirled in Tony's direction, firing wildly with his rifle, which of course missed (though it did whiz uncomfortably close to Tony's ear). The look of shock on Stryker's face as he saw his assailant said it all before Tony fired another round right into his face, turning his expression into a mangled mess of gore as he fell back against the tree... then collapsed into a sitting position, clearly dead.

"Vergil?" Tony called, running up to Stryker and kicking him to make sure he was dead.

Vergil's eyes widened upon hearing the voice. "What...? How?" he asked, glancing upward to see Tony.

"I've got a car a short distance away on a side road! We should get out of here... like now! We shouldn't stick around! Stryker rarely works alone!" Tony insisted.

Vergil glanced behind him, and finally managed to jump up onto a ledge overlooking the pit, holding onto a branch for support as he searched for Emilena. "You here that?" he asked. "One of my friends has a car we can use! I'm not sure I can reach you... but..." He worked on breaking off a longer branch, hoping it would be sufficient as he held it down for her to grab onto. "Can you get it?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 20, 2014, 10:47:12 pm**

"You have *friends out here?*" exclaimed Emilena. Nevertheless she wasn't going to complain; William's body had sunken through the spikes to the extent that the tips were driving into her hands and knees.

Her feet got some free acupuncture as she staggered to a precarious standing position. Knowing she'd only have one shot, she leaped off of William's body and dug her claws into the branch. She almost slipped off as Vergil staggered under her new weight, but once she was flush with the pit wall she could use her feet to aid the climb.

"Jesus..." she gasped, catching her breath at the top of the pit. "I heard the gunshots and figured Stryker had killed you...who the hell are your friends?" Not wanting to keep whoever it was waiting, she stumbled forward, using Vergil's large branch as a walking stick. She also grabbed Stryker's torture knife and laser pistol from where they had fallen on the ground; even among probable allies she'd prefer to be armed.

Lily jumped as she heard gunshots. "Over there!" she gasped.

"Emilena!" Flora dropped down onto all fours and sprinted as fast as she could, leading the team at a breakneck pace towards the sound of the gunfire.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 20, 2014, 11:40:26 pm**

The sound of gunfire drew Maritas attention, then she saw Flora run off " flora! Hold up! you have no idea where you are going!' She called before running after her' " If you fall into a trap or something " I'm reaklly going to give yiou a lecture Flora! She said as she broke into a run to try to catch up with the folf.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 21, 2014, 07:56:29 am**

Axel flinched at the sudden cracks in the distance, his eyes widening. "What -" he started to say... but then Flora rushed past him, almost knocking him to the floor in her eagerness to get

to the source of the gunfire.

High above them, Rio suddenly dropped into view, holding onto a branch one handed. "I saw a flash! I saw a flash!" he announced, pointing frantically. "Flora, wait for me!" Pulling himself back up, the leaves started to rustle and shake as he quickly followed her in the treetops.

"Flora!" Triste hissed as the folf dashed off, but she didn't stop. "*Shit...*" Rushing at this pace would almost certainly alert any potential enemies in the woods of their arrival. Flora was way too far ahead for Triste to catch up, but she could at least try to get there in time to deal with the situation if they did wander into a trap. Cloaking herself, she started to give chase to Flora.

Watching the others dash off, Axel pulled out his pistol and gulped, looking at Lily. "Why... why are we *running* towards the sound of guns? That's... ah..." A nervous noise escaped his throat as he could see they were being left behind. "Ah crap... be careful, alright?" he muttered, pulling out the pistol Triste had handed him and struggling to click the safety off.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 22, 2014, 02:26:11 pm**

Tony moved up to them now, shoving his pistol in his waistband. "It's him... one of my erstwhile companions. I'm afraid we don't have much time for chitchat though because he's right... others could be coming. Say... did you encounter any traps on the way in?" Vergil asked the ferret.

"No." He shook his head. "Nothing back the way I came. My car isn't too far off. Come on!" he said, waving them on.

"How are you still alive?" Vergil asked him, taking the sniper rifle as they passed by Stryker's corpse.

"I don't know." Tony confessed, heading through the trees, leaves kicking up under his feet. "I woke up in this priceless classic, saw Stryker driving by, and decided to follow. That's when I saw him basically kidnap Emilena and wondered what he was up to. Was shot at upon arriving at the castle, but uh..."

"Wait... you have no memory after your fall from the cliff?" Vergil asked, pausing, causing Tony to stop as well.

"No..." the ferret replied. "Just pain and... darkness... but I knew I was alive..."

Vergil furrowed his brow. How was this even possible? What if it wasn't really Tony? But then again... why question the ferret who'd just saved their asses? There wasn't time for this. "Let's just get to this car of yours and get back to the others."

Tony nodded, and continued on, and Vergil could indeed see a beautiful black and red vintage automobile just becoming visible through the treeline now. Memory loss... just like his own... were Tony's circumstances similar though? What exactly was going on here? Whatever it was, they could get their answers later... they needed to distance themselves from this place as soon as possible.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 24, 2014, 02:13:20 am**

"Tony?" Emilena repeated, puzzled. The stuffed shirt from Lanthae whose father has tried to have her killed twice now? "I'm sorry, but how do I know you're not just here to rescue Vergil and drop me right back into a mafia dungeon?" She kept a tight grip on her weapons, but did not hold them in a threatening position.

"Emiiiiiii!" Flora came bursting into view, waving her arms wildly. Then she sprang a net trap

which bound her tightly and left her in a hogtie at the top of a tree.

Lily and the others soon came panting into view. Lily quickly worked on freeing Flora while Emilena backed into Vergil, nonplussed. "You weren't kidding when you said you had friends in this forest..." she muttered, observing the sheer number of people that had just arrived.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 24, 2014, 02:41:07 am**

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marita caught up to Flora right after she triggered the trap. " always look where you are going flora, and that way you wont fall into a trap like that. " She sighed , then stopped as she saw Tony. Marita's eyes widened, and her mouth fell open. for a few seconds she was speechless then finally managed to get some words out ' t-TONY? how -- how the heck did you survive that fall? You fell like 5000 feet off a cliff! Look i've heard people have survived falls from ridiculous heights, but thats usually just dumb luck. Ok I want answers.. when we get out of here, i suppose.' She then turned away from Tony and looked at Emilena, and she recognized her. her eyes narrowed, and the emotion on her face evaporated. " so part of this was rescuing... HER? Great.. just great. a rather big detail you left out Flora' she said looked up at the entrapped folf ' But well i guess we can sorta all this out once we get the heck out of here' .
 Suddenly a voice came out of the forest around them." My my ! what wondrous news ! I have guests' a thin reedy voice cackled. ' Just give me a second.." a figure dropped out of trees in front of Tonys parked car. It was a decent-sized wolf, wearing an odd assortment of clothing. ' Rags mixed with leaves, with moss for 'boots, his eyes moved moved back and forth , a grin plastered on his face. "Well well. welcome to my forests! Shame Sryker and william used about half of it to torture or kill people, but hey I managed to grab some stuff from thier bodies " He cackled. " Forgive me, where are my manners? Kojjurro, at your service' He did a mock and flamboyant bow. "

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 24, 2014, 07:55:45 am**

Her eyes passing disinterestedly over the newcomer who'd dropped from the trees, Triste pushed past Lily as she attempted to cut Flora down and stopped in front of Vergil. She started to speak, but then her breath caught in her throat as she saw who was standing beside the gecko. After an almost indiscernible pause, she mentally shook herself, regaining her composure. *I can find out how he's alive later...*

"Tony? What... how are you..." Axel whispered, his mouth dry, eyes wide as he stared at Tony.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?" Triste demanded, turning her attention back to Vergil. She saw his bloody leg and frowned. "You've been shot..." *We need to treat this now.* Triste looked over her shoulder. "Lily! We need you here!"

There was a rustle of leaves, and suddenly Rio dropped through the branches, landing lightly on his feet in front of Emilena. "You're okay! Did you kick their asses?!" Rio hugging Emilena's waist. As he did so, he caught a glimpse of Tony, and the boy froze. "What the *fuck?!*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 27, 2014, 12:59:42 pm**

Vergil ground his teeth as Triste mentioned his wound. "Don't have her waste her energy and cause herself pain... I can heal myself just as easily once the drug they shot me up with wears off. Have her save her strength... and her pain centers. No sense putting her through needless pain." he said, wincing a little as exhaustion and fatigue once again started to overtake him, now that his adrenaline rush had worn off. He began swaying a bit, trying to hold himself upright. "Just... just get me into a car so I can sleep..."

Tony shook his head as he gazed at the others, indescribably pleased at seeing them again. "I can't answer that." he said to both Axel and Marita. "I woke up in that car..." He hooked a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the Duesenberg. "Isn't one of my father's, no idea how I got there... saw Stryker, so decided to follow him. Had to make the choice... I made it." he said, nodding back in the direction of Stryker's mangled corpse. He was keeping things short... in case the others didn't trust him, and also because they needed to move.

He raised his gun as Rio dropped from the trees, almost panicking, as he expected retaliation from the castle at any moment... but relaxed if only slightly upon seeing it was his "executioner." He smirked at the kid, then shrugged, before violently pistol-whipping him across his face. "THAT'S for throwing me off a cliff! It takes more than a little shit-head like yourself to kill me! You try that again I'll blow your brains out!" he waved the gun in Rio's direction before a throaty alarm began roaring from the direction of the castle, penetrating the trees and heralding further doom for them if they stuck around.

"Shit! We don't have time for this!" Vergil groaned. "We have to get out of here NOW! They must realize Stryker's vital signs have stopped so..."

"Right!" Tony nodded and jogged over to the Duesenberg, clambering in behind the wheel. He turned the key, pushed his foot on the starter switch then depressed his heel on the accelerator, letting the big engine rumble to life, causing Vergil to jump a little at the sound.

"I hope you don't mind but... we should ride with him... I don't know if he's genuine yet or not... but I can't freaking walk more than 20 feet right now." Vergil wheezed to Triste. "I need to just... rest... I can scan him when I'm back to full strength..." he muttered, knowing Tony couldn't hear them over the roar of the straight-eight. "I think he's genuine... he killed Stryker after all... so..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 27, 2014, 08:11:56 pm**

The second Tony pistol-whipped Rio, Emilena pointed her laser pistol at him and fired. It didn't work; Emilena had no idea how to cock a laser pistol. So she drew her knife instead approached. "Nobody treats a member of my crew like that and gets away with it," she growled, but then Flora tackled her in a full-body hug that sent her sprawling.

"Emi oh my god you're safe and we helped rescue you I was so worried!!!" She cried openly. Emilena pushed Flora angrily, but the Folf refused to let go. "I was so worried I don't know what I would have done without--"

"Flora! I've got things to deal with that aren't you and your insipid fourth-grade act!" Emilena smacked Flora in the arm with the blunt of her blade in order to free herself. "Get ahold of your hormones and let the adults talk."

Flora staggered back, nursing the new bruise on her forearm. Her eyes widened in shock and her lips tremored. Lily didn't look too pleased as she stepped forward to defend Tony. "Emilena, let's not stab anybody," she said hastily. "Tony just had a score to settle, and now it is, so let's all be on the same team here and just get in the car..."

Emilena glanced at the vintage Dusenberg and a wicked smile played across her face. "You're right..." she leered. "Let's go to the car."

Lily gratefully climbed into the backseat, and Emilena took her knife and scratched a long silver gash in its elegant chassis from trunk to hood making sure to hit the door as well "*That's* for holding Rio over the cliff side in the first place! Since apparently schoolyard hazing is the level you consider for settling grievances."

Lily pursed her lips. "Honestly, is everybody on this team twelve?"

Flora was the last to enter the car. Her eyes were glazed and unfocused, and she shivered with the dull pain completely unrelated to the growing bruise.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 27, 2014, 09:15:30 pm**

It wasn't the scratching that pissed Tony off... it was Emilena. He'd never liked her in the first place, and liked her even less now. He didn't own the car, so he couldn't give a shit what happened to it but this... he elbowed her violently in the face and shoved his pistol there a moment later. "All right you know what? I'll fucking kill you right now you damn bitch! YOU were the reason I held him over the cliff in the first place!" he snapped. "YOU were the one going through our shit and throwing it over the edge WITHOUT explaining yourself. YOU were the one coming after us! So yeah! I'll blow your fucking head off and do the world a favor!" He shouted, preparing to fire if she tried anything... the slightest twitch.

Vergil had limped into the backseat next to Lily by now, but he grimaced at the exchange, then gave her a soft smile. "How you been, Lily?" he asked.

"I came here to save your ass." he heard Tony saying. "But as usual, it wasn't an ass worth saving... so you can just do me a favor and fucking walk. Good luck with the mob." He said, throwing the car into gear and moving off down the road now.

"Hey wait!" Vergil called. "Aren't we...?"

"They clearly came in a vehicle. They can go back to it." Tony snapped. "I'm not taking any shit anymore. She can walk. Or get shot by the goon squad. I don't fucking care." he said, shrugging here.

"Right..." Vergil murmured, resting his head against the back of the rather comfortable seat and closing his eyes.

"We're getting the hell out of here first and foremost... then we'll talk about what comes next." the ferret snarled, up shifting to second and increasing speed as the speedometer climbed rapidly.

"You want to tell us WHERE your vehicle is?" Vergil asked Flora. "We'll drop you off wherever it is."

"No promises though... I don't know this area well... and no funny business you got it? I hate your boss, not you." Tony added.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 27, 2014, 10:18:15 pm**

"Hate to break it to you Tony," Emilena smiled and folded her arms. "We're on the same team now. Vergil and I just survived some shit that would have left you on the dungeon floor, and since his last team couldn't handle a 13-year old without a teammate stumbling off a cliff, it's not world-saving material right now."

She sat defiantly in the backseat behind Lily. "You can harbor a grudge, god knows you're not the only one. But if you're spending your second life saving the world, you're spending it with me and my gang."

Lily glanced at Vergil. "You want Emilena on the team? I mean...I know your old team kinda failed you...but Soren won't be happy."

She wrapped her arms around Flora. "But you aren't dropping Flora anywhere, Tony. I need to talk to her."

"I don't wanna talk..." Flora muttered hollowly.

"Yeah, could we get some heals please?" Emilena interrupted Lily. She and Vergil were getting blood all over the upholstery. "We've been stabbed, shot, and manhandled all night."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 27, 2014, 10:27:02 pm**

"I'm on the fence about that in all honesty." Vergil muttered, looking at her here. "Nothing personal, but just because we survived an ordeal doesn't mean I want you on the team. Hell I don't even know if I want a team anymore. As you so pointed out, Tony fell off a cliff, but you're little better. I can't trust you, and that's just something that doesn't come with escaping together from a castle." he stated bluntly. "The only way NOT to get anyone else killed is if I don't take anyone else along, it's that simple. You didn't exactly explain WHY you were looting our stuff. Or what you were doing there in the first place. For all I know... you're a Kalis plant."

He held up his hand. "No healing. Save your strength and pain. I don't want you to suffer over me. I'm not worth it, so I'm going to have to insist. Heal her... don't heal me." Vergil shook his head. "I'll manage... once I'm back up to full strength."

The car tore through the woods, Tony pushing it up to 75. "Yeah it's like you said. As for me well... I simply hate you. No way I'd work with you anyway. And fine... you wanna cut me loose?" Tony asked acidly, looking in the rear view mirror now. "Go right ahead... hell I'm used to it by now."

Vergil said nothing to this, feeling nothing further needed to be said. He kept his lips pursed, and his eyes forward.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 27, 2014, 10:42:07 pm**

Emilena scoffed. "Yeah, because a Gecko with no powers is going to get really far on his own."

"I have an idea," Lily suggested. "Vergil can read Emilena's mind and find out everything he wants to know. She can't hide her true loyalties from a mind reading."

"Yeah, but he doesn't have his powers right now," Emilena pointed out.

Lily grasped Vergil by the hand. "I can fix that." Closing her eyes, she found the chemical blockade restricting his psi abilities and broke it down into inactive elements. "There. Now there's no hiding the truth."

Emilena shrugged. "Read away. I got nothing to hide."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 27, 2014, 11:18:14 pm**

Triste stared at Emilena, then gave a slight shrug and looked across at Vergil. "Do it. If she's really not thinking of going against us, then it might not be a bad idea to keep her around. She's shown that she's at least capable of surviving... and that's something our team desperately needs right now." She tilted her head, her eyes passing dismissively over Axel. "Vergil and I are the only ones on the team at the moment who have the necessary skill set to deal with whatever the mission might throw at us."

"Hey! I'm not *that* helpless..." Axel spluttered.

"And once you've read her, you need to take a look at *him*," Triste continued, switching her attention to the driver's seat. "Because, right now, Tony's the one who's worrying me the

most. Nobody should have survived what happened to you." Her eyes narrowed. "And yet, here you are. In perfect health. Right next to where Vergil was being held captive. That didn't just happen on its own -someone or something had a hand in that. But who? And why?"

"Guys, just... look, we shouldn't be pointing fingers. Not right now, anyway! We just... We need to focus on getting ourselves out-" Axel attempted.

Rio interrupted, his voice nasally from the hand he had clasped over his bloody, swollen nose. "Yeah! What the fuck is up with that, huh? *You fell off a fucking cliff!*" The boy glared daggers at the adult ferret who'd pistol whipped him. "If someone's a... a kasis plant, it's probably *you!*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **December 27, 2014, 11:20:23 pm**

"That's not necessary." Vergil murmured, almost recoiling from Lily, but allowing her to do her thing. He nodded, feeling a flood of abilities streaming back to him. He closed his eyes, pretending to rest, but scanning Emilena while doing so. A sudden revelation caused him to pause, and open his eyes. Her son? That's what this was about? But... Why not tell everyone?

Narrowing his eyes, he watched the trees whiz by, Tony not slowing. He saw a vehicle coming up through the trees, and started to finally slow. Downshifting, he pulled the Duesenberg to a halt, frowning. "All right, everybody out. This it... Since I'm clearly being whatever it is."

Vergil pursed his lips, and thought a moment. "I'll ride along." He stated.

"To where?" Tony asked with disdain. "I'm dumping this car and disappearing."

"There isn't going to be room." Vergil said simply, waiting for the others to exit.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **December 28, 2014, 02:39:49 am**

The squeaky tones of a badly out-of-tune erhu played by a poor musician drifted through the greasy air like the incense smoke from the shrine in the corner.

Soren's stomach rumbled. The menu he was reading was in English but it was obvious the translator just shit out a copy as fast as possible. How else could "Explosively Fried Black Cod With Dried Pineapple Sweet and Sour Sauce" be turned into "Exploding Black Fish With Fucked Pinapple"?

"Who translated this menu? Some drunks?" the Human muttered.

Anne was reading the Cantonese menu. "Soren!" she hissed. "You don't want to go saying shit about this place!" She indicated with her horn to a group of serious looking Chinese men who were busy enjoying glasses of *baijiu* (a potent Chinese liquor made from sorghum) and playing majjhong.

Soren looked around the grimy eatery. Seeing as most of the customers and staff were rough-looking individuals, he wisely decided to shut up.

A Dhole came over to take their orders and replenish their mugs of tea.

Not waiting for Soren to order, Anne spoke up: "*Goi haw, bak jaam yui. Ei nea Yep Bun bat gok.*" ("I want white-cut fish with Japanese star anise.")

The waiter nodded and gestured for the two to follow him. They were then led into the back of the eatery, past the kitchen and pantries until they had arrived at a bland but clean banquet room. Brushed stone Chinese dragon and pheonix sculptures provided the only decor.

Soren took a seat at the table as did Anne. A few minutes later, six men walked (or in one case, slithered) into the room. One of them, a large Chinese man with gleaming metallic hands, took a seat. This was Ruozheng "Rory" Zhao, one of the *Bak Long*'s enforcers. His fellow Triad members seated themselves after he did.

"I assume you both are here for business?" Rory Zhao said. His voice was calm and cool. He had a noticable accent but his words were still understandable.

Soren opened his mouth but Anne roughly elbowed him. "Let me do the talking!" she whispered.

Anne nodded. "Yes. But I am not here for my drugs or anything. What I am looking for is information."

Rory templed his metallic hands. "I see. That doesn't come cheap but I'm a reasonable man. I'm willing to negotiate."

He turned to three of his associates. "Jin, Geeming, Leishing, get the chefs to prepare some *dim sum* and *haing pen cha*."

The three mentioned associates left the room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **December 28, 2014, 07:29:18 pm**

In the pause that followed after Vergil finished speaking, Axel glanced at the others then started to reach for the door handle.

"No." As Triste spoke up, Axel paused, his hand falling from the handle. Triste gave a slight shake of her head. "You seem very eager to leave us all of a sudden, Mr Stracci. Almost as soon as we mentioned using Vergil to check you aren't... different." Her jaw tightened. "I don't like not knowing how you got here without a mark on you. After falling over the edge of a *cliff*. You could have been tampered with, or if not that, then cloning isn't especially hard to accomplish." She leaned forward, her hand settling in her lap. Her silenced gun glinted in the fading light.

"If you *have* become an informant for whoever's responsible for your... timely reappearance, then I can't risk you running back to them." She nodded her head in Vergil's direction. "And I'm not leaving Vergil alone with you. So until we find out if you're genuine, I'm not going anywhere."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **December 28, 2014, 08:09:51 pm**

"Yeah, seriously." Emilena folded her arms and followed Triste's lead at not leaving the car. She spared an appreciative glance at the gecko. It was nice to see other competent females who didn't screw around, especially ones who gave Tony a hard time. "We all saw Tony die, Triste is right to think something fishy's going on. But the part about Tony wanting to run off is just him being him. Did he ever tell you about his short-lived Purifier career?"

"Did you read Tony's mind?" Lily asked Vergil quickly, cutting off Emilena before she'd continue her story. "What did you find?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **December 29, 2014, 03:11:58 am**

Marita sat in the back , next to flora. "flora, if you need someone to talk to, i'd be willing to talk.' she said softly as they were driven back to the SUV that Flora had stolen and driven them here. ' If i may say a few things Tony ' she spoke up, not yet leaving the car.. ' the truth is, regardless of our personal animosities towards each other, we find ourselves on the same side at the moment. Emilena isnt exactly my favorite person on earth, but unfortunately we're kinda stuck with her for now. our teams.. have merged for lack of a better term. We don't have to like it, and clearly you dont. but.. for now we are going to have to work together. Besides, you and I have some unfinished business between us. before your incident with Rio, you asked me out on a date. And.. I'm holding you to that now. just pick a place for us to go, your choice.' she finished.
_ Kojurro jumped down from the top of the Dusenburg. He had jumped on top of it as the others had climbed in and had ridden on top along the way.' you lot arent getting rid of me that easily ' he cackled. ' yes, yes, not that easily ' he laughed as he made his way towards the SUV and climbed in, a trail of leaves in his wake.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 01, 2015, 06:08:10 pm**

"I didn't die..." Tony quickly corrected Emilena. "I was still alive after I hit... THAT I know... you weren't there, moving on." he said, brushing aside her uninformed comment. He stayed silent as Marita spoke before Vergil chimed in. A date? That's right... he'd asked her out that day hadn't he? Well then...

"Yes. I didn't find anything. He's not a clone, he's not a someone else, and he's not hiding anything. As far as his health, he's in near perfect physical condition, from what I can tell. Someone with say... my abilities could've easily healed him... but we don't know many like that, do we? The second option is he was subjected to advance gene and nanotechnology therapy, which is quite expensive. And that's not to say either of you is off the hook." He looked pointedly at Emilena here. "A skilled psionic can easily mask their intentions. Since we know Tony isn't one, and I'm pretty sure you're not, you seem to both be in the clear, seem being the key word... as for anything out of the ordinary with our ferret friend, I detected nothing, but I'd need something specific to look for." he stated.

"If I were say looking for something the size of a cell... I'd need considerably more time. Anyway, he's clean, so far as I can tell. However, it seems SOME of us..." he glanced in Emilena and Lily's direction. "Had ulterior motives they did not immediately make clear to this group that endangered the mission... to say nothing of the needless and stupid conflict that occurred on the North Yungas Road." Something in Tony's recovery made Vergil wonder about things though... like why couldn't the gecko remember his own past? What was blocking it? Why were his memories... incomplete? Why did he feel like two people sometimes instead of one?

"So... rather than waste times in pointless debates while the castle's forces surge on towards us... I suggest we get out of here and unite. It's worth our time instead of what happened in Bolivia." he stated bluntly.

"Wish I could double back to the castle..." Tony murmured, staring at the chrome dashboard. "I'd love to have that Cord and its semi-automatic transmission, as opposed to having to double clutch."

"But you CAN double clutch, yes?" Vergil asked now.

"Yeah, sure I can. I'd just prefer not to." Tony answered.

"So long as you CAN... but I mean... my knowledge of this is like nil but... why is it a problem?"

"It's not." Tony responded now, shaking his head. "Forget it! I just remembered you DON'T have to downshift if you come to a stop. So forget it. It's fine." he said quickly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 01, 2015, 08:49:37 pm**

Plates of steaming hot catfish dumplings, *ha fun* (rice noodles wrapped around shrimp and covered in sweet soy sauce as well as a large plate of Buddha's Delight were carried into the room along with plates for everyone. A standard metal teapot and porcelain mugs were next.

Geeming, a large Taiwanese Habu spoke. "We hope you enjoy the meal." He took his position back in the seat.

To show the food wasn't drugged, Rory poured himself a some tea and grabbed some steamed fish balls. He ate the fish ball and drank the tea, loudly swallowing as he did so. "Now then, what information do you want?"

Soren tentatively used his fork (since both he and Anne where non-Chinese, forks had been provided instead of chopsticks) to spear a fish and shrimp ball.

Anne sipped her tea. "We're looking for someone." She reached in her pocket for a picture of Vergil.

Rory swallowed his mouthful of Buddha's Delight. He examined the picture and passed it over to a short but muscular Jinhong Horse. Interestingly, his emerald colored corundum subdermal armor was slightly visible underneath his skin (though that may have had to do with the cosmetic LEDs implanted with the armor. Coupled with the twin "horn antennae" (looking more like Deer antlers than unicorn horns), the equine looked remarkably like the *Qilin* of Chinese myth.

The stallion examined the picture and then spoke. "What are you exactly looking for?"

Anne refilled her teacup. "We want to know his phone number and address."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 02, 2015, 01:53:50 am**

Emilena shrugged. "Getting out of here and uniting with the rest of the team sounds fine to me. Flora says they're at an apartment or something." She glanced at Lily for confirmation.

To her surprise Lily had turned away from the group, trying to conceal a flushed red face. She was doing everything in her power to mask her anger at how flippant Vergil had just behaved toward the topic of Ejlert. Ulterior motives? That's how he chooses to describe an attempt to save her son's life? But she knew Vergil would just insult her passive-aggressively were she to try talking to him, like he always does.

Sometimes she wondered why she's placing all her trust in him...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 02, 2015, 02:11:38 am**

They are at the apartment I share with Soren and the girls Marita said. " speaking of which i need to call them to let them know we've found Vergil and are bringing him back. we'll hash out everything over supper. When was the last time you guys ate?' she added turning to Tony, Emilena and Vergil " Rose makes a mean pot pie,big and filling. we should have enough of them to feed everyone. there's about 20 of us... on second thought, we might have to run to the store to grab some more.. anyway, dinner is on me tonight.." Marita offered.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 02, 2015, 02:17:35 am**

"Ahem ANYWAY..." Tony said, idling the car as he pushed the choke in. "We're overcrowded in here as is. That's why I kind of drove up to the SUV you guys arrived in. Those staying can ride with me... otherwise like I said... we're just wasting time and allowing more time for the search patrols to find us. As for when I last ate... I have no idea. I only woke up in this car a few hours ago."

Vergil stayed put, as he'd already stated his intention to ride along. He could sense Lily's... uncertainty bordering on anger over his statement, but knew she'd recklessly endangered his entire team by hiring Emilena in the first place, which did absolutely nothing but contribute to their woes on the North Yungas Road. It was tactically unsound, and given his viewing of looking at the bigger picture, needless. He couldn't fault her of course for wanting to save her son... but not telling them put them all at risk... and nearly cost one of them his life. Trading one life for another was not acceptable, at least not to him. Besides, she should've come to him first and foremost regarding this matter, seeing as how he'd had the only connection to Kalis in this entire group.

He didn't look at her anymore though, instead choosing to rest his head against his hand, the elbow on that arm resting against the door. He stared blankly ahead, knowing this was quite possibly something Kalis could use to full effect against them later on, which made her more of a liability than an asset but... he'd worry about that when and if it came up. Kalis could just as easily kill Eljert as use him against the group... either way, he'd do everything in his power to prevent that... and ensure a mother wouldn't have to see her son suffer grave consequences... he had to protect them all if he could from this point on... no more deaths... everyone had to come home satisfied...

"This morning." was all Vergil said in response to Marita's question. He wasn't feeling particularly hungry though... more nauseous than anything else.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 02, 2015, 02:43:42 am**

' fair enough' Marita said getting out of the car ' I'm driving the SUV. Whos coming with me? First call, gets the passenger seat.' She smirked as she headed over towards the SUV, not noticing that Kojurro had climbed onto the top of the vehicle and was holding on to it.

Marita opened the drivers side door, climbed into the seat and pulled out her phone and called the apartment, and in a few seconds Marie picked up the phone and answered ' Hey Marie, its Marita. We managed to find Vergil. hes safe, we're on our way back. picked up a few guests as well, could you and Rose make some pot pies? We'll need about 20 or so.. Run to the store if you need to, just put it on my credits card. And call Soren if hes out, to let him know we've found him."Marita said Will do ' Marie replied ' I'll do that right after you hang up. Soren's out, where i dont know, but i'll call him. he has his cell phone." See you in a bit" Marita finished the call and put her cell away before starting the engine and waiting for those coming with her to climb in.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 02, 2015, 03:16:16 am**

Flora didn't answer Marita's question, just continued staring blankly into space. Lily, however, answered firmly, "I'll drive with you Marita," and left the car without another look back.

Emilena rolled her eyes. "What's her problem?" She scooted over so she could take up two seats and stretch out. "Seriously, let's get this show on the road. Never seen a car escape this slow. You guys clearly have never done a drug run."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 02, 2015, 07:11:07 am**

Following Lily into the second car, Axel pulled the door shut and put a hand on her knee. "Hey, look... don't worry about it, alright? We'll find Ejlert. It doesn't matter what he says." His ears prickling uncomfortably, he glanced out the window at the other vehicle. *Something's wrong...* He was elated at seeing his friend alive again, but...

He shook his head. "Get us out of here Marita."

In the first car, unconcerned at Lily storming out, Triste slowly pulled her pistol back, not quite confident that Tony was completely safe, but satisfied that he probably wouldn't try anything at the moment. Still... she'd be keeping an eye on him.

"Anyone got a smoke?" Rio complained. "I could kill for a joint right now."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 02, 2015, 03:27:05 pm**

Tony immediately threw the car into gear, accelerating rapidly down the road. "And YOU'VE clearly never raced a Duesenberg Model J before." Tony replied. "This thing can STILL run up with some of the best modern vehicles. Anyway no smoke... I woke up with nothing on me." he explained. "Though believe me... if I had one I'd gladly surrender them." He smiled to himself here. *Anything to kill you faster and shorten your lifespan* he thought.

Vergil leaned over the seat to look at what Tony was doing. "So... how do you double clutch exactly?"

"I'll show you..." Tony stated, increasing speed now to the point he'd need to up shift. "So like... it basically means you need to shift into neutral than shift into your gear. So press the clutch once... shift into neutral..." He demonstrated as he began to move into second gear. "Press the clutch a second time, shift into second... and there you have it! We should be good for the rest of the trip since these babies can go up to 95 mph in second gear alone... unheard of even with some more recent cars." Vergil nodded, noting they were cruising along at about 60 for now, as this road wasn't exactly straight, but did bend and curve every so often.

"You know funny you asked... you bring up an interesting point... you can tell a lot about a car like this if you wake up in one suddenly after a month of sleeping. Like for example... when I started it up, I didn't need to use the choke... meaning someone had driven the car recently before I woke up in it." Tony explained.

"How do you mean?" Vergil inquired.

"Well you only need to choke your car if it's a cold start... if the engine's warm, no choking is necessary. So... I didn't just get set in the car... someone drove it with me inside to the alleyway, and left me there."

"I see... any way to check this vehicle?" Vergil asked. "Like trace it?"

"Um... probably not, given that they're rare, but that means they're easy enough to conceal. You pay with cash, forget it. Plus you don't need to register these cars anymore... they're relics. My dad never had to register any of his. So... doubtful, unless it was like a museum piece or something." Tony shrugged here.

"Wonder if I should keep this..." Vergil murmured.

"Eh?" Tony asked.

"I don't have a vehicle at present. I take public transportation."

"It's probably more trouble than it's worth." Tony chuckled. "You have to have a real appreciation for it, and well the gas too isn't cheap. AND you need to know how to drive a

manual."

"I'll think about it..." Vergil stated, glancing out the window again as the trees suddenly ended and green fields stretched out on either side of the car.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 02, 2015, 08:28:27 pm**

Marita pulled the SUV out from where Flora had parked it and drove off , aiming to get back to the apartment in a decent time. the SUV rapidly gained speed as Marita shifted it into higher gear. Marita tiore through the cornfield ans was soon back on the road. ' How are you guys doing? she asked glancing at the mirror in the middle of the front row of seats which showed Axel and Lily. " well, i didnt expect to run into Emilena or Tony again, but i figure we'll get explanations and stories once we get back to the apartment. Rose and Marie are cooking dinner, hope you guys like pot pies. they're big, flaky and full of big chunks of meat.' Marita grinned.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 03, 2015, 12:24:18 am**

Lily took a few deep breaths. "I'm doing...fine Marita." She looked away. Her eyes met Axel's and she flushed red, knowing he'd see right through any attempts he made to mask her anger.

She needed to get things under control. She wasn't sure why she even lashed out like that, it was just...a buildup of her frustration at a seemingly endless pattern of failed attempts to accomplish anything. Emilena's unpleasant behavior riling teammates up didn't help.

She grabbed her husband's hand and silently debated whether they should both just run away and leave Vergil and his team to their fates. After all, who would miss her? Nobody on the team had ever expressed anything beyond ambivalence towards her. Vergil had even denied her the opportunity to heal him, pointing out that he was more than capable of psionic healing himself. To her, that remark was yet another slap in the face.

She was silent for the majority of the car ride. Near its completion, it was only the sour acceptance that she would be leaving Ejlert to his fate that kept her from storming from the car into the night and never looking back.

"We get it, you have a hard-on for vintage cars..." Emilena yawned. "If I ever start caring I'll go watch *Antiques Roadshow*. Though I'd definitely watch Vergil try to drive stick shift, *that* would be legitimately entertaining."

She glanced out the window as they neared the apartment. "So, who on the team hasn't managed to get themselves killed yet? We had a betting pool among the gang, I've got two hundred down that Soren didn't survive Bolivia."

She shifted in her seat and winced painfully. She needed to get Lily on healing her up as soon as possible...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 03, 2015, 01:07:42 am**

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marita looked back at lily, and a frown spread on her face ' You ok lily?' you've been awfully quiet. is there something wrong? I'm not a psionic like you, i cant tell what people are thinking..you have to tell me ' she added, as she pulled down a street which was close to the apartment. She hadnt gotten back as fast as Flora had gotten them to the forest, and Marita

supposed she'd have to spend some credits on the folf to pay up for losing their bet. marita turned into the parking area in front of the apartment.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 03, 2015, 01:09:35 pm**

The stallion tapped his chopsticks against his chin. "So all you know is his appearance and first name? By the way, that cell phone number you gave me is a prepaid one. It won't lead you to him."

Anne nodded. "That's all we know."

The Equine templed his hands. "Well, with what we have, I may be able to get some information. However, it won't be cheap and I can't garuntee success. If you'll pay the upfront fee of 75,000 credits, I can try. If I succeed, I expect an additional 115,000 creds. If I fail, half of upfront fee will be refunded."

Soren's eyes widened at the cost. What the Triad member was asking was almost literally half a year's profit from him and his roommates."

"50,000 up front. And 95,000 if you succeed," Anne said.

The equine shook his head. "70,000 up front and 110,000 or no deal!"

"64,000 up front. And 100,000!"

The "*qilin*" smiled. "69,000 up front and 105,000!"

"68,500 creds up front and 103,750 creds for success. That's my final offer!" Anne exclaimed.

"Very well, I accept. Now the cred vouchers."

Soren turned to Anne. "Anne! We can't afford that! That's like half a year's income for all of us!"

Anne's ears splayed in embarrassment. "Oops. Sorry. I just realized we can't afford the cost."

Rory then spoke up as waiters cleared the dishes away. "I see. Then this meeting is over. Please pay for the meal at the register. The Taiwanese Habu passed the duo their checks.

Anne and Soren exited the back room and passed by the patrons. In front of them at the cash register was a Giant Panda with an order of white-cut catfish with scallion and ginger.

Outside, Marion was eating some rice and soy sauce catfish. A partially empty teapot of pu-erh tea was next to her.

She scowled as she saw a Human and an Augment Shetland Pony pass by her. She discreetly snapped a photo of them with a camera concealed in her clothing.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 04, 2015, 10:18:00 pm**

Axel saw Lily flush red as she looked at him, and he squeezed her hand back, trying to offer what comfort he could until they were in more of a position to discuss things. *He had no right to say that...* he thought grimly, remembering what Vergil had said before they'd changed cars. *It's not like he's been the perfect teammate...* The rat's stomach tightened. Somehow, they were all going to *have* to talk things over - there was no way they could continue like

this, with all these barriers being thrown up between them. Axel swallowed. *Damn it... Since when did this become so hard?*

He felt the car slowing, and as he snapped out of his thoughts and looked out the window, he saw they were pulling up outside of Marita and Soren's apartment. "Thanks Marita."

"Mr. Almaya is still alive," Triste said distractedly. "At least, he was the last time I saw him."

"Ha!" Rio crowed triumphantly. "I told you! Pay up, Emi!" Glancing over at her, the boy saw that she really looked like she was in pain - what the hell had happened up at that castle? "Actually... Forget about it. I can just beat you at something else," he said, trying to make her feel better, as ineffectual as it might be.

Trieste leaned forward towards Vergil as they neared the apartments. "The people who kidnapped you... Do you think they could come for you again? The last thing we need on top of everything else is the mob tailing us."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 05, 2015, 06:01:41 pm**

Tony got onto the highway and drove the roughly 35 minutes it took to get back to Corona proper, though fortunately none of his long term memory had been affected by whatever it was that was holding him in its grip, and he knew the way to Marita's.

"How should I know?" Vergil responded to Triste's question. "I wasn't expecting to get grabbed by them in the first place, nor did it make any sense for them to grab me. I can't answer that." He shrugged, really not knowing what the mob's interest in him was.

Tony took the shortest freeway to the apartment, wondering what he should do with the car. Probably dumping it was the best option... just in case. Who knew where it had come from, or if it was "hot" or not.

He pulled up in front of the apartment, looking up at it pensively. Vergil raised a brow, then exited the vehicle. "I honestly have no vested interest in a group dinner, to be quite frank with you." he told Triste. "But I since I have no alternate plans... unless you can come up with something, I suppose it's unavoidable. To be honest though, I still feel like vomiting."

"I think I'm gonna go dump this car then get a cigarette and go for a walk or something... head over to my father's and tell him I'm alive." Tony stated, staying in the car for now as he waited for the others to exit.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 06, 2015, 12:08:06 am**

"I'm sure Marita's cooking will help you in that regard," Emilena remarked over her shoulder to Vergil; she was first out of the car and already bee-lining for the door.

The inhabitants of the apartment were no doubt surprised when Emilena was the first person to march through their door. Wasting no time with pleasantries, she opened their cupboards and began eating whatever she felt like, trying to keep herself from passing out.

Lily, still in the car with Marita, took a deep breath. "I'll talk to you about it later..." she told Marita. "Let's just get inside and recover from tonight."

She walked into the house at roughly the same time Emilena had finished her meal. "You," Emilena jabbed her finger at Lily as soon as she saw her. "Medical. Now."

Lily sighed. "Let's get some privacy." She led Emilena into the back of the apartment, Marita's computer room. "This is going to make you feel sleepy," she warned. "Your body is running almost entirely on adrenaline, and once I level that out..."

"Hold it," Emilena said hastily, glancing around the guest room. "I'm not sleeping with the others." After rummaging through Marita's boxes and locating a superheating conductor plate, she climbed out onto the balcony, hoisted herself onto the next floor down and burnt a small hole in the sliding glass window.

"What the hell are you doing?" Lily hissed, precariously following her patient into the uninhabited apartment. The lack of living materials beyond standard furniture indicated this apartment wasn't currently rented out. Emilena had already stumbled into the shower, quickly turning the water to maximum heat and rinsing her entire body of as much of the grime, blood and filth as possible. She sighed as the scorching water rolled down her fur and numbed her nerves.

"Hellooo?" Lily tapped her foot impatiently. "Emilena, you can do this *after* I've healed you and gone back to the others! I'm really not interested in your crap right now!"

Emilena poked her head out. "Jesus, what the hell's eating you?"

"I hired you to locate and rescue Ejlert, not drop off the face of the Earth and mess around with Vergil!" Lily ripped the curtain aside and wrenched the shower off. "Get on the bed;" she ordered, jabbing her finger, "you get bare minimum heals because I don't feel like looking as if I went through a wood chipper. Not for you."

"Hey, I was following the best lead I had!" exclaimed Emilena angrily, crossing to the bedroom and flopping onto the bed. "You said Vergil was trying to relocate Kalis, right? That means my best chance at reaching Kalis was Vergil! And still is, by the way, why else would I be wasting my time with these--"

"--*No!*" Lily shouted, face turning red, "There's tailing someone for info, and *then* there's raiding their cars and getting someone killed, drugging them on a cruise ship for shits and giggles, and then acting like a prick after they rescue you!"

"Hey, nobody rescued me back there!" Emilena sat up angrily. "Not Tony, not Vergil! *I* saved my own hide from that mafia dungeon!"

"Yeah?" Lily glowered. "What about the time before that?"

Emilena grew silent. Lily pushed the vulpine onto her back and leaned in close.

"Back in Lanthae, you told me that you had a life debt to me," she muttered darkly, face millimeters away from Emilena's. "Well, I don't think you're pulling your weight. As of right now, you better stop all the attitude, stop horsing around because you like pissing people off, and start focusing on the thing I hired you for." Her hand shot out around Emilena's neck and she sucked the remaining energy out of her body. Emilena gasped but she literally couldn't even lift a muscle.

"If Ejlert dies because of your actions," Lily threatened at barely a whisper, "I'll kill you myself." With a flash, Lily stemmed Emilena's bleeding and reset the sprain in her ankle, but offered no recovery beyond that. Leaving the fox gasping for breath on the bed, Lily crossed to the apartment door, unlocked it, and returned upstairs.

As she approached Marita's door, she regarded her new open wounds, hidden under her layers of clothing. Why didn't they feel like they were healing...?

Flora tiptoed into the kitchen. "Wh-where's Emi?" she asked nervously.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 06, 2015, 01:33:00 am**

marita entered the apartment after Lilly and Emilena. " Hi girls ' she said tired. ' we're back. are the pot pies ready?'
_ almost done' Rose said from the kitchen. " they'll be ready in 5 minutes."
- Marie looked at flora.' Is Emi the fox that just went through here? i think shes in the guest room ' she said giving Flora a smile. " dinner should be ready in a few minutes, and if you need the shower, theres one in each of our rooms. So if you need to clean up, go ahead. I'm Marie" she smiled.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 07, 2015, 08:24:59 pm**

Triste shook her head. "No, I don't have any other ideas. I don't exactly want to play happy families either but..." She shrugged, looking up to study Marita's apartment block. "At least this'll give us time to get our heads together. Come up with a plan for our next move." She glanced at Tony, her eyes settling on his. "Make sure you aren't followed," she warned.

In the apartment, Rio was busy rifling through Marita's cupboards. "Don't you have any pop-tarts?!" He looked across incredulously at Rose. "The fuck is this?!"

Axel popped his head in the doorway. "Rio! Stop that, they said we'd be eating soon!"

"Goddamn it..." Rio sighed, straightening. "No pop-tarts... *Your* shitty cigarettes..." He waved an accusatory finger in Axel's direction.

"My..." The rat patted his trousers, ears drooping, then started when he saw the corner of his cigarette packet poking out of Rio's pocket. "Jesus, give those back! If Lily knows I've started again..." Darting forward, he snatched them out of the boy's pocket then held them up, far out of the reach of Rio's grasping fingers. "And apologise!"

Rio stopped trying the snatch the cigarettes back and frowned. "What the fuck for?"

"For acting like a jackass to these guys when they're about to cook you a meal! For them letting you in! They didn't have to."

"So fucking what? I..." Rio stopped, his face frozen mid-scowl. As he looked around at the others, his expression slowly slackened. He sighed, then looked in Rose's direction, his eyes fixed on the floor. "I'm... sorry." The word felt alien coming out of his mouth.

Nodding, Axel turned and grinned at Flora. "You know, he tries to act tough, but the night he stayed with me and Lily, I saw him sucking his thumb in his sleep."

Rio blanched. "I knew you were there, I... I was pretending..." he trailed off, unsure what he could say next.

The front door clicked open as Triste let herself in. Her head was tilted disapprovingly. "This building has extremely bad defences," she stated.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 07, 2015, 10:05:54 pm**

if you want pop tarts we can get you some " Rose replied to Rio. ' I'll go in the morning and get you some. What flavor do you want?'

this place isnt built for defense. Marita replied to Treiste. "if you want top end security and defense systems, well we dont have nearly the creds for anything approaching top of the line. if we made more creds, then we could worry about that. In any event, dinner is the more pressing matter."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 07, 2015, 10:40:02 pm**

Lily walked in just as the timer dinged, indicating the pot pies were ready. Normally she'd ask if there were any vegetarian options, but at the moment she couldn't bring herself to care.

"Let's get this dinner going..." she said wearily. "Some of us have had particularly long days...and I have some things I need to talk about with the group."

Flora shook her head in response to Marie's statements. "I just want to see Emi! Where did she go?" She made to retreat into the back, but Lily grabbed her firmly by the shoulder.

"Flora just sit down!" Lily commanded, easing the folf into a chair. She almost messed with Flora's chemical levels to make her easier to convince, but caught herself in the nick of time. *Jesus, I'm starting to get a little trigger-happy with my powers, aren't I? I need to get ahold of myself...*

"Vergil," she said, as one of the girls placed a pie in front of her. "Where were you and Triste on the cruise ship when we were getting drugged, or in Voltaic when we were given absolutely no communication or direction, not even what room we were staying in? You basically left us all out to dry...and I want to know why."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 07, 2015, 11:18:04 pm**

Marie and Rose put pies in front of every seat. before sitting down in the available chairs. "dig in everyone!"Marie said cheerfully as she sat down at her spot. " we've have Turkey, white meat and vegetable. if you would like a particular one of those just let us know."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 08, 2015, 05:53:23 am**

The door to the apartment clicked open as Soren and Anne entered.

The Human bit his lip as he saw Vergil sitting at the dinner table. Keeping his anger under control, he sat down. He helped himself to a small fish pot pie. His abnormally tight grip on the fork hinted at his anger.

Anne helped herself to a vegetarian pot pie. Her ears were pinned back -- a clear sign of her anger.

"Vergil," Soren said, trying to keep his voice neutral. "You said we would be working to find the waypoints as a team. I want to know why you dumped us at Voltaic Station. We were *very* lucky that no one died there."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 08, 2015, 07:57:33 pm**

Vergil took one look at the dish, felt his stomach shoot into his throat, and gagged it back down. He stared at it as he listened to Lily, then Soren repeat exactly what Lily had said needlessly. "Ahem..." he cleared his throat. "I was with Triste the night you were drugged. I

saw no point to a group dinner after Tony died, for a very specific reason... and that reason is you mentioned 'team' Soren... that's precisely what I thought we were... until of course one of us decided to keep something of vital importance to this group from the party, and not only that, but execute extremely poor judgment and hire someone who's a complete danger to herself and everyone around her regardless of whatever your personal feelings of Emilena Echo might be." Vergil stated bluntly, fixing his orange eyes on Lily.

"You SHOULD have come to me with this first. I'm the one who organized the group. I'm the one responsible for making sure we operate effectively as a team. But when you start doing things like hiring drug-addicted thugs who have a track record of being jackasses just for the sake of being a jackass, that's when I start to question your sanity and whether or not you really have the well-being of the group in mind. Since you seemed more keen to enlist the help of someone who's done nothing positive for this group from the start of this quest, I figured you no longer wanted to be a team player, so I gave you exactly what you wanted: a night out with your hired hand in which she proceeded to drug all of you and land you in the infirmary while I spent the night with someone I know I can trust." He glanced at Triste here.

"Anyway, if you wanted to know your room numbers, they were on your tickets... you merely had to glance at those to find that out... you needn't my help for such a thing. I felt I could no longer trust you after Emilena all but looted our vehicles and set off a chain reaction that got Tony killed. As said, you could've come to me first... I would've handled and supported you regarding your son but... after that, I didn't know what you were up to, bringing such an unpredictable card as Emilena into the fray. After that, well... it was incidental. The fact everyone else happened to be in the infirmary made them collateral damage. I had a job to do, so I was going to do that job. The fact the entire party got drugged is on you, not me, so if you want to start pointing fingers Soren, I suggest you do so away from me." Vergil said pointedly looking at the human now.

"Had you come to me first, I would've helped, even at the expense of our primary objective. So... I'm not going to say I'm blameless though... I have been rather spiteful... but ever since Tony died I've been feeling different... feeling out of sorts... not feeling like my usual virtuous self. I feel darker... more like... more like Rex probably had me feeling when I worked under him. I nearly lost it on that mountainside, and I don't know why. I'm having this strange suspicion that my memories... can't be trusted." he said, looking around the room now.

"I don't know WHO I am, what I'm supposed to be, or why I feel like this. I've tried to fight it, but the more shit that gets thrown our way... the less in control I actually feel. Tony, like the rest of this group up until that point, was relatively innocent, and seeing him get killed sparked something inside my mind. I don't know what it is... or where it came from... but it conflicts with who I was before. I felt more like... if Lily wasn't going to be a team player, why should I rely on her at all? While I had no idea you would end up drugged that night, it did seem to justify my own point of view later on: that hiring whackjob morons we can't trust is stupid and dangerous... and compromises the integrity of our mission. So... we can hit reset... and try and get along... though of course that means addressing Ms. Echo... if she IS joining us... she'll have to follow orders... or she's not on the team, and no, it's NOT your decision." Vergil said sternly, looking right at Lily. "It's mine. I was ordered by the Federation to beat Kalis to the Cataract, and that's what I'm going to do. I chose to bring you along because I trusted you and liked you... you betrayed that trust so now... where are we?" he asked, looking around the room again.

"A whole lot of bitter resentment swirling about. You guys hate me, I'm not exactly thrilled with Lily's choices, and ever since Tony got killed, I'm feeling like two different geckos. Like I don't even know who the fuck I am anymore." he said, practically spitting the words out. "Never felt this way before until now... anyway, that's about all I have to say on the matter. I will of course try and rein this other side of me in but... as said, it's been getting harder and harder... I seemed to be at my best ironically when I was escaping the castle... but having the drug suppressed has brought it all out again." He sat back here, clasping his hands in his lap, as if he were settling down to a nice fireside chat with everyone, though there was of course no fire present.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 08, 2015, 08:17:23 pm**

I'm all for hitting the reset button" marita said, looking at Vergil " recriminations arent going to help any of us. we can point fingers all we like, and it wont get us anywhere. its not just Emilena joining us however, its Flora and Rio as well.I'm willing to let bygones be bygones Vergil, but communication is key. a simple note saying ' Trieste and i are in Room X, we'll be around if you need to talk" could have saved us a lot of trouble.We spent a lot of time looking for you and Treiste on the ship, knowing what room you were in would have made it easy on us.we were not intending to get drugged, by the way, that was.. well Emilenas doing. but like i said I'm letting bygones be bygones, with everyone. going forward we need to trust each other. thats ALL of us' She said looking at the others sitting at the table. " the goal is getting to that final Waypoint before Kalis does, otherwise we can kiss our butts goodbye. thats means we communicate better and work together better.Tony managed to survive his fall- how exactly i have no idea- but as long as hes alive we try and get back to the group we were before the North Yungas Road."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 08, 2015, 08:26:00 pm**

Vergil glanced over at her and raised a brow. "I think you're a little confused. Triste and I were together on the ship while you were being drugged by the wonderful new addition to your team." he said sarcastically. "I had no obligation to join you at dinner. You spent hours looking for us on the STATION... not the SHIP..." he pointed out. "We'd docked after all. I was finding the waypoint on the station, and I already explained why I was doing so. You all had ended up in the infirmary, something I didn't find out about until later. My plan was get off the ship, check in, and do my job. As I ALREADY stated, what happened to all of you was incidental thanks to what Emilena did. By that point I didn't really care because I felt I couldn't trust Lily anymore. I was going to find the waypoint, pick you all up when it was done, and get the hell off the station. I only ran into you after we had gotten back to something I hadn't been expecting." he explained, rubbing his forehead here and closing his eyes as he tried to focus on who he was initially... and not lose his grip on that...

"Also..." he said, remembering what she'd said at the end there. "We have two more waypoints to find... well... we know the location of one... or more correctly Triste and I do... the final one will be revealed at the next stop."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 08, 2015, 09:17:20 pm**

So, just because you no longer trusted Lily, you let everyone else hang" Marita replied. " its one thing to no longer trust her, quite another to lump everyone else in with her. We are a single group, Vergil, there's no " My team" or ' your team', there's simply "our team'. which is bigger now then it was when we started. Tonys returned and now Emilena, Flora and Rio have joined us for lack of a better term. We find the last two waypoints, find the Cataract , and use it to destroy Kalis. thus well saving the world in storybook fashion.Now, where is the location of the next Waypoint? You mentioned that you and Triste know where it is, but the rest of us do not. if you wuld kindly fill us in, we can all be on the same page.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 08, 2015, 09:23:08 pm**

Axel poked at his food, left almost uneaten as he listened to the gecko explaining his situation. "Vergil, we don't... we don't hate you," he sighed, putting down his fork with a light clatter. "We just wish you guys hadn't just left like that. After the ambush on the North Yungas road, we had no idea what could have happened to you when we woke up on the station and you weren't there. For all we knew, *they* could've gotten to you. Just... we've got to be more open

with each other."

Across the table, Triste finished her plate. *No sense in not keeping your strength up.* She leaned back slightly and leveled her eyes at Axel. "If only you and Mrs. North had had the same sentiments when you hired someone we didn't know about to go behind our backs," she said flatly. "Didn't you think it could go badly?"

Axel's jaw clenched, his mechanical hand tightening into a fist. "It *wasn't like that*," he said back, the rat's voice slowly getting louder. "We were..." He stopped. Raising a hand to rub the bridge of his nose, Axel sighed again. "No. We can't argue. If we do that, we get divided, and he wins." He folded his arm back on the table in front of him, his lanky body hunched over the surface. "I'm with Marita. We start new, no looking back. We *have* to. Okay?"

Triste shrugged. "I just care about the mission. As long as we succeed, I'll be happy."

"Fair enough," Axel nodded. "Alright... so where's the next waypoint?"

Triste glanced sideways at Vergil, then looked around at the others. "It's in Egypt."

Sitting next to Flora, Rio looked confused. "What the hell's a waypoint?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 08, 2015, 09:28:18 pm**

"You haven't trusted me since the cruise ship because of something you didn't know until thirty minutes ago in the forest?" Lily crossed her arms. "I don't think so. You may be psionic, but you're not a time traveler. Not to mention I'm not the only one you've treated like dirt. Why exactly did Soren and the girls get the cold shoulder despite doing nothing but serve as reliable and trustworthy teammates?"

She pushed her pot pie away. "You want me off the team, just say the word. I was only invited as an afterthought; the real invitation was to Axel because he's friends with Tony. You wouldn't have helped me rescue Ejlert and frankly you *still* aren't going to, because I've never met an individual less capable of empathy than you. Your apologies are hollow and laced with stealth insults, and I can't find myself trusting a single word you say. The fact that you've decided to keep the next waypoint secret and expect us all to just stumble along behind you like blind mice on a leash is just further evidence that you're not going to change."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 08, 2015, 09:38:20 pm**

"I never said what I did was right." Vergil responded to Marita. "I only said I didn't care." He looked at Axel, and rather admired the rat's restraint. Best things said all night in all honest. She knew nothing about him, clearly from her stupid comments, and didn't even address the fact that she had endangered the entire team. Fortunately, while Triste had said Egypt, she hadn't exactly said WHERE the waypoint was located. It could be Egypt or the Sudan for all Vergil knew, since they hadn't looked up how far south it was. It was somewhere in the Sahara, that's all he knew.

"Fine..." Vergil said after Lily had had her little rant. "You can't trust me we can't work together. I'm not going to sit here and defend myself in front of you. Axel I'm sorry but your wife clearly DOES hate me... so while you may not... I'm not working with people who hate me... NOR recklessly endanger the mission." He got up from the table, not having touched his dinner in the slightest. "Goodbye all, I'll be requesting a new team." he said bluntly. He then turned and headed for the door, opening it and walking out. "And for your information, I suspected it had been you from the start... who ELSE would hire Emilena? Tony? Soren? Marita? They all hate her... that left you... the only one who doesn't." He paused before leaving.

His stomach was roiling now, and he struggled to hold it in. He clutched it, and began heading down the stairs. She was a moron... he would've helped her from the start... she was too stupid to see it though... but he wasn't surprised. She'd made poor choices since the start of this entire mission. Heading outside into the gathering darkness, he waited to hail a passing cab, looking out at the street.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 08, 2015, 10:02:11 pm**

"I like Emi!" Flora protested.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 08, 2015, 10:09:58 pm**

((done with permission of LB&T))

Vergil hardened though, even as the taxi approached. No.... wait... this wasn't right...

He turned around, marched back up the stairs, and reentered the apartment. "Wait a minute! You're right! I'm in charge, you're off the team! The rest of you are still on... if you're down... let's go find that damn waypoint!" He said with determination. "Also... Emi's hired... much as I hate to admit it... she's useful WHEN acting in concert with a team. So yeah! Lily's off, the rest of you are on, cause I got NOTHING against you! You're all awesome, and there's no reason we SHOULDN'T be working together! I acted like a total dickhead, yes, I apologize. But right now... this is my team.. anyone who doesn't want to join... can stay but.... I'd really like all of you on... you included." Vergil said, eyes landing on Axel. "So please... I'd really appreciate it if you could all join me and we NOT let Kalis win... like he said." Again he looked at Axel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 08, 2015, 10:22:47 pm**

Marita's face hardened ' alright Vergil I'm in. But if I can find Eljert for Lily, i'm going to do that as well. Defeating Kalis could be the key to finding him."

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I'm in " Marie said " we need to do whatever it takes to stop that lunatic Kalis.
-
You can count on me' Rose said looking at the others. " We're"
the door opened Rose stopped as she saw who had just come in. the newcomer strode up to them trailed leaves in his wake "Don't forget about ME old friends" Kojjurro cackled. 'I'm raring for some action!" he grinned sghowing some weathered and stained teeth. " he was apparently completely unaware that the leaves covering his privates had all fallen off.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 09, 2015, 07:54:41 pm**

Shocked by the demand Vergil had just made, Axel didn't react to Kojuuro's entrance. He stared across at the gecko, wide eyed. "Wait. Wait, no, she's *with* us, she can't..."

"Vergil said he didn't want her on the team," Triste interrupted. "And I can't blame him. I wouldn't want someone like that on our team."

"She-"

"Someone who could have put all of us at risk. More importantly, put the mission at risk."

"If you just-"

"*No.*" Triste stared at Axel, then slowly looked over at Lily, her eyes hard, her voice cold. "*She's. Gone.* And that's it."

Axel's jaw set in the few seconds of silence that followed. "We can't just leave her behind." Glaring at Triste, he reached over and put his hand over Lily's. "We can't."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 10, 2015, 12:22:16 am**

Lily pulled her hand away from Axel. Her face was etched and she couldn't make eye contact with anyone.

She didn't trust herself to speak, so she stood up and silently left the table. Every possible emotion was swirling through her mind, and she needed to leave before she did something she regretted.

She knew Axel would try to follow her, so she sent him a message. *Don't. Stay in their good graces. This is for the better. I'll be all right. I'm serious,* she added, sensing that he was fully ready to ignore her. *We'll talk soon. But if you get yourself kicked off the team, neither of us are good for anything. Please.*

The warm night greeted her, the temperature giving her something to focus on other than herself. Everyone she considered a friend was behind her, the city offered her no more options. She didn't know what to do. Despite all the endless choices she had right now, she chose to boil them down to two; left or right?

She chose left.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 10, 2015, 12:41:21 am**

Soren templed his hands. He did have to admit, Triste had a point. But then again, Lily was the one who had helped him back in Voltaic Station. "We do not have anyone with medical training. Lily's healing powers are the closest we have. If she does not join us and someone is seriously injured, there is a good chance they could die. So tell me the truth, would you sacrifice someone -- maybe even yourself -- for stability?"

Anne put her now cold pot pie in the refrigerator. "Look, Lily was a great help to us during the Purifier Crisis. Right now, I actually want her to come with us because she has proven to be nothing but helpful during that incident and I'm sure she'll help us again."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 10, 2015, 04:24:38 pm**

"It's not stability." Vergil said, turning to Soren. "It's so we don't get compromised in our objective. Big difference. And I can actually heal if need be... plus we have modern conveniences as well we can take along. She's not necessary. And that's final." Vergil stated firmly. "If you like, feel free to go grab her and form your own team, but you don't have the coordinates of the next waypoint, and you'd have to go back and get the one we got... provided it's still even usable given what we saw down there. No I'm putting my foot down here. She risked compromising us, and it won't happen again." He'd rather liked Triste's heavy-handed way of dealing with it. Normally he was averse to such methods but... in this instance, why not? Sometimes you just needed to be reminded of things.

He backed away from the chair now, having stood next to so everyone could see him. "Speaking of healing... I'm going to go and heal myself. My injuries are extensive so... it's not going to be quick. Few hours probably but it's a lot faster than doing it the old way. I'm too

sick to eat right now so I think I'll pass." he said, to Marita. "Thanks anyway."

It was at that moment that Tony walked in the door, looking around. "I dumped the car... much as I wanted to, there was no way I was going to keep it. And don't worry... I'll get you whatever you want." he said, turning his gaze to Vergil. "IF of course you really still want one."

"I'll think about it." Vergil said, looking around. He chose a chair in the corner, sat cross-legged in it, and closed his eyes, appearing to focus inwardly.

Tony looked around awkwardly. "So... what did I miss?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 10, 2015, 05:44:28 pm**

Quite a bit actually" marita said as she moved the pot pies away from where Lily and Vergil had been sitting " If you're hungry Tony we have pot pies. " eat as much as you want. " Kojurro went up to the stove and swiped a pot pie. ' not wasting time on unnecessary things like manners. he began eating with his fingers.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 10, 2015, 09:55:42 pm**

Axel sat in silence, stone-faced. He hated what was happening, but if this was a way to increase the chances of finding her son, and bringing him back safely then he'd have to put up with it. *At least she'll be out of any immediate danger... and she's right. If both of us get thrown off the team, the odds of getting to Ejlert...*

After a moment, he let out a sigh and looked up at Tony. "Lily's staying back here, she's... she isn't coming." He swallowed, then continued. "We're heading to Egypt next... right?" Axel glanced across the table at Triste.

She nodded. "And we'll need to leave quickly. Too much time's been wasted already."

"Fine." Axel drummed his fingers, his mind apparently distracted. He paused, blinking at the ferret. "Tony, I'm... I don't know how it's possible but I'm... I'm glad you're here."

"Who the fuck is *this* guy?" Rio asked, his face twisted in disgust as he watched the naked Kojuuro rummaging through the cupboards.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 11, 2015, 02:40:34 am**

"...so, is dinner done? Can someone tell me where Emi is?" asked Flora nervously.

She carefully slid out of her seat and tiptoed into the back room. She didn't feel comfortable around these new people, they all seemed to yell a lot.

Her heart skipped a beat when she didn't see Emilena in the back rooms. "Calm down, don't panic..." she hyperventilated. "calmdowndontpanic*calmdowndontpanic*--!" Suddenly she spotted a bloody handprint smearing the outside balcony. Quickly she scampered over the railing, dropping onto the next floor and sighing in relief as she spotted her leader passed out on the bed in the lower apartment.

"...Emi?" she asked quietly, tiptoeing over to the figure. Her pulse raced as she realized the vixen had washed herself clean and fallen asleep above the covers completely nude. Her clotted wounds were black pockmarks contrasting with her sweat-slicked pale skin.

For what felt like an eternity Flora stared silently, fidgeting and catching her breath. Despite

the cool night breeze she felt overheated. Finally, ever so timidly, she crept closer and gazed intently upon Emilena's curves. At the clammy dimples of her inner elbows, the pallid stretched skin of her inner thighs, the murky bruises misshaping her breasts. Flora lay a hand delicately on Emilena's forearm.

"How asleep are you?" Flora whispered as loud as she dared. "*Emi!*" Pained but regular breathing was the only reply she got. Emi wasn't going to wake up...

She felt her erection strain against her waistband but couldn't bear to take her focus off of her current grasp. Emi's fur clung tightly to the muscled flesh underneath Flora's hand, leaving cold sweat soaking into her fingertips. Slowly, gradually, she traced Emilena's arm up to her breast and, with one final trepidatious gulp, cupped it.

She let out a low moan as her fingers pressed into the swollen skin. What little fat there was caved immediately under pressure, but its sharp crown dug unyieldingly into her palm. Flora grabbed the other and fondled both, unable to stop herself.

Then he ran her fingers down Emi's flanks, brushing over clots and scar tissue, before ending on her inner thighs. Her heart skipped as she pressed her thumbs into the gluteal folds. Then she traveled further, leaving her fingers wrapped around Emilena's battered and calloused feet.

As Flora grew bolder, her breathing got faster. Looking away from her prize for only a second, she urgently tore her clothes off and crawled onto the bed. Wrapping Emilena in a hug, she nestled her muzzle into Emilena's neck and sighed as she rubbed her girlhood between Emilena's legs. Years of pent-up tension built itself to a breaking point as everything Flora had ever wished for came true, one spasm at a time.

Suddenly, already, her abdomen tensed up and her eyes flew open. Squealing uncontrollably, she dug her claws into the mattress and arched her back as an unrelenting tidal wave climaxed through her, splashing messily along her prey's stomach and chest.

Panting, Flora collapsed onto her object of lust. Emilena grunted but still didn't wake up. Flora gasped for breath, shuddering from the aftereffects of the wave. As her breathing regulated and her senses returned, she slowly realized something.

She was still hard.

Wrapping her arms around her love, Flora pressed her flytrap against Emi's lower folds, took a deep breath, and forced her way in.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 11, 2015, 02:02:42 pm**

Vergil remained in his meditative state on the chair, apparently unresponsive, though how true that was was anyone's guess. Tony looked over at Axel here, and gave a small smile and nod. "Yeah... I'm... I'm glad to be back in all honesty. I don't know how either but... maybe we'll find out, maybe we won't." he said, shrugging.

He was soon interrupted by Rio, who was asking just who Kojuuro was. "Oh... that's... Kojuuro." the ferret said. "Without a doubt the strangest member of our group... if you can even call him a member..." Tony muttered that last bit.

He took a seat at the table, sighing. "It is good to be back... I... missed everyone." he said, looking around the table and picking up his fork before digging in. "I'm glad to see you're all alive, truth be told. I was worried that after that... well I wasn't sure what to expect. So... we actually encounter this bastard Kalis yet?" he asked, looking around again.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 11, 2015, 07:28:56 pm**

No, Not yet " rose sighed as she took kojurros pie away from him ' ' we'll run into him soon enough I'm sure' She said as she took a seat at the table. " Kojuuro, please sit down" Kojurro grinned and did as requested. 'good to be with you lot again.. i.. guess i went to seed after our last parting.' he said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 12, 2015, 11:40:50 pm**

Nairda lay in a dazed stupor all night. When the morning sun shone over the horizon and the nocturnal mold crops closed up their spores for the day, he continued to stare straight ahead at the stucco ceiling, his mind still several hours behind from the marathon of impossibly kinky sexcapades he'd just experienced.

What will I do now? he wondered, *now that I've experienced the best day in my entire life?*

As the daylight shone through the open window, Emilena found herself rousing from a dreamless sleep. But it was going to take a lot more than consciousness to get her out of bed, she decided. She was perfectly content to lie here for the rest of her aching, miserably sore life.

Last night was a dizzy blur, and not the good kind that came from tripping on multiple drugs in the privacy of one's safe house. Slowly her brain mentally pieced together the events involving Stryker, Vergil, and something with Lily at the end...

I'll worry about that all later, she thought wearily. Got to make sure she was still in one working piece first.

She tried to raise her arm and hissed. Her joint was **not** happy to be disturbed. Slowly she shifted onto her side so she could face away from the window, and realized that she felt...crusty.

What the hell? She scraped a dried film off of her stomach, confused. *That* was certainly not part of her memories from last night...

She became aware of the sound of running water. Someone was in the apartment shower. Combat instincts flaring up, she rolled off the bed and creeped to the bathroom door. Grabbing the clothes iron from the empty closet, she listened for a few minutes, hoping to gather some information about the intruder's gender or weight.

Then the shower turned off, so Emilena threw caution to the wind and kicked the door open. Swinging the iron reflexively, she barely prevented herself from braining the startled fuchsia blur that flailed backwards screaming. "Flora?"

"*Please don't kill me! Oh god I'm sorry!* I didn't mean to!" Flora tried to dive out of the shower, got tangled in the curtain and wound up sprawled on the floor cowering in a ball. "Please don't!"

"You didn't mean to what?" Emilena took a few mental steps backward and tied some clues together. "Flora, did you..?"

"I didn't-- I-I shouldn't have, and I'm so sorry!" Flora sobbed hysterically, backing up into the corner and viewing the clothes iron with wide open eyes.

Emilena set the iron aside. "Flora, look, could you please calm down? I have a really bad migraine already and you're not helping!" When the folf couldn't stop panicking and babbling apologetic gibberish, Emilena pinned her and wrapped her hands around Flora's snout. "*Flora,*" she said sternly. "I'm not. Going. To hurt you. Do you understand?"

Flora nodded her head, still shaking uncontrollably.

"Good. Now, I'm going to let go, you're going to sit down with me, and we're going to talk about this. Okay?" When the folf didn't object, Emilena grabbed her by the arm and directed her back to the bed.

Tears were still running down Flora's face. "I know it was bad," she whimpered, "I knew you would kill me, I don't why I did it, I just..."

"Quiet." Emilena sighed as blissful silence reasserted itself. "I don't want to hear what you have to say. I probably already know. Just let me talk."

She took a few moments to collect her thoughts. "Now, first of all, I don't really care that you raped me. So stop apologizing. I've been through much worse in the past 24 hours, and I would have loved if some of them had let me fall unconscious before doing their thing. Okay? But that said, this isn't happening again."

"I know," Flora nodded quickly. Her face was bright red and she was short on breath. "It won't, I promise. I'll never do it to anyone again!"

"Don't promise that," Emilena rolled her eyes. "You're a teenager, you're going to keep doing dumb shit. But maybe this is a good opportunity to for us to talk a little. I haven't been paying you the attention you deserve as a member of the gang." Emilena sighed again. "It's all been taken up by Nairda and his worthless problems."

Flora sniffed and finally met her eye. She was only now realizing that she wasn't about to die. "Okay, if you want to..."

(OOC: Converstion got long so I split it into two parts. If you had things to do last night, you can put them in your next post, just nobody seemed to protest a timeskip in the Skype chat.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 13, 2015, 12:32:16 am**

Marita stretched and yawned from her bed. The full weight of lsast nights events were finaly starting to sink in. ' they had gained 4 3 new members to the group ' Emilena, Flora and Rio) Regained two old members (Tony and Kojuuro) and lost one member (Lily). It had been close to midnight by the time she had gotten to bed, and marita did not get the quality of sleep ashe normally got. Thus it was around 8 am when she got out of bed and chaneged into a fresh set of attire, before heading to the kitchen to make hersellf some toast for breakfast. Wasnt much of a breakfast, all tings considered, but marita needed something, ANYTHING to get the cobwebs out. Marie came in the kitchen about 10 minutes latter in her nightgown' You're up early.." Marie said stifling a yawn. ' Yeah couldnt sleep very well. we've got a lot of work to do, to become a more cohesive group..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 13, 2015, 04:50:00 pm**

Rio blinked and groaned, woken by the sound of murmured voices, turning over as the dim light of day washed over him, the sunlight forcing its way through slightly grimy windows. Rolling over again, he blearily sat up and rubbed his face, having to take a moment to remember where he was. After Flora had left the table to find Emilena, he'd stayed behind, watching the others talk. It was boring as hell, sure - most of it was talking about the things they'd done before, stuff he didn't understand... but somehow, he hadn't minded. It had even been kind of nice, the last time he'd been able to just sit down at a proper dinner like that was... well, never. Still, he had his limits, and after a few hours, he'd slipped from the table and flopped on the sofa, exhausted.

Where he'd just woken up. Sitting up, he stretched... and realised with dawning horror that his thumb was planted firmly in his mouth. "*Son of a bitch*..." he muttered, pulling his thumb out hastily with an audible pop. Standing, Rio yawned and padded into the kitchen from where the voices were coming from. Stepping through, Rio paused as he saw Marita, Marie and Axel sat at the kitchen table. He crossed his arms over his wrinkled T-shirt. "Hey."

Axel looked over, his conversation with the other two interrupted mid-sentence. "Hey," he replied. His voice was slightly husky. It looked like the rat hadn't slept at all, dark circles casting shadows under his eyes. Axel indicated towards the fridge. "There's juice if you want it." The corner of his mouth twitched. "No cigarettes though."

Triste stared up at the slowly lightening sky, and with a despondent heave of breath, gave up. In the early hours of the morning, unable to sleep, she'd gone up to the roof of the apartment building, and set about trying to contact someone at HQ. Anyone. But of course, there'd been nothing.

Shit. Scowling, Triste retreated back down into the gloomy apartment building, her expression remaining just as dark as she made her way silently down the corridors towards Soren's door. *We really are on our own...* she thought, letting herself in.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 13, 2015, 06:40:42 pm**

Morning Rio" Marita said, as he came in ' we' have milk and juice in the fridge. what do you want for breakfast? We have eggs, if you like them.."

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rose entered the kitchen and took a seat ' morning everyone ' she said sitting down at the table.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 13, 2015, 07:21:13 pm**

Vergil had spent the night rejuvenating himself. The meditation also acted like rest, so it had quite the powerful effect of healing his injuries and resting his mind, and allowing him to recharge. Vergil had to admit... it was better than any sleep he'd had recently, that was for sure!

Opening his eyes, the gecko was finally cognizant of people being at the breakfast table, right as Rio walked in. As there hadn't been enough room for him to spend the night, Tony had gone off somewhere overnight (Vergil assumed home), but the ferret reentered shortly after Vergil opened his eyes.

"Hey guys..." the ferret said, looking around before taking a seat at the table, though he turned his chair around so he could rest on the back of it. "I didn't grab breakfast on the way over..." he sighed, his face looking a little heavy for some reason... but he put a smile on shortly after.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 13, 2015, 10:19:40 pm**

Soren said nothing as he sipped his morning glass of hot tea. Anne was munching on some oat cereal.

The Human looked at the gathered group. The scent of Marita's scrambled eggs made his stomach growl. "So what's the plan?"

Anne's ear twitched slightly as she sipped her cup of water. "Don't ask me. I know jackshit about this expedition."

"Then why are you coming?"

Anne smiled and tapped her metallic horn. "Someone with electronic warfare capabilities will prove to be quite helpful!"

Soren gave the mare a quizzical look. "Since when did your implant let you do that?"

"Since yesterday night. I just decided to do a little reprogramming on the software. It's got a range of about maybe five meters, tops."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 13, 2015, 11:43:41 pm**

"Now, despite your overly flirty attitude I know you don't normally talk much about yourself," Emilena started, "so how about instead I tell you what I've noticed over time, and you can tell me if I'm wrong. I'm not a psychologist, but I was a criminal investigator." Emilena consciously reminded herself to keep from settling into police-interrogator mode. "For an exhibitionist who's decided to make sex a huge part of their identity, you're oddly something of a loner. During all your time in my gang, I've never seen you actually get someone in the sack."

Flora looked at the ground. "That's because I'm so weird-looking..."

"No, it's because you act stereotypically feminine right up until you whip your cock out at the worst possible time." Emilena wasn't interested in sugar-coating things. "You're intentionally sabotaging yourself, and I know you're not dumb enough to be doing it on accident. I think it's because you secretly have a deep-seated fear of actually committing the deed." Flora didn't say anything. "That's also why you picked me to channel your romantic desires towards, because then you could act on them indefinitely without fear of reciprocation. Does any of this sound right?"

Flora's lip quivered. "I...don't know..."

"Well, think about it and let me know. I've got nowhere to go." Emilena folded her arms. She was starting to feel sleepy again, but she needed to wrap this up so Flora could forever bother somebody else with her hormonal advances.

Flora sighed. "I...guess that sounds a bit right..."

"Uh huh. Now look," Emilena forced her to make eye contact. "We all have weird things we do to try and feel unique, but acting like a walking dichotomy is just going to leave you unfulfilled. Go find someone and actually get laid. Get over it."

Flora's eyes went wide. "Really?"

"Yeah, have sex with lots of people, as many as you want. Admit what you're packing from the getgo and find people who'd actually want that. Just give it a shot, okay?"

Flora nodded. "Okay Emi! I'll do that!"

"Great." Emilena yawned. "You should start with the trio of dogs upstairs. They're simple-minded, they're polyamorous and they won't charge money."

"Okay!" Flora bounded out of the room, leaving Emilena to gratefully lay her head back on the pillow and enjoy the silence.

Emile stirred, and sat up with a yawn. He noticed Nairda was awake and smiled lopsidedly. "Morning, son. How you feeling?"

"Absolutely fine," Nairda still felt dazed. "No, that was amazing..."

"See?" smiled Lena sleepily. "I told you, mother knows best."

"How about you come with your old dad and lay the moisture tarps on the mold crops?" Emile slipped his work pants on. "It'll be like when you were young."

Nairda hesitated. "That would be fun, but...after that, I need to go find Emilena. We need to patch things up."

"At least stay for breakfast!" Lena stretched before picking her bathrobe off the ground. "Your father had an amazing haul last night, and the autostove makes great slow-roasted seal breasts."

"Well, okay," Nairda submitted, climbing out of bed. "We can do all those things. But after that I have to leave. I left my true love somewhere in South Africa, she could need my help."

"We'll miss you Nairda," Lena hugged her boy. "It's so hard to see you all grown up. But I'm so glad you've grown up with all your limbs still attached."

"I'm proud of you son," Emilen patted him on the back and handed him a baggy coverall. "Here, you'll want to wear this before we visit. Unprotected exposure to the mold crops can cause dermal mycosis."

"And when you do find this Emilena girl again," chuckled Lena as her two men left the house, "make sure to put what we taught you to good use!"

Flora burst through the apartment door and pointed directly at Marita. "I want *you*!" she declared. "To get fucked by *me*." The finger shifted to pointing downward. "With my penis."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 14, 2015, 12:00:25 am**

Coming through the door just as Flora entered the room, Triste was treated to a loud statement of Flora's intentions. It didn't help her mood. "Nobody's fucking anyone," she muttered, slipping into the kitchen and leaning against the kitchen table. "We need to figure out our next move."

Axel stared at where Flora was pointing. "You have a penis?" he asked slowly, his expression dumb-founded.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 14, 2015, 12:24:44 am**

Marita gaped at Floras almost absurd frankness and it took her almost a minute. " Well.. Flora.. thats not something you come out and tell people in public.. especially when said people are trying to eat breakfast.." she added looking at her plate
 - Yes" Rose nodded. " thats a bit too much info. besides there are kids present.' she motioned at Rio. " even if he really doesnt act like a kid ...
_
i would say good morning to you Flora, but after that.. outburst.. i don't know where to start' Marie said " i mean.. its good you've taken an interest in Marita.. but usually you go out on dates first before proceeding to the bedchambers. i .. think you have the order mixed up..
 marita looked at her plate a for couple minutes in thought then go up, and walked over to

Flora, and took her by the arm "Come along with me to my room.. and we can.. straighten some things out.. I do owe you a favor. since you beat my time getting from here to the forest by 8 minutes ' she added. " So pretty much anything is fair game... but we do need to have a chat first..," she said to Flora, but her face was not showing any or displeasure. She stopped as Trieste interjected " But first things first.. we have to plan for when we leave.. which will be very soon..' she pulled away from the folf and returned to the table..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 14, 2015, 02:08:23 am**

Soren spat out his drink at Flora's blunt exclamation. "What the fuck!? Shit, I'm blunt but at least I don't go flaunting my junk around. Seriously. What. The. Fuck." He shook his head and then facepalmed. He then got up to get a dishcloth to clean up his spilled tea.

Anne started laughing at Flora's bluntness. She pushed her empty bowl of cereal aside, not caring she knocked over some spam USB sticks that she had planned to disassemble. "That's the most unsexy pickup line I've heard since 'I want to be the charger so I can plug into you'."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 14, 2015, 10:29:54 pm**

Flora flipped them all the bird. "Y'all just jelly."

Then Emilena trudged into the kitchen and pegged her with the undergarmets from her outfit. "Clothes. Civilized people wear clothes when in the presence of others," she murmured grumpily.

Emilena had quickly found it impossible to fall asleep without taking a shower, and after the shower she was awake enough to feel how impossibly hungry she was. For some reason Flora had been wearing almost two complete outfits, and Emilena had helped herself to the larger of the articles.

She collapsed in a chair, grabbed the cereal box and began eating handfuls straight out of it. She spared a glance at Vergil, who appeared far healthier than she remembered. "Well damn, somebody's looking peachy. Lily gave you a better heal than she gave me..."

Then she noticed Kojurro and could only emote dull surprise. "Never mind what I said about civilized, Flora. Apparently they're letting *anyone* in here..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 15, 2015, 12:56:48 am**

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marie put some eggs on a plate and gave them to Emilena ' hope you like them scrambled ' She said.
-
Yes clothes would be proper Flora' Rose said ' You can take some of mine. I have plenty'
_
Well well, Officer Emilena. Long time no see' Kojuuro smirked in reply. ' still working for old whatisname. eh?' he laughed "it had been several months since Kojuuro had seen Emilena, but at least he remembered her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 16, 2015, 09:05:14 pm**

Tony looked over at Anne, and nodded. "yeah... that'll be useful for sure. I doubt many would know you're capable of doing that... and it'll be good to have you along." he said softly, smiling at her. He'd been worried about her the whole time, but then a portion of his life had been

stolen after he'd blacked out, and he'd lost it. Still... it was good to be among friends again.

Vergil began eating. "Well... it's either Egypt or the Sudan... I haven't had time to check the coordinates yet what with me getting abducted and all." he stated flatly. "So when I do, we'll head there. It's the second to last one so... after this, one more to go and we find the warship. Somehow I get the distinct sense that Kalis already knows about that one in China so... makes me wonder if he'd only need this one, or if he's got none of the others either. Still, I suppose he doesn't have the full picture, since we aren't dead right now." he half joked.

Tony nodded solemnly. "The home stretch then." he exhaled. "Egypt or the Sudan... can't say I'm a fan of the desert but... we gotta do what we gotta do. I'll fund our flights of course... anything else we need if we need to restock."

"That'd be a good idea." Vergil nodded. "We need to covertly get weapons into the country..."

"Yeah well that won't be a problem... pretty sure my dad's got contacts over there." Tony replied.

"All right... I think I heard Anne mention something about electronic warfare... that'll come in handy. We've got the hacker with Marita, the muscle with Soren, Emilena, and arguably Axel, and yadda yadda yadda. Also Emilena's former law enforcement... she can navigate that kind of stuff. Anyway, I figure we'll take stock of what we need... book our transport, and get over there. The sooner the better cause I'm all for wrapping this one up and taking Kalis down!" Vergil stated adamantly. "He's messed with us long enough!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 16, 2015, 09:47:33 pm**

Triste nodded. "Agreed. Kalis needs to be taken down. And fast."

"Right, let's show Kalis that he screwed with the wrong people," Axel said, a slight smile playing at the corner of his mouth for the first time since last night. *And I'll find Ejlert, Lily. I promise.*

Rio frowned. "I still don't know who Kalis is."

Axel glanced at him. "He's a psycho who wants to control the world using a massive warship, and we're gonna find out where it is, get there first and, if I have any say in it, fly the warship straight up the bastard's ass."

"That sounds about right," Triste said, nodding slightly.

"Oh, okay." Rio snatched a fistful of cereal from Emilena, then suddenly brightened. "Wait, a *warship*?! That blows stuff up and shit? And we're gonna be taking it? That's fucking awesome!" His eyes glazed over. "I could do whatever the hell I wanted then..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 16, 2015, 10:41:22 pm**

Emilena nodded. "I've smuggled guns before. Way more dangerous than drugs, but not when the mafia's on your side."

Flora brushed Marita's lips with her finger. "I'll bust my nuts in your mouth later, lover. I won the bet, after all." She looked at Rose. "You used to be a whore, right? I'll take an outfit, but don't give me one of your whore costumes. Girl's got to have dignity."

"Are we taking any sort of public transport to Egypt? Cause if so, you'll need to do a better job of covering your tracks," said Emilena. "There's a reason both Veranus and I were separately

able to track you to the Yungas airport, and it wouldnt have happened if you were on a private mafia jet."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 17, 2015, 12:57:04 am**

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dignity? you just said you were going to stick your enhanced gizmo in my girlfriends mouth! in public! theres nothing dignified about that! " Rose replied. 'you'll get what i'm willing to give you Flora.. no more or less...and i'm not a whore..i got rid of those attires after i moved in with Marita and Marie..' Rose replied.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 17, 2015, 05:33:36 pm**

Soren shot a dirty glare at Flora but said nothing. He wasn't interested in dealing with a Folf who'd seemingly fuck anyone, anytime, anyplace. "Anyways, what about weapons?" Soren asked. He pointed to his shotgun leaning against the back wall of his bedroom/workshop. "I can't bring that on the plane! And customs will be on my ass if I try bringing that into the country!"

"Thanks!" Anne clapped Tony on the back. In reply to Soren, she spoke: "Well, I've got horseshoes, a horn and brass knuckles." She blew some air through her nostrils. "Though how'd they'd fare against Kalis's forces is questionable."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **January 25, 2015, 04:41:44 pm**

"Thanks... I'm glad to have you back." Tony replied to her with a smile as Anne clapped him upon his backside.

"Right... but I would caution against using that ship ourselves. I've been... thinking on it... myself. A race capable of building such a device would be truly evil... I don't think anything good can come of it and... I sense... something else with it as well that feels off. Almost like... there's A REASON that civilization doesn't exist anymore... I mean what's puzzling me is they build a giant warship capable of devastating cities but then... vanish? No... something's wrong about that..." Vergil trailed off here, looking into the distance.

"Anyway... it's something I'll be pondering over the next while... and hopefully we don't run into a nasty surprise along the way regarding it." he murmured. "So let's make our preparations."

"I'll arrange our transportation, and as far as tracking us goes... somehow I feel Kalis has always been one step ahead of us in that department regardless of how careful we've been." Tony replied. "In terms of weapons though, my father can easily smuggle those into Egypt or wherever we're going." he commented.

"Make the arrangements... I'm going back to my place to regroup and take stock... I'll be in touch..." Vergil said, getting off the chair now and nodding at the group.

The city of Aswan was not scorching in January, as it typically wouldn't rise above 85 degrees this month, and the city was actually a pleasant 75 today and dry. The desert stretched out on either side of the city, and the blue ribbon of the Nile cut the city in two, slicing through it majestically before flowing north to the Mediterranean, hundreds of miles away. The first cataract of the Nile was just south of the city, and further south were numerous others. Lake Nasser was above the city as well, having completely submerged the second cataract after the completion of several dams in the region; it made navigation of the cataracts much easier.

Vergil stepped out of the taxi into the afternoon sun, and donned a pair of black sunglasses as he looked around the streets. Tony exited from a cab that pulled up behind that one, and the ferret two was already wearing a pair of sporty looking shades. Their "gear" was in luggage in the trunks of said cabs, having been waiting for them after they'd deplaned from their private jet from Cairo to Aswan.

"According to the coordinates... the next waypoint is located up the Nile further south... past Abu Simbel and over the Sudanese border." Vergil commented, checking his phone.

"Right... so we need a boat... I'll go take care of that." Tony said, looking off in the direction of the waterfront.

"Preferably something fast." Vergil responded.

"Right... anyone want to tag along?" the ferret asked, looking around at the group as he began unloading some of the duffel bags and paid their driver.

"I'm gonna get a drink at the bar before we leave." Vergil said, pointing to a nearby local place that looked like a good place to hang out and gather information.

"I'll see you there!" Tony called.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **January 26, 2015, 02:19:56 am**

I'll come along " Marita said as she grabbed her belongings from the truck, and began following Tony. ' Should be near the river, right?' she asked.
-
marie and rose grabbed their supplied and headed safter vErgil, a drink sounded nice after the length cab ride ' so what kind of drinks do they serve in this part of Egypt, Vergil?' Rose asked as she carried her knapsack on her back.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **January 27, 2015, 03:22:51 am**

Flora shook her head. "I--uh, think I'll stay with the group," she smiled, feeling jumpy.

Emilena laid a hand on her shoulder reassuringly. "It's okay," she consoled. "This isn't Titus Desert. Nothing *that* bad is going to happen."

"But aren't we like...raiding a secret fortress or something?" Flora shuddered. Ever since Titus she could never feel comfortable in the desert.

"Yeah, but there's no way its going to be as bad as Titus." Emilena dropped her suitcase in front of Flora. "Though if you insist, carry my stuff. I'm going with the boat group."

(OOC: Do the characters have weaponry?)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **January 27, 2015, 07:13:54 am**

Axel stretched as he climbed out of the taxi, working out the knots that had started to work their way up his back. He took a gulp of fresh air - after a long journey cooped up in the back of a taxi, with a window that refused to wind down and a driver for whom personal hygiene was a myth, the rat had been on the point of suffocation.

Feeling a little better, Axel waved a hand quickly to Tony as he walked down towards the

waterfront. "Yeah, I'll come." Heaving the strap of his bag over one shoulder, he fired a disgruntled look at the driver, who reciprocated with a bored roll of the eyes, and set off after the ferret. Axel slowed as he neared Emilena, who was also heading in the same direction. "Hey, uh... I didn't get a chance to say before but... thanks for trying to help Lily and me with..." He shrugged. "Even if it didn't exactly go to plan."

Rio watched Emilena and Axel following Tony, then looked up at Flora, shielding his eyes against the sun's glare. The folf didn't exactly seem happy. *What the hell happened in Titus?* "Don't worry about it," he started, shrugging on his *Captain Super Man* backpack - he'd had almost nothing to bring along - and making for the bar. "We can just..." Getting closer, he noticed a sign hanging above the bar's doorway. Beneath the arabic, 'No sell to under 18' was written in english. Rio swore loudly. "Oh goddammit!"

"Shut up," Triste hissed, her eyes flicking around, scanning the crowd that was flowing in the streets around them. It had been too easy for Veranus to follow them before, and because of that they'd almost lost everything. She was determined not to let that happen again. At Vergil's side, she quickly examined the faces of the patrons sat around as they entered the bar. A few looked up, disinterestedly noting the new arrivals, but none seemed to be taking any particular notice of them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **January 28, 2015, 02:30:21 am**

(Egypt)

Anne adjusted her sunglasses. The smell of tobacco still lingered in her coat and nostrils thanks to a driver who seemed to be constantly smoking. Her steel horseshoes remained but her brass knuckles were concealed inside her pants pockets. Uncharacteristically, she carried a small purse.

"Never thought I'd see you carrying something that a filly would carry." Soren cracked a smile as he nibbled on catfish kebab.

Anne's ears flattened and she gave the finger to the Human. She noticed several billboards advertising numerous algal oil industries as well as fish farms -- Egypt had become a major algae oil and fish farming country thanks to its vast amounts of open space, brackish water and copious amounts of sunlight.

(Corona)

Marion waited outside Mace's office. Her prostheses had been replaced as had her flying frame. She scowled as she looked at a picture of the city's skyline of gleaming steel and glass towers.

The Human simply could not believe this. She had important information to relay to Mace and the secretary had scheduled her in for an appointment...five days later. She stared at the disinterested Gila Monster and gritted her teeth. That fucking pencil pusher had just gotten some valuable intel outdated!

She knocked on the ornate wooden door again.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 02, 2015, 08:58:17 pm**

((Sorry guys... I'm really depressed... and I can't write effectively when I'm depressed. I'll try to post more frequently.))

Tony waited for those accompanying to grab their stuff, and he began walking down to the

waterfront. He was told he could rent fast, reasonably priced (for him) and relatively well equipped boats. "Yeah." Tony nodded to Marita's question, and glanced about, shoving a hand in his pocket as he carried his bag over his shoulder.

"Hmmm?" he asked, glancing over at Axel now. Even in the relatively comfortable weather of this part of the world, he wore his flat cap, and smiled as the rat elaborated. "Oh hey... yeah... no problem. I mean I'll always try to look out for you guys... regardless of whatever present company may think or feel." He shrugged here.

"I mean come on... you were like... the first one in that group to even show me trust or kindness so... I haven't forgotten that." he stated, his eyes moving from the rat to down to the waterfront, scanning the boat selections they had. Whistling as he saw several yachts bobbing up and down along the quays, the ferret nodded.

"I'm all for that one." he said, pointing out a rakish looking white and silver yacht with wood paneling on the floors. Tony figured her to be about 75 feet long. There were plenty others like it on the river, some bigger than that one, and so they'd blend right in. A sign out front read it was for rent, or sale, if the buyer was interested enough. "Whaddya think?"

Vergil noted Triste's caution, but figured it was all right... he didn't sense Varanus after all, and that was a good sign. He had learned to pick up on him the last time they'd encountered one another, and he was ever presently searching for that.

Looking at Triste as he headed inside, Vergil figured on asking her what had been on his mind awhile now. "You know... I don't think I ever found this out but... had you ever met Rex before? Any read on what he was like before... well you know... ever serve with him, or... well you lived in his time... both when he was fighting the Alliance and later on when he rebelled. Thoughts on him as a leader? Any indication of why he might've turned traitor?" Vergil inquired.

"It's just I'm still curious... I feel if I come to understand him... understand how he operated... then maybe I could understand... everything. More about myself and this mission... and why Rex was after that ship in the first place."

"As for what they drink here..." he turned to face Rose. "Your guess is as good as mine. Tropic stuff? Egyptian stuff? Haven't the slightest idea." he chuckled.

"Mr. Sardolemuel will see you now." the receptionist told Marion, and nodded for her to go inside.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 04, 2015, 03:48:30 pm**

(Egypt)

Soren nodded. An algal oil tanker with Arabic writing on it motored past them on the river. He pondered something. Algal oil tankers were enormous and inconspicuous...could Varanus hide something within a tanker?

"Looks good to me," he said.

Anne smiled. "Yeah! We can go for a river cruise at the same time.

(Corona)

Marion entered the luxurious office and took a seat in the plush seal leather chair. She took out a small memory card and placed it on the table.

"Five days ago, I spotted the same Human and Shetland Pony Augment that I had previously seen in Bolivia accompanying Vergil. I spotted them at Big Wong's Authentic Cantonese Cuisine -- a known Triad meeting place. This memory card contains pictures of them. Right now, I do not know of their whereabouts."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 05, 2015, 07:34:40 am**

Axel gazed longingly at a large boat with a large, powerful (and probably incredibly loud) engine fitted, and adorned with bright red racing stripes along the side of the craft. At Tony's suggestion he tore his eyes away. "Yeah, that's, ah... probably the safer option." *Another time...*

Looking around, Axel spotted a small wooden shelter a small distance up the waterfront. "I guess that's where you pay," he said, pointing as he started to make his way over. As he got closer, he could see that the shelter was entirely filled up by a rather overweight man who'd managed to squeeze his considerable bulk into the small space. Two beady eyes gleamed in the shade offered by the structure as the man stared at the rat who walked over and stopped in front of him.

"Hi," Axel smiled. "How much to take that boat out? The one over there?"

The mass in the shelter growled in arabic and spat a glob a phlegm between Axel's feet.

Axel's smile vanished, and he took a hasty step back. "Ah..."

"I never actually served with Rex, no," Triste said, taking a seat at a table that would let them see the entrance of the bar - and anyone coming in. "But I knew of him while he was still in the Federation. As a leader he was... gifted. He knew how to make people listen to him. Follow his orders. *Believe* in him. And he was extremely intelligent." She fixed her eyes on Vergil. "That's what made him so dangerous when he went rogue. As for why he went rogue in the first place... well, we never determined the exact reason."

Triste paused as a patron walked past, her eyes tracking him until he walked out the door and turned out of sight. "He had his own ideas about how the Federation should operate. And when you combine that with his drive to always succeed then..." She sighed. "Maybe it was inevitable."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 07, 2015, 01:48:12 pm**

"Yeah that's right... believe me I plan to ENJOY this cruise while it lasts." Tony agreed with Anne, nodding his head and smiling. "Cause it looks like we got at least an hour before we reach our destination if not more, depending on how long it takes to the clear the dams and such."

He noticed Axel practically get verbally slapped by the thick Arabic the rotund man who looked like he belonged in some back street deli was using. "All right hold on... I'll handle this..." Tony stepped forward, and began yammering in the same tongue the corpulent guy was using, the two exchanging seemingly heated words, but finally, after a moment or two, the man seemed to acquiesce after Tony flashed some credits in his face. Taking the payment, he nodded and handed the ferret proof of rental and a receipt.

"Right!" He grinned, walking back to them now. "Managed to get a good deal. Bartering is the norm in these parts, and you never pay full price for anything if you know what you're doing. So according to this..." he glanced at the sheet of paper. "It looks like... keys are in a safe in the cabin... combination is on this paper." he tapped it with his claw.

Vergil nodded slowly. "Yeah... I can see that then. I wonder what he and Kalis saw when they went to go finish off the Alliance... what made them change their mind? They weren't really joining the Alliance but... well I suppose it doesn't matter. What they did was ultimately wrong and cost a lot of lives. No denying that." he stated, watching the door as well before shifting his orange eyes back to her.

"So... would you allow me to buy you a drink?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 07, 2015, 03:33:22 pm**

Upon noticing that Tony had solved the language barrier, Flora sadly put the auto-translating megaphone back into her bag and Emilena breathed a sigh of relief. "Great, let's get the hell out of dodge. The quicker we're on the water the fewer eyewitnesses we leave behind."

She folded her arms. "Where did our useless teammates get off to now?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 07, 2015, 06:28:43 pm**

Good that you Speak Arabic, Tony, because mine is virtually nonexistent " Marita said ":Don;t do much business with that part of the world. looking over at Flora she motioned to her.'come have a seat with me Flora.

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Rose bought four bottles of beer Marked 'Stella' , and had Marie hold three of them as they headed towards a open table, close to where Vergil and Trieste were. ' we're saving a couple for Marita." Rose explained ' didnt know alcohol was allowed here' Marie said looking at the bottle " they've been making beer here for thousands of years ' Rose said opening up a country guide and flipping through it ' since the days of the pyramids, if not longer. " The Pyramids, sole surviving wonder of the ancient world, still towered over the desert.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 08, 2015, 07:47:19 pm**

"Oh, did you buy alcohol?" Flora scampered forward. "Sweet! I love going to foreign countries because they never realize I'm underage!"

Indeed the bartender didn't seem to speak English, or at minimum he didn't bat an eye as Flora grabbed the Stella and sniffed it. She wrinkled her nose and stuck her tongue. "Ew. I was spoiled by those African Cocktails. Well, I can fix this." She fished a travel bottle of cough syrup out of her back pocket. "You bought the drink, so I'll supply the drank." She started pouring it into Marita's beer. "This'll make that potable potent."

Emilena clicked her tongue. "Could we, like, take the boat for a test run?" she asked the other teammates on the dock. "And pick up the waypoint while we're at it? We can retrieve the others on the trip home."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 08, 2015, 08:41:47 pm**

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we'll go then ' marita said, and climbed aboard the boat as Flora spiked her drink with the syrup. " No drinking Flora Until we reach the end of the trip' she said. now get on board, and we'll try this craft out. Tony, naturally will be driving " She smiled at Tony.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 08, 2015, 08:46:32 pm**

Axel had a quick look at the paper Tony was showing them, then nodded. "Alright, let's get the keys then get our asses in gear." At Emilena's suggestion, he bit his lip. "We need Vergil to make the waypoint... thing... work, but maybe one of us could head over to the bar and get the others, while the rest of us get the keys." He shrugged. "It'd save us time."

From the side, Rio raised his hand. "I'll go." He'd been eyeing the box of credits that the large man in the shelter was holding as carefully and watchfully as if it were a newborn baby. Upon careful consideration, he'd decided the risk of accidentally getting wedged in one of the man's many folds was too high. "I get to drive the boat for a bit, though, right?"

"Ah... yeah. Sure. Tell them to meet us back here." Pleased by Axel's affirmation, Rio turned and sped away in the distance of the bar, not seeing the rat shake his head and mouth *no* at the others once the boy had turned around.

"I'll have a water," Triste said, the corner of her mouth twitching in what passed for a genuine smile. "Need to keep a clear head for what happens next. You three should take it easy too," she warned Marie, Rose and Flora. "We need to be focused for this."

She turned her attention back to Vergil. "So when we get to the waypoint, do you-" She was interrupted by the sounds of a commotion at the entrance, and her head quickly snapped to the side so she could see what was going on. Triste caught a glimpse of a scrawny, tanned kid being plucked up by the scruff of his neck and effortlessly carried out of the bar that he'd just tried to enter by one of the bar's staff.

"No, you don't... goddammit, I *know* people in here, you prick, just..." Rio struggled helplessly. Just as he was being taken out the door, he caught sight of Vergil and the others. "Hey! We got the boat! We-" Rio didn't get to say anything else as the man flicked him through the doorway and out of the bar like something unpleasant he'd found on his finger.

Triste sighed and started to rise. "Looks like that water's going to have to wait."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 08, 2015, 10:10:26 pm**

(Egypt)

Anne let out a sigh of relief as Axel said that Rio would not be piloting the boat. She climbed aboard the gangplank after Soren. At the same time, she had her hands in her pockets, which were concealing her stolen brass knuckles.

Soren sat on a deck chair aboard the ship. He noticed that a hookah sat on a elegant glass table. "So who goes in first?"

The Shetland Pony mare looked at the hookah and smiled.

(Corona)

Marion looked at Mace. She tried to decipher his nearly unreadable expression. "What are my orders, Sir?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 09, 2015, 02:50:57 pm**

((Sorry for the somewhat meh post; don't really have a lot of time right now))

"She's standing right in front of me, apparently." Tony said in response to Emilena's question about useless teammates. "Oh I'm sorry, I thought you meant the useless teammate that couldn't escape a castle without Vergil's help, RIIIIIGHT." he said, grinning at her here. Best way to nullify her stupid sarcasm was fire back with intelligent sarcasm. "The teammate that can actually ACTIVATE the waypoint is back at the bar getting a drink, like he already said. But yeah, we'll send someone along to fetch him." He nodded as Rio left, and appeared relieved that no, Rio wasn't driving the boat.

He headed down to the dock with the others, and peered into the big yacht. "I'll go first... get the keys, start her up, and we'll shove off once everyone is here. Shouldn't be much longer anyway... they're usually good about moving..." He headed into a luxurious cabin, with padded chairs, royal blue carpet, and fridge. Opening the fridge with a modicum of curiosity, Tony noted it was empty. "Hmmm... let's put our water bottles in here... we're gonna need 'em later on after all." he stated. "Best keep 'em cold."

Heading to the large safe mounted on a bulkhead, Tony input the numbers, opened it up, and retrieved the keys. "OK got 'em! And yes, I do like the idea of me driving." he said, smiling back at Marita.

Vergil nodded, but was interrupted by Rio coming up to them, promptly getting denied entry, and telling them the boat was ready. He sighed. "Yeah... sorry about that... I'll try and make it up to you somehow." he said, giving Triste a sincerely apologetic look. Standing up, he nodded at the others, and headed for the exit.

"You all right?" he asked Rio, offering to help him to his feet by outstretching his hand. "Lead the way, young squire. We'll be right behind you." he said gamely.

Mace looked at Marion and frowned. "So... do you know what Vergil is actually after? Have you been able to determine his goal? Is he after something called... Torment's Cataract?" he inquired, giving Marion a steely look with his gray eyes now.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 09, 2015, 03:56:26 pm**

Marita took a seat next to the fridge " Nice digs. Feels almost like a luxury cruise, minus the chattering guests and all you can eat buffet. Did you get in touch with your dad Tony, to let him know you're alright?" she Asked.

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rose and marie picked up thier bears and followed Vergil and Trieste out of the bar towards the docks. Rose was holding two bottles, Marie just one.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 10, 2015, 08:19:56 am**

Yesterday there was no possible way Emilena would have allowed a comment like that to fly, especially not from Tony. At minimum she would have acidly reminded him about his track record with fighting ten-year olds, but Lily's warning was still fresh in her mind. Lily wasn't part of the team anymore, but she would no doubt be crossing their paths again, and she had been very clear about what happened if the team considered Emilena a hindrance...so Emilena merely bit her lip and counted silently to ten before boarding the boat.

"Why did you buy alcohol if you weren't even planning on drinking it?" Flora complained loudly, hopping on the boat. Her face brightened when she saw Tony. "Hey! I heard you and Marita were in a relationship; so are we! Wanna have a threesome? You can be on top, that way your masculinity isn't threatened."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 10, 2015, 01:26:15 pm**

Marita facepalmed at Flora's comments- that girl had no inner filter whatsoever. ' first , Flora. i bought it to drink later, after we found the waypoint. and second, asking Tony for a threeway isnt a good idea.' Marita said shaking her head. ' he might be up for it, he might not, but thats not something you come out and ask a guy in public, to his face."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 10, 2015, 03:36:53 pm**

"Here it is." Rio signaled towards the boat, then hopped on after Flora. Glancing back at Vergil, he nodded. "Thanks for the hand up back there, man," he said. As he entered the cabin, he caught the end of what Marita was saying and grinned. "If you don't ask him to his face, how the fuck else are you gonna ask him? A letter?" Rio straightened. "I've had *millions* of threesomes," he boasted, looking down his nose at Marita (although, since she was much taller than him, it was more like looking up his nose at her).

"*You don't even know what a threesome is*," Axel's voice drifted through a window above the fridge, from where he was examining the boat's engine outside.

Rio started, then pouted. "Yeah! Yeah I do! It's..." He frowned. "... It's when you have sex three times, like, really really fast."

"*That's exactly what it is.*"

Triste shook her head as she sat down in one of the expensive looking chairs and spread out a map on her lap. Tracing the route they'd have to take, she looked up at the others. "The waypoint isn't too far away - it'll take us about an hour... an hour and a half to get there."

"Alright! Just checked the engine - just quickly, anyway - and it seems good to go," Axel announced, stepping into the cabin, his shoes whispering against the carpet as he wiped his hands on the back of his trousers. He saw Tony holding the keys. "Should we set sail, captain?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 10, 2015, 04:24:57 pm**

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a threesome is when there are 3 people involved in having sex ' Marita said ' and since you are 13, Rio, you are well underage for any sort of sex. an adult is not even supposed to touch you, let alone bang you, at your age. normally I'd not be so frank about such things, but Flora cant keep her thoughts to herself,bless her heart, and you have a mouth that never stops yakking.' She cracked at Rio. she then overheard what Trieste was saying. " so 90 minutes huh. whats the over-under on having 15-20 of those killer robot things there? I mean , there's been more of them at each waypoint, hasn't there? There were 6 at the first one, 9 at the second.. "

—

Rose and Marie Climbed on board and headed over towards the fridge to put their beers away. ' nice digs ' Rose said appreciatively as she took a look around before choosing a seat ' she pulled out some Egyptian coins she had gotten for the beers ' Something to toss into my coin jars at home ' she said ' a couple pounds and few piastres' she added.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 10, 2015, 08:52:44 pm**

"No problem." Vergil replied, smiling and nodded at Rio as he hopped aboard, though paid precious little attention to the next set of sexual conversations taking place. Instead, he opened his duffel and took out a pith helmet from a bygone era, placing it upon his head and smiling at Triste as if he'd just pulled a prank and sat down next to her. Surprisingly, it seemed to fit well on him, and didn't look completely out of place. He had to keep the sun off him somehow when they got out there after all.

"Dr. Livingston I presume?" he asked Triste, sitting beside her and glancing at the map she had pulled out. He nodded as he noted their next destination. "It's possible, but we didn't encounter any at the last waypoint, probably because it was underwater." Vergil mused aloud to Marita's pondering.

"Uh no, I'm not interested." Tony replied blandly, sticking out his tongue in revulsion. "Since you two are spoken for, I'll look elsewhere, thank you." he stated, motioning at the two of them with his claw back and forth. Hmm... maybe he could try and rekindle his thing with Anne. The pony was certainly in good spirits, or so it seemed, but Axel interrupted them after reentering the cabin from inspecting the engine. "Awesome!" he stated in response to the rat's declaration that the engine was good to go. "Then let's shove off!" He had to admit Axel had the right idea checking it BEFORE they left... no use in renting a lemon after all that would die on them in mid-river...

He went outside, mounted the stairs up to the cockpit, taking them two at a time and pulling himself up with the handrails until he reached the bridge, inserted the keys, and listened to the big, throaty grumble as the engines came to life. "Right..." He whispered, checking to make sure they were clear in front and behind, then pushed the throttle forward to head out into the Nile.

He spun the wheel to the right, keeping a close eye on river traffic, and increased speed once more to do a 180 into the river. He pulled out safely and pointed the bow south, nodding to himself with satisfaction on maneuvering the big boat safely.

"I feel like Lawrence of Arabia's theme should start playing or something." Vergil chuckled, looking out the cabin windows now as Aswan slid by them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 10, 2015, 11:55:18 pm**

Hold on Tony" Marita said coming up to him " Flora and I are not in a relationship, nor would I ask you to join in a threeway. Shes... well I dont know what she was thinking when she said that. she's quite a bit of a goofball" Marita said " I'm sorry that you had to be grossed out like that. Let me buy you dinner to make up for that scene. whatever you want.." Marita said firmly. ' and we havent had that date yet either. so don't go casting me aside until we've had it.'

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 14, 2015, 03:45:06 pm**

Veranus' radio cackled. It was a private frequency, one only used by his closest henchmen. "Veranus," said the mystery voice. "I need to speak to you. Please respond."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 15, 2015, 02:44:50 am**

(Corona)

"I had boarded a *Scarab Mk IV* ship and a personal ship known as the *Falchion* in pursuit of one of men whom I encountered in Bolivia. I shall just boil it down to the essentials." Marion sipped a glass of water as she calmly recounted all the details.

"For starters, the Ferret whom I took to be a government operative is not one. He is Tony Stracci, the son of the notorious Lanthaeni crime lord Don Stracci. Both ships are owned by someone named Varanus. Some information I stole out of the shipboard computers indicates that Varanus is also after Torment's Cataract.

"Furthermore, information I gleaned from Tony Stracci's personal belongings suggests that he is in contact with Vergil and that he had been after some sort of waypoint in Bolivia. Finally, I also noticed one that several of his contacts live right here in Corona."

She downed her glass of water. "Right now, I believe that I may be able to find out where they are going next and what they are up to."

(Egypt)

Soren was examining a map of the Nile. He scowled as he realized that several of the areas were marked as belonging to various companies -- and were therefore forbidden zones. He t

"Tony," he said, as he climbed up the wooden stairs from the lower decks and into the bridge. "I don't know how accurate this map is but according to what Triste said, the waypoint's inside the borders of Aswan Algal Chemicals."

Anne reclined on the deck where she sipped a bottle of local honey beer. Her metallic horn gleamed in the desert sun.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 16, 2015, 07:45:06 pm**

Tony regarded Marita skeptically, but finally nodded at her explanation. "All right... when we get back from this we will, how's that sound?" he asked, raising his brow as Soren came up to him here. "So... it's in a corporation's territory?" he asked. "Pretty remote place if you ask me... maybe they don't really monitor the desert as much as they do the shoreline." he suggested. "I mean we don't know the terrain makeup of the waypoint just yet... it could be based in a relatively desolate part after all... you never know."

He turned his attention back to the river, and silently hoped this would be easier than the other ones... but somehow he doubted it. This whole trip had been one big challenge from start to finish, and he had no idea what else he'd encounter before this quest was through.

He increased speed on the boat's throttle as he reached more open water, and kept his eyes scanning for oncoming traffic, but it was sparse the further south they headed, and that suited the ferret just fine...

"What?" Varanus asked, touching his throat. He'd fully healed in the weeks leading up to this

point, and was ready to get back into action, which promised to be soon at this rate.

"I see." Mace replied, studying all the information she had laid out before him. He paused as she mentioned waypoints.... it was the exact same thing his brother had been looking for years ago... but what was the connection now? His brother had only told him a few things about it... not enough. "You... said waypoints?" he asked softly, swallowing hard. "I-I see. Um... I suppose so but... I feel at this point this is getting beyond something I wish to pursue. Given what I learned about this stuff in the past... it's stuff we probably shouldn't even be messing with in the first place." Mace told her flatly, fixing her with a steely gaze. "It destroyed my brother all right? And he was the strongest person I've ever known."

The gecko tapped a finger on her notes thoughtfully. "My brother changed forever... and ultimately ended up dead pursuing this... I'm more interested in this Vergil Speicher... and what his connection with my brother is." Mace said now, looking up at her. "Have you found anything linking him to Rex?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 16, 2015, 08:51:06 pm**

Sounds great " Marita smiled , relieved that she had salvaged things with Tony for the time being. ' this waypoint should show us the last Waypoints location correct? The one In Asia? After that well, its finding the ship itself..
-
Rose and Marie calmly drank thier beers, letting the warm sun tan their skins. the scenery was the only thing notable, there wasnt many boats in this portion of the river.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 17, 2015, 06:42:14 am**

"We could always just stop the boat just outside, sneak in and get to where we want. I could do that shit no problem," Rio suggested, leaning back on on of the plush chairs and propping his feet up, trailing sand onto the expensive looking fabric.

Axel shrugged. "Depends how far in the waypoint would be. And if there's more of those robot guard things, it'll be hard to be subtle."

Rio looked up interestedly. "Robot guards?"

"You don't want to know," Axel shuddered.

"We'll assess the situation when we get there," Triste said, studying the map. "If we're in luck, it'll be as Mr. Stracci said, and security won't be an issue." She glanced out of the window, noting the steadily dwindling number of boats. Turning her head, she looked behind them, eyes tracing the course they'd just taken, studying what few boats remained on the river. Still no obvious tail, no signs of being followed. Triste swallowed and turned her attention back to the front and whatever awaited them further on.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 17, 2015, 02:28:08 pm**

"I wish to speak with you in person," the voice continued. "I have information on a certain target of yours which you will find quite valuable, not to mention a method of obtaining more. I'm transmitting you my coordinates." The coordinates placed the call somewhere in the deserts outside Corona. "You may meet me there, or choose a rendezvous point of your own. And to prove I'm telling the truth, you can have the first tip for free; Vergil Speicher's team is

currently sailing down the Nile River, having just left the city of Aswan."

"I've never liked corporate raids," frowned Emilena. "This far out of town, they're basically governments with no need to put up a good face for the populace. If any of us get caught, they're good as dead."

"Then let's not get caught..." Flora shivered. As the prospect of leaving the boat and returning to the desert loomed, her old xerophobia was starting to reassert itself.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 18, 2015, 05:52:22 pm**

"Hahahahah...." Varanus chuckled throatily at the voice on the other end, having checked his phone for the coordinates. "Oh I already know where he is... we're already waaaaay ahead of you." he smirked, lowering his sunglasses as he reclined on a deck chair, soaking in the sun on the boat that moved down the Nile a good ten miles behind the yacht Vergil and company were on, completely out of sight thanks to bends in the river. "Unfortunately I'm nowhere near Corona at the moment, so our meeting will have to wait. If you wish to join our cause, I can give you specific instructions about enlisting. Right now though... I've got a job to do." he said, looking up at the sky. No one could see it just yet... but Varanus was bringing along sizable reinforcements this time. However, he wouldn't call on them unless absolutely necessary... he wanted to finish Vergil himself... he would take personal pleasure in performing that task...

"Well hence we should avoid any corporate contact whatsoever." Vergil stated, looking over at Emi. "You're right... they'd kill us and no one would care. It'd be pointless to get into it with them out here. We aren't gonna get lucky twice like we did on Voltaic. I say we cruise on by the point of land closest to where the waypoint is, see how many shore installations there are, and if none, anchor right there and take a small boat to shore. It looks like the waypoint is..." He glanced at the map again, narrowing his eyes. "Only about nine miles inland so... requisitioning a vehicle might be preferable once we land."

"That's right." Tony said to Marita up above. "This is the penultimate waypoint... then one more, then the ship. We're gonna destroy that thing somehow... or maybe let the fleet handle it. Either way, we're not letting Kalis obtain it." he said with determination. At the rate they were moving, it wouldn't be long before they arrived, which was good, as Tony was looking forward to doing this again...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 18, 2015, 06:43:20 pm**

"I assure you, you're not ahead of me," the voice replied. "I can gain up-to-date information on Vergil faster than you'd believe. I look forward to meeting you and sharing my intel. Don't take too long in sending someone to meet with me; I wish to work for Kalis, but I can turn to other factions if I must."

Then the voice cut out.

"Sounds good to me," Emilena nodded. "I doubt we'll be lucky enough to obtain an unguarded land vehicle once we disembark, but if we do come across one Flora has significant experience hotwiring cars."

Flora nodded proudly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 18, 2015, 07:53:40 pm**

(Corona)

"No sir," Marion replied. "But since several of Vergil's contacts live in Corona, I may be able to get some information from them."

She finished off her glass of water and placed it on the soapstone coaster.

(Egypt)

Soren sipped some local soft drink as he examined the maps on the table and his laptop. The ride was fairly smooth so he didn't have to worry about making accidental marks. The maps he had were marked up with rough positions of patrol routes, boundaries and other data.

He looked out the cabin window and saw a large algal oil tanker pass by. *Hmm. Maybe we can stow away aboard one of those tankers...* he thought.

The door clicked as Anne came in. "So what's going on?" she asked as she went to the refrigerator.

Soren rubbed his face. "I'm doing some map analysis. And right now, I don't see how we're going to get in by water or air."

He got up and headed for the bridge.

"Tony," the Human said as he placed the marked-up maps on a teak table inside the rather luxurious bridge. "I've been doing some analysis and we can't get near the waypoint by water -- it's deep inside corporate territory. The companies here patrol their waterways vigorously and if we get caught, we're bricked. Their land and air patrols are no less vigorous but owing to the sheer amount of land, intruders are less likely to be noticed."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 18, 2015, 08:53:12 pm**

Who the hell was this who was coming on and contacting him? And how did they know so much? Not like it really mattered, since Varanus intended to end Vergil by the end of the night. Soon no one would care who he ever was or had been. Except of course... Varanus KNEW who he was... and it was with great pleasure that he'd terminate his existence. Who knew? If he could... it might mean he'd be strong enough to take out Kalis and inherit his empire for himself.

"Yeah uh... relay that call to Admiral Carrack. He can pass it on to Kalis, and if his lord is interested, we can I dunno... send someone out there to meet this guy or something." Varanus ordered, narrowing his eyes as he raised his sunglasses to cover them again and went back to sunning himself.

Mace nodded. "Very well... look into these contacts and see what you can find. But don't go breaking the law. You get caught I'll deny all knowledge of your existence, but then again... you already know that." he said, giving her a nod. "Find me what I want... and let's find out more about him."

"Well stealing a vehicle might be easy, especially if we pick one carefully and not just jack one

that we see the first time. But yes, we'll try and avoid people at all costs... the less that see us head into the desert... the better." Vergil stated, looking down.

Vergil greeted Anne with a nod as she entered. "We're just basically going over ideas and plans. Bouncing them around so to speak. That horn of yours... can it activate electronics from a distance?" he inquired.

Up above, Tony listened to what Soren had to say. "I see... but they can't stop navigation on the entire river! I'm sure there's a corridor you can take through it. I mean if we can't go any further we'll have to stop, and hope there's a convenient vehicle we can take that fits all of us... otherwise we're gonna be out of luck anyway. Walking nine miles in the desert... we'd need a hell of a lot of water for that. Unless we wait till night, but then we'd be freezing our tails off." Tony pointed out. "I'd rather just go during the day, as we didn't exactly pack warm clothing. Anyway... how far before they'd stop us?" he asked Soren.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 19, 2015, 03:13:22 am**

Soren looked at his map. "Most of the smaller canals that branch off are in corporate territory -- and closed to public access. Aswan Algal Chemicals has an algae farm on the shore of the Nile -- something they got special permission from the Egyptian government to do. That stretch of the waterway is open to public boat traffic but it has a *very* strict speed limit. If we go too fast or too slow, or worse, stop, Aswan Algal Chemicals will be sending over a patrol boat to see what's going on." He took a seat and templed his hands. "Granted, we could feign engine trouble, ambush the guards and then steal their patrol boat but considering that their patrol boats are armed, I'm not liking the chances of success."

He then pointed to some red dots he made on the paper -- one of numerous that dotted the riverbanks. "We can forget about the waterway approach. Cameras and various sensors watch every inch of the riverbanks. If you even *hint* that you're heading for the restricted access canals or preparing to make a stop at the riverbank,, the guards will be on your ass.

"By land, it looks like the off-limits areas are clearly marked. It looks like the closest you can get to the complex is maybe about four miles. Any closer and the company starts getting *real* interested in what you're up to."

Anne shrugged. "Hypothetically, if it's radio-controlled, I probably could control it remotely. But the problem is that my antenna is powered by a cluster of micro-fuel cells that runs off the glucose in my blood; it's not very powerful so I'd say I have a range of 200 feet tops. As for the jamming capability, it's got a range of twenty feet at most."

She reached inside the refrigerator and grabbed a glass bottle of beer. She pulled out her stolen brass knuckles from her pocket and used them as an improvised bottle opener.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 21, 2015, 07:03:07 am**

Axel looked over the map Soren was pointing at, and frowned. "Damn... so they've got every way in covered..." He chewed his lip for a second thoughtfully. "Well wait. Anne, your horn could jam the cameras right? If the signal from your antenna was strong enough?" The rat blinked at her. "What if we could find a way to boost the signal that you could give off from it? It wouldn't have to be for long... just, you know, enough to take out a few cameras and give some of us the chance to get off the boat and out of their sight? Then whoever's left on the boat could keep driving up the river, then turn back and, ah, pick us up again?" He shrugged. "Maybe there'd be a way to mess with the security defense once we're in, give us a chance to get away again? It's the only way I can think of that means... you know, we'd have a chance of avoiding any people who work there."

"We'd still have the problem of avoiding the security teams patrolling the plant," Triste pointed out.

Rio perked up. "How about a distraction? You said the guards get all over your shit if the boat stops along here," he said, reaching up and stretching his arm to point at the waterway. "So what if whoever stays on the boat *does* actually stop somewhere along there. If a team of assholes comes around, it'd mean less of them for the rest of you to hide from." Rio looked up at the adults. "And they'll probably not get as mad if they see it's a kid who fucked up driving the boat. And if they do then I guess it'll give you guys more time to do whatever the hell you're gonna do."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **February 21, 2015, 12:03:31 pm**

"Hmmm...that could work," murmured Emilena. "It could give something for the less threatening teammates like Axel and Marita something to do."

"I could go with Team Less-Threatening!" Flora piped up.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 22, 2015, 06:23:35 pm**

Since it seemed everyone was wandering up to the cockpit, that's where Vergil headed as well, having already sensed what the discussion was taking place above his head. He went outside to the teak stern deck, and climbed the stairs (or ladder as it was known on boats) up to the wheel, where Tony and Soren (and everyone else) were deep in discussion regarding their next moves.

Vergil listened to the suggestions, and nodded even as Tony spoke up. "I was just about to suggest that actually!" the ferret said. "We move those on shore to the boat, and slip ashore without being seen. No sense risking it with security like that. Nine miles away though... we're gonna probably need ground transportation of some kind..."

"I agree with the distraction." Vergil spoke up now, looking them over. "But I don't want our distraction getting harmed or killed for their job. We should do our best to keep them out of reach of the company forces. Of course... you could always throw the throttle forward and take off, leading them on a chase... but you'd have to ensure you could keep this boat around for our escape. We brought communicators with us, so keeping in touch won't be too much of an issue." he informed them all.

"Still... I don't want the decoys captured. Find a way to get this boat away from the security forces after they clear you, and join us." Vergil looked at Rio here. "I don't like leaving our forces divided for too long in the face of potentially strong opposition. To top that all off... I don't want to inflict needless pain." he said, looking sympathetically at Flora and Rio, as they seemed to be volunteering.

"Well hey... they could like... be waved on their way, and then like... come back for us when we're done." Tony suggested.

Vergil nodded. "I think that'd be best, yes. Perhaps a high-speed extraction would work well. What's everyone think?" he inquired, looking around at the others. "We'll have a better idea of course once we're on shore, and can see their defenses for ourselves."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 22, 2015, 07:22:51 pm**

Those on the "Boat" team will have to occupy security on the river long eough for those on land to get to the waypoint, deal with whatevers there, and unlock the coordinates to the last waypoint. We're likely talking something that could conceivably be anywhere from 15 minutes to a couples hours ' Marita said." thats not including picking them back up either, so we're possibly doubling the time frame. so whoever is operating boat needs to be good at it.. and no Rio, we're not putting a 13 year old in charge or driving this thing,.so dont ask. It'll likely be either me or Axel operating the thing.." Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 22, 2015, 08:46:13 pm**

Anne nodded. "If you can get your hands on a repeater like what's used for boosting cell phone signals, you can significantly increase my range of implant."

Soren tapped his chin. "You know, this boat has a radio, right? And a repeater's essentially a radio transmitter." He smiled. "It should be very easy for me to modify our radio."

The Human then looked at his map again. "You know, we could stow away on an oil tanker and deal only with the internal security."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 23, 2015, 06:46:31 pm**

"How often would an oil tanker come along? By the time we manage to get aboard one, we could have wasted too much time," Triste pointed out. "And we don't know what kind of security they'd have on the ship - I'd be surprised if nobody else has ever tried sneaking in using the ship. We could just be trading the maneuverability of the outside for the enclosed space of the tanker with the same amount of resistance."

Axel shrugged. "At least if we went for the first plan, we could hit the place fast, and get out quick."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **February 24, 2015, 01:37:39 am**

"I agree with Triste. A tanker's too much time, too unwieldy, and too much of an unknown. You said yourself a water approach is out anyway. We have to strike fast. In and out, get the waypoint, and not mess around. So let's focus on getting ashore as quick as possible, procuring land transport, and getting to our destination." Vergil stated, looking the map over again.

"Satellites show either a rock formation or something like it over the waypoint so... it could be a cave or something where it's located." Vergil commented thoughtfully. "Anyway, if a water approach itself is out, we can't really make use of a distraction anyway. We should just stop well short of their territory, get a vehicle, and move on in." he suggested. "Less chance of detection that way."

"Hm... gotta find a land vehicle first." Tony pointed out.

"Could just wait for a patrol to pass by the perimeter, incapacitate them, steal their vehicle, and get the hell over to the waypoint. I think that's our best best." Vergil replied. "Of course we don't know anything about their vehicles... none of this showed up on our intelligence beforehand... we'll just have to ultimately improvise I suppose." he confessed.

Mace nodded. "All right... do it. See what you can find out and report back." he ordered, giving

her a look that said it all: get this done.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **February 24, 2015, 02:10:13 am**

Whatever vehicle we grab, has to be big enough to hold all of us ' Rose said as she peered over the map. " i mean we are going in as one big group right? The whole ' one team provides a distraction" is out the window?
- Time is of the essence; Marita said " we cant waste too much hemming and hawing. w e need to be in, out and on to the last waypoint as quickly as possible and attracting the least amount of attention possible. Which , obviously is going to be tricky..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **February 24, 2015, 02:34:36 am**

(Corona)

"Understood." Marion saluted, picked up her notes and exited the office.

First things first, she had to do some research.

As she entered the elevator, she examined her notes. Surprisingly, Tony Stracci's passport had been with him the whole time. Of course, when traveling, leaving one's passport in a hotel room -- especially when the hotel staff may or may not be petty thieves -- was an unwise decision. The Human then examined a battered scrap of paper containing Vergil's name and a phone number she presumed to be his.

The elevator gently chimed as it reached the first floor atrium. Numerous workers milled about the airy space. Some were chatting, others were heading to the elevators. And some were heading to the company cafeteria for a snack.

She stepped into the crowd and headed for exit. First thing she'd do is use the company's considerable pull to get the Corona PD to trace on that number.

(Egypt)

"You mean this vehicle?" Soren pulled up a grainy satellite image on his laptop. While the image quality was quite poor, it was easily made out to be some sort of armored dune buggy with some kind of gun turret on the top.

Anne looked outside the window with a set of comp-noculars at a passing oil tanker. She scowled. "Forget stowing away. The oil tankers are all drone barges. No visible windows on the bridge."

Soren smiled. "Hmm. Do you think you can hijack them with your 'radio horn' and a repeater?"

Anne shook her head. "I can 'hear' the radio transmissions but the tankers only emit signals -- mostly heading, destination, state of cargo, speed and all that shit. I suspect that their routes are pre-programmed."

The Human let out a breath of air. "Well fuck, there goes one of my ideas for a distraction."

"If it involves a computer virus, it might still work." The mare put the comp-noculars aside and grabbed a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. There, she laid out her basic plan. "We want to get to the waypoint with out the guards getting on us, right?"

"No shit."

"These oil refineries are mostly computer controlled. And--"

Soren finished the mare's thought. "IF we can get a virus into the system, we can probably cause some big problems for them. It's a perfect distraction. They'll be too busy dealing with the fire or what have you to notice us at the waypoint. And by the time the fire's out, we'll be gone." He brought up the satellite map again. "And it looks like the cracking and distillation units are far away enough that we're not going to suffer any ill effects."

He then turned to Axel. "Do you think you can whip up a virus that'll force the refinery's equipment to operate beyond their safe parameters or override the programmed safeties?"

Anne finished off her beer and walked over to the trash can. She looked outside the window and saw the patrol boats of Aswan Algal Chemicals in the distance. Even worse was she could see that frame-flyers also patrolled the refinery airspace. "One problem, someone has to get the virus into their systems."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **February 24, 2015, 12:05:33 pm**

"Yeah, I could get something ready in a few minutes if Marita lets me borrow her laptop." Axel nodded. "It, ah, won't exactly be a masterpiece but it'll be enough to screw things over for them."

"But we'd still be left with the problem of waiting around until the virus has sabotaged their systems. We need to do this quickly, remember?" Triste said, glancing in Axel's direction as he rooted around in Marita's bag.

"We might not have to do it first," Axel said over his shoulder as he pulled out the laptop and booted it up. "Even if we get in without needing to use it, it won't hurt to have it just in case. Could always use it if we, ah, need something to buy us time or help us get out unseen. Alright, here we go..." His fingers started tapping on the keyboard.

"Fine. Just hurry up and get it done." Triste joined Anne at the window. The plant was getting closer by the second. "Stracci, start getting us closer to shore, and someone else modify that radio to use on the pony's horn. We can't wait any longer."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 01, 2015, 07:21:03 pm**

"Sounds like a plan to me..." Vergil closed his eyes, focusing intently, and suddenly, they sprang up. "Two vehicles of some sort are close by... just on the other side of that building." He nodded at a low building that was close to the shoreline.

"Right! Getting us closer now! Let's start doing all that electronic stuff cause we're going in!" Tony said, turning the wheel and pointing the bow to the shore now and throttling down a little. "OK! Someone should break out the dinghy and get it ready! We can use the yacht itself as cover! Shield us from the shore and get on dry land quickly!"

Vergil nodded, and looked at Triste. "Dinghy duty?" he asked, breaking out into a small smile.

Outside Corona, an agent of Kalis was waiting in the coordinates given by the mystery voice on the phone. Varanus wasn't there, as he was currently in Egypt. This man was tall and thin, with a hook nose, a scowl on his features, and a gun in his rear waistband. He tabbed his foot and kept on the lookout for anyone approaching.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 02, 2015, 01:02:04 pm**

Soren grabbed a toolbox laying near the bridge's entrance. "I'll get to work on the repeater. Marita and Axel, could you two get to work on that virus?"

He opened a panel that was clearly labeled "radio" and began tinkering with the radio equipment.

Anne looked out the window. She nodded. "Whenever you're ready, Soren."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 02, 2015, 04:50:48 pm**

"I'm on it, I'm on it..." Axel muttered, his brow furrowed, tongue sticking out in concentration as his fingers scuttled across the keys of Marita's laptop.

As Vergil mentioned readying the dinghy, Triste answered his smile with a small one of her own - though it vanished after a split second. "I'd be honoured." Walking briskly across the yacht, she reached the side of the ship. The dinghy was suspended above the water, a set of pulleys keeping it up, and as she studied the craft she frowned. "This won't be big enough for the whole group to fit. Looks like we'll have to leave some of us behind after all," Triste called back.

"I'll stay," Rio volunteered, his eyes staring at the wheel hungrily.

Axel stood up from the laptop and rubbed a hand through his hair. "Alright, done. It's not pretty, but, ah, it'll get the job done." He bit his lip as Triste reported that the dinghy wasn't big enough. "I'll stay back too. We can keep the boat going then come back to pick up the away team when they're done." He blinked. "It might be nice to *not* have someone trying to shoot my ass for once." Pulling out a USB stick onto which he'd stored the malicious files, he tossed it over to Soren. "Here. If you can find their network systems, just stick that in and open it up. It'll do all the rest for you."

Triste had meanwhile been lowering the dingy into the water, the view of any workers at the plant obscured by the angle the yacht was positioned. As it splashed lightly into the water, Triste turned back to the group as she lowered herself over the side. "Whoever's coming, hurry up. We don't have all day." She fixed her gaze on Anne. "Make sure you disable the cameras *before* they get the chance to see us. We need to make this quiet."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 02, 2015, 08:25:18 pm**

The representative of Kalis was standing outside a makeshift hovel in the remote deserts outside Corona.

An overweight middle-aged man opened the door. He was visibly nervous and couldn't meet the representative's eye. "Uh...hello. Hi. Nice to see you...uh...showed up..." Meekly he led the way into the back of the building, where a hastily-assembled radio and broadcaster took up the lion's share of the living quarters.

The only other person present was a dark-skinned woman in a light grey dress. "Hello," she greeted the newcomer. "My name is Lily North. I'm the one who spoke to Veranus recently. Thank you for meeting with us so promptly."

"I'll stay on the boat as planned," Flora nodded.

Emilena strapped her pistol onto her belt and carefully boarded the dinghy. "Marita, we're going to need you on the infiltrating team. For your hacking expertise."

Flora sidled up to the map and secretly palmed Rose a note: *Will you stay with me on the boat? I desperately want to ask you some things regarding Marita...*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 02, 2015, 08:34:05 pm**

A click was heard as Soren closed the access panel. He wiped off some dirt on a nearby paper towel.

"All right, repeater's ready to go." The USB landed at his feet. He picked it up and pocketed it.

A distinct clatter was heard as Anne retrieved her rifle from the locker and loaded it. She also had on a ballistic vest but a helmet was conspicuously absent. "Hey Soren! We're ready to go!"

"Just give me a moment!" Soren ran over to the open locker and grabbed his shotgun. He quickly loaded in shells and strapped on a belt containing extras. He also donned the provided ballistic vest and helmet. He slung his shotgun over his back.

He then looked at Rio, Tony and Axel. "Shouldn't I stay to fend off boarding attempts?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 02, 2015, 09:19:50 pm**

Sure ' Marita said, going over and grabbing her computer. Lets go then." Marita Said grabbing her bag, which had her gun stored insude it. She slid her computer in, and looked at Vergil Emilena and Trieste.

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"I'm going with the infiltrators ' Marie said " Just be warned, I havent used a gun much.. but I'll do my best to help ' she said as she took out her gun.

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I'm staying with Rio and Flora ' rose said as she took the note and took a very brief glance at it.. she motioned to flora then towards the back of the boat.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 07, 2015, 06:22:41 am**

Axel shook his head. "No, if they try to board we'll just have to, ah... well, we'll have to think of something. But we can't start fighting on the boat - we're too exposed, if the security starts firing on us we'll be cut to pieces."

"Oh, that makes me feel good," Rio muttered in the background.

"Stay with the others Rambo," Axel said, nudging Soren's shoulder. "You know what the other waypoints were like, if it's the same thing here they'll need all the help they can get. It's alright, we'll be okay."

"It's now or never!" Triste called across, looking over the side of the boat. "*We need to go!*"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 07, 2015, 03:23:05 pm**

Tony nodded at Axel to take over, and relinquished the wheel. "Right! Well we'll see you guys in a bit!" he said, jogging down the stairs from the bridge to the rear of the craft, where their zodiac was bobbing in the water gently.

Vergil had climbed aboard after he had helped Triste hoist the launch over the side, and all that was left was to motor the short distance to shore. Tony took his seat, closed his eyes, and waited while they began the voyage, Vergil operating the throttle to bring them towards the shoreline. There were a lot of reeds poking out of the water here, and it would make an ideal spot to run the craft on shore and conceal it.

Tony held the small GPS tracker in his hand, opening his eyes to check it every so often, as it was pinging off the precise heading and distance of the waypoint. As the craft crept into the reeds, Vergil ran it up onto the shore to beach it so it wouldn't drift away, and Tony hopped out to help haul it further onto the sand. Vergil cut the engine and leaped out as well, crouching in the reeds as he watched the compound, which was about 100 meters to their left.

"The vehicles we're after are slightly to the right of that building... I think there's people in the building though." Vergil said softly.

"Well... guess we'll just have to be quiet... who's got the laser cutter?" Tony whispered, referring to a small pen laser they'd brought to slice through things like fences, such as the one that surrounded the compound.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 07, 2015, 06:19:36 pm**

Soren sat in the zodiac. His shotgun was slung across his back.

When they had landed, he took out his comp-noculars and focused. There, he saw two of those armored dune buggies. "I see two of the vehicles but no cameras." He then noticed several quadcopter drones flitting through the air. Upon closer look, he noticed the drones were armed with a machine gun and a camera dangling underneath the body. "Scratch that, I see a few armed security drones."

He then switched his comp-noculars to a radar mode. There, several silhouettes showed up against the blank concrete wall. "It looks like a guard post of some sort. And there's at least four people inside."

"I've got the cutting tools and shit," Anne whispered. Her horn was active and she had overheard bits and pieces of radio chatter.

Upon hearing Soren, she softly swore. She snorted as a reed tickled her muzzle. "Great, I can't jam anything because if the cameras or sensors here go out, the guards will stream out and start looking for what happened."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 07, 2015, 06:20:59 pm**

'Here ' Marita said, handing it over to Tony. ' " Just make a big enough opening for all of us, so we can all get through. time is of the essence , after all.
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marie crouched down and stared at the fence, which wound its way off into the distance.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 07, 2015, 09:21:24 pm**

"Are the cameras feeding directly to the guard post or do they have their own security room elsewhere?" Emilena asked under her breath. "If the latter, we could cut them off at the source

and then bypass the guard post easily."

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Flora fidgeted her hands nervously. "Hi. I was just wondering regarding Marita...we haven't actually...you know...done anything yet, and you're like an expert on that, so I was wondering...what do girls *do* exactly during it? Do they just like...lay there?" Flora stammered, blushing beet red.

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"I'm a former member of Vergil's team. I joined him out of concern for my son's well-being, who's currently a soldier in Kalis' fleet." Lily's eyes flashed angrily. "Vergil recently kicked me off the team, saying our goals were 'incompatible' and that I shouldn't care if my son dies just for the good of *his* mission."

She stepped forward and unrolled a large map of the world. "I'm not the only one he's antagonized; I have a friend on the inside, and they have a direct line to me. Wherever Vergil's team goes, whatever they do, I get informed in real time. As it's happening." She tapped a section of the Nile River. "Half of his team has just disembarked from their boat here. They're hoping to secure land vehicles and travel to the waypoint. The noncombatants are remaining on the boat in case a distraction is needed."

She stepped back so the representative could examine the map without his personal space being threatened. "And while that's the primary service I can provide, I can help in another way." Lily took a deep breath. "I'm a psion. I specialize in healing and I'm the reason Vergil's team has never suffered a casualty up until now. However, Vergil blocked my powers somehow when he kicked me out, and I haven't found a way to reactivate them. If your doctors can help me with that, I can revolutionize your hospitals and infirmaries. Both of these services come at a single price; I want Kalis to assure my son, Ejlert Sulus North, is stationed somewhere out of harm's way."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 08, 2015, 03:25:08 am**

Rose stared at Flora upon reaching the back of the boat and hearing her question.
' Wait, are you asking me what to do while having sex with Marita?' she sighed and took a deep breath before answering. " have you ever had sex with another girl Flora? I'm guessing not, by your question, someone who has had experience in that wouldn't ask such questions or be nervous about it..
but normally before you do anything intimate, you go out on a date. makes it more meaningful when you are in bed- you've spent time together, had a good time and are in the mood for some 'fun'. I'm also guessing you haven't had many dates either. we'll take you out on one after this is over, see how you like it. but since you asked about what happens when two girls do it, I'll tell you.

now, in girl-girl , one of the girls assumes the male position, which is on top. the one on top drives the action and dictates to the one on bottom. girl-girl sex is similar to male female sex, with the exception of course is that girls don't have a penis and there's no penetration. no risk of pregnancy either , which given our - and by our I mean, Marita, Marie, and me-current financial status is a very good thing, we couldn't afford having a baby.
every girl I've had is different to a degree- some like a long session, others just want to get it over with.some like foreplay others dont. Marita usually is on the bottom, with me on top. shes a good lay and rather feisty in bed, especially after a glass of wine.' Rose said with a smile.'would you like me to show you a few things?" Rose asked Flora.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 08, 2015, 07:50:06 am**

Triste studied the building then shook her head. "It's difficult to tell..." she replied to Emilena's question. "Shit, we need those vehicles." Studying the paths the drone were taking proved no help - there was no distinctive pattern to where they flew. Her eyes narrowed. The machines only seemed to be patrolling the outside of the perimeter. If they could just get past the fence to the inside of the compound...

"Anne," she started. "Could you just try to target the sensors on those drones? Not the cameras? You disable those, then I could cloak in, cut the fence and bring one of vehicles to the rest of you, further down from the range of the drones."

Rio snorted. "What do you mean, go out on dates before doing anything *intimate*," he said, scrunching up his face on this last word. "Sometimes, all people want is a good hard screw. Who the hell has time for dates?"

Axel said nothing, his eyes fixed resolutely forwards as he steered the boat back to the center of the river, the plant drawing nearer. Betraying his attempt to appear nonchalant, his ears had turned a bright shade of pink, and as Rose began her description they turned in her direction in a rather fixed manner.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 08, 2015, 01:51:37 pm**

"Good idea." Vergil whispered. "We'll be ready. Once Anne jams the sensors, Triste gets the vehicle, we get in, and take off. I'll run interference in case something goes wrong... I can easily topple a few drones and knock a few security guards back after all."

"Right! So... let's make it happen then! According to the GPS, the waypoint is nine miles off... so that's... not too far into the desert. About a ten minute drive or so." Tony whispered back.

"Chances are, the guards will hear the vehicle start up so... I may need to run interference anyway." Vergil murmured. "I'll be ready for that... so just focus on getting that vehicle to us. I'll cover you while you do..." Vergil assured Triste. "And hey!" he said, reaching out and grabbing her arm. "Be careful... all right?"

A figure wearing red robes suddenly appeared behind the agent now, and glared at Lily with cold, dead, but golden eyes. He was a tall gargoyle gecko, his skin spiny and hideous looking. His robes swept down to his feet, which weren't visible. His lower jaw was gone, replaced by a metallic substitute which clearly did not lend itself to movement. Instead, when he spoke, it came from some voice box embedded deep in his throat, giving him a raspy, hoarse, yet chilly voice that sounded like death incarnate. Lily could sense his powers were immense, dwarfing anything she might have ever encountered before.

"You need not concern yourself with Vergil's team. I've already taken measures to ensure that not only will they soon be in my possession, but after extracting what relevant information I need, they will be eliminated. One of their own team is working for me... though he doesn't know it yet." Kalis explained, not blinking as he stared at her. "My second-in-command is shadowing them. Once they have the waypoint, he'll move in. However, I've sent Admiral Carrack and his flagship as backup... they won't have any chance of escaping my trap."

"Your powers are useful to me... you may enlist... though know this... I do not broker deals. Your son will be called upon to serve whatever capacity I see fit. He is of use to me, and I will send him to a position that makes the most use of his talents. You join me, and I can guarantee that should you survive the coming war, I will personally see to it that you will receive whatever you want on this planet. That is an assurance I can give you." he concluded, having stared at her this whole time, his eyes boring into her deeper and deeper.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 08, 2015, 05:38:00 pm**

"I'll provide cover fire if things go south." Emilena sighted the scope on her pistol. "Always wanted to try one of these; sounds completely stupid in theory but at this range it'd actually fit the bill."

She attached a silencer. "Course, it'd be ideal if it didn't come to that."

Flora jumped; she hadn't realized the others were in earshot. "What? No! I've had *loads* of sex! With...*lots* of people!" she added hastily. "Come on," she practically dragged Rose out of the room and into the lower deck of the yacht.

"There, uh, might be a bit of a problem with that..." she kept her voice low even though they were now alone. "I'm not...uh...exactly built like other girls. I don't know if it'll be the same thing..." She hesitated, then nervously unbuckled her jeans and slid them down to her kneecaps. "Is that a dealbreaker? Will Marita insist we keep things nonphysical?"

Lily visibly jumped; she thought the representative had come alone. She recomposed herself quickly, and hoped that her less-than-graceful first impression would be excused since she's not applying for a combat role. "I'm...glad to hear Ejlert is of use to you," she replied. "That's reassurance enough, that he's part of the picture and not just a faceless gun among the ranks..."

"Er..." Foley cleared his throat. "That offer applies to me too, right?" he had been shaking ever since Kalis had appeared, and was quickly wondering if calling attention to himself had been a mistake.

"Foley is a skilled programmer and a friend of mine," Lily introduced. "He's the reason I was able to contact you; he reverse-engineered Veranus' radio chip using only the supplies in this shanty."

"I heard from multiple sources you're planning on taking over the world, and pretty close to doing it..." Foley tried to grin casually but the fear in his eyes kinda killed the intended effect, "and I thought 'that sounds like the team to be on,' you know?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 08, 2015, 06:59:08 pm**

rose started as flora undid her jeans and revealed her privates- instead of a vagina like a normal girl, a penis moved back and forth . ' have.. you .. always had that? she asked quietly.'or is that an implant? rose looked closely at flora. ' you're not the first one i've met to have a 'double package', in my er-previous work, i had a few girls with sausage downstairs. they were actually the nicest companions and paid the best- most likely because i was willing to bang them.there was a girl named Curusa ... anyway. i dont think it will be a dealbreaker. maritas had a open mind ever since we started dating. as long as you are honest and open with it, have a package wont be an issue."
-
 9 miles huh, so we'll need to move very fast.. ' marita said..'cut the fence, and move your butts.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 08, 2015, 10:01:34 pm**

Anne nodded. At the same time, she tried to pick out the frequency the drones transmitted in. The mare found that frequency and sent a small burst of radio waves which was picked up by the repeater on the boat and greatly amplified.

"It's done," she whispered.

Little did she know that other sensors had picked up an unusual burst of radio waves coming from the boat cruising down the river.

Inside another part of Aswan Algal Chemicals, a group of flying-frame equipped guards were being dispatched to that boat cruising down the river. Standard protocol for the guards was to hail the vessel and ask if there were any problems. An armed patrol boat was also dispatched.

Soon, a sleek motorboat with a machine gun on its bow was roaring down the Nile River and heading straight for the boat that Tony was currently captaining. Four of the armed guards flew above the boat, the engines of their flying frames were drowned out by the roar of the motorboat's engine.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 09, 2015, 01:05:13 am**

"It's not a 'double package,' I'm just flytrap and no Venus," Flora corrected softly, blushing. "And I've always had it...honestly sometimes I don't think I really count as a 'girl.'"

She was getting excited, and there was no real way for her to hide it. "So, you said you were going to 'show me some things'?" she repeated, flushing bright red under her fuchsia fur.

"Go Triste, go!" Emilena kept her gaze trained on the expanse ahead, but the coast was completely clear.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 09, 2015, 02:07:26 am**

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well, considering the circumstances we'll keep it short and sweet. a bit of breast foreplay and french kissing ' rose said. ' since well we have to keep an eye out for the others and anyone who might try to stop us from, well, getting out of here.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 09, 2015, 12:16:45 pm**

Triste nodded and glanced back at Vergil, briefly touching his fingers. "I'm hoping it'll take more than this to bring me down." She met his eyes for a second, then pulled away, standing up and cloaking simultaneously. "Just keep me covered," she muttered, then set off at a jog down towards the fence.

Getting closer, she could almost feel the eyes of the drones upon her, almost a physical weight that seemed to weigh her down. Triste could hear their mechanical whirring as they hovered lazily overhead. As she ran beneath one, her boots crunching softly on the rocks and pebbles scattered across the sand beneath her feet, the drone suddenly stopped in its path, swiveling in her direction camera and machine-gun barrel gleaming in the sun's glare. Triste's heart sank - *had something gone wrong? Could it see her?!* - and as she ran past it the gecko kept it in her peripheral vision, convinced she was about to feel the hot, piercing pain of bullets ripping into her.

Then she was past, and nothing had happened. Letting out a breath slowly, Triste looked over her shoulder and saw the drone set off in another path, not interested in her. *Thank god.* Finally, she was at the fence. Stopping just short of the chain-link structure, she quickly pulled out the laser cutter that she'd taken from Anne. A thin buzzing started to whine in her head - her cloaking was about to run out. Breathing evenly, Triste activated the device and started to run it down the fence, the white hot laser cutting easily through the metal. The buzzing in her head started to get louder, more insistent, and she picked up her speed, cutting down then to the left, creating a small flap. Switching off the laser, Triste gently pulled the flap up at the corner, slipped through and pulled it shut gently behind her... just as her cloaking drained away. Hissing, she darted forwards and pressed herself flat against the wall of the security compound.

The ringing in her head started to fade as the invisibility system embedded in her skin started to recharge. Triste knew they didn’t have enough time to wait, so after taking a second to gain her bearings she set off to the right, keeping close to the wall of the compound as she followed the structure around to the rear of the building. Only once did she have to duck past a window, and as she did so Triste heard the muted voices of the four guards Soren had reported. Whatever they were talking about, the discussion seemed relaxed. In the background, she could hear the sound of what sounded like a sports commentary coming from a tv. If they were lucky, the noise would cover the sound of the vehicle.

She rounded the corner and finally, there in front of her were the two armored vehicles. They were parked out in the open - right in view of a door leading into the building. Shooting a wary glance in the door's direction, she darted straight for the closest vehicle. Running her long fingers against the vehicle, she pulled the handle and almost smiled as the heavy door heaved open. *Thanks for making it easier...* Easing herself behind the wheel, she took a quick look at the ignition and gritted her teeth. No keys - of course it wouldn't be that easy. Sliding the knife from its sheath on her arm, she sliced at the wires beneath the wheel and started reconnecting them, shooting glances through the windscreen towards the door. Still nobody. Suddenly, the engine of the armored buggy rumbled to life, the dashboard lighting up.

Triste waited for a second to see if anyone came out, and when the door stayed shut she allowed herself a quick smile. Things were finally going smoothly. Working the gearbox, Triste eased the buggy forwards, keeping it slow for the moment as she craned her neck to see down to the front of the car. A gate in the fence was ajar, and she nudged the buggy through, trying the keep the noise down as the metal squeaked. Then the vehicle was clear, and she started to pick up the speed, the dust road she followed taking her further away from the compound and, luckily, keeping away from the sight of the drones. Glancing to the side, she spotted the area where the rest of the team was hiding and as she swung the vehicle off the road and sped towards them, Triste could feel her heart pounding in her chest. *The hard part still isn't over.*

"Get off! *Stop it!*" Axel snapped as Rio prodded at his arms, the metal clinking as the boy's sharp nails tapped against their surface. Throwing a hand up in the air in exasperation, Axel turned away from the wheel and pointed a finger. "Keep it up and I'm hanging you on our flagpole! I'm talking serious wedgie time!"

Rio seemed unimpressed by his protests. "So they don't fire lasers or rockets or anything?"

"They let me pick stuff up and... do other stuff. That's it!"

"Super strength?"

"No."

"Force fields?"

"No!"

"Oh shit."

"What?"

Rio was staring at something behind Axel. The rat turned and his ears flattened as he saw what had caught Rio's attention. A boat, tailed by four guards using flying frames were speeding towards them. "Oh shit," he echoed.

"Move!" Rio pushed against Axel and put his hands on the wheel, standing on tiptoes to see where the boat was heading. "It'll look more natural that we're going slow if I'm driving... just talk to them!"

Staying next to Rio in case he started to steer them aground, Axel swallowed and turned to face the incoming security team. He waved to them. "Ah... Ahoy there!" he called lamely.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 09, 2015, 03:13:01 pm**

The motorboat slowed down as it stopped next to the pleasure vessel. The flying guards landed on the deck and their wings retracted.

The first guard took off his helmet, revealing a man with a heavily tanned face and Arabic features.

"*Hello,*" he said in Arabic. When he got no response, he switched to English. "We noticed that your boat seems to be going a little slow. Are you having some engine trouble?"

Despite the guard's casual tone, the motorboat's gun turret was aimed squarely at the bridge and the three other guards had their weapons at the ready.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 11, 2015, 07:46:42 pm**

Vergil watched Triste go about her business, and though he soon lost sight of her, he knew she was making it look easy, but also knew it was anything but. He knew she'd be going through some tense moments here, and as he heard the rumble of the engine and saw the vehicle start to roll forward, he began silently pleading. "Yes... yes..." He hissed under his breath. "Come on! Come on!" Still no movement from the guard shack... fortunately they seemed really interested in their sports match for whatever reason.

"That's it..." he said, watching as the vehicle got closer and closer. The less they had to deal with here... the better. Vergil knew their hands would be full at the waypoint, so this was good. Less crap equaled more productivity as far as he was concerned. Vergil could already sense the others might be in trouble back at the boat....

As the vehicle rolled to a stop near them, he stood up and made for the side door. "Let's go!" he whispered, throwing it open and allowing everyone to clamber in first. Tony got in, holding the GPS locator, and Vergil finally climbed into the front passenger's seat, shutting the door and nodding after they were all in.

"Uh OK so like... go this way." Tony reached an arm in between Triste and Vergil and motioned with his hand, waving it like a weather vane in the direction he wanted Triste to go. "It's nine miles in that direction. I'll let you know if you've deviated too much."

"Well... that went... well." Vergil said, looking over at Triste as he was propped up on this huge seat. "You did good." he praised, giving her a nod. "We might need to hurry though... I'm sensing... trouble back at the boat."

Kalis turned, and fixed Foley with a gaze that could've frozen the blood in his veins. "No offer is that ironclad when you join me. You make yourself useful or you die if you fail. I've found this method has a... very effective rate of success for those who wish to keep their jobs. It weeds out the worthless from the worthwhile. But you are correct; I need but one waypoint and Devastation's Inception is MINE! I wasn't able to access the others thanks to Rex having reprogrammed them... something I was unaware of before I killed him. Still... Vergil's search has been most fortuitous to me. My map is nearly complete, and when I have it all together... I'll know." He turned his gaze to Lily now.

"Who is your contact in Vergil's group? You tell me and I'll order Admiral Carrack to spare this person rather than kill them along with the rest of the group once he's finished extracting all the relevant information from them. Unless of course your contact is expendable, in which case I'll eliminate them along with the others in due time." Kalis informed her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 12, 2015, 10:18:01 am**

"Well, I'm totally, uh, on board with that!" Foley stammered a reply. "Love live Emperor Kalis, hoo rah, and all that!"

"My contact would prefer to remain anonymous, at least until Vergil is killed," Lily answered. "They don't want to risk any 'special treatment' arousing suspicion from Vergil's team. They understand and accept the risk this puts them at."

She paused. "Would it...be possible to learn where Ejlert is currently stationed? Maybe even visit him, if possible?"

"F-french kissing?" Flora stammered. Her fingers shook as she unbuttoned her shirt. "I...uh...just like that?" She wasn't used to getting this far; usually once the flytrap entered the picture she was greeted with a metaphorical (even sometimes physical) wall.

Emilena vaulted into the vehicle. "Nice job, now let's book it. They won't notice this truck is missing forever."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 12, 2015, 01:37:47 pm**

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yes. i'll keep it under a minute' Rose said. Rose suddenly pressed her lips to Flora's, stopping her from unbuttoning her shirt. Rose had kissed girls like Flora before, she found Floras lips to be soft and supple, the same went for her bosom, which Rose now touched with her claws. Rose gently slid her tongue into Floras mouth.
-
Marita and Marie climbed onto the back of the vehicle ' lets move Marita said ' the sooner we get to and clear the waypoint, the better. lets just hope theres not 50 giant killer machines at this one..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 13, 2015, 06:47:05 am**

Triste's jaw clenched when Vergil mentioned trouble back on the boat. "Son of a bitch... alright, let's make this quick." As soon as the others had clambered into the vehicle she slammed the accelerator to the floor and the buggy roared off, kicking up a trail of gritty sand and loose stones.

The direction she'd been directed towards was off road, and the car was launched into the air several times as they raced across the uneven ground - luckily the buggy was built for this terrain, and the passengers stayed in relative comfort as they were bounced about. In the distance, Triste could see that the direction they were taking was leading into a more mountainous area, something that she noted with a degree of relief. At least they'd be less exposed.

"Any idea what to expect?" she asked Vergil. "I know it's a fair distance out, but the less noise we can make out there, the better."

Axel blinked uncertainly when the guard first began speaking Arabic, but upon the man changing to English a relieved smile worked its way onto his face. "Ah, no no, nothing like that sir.... er, officer..." He swallowed, his mouth becoming uncomfortably dry as he couldn't help but notice the abundance of guns. "Uh, I'm just taking my son for his first boat ride. You love boats, don't you kiddo?"

Clutching the wheel, Rio nodded enthusiastically. "I love boats dad!"

Axel chuckled. "Of course you do." The rat leaned a little closer to the guard. "He's adopted but, ah, I don't think he'll realise for a while. I think he's, you know... a little slow."

Rio's expression darkened.

"So, ah..." Axel licked his lips but it was like sandpaper. "If there's nothing else we can help you with, we'll just be on our way..." He crossed his arms casually across his bony chest, praying that whatever Rose and Flora were doing they didn't attract any attention.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 14, 2015, 12:14:20 am**

Soren's stomach lurched as the vehicle bounded across the rocky desert. He watched as the dunes and rocks sped by them outside the window.

"Fucking hell, how fast are we going?" A jolt made his shotgun rattle in the holder he had placed it in.

Anne, on the other hand was busy eavesdropping on the radio waves. Her ears suddenly pricked up as she "heard" what had happened. "What the fucking hell!? They noticed we stole one of the vehicles!?"

Soren turned around and saw a long plume of dust blowing in the desert wind. He snatched the comp-noculars from the bag and peered out the rear window. His jaw dropped as he saw two guards with flying frames and a similar armored dune buggy in pursuit. He checked the parameters. They had a two mile head start.

"Hey! We got company! Two 'flitters' and one of those buggies!"

The guard scowled. "You *are* aware that it is illegal to allow an unlicensed minor to pilot a vessel, right? And furthermore, your son appears to be under the minimum age. I'm going to need to check the registration, license and papers."

While Aswan Algal guards weren't really military or police, in practice, they had full jurisdiction -- including full powers of search and arrest -- in company property. Which happened to include the part of the Nile that the group was on.

One of the guards, a Jackal by looks, heard some unusual noises coming from behind a closed door. Without even bothering to knock, she threw the door open.

And found Rose and Flora engaged in some heavy smooching.

(OOC - "Flitter" is slang for a frame-flyer. Particularly one associated with company security forces, military or police.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 14, 2015, 12:40:28 am**

Rose broke away from Flora as a light was flashed in her eyes' Alright girls " said a female leopard guard holding a flashlight ' out you come.. no funny stuff. come on.
Rose took a deep breath and slowly walked out of the room."Sorry if I interrupted 'tongue hockey', but we need to know what you folks were doing in a restricted area. You DO know this part of the river is private property right?" Rose shook her head." The leopard sighed ' Tourists? Figures.' She turned to the jackal. "Take them up with the others, while i search this area.Put cuffs on them if they try anything funny. They're most likely tourists who got lost , its happened three times now in the past two weeks."
the leopard turned and motioned to Flora 'come on, you too."

_
2 miles isnt that much, especially when they likely have heavier fire power' Marita said. ' floor it Trieste!' She said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 15, 2015, 04:03:49 pm**

Vergil shook his head in regards to Triste's question. "No... I don't. I... I don't think I've ever been to this one!" he admitted, swallowing hard. "But it doesn't matter! Whatever awaits us... you can bet it'll be..." Before he could finish, Soren interrupted him, and Vergil whipped his head around to try and see what the pursuers looked like. "Yes..." He muttered, clenching his jaw.

He began focusing on one of the flying frames, and suddenly, it veered off course, right towards the other frame. Vergil was telekinetically manipulating it, hoping the two would smash into each other and that would be that. Since they were out ahead of the buggy, they had a chance of falling right into the path of their comrades.

"Holy shit!" Tony declared, going wide eyed as he saw what was happening behind them. "Uh... you doing that?" he asked Vergil with uncertainty, who didn't respond, as the gecko appeared to be concentrating heavily.

"Don't have time for this nonsense." was all Vergil replied bluntly, not taking his eyes off the now erratic flying frame.

"Uh... right! Um..." Tony checked the locator again. "It's uh... it's like... see that grayish hill?" he asked, pointing it out as best he could to Triste. "It's that one!"

Kalis narrowed his eyes here. "Then your contact risks being killed along with the rest, something I couldn't care less about." he said dismissively. "If it does occur... you can chalk it up to the rest of the casualties that will be taking place once I launch my final offensive against the Federation."

He regarded her with dark eyes, the gold seeming to glow almost as she asked if she could see her son. "He currently serves aboard my flagship. I'm planning to gate-jump soon to Admiral Carrack's location and meet this... Vergil for myself." he informed her. "So my flagship will not

remain in this area for long. If it's detected... the Federation flies will swarm over it. I'll be taking it to the *Leviathan* soon." he explained. "You may come if you wish." he told her simply.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 15, 2015, 09:10:47 pm**

Flora yelped and scrambled to pull her pants back up, but succeeded only in falling over. "Who the hell are you?" she stammered. "You couldn't even give us one minute?"

She was halfway decent by the time she and Rose were shunted back to the cockpit with Rio and Axel.

"Which one of you owns this boat?" the lead guard asked, shining the flashlight in Flora's face.

"Ow! I do!" Flora lied. "I've got the papers in my suitcase." Pushing her captor angrily off of her, she crossed to her suitcase and rummaged through, flushed and pent-up.

Emilena sighted her scoped revolver for the eleventh time, fired, and missed for the twelfth time. "Why the hell didn't I keep that laser pistol?" She griped, rebalancing as the truck bounced erratically. "No wonder I never bothered getting certified with these back in the force!"

"I would like that very much!" Lily exclaimed, then covered her mouth, worried she was sounding too eager in front of the warlord. "Sorry, I've just been hoping to see my son for a very long time. I also should investigate your infirmaries, talk with your doctors."

She glanced at Foley. "You coming?"

He nodded. "Between rigid working conditions and getting immolated in planetary destruction, I'll take the performance evaluations."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 15, 2015, 10:18:15 pm**

Rose sighed as she took notice of the guards on the boat, of which they were 5.'no funny business from any of you'.the guard near her said harshly" we'll pay the fine, whatever it is and be on our way. Rose said ' Its 100000 credits , for operating in a restricted area, and operating with an unlicensed minor the guard said."Make the transfer to Aswan Algal. Once the credits have been verified you'll be allowed to return to port. In the future, be more careful where you are going while operating a boat.' the guards said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 15, 2015, 11:10:13 pm**

It was at that moment that Flora pulled an AK-47 out of her suitcase and emptied the magazine in full auto at the not-police, screaming uncontrollably. "Rio! Hit the gas, quickly!!!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 16, 2015, 01:05:59 pm**

The bullets struck several of the guards, staggering but not killing them thanks to their armor. Except for one who caught a bullet right in the head.

"Engage! Engage!" The guards scattered and took cover behind whatever furniture was available as they raised their weapons to engage the Folf.

Almost immediately, the sound of their own weapons added to the din.

Meanwhile, the motorboat outside kept its MG turret trained on the bridge but held its fire lest it hit the guards.

Small explosions blossomed around the dune buggy as their pursuer fired off several rounds with its own mounted autocannon turret.

"Fuck it! We need someone using the turret!" Anne shouted.

Soren retrieved the firing controls from the small recess next to the ammunition holder for the turret. Almost immediately, an image of the desert popped up on the small viewscreen.

He swore as he realized that he had no idea how to operate it. Luckily, the two joysticks were clearly labeled. Gripping the two joysticks, he swiveled the turret and aimed it until the small dot was visible. He pressed another button on the console and the camera zoomed in closer on the pursuing dune buggy. He squeezed the triggers, sending a hail of 20 mm explosive shells at the pursuers. Most of the shots went wide but it still had its intended effect; the pursuers were forced to take evasive action. Unfortunately, the gunner had *much* more experience than did Soren and several of their shots landed dangerous close to them. In fact, one even grazed the vehicle's turret.

Every so often a red line showed up in the screen thanks to the fact the cannon was loaded with a mix of tracer and explosive shells.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 16, 2015, 01:10:01 pm**

Flora! Rose ducked as the bullets went flying and the battle was joined.. " you do realize you just blew any chance of us paying a fine and heading out scotfree? Now we're going to have to fight our way out of this--or pay like a million credit fine.. which we dont have..' She turned and tackled the leopard guard who was surprised by Rose attacking her. Rose pinned her down with her weight and grabbed her handcuffs from a side pocket. Rose Cuffed the guards arms behind her back then gagged her with a handkerchief. ' take them down.. we'll dump them off at the nearest dock' she said, as she left the guard on the ground, and crouched low to tangle with another guard.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 16, 2015, 03:28:23 pm**

Axel's eyes went blank when the guard requested to see papers. "Uh... yeah, this is a rental but they'll be somewhere around..."

The sound of Flora's AK-47 tore through the air.

The rat flinched and gave a surprised squeak, shooting a quick glance over at Rio who seemed just as confused as he was. Turning back to the guard, Axel's mouth opened and closed as he tried to think of something to say. The he saw the man reaching around for his gun, and the time to talk was over.

Without thinking, Axel rushed forward and barreled into the guard, driving him back and heaving the shocked man over the handrail, sending him tumbling with a yell into the river. Almost as soon as he'd fallen out of the way, the turret mounted on the boat below roared to life. Yelling, Axel threw himself backwards as bullets shredded the wooden handrail, tearing

through the air where he'd been standing moments before. "*Fuck!*" he shrieked, covering his face with his arms as wooden splinters rained down on him. Axel's ears started to ring as the sound of several other guns were added to the mix. As he lay on the floor, slightly dazed, a thought managed to push through the clouds fuzzing up his head - *If we don't get the boat moving, we're gonna be shredded...* Numbly, Axel rolled onto his front and looked across at Rio, who was crouching down by the wheel, his eyes seeming to dart around everywhere. "Rio!" he screamed. "Start the boat!"

Rio glanced across almost irritably as he heard the rat shouting. He knew that in a firefight, running around was only going to make you more likely to get shot - staying still was his best chance. He tried to focus on what Axel was saying.

Start the boat!

Nodding quickly, Rio reached up and pushed the throttle fully forwards, trying to peek around to see where the boat was heading. It seemed painfully sluggish. "Doesn't this go any faster?!" he groaned, punching the wheel in irritation.

"That's the top speed!" Scrabbling across the floor, Axel joined Rio at the wheel, one hand on the boy's back to keep him low. He could only hope none of the guards came up to where they were - with no weapon to speak of, Axel had no way of defending them.

"I see it!" Triste nodded as Tony pointed the direction to head for, slamming her foot down on the accelerator as their pursuers drew closer and closer in the rearview mirror. Several *thumps* reverberated throughout the vehicle as bullets slammed into them - silently, Triste gave thanks that the buggy was armored. It would only be able to take so much though...

"Soren! Hurry up and kill those bastards!" she growled, swerving the car left and right in an effort to avoid the machine gun fire. Ahead, the spot Tony had indicated was drawing closer. *Shit!* They'd need to deal with them before reaching it...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 16, 2015, 05:12:50 pm**

Rose felt the ship begin to move as the sound of bullets thudded against the walls. the windows in the room shattered as bullets hit them. she crouched down and tackled one of the remaining guards, knocking the gun out of her hand. she tied the guard up using her cuffs, then grabbed the gun where the guard a had dropped it. she saw the final guard trying to shot at Flora. She took careful aim and fired, hitting the guard in the side of the neck, and causing him to collapse to the ground. the guards were now dealt with but there was still the matter of the turret on the boat firing at them. Flora get down! Rose called out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 16, 2015, 05:35:39 pm**

Flora had been hit in the thigh, shoulder, foot, and the last guard got a glancing strike across her side. Tumbling to the ground with a crash and lolling her head to the side, she caught the cuffed jackal guard glaring at her. "What's your problem...?" the folf asked, words slurring slightly.

The jackal started. "Are you insane?"

Flora honestly considered that. "Wow, you know, I might be." Flicking an attachment on her rifle, she shined the guard right in the eye with a pink laser sight. As the jackal screeched and tried in vain to cover her eyes with her hands, Flora dragged herself dizzily to a handrail and held on as the boat bounced and jolted in its wake. She didn't feel well...

Emilena finally hit her first target with the scoped revolver, by ignoring the scope and aiming from the hip. "When we get to the waypoint, you better move fast Vergil! We're gonna be holding them off as long as we can!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 16, 2015, 06:02:12 pm**

Rose ran crouched to avoid getting hit, and made her way over to the railing to assist flora ' The boat was moving as fast as it could and was (Very) slowly pulling out of the turrets range. _ Grab onto me Flora so you can steady yourself. Once we;re out of range we'll look at removing those bullets ' Rose said, looking at the bloody spots on Floras shoulder side and leg.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 18, 2015, 06:42:09 am**

Though the boat was travelling as fast as it could, the guard's patrol boat was easily keeping pace, the gunner keeping the hail of bullets trained on them. The bullets were tearing the boat apart - there was no way they could keep going like this. Axel swore under his breath as he searched for a way to get rid of the patrol craft. From their position, he wouldn't be able to get up and leave the wheel - it would just give the gunner the clear target he needed to cut them down. Defeated, Axel crouched back down and gritted his teeth.

He turned to Rio and started to say something when he saw the boy staring at something in the distance. Axel spun to follow his line of sight, and blinked when he saw a spot on the left side of the river where a collection of large and sharp looking rocks were clustered, their tips jutting out of the water like vicious teeth. They were on the same side as the patrol boat.

"No way!" Axel looked back at Rio. "It's too risky, we could get caught up instead, then we'd be screwed!"

"We're screwed if we don't do anything!" Rio snapped back, his knuckles clenched white on the wheel.

That was a fair point, Axel decided. Taking the wheel from Rio, he kept the boat going in an even line, the guard's motorboat moving up closer to their side. The roar of the turret was almost unbearable - *how many bullets does this thing have?!* The rocks were getting closer... closer... *Now!*

Axel quickly spun the wheel to the left as hard as he could. The motorboat had shifted to the right to give the rocks a wide berth, but suddenly the larger boat they'd been chasing was bearing down on them. The side of the rental boat, shredded by gunfire, slammed into them and the guards were pushed inexorably towards the jagged rocks. The driver tried desperately to stop, but it was too late and they were swept forwards.

As Axel heard the crunching of the motorboat and the screams of the guards, a small part of Axel hoped the men hadn't been crushed by what they'd just done - the guards were just doing their job after all. But a bigger part of him was relieved that they'd been dealt with.

Beside him, Rio was yelling in bloodthirsty glee. "*Yeah!* Eat that, cocksuckers!"

His heart thumping like a jackhammer in his chest, Axel yanked the wheel back to the right, trying to get them away from the rocks. Luckily, it seemed that -

The boat was jerked to the side, throwing Axel and Rio to the floor, the crunching of wood that filled the air soon replaced by the screeching of metal. "Aw no... *come on...*" Axel moaned, scrambling back up and wrenching the wheel. There was a final scraping sound, and the boat pulled free, heading back into the safety of deeper waters, listing slightly.

They were taking on water.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 19, 2015, 10:17:00 pm**

The dune buggy shook as it took several more impacts. "I'm trying my best!" Soren shouted. It was then he got an idea.

He aimed the turret at the ground in front of the pursuing vehicle and pulled the trigger. His gamble was perfect. Not expecting mines in company territory, the bottom of the vehicle was unarmored. While most of the rounds detonated against the rocky ground, a few had managed to bounce up and strike the vulnerable drivetrain. The stricken vehicle ground to a halt.

Smirking, he aimed the turret at the armored windshield of the disabled vehicle and let loose a stream of HE rounds. The vehicle soon burst into flame as its battery pack was breached and the electrolytes caught fire.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 20, 2015, 01:03:53 pm**

" 'Sokay..." Flora muttered weakly, allowing Rose to stagger her over to the first aid kit. "I just need some...just need some..." she spotted a large syringe of morphine underneath the gauze. "Oh *god* yes."

She injected the entire contents of the syringe into her arm and sighed in relief as a fuzzy numbness clouded her brain. "You know..." she smiled dizzily at Rose, "I really liked...what we had back there...before--"

"We're taking on water!" she suddenly heard someone yell. In seconds Flora and Rose were up to their ankles in the Nile.

"It's still okay..." Flora insisted, wrapping her arms around Rose. Her eyes weren't focused on anything in particular. "It's still okay...Aurora will save us..."

"Nice!" crowed Emilena. "You're not half as useless as you were in Lanthae!"

She glanced backward at Triste. "We've got our opening, now get us to the waypoint before reinforcements arrive!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 20, 2015, 07:59:11 pm**

I'd rather not leave our fate up to Aurora" Rose said, grabbing the gauze and bandages and shoving them down her dress front with one hand before sloshing through the water as she held onto the clearly drugged out Flora.' and Yeah, It was getting interesting there before we were rudely interrupted. i'm thinking a Take 2 is in order, once we get the heck out of here. lets.. go find a lifeboat. Axel! Rio! I Think it's time to abandon ship!" she called out.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 23, 2015, 08:17:33 pm**

Hey! Dont leave us here!" the jaguar guard called out, the water rapidly rising as she struggled to her feet, the water lapping at her heels. She held out her arms in surrender as best she could. "'look, help me and Uesa get out of here and we'll .. look the other way. we'll class this as an accident.. happens quite a bit in this portion of the river."
Rose paused , her arms starting to strain from holding the drugged Flora.'Fine. There's a lifeboat on board right?' Yes. one, on the left side of the boat. standard issue for this class. Holds a max of 10 passengers' the jackal guard said as she rushed over to the gagged leopard, got her to her fet, and ungagged her. the leopard swore as she was ungagged ' What the hell is wrong with you people!' she shrieked at Rose and Flora.

"Uesa, the time for recrimination is later, after we get off of this boat. we've got maybe 15 minutes to get off before it sinks.' Atrua -which was the leopards name- said ' Hold still.' she helped Uesa work off her cuffs then Uesa undid the cuffs on Atrua.''Get to the boat ' Uesa said imperiously, drawing in heavy breaths "we need to get our belongings and first aid ' Floras not in good shape..' Rose started.
- Then she shouldn't have started shooting off an AK-47! Uesa said roughly, before sighing." Look. get to the lifeboat, put your friend in.. and then you have exactly 3 minutes to grab whatever you can- first aid, phones, whatever- before we start rowing away. that goes for all of you lot . she said glaring at Rose.
Rose turned and headed towards the left side of the boat where a covered lifeboat, hung off the side of the larger boat. rose laid Flora down on the tarp that covered the boat.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 23, 2015, 08:33:30 pm**

His ears still ringing from the gun blasts which had long since died away, Axel stumbled down to Rose. "We... jesus, are you okay? Is.. is *she* okay?" He blinked at Flora, unsure, as the wounded folf lay in the lifeboat. He took a deep breath, trying to steady his nerves. "Why the hell did they start shooting at us?! What happened?! Did -" He finally spotted one of the guards and took a quick step back, slightly raising his hands. "Whoa, what's going on?" He looked to Rose for answers, his expression questioning as he noticed the guard didn't seem to be about to attack them.

Rio stepped forward, flipping the guard the finger. "What the fuck were you shooting at us for?! *Asshole!*" He grimaced and gestured to Flora and Rose. "Blow her fucking head off!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 23, 2015, 08:51:36 pm**

I made a deal with them ' we spare their lives, and they'll look the other way on our little excursion.' Rose said in reply .' get the tarp off, get in, and try and make Flora as comfortable as possible. we'll have to get those bullets out of her ASAP once we get to shore..' I'm headed back in.I'll have to get as much of our stuff back , and first aid,as quickly as possible.'
- You have 3 minutes' Uesa said as she got part of the tarp off and climbed in. Rose rushed back into the room.

- ' Be more respectful kid' Atrua said to Rio. "As for why we started shooting, We thought you folks were running contraband, quite a bit of it runs up and down the river. its why Aswan Algal has us patrolling the waters in the first place, that and occasionally tourists who don't have any idea what they are doing get stuck. First we thought you lot were tourists, then when your nutso friend here started going all 'mob enforcer' on us, we thought you were running stuff. Did you think we would not respond in kind when fired upon? why are you folks here, really?" Atrua said, looking at Axel before getting into the boat.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 25, 2015, 04:51:13 pm**

Rio gaped. "Be respectful?! You were shooting at us, bitch!"

On Atrua's mentioning of Flora firing first, Axel's eyes flicked briefly towards the folf, but when she asked what they were doing on the river he shook his head. "No. I'm not telling you anything. Look, I'm fine with not hurting you and your... your friend. I'm sorry there was any shooting in the first place, that's what we were trying to avoid - but we aren't friends." Leaning into the boat, he took the AK-47 from Flora's limp grip and raised the barrel to the two guards. "Get in the boat and shut up."

"What?!" Rio tugged at Axel's shirt. "Shoot them and dump their bodies in the water! You know they're just gonna run their mouths off about us as soon as we let them go!"

"No, they won't." Axel gestured the gun towards Atrua. "You two are staying with us until the rest of our team comes back. *Then* we'll let you go, somewhere further down." He took a quick peak into the distance towards the plant. Luckily it didn't look like any more reinforcements were coming - if anyone had been watching, it was probably assumed the security team had taken care of them. Axel looked back at Atrua. "If you try anything, I *will* shoot you."

The boat gave a sudden groan, lurching to the side, almost toppling Axel and Rio over. "Shit..." the rat hissed. "Rose! Hurry up, we need to get out of here now!"

As Emilena managed to land a shot, Triste turned back and nodded quickly. "On it!" Slamming her foot on the accelerator, she sped the vehicle away from the guard's buggy and span the wheel, throwing them sideways into a narrow passage that led further into the mountains. After a few minutes, the steep walls of the passage flanking them fell away, revealing the waypoint before them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 25, 2015, 05:08:06 pm**

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i have one question' Atrua replied as she tossed the tarp off the side and watched it fall into the water " HOW exactly do you propose to do that when your only mode of transportation, aside from this small boat, is going to sink to the river bottom in less than 10 minutes? This boat can carry 10, a bit more than that if you really push your luck. its not meant for speed of any sort, its designed to keep you alive long enough to be fished out of the river.' she asked looking at Axel.'Your young friend there has quite the mouth on him.. tell him to be a bit more respectful and we wont have any issues.
- Rose rushed to the lifeboat and dumped in 3 handbags- hers Maries and maritas. "this is all i could grab- the water is absolutely freezing' Rose said, shivering as she climbed in.' i did empty the first aid kit though' she said, opening her bag and showing the first aid supplies inside.' Roses dress was soaked completely through, and the boat began to lurch more.'Lower the boat Axel! the boat is starting to tip, it'll capsize, then sink. we need to be away from here before it does."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **March 25, 2015, 06:24:46 pm**

((All right I"m back from tour. No real opportunity to post after all, so I'll just have to catch up.))

Vergil watched with satisfaction as the last buggy was dealt with. While the mountains here were more like bluffs and outcroppings of rock, the gecko panned his gaze ahead, even as Tony directed the vehicle they were in to a gap in between them.

"Really remote here..." Vergil murmured, narrowing his eyes as he looked from right to left and frowned. "Hm... there!" He said, pointing to a cave that suddenly loomed off to their left. "That's it... it has to be... they wouldn't have built it in an easily accessible location after all."

he stated. As Triste pulled the armored car to a halt, the cave entrance was like a giant arch, resembling a gaping mouth that sloped downward inside. It was mostly black and revealed nothing of what lay beyond.

Hopping out after opening the door, the gecko patted his side to make sure his blade was on him, and he exhaled, feeling it was still there. "All right... let's get this over with... no idea what's down there so... just be prepared for anything. This has so far been ridiculously easy but... I don't think it's going to stay that way."

He started walking towards the cave entrance, Tony hopping down as well and putting away the GPS locator. "Oh shit..." he whispered, seeing the creepy cavern opening ahead of him. "We really have to...?" he asked warily. "It's just I got this thing about you know... being underground and like... never being able to get to the surface again and like..." he trailed off here, gulping.

Kalis said nothing as he walked out, looking ahead of him. He raised his head to the heavens, and closed his eyes. "I must admit... you were the one I saw as the most gentle of the group... the woman who would forgive anything, no matter how serious. But it's reassuring to know you're just as evil as I know anyone can be... how we ALL should be... it's our nature to desire strength and power and... aggression. It just proves anyone can be this way... and well... I don't say that lightly. Even the best of us fall... in your case it was your desire to protect your son at any cost. Others have their own desires and needs that must be fulfilled... and they can't do it if they don't compromise their own morals and values. It's why being us is so... easy. Welcome... to the other side." he stated, his body suddenly lifting off the ground and fading from view as he was he transported up to his ship using miniature gating technology.

Lily and Foley soon found themselves in the same situation, the world around them vanishing as they were suddenly in a dark metallic corridor. Various species walked around them, all wearing uniforms. Kalis began walking forward, striding with purpose as he headed for the bridge of his flagship. Soon he'd confront this Vergil and the others face to face... and would reveal something he'd found out only recently that he considered to be positively delicious before he'd terminate their lives.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 25, 2015, 08:53:27 pm**

"Heheh..." chuckled Flora, still high on morphine. She couldn't keep a ridiculous smile off her face, even smothering her snout in her bloodied paw didn't help.

"What the hell is so funny?" the jackal glared at her.

"We..." Flora giggled, "We...should only let them come with us...if they strip naked!" She snorted and winced in pain, tears streaming down her face.

Emilena reloaded, painfully aware that she was 0 out of 8 on that last clip. "Are we there yet? Please tell me we're there..." she muttered to nobody in particular. There weren't any pursuers to aim for at the time being, but she kept her focus constantly shifting, trying to gauge their combat positioning even as the speed of the buggy kept altering the cover around them.

Lily paused at Kalis' words. She'd never thought of herself as evil; while siding with Kalis was admittedly a rather dark decision outside of context, she was doing it for the good of her son and only after her other options had been excised, courtesy of Vergil. But this definitely wasn't the time to debate semantics, and besides Kalis had already left.

"Whoo-eeh!" Foley whistled in appreciation when he saw the confluent ornamentation. "Like something out of *Stargate*! Actually, maybe a bit grittier. *Battlestar Galactica.* Do you think we get our own uniforms? Do you think they'll have my size?"

"Foley... why don't you go ask someone." Lily turned away. "I've got to go check on things now. I'll see you later."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 26, 2015, 12:48:09 am**

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that had better be the morphine talking' Uesa glowered.' Hold her down , we need to get those wounds sterilized and wrapped, the bullets will eventually work themselves out if they are shallow enough.
-
Rose dug into her bag for the guaze and bandages and and handed them to Uesa.' heres she said ' Some may be wet.' So what as long as they are otherwise clean?" Uesa said as she began treating Flora, moping up the blood from her snout and banadged the wounds on her side and neck.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **March 26, 2015, 02:16:52 am**

Soren unlatched his shotgun from the holder. Anne did the same with her rifle.

"I don't like the look of this place," Soren said as he looked around the cave's forbidding entrance.

Anne said nothing but her rigidly erect ears and clamped down tail conveyed her fear.

Soren pulled out the radio he had in his pocket. "Axel, we're at the waypoint do you copy?"

Anne noticed that Soren's eyes widened and his jaw dropped. The mare tapped him on the shoulder. "Something up?

The Human put the radio away and sighed. "The radio on the boat's dead."

Despite the hot sand surrounding them and the scorching sun above, a chill ran through the duo.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 26, 2015, 10:46:45 am**

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marita heard sorens comment and pulled out her phone and shot rose a text
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Rose , the radio on the boat isnt responding whats wrong? . after waiting a minute or so she got a reply and her jaw dropped ' you gotta be freaking kidding me! she exclaimed. she turned and looked at the others. 'the boat is sinking and the others are rowing away in the lifeboat.' she said looking shaken. ' so much for them picking us up..' Marita said.
How the heck did the boat sink?" Marie asked . ' Marita read the text ' got boarded by guards. , flora pulled out a gun and started shooting, guards ship returned fire, and in the middle of battle, boat hit some rocks and ripped big hole in the boat. we are currently in lifeboat, rowing away." we need to get the heck out of here, as soon as possible.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 28, 2015, 03:11:27 pm**

Triste's jaw clenched on hearing something had gone wrong with the boat. "Damn it..." She shrugged her shoulders, approaching the yawning mouth of the cave. "Well, we're here now. And we're too far away to be in a position to help them in any case. Let's just focus on this - once we're done here, we'll see if we can do anything for them."

As she stepped within, she felt the temperature drop almost instantly, the chill of the darkness settling over her like a cold blanket. As she stopped for moment, allowing her eyes to start adjusting to the gloom, Triste tilted her head. Had she just heart a rustle coming from further within? She could just start to make out the solid shapes of rocks, boulders and bushes nestled in the shadows but beyond lay only darkness as the cave continued to slope down even further. *Anything could be in there...* She felt a chill run down her spine, then dug her fingers into her palm. *Don't be stupid! You start jumping at shadows, you lose your focus...*

Without looking back, not willing to be blinded by the light from outside, she called back to Tony. "If you think it'll be a problem, you can stay back as a lookout." Triste wasn't crazy about the idea of leaving him alone where he could get up to anything, but it he was going to have a panic attack at an inopportune time, it might be for the best.

Still holding the gun on the guards as the lifeboat bobbed in the water, Axel's eyes flicked over to Rose briefly. "Tell them we'll try to lie low and wait for them to finish up. We can figure out a way to meet back with them when they're done."

"She's gonna need a doctor, isn't she?" Rio said, staring uneasily at Flora as her blood seemed to started seeping through the bandages Uesa applied almost immediately. "She's not looking too good..."

"We're in the middle of nowhere, how can we find a doctor?" Axel muttered. He looked at Uesa. "Just-"

He was interrupted by a crackling coming from Atrua. Glancing sharply at her, he saw it was coming from a radio strapped to her suit.

"What's going on?" A voice spoke from the device. "We've lost contact with the rest of your team... is everything alright?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 29, 2015, 02:18:03 am**

The others ran into rocks in the river Sir. Uesa and I got lucky. a.. passing boat of tourists offered to help us, unfortunately their boat also ran into the rocks and sank .We're currently in their lifeboat' Atrua' said ' Atrua heard the voice on the other end swear..' damn it.. alright make it to shore and then make your way up to Algal headquarters as soon as possible for a debriefing. what were the tourists doing in this part of the river? ' they were.. headed to Alexandria, they say they were taking a scenic trip on the river, before the accident.' Atrua said. 'Great, We'll have to compensate the travel agency for the loss of their boat. so much for that holiday bonus..just.. contact me again Atrua once you reach shore. Idu Musab, out" the voice on the other end cut off and Atrua turned the radio off.'Alright, I just created an alibi for you, in return i suggest you put that gun away." she said looking at Axel intently.
-
We ned to get those bullets out quickly' rose said glancing at the reddening bandages.' we dont have time to get her to a doctor."
Uesa sighed, ' i have a pocketknife in my pocket. ' its the best we can do as far as an operating utensil. do you have anything that could serve as a utensil for removing the bullets?' she asked ' I do have a tweezer. you know the type used for plucking hair from between your eyebrows." rose said digging into her purse and pulling it out. She took a deep breath and shot. Marita a quick text " will lay low until you guys are finished'. and turned to Axel and Rio '

Rio you and Atrua will have to row. Axel you'll have to hold Flora still while Uesa and I operate and remove these bullets. we have enough bandages, but I dont think we have any more morphine.you'll have to keep her absolutely still.'

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **March 30, 2015, 08:07:37 am**

"I'll stay with you, Tony," Emilena offered, who was thinking exactly the same thing as Triste. "The rest of you, get in there and make it fast. And if you so happen to see an amphibious vehicle, don't pass it by."

"Are you sure removing the bullets is a good idea...?" Flora mumbled dizzily. "When Bob shot me down in the spice mines, Nairda insisted we keep the bullets *in*...but I guess Nairda's an idiot so what does he know...?" She shifted her position and winced.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **March 30, 2015, 03:04:37 pm**

Axel stared warily at Atrua, then slowly lowered the gun into his lap... though he kept his grip firmly on the AK-47.

"You gotta be kidding me," Rio rolled his eyes.

When Rose suggested he hold Flora down, Axel shook his head. "No. We need to leave at least one person holding the gun. We're *not* trusting these two, Rose." He blinked at Flora, then sighed. Shuffling forwards, Axel pushed the gun into Rose's grip then leaned over the folf. "You keep that gun ready, Rose. I mean it." Keeping a firm grip on Flora, he looked at Uesa. "I hope you know what you're doing."

Scowling, Rio took a seat next to Atrua and glared at the woman. "I have my eye on you."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **March 30, 2015, 05:16:41 pm**

The ones already in you from before we'll leave in' Uesa said to Flora. ' we're more interested in the ones currently giving you trouble.' she turned to Axel 'my father is a doctor, who has done thousands of surgeries. He wanted me to follow in his footsteps, and I attended medical school for a couple semesters in college. to make a long story short, I found I prefer being in law enforcement more so I switched. But I know how to remove bullets and scrapnel and that'll have to do for the time being.
- Atrua sighed as she began to row' Cynical lot arent you.' she said to Rio. ' Keep an eye on me as you wish, but I'll get this boat to shore safely. "

Rose handed over all the supplies- gauze, bandages and her tweezer, before accepting the gun " We'll need something to hold the bullets, and something to clean out the wounds. there should be a couple small cups in my bag, I use them for holding my coins. just dump the coins out into the bag and use them. we'll have to use river water to wash out the wounds before bandaging them." Rose said. She turned to Axel " as for trusting them, for now we really dont have a choice. None of us are doctors or have any medical training, and Floras in pretty bad shape. I'll hold the gun so that Atrua keeps rowing, while you hold down Flora and keep her still while Uesa operates."
Uesa Pulled out her her pocket knife and set it down on the boat seat, before going over to Roses bag (Rose pointed it out for her) and retrieved a couple small cups filled with coins. she poured the coins out into the bag and zipped it back up." She took one of the cups struck it out over the side of the boat and filled it with river water. the other she left empty' "the empty one will hold the bullets' she said to Axel " When I locate the bullet , you use the tweezer to

SLOWLY ease it out, simply tearing it out will make things worse. We'll start with the one on her side"-
Uesa cut off the bandages covering the side wound, and threw them aside, revealing an angry red area where the bullet had entered. She dipped her fingers into the water from the first cup, and dried them off on her uniform before picking up the knife and making a pair of incisions leading away from the bullet hole.

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Over the next fifteen minutes , Uesa operated on the bullets , in Floras side, neck, shoulder and leg, and one by one, the bullets slowly came out. the second cup was now carrying 5 bloody bullets, the blood had pooled over the bullets and sloushed around as the boat moved through the waves. Uesa was now operating on the sixth and final bullet in Floras right shoulder.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 02, 2015, 05:58:13 pm**

As Uesa cut into the skin around the final bullet, Axel squinted in discomfort then pressed hard against Flora as he leaned in with the tweezers. "Alright... last one..." The boat suddenly rolled against the water and the tweezers he was gently edging into the wound were jolted forwards, the sharp edges stabbing into her raw, exposed flesh. "*Shit!* Sorry, I'm..." Gritting his teeth, Axel tried again, clamping the metal around the bullet and easing it out steadily.

The bullet clinked into the cup when he dropped it in. Heaving a breath, he leaned back and patted Flora's hand. "Alright, they're out. Jesus, she's bleeding everywhere..."

Rowing beside Atrua, his attention focused on the shore which was fast approaching, Rio blinked, the scrunched his face up as he focused on something in the distance. "Guys, something's coming."

Glancing back at Rio, Axel quickly followed the boy's line of sight and gritted his teeth. Rio was right - coming from the direction of the plant, a large, heavy-duty vehicle was trundling across the sand, a cloud of dust trailing behind. It was still much too far away for Axel to tell how many people were inside the car.

"Atrua, one of our team spotted you," the voice from the woman's radio crackled. "We've sent out a vehicle to your position to retrieve you and the tourists."

Axel turned panicked eyes to Rose. He didn't say anything but his feelings were obvious: *How are they gonna buy the fact that a tourist is full of bullet holes?*

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 02, 2015, 08:19:29 pm**

Copy that. i see them. ETA to shore 5 minutes. Atrua out.' Atrua replied as she then turned off the radio.
-
Rose picked up the cup filled with the six bullets, and dumped them over the other side of the boat away from shore."Keep calm Axel. We'll have to pass it off as treating a previous injury.' She said." 'injuries from the accident revealed prior undisclosed injuries' that kinda line.' she said setting the cup back down.
_ You'd better be VERY convincing with that. ' Uesa said as she dug through Maries bag, coming up with a spool of thread and a needle, and began sewing up the incision sites, starting with the shoulder she had just operated on.. 'But if thats the line you're going with, I'll back you on that. Best for all concerned is that you guys head out of the country as soon as possible. once all the areas are sewed up Axel, help me bandage them. And try and ACT like tourists, panicking will only arouse suspicion."
-
we were just in an accident, some trauma is to be expected ' Rose replied, and she went over to refill the water cup with a fresh amount, dumping the bloodied water out. the blood was

from Uesa cleaning her hands off between treating each injured area. uesa sewed up each area, going cunterclockwise for the right should, neck, left shoulder, left side, leg and right side. the boat reached the shore as she finished with the final area. ' alright, bandages' Uesa said to Axel.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 02, 2015, 11:08:22 pm**

"Yeah... yeah sure..." Tony nodded, hooking his thumb claws in his waistline and nodding. "Go ahead... I'll just... stay here and... keep a watch..." he gulped, giving one last look into that cave. "Just hurry back... sounds like there's trouble back at the boat..."

"Worse than that at this rate..." Vergil murmured, shaking his head as he sensed pain... anguish... but he couldn't be sure who it was or the circumstances. Tony exhaled and vibrated his lips as he watched the group start to descend into the cavern.

"Shit... I hope this goes OK..." Tony muttered, looking about him at nothing in particular.

Vergil didn't need lights, as he could see relatively well in the dark, his eyes adapting rather easily. If others wished to switch on lights, that was up to them. The cavern sloped gradually downward, and Vergil tensed up and gasped as bats suddenly charged overhead, zooming over them in those uneven flight paths that Vergil always found to be chaotic. "Guess we're disturbing their resting place..." He murmured, feeling a shiver pass down his spine.

As the passage sloped downward, a blue glue could be seen softly playing off the walls. It looked almost like water but... not quite. Narrowing his eyes, the gecko could see a bend ahead, and beyond that bend... the computer terminal of the waypoint! "There it is!" he exclaimed, nodding. "Except..." he stopped now, noticing the ceiling seemed to be... moving. "Uh... am I hallucinating or is that... not a solid ceiling?" he asked.

A faint clacking noise could be heard too, and Vergil strained to see what it was that was bustling about up there... and felt his stomach lurch as he saw what looked like giant millipedes crawling around in circles and spirals and twists. "OK..." he trailed off here. "Haven't encountered them yet... maybe... they won't... do anything..." he said slowly, but noticed they were starting to crawl in their direction now. "Or not..." He sighed, pursing his lips and drawing his energy blade before lighting up the area surrounding him with its red glow.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 03, 2015, 06:27:23 am**

"Guys!" breathed Flora. "Guys guys guys guys...what if..." she took a weak ragged breath; all of her bullet wounds were bleeding profusely due to being opened and her flesh was pale white under neath her fur. "What if we wait till they board, kill them, and *steal their boat*..."

Emilena didn't even spare a glance as the others departed. "So. Tony. This is the best opportunity I'm going to get to be straight with you. If you could please hear me out."

She took a deep breath. "Look, we both know that we don't like each other. And that's likely not going to change. But I am worried about you, because of the danger you're placing this team in by ignoring the circumstances of your return to the land of the living."

She folded her arms. "'Sleeper agents' are captives who are mentally-altered and allowed to return to their allies. They can be unwittingly transferring information and even 'activated' to become hostile at a later tactically-opportune date. I think it's incredibly likely that you are one of these, but your refusal to even consider the fact is putting us all in incredible danger."

She met his gaze steadily. "If you're willing to take some basic steps, I can guide and assist

you to minimize the damage you can cause. I might even be able to help you discover if you are indeed a sleeper; I have special training in this regard because of an incident in my past. But it's going to require you to stop being in total denial and admit that you can't fully trust what your mind and body are telling you right now."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 04, 2015, 01:05:38 am**

Dont talk ' Uesa said, as she stitched up the wounds, the loss of blood made it easy to locate the wound areas. within a couple minutes, all of the wounds were sewn up, and Uesa wrapped them tightly in bandages, covering them with clean ones. the bloody bandages were left in the boat, as the vehicle pulled up and three guards got out and headed up to the boat, two jackals and a leopard ' we need to get this one to Algal Medical fast . she has pretty extensive injuries 'Uesa said."one of the jaguars picked up Flora and carried her to the vehicle, the leopard motioned to Rose, Axel and rio " come with us please. we'll have you folks undergo some medical tests to make sure you didnt suffer any internal injuries." the leopard, a male said." just climb in the back of the vehicle.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 04, 2015, 07:20:23 am**

Blinking as the leopard carried Flora away, Axel nodded and stepped out of the boat hesitantly, Rio beside him. Despite everything, being able to step on dry land again felt good. "Alright, just keep cool. Maybe this is gonna be okay."

"Maybe..." Rio kept his eye on Flora as the guard carried her out of sight around the rear of the vehicle.

Carrying Flora around to the rear of the vehicle, the guard gently placed her down in the large, open area that was normally used for storing heavy equipment... then surreptitiously unclipped the holster securing the pistol to his hip. He'd noticed the gun that Rose was clutching - an AK-47. None of the security team at the facility carried that type of gun, so it belonged to the tourists... but what would tourists be doing with a gun?

The folf below him didn't seem to be too aware of what was happening around her. Slowly, he eased a claw beneath one of her bandages and gently pulled it up, just enough to see beneath. The leopard's lean face stiffened. The wound was stitched, but it had clearly been caused by a bullet. *What the hell's going on?* Satisfied that Flora didn't have a weapon on her, he left her there and walked back around the side of the vehicle, stopping Rose just before she followed the rat and the kid inside. "Let me take that, Miss," he offered, extending his hand towards the gun. "You must be in quite some shock, you should be taking it easy."

"Shit..." Triste slid her knife out of the sheath on her inner arm, her eyes trying to keep track of the multitude of bodies crawling down towards them, their metallic legs making thin clacking noises as they clicked and scraped on the rock, small red lights glowing in the darkness along the length of their bodies. But there were just too many - and they were all swarming towards the group. "Stay together," she warned. "Don't get separated. And try not to shoot," Triste said, glancing quickly at Marita and Marie. "The bullets'll ricochet in here."

Breathing slowly to keep calm, Triste spoke lowly to Vergil. "It's more defensible by the console. Maybe we should -"

Almost as if they were of one mind, the swarm of sinister looking guardians suddenly surged forwards, speeding across the walls and ceiling of the cave and lunging towards them.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 04, 2015, 12:43:46 pm**

with all due respect sir, I need to hang on to this. we're headed through the Middle East once we pass through this country, and as you know that region has been unstable for thousands of years. best to have a weapon on you, just in case. Rose said.' that is true." the guard said slowly.' can you explain why your friend is in such bad shape?' he motioned to the the back of the vehicle. ' those bullet wounds look pretty new to me." well Flora is shall we say a bit of a free spirit, and thus gets into a lot of trouble some times. she got into a scrap in Khartoum, got shot a few times and we originally just left the bullets in. but well she got banged up in the wreck and her injuries got reopened, as it turns out she was shot more back in Sudan than we previously thought. never complained a bit, shes a tough girl."
_ Fine fine, just keep your weapon at your feet and in front at all times until we reach the medical wing.Get in" the guard motioned, and Rose climbed in, next to Axel. Atrua and uesa climbed in next, and took seats opposite the the ' tourists'. Atrua turned on her radio ' Algal this is Atrua we have reached the vehicle and are headed your way with injured tourist. Tourist, named ' Flora' is suffering injuries consisting of a combination of a prior shooting with injuries suffered in the river accident. she'll need some blood to be transfused, as removing the bullets caused quite a bit of blood loss.'
-
do you know when she was shot, came a doctors voice on the other end 'tourists.. say in Sudan.. where in that country is unclear. ' well, we'll treat her injuries as best we can. were there any bullets fragments in the wounds ?' no from what i saw all of them were intact. the bullets were lost when a wave hit the lifeboat we were in so further forensic testing is impossible."" the Nile is a harsh mistress, just get her here as quickly as you can. Dr Musura out" the radio was turned off.
_ Millipedes.. giant millipedes this is something new- and very creepy' Marita said as she looked at the giant swarm of metallic creatures on the ceiling. ' what are milli- Marie started to ask before the swarm rushed towards them. " get to the console " marita called as the gap between them and the creatures rapidly shrunk.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 10, 2015, 01:22:44 am**

I have literally never seen so little happen in such a long time... Lily thought with annoyance, watching something diagetic up on the spaceship.

Even while talking to Tony, Emilena wondered what the hell was taking the others so long.

"Could we move things forward *please*?" asked Flora dully. "I'm almost out of blood..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 10, 2015, 02:40:54 am**

the vehicle carrying Rose flora and the others headed towards the medical wing of the algal headquarters which was one of several buildings the corporation had built on this side of the river. ' rose turned and looked back at flora through a window in the vehicle a guard had placed some blankets under her ' just hang in there Flora ' rose said , trying to be reassuring.' we'll be at the medical area prtty soon, so you can get the treatment you need for your injuries..
-
Marita waited until a number of millipeddes got close, then fiored. the sounds of the thud as the bullets hit the mettallic creatures was loud and disconcerting, yet even with the bullets finding their mark in a few milipedes theres were still many many more to take down.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 11, 2015, 09:47:30 pm**

Axel fidgeted uncomfortably with his fingers, staring at the squat, pale building drawing up outside his window as the vehicle started to slow. The medical section he assumed.

"Alright, we're at medical," the driver said, confirming Axel's thoughts as he drew the handbrake up and turned around. "Samuels, get the wounded in first, she's lost a lot of blood. The rest of you should also wait inside while we figure out what to do next. If you'd like, we can take a look at you if you were injured during your accident on the river."

"No... No, I'm good," Axel said, keeping his expression grateful.

"Me neither." Rio blinked at Flora's bleeding body. "She'll be okay, right?"

Swinging himself out of the vehicle, Samuels leaned into the back and pulled Flora out. "She'll be fine kid. We know what we're doing." He glared suspiciously at Axel, Rio and Rose for a second longer, then started towards the building, Flora in his arms. *Their story doesn't make sense... why are Atrua and Uesa backing them up?*

As Samuels walked away, Axel gulped then glanced at the others. "Alright, I, ah, I guess we should go in."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 14, 2015, 02:52:23 pm**

((Please keep the OOC references to my time in posting OUT of this RP LB&T. Just a reminder OOC SHOULD NOT be implied IC in any RP I'm running. We can all respect each other and the fact that real life sometimes kills our inspiration to post I think. Sorry to single you out but it was pretty blatant on your part. I'm sorry I'm taking awhile but I just don't find any inspiration for the characters I'm writing anymore. When it stops being fun and starts feeling like work, it's hard to keep at it. I admire the enthusiasm you have for at least one of my characters, and just wish I could muster that up myself.))

Tony chewed his bottom lip and looked over at her. "You're implying I've refused to consider it... I have. I have no other explanation for how I ended up where I was... but I can't confirm if I was ever in enemy hands either. Either I was found by them or I wasn't... though of course, wouldn't have been in that situation had you not been mindlessly rooting through our belongings in the first place." he said pointedly.

"Still... I have an even simpler solution. One that has absolutely 100% chance of success: I leave the group. If I'm a sleeper, Kalis obviously wants to screw with us, and he can't do that if I'm not there. An ADDED benefit is that I'm not actually seeing the waypoint right now, so I have no idea WHERE we're going next, and if I leave soonish, that prevents me from being triggered, if that's what's wrong with me, and it prevents the party from getting harmed... problem solved. Believe me, I've BEEN thinking about it. Last thing I want is to do that so... while you guys go off and kill Kalis and solve that little problem, I'll be warming the bench from home and preventing any sort of issues that could crop up. Everybody wins, right?" he asked, spreading his arms a bit.

"You take away the NEED to trigger me... or... spy on the others, I'm no more different than the average Joe on the street to Kalis. The party moves on to their next destination, I have no idea where it is, and we're all safe. Do I like it? No. Do I think it's necessary? Yes." He nodded here. "Thanks for the offer too... it's surprising me I admit, but appreciated."

Inside, Vergil glanced quickly at the console, and nodded. "Right! Get over there before they

can get down! And don't shoot! Too much chance of a ricochet in here!" he called, his voice bouncing around the chambers. He ran towards the console, though was nearly cut off by a millipede that crawled down the wall towards him. Slicing into its head, he drew a nice line across its mouth (or at least, he thought it was its mouth) and saw fluid spray in every direction, coating him a bit in its viscous substance. "Ugh!" he declared, spitting some out of the side of his mouth.

Punching his fingers on the console once he reached it, he tried to gather his mind to work this through. "Uh... OK... so... it's like... uh... what's the..." He began reading the questions they presented to him, his memory suddenly springing to life. He'd been here before! He knew these answers! Hitting one, then another, he worked quickly. "Neural scan? Dammit!" He uttered, turning around as he began to fight off another millipede with his blade as the creature shrieked hungrily at him. "Lunch is gonna have to wait! I'm BUSY!" he roared back, cutting off a few legs, which didn't seem to do much in the way of helping.

"Ugh! Don't have time for this nonsense! I'm putting your lunch plans on permanent hold!" He sliced into the area under its neck, and watched it slump forward a bit. Rapidly turning around, the scan hit his head and gave him the all clear. Yes! Simple! The map sprang to life, and there was only one choice left to make: China. Vergil pushed his finger down on it, and the coordinates appeared. Studying them carefully, he committed them to memory, whirled around, and began hacking away at another one. "Got them! Let's go!" He called to the others. "Lead the way!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 14, 2015, 07:25:58 pm**

"Striking it out alone is one of the worst things you can do," Emilena explained. "Your trigger has nothing to do with distance, Kalis might even be capable of knowing that you abandoned us, and then he'd have no reason not to activate you immediately. You're a mafia don's son, you have uses beyond reconnaisance."

She looked him straight in the eyes. "I know everything you're feeling right now, and its natural. The fear, the self-doubt, the desire to run away. Like you're just a pawn, destined to die in a game you didn't even want to play. But you have to unlearn everything you're thinking of doing until I've taught you just what you've gotten yourself into. You can't even stop feeling hopeless, because some triggers are chemical and react to a positive change in state of mind."

She reminded herself to slow down. "There are three steps to recovery, and the third is optional. First, we need to determine what type of trigger you've been embedded with. There's a depressingly high amount of possibilities. Then, we need to take steps to mitigate the chances of you being triggered, and minimize the possible fallout if you trigger anyway. The last step...I'll get to if we succeed at the first two."

She took a deep breath. "God, I don't want to do this next part...but you need to understand just why I'm the only person you can place your trust in." She began taking off her shirt.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 14, 2015, 11:17:35 pm**

Tony blinked as she began removing her shirt. "Wait... what the hell are you doing?" he asked, backing up a little here. "Pretty sure there are certain things I don't need to see right now with the possibility of the others... coming back." he said, gulping. "I mean really..." he held up a paw, as if that would stop her (it wouldn't of course). "Can't I just... leave? I don't know anything about our next destination and I'm planning on leaving it that way..." He trailed off here, pausing as he couldn't help but wonder just what she was attempting, his nagging curiosity getting the better of him.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 15, 2015, 02:37:40 am**

Emilena showed him the lowest point of her nape. "Look at my neck. You see that scar? Right at the base of the medulla. That's where mine was, because it had to override my instincts. It needed to operate without me thinking."

Her eyes clouded. "When I was a junior officer in the Lanthae Police Corps, I woke up hogtied in the basement of the First National Bank with no memory of how I got there. I freed myself and quickly discovered the bank was in lockdown, surrounded on all sides by police forces with a team of criminals draining the place. I reached the sewers and opened up an entrance for a small four-man team of SWATs to infiltrate the bank. Then I insisted on accompanying them so I could get revenge on the men who had tied me up. Never once did I wonder what I'd been doing there in the first place. Just like your instinct is to run away, mine was to fallback on my combat training."

Emilena's cheeks flushed. "I was so stupid. We made it all the way to the hostages in the vault, me and the SWATs, and then...I blacked out. When I woke up, everyone was dead. I'd thrown a live grenade into the vault and locked the door behind my teammates."

Tears unwittingly stung her eyes and she couldn't meet his gaze. "Four highly-trained officers, Tony. Six innocent civilians. In one second I went from the hero of the hour to a mass murderer..."

(OOC: I'm not inventing this conveniently; this is part of the plot a story I wrote months ago. If you'd like to read it and other stories set during Emilena's police years, PM me and I'll give you the link.)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 15, 2015, 06:06:04 am**

Triste nodded quickly, yanking her knife from the skull of one of the millipedes and letting its body slump to the side. "Alright! Marita! Marie! Let's go, move it!" She turned and started backing away towards the slope leading out, the cave becoming darker again the further they moved from the console's blue glow.

With the ringing in her ears from Marita's gunshot, Triste didn't hear t.he light scuffling as a large shape crawled overhead. "Hurry up!" she started to urge again... then cried out as something heavy slammed into her from above. Yelling, she felt something snap in her chest as her knife was sent skittering out of her grasp. Gritting her teeth, Triste rolled over... just in time to see the millipedes grotesque head dart forwards towards her neck. She threw her arm up, and hissed in pain as its mandibles closed around her wrist. Struggling to force her other arm past the millipede's body as it writhed on top of her, she closed her spare hand over one of the appendages slicing into her flesh and yanked hard, tearing it off the creature's 'face'.

The millipede reared back, and suddenly free again Triste took the opportunity to push herself to the side, reaching for her knife despite the burning pain in her chest... almost...

Triste was yanked back back again, the knife beyond her reach once again as the millipede recovered and bit down on her leg, clamping firmly on the limb. Dragging her claws on the rock, Triste tired to stop herself, but the creature kept dragging her back - and then started to climb the wall, taking her with it. As she struggled uselessly, the pain in her side worsening, she ground her teeth in horror as she saw it was trying to take her up into the roof of the cave. Into the nest where countless more of them crawled and slithered over each other.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 15, 2015, 11:35:37 am**

Marita and marie breathed heavily as a number of millipedes lay dead around them, the internal fluid spilling out on the ground around them. the clicking of legs alerted their attention , and the girls looked on in honor as trieste was slowly pulled up the wall. marita took careful aim and aimed at the millipeedes baxck, and began firing. her ai, was good and hissing from the millipedes indicated the bullets were making an impact.' the millipedes screeches became louder as each new bullet found its mark, and it stopped its ascent about halfway towards the roof. ' Marie get over there! Break her fall! that millipedes going to be dead soon and she'll need someone to soften her labnding! Marita said as she continued firing.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 15, 2015, 01:41:01 pm**

Tony stood there, frowning slightly as he listened to the story, thoughts running through his head. He then noticed... her... crying? Or almost doing so. She had emotions? His face fell here, and he looked her over. "I see... but you don't think... that would happen to me, do you?" he asked. "I mean how did you actually... get rid of it?" he inquired now, looking to the right, but couldn't see much thanks to the hills all around them. He didn't like this... way too easy for someone to get the drop on them... they were sitting ducks in this valley...

The bullets weren't very effective, thanks to the armored carapace of the millipede, and Vergil whirled as he saw Triste getting dragged off. "No... NO! TRISTE!" He shouted, heart leaping into his throat as he tore after her, blade at the ready. He swung, but halted its arc, afraid he'd hit her. Bullets began flying in every direction thanks to Marita's efforts, and Vergil yelled over to her as he followed after the bug: "Stop firing dammit! You have as much chance of killing us as you do them!" His point was brought home when a bullet buzzed the top of his feathers, ruffling them and causing him to gulp.

As the creature began to retreat up the walls, Vergil leaped onto the rock surface, his fingers and toes actually useful here, as like any gecko, he could scale vertical planes. "Triste! Hold on!" he called to her, scaling after her. He'd never catch up at this rate, as he couldn't compete with hundreds of legs, but he could do one thing...

Closing one eye, he held his sword like a spear, and tossed it like a javelin, the deadly blade hurtling toward the head of the creature. It lanced into the skin and caused the millipede to shriek, and as it expired, it dropped Triste. Vergil's arm shot out and he grabbed her, but strained as he slid down a few feet on the wall. "Agh! I think... I think I'm gonna have to drop you... you all right?" he asked. "Hey!" He called down to the girls. "Can you catch her? I can't climb down AND hold her at the same time! Can you get her?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 15, 2015, 03:19:12 pm**

Marita stopped shooting after hearing Vergil at her. " Alright. Look like you got it Vergil! Nice work. just hold on for another 15 seconds' marita said Running towards the wall where he and Trieste Was , She and Marie soon stood below Vergil at the bottom of the wall, looking up " Ok! you can let her go, we can catch her!" Marita called up " you can get down and we can get the heck out of here.
-
rose headed into the medical wing which had a smell of chemicals in the area- likely to disinfect any surfaces in the vicinity. a row of small chairs stood in a corner ' just have a seat in those chairs ' one guards said to Rose rio and Axel. once we treat your friends injuries and shes stable, then you can visit, might be an hour or so though.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 15, 2015, 05:24:31 pm**

"That's the thing, Tony..." Emilena sighed. "I didn't have to get rid of it. The routine ended after I killed my allies. I wasn't even important enough to get a suicide command included."

She realized she was balling her fists. Counting silently down from three, she relaxed a bit and met Tony's gaze again. "Do you know what my trigger had been? The sensation of safety. As we walked into that vault, and the hostages were alive, and I had four highly-trained officers to rely on...for the first time that whole day I felt like I was going to survive. Like things were under control."

Emilena had a number of metal straps around her chest and hips; she removed them before putting her shirt back on. "That's what I'm trying to explain to you, Tony! You CAN'T just try to live life avoiding what the trigger might be! It could be *any*thing, and it'll probably be whatever Kalis expects you to do! If you remain ignorant, it'll only hurt more because you aren't prepared when it'll finally strike."

She handed Tony the metal straps along with a dial remote. "I'd purchased a Faraday dampener in preparation for this conversation; it prevents electronic signals from penetrating a small field around me. That was in case they bugged you, because if they heard us talk like this they might send the trigger signal right away. You should put it on. Once we're somewhere safe I've got all sorts of precautions I'll be able to teach you, and training that might help us narrow down the possibilities for triggers. I've...kinda spent a lot of time researching this topic..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 15, 2015, 05:42:59 pm**

Triste felt Vergil let go of her. As she fell into Marita's grip, something crunched and she let out a choked gasp. "God*dammit*!" Triste stooped to retrieve her knife and pressed a hand to her side, grimacing. "I think it broke a rib... Shit." She glanced back at Vergil, Marita and Marie. "Thanks... they - "

Her eyes widened as she suddenly saw a surge of movement just above Vergil. "There's more coming! We need to move!" She started backing away painfully, watching to make sure Vergil wasn't about to be snatched by the mass of millipedes.

Axel nodded to the guard and smiled. "Alright. Thank you sir." As the guard walked away, his smile vanished and he turned to Rose and Rio. "Crap... the others are gonna be stranded..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 15, 2015, 07:48:38 pm**

Run!' Marita said, grabbing onto Trieste Shoulder and helping her stagger towards the exit as fast as she could , Marie ran in front of them trying to put as much distance between her and those monsters

_
'Not much we can do about that" Rose replied, picking up a magazine off a table next to her seat- it was a magazine about the history of Egypt. she opened it up to the first page.'we'll have to wait until they try to call us..'

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 15, 2015, 07:58:05 pm**

Vergil telekinetically retrieved his blade from the millipede, and dropped downward now, landing hard and wincing. "Ugh! Yeah... let's move! I have a bad feeling about this!" He

started charging down the tunnel, as it was high time to get the hell out of here. Vergil slid to a stop, and turned to face Triste. "You're gonna have to move, I'll support you, but we gotta go now!"

Outside, Tony bit his bottom lip. "But even if I'm triggered while I'm away... it'd be useless..." He speculated, looking at the metal straps. "Uh well I may as well... suit up..." he said now, but turned his head rapidly to the right again, seeing dust rising in the canyon as vehicles were headed their way. "Oh son of a..." he trailed off here as a convoy hove in sight around the corner. "Dammit! We've gotta warn...!" he turned to head into the cave before he stopped dead in his tracks, seeing the others emerging now. "Shit!" he exclaimed, stamping his foot and turned around as the convoy began screeching to a halt.

The lead vehicle's door opened, and a scaly leg placed first one foot on the ground, then a second followed as the hulking monitor Varanus stood before them now, a toothy grin etched on his face as he rolled his shoulders and cracked his neck. "Well... well... well..." Soldiers belonging to Kalis's Empire quickly debarked behind him, leveling their guns at the emerging party. "Looks like I've bagged me quite the catch!"

"Varanus!" Vergil uttered, his voice deep and his eyes narrowed as he assessed the situation.

"Yes! And I've been looking forward to this for a long... long time! Now that I know who you are... if I kill you... I'll be even more powerful than Kalis himself! His empire will be mine!"

"You remember me?" Vergil asked, surprised by this. "Who am I? Did I serve with you?"

"It won't do you any good knowing that!" Varanus activated his blade. "Once I take your head... I'll have surpassed you AND Kalis in every way imaginable!"

"But sir... our orders are to capture..." One of the soldiers began, before suddenly, he was lifted off the ground and thrown violently against the side of the buggy, gurgling as his body was mangled beyond all recognition.

"Shove the orders! This is MY chance! Vergil... YOU'RE MINE!" Varanus began charging towards him, and Vergil quickly shot his eyes around.

"Take cover!" he ordered his group. There were plenty of rocks to hide behind, as well as their armored vehicle. "They plan to kill us anyway, so we may as well fight!" He shouted, activating his own sword and leaping into the air to come down on Varanus from above.

"Too slow!" Varanus shouted, whipping his hand out and tossing Vergil aside at the last minute telekinetically. Vergil cried out as he rolled along the dusty ground, coming to a stop half buried in sand. Spitting some of the gritty substance out of his mouth, he barely had time to rise and block Varanus's next blow as the big monitor began fiercely attacking him as the soldiers opened fire on the party. Varanus's powerful body was like a sledgehammer slamming into Vergil's arms as he parried and backpedaled, trying to get into a better position to attack...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 15, 2015, 09:05:01 pm**

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marita and Marie dove behgind rocks as veranus' guards began firing on them." great just great. first giant millipedes, now these guys ' Marita scowled as pieces of the rock she weas hiding behind were chipped off by Veranus' crew.." and i thought we were done with stuff like this.. guess not. I'll need a good stiff drink after all this " Marie said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 18, 2015, 07:11:32 am**

Triste grunted as she rolled behind cover along with Marita and Marie, pressing herself against the rock and gripping her knife tightly. She glanced out from behind cover... just in time to see Vergil only just manage to block Veranus' attack. *Shit...* "Stop talking and kill them all," she snarled to Marie, vanishing as she activated her cloaking augment.

"Keep firing!" One of Veranus' henchmen yelled. "Flank them! Get behind their cover, they-" He grunted as something knocked into him, his body armour jerking as something pulled on it. "What the..." He gaped as a spindly lizard suddenly appeared in his face, yellow eyes narrowed in rage. "*Fuck!*" the man started to scream, but he was cut off by the hooked blade punching through his throat.

Triste twisted the knife, the man's windpipe crunching as it broke open even further, turning his scream into a pitiful wet gurgle. She heard a surprised yell from behind as one of the Veranus' other soldiers noticed. Vaulting over the henchman she'd just stabbed as he staggered, his body trying in vain to resist the fact that he was dying, she wrapped herself around his back and yanked out the pistol from the holster on his waist. Aiming over his shoulder, she put a bullet through the skull of one young-looking soldier then turned the barrel to the man next to him, pulling the trigger even as he opened fire. The bullets from his assault rifle slammed into Triste's human shield at the same time that hers took him in the chest.

Triste felt the impact of the shots as the man she was piggybacking was hit. He let out a final gasp and fell heavily onto his back - right on top of Triste, causing her to cry out in pain. With effort, she pushed the body off herself and sucked in a deep breath, her chest feeling as if it was collapsing in. She was interrupted when the sand around her erupted as yet another soldier standing further away opened fire on her, a few bullets tearing chunks off the corpse to her side. Hissing, she cloaked herself again. The soldier paused as his target vanished, then squeezed the trigger again as off to the side a cloud of sand was kicked up. Her hand gritted from the small rock she'd just thrown, Triste snatched up the pistol again and fired off its final bullet. It took the soldier in the side of the neck and he screamed, collapsing to his knees and clutching his wound as blood spurted between his fingers.

Staggering to her feet, Triste yanked the knife from the man's throat and looked around. More soldiers were moving in on Marita and Marie's position, but off to the right Vergil and Veranus were still hacking away at each other. Leaving the two women to deal with the soldiers themselves, she broke into a sprint, ignoring the screaming pain in her side. As she drew closer behind the huge monitor lizard she leaped, drawing back her knife and aiming to plunge it into Veranus' cervical vertebrae.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **April 18, 2015, 05:58:11 pm**

(Egypt)

Soren and Anne had been standing guard with the dune buggy as the rest of the crew descended deep into the caves.

"Are you fucking kidding me!?" Anne exclaimed as she saw the battle raging in the distance with her comp-noculars.

Soren snatched the comp-noculars from the mare's grasp and looked in the distance. "Oh great, looks like Marita and her crew got themselves into another shitfit."

He grabbed the turret's control panel. "Anne, you drive!"

Anne got out of the rear passenger compartment and into the driver's seat. She pressed the button and listened as the motor started up with a low hum. Her ears pricked up in excitement as she disengaged the parking brake and set the vehicle in motion.

Soren looked through the viewscreen and tried to figure who was the enemy. Not an easy task given the incredible amount of gunfire and dust that was present.

(Corona)

Marion sat down on a bench as she looked at the electronic notepad containing information she had gleaned from the Corona PD. All around her were tourists and locals enjoying the spring air. Indeed, banners festooning the streetlights indicated that a street fair was going on.

The Human took a bite of her deep-fried catfish sausage as she browsed through the information. She did not need to worry about eavesdroppers as the notepad's screen had a coating designed to prevent such encounters. Unless one was wearing the specialized glasses (which also doubled as rather sleek looking sunglasses), all that was visible on the screen was a solid silver surface, like a mirror.

She sighed as she scrolled through the notes. The phone number linked with Vergil led to a disposable cell phone. On the other hand, she did have the address of someone named Axel Whent.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 18, 2015, 09:41:12 pm**

Got it! Marita said noticing the arrival of 5 more guards, who set up positions near the area where the two dogs were situated. Marita took aik with her gun and fired, catching one of the guards in the shoulder and causing him to scream out a violent oath. both Marita and Marie had to duck as the 5 guards opened fire, the bullets deflecting of the top of the rock and sending razor sharp rock chips onto the girls. it became a game attrition, the girls returning fire in-between breaks when the guards loaded fresh ammo clips into their guns. Marie managed to fell one of the guards with a well-placed shot to the temple,, Marita got another guard in the throat. slowly the rock providing cover began to crack and be chipped away from the rain of bullets striking it. marita covered her head to protect it from the shards.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 18, 2015, 10:06:06 pm**

Emilena crouched and slowly crawled to the left; nobody seemed to be paying attention to her and Tony thanks to the attention Vergil's entrance commanded, which gave her ample time to scout out the perfect spot.

Taking cover along the crest of the cave, Emilena focused on trying to sniper with her revolver, finally grateful for the flash dampener.

Her ears pricked when she heard the duggy coming. "Hope the others are ready to jump..." she muttered, not even sure if Tony had remained in earshot.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 22, 2015, 03:01:01 pm**

((Sorry guys; I have a lot of tours right now so I don't have much time to post.))

As Triste went to plunge her blade into Varanus's back, the big monitor whirled around, kicking Vergil's chest and staggering him backward while he brought his blade up and slashed towards her, striking her knife and throwing her off to the side. "What is this? Your little friends have to help you finish me off? Can't do it yourself?" Varanus mocked as Vergil charged back in, their blades connecting once more. "I'm far too skilled a combatant for EITHER of you! Neither of you stand a chance because you're both worthless and weak! Bugs that I'll squash under my

heel!"

Tony meanwhile was lying flat on his stomach. Because of the others' insistence, he had no weapon, and was completely defenseless, so all he could do was hide behind the buggy's numerous wheels and hope no one came around and executed him from behind with some shots to the back of his skull. He had extremely limited vision from his position, but tried to look around whenever he could to preserve his own life.

Vergil hacked once, twice, but was met by Varanus's powerful blade every time. "You're really pushing me, you know that?" Varanus asked, slamming another blow against Vergil's blade that rattled his body to its core.

"Yeah well... you're someone I won't be sorry to see gone!" Vergil declared. "I urge you to stop this! I have no quarrel with you after all!"

"On the contrary... you represent everything in our way... and a personal ambition of mine!" Vergil tried to see where Triste was... if she could get in another attack... he might have a chance... Varanus tended to pivot his left foot before his kick... Vergil would be ready next time... and go for the vital spot he knew there'd be no recovery from...

"Heh... well then... you're just gonna have to accept the fact that you failed to kill me the first time... and you'll fail again!" Vergil smirked, hoping to rile Varanus up, as he seemed to be a very emotional fighter.

"Ha! Big talk for such a small lizard! We'll see who gets the better of who! I know I'm superior... I KNOW I AM!" he yelled, launching into another flurry of heavy-handed blows that Vergil managed to turn aside every time, his confidence growing as the battle continued...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 24, 2015, 05:20:45 am**

Triste grunted as she managed to avoid landing flat on her face, twisting to come down awkwardly on her feet. Her knife arm was throbbing from the impact of where Veranus had blocked her attack. *Son of a bitch...* Gritting her teeth, she steeled herself for another run at him, but movement in the corner of her eye drew her attention - the buggy! Soren and Anne must be making a run for them... if they could just last until they arrived...

Looking back to the fight, she could see that it seemed Vergil was slowly getting the better of the larger lizard - and Veranus wasn't taking it well. If she could just help Vergil hold him off until Soren arrived, the extra firepower of the vehicle's turret could make all the difference. Triste felt the buzzing in her head subside, letting her know her augment had recharged. Cloaking, she moved to flank Veranus again, keeping her eyes on his attacks. Triste waited until he started to step forward to attack Vergil again... then she struck. Darting forwards, she sliced through the flesh of the back of his leg in an offhand sweep then leaped back again, dodging to avoid his blade.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 24, 2015, 12:28:37 pm**

Just for the hell of it, Emilena also attemtped to snipe Veranus. She doubted she'd succeed, but perhaps it would give Triste and Vergil an opening. *Gotta love enemy commanders that draw attention to themselves in battle...*

She glanced at the approaching buggy, willing it to arrive as soon as possible so they could all escape.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 25, 2015, 07:46:20 pm**

a doctor entered the room ' where Rose Axel and Rio were . " Alright you folks we have your friend stabilized ' You may visit her for a half hour or so, please keep your voices down so she is not too distressed. Follow me please" He motioned to them to follow him.

Marita and Marie continued trading gunfire with the guards, the guards bullets slowly chipping away at the rocks which provided protection for the girls.. finally marita killed one of the guard with a shot to the head.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 27, 2015, 02:35:52 pm**

"Our ride's here! Let's book it!" Emilena vaulted into the buggy as it reached the combat site. She glanced at Vergil and Veranus' melee. "Forget about him, we got what we came for! Come on!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 29, 2015, 07:27:14 am**

Triste swore, glancing at the buggy that had pulled up a short distance away and backing up towards it. "She's right! Vergil, let's go! We need to get out of here!" Even with the few deep wounds she'd managed to land on Veranus, the huge lizard still wasn't going down. If reinforcements were coming, which she had to assume they were, they'd be at a serious disadvantage.

She jumped on the side and banged her fist on the window. "Soren! Fire on..." She gritted her teeth. If he used the turret to open fire on Veranus, the chance of hitting Vergil was too high. *But we can stop them from following us.* "Take out their vehicles, make sure they can't come after us!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 29, 2015, 12:06:12 pm**

Marita and marie rushed to the buggy and jumped onto it clinging onto the side. they had managed to kill the 5 guards who had fire on them. both were exhausted and nearly out of ammo. ' give Vergil as much help as yopu can Soren" marita said " if you havve to.. shoot Veranus

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Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **April 29, 2015, 04:15:12 pm**

"YOU forget about him!" Vergil snapped back at Emilena. "You honestly think he's just gonna let me walk away?" The combat was too close and far too heavy for Vergil to escape, as Varanus was between him and the buggy... then Triste struck, and Varanus screamed out in pain and anger as he briefly turned his attention to her, swiping and missing but landing a scalding blow on her tail.

Vergil struck, but Varanus blocked, though Vergil twisted his blade upward, nearly managing to land a blow on Varanus's neck. "Dammit!" He could see everyone falling back, but he wasn't capable of doing so at the moment... he was stuck.

"Ha! I'll kill you in one minute! Time it! You're already growing weaker! I can sense it!" Varanus appeared to be using pure adrenaline and his kinetic abilities to supplement his strength, despite his injuries, but Vergil by now had analyzed the way he had moved before striking, and Vergil decided on one last desperate act. He faked downward, Varanus blocking the blow. Gauging his time, Vergil did it again, once again getting blocked. But next time...

"It's OVER! I AM...!" Varanus went to swing to cut Vergil in half when the gecko seemed to make a blunder and leave himself open, but the small gecko was faster, and as Varanus lifted his blade, Vergil used his own to lop off the monitor's head, severing it at the neck and leaving a clean cut with an orange ring around it to indicate the burn.

"Oh sorry to CUT you off!" Vergil declared, grinning as the big lizard's body remained upright for a moment before falling off to the side. He'd purposely opened himself up to an attack to let Varanus think he had an advantage... but when the monitor moved to strike, Vergil struck back faster... and it was over. Glancing at the other soldiers were who still alive, he threw his blade, impaling one through the head before retrieving it with his telekinesis and charging towards the buggy. "All right! We're out of here!" he declared, but froze in his tracks as a massive force began acting on his body. "Agh!" he cried, frozen in place as he was suddenly lifted off the ground and began hovering in place. "What the hell?"

He could see the buggy was starting to levitate as well, and his gaze shot upward, to see... a massive aerial battleship blocking out the sky overhead. They were caught in some sort of force field... and there was literally nothing Vergil could do... his limbs were frozen where they had been moments before, and his legs were equally stiff, his mouth barely able to move as they all began to be pulled towards the *Leviathan*, which was the name of the ship on its side.

"Shit!" Tony called, equally as powerless as he was pulled through the sky towards the ship. He hadn't yet entered the buggy, so was exposed out in the open. As they drew closer to the ship, a large bay opened up to welcome them in, like a sinister mouth as on the bridge of the ship, Admiral Saul Carrack smirked. Varanus had stupidly exceeded his orders... but no harm done... Vergil was his now... and soon... his plans would be his as well. He sent a flash transmission to Kalis's flagship, informing him he had Vergil in his possession, knowing his master would be pleased to finally confront the small white gecko with the orange eyes.

The buggy, Vergil, Tony, and anyone else not in the buggy were deposited in the bay, and finally released, though the buggy was kept in the containment field, rendering its turret inoperable for the time being. Vergil assessed the situation, but was met by what looked like an entire company of soldiers, rifles all leveled at the group. There were too many to try anything... if he resisted... chances were one of them would get shot... so the gecko did the only practical thing he could think of. He raised his arms out to his side, and made no sudden moves as he lowered his head, accepting the fact they were beaten... for now.

"Oh shit..." Tony gulped, seeing a least a hundred rifles leveled in his direction. He stumbled backward, getting used to using his legs again, and meekly put his arms up as well, knowing there was no fighting their way out of this one...

A probe suddenly detached from the ceiling, and impacted with the buggy, burrowing into its side. "You have precisely 15 seconds to exit that vehicle with your hands in the air." came a voice over some speakers. "Your alternative is extermination... by cyanide gas..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 29, 2015, 05:43:38 pm**

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marita and Marie reacted in horror as they were pulled into the huge ship, and upon hearing the voice give them the order, marita tossed her gun aside' Cant do anything against that many guns marie" marita said as she got off the vehicle her arrms raised. marie followed her, her eyes scanning the gathered forces- the group was outnumbered 10-1, at least. still they had not gotten all of them.. yet..

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Serris** on **April 29, 2015, 06:55:55 pm**

Just before the vehicle had been lifted aboard the ship, Soren's (not)-so skillful use of the dune buggy's turret had reduced most of the enemy vehicles to smoldering wrecks.

Upon feeling the vehicle shake and float both he and Anne opened the doors and prepared to jump...only to change their minds when they realized that they were already a few hundred feet off the ground.

The vehicle landed with a *thump*.

"All right, let's--oh fuck no." Soren looked out the window and saw hundreds of soldiers beyond a shimmering blue wall. He immediately recognized that shimmering wall as a containment field (he had used miniature versions of them when working with augments that contained potentially defective batteries to prevent a battery explosion from harming him or causing damage).

Anne's ears rapidly swiveled back and forth as she wrung her hands. "Shit! Shit! Shit!"

"We need to do something that--"

The sound from the loudspeaker cut the Human off. He looked at his shotgun and pondered if shooting himself would be a better fate that what Varanus had in store for him. But he was aware that the rest of the team was on board and they'd be able to do something.

With a sigh, he opened the dune buggy's door and stepped out with his hands in the air. Anne followed, though her bared teeth and pinned ears indicated her displeasure.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **April 29, 2015, 07:14:23 pm**

"Don't have to tell me twice." Emilena was the last person to exit the vehicle, casually tossing her scoped pistol to the nearest guard. "Couldn't hit a damn thing with this anyway."

She did a quick headcount as she raised her hands in the air. *At least it doesn't appear they got Axel and his team...for now...*

"Murr..." Flora's tongue lolled out as the doctor applied anesthesia. "Mmm...more of that please. Could we...like..triple the dosage? I want to be *swimming*..."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **April 29, 2015, 08:09:39 pm**

"Shit... *shit, shit, shit!*" Triste snarled under her breath as she felt the buggy jolt against the floor of the ship's bay. Her eyes scanned the area for any way they could escape, something that could be used against the enemy - but there was nothing. There were too many soldiers, too many weapons trained on them. Even if she cloaked, she'd only be able to take out a few before the rest gunned her down.

She forced herself to calm down. If Kalis' men wanted to kill them, they'd be dead already. They were going to keep them alive for a while. *Vergil at least... he's the most important one.* She just had to hope that whatever was going to happen to them, at least some of them would have the opportunity to do something. Triste sighed and stepped down from the buggy, putting her hands behind her head. *If there was a way we could contact the others...*

"Alright, thanks." Axel nodded at the doctor, then turned to the other two. "Let's go-" He blinked as he realised Rio had already dashed out of the room. "Ah..."

As the doctor opened the door to Flora's room, Rio barged past him, hurrying over to her bed. "You okay? How're you feeling?" He squinted at what was being administered to her. Whatever

it was, it seemed to be having an effect. "Can I have some? I twisted my ankle..."

Axel stepped through the doorway, smiling apologetically at the doctor Rio had pushed aside as the man rightened himself then left, muttering under his breath. As he walked out of the room, Axel looked at Rose and gestured towards Flora. "Well, she... doesn't look like she's having a bad time, at least." He lowered his voice. "The others are taking a while to get back to us... Think they got lost or something?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **April 30, 2015, 01:07:05 am**

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i have no idea" rose said as she took a seat. a monitor sat next to the bed, registered floras condition, an iv dripping pain medication into her in one arm, while the other arm was transfusing blood to replace the blood she lost from being shot and treated for her wounds.' for now we just have to make sure flora is ok.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 03, 2015, 12:21:46 am**

As the party exited, the containment field dropped, and the soldiers began to move in to restrain them. Vergil narrowed his eyes, and directed his gaze to Anne. As they brought his arms down, he began sending her a telepathic message. *Anne... I've been on this ship before... back when I served under Rex... it was his flagship for a time... the locks are electronic based in the cells... if you can... you might be able to override them somehow. Help free the party and get the rest of us... they're going to split us up soon... I can feel it...*

The captain of the company strode forward as binders were put on their wrists, and pointed at Vergil. "You..." He looked around, then smirked. "And you." he pointed at Triste. "You're gonna have a personal interview with Admiral Carrack. The rest... take them to the holding cells. If we can't get what we want out of these two... we'll work on the others later."

Vergil gave Anne one last look, then shifted his gaze to Triste. *Don't worry...we're going to get out of this... I just hope they don't use you to... get to me...* he sent to her, looking straight ahead now. Vergil and Triste were separated from the main group. About 20 soldiers followed them, so there was no hope of Vergil trying anything drastic... it would only take one shot after all to end either of their lives...

The other party members were led to the cell area, which were basically mini containment fields. As Vergil told Anne, the locks were electronic based. Not overly sophisticated, but obviously not easily accessible from inside the cells either.

Vergil and Triste were led into a room with two test tubes like... things, similar to what Vergil had been kept in before when he'd woken up. Shoved inside, the binders were removed, and they were sealed in their own tubes. The soldiers soon departed, and Vergil looked over at her. "So... here we are. I don't think this is going to be a friendly chat the admiral wants to have with us. I remember him... former hero of the Federation who defected to Rex's cause and became a mass murderer. Not the kind of guy I'd want conducting these things. I could try and crack the glass but... something tells me we wouldn't get very far just yet... they can seal this room with blast doors I notice... and I don't want to try anything until I know the others are safe... we bust out... we risk their lives. I instructed Anne on... well I'd better not say, just in case they're listening in." Vergil said now, looking around him. "We'll just have to stay put... and hope they can get to us sooner rather than later..." he said softly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **bushwacked** on **May 07, 2015, 04:33:58 am**

Triste nodded. "Alright." Standing in the middle of the tube, she clenched her fist tightly and took a deep breath. She wasn't used to being taken prisoner - it made her feel so helpless. So *useless*. On the other hand, at least they now had a way to infiltrate the ship... if Anne was able to figure out a way to get to them in time.

Looking around, Triste felt a strange pang in the back of her head as she looked at the other tubes around the room. Something about them seemed familiar... She shook her head and ignored it. She'd probably seen them from surveillance footage at some point... they had more important things to worry about.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **May 13, 2015, 01:22:55 pm**

The door hissed as in stepped Admiral Saul Carrack... a man Vergil was fairly familiar with. He knew him from before... he'd been a hero of the Scorched Earth War, but then had turned traitor and joined up with Rex... and had become quite the butcher by all accounts. He was a well-built man in his early 60s who had a rugged, craggy face. A five o'clock shadow adorned his chin, and his cold, steel blue eyes regarded them with triumph before a thin smile slid across his features.

"So... Vergil... what is it? Speicher now? And Triste Alcyle. You'll have to forgive me if I get your names wrong... they're rather immaterial... ahem." He looked from one to the other. "Where is the last waypoint? What is your objective for the Devastation's Inception?" he inquired.

Vergil said nothing, giving him a stony look. "Very well... let's see which one of you breaks first." Admiral Carrack responded. He took out a controller, and hit a button on it. Vergil was suddenly slammed back against the tank by thousands of volts of electricity that suddenly coursed through his body.

"AGGGGGGH!" he screamed, the lightning danced off the tips of his fingers, toes, and tail, his feathers beginning to fry as he sank to his knees. The tank was clearly rigged to jolt whoever was inside, and Carrack smirked as his eyes moved to Triste. "Feel like talking?" he asked, Vergil crying out again as another burst hit him, throwing him back once more as he writhed like a worm in agony.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 07, 2016, 07:40:12 pm**

Lily observed the waiting room of the flagship’s infirmary. The pristine white space was sanitary and sterile, with soft white lights that used photoscopic technology to eliminate the effects of night-blindness and vision-induced color bleed. It was more advanced than any hospital she’d ever experienced back on the planet.

“Miss Whent?” The doctor came out. He was clad in a multi-purpose unisuit and carrying a waterproof datapad. “The results are back.”

Lily felt her nerves flutter. He didn’t seem happy. “And?”

“And...by our tests, your psionic abilities should be completely functional.”

Lily bit her lip. “Well, they aren’t. What the hell did Vergil do to me?”

“I don’t know,” the doctor consoled. “But it’s nothing medical.”

“Well, then what am I supposed to do?” Lily balled her fists. “Kalis brought me on board to revolutionize your medical facilities with my abilities. What use am I if I don’t have those?”

“I don’t know, I’m sorry.” The doctor returned to his business, leaving Lily exasperated and

frustrated.

She marched out of the infirmary, shooting a glare at a crewman who had the misfortune of walking past the door right as she was leaving. As soon as Vergil is dead, her only claim to fame is her healing powers. If she had any hope of rescuing Ejlert, she'd need to figure out what the hell is blocking those, sooner rather than later.

She found Foley drinking in the technical manuals and logs on the warship's computers. "You look like you're keeping entertained," she remarked idly.

"This is amazing!" he breathed. "The technology on this ship is off the charts. 3D replication of any material, cold fusion, infinite food...surprised that these people are so barbaric considering they've basically got a utopia up here. Did you know Kalis assumed control by backstabbing his former commander? And so did Carrack. And practically all of the senior officers. I'm lucky I'm bottom of the totem pole."

Lily pursed her lips. "Go back to the technology. How are they holding Vergil and team prisoner?"

Foley switched windows. "Um, Vergil and Triste are in restraining pods, the rest are more traditionally incarcerated in the brig. Looks like Vergils' being interrogated right now. But I think you'll find this most interesting." He shifted to a related tab. "Couple of the others are being held in a police station on the ground. Looks like they pissed off the coast guard, completely separate incident. They're not even flagged as being involved with Vergil and the others, I don't think anyone knows who they are."

Lily noticed Marie's and Axel's names among the list. "Hmm. Maybe we could work with that. Can we contact that station?"

* * *

Thirty minutes later, Axel, Flora, Anne, Marita, Marie, Rio, and Rose were rolled into the infirmary strapped securely to gurneys. They wore only thin hospital gowns, and a pair of armed security guards flanked them carrying heavy caliber rifles. "Ma'am. The prisoners you requested for experimentation."

Lily nodded as she walked out of her office. "Ah, excellent. Thank you."

"One last thing," the guard handed her a promissory warning. "Carrack was not pleased with the fact that you bypassed the Chief Medical Officer when requesting these test subjects. In the future, any further breaches of rank will result in swift disciplinary action."

"Of course." Lily could sense a threat despite the politeness in his tone. She glanced at the figures. "I will thank the admiral at the next opportunity for authorizing this. I believe that experimenting on these lowlifes will allow me to unlock my psionic powers."

"So does he. Which is why he's giving you a second chance." The guards turned to leave, their last words echoing as the door slammed shut behind them. "Dispose of the survivors when you are done. Don't disappoint the admiral again."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 13, 2016, 12:37:46 am**

As Admiral Carrack cut the voltage to the tube, Vergil was left panting, smoke trailing from his body as his skin had heated to super intensity in the span of seconds from the jolts. Carrack turned his attention to Triste now, scowling. The female lizard was left disconcerted by the suffering of Vergil, but she had to stand firm... she couldn't give him any information. "Well?" Carrack asked, folding his hands behind his back.

Triste bit her lower lip and looked to Vergil again, who gave her a slight shake of his head.

Nodding once, Triste's eyes hardened, and she glared at Carrack. "Blow me." she replied simply.

Carrack appeared only slightly surprised at this, and smirked. "Very well... we'll do just that." he said, his thumb going down on the button once more, this time throwing electricity into Triste's cell. She screamed and fell back against the walls of the tube, and Vergil managed to get shakily to his feet.

"No... NO!" he yelled out, though could do nothing inside the tube, as his powers were stymied by the barrier in place, keeping him in check as he slammed a fist on the glass, trying desperately to break out but failing rather miserably as Carrack kept up the voltage.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 13, 2016, 11:13:32 pm**

Marita Stirred first among the prisoners brought out to be ' tested' by Flora. AH.. MY Head " she murmured, Before quickly realixong she couldnt move much.. She looked down and realized she was restrained very tightly.. She then looked around and Noticed Lily " Ah.. crap.. ' she said softly.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 14, 2016, 06:37:45 am**

Flora was swimming with the lofty haze of the painkillers the police had pumped her with. Dreamily she opened her eyes at the sound of Marie's voice. "Don't worry, I'm sure they've got some for you too..." she purred, attempting to rub her eyes and only then realizing she was tied down. "I...whu...huh..." Her eyes focused and she recognized. "Oh! Hi Lily!"

Lily shushed her quickly. "We've never met and you're terrified of me because I'm going to kill you," she ordered urgently. "Try it again."

"I don't...you are?" Flora cocked her head in confusion.

"*Nooooo!*" Rio supplied dramatically, thrashing his bonds for added affect. "Please don't kill me, scary doctor lady! I'm just a kid, got so much to live for!" Very convincing tears welled in his eyes. "I just wanted to join the circus!"

Lily sighed. "Perfect. If we get interrupted, everyone follow Rio's lead. Maybe with a bit less Broadway. Now, what are you even doing out here?"

"We were following Vergil!" Flora supplied. "I never really caught the details, but we came to find something in Egypt."

"Yeah, he wanted a...worldpoint or something..." Rio racked his brains. "Stuck all of us on a boat, we were the getaway, uh, then Flora shot everyone and things went tits up."

"I snogged Rose too!" Flora supplied. "It was *awesome*!"

But Lily had already taken Foley aside. "They're talking about waypoints, aren't they?" Foley muttered, having been filled in somewhat beforehand. "Vergil either saw it, or knows where it is."

"Yes. And if Vergil found it, then Carrack is extracting the location as we speak." Lily opened a first-aid kit and removed the standard issue pistol, a testament to the violent culture they were currently working for. "And we become a lot less valuable the second he finishes."

She marched out of the infirmary without another word.

"Hiii Foley!" Flora piped up excitedly. "I'm so drugged I'm not even mad you ditched us like a

little prick!"

* * *

Lily quietly slid open the door to the room where Carrack was interrogating Vergil and Triste. She took a deep breath and opened her mouth to ask the admiral whether Vergil had revealed any fruitful information.

It doesn't matter, she suddenly realized. This was no time for role-playing the submissive medic. Carrack was already dangerously close to executing her, and anything he's learned couldn't leave the room and return to Kalis. *Time to act like I'm a true part of this crew...*

Triste's torture was giving her more than enough of a distraction. Bracing the pistol with both hands and placing it a millimeter from Carrack's back, Lily bit her tongue and pulled the trigger.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 14, 2016, 09:10:32 pm**

As Triste was tortured in front him, Vergil was trying to resist the urge to just break down and give away information... but was he really that strong? There was... he couldn't just sit here and watch her be tortured... the pain looked immense as it coursed through her, and Carrack's evil smirk just made things far worse. "Stop it..." Vergil said softly, pushing his hands on the glass. "Stop... stop it... STOP IT!" He roared, unable to do anything still. This got Carrack's attention though, and the admiral halted the proceedings and directed his attention to the gecko. "Yes?" he asked, looking from him to Triste.

Triste was curled up in the tank, trying to snarl and indicate to Vergil he shouldn't say anything but the gecko cracked, and clenched his teeth. "I... we found the final waypoint... and the last coordinates... you can't... do this to us anymore."

"Then tell me where it is!" Carrack snapped.

"Hong Kong..." Vergil snarled, glaring at Carrack.

"WHERE in Hong Kong? It's a big city." Carrack shot back.

But Vergil paused as he saw Lily head up behind the admiral, and then promptly shoot him in the back. Carrack's mouth twisted in agony, and his eyes bulged, as if wondering just what the hell was going on. He turned, staring at Lily briefly in utter surprise before he collapsed, his face a contorted mask of horror and disbelief. "She hasn't... told you..." He whispered, shifting his eyes to Vergil before all life left him.

"She?" Vergil asked, looking to Lily but wondering briefly he meant Triste. He inhaled sharply, looking at Lily now. "What are you.... doing here?" he asked.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 15, 2016, 05:45:20 am**

Lily shot him a glare of pure venom. "I just took your advice to heart. What was it you called me? Lying, reckless, untrustworthy? Sounds like I'd fit right at home here."

Noticing the remote lying next to Carrack's lifeless body, she snatched it up and switched the voltage back to Vergil's cell. "Not that you could even understand a motive like loyalty. You think it's all about you and literally nothing else matters. Everybody needs to get down on their knees and sacrifice their lives, their dreams...everything for you and your hidden plans, and if they don't they're worthless! You don't need to explain things to your team, or protect them. They don't matter. They should just march to their deaths fueled only by your indifference, condescension, and exasperation, shouldn't they?"

She flipped the electricity on. She had questions, she had demands for him. But for now she just wanted to see him in pain.

Rio struggled with his gurney. "Hey, fatty. Untie me or I'll spit on you. Real grosslike."

Foley bit his lip. "I want to. Really. But I don't think that'd be a good move. Lily's in charge here, and they really don't like uppity underlings on this ship."

"*Foley why do you suck so much*???" Flora screamed, making a complete 180 from her previous lucid dreaminess. She shook her gurney so hard it threatened to tip. "Why can't you do anything useful? What the hell happened to you?"

Foley tried to stabilize the gurney but Flora thrashed and sent it tumbling over him. Angrily screaming at her former teammate, she began biting and teething at his face, leaving him trying to defend himself in a panic.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 16, 2016, 06:24:32 pm**

Flora! Stop it! This isnt going to help matters ' Marita rebuked her, as one by one, both Rose and Marie came to abnd realized they were prisoners." let Foley up, and let ME talk with him."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 16, 2016, 07:42:22 pm**

Foley shoved Flora's gurney, sending it skittering across the floor. Flora gave a screech when it pinned her against the wall. "I didn't want to get involved in this shit again!" he shouted angrily. "I'm only here because I want to survive after Kalis glasses the planet!" He angrily grabbed the first aid kit and disinfected his face. "What the hell do you want to say?" He glared at Marita.

"Lucidity is the key."

Emilena was sitting next to Tony in the brig. She was chained to the wall, but free to talk. "You're supposed to practise taking control of your dreams first. Don't let them guide you along aimlessly like everyone else gets the leisure to." She gritted her teeth as her hands fell asleep from the awkward position she was trapped in. "I know you probably don't feel like sleeping right now, but unfortunately it's all about remaining in control even when your subconscious is calling the shots."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 16, 2016, 10:44:55 pm**

" what Do I want? Well, first and foremost to be let go' Marita said. "That goes for all of us currently shackled to these gurneys. Now you said, "you want to live " well if you force us to tell you all that we know, well then you will have done your job,but then you'll be expendable to Kalis, he'll have no further use for you. You're useful to him, only as long as we have info he doesnt yet possess. Our lives, and their lengths, are tied to yours. Now I'd wager your counter will likely be something aling the lines of " as long as I am useful, Kalis won't kill me". Well thats not true at all. Kalis is a grade A-Psychopath, like Stalin. Guys like him don;t need a reason to kill someone, in fact they get their jollies from killing people, simply from being able to kill people.

Foley sighed ' You're smart, I'll grant you that. Smarter than the bitch who was clawing my face and screaming at me just a few seconds ago. But You are aware of how hopeless your situation is, don't you? Ok, One side, you have a ruthless warlord with an entire fleet of psionic warriors, with the power to crush just about every government on Earth in a matter of hours.. and on the other side " He smiled darkly " You have you guys, 6 or 7 or 8 blokes, who are all now prisoners aboard this ship, and who are currently being (or soon will be) brutally tortured until they snap.You want me to throw my lot in with you guys?' Foley laughed mirthlessly. Why?"

" Because he doesn't have the ship yet' Marita pointed out. "That ship is powerful enough to destroy his entire fleet. As long as he doesnt have it, There's a chance he can be stopped. and frankly, as unlikely as it may seem, we are the only ones who can stop him at this point. Like you said, the government wont be able to do it, once he gets ahold of it. They'll be mincemeat in a few hours. And then the entire world will be like a Soviet-era gulag, a living nightmare for all those subject to his rule. How long do you think he'll let you live, once he has absolute power? 'Loyalty, Honor, and mercy' mean zilch to him." Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 17, 2016, 12:58:25 am**

Vergil looked wide eyed at her, astounded by what she'd just done... he wouldn't kill in cold blood like that himself but just seeing how far she'd fallen it was... but he didn't have time to think as he felt the electricity slam into his body and he shriveled up into the tube, screaming out and then being hurled back against the walls.

"No that's... that's not true...! I revealed the location of the... the waypoint!" He said through clenched teeth as the lightning danced all over his body. "Aggggh! I just... revealed it so they'd stop... torturing... Triste!" He exclaimed, trying to open his eyes but finding the searing pain far too difficult.

"You don't... need to do this!" he pleaded. "Please... this is... not you! You heal! You don't... inflict pain!" He was curled up in a practical ball on the floor now, in sheer agony from the jolts.

Tony glanced over at Emilena, shackled the same way he was. Their prison door was a force field, so breaking out was... tricky at best and probably impossible without some outside help. "I think... that makes sense... I..." he closed his eyes here. "So I have to sleep? At a time like this? I... yeah that's gonna be difficult but I'll try... of course... I suppose I could cause a ruckus... force the guards to come in and beat me senseless... or into unconsciousness." he suggested, though figured that wouldn't probably work.

"ugh... all right... I'll try and relax... shit I feel like I need some alcohol for that to happen." He stuck out his tongue here. He tried to just... picture himself in a comfortable bed back home... or driving one of his father's cars... it was hard though. "what... happens after I master lucid dreaming?" he asked now, still with his eyes closed.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 17, 2016, 05:32:09 am**

"Triste?" Lily shouted over the crackling of the electricity. "You mean the *only one* you ever share anything with? The one you're infatuated with? The one you took with you during the cruise, and Voltaic Station, and the only one who shares a personal history with you? Forgive me for not prostrating myself and renouncing everything I've said just because you were nice to *TRISTE!*"

She cut the electricity and observed the twitching, prone figure lying pitifully in front of her.

"And you know damn well I can't heal. I can't do *anything*, thanks to you." She fired the pistol again, but this time to shatter the protective glass window separating her observation room from the chamber with Vergil and Triste's pods. "And I don't give a damn about your waypoint," she spat, marching forward. Lily pressed her hands up against the glass of Vergil's pod. "I want you to give me my powers back..." she growled. "No bargains, no conditions. Just give them back to me *now*."

"Look Foley..." Rio rolled his eyes. "I get it, you're hedging your bets. That's just peaches, good for you. If you really lost your balls and need to stay some evil guy's bitch, how bouts you let us go, then we can take turns kicking you in the head and lock you in a broom closet. Say we jumped you, fucking perfect alibi."

Foley sighed. "You guys suck..." he grumbled. He undid Rio's gurney, and the youth quickly scampered round freeing everybody else. "What exactly are you planning anyway? You wouldn't even be up here if it weren't for me and Lily. No way in hell you're not completely improvising this."

"It's all about your brain maintaining control after control gets taken from you," Emilena explained. "Dreams are kinda a natural way the body goes into autopilot, so its the best form of practice. There's a reason they're called 'sleeper agents.'" She thought. "There's other stuff we could do, like attempt to extract the trigger using hypnosis or piecing together memories you have of Bolivia, but I highly doubt we've got any shot of pulling that off. Better you spend what time you've got becoming ready to fight back once the trigger drops."

She jumped when they heard heavy footsteps approaching their cell. "Hey, listen to me," she whispered urgently, making unblinking eye contact with Tony. "You've made the biggest step already by accepting the possibility and becoming prepared. Now the trigger *cannot* completely take you by surprise, and that's huge."

Two burly guards, one with a shiny bald head and the other with a red goatee, marched into the room. While the bald guard levied his rifle at her, the other unclasped Emilena's handcuffed wrists from the wall.

"Just keep practicing," Emilena said evasively, looking in no particular direction. "You can only get better..."

The guards marched her out of the room.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 18, 2016, 12:16:33 am**

No this is going according to the plan "Marita said sarcastically as she worked circulation back into her hands ' We PLANNED to be captured and endure brutal torture, so we could get close enough to Kalis and kill him. Of COURSE we're improvising this. Look, we need to get out of here pronto. you wanna live longer than a few minutes, you come with us..we need to get out of here and get to China..Hong Kong to Be specific. Finding the waypoint wont be easy . that place is made up of over 200 islands. the definition of finding a needle in a haystack..' Marita said as she waklked over to the first aid kit and pulled out some bandages ' Flora , come here, and let me bandage your wound.."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 18, 2016, 04:33:48 pm**

After Ryo helped extricate Flora from her gurney prison, the tired folf stumbled over to the operating table and lay down, giving Marita full access to applying her first-aid. Foley handed

Marita a tube of fast-healing nanogel, an extremely effective healing salve that only Kalis has the technology to make.

Ryo glanced at the unconscious Axel. "Erm, the big guy's still out. Anyone got a bucket of cold water?"

"Are you sure we shouldn't just wait for Lily to get back?" Foley asked nervously.

Emilena stared at the piece of paper. "So wait. I just sign this, and tell you everything I know about Vergil, and you let me go?"

The science officer nodded. "You're not our target. Vergil is."

"But you've already got him." She was hand-cuffed naked to a hard metal chair in an interrogation room. Two burly but unarmored guards stood behind her with high-powered rifles. "I know I'm not in a position to nitpick, but really I'm not seeing why you're wasting your time with this."

"More information can never hurt." The science officer was getting annoyed. "We saw you have a background in psycho-analytics, Admiral Carrack felt you might be worth a second chance. Perhaps you saw things Vergil didn't even know about himself."

Emilena raised an eyebrow and sighed. "No no no. The correct bait would have been to claim he'd died during the interrogation. That would have demoralized me and made me think there was no use continuing the fight. And for god's sake put the jarheads behind some one-way glass next time," she jolted her head dismissively at the guards. "The hidden show of force is always more effective than the displayed one, lets the perp fill in the blanks with her worst nightmares. Heck, the bald one even has his safety on."

The bald guard growled, undid the safety and whipped the back of her head with his rifle butt.

"So I take it you aren't going to cooperate?" The science officer pressed, but Emilena was slumped over in the seat, unresponsive. "Of course. Bloody waste of time..." he muttered.

"Did you kill her?" the other guard asked. The bald one stepped behind her and checked her pulse. Suddenly Emilena took that opportunity to smash the back of her head into his face. Kicking the inside of the desk, she sent her chair skidding into the wall, pinning the bald guard and giving her the angle to kick the other guard in the crotch. Grasping the pinned guard's rifle and firing wildly, she blasted the bald guard in the pelvis, also shattering the seat of the chair out from underneath her.

The remaining guard opened fire but Emilena wrenched her handcuffs out of the shattered chair and rolled under the table. Firing up through her own cover, Emilena winced as rivets of molten metal sprayed across her face, but a cry informed her that she'd landed an incapacitating hit on her target.

She blasted the science officer's leg for good measure before leaving cover, which turned out to be a good call because he'd had his pistol out and was waiting for the shot. Pouncing him, Emilena grunted and endured a knee to the stomach as she garroted him with her still-locked handcuffs. "One...last thing," she panted in his ear as she choked the life out of him, "I knew you were going to kill me no matter what answer I gave."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 19, 2016, 12:56:23 am**

Vergil finally felt the electricity cut off, and he looked up now with pained eyes as Lily approached the glass of his tube. "I can't..." He whispered, not rising. "I can't... if I could... I would do it... please... believe me... but I don't have them... I never did... if I could help you I

would... but I can't give what I don't have... believe me... more than anything... I would return them to you if I could." he said here, panting and not raising his voice above a whisper.

"Please..." he reached out now, his head touching the glass where hers did. "You can still do... the right thing... I will try and research... why your powers are gone... I promise... but I don't have..."

A loud alarm suddenly blared throughout the ship. "*Attention all personnel. Lord Kalis's ship is docking in five minutes. All personnel, prepare to receive the Red Castle. Attention all personnel of the Leviathan... prepare to receive the Red Castle and Lord Kalis.*

Vergil looked up now, still panting. "Lily... you have to get us out of here... Kalis will kill us... *all* of us... but I can... help... I'm sorry you feel this way... but we aren't enemies... please... help us." he whispered, pleading with her now.

Tony thought about this."I'd be willing to try it! Hypnotize me... reconstruct my memories, I'll do it!" he said now, becoming frantic as guards approached them now. "Shit!" he hissed, clenching his teeth as they came in to take Emilena away.

"Get off her! Emilena!" he called out, struggling against his bonds, though this did nothing. She made eye contact with him and told him he had an advantage over the trigger, but for the first time since being brought aboard this ship... he felt genuinely scared... scared he'd give in to this trigger without her there. "GET OFF HER! Don't you touch her you bast-OOF!" he was promptly rifle-butted in the gut, causing him to nearly double over (except he couldn't fully do that as he was still chained to the wall) in pain. "Uggggh!" he moaned, hearing the blaring alarm to announce Lord Kalis's arrival as Emilena was led off. "Dammit..." he muttered, trying to regain his breath.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 19, 2016, 02:27:08 am**

"I don't believe your lies for a minute..." Lily growled, maintaining the same withering glare as she shot the hinges to Vergil's cell. The door creaked open. "You took my powers, and you're going to give them back. Until then, I need you alive."

She marched over to Triste's cell and freed her as well. "And no mama bear business from you either," she warned, keeping her pistol trained defensively on the both of them and standing so a wall was behind her.

Emilena broke the air vent from the wall with the butt of her rifle. It was a tight fit, and the only reason she could even move was her relatively small frame and her fur being slicked in cold sweat. She reluctantly had to swap the rifle out for the officer's pistol and knife; it would only clatter and make unnecessary noise.

Wouldn't say no to detouring for a drink... she thought, fighting mightily to stifle any coughs from the incredible amounts of dust she was kicking up around herself. *Where the hell am I even going...* Her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the announcement of Kalis' arrival echoing thunderously through the pipes, leaving her ears ringing and her teeth gritted.

Unfortunately the air duct developers neglected to install windows for her to figure out where she was even going, and before long she found herself staring at a straight drop. Cussing quietly to herself and well aware of her incredible chances of dropping right into a tighter path that traps her, she slid 90 degrees downwards and found herself plunged into a wave of hot steam. Seconds later, the pipes around her grew hot to the touch.

Cursing furiously and completely abandoning any hope of keeping herself quiet, Emilena

rubbed her blistering hands along the pipes until she found a groove, then started shooting it to break the integrity of the solder. After expending her clip and jamming her knife into the cracks, the pipe finally buckled and dropped her into pitch blackness. She smacked her head on something metal, then her leg, then her arm...finally she slid to a stop amid a mess of pipes.

As she clutched her head and tried to get her bearings, Emilena took her first extended break. Right now she was buried deep within the internal mechanisms of the ship, an area not built for people to walk in. She saw light above her, but she couldn't be sure that was just her vision exploding with phosphenes. For the moment, she needed a moment to catch her bearings and nurse her burns.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 19, 2016, 10:53:54 pm**

Vergil managed to get shakily to his feet, resting a hand on his knee. "Thank you... we need to get the others and get out... they'll be coming for them very soon and... thank you." he said, looking to her now. Triste rolled her eyes, Lily apparently forgetting about her ability to cloak and go invisible, but since Vergil and her were a bit... worse for wear, she figured she'd regain her strength first and then try something later on.

"You don't need the gun." Vergil said softly. "At least... not for us. And I'm telling you the truth... if I knew... I'd give them back immediately. But I honestly don't have your powers." he made his slow way over to Carrack's corpse, retrieving his sword as Carrack had apparently decided to keep it for himself, perhaps as a trophy to present to Kalis. "OK... We've got five minutes... let's get to the prison cell area and free the others. Then make for an escape shuttle and get the hell off this ship." he suggested, heading for the door now, leaning against it heavily as he opened it, and then moved out into the hallway. "Ugh..." he exhaled wearily, starting to move off down the hallway... this ship... seeming familiar to him... yes... maybe he had been here... having served under Rex in the past...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 19, 2016, 11:50:38 pm**

Marita applied the gel to Flora's injuries, then gave some of the gel to Rose and marie to heal the cuts in thier wrists. ; alright' Foley" she said turning to him." We have only a couple minutes to get out of here before Kalis's ship docks with this one. whats the quickest way off of this ship?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 21, 2016, 06:30:08 am**

"You want to get OFF? We just bloody got you on the ship!" Foley exclaimed in frustration. He looked at Rio angrily.

"Hey, I'm not the strategy guy, I just pickpocket bitches," the youth shrugged.

"Ugh." Foley checked Axel and Flora's vitals. "Neither of these two are in a position to travel. I'll stay with them here and send them after you once the nanogel has fully healed their wounds." He glanced at Marita. "If you're honest that you think you can defeat Kalis, then they're not in any danger. But even if you fail, I'll make sure I get them off the ship alive." Behind him, Flora gurgled happily as the nanogel sedated her.

Foley drew some quick directions to the escape pods. "You can take these to get off the spaceship. They'll be guarded so I hope you're ready for a fight. Alternately, take a left here and you can rescue your friends from the infirmary. It's up to you."

Lily nevertheless kept her guard up as they made for the escape pods. Triste in particular had been unsettlingly silent, and Lily remembered her pulling off some impressive combat feats in the name of protecting Vergil.

Another part of her couldn't keep a tiny nag of doubt worming into her thoughts. Could Vergil be telling the truth? Did he truly not steal her powers? If that's the case, what happened to them?

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 22, 2016, 01:26:09 am**

Thanks ' Marita Said, taking the directions From Foley " Get them to safety, and you as well. We'll need you, I'll wager, before the end. we'll need all the help we can get to defeat Kalis. After all, theres only a handful of us.' Marita said as she began heading down the hallway, following the map she had been givenn. Rose and Marie followed close behind her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 23, 2016, 01:35:51 am**

The ship was coming back to Vergil now, its corridors and twists and turns becoming familiar. "Yeah... yeah down here!" he said, stumbling along as he took a left. Fortunately, interrogation wasn't very far from the holding cells, and Vergil could see them up ahead. Staggering through the doorway, he saw two guards on duty outside the main row of cells.

"Hey! What the hell?" called one, shocked to see the prisoner out and about. Vergil attempted to draw his sword, but Triste, apparently not as rocked by the torture as Vergil has been, flashed by him, cleanly picked up a knife hanging on the wall by the door, buried it in the throat of one guard by tossing it before she hit the deck, avoiding the shot of the second and then tail whipping him to the ground, his skull cracking on the floor with a sickening noise.

Blinking, Vergil simply stood there and nodded. "Uh... right..." he said, moving to the switch that opened the cells and dropped the force fields. Soren, Tony, and the rest were released from their bindings and the fields dropped, the ferret nearly collapsing to the floor from surprise as his wrists were released.

"What the hell?" he asked, pushing himself out of his cell to see Vergil, Triste and... Lily. "Lily?" he asked. "What are you... doing here?" He jogged up to one of the prone guards, took his assault rifle and slung it over his shoulder. "This is... a rescue or something?" He had been trying to focus on falling asleep before he'd been released, so to suddenly be dropped to the floor had been a shock to say the least.

Vergil tensed up as he leaned over the control panel, sensing Kalis's presence on board now. "Oh no..." he groaned. "He's... he's here... we don't have much time..." he mumbled, still regaining his strength.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 25, 2016, 05:20:30 am**

Emilena took a deep breath. Her back wasn't going to get any less kinked in this position...with a strangled grunt she forced herself to her feet. Using her knife to pry a handhold out of the tiny ridges in the pipes, she started scaling to the light above her.

Her legs were burning and her arms felt dead when she finally crawled over the edge of a catwalk. She was overlooking something that looked like a huge boiler. She kept her eyes open for interruptions since she was now in a section designed for humans, but everybody appears to have sodden off to go watch Kalis arrive or something.

She approached the large isolated structure curiously, since it wasn't giving off enough heat to be a boiler. Scaling the catwalks, she reached a hatch above it and took a peek within.

An absolutely awful smell hit her like a sack of bricks. This chamber was a portion of the waste disposal system! Sealing it quickly to keep from retching, she nevertheless considered this a valuable discovery, since a waste disposal system would naturally lead to the edge of the ship.

As she traced the septic pipe along the catwalks, she weighed her options. Technically she should be locating her allies, but she suspected they were either dead or being tortured to death. It hurt to abandon everyone, but she was severely over her head already. Better that somebody live to tell the story of those who fought.

Eventually her intuition proved correct and she reached a hallway with windows revealing the open skies. She couldn't see the ground, but she hoped they weren't moving. Thousand-mile falls to the ground were perilous enough without beginning with thousands of knots of forward movement.

The hallway led her to a small hangar. She looked wistfully at the fighter jets stationed and briefly toyed with attempting to fly one. Instead she smashed the cockpit window and seat-belted herself into the pilot seat. It took a couple of clicks to find out which button on the joystick did what, but considering she was looking for the missile launcher, it wasn't too traumatic when a single missile rocketed out of the right wing and blasted the hangar door open. The hangar immediately depressurized and sucked everything not nailed down, which included Emilena's jet.

Immediately all the blood rushed to Emilena's head and she almost blacked out. The sheer coldness of the outer atmosphere threatened to give her a heart attack, and she thanked her lucky stars she'd located the ejection button beforehand.

A blind press of the button, and her seat rocketed out of the nosediving jet, a parachute popped out with a stomach-wrenching jolt, and she began her unpleasant descent to the desert ground.

"So are we going to the escape pods, or are we grabbing the guys locked up in the space jail?" Rio asked in confusion as he, Marie, Rose and Marita reached the fork in the road that demanded they choose a more specific direction.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 25, 2016, 04:27:13 pm**

Escape Pods ' Marita Said. "We need to get out of here, pronto. Trying to get them out is basically akin to a suicide mission. We Have no Weapons, and the element of surprise isn't enough to free everyone, we'd need weapons for that. So Escape pods it is. Then once we reach the ground. we'll need to get to Hong Kong, as the last waypoint is somewhere in there. We need to get there and find the ship before Kalis does. Otherwise, its all hail Evil Overload Kalis.' Marita said.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 26, 2016, 12:01:49 am**

Not having time to catch up, Vergil led the way towards the escape pods. He paused briefly, sliding to a halt as he looked at a map of the ship on a bronze plaque and saw they were ahead and down a level. OK... easy enough. But as he rounded a corner with the others, there he was... his long flowing red robes... his metallic face from when Rex had sliced it off... his spiky, threatening looking skin and those dead, yellow eyes.

Panting, Vergil leaned against the wall, in disbelief at being headed off like this. "K... Kalis..."

He said, leaning heavily to support himself.

"Vergil..." Kalis said in his raspy, robotic voice. "I've been meaning to confront you for years... but then again... my last attempt to kill you didn't work out as I'd planned." He took a step towards them, and Vergil could see Eljert was with him.

"E... Eljert!" Vergil whispered, moving forward himself before stopping as Kalis glared at him.

"That's far enough..." He ordered. "Old friend..."

"What?" Vergil asked, panting heavily and raising his brows. "I don't... specifically... remember... being friends with you... or.. even knowing you all that well."

This elicited a rumbling laugh from Kalis now, who glared cruelly at him. "Really old friend... they really did a number on you... didn't they?"

"Who? What?" Vergil asked now, unsure what Kalis was talking about.

"The Federation you IDIOT! Do you really THINK that you've been dancing for them of your own free will and volition? You've been more brainwashed than even I thought was capable... but I suppose they have that technology... don't they?" he asked, fixing his eyes on Triste now, who seemed frozen and extremely agitated by something.

"Vergil... Vergil..." She whispered to him. "Don't listen to him... he's lying..."

"Hahahaha yes... yes I'm lying... I know all ABOUT you Vergil... who you are... where you came from... what you were born of... and what you became... the Federation's slave... a new identity... a new life... brainwashed into thinking you're some big new hero... a weapon for them to use... that couldn't be further from the truth because I KNOW who you are!" Kalis challenged him now. "You and I go WAY back in fact."

"Vergil! Don't listen! We gotta get outta here! Screw this guy!" Triste yelled, throwing a knife towards Kalis, who simply deflected it with his mind and let it clang into the wall.

"Well what a fetching handler you've acquired for yourself... 'Vergil'..." Kalis said mockingly. "She manipulates... she makes you think you're this what? Federation hero or something? Hahahahah you are their greatest ENEMY! The one they FEARED would destroy them! And then they got their hands on you and remade you into their perfect puppet... defeated you so thoroughly you didn't even realize it had happened!"

"The fuck are you talking about? Triste? What's he mean?" Vergil demanded, looking at her darkly now. "I AM a hero! I know who I am! I... I..."

"Yes... you WERE a hero... 'Vergil'... but that's not even your real name... is it?" Kalis asked, chuckling evilly here. "You want to know the truth? The HORRIBLE truth?"

"I... no... no I... served with you yes but... I... I..."

"Hero of the Scorched Earth War... the Federation's greatest general... suddenly turned traitor with his best friend... launched a rebellion... brought the Federation to its knees... until he was betrayed... betrayed by his friend who wanted it all... wanted what he had... and now I've TAKEN it from you. I am YOUR superior... isn't that right... REX?"

Vergil was trembling in fear now, his legs wobbly and like jelly as he struggled to hold himself upright. "R... Rex?" he whispered. "No... no I'm... I'm Vergil I'm not... I'm not... Rex..."

"Rex... my friend... mentor... superior... supreme warlord... leader of Rex's Rebellion... you should stop denying what you KNOW to be true!" Kalis insisted here.

"I... I'm not... that's... that's a fucking lie..." Vergil panted, backing up unsteadily. "It's not true... liar... LIAR!" he yelled, springing forward now and activating his sword, with Kalis's own

blade out like lightning and blocking Vergil's blow easily enough and turning the weakened gecko aside.

"Just ask HER." Kalis replied, nodding to Triste now. "She's the one who knows who you are... whose mission was to lie to you... to tell you lies about who you are to reinforce the Federaton's brainwashing... brilliant really... I THOUGHT I had killed you but... she infiltrated your ship to kill you... was caught up when my guns began hammering and destroying your vessel... you must've been knocked unconscious or something... and she brought you back... brought you back to be reprogrammed into their slave... in just ONE fell swoop... Rex was returned to them... you... IDIOT... you couldn't see what was right in front of you... who you REALLY were?"

"I... I..." Vergil looked back to Triste here, who only looked at him with a pained expression on her face. "That's not true... it's not true... please tell me it's not true... I'm NOT... Rex... I'm VERGIL. Vergil Speicher... right?" he asked hopefully, but Triste closed her eyes and looked away.

"Vergil... I'm... I'm sorry... I'm... I was going to..."

"You were going to tell me? WHEN? AFTER I'd killed Kalis? AFTER I'd saved the Federation? When the FUCK WERE YOU GOING TO TELL ME?" he roared.

"If you need confirmation... just look me in the eyes... tell me you don't remember slicing my face off Rex... old friend... TELL ME!" Kalis ordered, and Vergil turned his head slowly, his eyes in agony as he gazed upon Kalis's... but there it was... the eyes... yes... the eyes that had gazed at him after he'd... torn Kalis's face off... his fleet... his life...his betrayal... his rebellion... his... his everything. Rex... he was Rex... HE was Rex... HE... was... Rex... his false life was collapsing around him now... and his memories... his REAL memories... they were pounding him like Niagara Falls... and he couldn't escape... couldn't escape it at all...

"I... I..." was all Vergil could say.

"You know the truth now... the very great truth they've been hiding from you this entire time... well... I'd say it's time to end things... Rex... you were my superior once but no longer... I'll kill you and take your place as supreme warlord... the way it was ALWAYS meant to be..." Kalis began advancing on Vergil now, who seemed rooted to the spot, hypnotized and unable to move.

"BASTARD!" Triste shouted, leaping forward to attack Kalis now. "Vergi! GO!" she yelled. "GET OUT OF HERE! I'll hold him off... kill him for good!" she snarled. "GO! you're in no condition to fight!"

Vergil watched Triste struggle with Kalis, the two coming to mighty blows as they fought, twirling, parrying and attacking. He then slowly turned to Lily, staring at her. "I... I'm Rex..." he said softly to her, unblinking. "I... I'M Rex..." he said, holding his hand to his chest, apparently paralyzed and unable to react from the revelation.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 28, 2016, 04:04:24 am**

Lily bit her lip. She wanted to hate Vergil, but it was hard to hate someone who was so pitifully being stripped of every quality they'd ever held dear. Kalis was brutal, and didn't pull a single punch. But Lily didn't have long to worry about Vergil, because someone more important was in the room.

Ejlert North was a heavyset youth, with sunbleached blonde hair that clashed with his dark skin. His eyes, the same shade of amber brown as hers, widened in surprise at recognition. "M-Mom?" he said, his genius-level intellect quickly putting the pieces together.

Then Kalis backhanded him in the throat with a dagger. "No interruptions," he reminded his

guard casually, as both pairs of amber brown eyes in the room widened in dawning horror.

"*Ejlert!!!*" Lily screamed. Every single cell in her body felt as if it shut down; her brain ceased to think, and time seemed to travel in slow motion; she could only watch as her son staggered and clutched his throat, trying in vain to stem the bleeding. She dropped to the floor; this wasn't a controlled fall, she practically face-planted next to Vergil, even as her son maintained standing with what little strength had not yet faded away.

Rio strapped Marita, Rose, and Marie into an escape pod. "Only room for 3 in each one!" he mentioned cheerily. "I'll take the next one down, you guys don't worry! I'm right behind you!"

Closing the escape pod door securely for them, he instead jogged back down the hallway towards the infirmary. Even if Marita's speech hadn't inspired Foley, Rio was convinced. This was his chance to *save the world*, and like hell he was missing out on that.

Down in the deserts of Cairo, two camouflaged individuals had assumed an observational position and were observing the warship. The smaller of the two was a lightly-armed tracker, who had volunteered his services to track down a woman who had done him wrong in the past.

"The *muchacha* is moving around a lot, *SeÒor*!" informed Nando in a thick Spanish accent. He refocused his binoculars on the ship, but the lion's share of his attention was on the tracking device receiving signals from his brain. "Her trajectory is *muy extraÒo*...but..."

He suddenly switched focus when he spotted something falling from the sky. "SeÒor Stryker! *Arriba*!"

With a pained grunt, Emilena felt her ejection seat embed itself into a sand dune. Undoing the seatbelt, it still took her an extra minute to free her legs from the burning sand that had quickly covered her lower body.

Cursing brilliantly, she balanced precariously on the seat. Her pawpads may be calloused, but they weren't prepared for the burning heat of the Egyptian afternoon sand. Taking her knife, she stabbed into the seat and began cutting the leather coating out to cobble some rags for her feet. She'd been on the ground less than a minute, and she already felt like she was getting first-degree sunburns.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 28, 2016, 04:21:33 pm**

Marita pressed the eject button and the pod with the three of them it was flung, out into space at a rapid pace. the speed combined with the friction of the atmosphere, began to make the pod become very hot. " Cant You steer this thing/ Marie shouted. ' No! its flight path is pre-determined' Marita responded. ' we'll land somewhere in the desert, how close we';ll be to civilization, i don't know. Lets just hope Rio, Foley and the others find their way off as well.' The pod red across the sky streaking down towards the lights of a city lying on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea-Alexandria, Egypt.. the pod landed with a crash in an tuned area to the south of the city.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 31, 2016, 01:24:17 am**

Rio raced down the hallway, passing several crewmembers who mostly ignored him. One of the perks of being a kid, apparently.

He emerged to see a pretty unpleasant site; Triste in full combat with Kalis, dead guards everywhere and the remaining crewmembers looking pretty worse for wear. "Crap, next time I'm taking the escape pod..." he breathed.

Lily closed her eyes, unable to process the flood of emotions coursing through her. It was if every possible negative emotion was flowing through her, destroying her very being and crushing everything she'd done, everything she'd sacrificed to reach Ejlert. She'd lost it all. And there was nothing more dangerous than someone who had nothing to lose.

Suddenly she grabbed Vergil's arm. "Get up." Locking eyes with him, she glared at him for the umpteenth time, but this one was full of fiery molten rage. "I don't care who the hell you are." Pulling him unequivocally to his feet, she pirouetted him to face Kalis. "I don't care what you've done or what your real name is, but you've got a shot to make that bastard pay. It's *his fault*." She withdrew a syringe from her labcoat, a painkiller/adrenaline booster, and stabbed him in the arm with it. "We can debate philosophy when that space lizard is dead and buried. Sounds like you used to be his boss or something, why don't you show him what happens to uppity lieutenants in this fleet?"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **July 31, 2016, 01:41:58 am**

Vergil watched in horror as Eljert was merely clubbed in the throat, and he couldn't react... couldn't move... Lily collapsed next to him, and he watched as he slowly... slowly started to come round. His breathing was slowing... Rex... he was Rex...

He felt Lily drag him up, but couldn't acknowledge her, and winced as she stabbed him with something. Something... his adrenaline was starting to course through him again, and he tried to register her words? Fight? No... no he couldn't do that... there was something more important he had to do...

He stumbled forwards, arms reaching out, and grasping Eljert now. "Come on!" he hissed, tugging the wounded youth away now. "To the escape pods! They're just ahead! I'll try and heal you!" he exclaimed, running now past the battling Triste and Kalis. "Come on!" he shouted back to Lily, and dove into an escape pod, shoving Eljert into a seat and strapping him down as he sat violently into the next one, buckled himself in, and slammed his fist down on the launch button. The pod blasted off from the ship's side, hurtling down the few hundred feet to the desert sands, firing its retro rockets to slow its descent and keep it from slamming too hard into the ground. As they touched down with a cloud of sand, Vergil was moving, up out of his seat, springing to Eljert and dragging him out to lay him down on the ground, trying to focus... trying to gather up enough strength... trying to... save the youth.

He closed his eyes, laid his hands upon his form, and tried... tried to do... something... but it wasn't enough... it wasn't... he could feel the boy expiring, his life leaving him... no... no... "NO!" Vergil roared out, eyes popping open as he tried but failed... the life force leaving him... there was nothing... nothing he could do. "I... I did... no... Eljert..." he whispered, gazing down sadly now at the lifeless youth. "I... I'm so... sorry..." he said, and he must've been speaking to Lily... or maybe Eljert... or maybe both. "I'm so... sorry." he got weakly to his feet now, looking to Lily here, pure hopelessness written on his features. "I tried... I tried... I... I don't have your powers." he said now. "I wasn't enough... I only wish... I had gotten to him sooner." he said here, apparently struggling to stand, his legs wobbling even after the shot she had given him.

Behind the advanced scouts, a large form rose up from the desert sands. He was now different... a red, cybernetic eye was connected to his face, overlapping his left eye. A metallic spine ran down his backside and culminated in a massive metallic tail. His right arm was a

missile launcher, and his left was a Gatling gun that doubled as a bludgeon if he needed it. Smirking here, the now enhanced assassin began bounding over the sands.

"All right bitch... I'm coming for you..." he muttered, his powerful legs practically leaping him over the desert.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **July 31, 2016, 09:54:26 pm**

Emilena winced with every step she took through the scorching sand of the afternoon desert. She was lucky it isn't midday, or she'd almost certainly have passed out from dehydration and heatstroke. As it was, her makeshift footrags were doing very little to ease the discomfort of walking, and she was pretty sure she'd already developed a severe sunburn across her entire body.

But about ten minutes later, that suddenly became the least of her problems when an old enemy arrived to stand before her, barely recognizable due to his new cybernetic enhancements. "Oh for the love of...I thought you died," she groaned, her knife continuing to hang limply at her side. She knew she didn't stand a chance against him, and he knew it too, which was why he didn't even bother to hide his presence. "I don't suppose there's any chance Don Stracci requested you keep me alive for interrogation?"

"Ejlert!" shouted Lily, pushing Vergil aside when it was clear he wasn't going to heal the boy. "Ejlert, can you speak? Stay calm!" She had no medical supplies whatsoever, and the boy was suffering from a dagger wound to the throat. Said dagger was missing, meaning that there was severe bleeding. She didn't need a medical degree to know it was a fatal wound. "Vergil," she cried, fighting to keep from breaking down in front of her missing son, "if you're telling the truth that you didn't steal my powers, *where did they go?* How do I get them back?!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **July 31, 2016, 11:34:50 pm**

Mom...' Eljert Gasped weakly, air hissing through the hole in his throat, with every labored breath- I"m sorry.. I ran away.. please forgive... me..' he coughed, blood shooting out of the hole in his throat.. The youths eyes were dimming. his end was very near.. ' Just.. don't forget me mom.. please? Promise me" he murmured then his eyes rolled back and his head went limp as his last wisps of life left his body and he slumped to the ground. Eljert was no more.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 04, 2016, 11:50:45 am**

"I... I don't know!" Vergil panted, trying to think here. "But... but if... if there's... a reason... the only thing I can think of is your own self-doubt... it's suppressing your abilities because you've become lost... you don't know who you are anymore... you want to retrieve them so badly that it's causing further frustration and anger and you're now stuck... you can't move forward... you can't move back... you're stuck. Lily..." he approached her now. "You have to believe... believe in WHO you are and not lose sight of that! You've lost that... and yes I feel I've contributed to that... but you can't lose yourself."

He placed his hands on his hips now, and shifted his weight onto his left foot. "Lily... you were a determined individual of our group starting out... determined to find your son... and I'm sorry that neither of us could save him... but the enemy... the *real* enemy... is and always HAS been Kalis. He's the one who corrupted your son... he's the one who who destroyed Lanthae... he's the one... partly responsible for why I'm now Vergil and not Rex... but I... like you... can't run from my past... I *am* Rex whether I like it or not! I... I can't deny that anymore because my memories... my past... that exists... it wasn't a lie... I... I don't *want* to be Rex but at the

same time... that... that is who I am... you must... accept who you are... and the powers you have..."

He thought a moment now, raising a brow. "Sure I don't want to be Rex but... knowing I am... that's... I suppose a bonus in some way just because I can USE that to my advantage against Kalis... I can use... who I am... against him. As you said... I used to be his superior... I can once again prove I am... but you have to step up and believe in who you are as well." he said, still weakened from the torture, though the adrenaline shot was helping. "You show the world... everyone... what it means to be you..." he said now, finding strength in his own words for himself as well, despite Kalis's revelation.

"I was responsible for you losing faith in yourself... just as I... was responsible for turning Kalis from a hero... a young... impressionable hero... into what he is now... but we must bear responsibility for our actions... and it is what you CHOOSE to continue being... or not being... that... is your real test now. I set you and Kalis on your respective paths BUT... you both chose to continue on them... you must make... a different choice now... not just for your sake... but for mine as well." he concluded, looking at her with imploring eyes.

"I no longer work for Don Stracci... my mission... is termination of *you*." he said here, sneering. "Your end is nigh Emilena Echo..." he then sprang forward, violently whipping his Gatling gun across Emilena's face and sending her flying back through the air to face plant in the desert sands.

Stryker was over her in an instant, a combat knife appearing from the middle of the Gatling gun, which he promptly shoved into Emilena's spine, missing her vertebrae by inches. "I've made it my life mission to kill you and terminate your existence! Now... I will finally have that chance!" he exclaimed, crowing over his victorious position. Withdrawing the knife from the now screaming Emilena, Stryker picked her up, then used his metallic tail to whip her into the air, firing off a missile in her direction and causing it to detonate close by, the concussion burning her and throwing her through the sky and behind a nearby dune. Grinning, the sungazer lizard began bounding after her. "You can hide!" he exclaimed. "But you can't run! I'm now superior in every way to you!"

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 04, 2016, 04:23:23 pm**

Lily could only look at her son's dead body in shock. The light had gone from her eyes, and she could vaguely hear Vergil trying to comfort her, but what did it matter? What did anything matter with Ejlert dead?

But then something Vergil said broke through...she had lost her path. She'd made some terrible decisions in her quest to rescue Ejlert, put her faith in the wrong people and left the right people to die. Her cheeks burned when she thought of how things could have been if she'd stayed with her team. If she'd remained a healer.

But her path was crystal clear now. With Ejlert dead, her new goal was to avenge his death. Kalis needed to pay for what he did to her son. "Vergil..." she started. "That's your name. Vergil. You don't have to think of yourself as Rex, that was a different man whose ideals you don't share. Remember that I was reborn once, too. I could continue to think of myself as that horrible mutated creature from Lanthae...but that would only hurt my ability to change my future." She touched him reassuringly on the shoulder. "You are now Vergil. You have Rex's powers, but you are going to use them for your own ends, and his memory holds no power over you."

She started in surprise as she felt a familiar sensation through her fingers. Slowly, Vergil's wounds were transferring onto her. With the renewal of her purpose came the return of her powers!

Emilena cried out as Stryker punted her directly into the scorching sand. Her new wounds burnt with a dull ache, more painful than usual; leave it to someone like Stryker to wield weapons designed to favor agony over damage. She tried to get to her feet, spitting a mouthful of blood onto the dune below her. She still had her combat knife, and a lucky swing was almost certainly her only hope of survival. "Are you sure you dont want to take me prisoner?" she asked desperately as he bore down on her position. "You could torture me to your hearts desire. It'd be just like old times."

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 06, 2016, 02:39:17 pm**

Vergil considered what she said now, and even though his memories were still painfully flooding back, he was growing to accept them now... it was better than having "amnesia" and not knowing anything. He had sought the answers... and he had found them. "Yes... yes... that's... that's something... I should look at it as. It's my life... but just as you are choosing now... I too have to choose WHAT sort of person I will be from here on out... that... that is the most important thing." He agreed, nodding.

He tensed up as he suddenly felt her powers return, the wounds moving away from him and the great burns that had crisscrossed his body were now fading, as were the internal injuries he had suffered.

He inhaled sharply, and looked at her now with amazement. "You did it... you did it!" he grinned, holding her arms now. "I thought so! I thought it was because you had lost your way! This is great! Oh but... Triste!" he exclaimed now. "If she's still alive... we have to rescue her... and everyone else."

Tony sputtered as he came out of an escape pod nearby. "Hey!" the ferret said. "I'm all for that! But... what about the others?" he asked now.

"They have phones... well... did have phones. We can send them messages... tell them to meet back at Corona or something... chances are Kalis will know where Devastation's Inception is... so... we'll regroup... and hit it with everything we've got... hit HIM with everything we've got!" Vergil declared now, looking to Lily. "But first... we should try and find the others... their pods would be scattered." he pointed out now.

Stryker slid to a halt near her now, then shoved the tip of his tail right through the back of her thigh, impaling her rather handily as blood spurted out. "Like hell! There are no good old times!" he declared. "Only the new... but yes... I fully intend to make you suffer before I finish you off!" he crowed triumphantly. Withdrawing his now blood stained tail, he wiped it off on her backside and then whipped it roughly across her face.

"Bitch!" He spat right in her face next, then activated a new feature on his Gatling gun, a device which super-heated the barrels as quickly as an electric stove, and placed it right on her backside, scorching through her clothes and starting to burn her back. "Heheheheheh! How you like THEM apples?" he asked now, smiling evilly down at her.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 07, 2016, 01:59:52 am**

"You're right," Lily nodded. "I don't know how many of them got out...but we can't give up now." A cold fire burned in her eyes. "I won't rest until either me or Kalis is dead."

She crossed to the controls of the escape pod. "These can communicate with each other. Our comms are out, either damaged in the crash or being actively jammed by the warship, but I've

got a few coordinates for other pods." She glanced at Tony. "Did you see anyone else reach the escape pods? I saw Rio for a second at the end, and I'm not even sure if Soren left the holding cells."

Foley gritted his teeth as he pushed Axel's and Flora's gurneys down the hallway. "Coming through! Medical emergency!" he shouted people out of his way.

He'd been following the progress of the little coup, and it was clear that Vergil's escape had halfway worked, and the other half was probably about to die horribly at Kalis' hands. That meant Flora needed to be off this warship ASAP. He'd already dressed her and Axel in nurse outfits, in the hopes that they'd look slightly more like crewmen instead of thugs.

He went for the further pod bay, just because the closer one was probably a little populated due to Rio and the girls visiting it. Unfortunately this meant that he'd had to use the much smaller auxiliary pods, which could only hold a single person each. He wasn't 100% sure how these things worked, so he did Axel first. Sucks to be a pragmatist, but Foley honestly didn't care if Axel's pod crashed into the ground at terminal velocity and exploded. However, it shot out perfectly and began its slow trajectory to the ground.

Flora was next. Strapping her into her seat, he began preparing the pod for launch, when he heard crewmen enter the bay. "You there, stop!" one of them yelled. "Step out of the pod!"

The sound roused Flora, who looked sleepily up at Foley. "I...huh? Where are we?" she asked in a daze.

Foley pushed the button to close the pod bay door, when a bullet struck him square in the heart. It was a poison-tipped round, bloodless but still lethal. He grunted, and Flora squawked in surprise at the sound of gunfire. "Foley, what's going on?" she stammered, as her memories slowly returned. "I was so out of it, I--!"

"No, you weren't," Foley interrupted, stumbling backwards so the pod door would have room to shut. "I was. You were right about everything, Flora." He got one last resigned look at her terrified face as his vision slowly faded to black. "I backed the wrong horse. I'm sorry."

"Foley!" shouted Flora in a panic as the guards fired at her pod. "*FOLEY!*"

The pod rocketed off into the sky.

Emilena grunted as she hit the sand for the umpteenth time. A sharp pierce in her leg, and she cried out again as she felt her thigh slice open. "Jesus..." not really feeling capable of her usual banter, she simply attempted to bury herself in the dune, where maybe she could play dead more effectively.

But Stryker wasn't done with her yet. A searing pain, even worse than the burning sand, dug into her lower back, sending her into uncontrollable spasms, but she couldn't even crawl away. "Aaaugh!" She gritted her teeth as both sides of her body were singed, but there was nowhere to go. She was too dehydrated to even cry.

Well, I'm not fighting my way out of this one... she realized with dawning resignation. *And he won't listen to negotiation...my only real option is to play dead...at least if I die it won't be groveling for mercy...*

So even though her nerves were screaming, she forced herself to lay perfectly still. It was worryingly easy, she was already so close to passing out from sheer pain...

From behind Stryker, Nando had silently assembled his automatic rifle. Getting as close to the dueling pair as possible, he took a deep breath and prepared to open fire on his master.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 08, 2016, 10:03:21 pm**

"Ri-right! The pods!" He said now, nodding. "Good thinking! We'll send out a message for everyone to meet back in Corona!" Vergil said now, heading back to the pod now that he was at full strength thanks to Lily. He got to work tapping out a message, and nodded for Lily to join him so she could deliver the coordinates.

Tony followed them, a grim look on his face. "Well... some got out but shit... I don't know about Soren... I'm not sure if he ever made it out of the holding block!" the ferret said warily. "He wasn't with us when we encountered Kalis so... I... I fear the worst!" he said, his voice dropping out from under him.

Stryker then proceeded to raise his bludgeon and smash it down with extreme force on Emelina's back. He then repeated the motion, lifting up the battering instrument and bringing it back hard for a second time... again and again he did this, and finally, he heard the satisfying snap of her spine as he broke it in two. "Heheheheheh!" he chuckled evilly, grinning mirthlessly down at her.

It was then Nando opened fire, his bullets striking Stryker's metal spine. This caused the lizard to whirl around, an angry glare in his eyes, wondering what this was all about...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 08, 2016, 11:58:57 pm**

"Let's focus on who we can rescue, before taking headcount," Lily suggested. "Soren could have been in any of these pods."

After the scan finished, she pointed to a spot just north of them. "Let's go there first. One pods' already landed, and its got another inbound."

Nando emptied his magazine into Stryker, aiming for vital organs. He knew he'd only be buying himself seconds, so the kill needed to be fast.

It wasn't fast enough. Stryker was on him in an instant, his tail swiping Nando across the face and sending his rifle skittering. Spiraling to deflect, Nando drew a sidearm with his backhand and fired a shot right through Stryker's cybernetic eye. Stryker screamed with rage and smashed his assailant in the chest with his battering ram. Nando grunted but fired his grappling hook, pinning Stryker to him while being crushed into the ground. Simultaneously his tail realigned and buried itself into Nando's arm. Grunting, Nando used his remaining hand to thumb something on his belt. "Checkmate bitch," Nando grinned weakly as the EMP grenade went off, shutting down both of their cybernetic arsenals. Stryker cried out and tried to wrench free, but without his cybernetic skeleton his body was shutting down.

Emilena moaned pitifully, barely observing what was happening around her. She could only register that something had happened that likely saved her life. Staring over at the pair, locked forever in terminal combat, she realized Nando's identity with a flash of shock. "Oh my god, Nairda..."

Nairda was as doomed as Stryker. He looked weakly over at Emilena. "I'm sorry...I didn't act sooner..." Tears fell from his eyes. "Now we're both going to die..."

Emilena coughed up blood. "Well...it happens to everyone...it's...good to see you again. Didn't think I'd get to... How did you find me...?"

Nairda chuckled, then winced in pain. "Remember back in Lanthae...? After we saved Soren in his house. I registered that tracker on you. You never took it out."

Emilena's eyes widened. "You've been *tracking me* since then? That was...fucking months ago! Stalker creep..."

"I was going to tell you...eventually..." Nairda smiled sadly. "Also since we're dying, there's something else you have to know. Something I learned at Emile's and Lena's."

Emilena's eyes widened. "Wait, you went...to my parents?.....Why?"

"Not yours. *Ours.*" Nairda didn't care that her face filled with horror at his revelation. "I always...knew I loved you, but I'd never realized it was also as a sister."

Emilena collapsed, breaking eye contact as her face filled with burning sand. This was far more information that she was prepared to deal with. And she'd been so close to never learning this before the sweet kiss of death removed her memory forever.

"Emilena?" Nairda asked, worried. "You still love me, right?"

Emilena's head spun. Her heartbeat, growing slower as her body lost critical amounts of blood, struggled to grasp the question. Finally, as she felt oddly cold despite the sweltering heat and realized it was the coldness of death, it gave her a moment of crystal clarity. She was going to die. Morals didn't matter anymore. "Yes," she sighed. "I love you."

There was a blinding flash of light, and Emilena shielded her eyes in horror and bewilderment. A wave of hot sand washed over her from a massive impact, and she clawed herself back to the surface with her hands, her legs remaining paralyzed from Stryker's final blow. Half of her was convinced this was God's divine justice, smiting her for her hubris in committing crimes against nature.

But no, an escape pod had merely landed right on Nairda, giving him that unmarked grave he'd always wanted. It also gave Emilena some much needed shade. Though her vision was getting darker of its own accord...

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Pterano** on **August 13, 2016, 05:27:10 pm**

"Right!" Vergil nodded firmly, pursing his lips and seeing it was about a mile away. They set off now, the gecko sprinting to make the time go faster, his trained body not needing to rest much out here for only a mile. Tony on the other hand... somewhat lagged, but he huffed gamely along, having taken some supplies from his escape pod.

They arrived just as the escape pod landed on Nairda, Tony and Vergil wincing as it threw up a cloud of dust. Sensing Emilena, Vergil's eyes widened. "Shit! Oh Christ!" he said, running around the pod now. "It's Emilena... god... goddammit!" he said, seeing her pitiful state. "I... she's gonna need healing!" He called, waving Lily over.

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **aabicus (LettuceBacon&Tomato)** on **August 13, 2016, 05:47:47 pm**

"I can do that," Lily's gaze was steeled as she pressed her hand against Emilena's shoulder blade. "How...exactly did you end up in this state?" she couldn't help but ask once the most grievous of the injuries were healed.

"Aaugh!" Emilena cried out repeatedly as she felt bones snap into place and muscles seal themselves. Lily's healing was different now, more efficient and void of painkillers, but she also noticed that Lily no longer inherited the wounds from her patient. "Old friend of Tony's dad

came to say hi..." she grunted, gritting her teeth in agony, "...but I think it just got dealt with. Glad to see we got our medic back, though I'm not sure where you came from..."

"Yeah..." Lily looked away. "Vergil and I patched things up. Do you know where any of the others are?"

"Only whoever just gave Stryker a viking burial..."

Emilena glanced at the pod. Lily threw open the pod door to reveal Axel, still blissfully unconscious in his seat. Rushing forward, she buried her husband in a hug. "Oh my god, you made it out, thank you God..." Lily whispered softly. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for everything..."

Emilena staggered to her feet and glanced at Vergil. "Any of you gentlemen have clothes to donate? And we need to move quickly; I can imagine the warship can track the landing locations of their escape pods."

Lily nodded as she freed her husband from his seat belt. "We just need to grab any other survivors, then figure out our next plan of attack. This fight isnt over."

(OOC: Do we wanna do a time skip to Hong Kong or some new location? Anything else need to happen in the deserts?)

Title: **Racing the Storm**
Post by: **Nick22** on **August 31, 2016, 10:24:12 pm**

(We can time Skip. That will Allow Marita and the others to reconnect)

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