

# THE CROSSFADE... SOLO

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*With that said, Please Enjoy!*

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# Chapter Three

## DEJA VU



**A** bright light blinded Dahn's blurry vision as he struggled to adjust to the new atmosphere. The day had broken and sunlight blasted in through the window across him, blaring into his eyes, and forcing him to raise his hand to his face.

He groggily wiped his forehead, clearing a gentle sweat that had taken up residence there. Sitting up, he turned his head back and forth, scanning the alien room that he found himself in. His left hand was filled with the sticky clammy feeling of sweaty skin. It wasn't his skin however.

Dahn turned to focus on Lemon's limp figure in the hospital bed he sat against. His memory chatted excitedly with his consciousness as the events of the previous night came back to him. "*What a night...*" He thought as he gave Lemon's small hand a reassuring squeeze.

"Hi," a sleepy Lemon meowed. Her voice was tiny and timid.

"Lemon?" Dahn asked suddenly as if he didn't believe she was awake.

"Danny," Lemon smiled weakly. "I had a weird dream last night."

Dahn didn't reply to his friend immediately; he just peered at her sympathetically.

Seeing Lemon in the hospital was a pitiful and saddening sight for anyone that knew her, much less Dahn himself. The chipper young lady, often seen as an embodiment of energy; was always bright and on the go. Her demeanor was that of someone always bursting with emotions of some sort. This morning however, she just lay on her back; still as a petrified turtle. Her lips were dry and crusty, her breathing laborious and heavy. The young lady looked as if the color had been sucked straight out of her and mercilessly dumped down the drain, with no hope of retrieval.

"I dreamed that I died." Lemon continued airily. "And I started to forget everything..."

"You're not going to die." Dahn replied flatly.

"Not while you are here, but if I had woken up today, and you weren't here. I'd have killed myself." Lemon revealed.

"Why?" Dahn asked fearfully.

"Because I'd think I was already dead." Lemon answered seriously. "So I'd test to see if I was dead, and then that would end up killing me. I'm glad you're here this morning. When I awoke and saw you, I cried."

Dahn subconsciously wiped the tiny bead of tears forming in his own eyes. It was an sentimental mixture of joy, frustration and anger. "I wouldn't leave, even though the doctors and nurses pressed me to." He assured her.

"I know." Lemon smiled weakly. "I saw in my dream."

"So how are you feeling?" Dahn asked, his voice drizzled with concern.

"I'm feeling ok; lots and lots of pain.

"Do you remember what happened last night?" Dahn asked his friend.

"Not really." Lemon replied.

"I don't know when we got here, how long you'd been here and what had been done. But while we were in the waiting room, waiting for word on your current stable condition, a nurse came in. He beckoned to uncle and started talking to him about your condition and I heard him mention the words "losing her."

Lemon just blinked and listened.

"I kind of lost it." Dahn admitted sheepishly. "I rose from my seat and butt into their conversation. I asked point blank. 'What is she losing!?!' The doctor turned to me and said: 'Sir, we are discussing something very important right now please-'but I cut him off and grabbed him by the collar. Then Uncle

tried to calm me down but I wasn't listening. The doctor then blurted: 'Sir, your friend seems to be having a vivid dream while awake. She won't let us near her; she's throwing a huge tantrum and ripping up our work on her chest and head. She's suffering from a form of amnesia it seems, but you need to calm down or else I'll have to get security.'

"I was already running down the hall to your room by the time he finished talking. I wasn't sure how I saw the room number from the clipboard that the doctor was holding, but I knew where I was going."

"I couldn't remember anything." Lemon reminisced. I was going crazy; it's as if I was drowning in ambiguity. I was in dire need of something that was familiar."

"I know." Dahn agreed. "When I burst into your room, people were holding you down trying to get you to stop wailing. "You were screaming: "please don't give me back!!! Please take me back!!!"

"I couldn't stand it! I rushed to them and ripped them all off of you! Leaping upon you, I grabbed your face firmly in my hands like a vice. I then pried your eyes as far open as I could without hurting your sockets, and stared into them as intently as I could – not blinking once. You calmed down immediately; your eyes traced every movement of mine. I felt like, I was controlling you. Then I felt you go limp in my grasp as I got off of you. Blood stained my hands from the gnash in your forehead, which apparently you made rip while you were carrying on." Dahn recollected.

"I saw my whole history flash before me and that was enough to shut me off." Lemon explained. "But yeah, you acted out of instinct because that's what I needed."

"But where did you not want to go back to?" Dahn asked his friend gently.

Lemon fell deathly silent and sighed. She looked at Dahn's weary expression, his eyes searching hers intently. She felt a sudden anger spring into fists as she drew back from her friend and tried to roll over to turn her back to him but it hurt – a lot.

"Ack!" Lemon cried out, stopping her retreat abruptly. Hot tears of anger and frustration sprung into her eyes as she tried to hide her body's retaliation for her temper. Dahn lifted his hand to comb her messy

pale hair affectionately, but Lemon swatted at it feebly, realizing the futility of her attempts seeing that her impaired arm had little range of motion.

“Please go away if you’re going to ask questions like that!” she choked as she surrendered.

“Geez!” Dahn puffed. “I’m sorry I didn’t mean to strike a nerve, but you were frantic last night.”

“Probably because it’s a vivid memory I DON’T want to EVER relive. My visual memories are VERY clear Dahn, and they hurt.”

“Ok, I can understand that.” Dahn agreed. Then he mumbled, “I’m just glad you’re ok.”

“Yeah,” Lemon muttered. “Everything just hurts.”

An awkward silence followed as Lemon pouted in the bed while Dahn quietly surveyed the room. He peered at charts, read posters, and memorized interesting terms. Time seemed to laugh at him as it crept by at snail speed, forcing him to endure the painful atmosphere of the room.

*“My parents are in this building, sleeping away, thinking who knows what.”* Dahn thought as he dragged his fingers across a diagram of the human brain.

“What time is it?” Lemon growled out of the blue.

Dahn looked at his digital watch which read: “8:27am”. He turned to lemon, which lay stiffly in her bed and echoed the time. “It’s a few minutes to 8:30.”

“I see.” Lemon mumbled. “I want to go home.”

“You’re grumpy and crazy at the moment.” Dahn instantly rebuffed his friend. “There is no way you can go home right now.”

“I know.” Lemon retorted with annoyance. “Still doesn’t stop me from wanting to go.”

“I’m sure doctors will be down here to check on you soon, they’ll assign you a nurse and you’ll meet your doctor who will be running vitality test, prescribing medication, and giving out commands on how your healing body should be cared for. Just be patient, I know you’re cranky.”

“I’m more than cranky, I’m really upset.” Lemon insisted. “Everywhere on me hurts, I’ve been humiliated, hated, and underappreciated. Why am I the one that ends up here? Laid up like this? Why me Dahn? Am I not trying? I just want to give up sometimes.”

“Lemon-

“I mean I’m always agreeable, always caring, always happy, I don’t try to do bad things...I know I have a stupid sense of humor, and maybe I’m rash and maybe a little harsh but I’m ruined now,” She continued to quarrel. “And it’s like it never ever going to be enough. Now look at me. I’m going to miss out on so many things. So much!”

Hot furious tears begged to leap out of Lemon’s swelling eyes. She tried to lift her hand to wipe them away, but a sharp pain stayed her hand. She slammed her hand back down onto the bed, infuriated with her situation and stubbornly causing even more pain than before. Finally surrendering, she began to sob.

“Can you clean up my face please!?” She barked, looking at Dahn furiously as she accepted her fate. Dahn sat down on the bed beside his best friend and gently dabbed at her face with the hem of his t-shirt. He could feel her wrangled emotions bombarding his empathy and thus he didn’t speak or try to make her feel better. She was clearly overwhelmed. Instead he just leaned over her and gave her a silent hug.

“Tnyq” she sniffled.

“You’re welcome always and anytime. I’m as frustrated with life as you are. Though, there is much to learn about you. But I feel you.”

“I’m sorry.” Lemon sniffled again.

“Quit apologizing, you’re justified.” Dahn told her. Despite the fact that he hated the permeating smell of hospital wear, the young man didn’t move from hugging his friend.

“You – y know? Your parents a – a - are here?” Lemon suddenly informed her friend.

“Mhmm.” Dahn answered without moving. *“How can I forget?”*

“You can s-s-see them?” Lemon stammered.

“Yeah, I’ll try; I just hate seeing you like this. It’s not fair. But life isn’t fair.” Dahn answered slowly.

“It’s ok” Lemon sniffled again. She hauled up a long draw of her runny nose which normally would have disgusted Dahn, but at the moment he couldn’t have cared less.

“Can you wipe my nose?” Lemon asked tentatively. “I know I’m a big baby right now. But can you just not mind? I’m really upset right now, and I think we’ll have company soon. I really don’t like to be seen like this.”

“It’s no problem Lem.” Dahn assured her. He leaned off of her and reached into his pocket and pulled out a wrinkled napkin.

“Noooo, get a clean tissue over there.” Lemon commanded through her dying sniffles. Dahn chuckled and went to retrieve a clean sheet of tissue paper. He sat back down and folded the tissue neatly and then gently wiped Lemon’s nose and tossed the tissue into the trash across the room.

“You are such a good friend,” Lemon blushed cheering up a bit.

“You’d have done more for me.” Dahn retorted emotionlessly.

“I would not wipe your nose,” Lemon giggled through her sniffing.

“I’m sure you’d do more than that if you needed to. You’ve got a mother’s touch behind that wild outer crust,” Dahn told his friend.

“I do?” Lemon asked.



“Yeah, you and Val...You both seem to know less about yourselves than I do,” he replied.

Lemon was about to respond to Dahn’s remark when the room door opened loudly, and people filled inside. Dahn’s uncle was among them; whom Lemon scoffed at with a dirty look.

“Sunshine!” the nurse smiled brightly at Lemon as she appeared from behind her larger comrade, the doctor. “You look sore, but you’re awake! That’s very good!”

“Good Morning you two,” the doctor introduced himself. “I’m Dr. Maeski and this is Nurse Haidee.

Then turning to face lemon particularly he said: “Lemon? I understand that’s what you are called? You may not have remembered, but I was here last night during your rush in. You were pretty badly battered but nothing we can’t fix up in a jiff ok?”

“We’re going to make sure you don’t even remember being in an accident a few weeks from now!” Haidee chirped.

“Yay,” Lemon rolled her eyes cynically.

The doctor walked over to Lemon’s bed foot and placed his hands on his hips. “So little one, tell us. How are you feeling?”

“Sore as woman that just –

“She’s very pained up. “ Dahn interjected quickly.

The doctor nodded in agreement. “Anything you can’t remember? Anything you feel like you knew but no longer do?”

Lemon shook her head vigorously.

“Good goood. I imagine your chest must hurt a lot?” The doctor continued. “You had 2 hairline fractures in your lower rib cage, a shoulder dislocation, and a concussion. Of the three injuries, the concussion is the most serious and we want to keep you 2 days more than we would have due to your

outburst last night. After your friend calmed you down, we were able to re-stitch the gnash in your head. We were a bit upset by your antics because that gnash really needed to be bandaged and you tore it open from flailing so much.”

“Sorry.” Lemon mumbled.

“It’s ok Hun, we understand you were delusional.”

“You have a pretty face and I’m sure you want to preserve it no?” The doctor asked. “We also want to make sure there is no latent damage to your head ok?”

“Ok.” Lemon nodded slowly. The nurse came over and tapped on her arm’s sling. “You’re going to be just fine honey.” She cooed.

Dahn recognized this “Haidee” instantly upon seeing her face. He almost gasped but held his composure so as not to deter attention from Lemon.

“So Let me repeat now, my name is Doctor Maeski, and this is my assistant nurse in-training Haidee Wark.” Dr. Maeski informed the group. “Haidee will take care of you for the duration of your stay ok? She’ll administer your meds, full fill the prescriptions I prescribe, change your bandages, help you to the bathroom, and bring your meals...all that stuff. I will periodically check up on you to see what progress you are making and what length we may need to consider to make your stay here profitable, efficient in healing you, and enjoyable. If you need anything, just ask Haidee or ring for someone.”

Then turning to Valerian, he continued. “All of her treatments are covered by her insurance I assure you, though I am curious about something. I want to run some records by you so we can discuss some things?”

“Sure.” Dahn’s silent uncle finally spoke.

“You are her parent/guardian I presume?” Dr. Maeski asked Valerian.

“I am.” He answered approved.

Dahn found himself staring at Haidee incessantly, not because she was cute or anything of that sort, but because she was the nurse that escorted him to see his parents 2 years ago when he first discovered the amnesia business. The happenings of the room became a slurred mixture of random events as Dahn's consciousness carried him to a totally different place. His mind recollected all the memories he had of Haidee Wark and even Dr. Maeski. He was dead sure Haidee was a nurse during the tragedy of his parents and Maeski's voice was distinct.

Haidee stooped down to Lemon's eye-level to calmly talk to her about treating her chest bandages and etc., while Dr. Maeski and Valerian stepped aside to discuss whatever matters he found peculiar in Lemon's records.

<Flashback>

*"Um - Dahn Xiriga? Dahn??" a nurse called apologetically as she emerged into the ER's solemn waiting room.*

*"Yes?" Dahn piped eagerly. "What is it?"*

*"It's your parents...Both are awake." Haidee told him. "But - well - they seem to be suffering severe amnesia. We wanted to let you come as see them. They are in terrible condition but they are conscious."*

*"Let me see them now!" Dahn exclaimed hardly absorbing anything Haidee just said.*

*"Haidee escorted the desperate shaking young man to the room where both of his parents lay, each in their own bed about seven feet apart and all manner of machinery hooked up to their traumatized bodies.*

*Dahn made his way to his mother's side first. One doctor held his shoulder as he approached her to stay him from getting too close. His mother turned her eyes only and peered at him weakly. Her glassy eyes were unfocused and dim; they seemed to be to only animate part of her body. She wore a brace on her neck, her chin point straight towards the ceiling.*

*Dahn took her cold feeble hand as if it was a delicate feather and lifted it to his cheek which he pressed against his face firmly.*

*"It's me mom." He breathed. His heart cracked with sorrow to see her so disabled.*

*"Who are you?" Dahn's mother mouthed.*

*"I'm your son mom?" Dahn answered half-heartedly. He didn't like the way she said it. Using so much strength to deny the existence of her only boy already began cutting at his composure.*

*"I do not know you." Dahn mother whined. Dahn felt baby-like tugs of her trying to remove her hand from his grasp.*

*"Of course you know me..." Dahn muttered. He tried to move closer to look in her eyes but was restrained by a strong doctor. "She insanely weak," he told Dahn firmly.*

*"Mother don't you recognized me?" Dahn choked. "It's me? I'm your only son!"*

*Dahn's mother just stared blankly at him and coughed. She looked around the room again with a bewildered look and then closed her eyes. Dahn felt her hand go limp in his as he laid it back on the bed. He turned to make his way to his father but Haidee stopped him.*

*"I think you should wait some." She told him gently trying to steer him away from their beds. "They are still in a traumatic state. Doctors are doing everything they can to stabilize them. We just thought you might want to see that they woke up. Well your mother did.*

*"What can make a mother not recognize her own son?" Dahn wondered as he continued trying to get to his father's bedside.*

*"Take him out Nurse Wark." One of the doctors commanded. "The time is way too premature for him to be here.*

*"Come on Hun..." the nurse said sweetly as she led Dahn away from his parents.*

< More Flash Back >

*"Mr. Xiriga, Its good to see you, how are you today?"*

*"Good Afternoon Sir, I'm ok. I was told you wanted to see me?"*

*"Yes I do, now you haven't done anything wrong. I wanted to see you on a subject completely unrelated to your curriculum or academic activity actually."*

*"Well?"*

*\*Cough\* - "There is um, no good way to say this so..."*

*I was handed a crisp letter from Clover Leaf Hospital. My stomach hollowed as I ripped it open already knowing the subject. On the external body of the envelop, it read: "Urgent! Please Respond ASAP".*

*"This came for you, and well, we know the tragedy with your parent is still out there. We figured we best give this to you now, instead of sending it to your mailbox... You don't need to read it here or anything, it's your personal business, and you deal with it as you feel fit." I was told.*

*My hands shook with anxiety as I unfolded the letter's body and began to read aloud.*

*Dear Dahn Xiriga,*

*'We at Clover Leaf Hospital have composed this letter to inform you of the current status of your parents. We have both good news and bad news. However, the good news is only good because it makes the bad news more bearable. Immediate reply to this letter is recommended but not required. We know this must be hard for you, and we completely understand if you cannot reply at this point in time. We would like you to know that our team stands 100% behind any decision you make and will work day and night to bring you satisfaction in this dark hour.*

*Your parents; \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Xiriga, have suffered from severe Retrograde Amnesia.*

*Retrograde amnesia is the inability to retrieve information that was acquired before a particular date, usually the*

time of an accident. Ordinarily, this type of amnesia is a result of damage to the medial temporal lobe, which is most certainly the case with your parents. In some cases the memory loss can extend back many years – even decades! Careful analyses of your parent’s behaviors and data we’ve collected about their brain activity have yielded grave results. We are afraid to inform you that your parents have lost years and years of memory. To shed a little light on the issue, we will explain what seems to have happened. We’ve deduced that your parents huddled together as the plane was about to crash, and have received the most damage to the same area in their head, the temples. Located in this vicinity is the medial temporal lobe, which converses with the hippocampus and is vital to the processing and the creation of overt long-term memory. This part of your brain processes a lot of sensory data ranging from language, to auditory and visual processing, new memories, and facial analytics decoding and recognition.

The Good news is, we have managed to repair all that we can and have made immense progress in your parent’s recovery and they will still have all functionality after a full recovery. The Bad news is...they’ve lost the past 23 years of memories. You are not an exception. They have absolutely no recollection of a son or anything that seems to have taken place in the last two decades. We are gravely sorry and we are trying everything we can to alleviate this limitation in the recovery.

We at Clover Leaf Hospital believe that emergent technologies and discoveries will eventually allow us to fix this problem as the damage was not extensive enough to rule out the possibility of memory retrieval. However, due to the way the brain stores and garner’s data, if your parents are allowed to create too many new memories, there is about a 91% chance those lost memories will be gone forever. Our main obstacle is that brain tissue cannot heal and if killed, is permanently damaged. Your parents lost an unpleasant amount of brain cells in that area.

Thus, we would like your input before we continue. You have the option to have us induce a coma on your parents until more concrete opportunities arise. Or we can allow them to continue an active recovery and risk them losing all those memories. Your parents will continue to heal and will we continue to treat them -

*I could not read anymore, the pain was too intense. My world was crumbling at a speed I could not withstand...*

<End of Flashbacks>

Dahn snapped back to reality to notice Haidee explaining to Lemon what her prescription was designed to do and what side effects she may feel. Valerian and Dr. Maeski were nowhere to be seen. Dahn stared at Lemon who seemed to be enjoying Haidee's company despite her droopy eyes and frail figure. She occasionally giggled at the jovial nurse's wisecracks about the plethora of side effects from the drugs. Dahn stared at his friend and prayed with all his heart that nothing would steal her memories from her.

*"Lemon was the only one that had been there for me when I started to degrade after my ambivalence settled in." he thought.*

*"I was so mean...so cold... I must have truly been her only friend why she endured that monstrous attitude."*  
*Dahn lamented.*

Dahn watched Lemon reach up and shake one of Haidee's outstretched arms, a bright smile danced on her lips as her tired eyes crinkled at the tips like an elder. Haidee put something in her hand and then covered it with a different hand as she pushed Lemon's arm towards her chest in a "giving" motion. They both laughed as Lemon peeked inside her hand and thanked the sweet nurse for whatever gift she had just given her.

<Flashback>

*Dahn stared angrily out of his art studio's gargantuan windows. The evening sun bathed him in a golden brown glow, trying to comfort him. His heart pumped blood like a runner during the Olympic dashes, his veins feeling swollen and taunted. His entire body twitched with frustration and blinding fury. The day had just been a living hell. One after the other, someone would come and tick him off, piss on his efforts, scoff at his progress, and complain about his attitude.*

*Standing against that window, Dahn watched the rest of the world go by not caring to ask him why he was so sad. It didn't give a second glance to his situation, not a single thought to how his heart was falling apart. His efforts, all his efforts and he still managed to end each day replaying the same scenes over and over until he was sick to his stomach with the ill memory. His memory was too vivid; he wished that he could have been a simplistic child, an optimistic and idealistic fool who could never grasp the plain reality that stood blaring in his swollen face. He finally began to accept that he was going to lose his parents more or less.*

*The door opened slowly and a young Lemon popped inside wearing sunny and light clothes meant for happy occasions.*

*"Come on Lion!" She laughed. The weather is amazing, the sunset is heavy, come join me and some friends downstairs!"*

*Dahn clenched his fists tightly, so hard he felt his nails digging into his callous flesh. He didn't flinch or answer his best friend. He just stood there, still as a petrified turtle.*

*"Danny!" Lemon smiled. "Come!"*

*"Go play your games Lem; I've got to do something."*

*"It can wait, play with us." Lemon retorted sharply. "We miss you, you never hang out anymore."*

*Dahn pondered her argument for a second. He knew that she hadn't known about the letter. He knew she had no idea that he had just made a heart-racking decision no one should have to make. He knew it well, and he thought about it...but he lashed out at his friend anyway.*

*"You child." Dahn muttered darkly under his breath.*

*"You what?" Lemon asked innocently, joining him by the glowing window. "What you say Lion?"*

*"I called you a child; a silly little child." Dahn repeated coldly.*



Lemon looked at her beloved friend tenderly and tried discard where she thought he was going with his argument. However, the anger in his heart yearned to claw at someone else's, not knowing what else to do.

"Ok," Lemon answered. "So will you come? I think you're grumpy."

Lemon reached up and scratched her buddy playfully behind the ear and said "Rawr!" It was a familiar playful gesture between the two students; usually to incite one another to stop moping and to come frolic.

"Get out." Dahn snarled.

"What???" Lemon cried moving her hand away sharply. "What's wrong!?"

"Just GET OUT." Dahn shouted again. "I'm tired of you! I'm tired of you all!"

"W-w-why?" Lemon quivered. She stepped back, stunned. Her eyes frantically searching Dahn's disfigured face for an explanation.

"You're an idiot. You can't even see when a guy needs some f\*\*\*\*\* time to be alone!" Dahn snapped, his fist shaking.

"I think your -"

"If you don't move from beside me, I'll find other uses for your mouth than it constantly pestering me." Dahn seethed as he punched the wall before him with a scary amount of force.

Lemon stood her ground and continued staring at her friend who had never even began to speak to her like that before.

"I've just saved the letter I'll write to the doctors back at the hospital. I've let them go. They're gone. They are gone and all you can see is that I need to play. Get out Lemon; go find someone else to play ok? GET OUT GET THE HELL OUT OF MY ROOOOOM! LEEEEEEEEAAAVE!!!!" Dahnn screamed louder.

"JUST LEAVE ALREADY!!! I DON'T WANT YOU AROUND ME ANYMORE! IT'S ME PLAYING GAMES WITH YOU WHY I SLACK SO MUCH."

*Dahn walked over to his room door and flung it open with all his might and pointed to the doorway. His face streaked with tears and his eyes swollen from crying. He gestured again with such force that he may have damaged a tendon in his arm as he pointed to the open space. Lemon still stood her ground unable to speak or move.*

*Losing his temper; Dahn's anger boiled over; he ran over to a table and flipped it over with a catastrophic thrust. Papers books, glasses, and all manner of items quarreled as they flew in all directions; uprooted by the angry young man. He grabbed anything he could find and dashed it with all his might to the ground. He punched walls and kicked the chairs about the room in a blind rage, tears flying from his face. One object he threw hit Lemon across her cheek.*

*The wild animal of a boy retreated to a stationary position against the wall of the room he so rudely assaulted and cried pitifully. His shoulders heavy and his voice caved with surrender. He felt something rest across his back but he just ignored it and continued to weep. The figure buried her face in his back and nuzzled the cotton of his t-shirt as she attached to his torso firmly. Dahn tried to shake Lemon's embrace, but she held fast.*

*"Get off of meeeeeee" Dahn wailed shoving himself against Lemon's body. "Stop it Lemon!"*

*Lemon silently ignored Dahn's pleas and held on to him tightly. The sorrowful youth turned to try to get away, but Lemon shoved him into the wall he stood against and buried her face in his tear-soaked chest. She sealed her embrace by locking her hands together behind his back and pushed against him, trying to hold him against the wall forcefully.*

*"W-w-w-wai do you stay after I all I said to you?" Dahn choked as he tried to pry Lemon's small figure from his body. "Don't understand that i said go?"*

*"No," Lemon whispered. "I'm a silly child."*

*"What do you understand then? Dahn hiccupped. Lemon said nothing for a while, just hugging.*

*"Rawr..." she finally whispered softly.*



“Can you just put some minced onions, shredded lettuce, a bit of mustard, some hot sauce, a clove or two?” Dahn asked a sandwich cart guy later that day.

“Yeah sure man.” the clerk agreed.

As Dahn waited for his order to be processed; he thought about his next move for the day. He was starving after having not eaten since yesterday’s supper. Although he had brought in hot food to eat with his family before witnessing Valerian and Lemon’s faceoff; the young man hadn’t the stomach to eat anything after the commotion.

“Here you go sir.” The cart clerk said as he handed Dahn his cold cut sandwich in foil paper.

“Thanks man.” Dahn replied as he grabbed his pre-paid chips and soda.

Dahn ate his sandwich eagerly, wolfing down each bite as he briskly walked to his residence. It was a short distance from the small store he had stopped by.

His intentions when he got home, was to rummage throughout Lemon’s remains and contact Alain to see how they would feel about visiting. He had a strong feeling that if Madame Estelle and her greasy assistant heard what had happened, they would not hesitate to visit their “Bébé Citron”. Then Lemon they get her contract signed. She was very cagey about that.

However, that was not what was truly on his agenda. He needed to see his parents. He had strong reason to believe that both Haidee and Dr. Maeski were hiding something. From the moment they entered the room, he felt a sort of falseness in their demeanor. Not that he thought they were imposters, but more something in his innate cognitive awareness had been awoken upon seeing Haidee. Besides from that, now having a reason to go back and forth from the hospital due to lemon’s hospitalization, gave him an excuse to test his growing theories.

Upon reaching his house, Dahn ran up the porch stairs causally and opened the screen door to his house. He casually let himself in with his keys, half expecting the house to be compromised for some reason, but it stood dormant and intact – just as he had left it last night.

*"Seems like Uncle never came home last night?"* he wondered as he trudged up to Lemon's room.

Dahn walked into the doorway of Lemon's wrecked room as the memories of the previous night refreshed themselves in his mind. He rubbed his chin thoughtfully, wondering where Lemon would have placed those contact details.

*"Her duffle bag,"* his subconscious informed him promptly.

Dahn spent the next ten minutes searching for Lemon's duffle bag; the one she'd brought back from FILI. His search was half-hearted though, because he had a latent fear that she had already taken it inside the car.

*"That's where he is!"* A random thought clicked in Dahn's mind; revealing where his Uncle probably was. *"Taking care of his car; I hope he gets Lemon's belongings as well."*

Just as he was about to conclude that Lemon's FILI bag was with Valerian's car, he spotted it hiding behind Lemon's favorite "crash spot" in the living room.

It made sense, that's where she dropped it when she decided to nap after the event, and then after the fight, she had went to her room and forgot it.

Dahn tossed himself into the sofa lazily and peeled the bag open, tearing its zipper down the center and prying it open. He rummaged through the bag with amusement; seeing all the little things Lemon kept at her side for quick access. While he felt a slight pang of guilt due to the fact that he was rummaging through a young woman personal space, he brushed the thought aside with a crude justification of "we're real close."

"Damn, here it is" Dahn muttered pulling the slip out of a pocket. Sure enough, the contact details of both Madame Estelle and Alain were scrawled on the wrinkled slip of paper in wild cursive.

"Madame Estelle is a bit...I don't know - intimidating. I'll call Alain." Dahn quietly told himself.

Dahn pulled out his phone and proceeded to dial Alain's phone number. He then paused and thought about his actions, talking to Alain was not something he actually *wanted* to do. In spite of this, he continued as he imagined emailing the French man would take too long.

"Bonjour Bébé!" came Alain's distinct French accent from over the phone's speaker upon answering the call. He sounded delighted.

"It's not Lemon, it me Dahn." Dahn corrected him. "And it's 'Bébé Citron' not 'Bébé'." He added with disapproval.

"Oh," the disappointment in Alain's voice was unquestionable, however; it was quickly dissolved.

"Bonjour Daahn!" He began again. "What has you calling me?"

"It's about Lemon." Dahn began.

"Mhmm, yes I figure as much. Seeing we have no business making contact, save it's about her. Unless you want a chat?" Alain's voice floated over. His voices seemed to be a bit airy as if there was a large distance between his lips and the speaker.

"Maybe later," Dahn groaned. "Lemon was in a car accident and won't be scheduling an appointment with you guys anytime soon."

"Merde!!!" Alain exclaimed. "Quelle!?! Quelle horreur!"

"Yeah, it was terrible I'm assuming you agree." Dahn replied. "See thing is, she's doing well mostly, but she's been grumpy and very anxious about the contract. Maybe you and Madame Estelle can visit her and bring the written consents? She's fully functioning and can write with one hand."

"We can..." Alian trailed off hesitantly.

"Really? You sound like you may not want to." Dahn assumed.

"It is because Dahn seems so eager. Why seem so eager though?" Alain mused suspiciously. "It's as if he is plotting a thing or two?"

Dahn rolled his eyes royally. "No Alain, like she's my best friend, we are really damn close; I'm not 'plotting' anything. I'm trying to get you to come and see her. It's not even like I asked to sign for her."

"True." Alain agreed more openly. Dahn heard wet sounds coming from the speaker every now and then and made him wonder where Alain was exactly.

"So you'll come?" Dahn asked again.

"Well I may need to know the location, but the contract signature needs to be between Madame Estelle and Bébé Citron. I'm sure that Estelle will agree to visit her though."

"Ok well that's good. I'll give you her room number and all that and you can go visit her when you guys feel that it's a good time." Dahn informed Alain.

"We'll come now!" Alain exclaimed. "There is no need to wait and Madame is quite enthusiastic about getting this marvelous idea into the workings. She agrees."

"She's there?" Dahn asked with a puzzled look.

"Yes." Alain replied.

"Can I ask where exactly you are?" Dahn asked tentatively. "I hear water."

"Why I'm taking a bath." Alain laughed.

"And Madame Estelle is there???" Dahn asked a little too blatantly.

"I am!" he heard her voice laugh over the phone's speaker. "And we will make haste in visiting our protégé!"

"Um sure." Dahn laughed nervously. "Just tell the receptionist that you are visitors for patient LL-303 and they'll tell you she's in room #455."

“C’est bon.” Alain replied happily. “We’ll arrange to meet with her soon. I hope she’s well!”

“Okay, Thanks, it will mean a lot to her, I’ll call her and let her know you all plan on coming in a bit.”

Dahn answered.

“Au Revoir! Dahn.” Alain said.

“Au Revoir Alain.” Dahn replied politely.

Dahn hanged up the phone and sat back in the sofa lazily.

“It’s funny...” Dahn thought aloud as he pondered Alain accusation. “I do have an ulterior motive...”

He deviously smiled as he thought about his ulterior motive. The evil little smile continued to play on his lips as he relaxed back into the plush sofa, plotting his next move...



HUH!" Dahn awoke with a start for the second time that day. He was still sitting in the seat that he had sat in a few hours ago, however; it was dark outside.

"Gosh..." he breathed as he sat up groggily. "I was that tired? Like was I drugged or something?"

"Fatigue." A gruff voice barked out of the darkness.

"WOAH!" Dahn leapt up from his position to see Valerian sitting in his recliner peering at him over a book.

"Geez Uncle! What is wrong with you?" Dahn cried flopping back in his seat. "You can't just sit in the dark in a room while someone is sleeping. "

"I was reading, and then it got dark. I was too lazy to get a light source, so I just sat here and meditated. I don't see the problem." Valerian answered nonchalantly.

"Except that, I didn't know you were there?" Dahn asked with annoyance. He reached over the arm of the comfortable auburn sofa and pulled a lamp's switch.

"Sighhh. Uncle, I'm not exactly the calmest guy in town."

"Don't worry; you didn't do anything *indecent* while you were sleeping. Though... you did mutter a girl's name a few times," Valerian teased.

"Dahn's cheek burned with a mixture of embarrassment and fury. His uncle could be just as annoying as Lemon in his own way.

"Who did I mention?" Dahn asked curiously. He himself wasn't sure who'd he be mentioning in his sleep except Lemon and it'd only be out of worry.

"Meh." Valerian shrugged as he shut his book. He placed it on this end table and crossed his legs. "I don't know who she is."

"Funny." Dahn trailed off. "Soooo anyways..."

“Soooo what?” Valerian asked expectantly.

“You got your car?” Dahn blurted. His attempt to change the previous subject was stark.

“Yeah, don’t worry about it. I dealt with all the strings attached and the legalities attached to vehicles in accidents too,” Valerian informed his groggy nephew.

“So efficient,” Dahn commented. He then moved on to Lemon’s belongings. “And Lemon’s stuff?”

“I took what she might have wanted immediately to her in the hospital, and brought the rest back here.” Valerian told Dahn.

“Ahhh, so you saw her?” Dahn inquired as he rose to get himself a drink.

“Yeah.” Valerian replied shortly.

“And?” Dahn asked.

“And what?” his uncle called over his shoulder.

“What did she do? I take it she’s still mad at you. I mean she doesn’t even know that you’re the reason why she crashed. And yet she’s still mad.” Dahn spoke across rooms. He opened the refrigerator and grabbed a can of soda.

“You don’t trust us.” He continued; popping the can open. “You sabotage your own car in hopes of trapping someone and don’t even tell your family members because you don’t trust us.”

“Something like that.” Valerian agreed. “You see Dahn, you seem to forget, but I *do* have enemies. The guy that is responsible for Sari’s injury is still out there somewhere, and I wouldn’t be surprised if he isn’t lurking around, stalking me for an opportunity.”

“Then tell us!” Dahn exclaimed. “Lemon and I love you even though you’re brutish. We can help. But what you did just really hurt us both, especially Lemon.”

“Yeah, I learned that now, things will be different after Lemon comes back...If she comes back.”

Valerian answered hesitantly.

“She will. That I am sure of,” Dahn assured him. “Here, have a coke.”

“Thanks,” Valerian said thankfully as he caught a stray can of soda flying through the air towards him.

“Lemon is very loving, she can’t hold a grudge and she knows things got a little rough. She’s eager to start using that money she got.” Dahn reasoned.

“Yeah,” Valerian agreed. He took a long swig of his soda, guzzling the cold carbonated liquid with ambition. A period of contented silence followed while the men drank their coke’s in thought.

Dahn walked to the kitchen’s side door and opened it, letting a rush of crisp twilight breeze flood into the quiet house. He leaned on the door frame and stared into the sky which was populated by just a few stars.

*“I need to get down to the hospital before visiting hours are over so I can execute my plan... but how the hell am I going to do it? I’ve got like a window of 5 minutes at maximum. How the hell did I sleep so long? It’s already 8:30pm and I haven’t called Lemon to tell her about Alain. She must be super furious or super surprised. Not to mention I’ve got to get to the hospital, and get clearance to see my parents... Sigh too many strings attached – and I’ve got 30 minutes? Why me?”* Dahn thought as he stared into the sky.

A bit vexed about the time, Dahn pulled his phone from his pocket to check the missed calls. Sure enough, there were 3 missed calls from Lemon. There were no texts however, so she probably wasn’t very upset, or maybe it just took too much effort to text with one hand.

“So...I went to see my wife.” Valerian grunted from the living room.

“Oh?” Dahn exclaimed. He left his spot by the door and came back into the living room where his uncle still sat in his favorite recliner. “Where do you get the time?”

“A man like me has his way of getting things done at good speeds.” Valerian smiled. “She’s good. I told her what’s going on and she gave me some suggestions.”

“Cool, so her cops weren’t there?” Dahn asked, finally finishing off his can of soda.

“Actually they were.” Valerian mused.

“Really!?!? Dahn asked incredulously. “They let you in?”

“Nope, I let myself in.” Valerian retorted. He lifted his can and down another few gulps of this can which emptied it right there.

“And?” Dahn asked, curious to know what happened.

“I told them what they needed to hear.” Valerian actually laughed.

“I see, I take it it went well.” Dahn rubbed his chin.

“Whether or not it went well, I feel good about what I said. My wife felt good too. So I’m happy about it and if they want to take Sari away from me...heh they can try.” Valerian concluded.

“Well, let’s hope for all of our sakes that this means good news. Now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go see Lemon.” Dahn said as he grabbed his travelling luggage. “And I’m running extremely late so I need to rush.”

“You know she got visitors recently right?” Valerian asked.

“Yeah, I kind of sent them there. It’s the people from FILI that offered her the money. They love her.” Dahn informed his uncle as he got ready to leave the house.

“Hey can I hold that harness you used in that parachute raid?” Dahn asked his uncle sheepishly.

“What the hell do you need that for? Valerian asked without looking at his nephew.

I just need it.” Dahn replied shortly. “It’s really mundane and yeah...”

Valerian shrugged. "It's in the shed."

"Cool I'll just get that and a couple other things." Dahn pointed out in a hurried voice.

Valerian wondered what his crazy nephew needed with a harness while visiting his friend. His request didn't seem to make much sense, but he was a bit too lazy to care. *"He's a damn grown man...well he's a kid but he's old enough to make the rationale. Whatever he is up to, he must know what it is going to cause."*

As soon as Dahn came back into the living room, Valerian challenged him.

"You think you're not going to make it in time and you're going to break into her room? He accused.

"Huh?" Dahn asked not understanding anything.

"The harness..." Valerian began. "You going to try climbing the hospital walls? To get inside Lemon's room?"

Dahn pondered his reasoning for wanting the harness and then decided to play along with Valerian's idea. It was actually *better* than what he planned to do with it.

"Yeah." He laughed nervously. "I need to see her before she sleeps. I need to know if everything is alright and if they won't let me in, I have no other choice."

"Hahahahaha!" Valerian threw his head back and laughed in his chair. "Ok son, go break your neck," He retorted.

"Don't worry uncle; you're not even legally responsible for me. If I die, I'll die in the bushes below. Besides, it's a **'precaution'** incase I **need** to do this. But you know you'd do the same thing if you needed to so zip it."

"Ok, I see what you mean, take care then and have fun visiting. I'll stay here and brood." Valerian stretched. Sitting back in his recliner, he quickly added: "Turn off the lights when you go. I'll probably snooze a bit too."

“Ha-ha, you’re not even going to wish me luck or tell me to be careful?” Dahn asked as he went to turn out the lights.

“I have faith in you.” Valerian grinned as he closed his eyes.

“You mean you don’t care what happens to me.” Dahn translated.

“Probably that too.” His uncle smiled more. He seemed to be enjoying the thought.

“Ok then Uncle, see yah.” Dahn stated briskly. “I don’t need you care.”

“Mhmm” Valerian nodded.

After checking to make sure he had everything he needed for the trip, Dahn set out the front door feeling more confident due to his uncle’s belittling. He made a note to lock back the door as he made his way down the house’s comfortable porch.

The young man stood on the walkway staring into the twilight neighborhood. The night’s ambitious wind whipped and licked at his face as he went for his bicycle. It was going to be a long night...

“Dahndelion!” Lemon cried as her best friend entered her recovery room later that night. “Look who is here!”

Sure enough, Madame Estelle and her assistant and possible lover, Alain, sat in the guest chairs; both of their legs crossed elegantly.

“Bonjour Dahn,” they greeted him.

Dahn waved and nodded lightly hoping that would suffice as an acknowledgement for his entrance. He noticed that Lemon’s doctor and Haidee were also in the room.

“What’s the weight limit for this room?” He joked as he gently closed the door behind him.

“Hahahahaha!” everyone laughed. Dahn wasn’t expecting anyone to laugh actually though, and he wasn’t trying to humor anyone, rather he wanted Haidee and Dr. Maeski to leave.

“Oh my lovely assistant and I were on the tail end of our profitable visit.” Madame Estelle quickly defended with a comb of her flamboyant red hair.

“Besides that, I’m pretty sure your appearance won’t hurt the infrastructure son.” Dr. Maeski said.

“Glad to know,” Dahn retorted. “So how is everyone? Lemon?”

“I’m doing a little better than I was this morning,” Lemon smiled. “The meds are so strong though; they have meh after effects. However, I think I’ll just settle for a slow recovery now that Madame came and gave me the contract to sign. I’m no longer in a rush to get out of here.” Lemon babbled. She then sighed with relief.

“G-

“That’s good to know.” Haidee laughed interrupting Dahn’s reply. “You’re strength after this injury is amazing too. You really don’t have that long a stay ahead of you.”

Lemon eyed Dahn's weary expression out of the corner of her eye. She was not sure what it is he wanted, but his face wore a look of exasperation and annoyance. Maybe it was due to Haidee cutting him off.

"Well it was nice seeing you Béb  Citron!" Madame Estelle smiled energetically at the girl in bed. "I am simple flabbergasted with the amount of creativity you possess and Ahhh!! I wish you were my daughter. Sadly... my daughter is -

"What Madame means to say is that you have impressed her far and beyond!" Alain translated quickly with a slow "over the hills," gesture.

Lemon beamed. "Mmhmm I think I've thanked you so many times but still I cannot enough."

"Please don't anymore; it is I who needs to thank you more." Madame Estelle gushed. "However, it is time for Nikolai and I to depart. Such endeavors await us both."

"Nikolai?" Lemon and Dahn asked in unison, and then they both grinned at each other.

"My other name," Alain revealed sheepishly. It sounded as if he may be ashamed of the name. "But Yes! Tis time to go! As Dahn stated, it's a bit crowded in here, and visiting hours are upon us."

With that, the French guests arose from their chairs and continued to bid their prodigy farewell. They goaded her to continue in designing despite her obstacles. She was told that she had a vivid mind, and a wonderful sense of originality; that sort of inspiring conversation. Dahn found himself staring into Haidee's eyes, reading her like a book. He didn't realize what he was doing until she met his gaze.

*"Every time I find myself in the same room with this woman, I can't stop focusing on her and she's pouring out subtitle details about my parents without me even searching. It as if she's leaking information?"* Dahn thought.

As Madame Estelle and Alain made their way out the door, Haidee gave the inquisitive youth a look of annoyance and turned to say something to her Doctor.



As soon as the French guests were through the door, Dahn cut his act.

“Can I visit my parents.” He blurted forthrightly.

“What?” Dr. Maeski asked. He looked as if he hadn’t seen Dahn since he arrived.

“Stop playing dumb,” Dahn snorted. “Both you and Haidee know who I am and I want to see my parents.”

“Yes we know you, but we can’t let you go see them.” Haidee responded rising from her seat.

“Why not?” Dahn challenged.

“They are in ICU still. That’s where they are always being kept. They are monitored frequently and we are keeping tabs on them at all time. Last I heard of them, they’ve been completely stable and their physical conditions are well.” Dr. Maeski interjected.

“You guys seem as though you’re hiding something.” Dahn continued to challenge. “Why not prove me wrong?”

“What would we be hiding Dahn?” Haidee asked innocently.

“I don’t know.” Dahn shrugged. Lemon watched the two parties argue on either side of her bed as if it was television and said nothing.

“Visiting hours is over, you actually should get going much less going to visit comatose patients.” Dr. Maeski informed. “I suggest you pack your stuff and leave before we get security in here.

Dahn growled and tried to contain his composure with a tight clenching of his fist. He was getting really agitated with Dr. Maeski’s tone.

“Gosh, it will only take a min or two. Why are you all so obstinate?” Dahn cried.

“We are respecting protocol!” Dr. Maeski said firmly taking a step towards the angry boy. “And you sir, are pushing your limits as a visitor. It’s 5 minutes from the official end of visiting hours and you need to

say goodbye to your friend and get out of here. If you wanted to see your parents, you should have come earlier.”

“Doctor, cut him some slack. Let him get a peak.” Haidee tried slowly. She tried not to meet her superior’s gaze which she could feel blaring at her due to her interjection.

“Are you crazy? What is it with you and this kid? He is totally out of line!” Dr. Maeski exclaimed upon hearing Haidee’s suggestion. “Do you want to mess up your emergent career by ignoring strict policies?”

“Doc, it’s not a super strict policy and even if it was, it’s a few minutes,” Haidee countered meekly.

“He can come back tomorrow,” Dr. Maeski growled. “I don’t get you at all, why are you siding with him?”

“It’s not about siding; I just understand the need to see a loved one again, that’s all. It is only a few minutes, you are just being difficult.” Haidee countered the angry doctor.

“You better watch out Ms. Wark, you’ve been in well favor by me, but you start making decisions like this, and that favor with vanish in an instant.” Dr. Maeski warned.

On cue, the room door creaked open slowly and all heads turned to see who the intruder was. A woman with tightly woven black hair popped her head inside and looked around, surveying the situation mildly. She then focused her gaze on Dr. Maeski and asked: “Is everything all right? It sounded a bit hostile in here.”

“Everything is f-“Dr. Maeski began.

“We are having a dispute actually.” Haidee piped up. “This young man is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Xiriga. You know patients in ward ICP-390?”

“Mmhmm,” the woman nodded.

“Well he is bugging to visit them but it’s after hours. For some reason he is adamant about it. Maeski says it’s completely breaking our visitor policies. I was rather for him going for a minute or two.” Haidee explained.

“Well Maeski is right, it is against policy,” the woman agreed stuffing herself into the doorway a bit more. “But not so much that it’s approaching the end of visiting hours, but more because you need a special pass to visit ICU, a personal assistant that will oversee you while you stay, and to top it off, you can’t stay very long.”

“That’s what I told her Hannah.” Dr. Maeski shrugged with irritation.

“Actually no, you were all about curfew!” Haidee snapped. The doctor closed his eyes and shrugged saying “whatever”.

“Well why don’t you come with me young man?” Hannah called to Dahn’s slump figure. “I have the clearance. I can take you down there to see them for a really brief moment, but at least you’ll see them.”

“Ok, Thanks,” Dahn replied gratefully. He gave Dr. Maeski a childish grin, the same way a child would grin when one parent saved them from the verdict of another.

As soon as Dahn and his escort were out of the room, Dr. Maeski turned to Haidee with a stink eye and scoff. Both engaged in an invisible eye dart battle of intensive combat until finally Haidee sighed and rose from her seat.

“See what you did? Your fussing put Lemon to sleep.”

“That’s fine.” Maeski retorted. “She needs sleep. I need to get on with the rest of my work. I’ll see you around Haidee Wark.”

“Yeah I’ve got quite a few more patients to administer meds for and then I’m done.” Haidee informed her superior. “Sorry for challenging you earlier.”

"It is ok, perhaps I was being a bit of a stickler." The doctor decided. "But once policies get loosened for one person, they begin to loosen for all. I don't want to see shit happening in our hospital."

Maeski turned to say something to Lemon, but then remembered she was has asleep.

"You are just conceding because you're so fond of Hannah." Haidee giggled with a punch to the doctor's arm playfully.

"Maybe so." Dr. Maeski agreed. "But I do know when to concede."

"Glad to hear it." Haidee answered getting her medicine cart together. She rummaged around Lemon's innocent sleeping figure, tidying up the remains of the visit.

"So what is it with the collage kid?" Dr. Maeski suddenly asked after a brief period of silence.

Haidee finalized her tidying session of Lemon's room by pulling her bed covers up to small young lady's chin. She turned to Dr. Maeski slowly and breathed heavily.

"I don't know doctor." Haidee admitted with a flustered heave. "It's just, when I touch him, I feel really weird and I get a vibe from him that I'm really interested in. I don't know if it's an emotional thing or a scientific attachment. But that kid is not a normal kid... Neither are his parents."

The nurse in training paused for a moment and folder her arms tightly across her white aquamarine hospital tee. She pondered her assumptions a bit more before revealing them to Dr. Maeski.

"To be honest, I'm curious about what he is going to say and do once he sees his parents." she revealed.

"So it wasn't about being keen to his emotional upheaval; more it was a ploy to satisfy your curiosity?" Dr. Maeski asked; the corner of his mouth twitching with a smile.

"Something like that," Haidee grinned as she flipped the light switch to the room. "We'll discuss it later."

“You are learning Ms. Wark.” Dr. Maeski smiled putting his arm around his apprentice as they left Lemon’s room.

“Are you ready?” Hannah asked Dahn upon reaching the ICU of his parents. Even though it was years since he had seen this door, the image was indisputably recognized.

“Yeah, but how come they are still in here?” Dahn asked with concern. “Shouldn’t they have been moved to a lighter ward if conditions improved?”

“Oh their conditions have improved marvelously, and the sleep they’ve been in has allowed their bodies to heal uninterrupted and seamlessly.” Hannah answered with admiration. “Provided they get the necessary supplementary supervision and care,” she then added quickly.

“Hey before we go in, I just wanted to say sorry if I’ve caused any problems. I really just needed to see them.” Dahn interrupted Hannah’s reach for the doorknob.

“No problem.” Hannah shook her head vigorously; an attempt at dissolving any form of remorse Dahn felt for pushing the subject. However, it did not even scratch the surface of his penitence – at least...not after he did what he was intending to do.

Hannah opened the room door slowly and the arid smell of medical equipment and anti-biotics permeated Dahn’s nostrils. It smelled so...sterile. He found himself feeling unclean by simply walking into it.

“Here we are.” Hannah whispered quietly. “Over there is your mother and over there is your father, you can see the –

Hannah didn’t get to finish her words. Dahn had grabbed her from behind, one arm across her chest; tightly clenching her arms to her body and the other hand on her nose and mouth. Leaning her backwards into himself, Dahn stepped backwards deliberately, aiming to close the door with his back. Immediately, Hannah tried to scream of course, but it came out muffled due to Dahn’s hand being pressed against her mouth.

“Shhh, it’s going to be ok I’m not going to hurt you please stop fighting.” Dahn whispered followed by the clicking of the door.

Continuing to scream hysterically, Hannah fought even more; trying to use the power of her calves to launch Dahn backwards by jumping. Her efforts were lost to Dahn’s anticipation. He knew that she might try something like this, and therefore quickly pulled her against the wall, slowly slumping them both down into a sitting position.

The slender woman fought frantically trying to make as much noise as possible to alert someone of Dahn’s actions. However, her struggles grew less and less effective as she gasped for breath. Her eyes watered and the color drained from her complexion as her consciousness started faltering. Hannah bit at Dahn’s hand ferociously, but again, she was unable to gain an edge on him. He wore a finger-less work glove over the hand that suffocated the innocent woman rendering her bites useless.

Finally, her battling became completely futile as the young man made his next advancement. The position Dahn had gotten the desperate woman into gave him quite the advantage in subduing her. They both sat on the ground against the wall; Hannah between Dahn’s powerful legs in a sort of “cuddling position”. He used as an avenue to wrap his legs around hers, completing a fully engagement. Hannah was paralyzed by his strength and within another minute; she had lost consciousness.

Dahn crawled from beneath the weight of the limp woman and stood up, his expression drizzled with shame.

“I’m really sorry,” he told the unconscious woman. “But I had no choice.”

Dahn didn’t bother to turning on any of the lights in the room, his task was way too important to risk detection. Despite this, the EKGs recording his parent’s passive activities were extremely interesting and he found himself reading the brain activity being output by his father’s own.

*“This is quite a bit of activity for a comatose individual.”* He thought.

Dahn traced the IV needle coming from his father's medical supplements and watch it run into his body. Everything looked so ethereal and scary.

"Guess I was a lot more immature and focused on my parents when I came here first." He recollected audibly.

Suddenly remembering the urgency of this situation, Dahn rushed to Hannah's body and knelt beside it. He slung his backpack from his back and ripped it open to break out his equipment. It was time for that harness he'd asked his uncle for to come into play. He pulled it from the bag and proceeded to dress the unconscious lady with. Dahn silently prayed that it was ready for use because he did not calibrate the harness in preparation due to the ambiguity of this victim.

Dahn lifted Hannah up and carried her to a window on the far left of the room, beyond his father's bed side. He opened the window with one hand as high as it could go and peered out.

The drop in which he'd need to let the woman down from was very short, and the ground below promoted his plan with an array of cushioning shrubbery. Feeling a bit skeptical anyway, Dahn grunted as he lifted Hannah's body to put her through the window. His actions were abruptly stopped when he heard a noise outside the room. His heart revved to a finger-sweating pace as he glued his eyes to the door, bracing for a passerby to attempt to open it. Luckily, they person walked by and did not interact with the door; he gave a long enervated sigh.

With a change of heart, Dahn dragged Hannah's body into a corner and left it there. *"I haven't go time to do this," he thought. "And the chances of someone spotting me are too high since this isn't a rear window."*

*"I need to get on with this before it's too late!"* Dahn scolded himself already feeling like he'd lost his opportunity.

Time passed quickly while Dahn prepped his experiment; it was a rather simple set up, but still required finesse. His theory was rooted in a pseudo-idea of memory mapping. Based on his research he wanted to play a song through his phone's headphones in both of his parent's ears at the same time. By



using a dual splitter, he'd send 2 stereo channels of audio simultaneously to both of the headphones his parents each would be wearing. Then he spliced a line-in microphone to the audio system which he'd overlay with his voice. The song was soliloquy called "*De l'autre côté*", a beautiful melody of violin and harp; it was sung by an emotional man about the trials of transitioning from a child to an adult. It was a song his parents often mentioned was played at their wedding. Dahn intentionally chose something riveting and vivid, something that would encompass their most vibrant memories and stir up a past that he knew they'd fully remember. Even without his "*other discovery*," he thought this should have some noticeable effect on his parent's amnesia.

"Here goes..." Dahn whispered as he placed a pair of headphone on his own head; microphone already in hand.

Dahn closed his eyes and took a deep breath; he had been practicing singing this song for this very moment, but for some reason, he felt like he didn't deserve to finally make some headway in his progress. It felt too good to be true.

*My brother bought me a little red car; I paid attention to that toy  
Gave me fun in the day and purpose at night; such is the life of a little boy,  
I work hard for a month and some more, to buy myself food, clothes, and meds from the store  
I take my time trying to make do on this ride, but the stress keeps sneaking in on the side...  
I go on my way, playing game one at a time, and my mothers' there every day n' every year,  
Till I'm fighting life's wrath and she lays six feet under soaking up my tears...*

As the song started playing, Dahn watched his parents EKGs intently. As he suspected, the activity began to increase as the song transgressed deeper in and instruments began to play. Dahn lifted the microphone to his dry nervous lips and as he began to whisper the lyrics into the microphone in sync. He made sure the gain was low and his voice was even lower. He wanted to impose his essence upon his parents mind so gradually; it'd be as if he wasn't even interrupting.

The ambitious young man closed his eyes as he applied pictures at every word sung in the song, he tried to put his soul as deeply into his words as he could, praying for his parent's activity to spike. He would sing on and off, hoping there'd be a visual difference in the monitors indicating the absence and presence of his voice.

Life seems to become a blurred haze of nothing as Dahn found himself getting really fuzzy. It wasn't the good kind of fuzzy, but on the contrary; it was actually a bit painful. A sharp sting shot through his back and exploded through his hunched body, sending scrambling electrical signals along his entire nervous system. Dahn ignored the crazy unpleasant sensation and continued trying to sing, but his lips quivered and he was losing his balance rapidly.

*"Whoa-"* he thought with a slight mouthing.

Dahn tried to stand to his feet, realizing that something other than the sensation of his experiment was getting to his body. He felt another sharp sting, even more painful than before and this time it was accompanied with another voice. Dahn crashed to the ground convulsing in shimmering pain as he curled into a ball and shook uncontrollably. Barely able to turn his head, the young man glimpsed a shoe appear into his blurred vision. He turned his head for the last time before all the dim room became a pitch dark abyss.

He saw Haidee pointing a pistol at him...

**TO BE CONTINUED**

