

Bleeding Brotherhood

Von Peacer

Kapitel 2: Desmond Miles, 2012

Desmond nearly fell over the cables lying on the floor in his haste to get out of the Animus. His fuzzy vision after his time in the machine and getting up a little too fast wasn't helping matters either. "Cazzo," he cursed as he held his head while Lucy hovered nearby, worried and ready to jump to the rescue should he decide he wanted to get to know the floor a little better after all.

"Is cursing in Italian your way of showing you're sophisticated now? If so, I am sorry to inform you that it isn't working," Shaun informed him drily from his place, his eyes not once leaving the desktop in front of him.

"Are you alright?" Lucy asked, ever worried about pushing him too hard, even though all of them knew how important Desmond's task was and that they needed to find the Apple as soon as possible. But he guessed it was normal to worry after witnessing what had happened to Sixteen - and he would really hate to end up like that.

"Fine. I just didn't want to relive another of Ezio's one-night stands."

"And here I thought that was the best part of all," Shaun commented absentmindedly while typing away at his keyboard.

Desmond snorted. "It's like seeing your grandparents have sex, only worse, because you're kinda participating."

That finally made Shaun turn around to face him. "Thank you, Desmond, for that lovely image," he said, his hands folded in front of his chest and bowed his head. "I'll make sure to find a way to pay you back."

Rebecca snickered. "I think he's just jealous that you're the only one that still has some kind of love life, even if it only is in a weird, virtual way."

"Yeah, that really is something to be jealous of," Shaun replied with an eye roll and turned back to his desktop, apparently deeming the conversation unworthy of his snide comments. Rebecca and Lucy returned to their work too, after Desmond had assured them that he only needed a short break.

He then made his way over to the little cooking corner they had established, if it could even be called that: it contained a fridge and a microwave. It wasn't enough to make a nice meal with, but they didn't have the supplies for that anyway, so it didn't really matter.

He opened the fridge and randomly grabbed one of the many instant menus that were the only thing (besides some yoghurts and milk) in the fridge, opened it up, plucked some holes in it and put it into the microwave. Then he leaned against the wall, his arms crossed before his chest, and observed the cave - sorry, Sanctuary - they'd been staying in for about a week now.

It still felt weird to be in a place he knew so well from his memories, especially since it

hadn't changed at all in the last five hundred years. It may have become a bit dusty and some debris was lying on the ground, but all in all it was the same room he had visited so many times in the form of Ezio. The statues were still in perfect condition and even the seals Ezio had gathered to get to Altair's armour were still in place.

It made all the cables and machines and laptops standing around look totally out of place. Not even its occupants really fit in the room, with their modern clothing: jeans and headphones and watches.

But then again, he didn't fit in either, did he? He had to look down to make sure he was wearing his usual white hoodie and his favourite jeans and not the assassin robe and armour he had become so used to in the last weeks. The only thing that was the same was the hidden blade apparatus he wore on his right wrist.

The ping of the microwave tore him out of his musings and he went to retrieve his food – curry chicken, it seemed; he only had that twice this week yet – before he installed himself on the only plastic chair they had at their so-called dining table, an improvised thing made out of two boxes and a more or less straight plate on it.

He immediately began to shovel the food in his mouth, not caring if it was a little too hot. He was starving. Every time he came out of the Animus he felt as if he had really done all the stunts he did as Ezio instead of just lying around all day long. He knew that it was his mind playing tricks on him and that his body didn't need the food all that badly, but he couldn't help it. Besides, what harm did it do? He might gain a little weight, but who was he trying to impress anyway, stuck in this cave all day long?

His eyes unconsciously slid over to where Lucy was sorting through some papers and every now and then pushing a strand of hair out of her face that immediately fell back into place. It was her little quirk, as it was Shaun's to regularly push his glasses back up and fiddle with his watch, and Rebecca's to nod her head to a song she liked and hum quietly to herself.

Desmond wasn't sure if it was, again, thanks to Ezio that he'd become more observant or if he just spent too much time holed up with these three. It was probably a bit of both, and it was the only entertaining thing he could do around here when he was outside of the Animus. It wasn't like the others would agree to take a break to play poker with him or anything, busy as they were with saving the world and everything.

The shadowy form of Ezio distracted him from observing his co-workers as it marched right through his line of vision to come to a stop in front of Altair's statue, looking up at his ancestor. It seemed Desmond wasn't the only one trying to get answers from his ancestor, even if his way was a bit more sophisticated.

He noticed that Ezio looked younger than the one he was used to, without a beard and with regular armour. But it was the composure that spoke of restlessness that convinced Desmond more than anything that this was Ezio at the very beginning of his career as an assassin, full of need for revenge, but not sure yet how to get it, not caring about it either way; so unlike his older, calmer, more reasonable self whose composure spoke of authority and complete control over the situation, no matter how dire it became. Ezio really had come a long way to become the Master Assassin he was nowadays, or rather had been.

Desmond massaged his forehead as the headache he had since he left the Animus got a bit worse. He'd gotten so used to it by now that he only felt it when it was worse than usual.

"You alright?"

He blinked as Lucy came over to him, the worried frown she always wore when talking to Desmond on full power. She offered him one of the two cans of Coke she had

brought and he gladly took and opened it while she pulled a box over to the table to sit with him.

"I should start collecting one dollar every time you ask me that. I'd be rich in no time at all," he joked and took a big gulp from the coke. The stuff was the only thing that kept him going nowadays, it seemed. It also helped to clear his head a little; even if the Bleeding Effect didn't disappear, at least he felt a bit more awake to better distinguish between past and present.

"I'm serious," Lucy insisted, trying to stare him down, but he wasn't intimidated. Hell, he had faced many more scary opponents than the petite woman in front of him, as Ezio, but still...

"So am I." He leaned back in his chair, a dangerous manoeuvre seeing as it might break down under his weight any minute now. It was a risk he needed to take if he wanted to appear nonchalant and relaxed.

Lucy wasn't convinced by his act, though. "You're having a headache." Damn, he forgot he wasn't the only assassin around with superior observational skills.

"Nothing I can't handle. It will pass." Her eyes bore into his and he tried his hardest not to look away.

"Anything else? Like hallucinations?"

His eyes automatically wandered to Altair's statue before he could help it. Ezio was still there. "I'm seeing Altair over there," he tried to joke to distract Lucy, who had of course seen his gaze wander off.

It seemed to work. Lucy sighed. "Why don't you ever take anything serious?"

"Because if I frowned as much as you do, I would more than likely get some serious wrinkles, and I'm way too young for that."

Finally Lucy smiled and Desmond felt like he'd won a great victory. Even if it was with a pretty lame joke, but beggars can't be choosers, right?

"Is it really that bad?"

He nodded and looked at her as serious as he could - which wasn't saying all that much. "Yes, it is. It's about time we save the world so you can finally show me how to have fun," he jokingly reminded her about the conversation they had on their little trip to the Sanctuary.

She nodded and crossed her arms before her chest to appear more serious, but the lingering smile on her face destroyed the effect. She was quite a bad actress, which was actually pretty endearing. Who would have thought that perfect Lucy even had any flaws? Besides being a total workaholic, of course.

"Right. It's about time I show you that there are much better things to do than swimming in sewers."

Desmond held up his hands in defence. "That was your idea!"

"You said yourself you had the time of your life," she countered and he grudgingly gave up. Point for her.

"Fine. But I'm sure we'll find other things to do that are even more fun," he answered without thinking and only realized how ambiguous that came out when it was already too late. Huh, Ezio seemed to rub off on him more than he had realized.

Lucy chose to tactfully ignore him and finish her Coke instead of replying, although the faint blush on her cheeks proved that she had understood the double meaning. Of course. Even a dead log would have gotten it.

"I'd better get back in the Animus," he said before the silence got too uncomfortable and reached out to take Lucy's empty can. When she handed it to him, he was painfully aware how they both tried their best not to touch and looked about

everywhere besides at each other.

"You're sure you're up to it? Maybe you should get a couple hours of sleep?"

Desmond shook his head as he made his way over to the trash bin to dispose of their empty coke cans. "I'll be fine. There'll be more than enough time to catch up with sleep once we find the, uh, POE."

He turned back just in time to see her smile at him, using her and Rebecca's abbreviation that had confused him so much only a week ago. "Alright. But don't overdo it, Desmond."

"I won't," he waved her off and made his way back to the Animus as she took her place in front of the laptop again, trying his hardest to ignore Ezio's shadow as it crossed him on his way back out of the Sanctuary.