Three grumbled as he saw the line for the front desk. Alverayn 5 was busy at the best of times - building a bank on a desolate moon might be a good idea when it came to security, but it did limit the flow of people through the main door. Besides, this was not the kind of place that put your sunday paper money in, this was the real deal. He fumbled around in his pocket for his wallet, walking towards the back of the queue as he did so. The ground felt slightly bouncy under his feet, a result of the artificial gravity tuned slightly under normal for comfort, and when he looked up he was greeted with the sight of a planet hanging in the sky, visible through the glass that made up the roof.

He quite enjoyed the atmosphere here - it made a change from the charged feel of the city, constantly thrumming with disguised intentions. Of course his stature turned more than a few heads - as sharks went he was massive, close to 7ft tall and heavily built. His right arm was missing at the shoulder, although the runes burned into his collarbone let him create a magical replacement if needed. Currently though they were dark, and he was trying to extricate his card from his wallet with just one arm, something he was failing to do despite considerable practice. Suddenly someone bumped into him, causing him to drop his wallet. He cursed and leaned down to pick it up.

“Watch where you’re…” He trailed off as he laid eyes upon a familiar-looking raven, and cold dread dropped into the pit of his stomach. “Hector?”

“Three.” Hector raised an eyebrow, sounding genuinely surprised to see the shark. He thought for a very brief second, then looked left and right to see if he was being watched before turning back to the shark. “You’ve got about 7 seconds.”

Three didn’t waste a second, grabbing his wallet and sprinting across the floor. He saw the shadow about 3 seconds in, and he made it about halfway across the room before the glass ceiling shattered and all hell broke loose. Black suited wolves dropped down amidst the rushing of air and cascading glass, abseiling into the bank from the ceiling. The emergency air bubble quickly sealed the gap but Three wasn’t paying

attention to any of it, busy getting himself somewhere hidden. He watched as several wolves dropped first, then gave a signal for presumably their leader to drop down. He didn't bother using a rope, instead gliding down on a large pair of wings - dragon wings from the looks of it. He was dressed in a black suit, and as Three watched from the shadows he landed, pulled a pistol from his belt and fired a shot in the air.

"SILENCE!" Even with the panicked crowd shouting his roar billowed through the main hall, and slowly silence descended as everyone stopped and stared. He waited for a couple seconds to make sure everyone was paying attention, then he turned to the wolves around him.

"Secure the floor." Instantly they went to work, wielding assault rifles and gathering the crowd into small chunks, rounding everyone up. The dragon paced impatiently while they did so, and when it was done he nodded to the wolves behind him. They said something into their wrists, presumably the communicators embedded there, and a moment later something large was lowered into the bank from the ceiling. Three couldn't tell what it was but it was definitely heavy, large enough to need at least four wolves to get it down. He didn't stick around to check what it was though, because a few of the wolves were checking the corners, and he decided to arm himself before he got caught.

As he made his way deeper into the bank he realised he still had his mobile on him, but when he pulled it out he saw that there was no signal. When he tried to ring a number he didn't even get a dial tone, just a weird crackling static. When he got to the armoury he cursed - it was bare, save for ammunition and a few letter-opening knives. He knew for a fact that it was always stocked unless the superiors were doing a bi-monthly check, and he cursed under his breath knowing full well that it was today. This was no ordinary robbery, he realised as he grabbed as much ammunition as he could. He'd been a part of bank robberies before, he'd felt the panic and the stress. No this was a smooth, flawless operation so far. This was premeditated long in advance, long enough that they'd planned every eventuality. Well, almost every one - he thought back to the face of Hector, how surprised the raven had looked.

“Time for a chat, old friend.” He muttered as he pocketed one of the knives and tapped the runes on his collarbone. With a flash his right arm ignited into existence, the limb composed of pure energy that seemed to waver in the cool air with the heat it was giving off. He checked his pistol one last time before setting off into the darkness.

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Hector sighed as he checked his gun again, for what felt like the umpteenth time. He was watching four wolves move the crate across the room, following the dragon’s instructions, but it was a far cry from what he was used to. So when he heard something in the shadows of one of the corridors, he immediately volunteered to check it out, cocking his gun and walking into the dark. Only when he was out of site of the others did Three strike, rushing from the shadows and knocking the rifle out of Hector’s hands. The raven didn’t miss a move, immediately flicking a knife into his grip seemingly out of nowhere and jamming it into Three’s leg. The shark grunted as he dodged the second knife aimed for his eye, and when Hector flipped it to his other hand and attacked his other eye, Three caught the blade in his magic arm. The metal sizzled as it melted on contact with the energy, and Hector gave him a slightly annoyed look.

“Must you show off even now?” He said with the faintest suggestion of a chuckle. Three’s response was to throw a punch right into Hector’s gut, considerable strength behind it as the raven folded over. As he tried to follow it up his eyes caught another flash of steel, and he backed off just in time to see a razor slash at throat level. He’d had his eyes in the wrong place though, as Hector rushed forward and stabbed him right in the side of the chest, driving the knife in deep. Three coughed, a dribble of blood leaking from his mouth, but instead of folding he grabbed Hector by the throat and delivered the hardest punch he could right into his face. Blood splattered the wall, and when he dropped Hector the raven staggered back and fell to one knee, breathing heavily. He lost a grip on a few of the knives hidden between his feathers, the ornate blades clattering to the floor. Three meanwhile grabbed the knife in his stomach and pulled, gasping as the steel slid out before tossing it aside. Hector

had sat back, still breathing heavily, and he just watched as Three walked over and collapsed next to him. He pulled off his shirt, showing the cuts marring that perfect musculature, and used the fabric to staunch the bleeding.

“Hngh...you haven’t lost your touch.” Three said with a grin. Hector chuckled, putting his head back against the wall.

“You always did have a mean left hook.”

“Well you know, Sparky’s gym is still up and running. He keeps a bag for me in the corner.” Three sighed. “I tried phoning, no luck. Some kind of signal jammer?”

“A reliable one. Active as soon as we entered.”

Three nodded. “There’s something I don’t get about this whole thing. They planned months in advance, they’ve got this whole operation on paper. You don’t do that for a bank robbery, you just get in and get out. Plus what the hell is in that crate?”

“You want to see?” Hector coughed and gestured for Three to follow, crawling along the corridor. After a brief but slow walk they slowly peeked around the corner to see a strange machine being drilled into the floor. It looked like some kind of generator, a big tesla spike at the top and a spaghetti of wires all over the place. The wolves had it hooked up to some kind of vault door, and were standing around wearing goggles and supervising.

“What the…” Three couldn’t make heads or tails of it. “What is that thing?”

“It’s a Tachyon stabiliser. The vault is chrono-locked, one second out of sync. To access it you either need the code, or you can brute force it back into synch. With that.”

Three pulled Hector back, his face dark. “There’s no way that there’s money in that vault, not with this amount of preparation. What’s in there?”

Hector shrugged. “Your guess is as good as mine. Chances are it’s not something you can buy though.”

“I need you with me on this.” Three pulled one of the knives he’d pocketed out, handing it to Hector. “I’m calling in a favour you owe me.”

“You’re really gonna hit me with that now huh?” Hector sighed, but reluctantly he nodded. “Alright but we do this my way. We wait for them to crack the vault, then fight them and make off with whatever’s inside.” At Three’s disapproving look he scowled. “Oh come on, don’t tell me you aren’t just as curious what’s in there. Big boss man promised me a fat cheque at the end of this so I need something to cover my losses if I do this.”

“Fine.” He crawled back to the corner, watching as the wolves worked away at opening the vault. The dragon stood nearby, his arms folded across his chest as he tapped his foot impatiently. Three watched him closely, noting how his gait was heavy and confident - this was someone used to being large, accustomed to it. They worked for a while before the generator gave off a loud crackle and powered down, and the vault seemed to shimmer for a second before flashing white.

“Finally.” The dragon said, stepping forwards. The vault door slowly turned, various locks disengaging with loud clunks, and when it eventually opened it swung to reveal what looked like some kind of glass tube. It was floor to ceiling glass, filled with liquid, and floating in the liquid was a ring. It looked nondescript, just a plain silver band with some strange writing on it, but even Three could feel that there was more to it. The moment the door swung open he could feel the air almost shiver, as if the universe was holding its breath.

“Now.” He whispered to Hector, and the raven nodded, pulled out his knife and threw it at the furthest wolf. He went down with a surprised

look, the blade sticking from his throat, and Three charged at another of them. There weren't that many overall, and between the two of them they managed to subdue them all as the dragon just looked surprised, almost amused. Only when the wolves were all down did they turn to look at him.

"You know, you didn't strike me as the sort to sell out." He said to Hector, tilting his head slightly. The raven sighed, rolling his eyes.

"I'll have to ask you not to mention this around the block. I owed him a favour but I have a reputation to uphold."

"Indeed. And this must be the mighty Three I have heard so much about."

"Do I know you?" Three asked, trying to place the face.

"I doubt it very much. Name's Vek. I would say it's a pleasure to meet you, but to be honest I was hoping to avoid something like this." Vek turned back to the vault, walking towards the glass tube. "Do you know what this is?" He asked, turning back to them for a second. After a moment's silence he hummed. "It's a prison. Not just an ordinary ring, but one holding something rather special. The power of a Singularity, but not one of this world. A Singularity called Foalvin."

Three jumped as for a second images flashed through his mind, of a world turned to dust by age and decay, of entire civilisations crumbling to the iron fist of time. He saw the last hope, the beloved creator sealed away and pushed through the collapsing walls of reality, dancing through the darkness. Then he blinked and it was gone.

CRASH

Vek chuckled as he broke the glass with a punch, catching the ring before it could fall. "Foalvin was a benevolent Singularity, like many. But I have no need of his personality - no, I simply require his power, and that I shall take." With a flourish he slid the ring onto his finger.

Immediately he grunted and stiffened as energy exploded from the metal, electricity surrounding him and infusing him with power. He laughed maniacally as his body swelled with power, as his muscles bulged with the force of a god. He quickly blew upwards, going from a modest 6ft tall to a monstrous 12ft, every muscle expanding as he basked in the power, soaked in as much of it as he could. Three and Hector could only watch as the already intimidating dragon was transformed into a deity before their very eyes, and as the transformation ended he looked down at them with a vicious, sadistic smile.

“Well then. I suppose you’re going to try and stop me, aren’t you?” He cracked his knuckles, the sound like gunfire in the enclosed room. His voice echoed strangely, as if there were multiple versions of him speaking at the same time. Three readied his stance, waiting for Vek to make the first strike. He didn’t even see the dragon move in the end, he just caught a flash of movement and then there was a grinning face next to his, and a fist cannoning into his stomach. He went flying into the far wall, hitting it so hard that blood sprayed from his mouth and he left a dent in the metal. As he collapsed to the floor he felt his ribs move in strange ways, and he grimaced in pain. Hector meanwhile had seen this and whipped out a knife, running forwards to try and jam it into Vek’s eye. He couldn’t even reach that high up, and when he tried to settle instead for a kidney he found that the blade just didn’t penetrate the scales, shattering against them. He gasped as a hand grabbed his neck and lifted him high off the floor, his feet dangling as he desperately scrabbled at Vek’s muscular arm. Just the forearm alone was thicker than his torso, let alone the bicep that made him look like a twig in comparison - there was no way he was getting out. Vek watched him with interest as he slowly choked the raven.

“Hey!” Three shouted, picking up a weapon from one of the downed wolves and cocking it at Vek. He fired a few shots, and while they didn’t even scratch Vek they did make him drop Hector and turn his attention to Three. “I know why you want that ring. You’re weak, you always have been. Even now with the power of a god you can’t even beat up a couple of men. You’re pathetic!”

Vek didn’t even bother using the godlike speed from before - anger twisted his face as he ran over, each footstep a deep thump that shook the ground. Three tried to throw a punch but Vek didn’t even acknowledge it as he grabbed Three by the throat and slammed him into the wall. He held him with one hand as he punched him in the face as hard as he could with the other, the impact a wet thud as his fist pounded flesh and bone alike into one bloody pulp. The first punch should have knocked the shark out, but somehow he managed to cling to consciousness. From there though Vek went into a frenzy, blasting Three in the face with blow after blow, snarling as teeth and blood went flying everywhere, as the wall cracked and crumbled with the force of the onslaught. It was more than just a simple beating, it was an assault of divine power, a savage and merciless punishment. To call it a fight would be an injustice - it was a mutilation. When Vek finally stopped throwing blows Three’s face was barely recognisable, just a swollen, bloody pulp.

“I think we both know who the pathetic one is.” Vek said, sneering with contempt. He dropped Three to the floor and turned to Hector, but suddenly stopped. He tilted his head. He looked at his fist. He made the connection. As if in slow motion he turned back to Three, and he could see the faint glimmer of something shiny in his mouth. It was the ring, somehow bitten off his finger, and as Vek watched the shark swallowed it.

“Got….you….” Was all he could say before a familiar blast of energy exploded from his body, and he was forced to arch his back and moan. Power unlike anything he’d ever felt scoured his body clean of wounds, zipping his flesh together as if it had never been damaged, new teeth punching out of his gums. Muscle sprang to life across his body, augmenting the already massive shark to monstrous proportions, making him truly terrifying. He stood up slowly, watching as all the power that had animated Vek slowly drained away, his body returning to normal. Meanwhile he felt his own strength double, triple, quadruple over and ovr again. He felt like he could lift a building, and when the growth stopped and he looked down at himself he figured he probably could. There was

something...else there too, something hidden behind his mind. Like there was someone watching over his shoulder, just out of sight.

“Give it back!” Vek shouted, spreading his wings wide and running forward. He threw the hardest punch he could right into Three’s stomach, but he might as well have been punching a wall of steel. His hand broke as it was smashed against rock-hard abs, each one the size of a melon. Three just looked down at him, remembering the beating he had just endured.

“My turn.”

It wasn’t much of a fight. Vek tried his hardest to fight back, using every dirty trick in the book, but it simply wasn’t enough. The difference in strength was obscene, far too high for any technique to make a difference, and onc Vek had exhausted himself trying to even make Three respond the shark socked him around the face and left him unconscious on the floor. The wolves were out, the boss was out, Hector was lying on the floor still trying to catch his breath, and Three was the only one left standing. With a sigh he went over to the generator, pulling out some wires until the whole thing went dark, and then he pulled out his mobile. Signal restored, as he thought, and for once he was glad that the police would be on their way. He had no intentions of cleaning all of this mess up after all.

It took a little while for things to get going. Once security arrived they quickly took Vek into custody, although they took so long that most of the wolves regained consciousness and darted off into the darkness. Vek awoke to find Three’s foot on his throat, the shark looking almost bored as he waited, and his pitiful attempts to struggle didn’t even grab Three’s attention. Three chuckled as the dragon was led away in cuffs, leaning back against the wall and sighing.

“So what now?” Hector said, sidling up beside him. “After all you did promise to split the loot, and uh...well…”

“It’ll make an appearance in a couple days, though it might not be very shiny anymore. Guess we’ll just have to wait and see.” Three flexed an arm, again marvelling at the strength in the limb, the power surging through it. “Mind you, I could get used to this.”

“I think I’ll let you deal with getting it out.” Hector said with a chuckle, rubbing his throat. It was still red from where Vek had choked him. “Since you can’t get me godlike powers, how about a drink and we’ll call it even?”

Three grinned. “Now you’re talking my language.” He began walking, and Hector gave one last chuckle before following him out. It was going to be a long but enjoyable few days.