

Storyboard-14

A man rounds the corner, and I take him down; a shot in the heart and head. Look at Ben as I drop the clip and replace it. My hulk of a man doesn't spare me a glance. We round the corner and he fires. Each shot detonates like cannonballs. We'll go deaf by the time this is done, if not from his gun, from the girls and children screaming from their cages. End of the row and we turn into a large space instead of more cages.

There are a lot of guys there, just guys too. Is it a sexist thing or does whoever's behind this just like watching big, strong, dumb men lumber about? And they are dumb. Anyone smart would head for the exits now.

I also don't head for the exit.

I fire, not bothering with being fancy. The goal right now is to incapacitate as many of them as possible, so I go for reliable chest shots. And imagine that, no body armor. As I said, dumb... at least I know better than coming at someone with a gun in a straight line when I am not wearing body armor.

That'll teach me not to be prepared.

Ben's shots leave gaping holes in the men's chest, sending some backward where mine stagger them before they fall. Should I get a bigger gun? I glance at him again, still firing. No, he's the one with the big equipment.

I smile as I remember how that felt. Yep, definitely big. Big enough to warrant him having a big ass gun.

My gun clicks empty. I eject the clip, reach for another one, nothing left. Fuck. Gun in the holster, I rush them, wondering where they're all coming from. The room's large, but still, I counted two dozen, and we have to drop that by now already.

I duck and punch, spin and kick, get punched back. Really need to stop putting on a show for Ben. He already knows how well I fight. He's kicked my ass, then—

The fist snaps my head to the side and I taste blood. "Not the fucking face!" I kick him in the balls. Then it's a knee to the face to show him how bad that is. I parry, then block and sidestep someone aiming a gun in my direction. The shot takes out my opponent.

Idiot. You don't fire in a crowd when there's more of your people.

Ben's detonations aren't as frequent. He makes each shot count. When one of them gets close enough, a fist takes that one down. Our eyes meet, and I smile.

"Catch," he says as he lobs something in my direction.

I'm making a mistake, I know that, but I still reach for it. I can't stop myself. Ben doesn't know it, but he just made the worse possible mistake in a place like this. I need to not catch it. I can't refuse what's about to happen. I don't want it to happen, damn it!

But the song is already in the air, as the blade glints in the light, calling to me. I'm sorry, Ben, I think, as my fingers close around the hilt; then the music is the only thing I hear.

It isn't a piece I've ever heard before. It never is. Each one is unique to the knife I

hold, this time a perfectly honed K-Bar, and the people around me. The music takes all of that and it makes a symphony that guides us all. Guide me to use the knife on them. I no longer want to resist it. I had my chance, but I wasn't strong enough. Now, I am its.

The music guides me under a blow, my hand moves up, pulled by the knife, its rhythm, blood splashes my chest and face. The arm, severed at the elbow, falls to the ground. I move on without sparing it and the dying man another thought. The music won't let me reflect on the atrocity I am inflicting as I move and slice, dodge, and kill.

I hate the music because I love it so much. It shows me how everyone will move; where they are and where they will be; as if they were under its influence as much as I was. They aren't. I have checked. They line up and I execute the majestic harmony of death that it is directing.

The music alters and I have a second knife—no idea where it came from. A Cold Steel Double Agent. It spins around my finger in the ring and cuts a throat. There is no resistance. The knife slips through the cartilage, cuts the vein and artery; blood fountains around him. I've forgotten about him; there is more death to administer.

The K-Bar is in a man's chest, by the side, between the third and fourth rib. He falls, his head pierced, and the blade catches on the bone. I let go, instead of letting it drag me down, and the music changes again—I have another knife in that hand.

Another Cold Steel; the 17T. The music moves my hand, and I follow. I dance between two gorillas of men, cutting one from groin to throat, the other only his arm, as he tries to step out of the dance. I let him go. He's dead already, the Cold Steel embedded in his armpit. The music shows me he'd been down before three steps.

The music places another man where this one had been. The crowbar in his hand is coming down, but he'll miss. The music tells me how to move out of the way and the 17T slams into his forearm. I throw him off balance and the Columbia River CRKT 2082 opens his jugular. I lose the DA, reflexively grab the crowbar, and suddenly the music is dissonant.

Before I can use that to pull myself out of it, I no longer hold it. The music is perfect again. Softer music is better than bad music.

I move from partner to partner. The music makes me work for it now. It no longer guides them to me. They think they are trying to escape, but this is simply a more active section of the piece. There is no escaping this symphony, there is only it reaching its inevitable conclusion.

I reach one, he tries for a kick, I block it, the 17T cuts the femoral artery. The foot lands and the man topples. The music alters for the Boker Applegate I hole. It alters again in response to me throwing the 17T in the back of a thug about to escape the music. It isn't a throwing knife, but with the music guiding its path, there is only one place it will end up. The man falls with it in his spine.

The music softens as the ending approaches. Then I stand alone, but the music continues, so there is someone left, but the music isn't moving me. I catch the motion out of the corner of my eye, big, fast, dark. I move, but the music isn't adjusting to him. He's out of step with the symphony.

The music tries to fall back into harmony, but he is against me, arms against my chest

and I can't resist his push. I hit bars and the ringing from my head hitting the bars shatters the music. I try to grasp it back. I want it back; I need it. How will I kill without it to—

Lips are on mine. Hard, savage. I barely hear the knives hit the concrete floor as I moan to the tongue forcing its way into my mouth. This is better than the music.

My arms are around his neck. My legs around his waist. He grinds against me. He holds my head with one hand gripping my hair, and the other is between us, grabbing at my belt.

We break apart for breath.

The ferocity in his eyes makes me shiver with want, but without the music to mask them, his tongue in my mouth to distract me, I hear the screams and whimpering.

“Stop.”

“No,” he growls. The buckle breaks and my belt slides out.

“We need to get them out.” His hand is on my cock and I gasp. It doesn't move. The snarl on his face is frozen as my monster regains a semblance of sanity.