

Bleeding Brotherhood

Von Peacer

Kapitel 7: Desmond Miles, 2012

After logging out of the Animus, Desmond just stayed put for a couple of seconds, blinking to get rid of the grey fog that was surrounding him and hoping that the throbbing in his head would maybe lessen a bit at the same time. No such luck, of course - not that he had had much hope to begin with.

Well, at least he managed to get rid of the fog and got out of his eagle's eyes mode that tended to activate on its own when he did so as Ezio.

A bottle of water and two aspirin appeared in his field of vision and he blinked up at the merciful soul.

Rebecca smiled. "You seem like you need it."

"Thank you," he nodded and finally sat up to wash the pills down with a couple of large gulps, emptying the bottle without even putting it down once. He immediately felt a little better. Animus sessions tended to dehydrate him quite a bit and not even aspirin could heal that.

But something was amiss and after a moment he realized what bothered him. "Where is Lucy?" After all, it was normally her that played the mother hen when it came to his health, not Rebecca, and hers was usually the first worried face to see when he came out of the Animus.

"Getting supplies. She should be back soon though," answered Rebecca and got up, stretching with a sigh. "How about some spaghetti carbonara? Shaun made some and it's actually pretty good."

The historian scoffed at that. "Why do you sound so surprised? I am perfectly able to cook some pasta, thank you very much."

"Because the British have a weird sense of taste. I mean, who puts vinegar on fries?"

"How is that any worse than putting tons of ketchup and mayonnaise on them?", he countered, and while the two continued their bickering, Desmond made his way to the kitchen corner and helped himself to a big serving of the spaghetti and heated it up again.

After he took a first bite, he couldn't help but add his grain of salt to the still on-going conversation about the pros and cons of British cooking. "This *really* is good. Maybe we should make Shaun our official cook, at least as long as he lays off the vinegar, of course."

"What *is* it with you people and the vinegar?" Shaun exclaimed exasperatedly before pointedly turning back to his screen, deeming this conversation unworthy of his further input.

Rebecca gave Desmond a thumbs-up and winked at him when she came over to sit with him, after grabbing a can of Coke from the fridge. "We're a pretty good team, eh?", she

whispered conspiratorially, but loud enough for Shaun to still hear her. He shot them a poisonous look which only made the engineer grin wider and Desmond chuckle.

"So, how are you holding up?" she added, a bit more serious and scrutinized him.

Desmond lifted an eyebrow. "Fine. Let me guess: Lucy put you up to this."

"To what?" Her tone was far too innocent to not be fake.

"Playing the mother hen in her absence."

She leaned back in her chair, looking more than a little sheepish. Bull's eye. "You know how she doesn't take no for an answer," she explained and Desmond couldn't help but grin at that.

"Hell yes, I know." He took another mouthful of spaghetti, before adding a bit more seriously this time: "She worries too much. I can handle it." After all, he had successfully ignored Ezio's shadow so far. As long as he ignored it, it wasn't really there, right?

"That's what I told her, too!" Rebecca exclaimed. Then she waited until he had finished eating and grudgingly added, "She still made me promise to send you to bed, though."

Desmond lifted an eyebrow, amused, and got up to put his empty plate in the sink, on top of the others waiting to be washed. "Is that so?" He looked at his watch. 3 p.m. He hummed. "I guess I'll comply. It's already late. Or early. " Whatever. Their rhythm was pretty messed up.

He chuckled as Rebecca heaved a sigh of relief, not having to face Lucy's wrath when she came back, and he made his way over to their sleeping corner. He was exhausted, or else he wouldn't have given in that easily, and his head was still trying to kill him. There was no way he could get back in the Animus and there was nothing else to do but sleep, since he couldn't go outside during the day.

So sleep it was. He crashed on his cot, not bothering to change out of his clothes, and a minute later he was fast asleep.

Desmond woke up from nightmares about having to kill all of his recruits when they turned out to be traitors and then having to explain the slaughter to a very disappointed Leonardo who wouldn't believe him. Of course he didn't feel all that well rested when he got up, his hands trembling a bit from the memory. The memory of a nightmare about his ancestor's memories. If that wasn't fucked up, he didn't know.

He silently got up, as not to wake the others who were for once all still fast asleep, and crept to where his bag stood, taking a fresh hoodie out and throwing the old one in their washing basket.

Then he looked at his watch and noticed it was only 9 p.m., which left him with at least another three hours of free time. It took him only one second to decide what to do next. With a last glance back to his friends, he grabbed his duffle bag and left the Sanctuary, leaving the earpiece behind.

Standing in the entrance of the room, Desmond took in the sight, new yet so very familiar. No matter where you went, pubs were basically the same, be it in New York, or the little city of Colle di Val D'elsa in the middle of nowhere in Italy. This Bar Arnolfo wasn't an exception, with the sound of lots of different voices intermingling, the occasional laughing and the clinking of glasses, Sultans of Swing playing in the background, the hotness of the day combining with the sweat to make the air heavy, and oh, how he had missed it.

He hadn't known what made him come here. One moment he was standing in front of the still open gate of Monteriggioni, trying and failing to resist the oh-so-tempting call of freedom, and the next he was sitting on the next bus driving to the nearest city. He

guessed it was his instincts that led him straight to this place.

Avoiding thinking what that might mean to his mental state, he finally moved from his place in the door and entered the pub, only feeling slightly guilty about being here in the first place. If he didn't stay too long, no one would be the wiser and he could just slip back in the Sanctuary without anyone noticing.

Yeah right. Like he ever was that lucky. But still, he needed the time out, and if he could run around Monteriggioni at night without being spotted by the Templars, he felt pretty safe in a pub full of strangers.

"Mi porta una birra, per favore," he ordered when the bartender looked in his direction, not even blinking at his smooth Italian. He had figured it was just another side effect from his prolonged time in the Animus, and a rather good one at that. At least that's what he had tried to explain to Lucy when she had thrown a fit the last time he used his newly acquired language skills without even noticing.

When he got his beer he looked around for a place to sit, but the pub was fairly full, it seeming to be the hangout of the city. Luckily he had inherited some of his ancestor's Italian looks, so he didn't stand out all that much compared to the locals.

"Hello stranger. You're looking a bit lost, want to come sit with me?"

Well, so much for that. But he didn't mind all that much when he turned around and found himself being checked out by a pretty hot chick. She had the typical Italian look, dark eyes and even darker hair that fell in long curls down her back, a promising smile on her full, red lips.

A charming smile immediately lit up his face in response. "I'd very much like to, belladonna."

She linked arms with him and led him to a free table for two in the back of the room where one had a clear view of the entrance. Apparently, she had been on the hunt this evening. Lucky him.

"So, what betrayed me?"

She shot him a questioning look and he grinned. "That I am not from here. Was it the looks or the accent?"

"Neither," she smiled and pointed to his glass beer. "But the locals don't usually drink beer. Besides, I'm here often enough to know the regulars."

He raised an eyebrow. "And why would a beautiful lady like you spend her time in this place?" He briefly wondered if that was really him flirting with this stranger or if it was yet again Ezio showing through, but he quickly dismissed the thought. He didn't care all that much either way. All that really mattered was that he was finally out of Monteriggioni and rid of his ancestor for at least a little while, since nothing here triggered any memories he related to his time spent in the Animus and thus he had no hallucinations about the Assassin for the first time in a while.

He was determined to make the most of his time and have as much fun as possible. And a beautiful woman like the one sitting opposite from him definitely counted as fun.

"Maybe to catch handsome strangers off guard," she readily flirted back and he took a sip from his beer to hide his triumphant grin. Jackpot.

The time passed all too fast flirting with the lovely Isabella and drinking some more beers, but even though he was starting to get anxious to get back, not wanting to worry his team too much, he couldn't bring himself to say goodbye to his regained freedom yet, even if it only was a momentary illusion. He even briefly toyed with the idea of simply disappearing and not going back at all, even though he knew all too well that that wouldn't be possible. Not necessarily because he wanted to save the world all that badly - he didn't really believe in the upcoming calamity yet - but because he knew that he

would never be safe. No matter where he would run, the Templars would be hot on his heels and his freedom would stay an illusion. Besides, he couldn't leave his friends like that, even if they sometimes annoyed him to no end. They still relied on him, and he relied on them.

"How about we take this to a more ...private place?" Isabella suggested at that moment, a very seductive smile on her lips as she traced the tattoos on his left arm with her fingers, making him shiver.

He was about to open his mouth, not yet sure what his answer would be, when he was very rudely interrupted. "How about you bugger off so Desmond here and I can have a little chat?"

Desmond looked up at Shaun with wide eyes, a little scared of the deadly aura the man was displaying, which was quite impressive, knowing that he couldn't hurt a fly, except maybe with an old historical book.

Isabella wasn't as much impressed, as indignant at the interruption. "And who are you supposed to be?"

Shaun's smile was as sharp as Ezio's hidden blade when he answered. "His social worker. He did tell you he was on probation for theft and violence, didn't he?"

The reaction was instant. One moment she was still holding onto his arm, unwilling to let go of her nearly captured prey, the next the same hand went to her purse. She got up, every trace of her flirty smile vanished and went off without another word while Shaun took her place opposite Desmond.

"You really know how to drive women away," he couldn't help but comment, trying to delay the inevitable chewing out he would get soon enough.

But Shaun simply shot him a deadly look, which wasn't all that bad, seeing as Desmond was quite used to being on the receiving end of those. He even prided himself with the knowledge that Shaun would never have perfected that look without him being there for practice.

"I find it much more worrying that you of all people are even able to hit it off with women. What are they thinking?"

Before Desmond could even begin to formulate a good counter to that, Shaun snatched his beer, took a sip and grimaced. "And what the bloody hell is this supposed to be? The old bathwater of someone's grandmother?"

He pushed the glass back into Desmond's hands and ordered a double scotch from the passing waiter. "Can't have that conversation being completely sober", he murmured and Desmond looked at him questioningly. Of course Shaun ignored it, impatiently drumming his fingers on the surface of the table while waiting for his scotch to come and enjoying seeing Desmond get more and more uneasy by the minute. That was probably the only reason he wasn't getting ripped apart already. Sadistic bastard.

"How did you even find me?" he tried to distract himself from the upcoming explosion.

Shaun looked around him. "Manly instinct. I knew if I just went to the most smelly place full of testosterone, I'd find you."

"You planted a tracking device on me, didn't you?" Desmond asked drily and Shaun rolled his eyes.

"Of course, genius. We couldn't have our last hope simply wandering off like that now, could we?" His tone was heavy with sarcasm, but there was something else too that Desmond couldn't quite put his finger on.

"Then where are the others?"

Shaun's scotch arrived and he didn't answer until he had taken a long sip, his eyes closed in pleasure, before he leaned back in his chair and fixed his eyes on Desmond. "At the

hideout, trusting me to bring you back. I convinced them that since the mother hen approach had clearly failed, it was time for us men to have a real conversation."

Desmond lifted an eyebrow in puzzlement. "A men's talk? About what?"

"You slowly going mental for an example." Shaun shrugged, as if he wouldn't care either way.

Desmond went stiff and his eyes narrowed as his heartbeat picked up the pace. "I'm not going mental", he protested, planning to sound amused, but it came out sounding more like he was defending himself.

Shaun, of course, saw through it right away. He probably would have even if Desmond hadn't been such a bad liar. That bastard was fucking observant.

"So you consider having all those hallucinations about Ezio to be completely normal? Or that you're slowly behaving more and more like him? I'm neither blind nor stupid, Desmond." There was it again, under all the condescension, that undertone of ...worry? No, that couldn't be right. Shaun didn't worry, least of all about him.

Desmond sighed, realizing that the time for denying it all was long over and took a long sip from his third beer this evening. Sadly, now that the mood was completely ruined, he couldn't help but agree that it didn't taste all that great. Go figure the historian could even spoil his last pleasure. "Do Rebecca and Lucy know?"

To his relief Shaun shook his head. "No. They're suspecting you're not doing very well with all the headaches you're having, but they don't know to what extent. Now, here's my question: how bad is it really? Do we need to start hiding all the sharp objects?"

Desmond winced and shook his head. He wouldn't go batshit insane as Sixteen had. He was having some trouble getting rid of Ezio, both the hallucinations and the memories that he sometimes couldn't tell apart from his own, but what did they expect, staying in this place full of memories in the first place? Still, he didn't feel like he'd go psychopath on them and that's what he told Shaun. "I do sometimes have trouble keeping my memories and his apart, but it normally gets better when I am out of the Animus and the Sanctuary for a while. I keep seeing him though, as long as I am in Monteriggioni. All the time in fact."

Shaun crossed his arm in front of his chest and shot him a calculating look. "But you don't see him here, right?" He shook his head and Shaun sighed, taking another sip of his scotch. "Well bugger. We need to get you out of here if we want you to stay sane, but once we do, you're not safe anymore. This is bloody brilliant."

Desmond shrugged, suddenly not all that concerned anymore and feeling a bit giddy with the knowledge how much his teammates cared about him. Even Shaun, though he expressed it in his very subtle, sarcastic way. "I'll manage. Once we locate the POE we can get out of here and I can take as many breaks as I wish."

"Right. And if it takes longer than anticipated, we're just going to use someone else to finish the job. Oh wait, we don't have someone else!" He fixed Desmond with a stern look. "You will take it easy. No complaints," he added before the assassin could even open his mouth. "We might even try to get out of Monteriggioni more often. This scotch really isn't half bad, even if it can't compare to a British one, of course."

Desmond understood the underlying piece-offering, and lifted his glass of beer. "We'll just have to celebrate our victory in an English pub then, right?" He might not have complained all that much about the Bleeding Effect taking over, but he was still relieved that his teammates were fine with cutting him some slack to get his bearings back. He might not go and paint symbols on walls, but it wasn't very comfortable sharing a mind with a long dead ancestor either.

Shaun smirked. "You really think you could handle some real beer?"

Finally things were looking up again, and not even Shaun's condescending remarks could pull him down. They would win this and then he would be free again to enjoy his beers when and where he pleased.

When they finally returned to the hideout, Desmond was determined to find the Apple and put an end to the war against the Templars. He smiled when he got into the Animus. It was time to save the world.