

The script is free, but please show me some credit!

Just a heads up, this script is SFX heavy.

Summary: The villain has taken hostage one of the hero's support team members, only to discover they're mute—and their hero isn't coming back for them.

Tags: [M4A] [Mute Listener] [Villain Speaker] [Strangers to friends to lovers] [Kissing]

Begin:

[Sound of laser beams and shouting.]

[Sound of running footsteps.]

[The hero asks how much power is left in the backup beam rifle.]

....

[Sound of explosion cuts off the Hero's cursing. Listener falls down, and the beam rifle clatters to the ground.]

[Listener's hearing fades in and out. The hero's yelling grows smaller.]

[The speaker's chuckle can be heard as the Listener blacks out]

[Sound of the speaker humming a gentle tune fades in, paired with the turning of a page.]

[Sound of handcuffs jangling and clothes shifting as the Listener jerks to consciousness]

Ah! You're awake. Finally.

[Sound of book snapping shut.]

Don't try to stand. Your leg was broken in the explosion. You have a splint in place, but you won't be receiving any pain meds until you answer some questions for me.

[Sound of silence as the Speaker waits for the mute Listener to reply.]

What, not even a 'fuck you' or 'where am I'?

[Listener looks down at their handcuffs. They shrug, masking their pain with what they hope comes off as nonchalance]

A shrug? Seriously?

[Sound of footsteps approach, their soft echo implying the room is mostly empty save for a cot.]

[Sound of clothing shifting as the Speaker crouches down before the Listener who's currently on the floor.]

Silent treatment isn't going to work here. The longer you evade questions, the more pain you're going to put yourself in.

[Silence ensues. The listener's face screws up in a mix of pain and irritation.]

[Speaker scoffs]

Don't look at me like that. Now let's begin. Asking the whereabouts of your boss seems a little stereotypical, hm? So tell me, what is your role?

[Sound of handcuffs shifting as the listener shrugs again, glowering at the speaker.]

[Speaker sighs]

That's how this is gonna be? You're just going to shrug until, what, your precious hero saves you? I'll have everything I want before then.

[Speaker huffs with amusement]

If looks could kill. Fine. So be it then.

[Sound of fabric shifting as the speaker stands and walks away.]

Maybe you'll feel more cooperative when that broken leg of yours keeps you up tonight. Don't expect any special treatment here.

[Sound of door slamming shut]

[Sound of door opening]

Morning, sunshi—

[Low whistle]

Damn, you look like shit. I'm willing to bet you didn't get any sleep? Tsk, you're so pale...

Hmf...still nothing huh? What should I call you anyway? Glare? Glarey? Scowls—

[Breaks off with a laugh as the listener glares at them.]

Damn, do you know what you look like when you scowl? If you weren't wearing those blocker cuffs, I'm fairly certain you could burn holes through me.

[Silence as the listener looks at the cuffs with a new interest.]

Mm? Oh, those. They may look like your standard handcuffs, but they're designed to dampen the wearers power. But since you seem to play sidekick to the hero, I'm guessing you aren't all that powerful, assuming you have any at all.

With how you're looking away, I'm guessing it's the latter. So what can a hero make of a civilian sidekick? You must have some skill. Mmm...definitely a support team member if those gadgets I found on your body meant anything.

Oh? Suddenly I have all of your attention. You can have your gadgets back when you give me some answers. So? What is your role?

[Silence as the listener slumps in defeat. The handcuffs make it too awkward to even attempt to sign. They open their mouth and do their best to shape words.

Note that listener wasn't born mute, but the hero took their voice.]

Why...are you just mouthing words? You...Shit. You can't talk. You literally can't talk.

[Sound of Speaker standing. They pass a hand over their mouth and they can be heard muttering.]

[Sigh]

If I give you something to write with, will you answer my questions?

[The listener nods]

Alright. I'll be back in a moment.

[The sound of a door opens and closes. The speaker has returned with a notebook and crayons.]

Oh don't look at me like that, this is all that was available...well, it was the safest option. For all I know, you could be planning to stab me in the neck with a fountain pen—truly, an embarrassingly underwhelming death.

Look, it's this or nothing. I might even let you keep these if you're nice.

[Sound of notebook and crayons being proffered.]

[Sound of Listener throwing a crayon at the speaker.]

Did...did you just seriously throw a crayon at me? Tch...What did I expect.

[mutters] I guess I'd do the same.

[Sound of handcuffs shaking expectantly]

No...no, those are staying on until you can behave. Answer my questions and we'll see about taking those off.

[Sound of notebook and crayons being tossed aside. Clothing shifts and handcuffs clink as Listener stubbornly turns away.]

Tsk, c'mon. Don't turn away. We'll start with the easy ones.

[Sound of Speaker picking up notebook and crayons and placing them in Listener's lap]

What is your name?

[Silence draws out until Listener picks up their crayon and briefly scribbles out something and shows it to the speaker]

86? That's not your name.

[Sound of Listener underlining it.]

Underlining it doesn't make it a name, Scowls

[Sound of more scribbling.]

'What does it matter?' I mean, do you want me to call you Scowls during your stay here?

[More scribbling]

A number system for employees...I guess that would protect your identity. So what, you all call each other by your assigned number?

I see. I'm not going to do that though. It's too...eh, doesn't matter. You're Scowls from now on until you tell me your real name.

[Amused laughter]

Well it's accurate. I guess I just have that effect on people. Do you have any family?

[Sound of Listener writing and flipping the notebook around]

[Scoffs] No, I'm not looking for leverage. Believe it or not, I'm not much for bloodshed.

[Speaker leans in] Haven't you noticed? My attacks don't kill people. Your hero on the other hand? He's the reason car and life insurance have skyrocketed. No, don't shake your head. He threw a car at me.

[Exasperated] There was literally a dog in—forget it, we're getting off track.

[Speaker takes a moment to collect their thoughts.]

Tell me, Scowls, how long have you been working for them?

[Listener writes]

Since you were 13...that's a little young. How old are you now?

[Mutters] Huh, so three years younger than me.

Why that age? What could you even do?

[Sound of scribbling. A pause. Then crumpling paper as the Listener balls it up and tosses it aside. More writing.]

'No more questions.' Yeah that's not how this works. You're my hostage and I intend to get information from you whether you like it or not.

Look, no more questions about why you're under the hero's thumb. But you will tell me what your job is.

[Sound of writing]

Support tech...huh. So you're a gearhead. Have to say, your team is something else. Can't tell you how many times I was caught on the wrong end of your little contraptions. Actually I can, and I probably will. But not tonight.

[Sound of writing]

Hm? Yeah, it's...around 2 am right now.

[Writing]

Yeah, I did say good morning. Was I wrong? So I got a little busy. Thought I'd let you stew in your own fear and agony for a bit. Y'know. Villain type shit. How is your leg by the way?

[Silence as the Listener only shrugs and looks away, their expression bitter.]

Hm. Maybe I should start calling you shrugs—

[Sound of Listener throwing the crumpled paper at Speaker's head.]

Hey! Stop throwing things, we're not in middle school. Oh real mature. Stick your tongue out at me again and I'll cut it off.

[More writing]

'Any...Any more questions'...your hand writing is awful by the way. No, don't blame it on the crayons. That's all you.

Mm, you have been...somewhat cooperative. Alright. One more question, and you can have some pain meds. When do you think your hero will launch their rescue mission?

[There is a long pause. The sound of Listener slowly writing fills the silence.]

You...don't know. Well, it's not uncommon for team members to be abducted. You've been with that bastard since you were 13, surely you have an idea of how long it takes him to prepare a rescue.

[More writing]

...'He's not coming.' Tsk, don't be foolish. If you're on his tech support team, that means your skills are invaluable. He wouldn't just let you go.

Shake your head all you like. Only time will tell, Scowls. I'll send someone down to give you some medication, so try not to throw any crayons at them.

[Speaker leaves with a chuckle and a door closes.]

[Sound of the door opening and closing.]

Morning, Scowls. And how are we feeling today?

My, that's quite a look. Don't like it when I'm nice? I'm probably more polite than any other villain that could have trapped you.

[Sound of Listener shifting, as if working out the cricks in their neck.]

You still look like shit. Are you still in pain?

[Listener gives them a dirty look.]

Hmph, yeah, I guess that is a stupid question. You're being held hostage in an empty room with no food, water, and a broken leg and...some crayons and paper.

[Sound of speaker approaching and crouching by the Listener. Sound of paper being picked up]

Is that me? What is that beam gun doing to my—

[Sound of paper being snatched away and thrown across the room.]

[Speaker huffs a laugh]

You still have some spirit at least. Curious that there's radio silence on the hero's end though.

[The sound of Speaker's voice fades in and out as the Listener's vision spins.]

[Sound of clothing rustling as Speaker moves to steady Listener by the shoulder.]

Hey. *Hey*. Stay with me now. What's your deal?

[Sound of Speaker feeling Listener's face.]

You aren't running a fever, but you look ready to pass out. When did you last eat?

[Sound of fabric shifting as Listener raises four fingers.]

Scowls, that's four fingers. You're telling me you haven't eaten anything in *four* days? But I've only had you hostage for two!

Why didn't you eat before? And don't you dare shrug.

[Listener shrugs one shoulder.]

[Speaker Scoffs]

For the love of...

[Sound of Speaker getting up and walking away muttering to themselves. The door swings shut behind them.]

[20 minutes later, the speaker returns with two sandwiches and a water bottle.]

Hey, I'm back. Don't look so surprised. You really thought I'd leave you to starve in here? I still need information from you.

[Sound of Speaker approaching and kneeling by the listener]

[Sound of Speaker unwrapping the sandwich paper.]

[Half joking] Did your employer not feed you, Scowls?

[Sound of slow writing]

You just...didn't feel like it. You, a tech support team member—one of the more mentally demanding jobs by the way—just didn't feel like eating for two whole days?

[Writing]

'I'm not lying.' I just don't buy it. Just shut up and eat for now.

[Sound of sandwich paper crumpling as Listener devours the sandwiches. Water bottle crinkles.]

Even if you didn't feel like it, your boss has a duty to make sure his people have their basic needs met.

Don't give me that look. I may be a villain—at least in your eyes—but I don't run my people into the ground.

[Sound of writing]

Oh uh...you don't need to thank me. I didn't do it for you.

[Mutters under breath] I need you alive anyway.

Mm? Forget it. Feel up to answering some questions now that I've fed and watered you?

[Sound of writing]

Hmph, I thought as much. Why don't you tell me what your working conditions were like?

[More writing]

It matters because I said so. Well?

[Writing and the sound of the notebook being flipped around.]

Ahh. So you had your own set up. I'm willing to bet it was some warehouse.

[Writing]

What do you mean it felt like more of a closet?

[Writing]

Team leaders get larger work spaces...but small fry like you get what's left. Well, what significant work did you do then? The hero must keep you around for something.

[Listener begins to write, but hesitates. They continue writing.]

You *do* have a power. You can...does that say you can see the history of objects? That is...definitely unique. But how does that help in developing combat tech?

[More writing]

Oh. I guess that does make sense. Knowing the origin and make of certain parts. I take it the cuffs interfere with it? Yeah, that's what I thought. So you did just well enough to skate by, but never enough to be a team leader yourself.

[Writing]

Uh, my name? As the hero's sidekick, you should know...ah, my real name. Not my title. Since you've been so well behaved, I'll enlighten you—

[Sound of Listener punching Speaker's shoulder]

Ah! How do you hit so hard when you're as weak as you are?

[Sound of Speaker rubbing their arm]

It's Victor.

[Speaker's voice fades out] Anyway, tell me more about the work you did.

[Sound of Listener folding paper origami.]

Bored out of your mind yet?

[Sound of folding paper pauses when listener looks up]

You're pretty good with your hands. I guess you'd have to be.

[Speaker watches Listener for a moment.]

You seem pretty well adjusted one week into captivity. No tears or pleading to be sent home. Do you just have that much faith that you'll be rescued?

[Sound of writing]

Mm. I guess I have spoiled you. Giving my captor pain meds and food. What a poor Villain I am.

Y'know, if you keep glaring like that, your face is going to get stuck.

[More writing]

I'm here to pick your little gear brain about your boss. I have an eye on him and he's made no move to launch a daring rescue. It's been a week, that's more than enough prep time.

[Listener goes back to folding origami]

Tch, why are you so at ease here? You're my *prisoner*. Shouldn't you be planning a clever escape yourself?

[Sound of folding paper continues]

Don't ignore me. At least tell me something about the hero's character.

[A pause. Listener begin to writes in agitation]

'They're brave.' That's it? 10 years and that's all you can tell me.

[More furious writing]

[Disbelieving laugh]

He's not going to leave you here, Scowls. He would be stupid to! I mean...that makes him look bad.

[Slower writing]

'He doesn't care about his reputation'. Yeah, well, it's not like gearheads like yourself are a dime in a dozen. I mean do you know how hard it is to find combat tech developers? Gods, just the manufacturing process is a headache on its own, let alone sourcing and buying parts. There isn't exactly a business market for villains where we can post hiring signs.

Ugh, I'm going to give myself a migraine if I think about it too hard. My *point* is that finding someone with your skill and power is rare. He *will* come for you, Scowls. And I'll be ready when he does.

[Listener pauses their origami.]

[Listener begins to write, but Speaker's phone rings]

[Speaker answers as they leave, voice fading.]

Yeah, authorize the purchase. I know it's under the agreed quota. We'll make do with what we have. While I have you, review the chemical inventory....

[Door closes]

[Sound of door opening]

Hey Scowls. I've got a deal to make with you.

Don't look so worried. If you agree to work on something for me, I'll give you back your tool kit. Or whatever you call these gadgets.

[Sound of writing]

Why? Because it's week three and I've gotten most of the information that I want from you. Might as well give you something to do that'll benefit the both of us.

The item in question is this. It's essentially the interior of one of my weapons. My team is struggling with the locking mechanism and the chamber keeps interfering with the projectiles.

[Sound of writing]

'Will it hurt anyone.' I mean, it is a weapon. And I may or may not use it on the hero.

Hey c'mon don't make that face. Look, I'm going to be firing at your hero one way or another. If not with this, then something else. So whether or not you work on this weapon, it ultimately won't matter.

You might as well take a break from your origami cranes and do something you enjoy. You're probably itching to tinker on something metal, yeah? I'll even...take off your handcuffs.

[Sound of writing]

[Soft huff of laughter]

I know you're not a robot. But when you talked about your work, it sounded like it was something you enjoyed.

[Sound of metal tapping against the floor as it is set down in front of Listener.]

[Sound of handcuffs being unlocked.]

Better? I know they're not the most comfortable.

[Sound of writing]

Ah—of course I know what they feel like. I am a villain after all.

[Bitterly] I've seen it all.

[Sound of writing]

What do you mean? 'What happens to you if he doesn't show up.' Well I guess, in this *hypothetical* world, I can't just keep you locked in here with your crayons. At that point I'd just tempt you with the benefits that come with being on my side. That or...I guess I'd let you go.

[Scoffs] Don't look so surprised. It'd be a damn shame to let you go, but it's not like I can force you into the job. And frankly, why would I risk having an enemy tinker with my weapons?

[Sound of writing]

'Why are you so nice to me'...tch, look. I don't know what your little hero fills your head with, but at most I'm a vigilante. I do what I do for a reason, not that it's any of your business.

[Sound of more writing]

What does it matter if you know? You'll be out of here soon, I'm sure. What would your hero think if he saw you feeling sympathetic for me, hm?

[Sound of fabric shifting as the Listener turns away]

[Sound of Listener picking up the project Speaker gave to them.]

[Soft sigh]

I brought more food. I'll leave these sandwiches here.

[Sound of fading footsteps and door closing]

[Sound of Listener tinkering on metal]

[Sound of something being screwed into place. (General gearhead activities)]

[Sound of door opening]

Hey. You—...oh. Wow. There are screws everywhere.

[Sound of paper being picked up]

I have to say, your depictions of weaponry and mechanics are worlds better than your people.

[Speaker chuckles with only a little amusement]

You're going to need more crayons. You're so heavy handed that you burn right through them.

[Sound of tinkering continues. Speaker releases a soft sigh]

There's been movement on the hero's side of things. Looks like he's gathering resources and intel.

[Sound of tinkering coming to an abrupt halt]

Damn...it's been a month already now. The break in your leg wasn't awful, so that splint should be coming off soon...

Scowls? Shit, you look like you've seen a ghost. Are you feeling ok?

[There's a pause before Listener resumes their work]

You seem off. Are you sure you're feeling ok?

[Sound of Listener knocking their hand aside when the speaker reaches to feel their face.]

Tch, fine.

[Hesitantly] I'll be back to check your progress.

[Sound of Speaker leaving]

[Sound of tinkering]

[Sound of tinkering faltering. Listener throws aside the project with a loud clatter]

[Sound of Hero's distant voice sneering "Just get this done. I'm tired of your excuses, just meet the due date for once in your life. Human lives are riding on this. I wouldn't have taken you in if I'd known you'd be this pathetic."]

[The memories are interrupted by a familiar voice—Speaker's.]

"Scowls?"

[Speaker's voice becomes more clear]

Hey. *Hey.*

[Sound of hurried footsteps and Speaker gently shaking Listener by their shoulders]

Scowls. C'mon, snap out of it. Fuck, why are you shaking? You're white as a sheet...are you in pain?

No? Ok, but that doesn't explain why you've broken out into a cold sweat. Fuck, Scowls, I can see your heartbeat.

[Sound of Speaker gently feeling around Listener's face]

Scowls, I need you to try to relax ok? Look at me. *Look at me.* Gods, it's like you're not even here.

[Soft curse] Damn...

Come here.

[Sound of fabric shifting as Speaker gently pulls Listener into their chest.]

[Sound of Speaker's voice in Listener's ear.]

Just try to relax. You look like you might start hyperventilating at any moment.

Something tells me...you're not looking forward to the Hero's rescue. Just...nod yes or no for me.

[Sound of fabric shifting as Listener nods against Speaker's chest.]

Yeah, I thought so. Just try to focus on my breathing and do it with me, ok?

[Soft sound of breathing as the Speaker coaxes Listener into calming down]

There you go....Remember, this cell is underground. Nothing can get to you without some effort. Ok? Nothing and no one can hurt you here.

[Soft chuckle] Never thought that would be a reassuring thing to say to anyone.

[Sighs]

Will you tell me why you're scared of the hero coming here? Or are you...scared of *him*.

Here, take your notebook.

[Sound of spiral notebook being picked up and placed in the Listener's lap.]

[Sound of slow writing]

You're worried you'll be punished? For what, getting captured?

[Sound of Listener nodding]

That's ridiculous, you couldn't have done anything. Scowls, has he...punished you before?

[Another nod]

[Softly] For what?

[Sound of writing]

...He'd push more work hours onto you? You told me what your conditions were like, it's not like you could have met his expectations. You were only 13, I doubt he provided much of an education for you.

[More writing]

[Exasperated] He hit you?

[Mutters to self] This fucking guy...and *I'm* the villain?

Look, Scowls...I took you as my hostage. I did it to get information out of you about the hero. I asked about your working conditions because I thought it would give me an idea of what kind of operations he has running.

But...at the end of the day, you're a civilian to me, even if you technically work under him. If you don't feel safe, then I won't give you to him. When all of this blows over, I can let you go.

[Sound of writing]

Yes, that's my concern. If I let you go now, the hero may come after you. Like me, he has eyes all over the city. You can't really hide yourself unless you're being hidden by someone like me.

[Speaker leans in and murmurs] Scowls. You're safe here. But you won't be locked in here forever. You can trust me, even if only for a little while.

[Sound of writing]

The plan? Well, things are different now. I have half the mind to fake your death, but you can't live in hiding forever. You want a life don't you?

[Slow writing]

You...don't know what a life looks like. You mean a life without the hero.

[Firmly] Then I'll show you. I'll teach you how to live selfishly, Scowls.

[Sound of fabric rustling as the Listener lunges for Speaker, trapping them in a hug]

Uh! Hm...

[Sound of fabric shifting as Speaker hugs Listener back]

Y'know, you're kind of killing my tough guy reputation—

[Sound of Listener swatting their shoulder]

Ah! Jeez, always so violent. I guess I prefer you that way, though.

[Voice fading as the scene ends] I see you've made more progress on that mechanism. Y'know, if you join *my* team, there's a dental and health insurance bundle with your name on it...

[Sound of chess pieces moving across a board]

I swear I took your rook. This is the third game in a row...I can see you grinning.

I was nice enough to bring you a board game and you can't even be bothered to play fair.

[Sound of writing]

No, you're not! You are so full of shit.

[Sound of a chess piece being firmly planted on the board]

How can someone who doesn't know a thing about strategy play so...can you even call it effective?

[Sound of writing]

'Well, I've taken your knights and bishops, haven't I?' Haha, very funny. I wouldn't call unpredictable chaos a strategy...hm, actually. I guess it can theoretically apply to anything if executed correct—

[Sound of another chess piece being placed]

My Queen! Wait, are you seriously using my pieces for your army?

[Sound of writing]

Cute, but you can't recruit prisoners.

[More writing]

[Laughs in exasperation] It doesn't matter if you offer dental and health care benefits!

[Sound of writing]

I told you, I'm free for the day. Everything is running smoothly. Thought I'd crush your ass at chess, but obviously that's not happening.

[Mutters] Especially with how you break the rules.

[Sound of crayon being thrown at Speaker]

[Laughs] I'm starting to think you throw things when you don't have a clever comeback.

[Sound of a chess piece being thrown]

Alright, alright!

[Sound of writing]

Oh right, it's my turn.

[Speaker clears throat after a beat of silence]

So, Scowls...Can you sign at all? Or do you choose not to for my benefit?

[Sound of writing]

You...never learned? I mean, were you born mute?

[Slower writing]

Ok, then...what happened to your voice? Does it have something to do with that scar around your neck?

[More writing. A pause. Continue writing. Sound of notebook being flipped around.]

[Sharp intake of breath]

Oh, Scowls...that's horrific.

[More writing]

'To protect his identity.' Tsk that's such *bullshit*. He's not even in the top league, what the hell is he protecting?

[Viciously] He's a low life at best. The only thing that makes him a hero to the public is when he throws some money at some fucking charity. But even that's corrupt.

I'm guessing you couldn't just up and leave?

[Sound of Listener shaking their head]

[Bitterly] I thought so.

[Sound of writing]

'There's more.' What do you mean?

[More writing]

Your...saying it's a habit for him? You weren't the only one? He just takes in orphaned children. But what do you mean there are more operations?

[Listener begins to write but pauses again.]

Scowls?

[Speaker leans in] You've gone pale again. What is it?

[Sound of writing]

[Sharp exhale]

You're kidding. That's impossible. You can't just combine organic flesh with non organic materials like that. Even if he could successfully create some fucked up chimera, it wouldn't last on the field.

[More writing]

Rejects? So he keeps the effective, obedient children who do good work and experiments on the less desirables?

[Writing]

'Like me.' Ah, fuck, Scowls. You're...you're not defective.

[More firmly] You're a human being.

And that sadistic sad sack just collects people like it's nothing. I always knew there was something fucked up with his "adoptive family."

[Sound of Speaker standing up and pacing]

This is new. This *changes* things.

[Muttering] If I can get hard evidence of his process, it'll just support the fact he's already involved in dark trades for illegal resources...

[Sound of a crayon tapping paper]

[Continued muttering] I guess I could have a team track him. If I could figure out his supply chain activity, they could trace it back to the seller as well as his base of operations...

[More tapping]

[Muttering] I could release it to the press during Hero's Day...he'd be busy with some narcissistic speech and—

[Sound of paper being crumpled into a ball and thrown at the Speaker's head]

Hey, what was that for?

Oh, I was doing the thing. Sorry. Mm, you look better though.

[Sound of fabric rustling as Speaker leans in and pinches Listener's cheek]

[Speaker's voice is closer] Look at that, the color is back in those pretty pink cheeks of yours.

[Sound of Speaker's hand being smack aside]

[Laughter fades]

[Sound of speaker crouching before Listener, voice still close]

[Gently] Hey, I was serious. You're not a reject. You're a victim of a very fucked up person. I'm...I'm glad I caught you.

[Sound of writing]

'I'm glad you broke my leg.'

[Soft laugh] Don't say that, Scowls. You're so morbid sometimes, y'know that?

It's been about a month now. Soon we'll be able to remove the splint.

[Writing]

Hm? Oh, my team developed a line of drugs that speed up the healing rate. Where it would normally take a handful of months to heal a break like yours, it only took one to almost completely heal it.

[More writing]

Why am I doing this? I told you. I'm a vigilante at best. It just so happens that some very rich politicians do a good job making people like myself look the villain.

I may not follow every rule in the book, but my goal isn't to hurt innocents.

[Writing]

Mm, I did kill some politicians, yes.

[Mutters] I mean, is any politician innocent?

They needed to be cut down. Don't you see the state of the city? Fuck, even the state itself? I remember when things were...good. Now it's so overrun with gang wars that people are having to pay their landlords for protection. It's sick.

You...

[Sigh, sound of Speaker running a hand through their hair.]

You wouldn't know. The hero didn't let you out much if at all, I'm assuming.

[Sound of listener nodding.]

When you can walk on that leg of yours, I'll have to show you what the city has become.

[More writing]

Uh! You...really? You want to stay? Why?

[Writing]

For the health care bundle...

[Laughs]

If that's what you really want, Scowls. But if you're going to stay, you'll have to see everything that I'm doing. It's a big commitment.

[Writing]

'Or you'll kill me?' What? No! Shit, don't look so solemn. No, you'd just have to go under a non disclosure agreement. I might even have some people watch your movements to ensure you don't leak any information. But I wouldn't...kill you.

[Writing]

Why not? Jesus, because you're a civilian. At least to me. I doubt you have any major connections to even leak information to, anyway...

[Speaker trails off as Listener leans in closer]

Well...maybe not just a civillain—Mmph!

[Slight pause before Speaker kiss Listener back]

[Sound of their mouths breaking apart]

Er, this isn't Stockholm syndrome, right—

[Sound of Speaker being swat on the shoulder by Listener.]

Ah!

[Darkly] You're going to pay for that.

[Sound of Speaker kissing Listener deeply]

[Sound of chess board and pieces being swept aside in a clatter as Speaker moves closer, gently pushing listener down.]

[Soft groan]

[Sound of more kissing]

[Softly and breathlessly] You taste better than I imagined.

Ah, you don't have to reach for your notebook. I can see it in your face. I, uh...

[Clears throat] Maybe I fantasized about you a little...like once.

[Sound of fabric shifting as listener reaches up to pinch Speaker's cheek]

Ok, Ok! You don't have to pinch my cheek. It was more than once. Are you happy now? Jeez, what kind of villain am I to crush on my hostage—Mmph.

[Sound of Listener's fingers threading through the Speaker's hair before pulling them into a kiss.]

[Sound of kiss breaking apart and Speaker trailing kisses down Listener's throat]

Fuck, you like it when I kiss your neck? Your sighs are so sweet.

[Sound of more soft kisses.]

[Sound of fabric shifting as Listener presses the heels of their hands into their eyes]

Scowls? Hey, what's wrong? Does your head hurt?

[Sound of head shaking]

You look in pain. Tell me where it hurts.

[Murmurs] Here, sit up.

[Sound of fabric shifting]

[Sound of notebook being picked up and handed to Listener]

[Sound of slow writing]

You saw something? What do you mean?

[More writing]

You...saw many things. A woman with a burn scar on her face looking down at you—

[Breath catches]

[Sound of Speaker grabbing Listener's shoulders]

What else did you see?

[Sound of writing]

You saw an older boy dragging you by the hand. And?

[Writing]

[Bitterly] The house fire...

[Speaker stands]

[Speaker's voice is terse] Don't...just don't touch me. I don't think your sight is limited to inanimate objects. Evidently you can see the history of living things.

I said don't!

[Speaker curses under breath] Fuck...

I...I need to go. I'm sorry. I just...need to think.

[Brisk footsteps walk away and a door slams closed]

[Sound of a door opening]

[Sound of the soft clatter of a tray as an assistant walks in]

"Aye kid, the boss had you sent a meal."

[Sound of writing]

"He's been neck deep in work. Somethin's off with him, but we try not to look too closely, y'know? I know he's been occupied the past four days, but I'm sure he'll come around."

[Sound of notebook being tossed aside and fabric shifting]

"Don't fret. Sitting in a corner like that will only hurt your back anyway."

"Tell you what, I'll put in a word for you—"

[Sound of alarms blaring]

“Ah shit!”

[Sound of running footsteps as the assistant leaves, the door slamming shut behind them]

[Sound of fabric shifting as Listener struggles to their feet]

[Sound of Listener limping toward the door.]

[Sound of a high pitched whine before the door and the wall are blasted, sending Listener flying back.]

[Hero] “*There* you are, 86! Never thought I’d have to use this tracker on you off all people.”

[Sound of heavy footsteps approaching.]

[Sound of Listener trying to shift away, but Hero grabs their bicep and hoists them up]

[Hero] “and here I thought you’d be happy to see me! Or dead. Interesting that the little villain didn’t just kill you off.”

[Hero] “Are those crayons? Tsk, tell me you haven’t been feeding information to the enemy. Your life isn’t worth that.”

[Sound of Hero walking away with Listener in tow] “Come along now. You can save your gratitude for when we return.”

“And what is this? A cast? The villain probably told you you broke your leg just so he could play caretaker. What a slimy bastard.”

[Sound of Hero ripping the cast free] “Don’t struggle so much or I might break your leg!”

[Hero] “Now was that so hard? Wipe that stricken look off of your face, you look like an idiot.”

[Sound of Hero readjusting their grip on Listener and hoisting them up into his arms] “Hold on.”

[Sound of hero taking flight, soaring through the hole he'd blown through the Villain's lair.]

[Sound of wind whipping past]

[Sound of a net being shot]

[The hero curses as they fall, entangled in the net]

[Speaker's voice grows closer as he approaches]

It's bad manners to take back your hostage without at least talking to me first. I was looking forward to our fight.

[Hero snarls] "You want a fight, coward? You should be more aware of what's happening at your lair. I practically walked in."

[Speaker laughs humorlessly, twirling a gun] I wouldn't call that explosion 'walking in.' Now are we doing this or not?

[Hero tosses aside the net, but grabs Listener and moves them in front of him]

[Speaker] Tsk, hiding behind one of your own? That's not very honorable.

[Hero unsheathes a blade and holds it to Listener's throat] "Y'know, I found it odd that 86 here was in fine condition when I found them. No traces of torture. Their leg in a damn cast and surrounded by bloody crayons."

"If I had to guess, you got rather attached, *brother*."

[Sound of gun being pointed] Shut the hell up and let them go. This is between us, *hero*.

[Hero keeps the blade pressed to Listener's throat] "Drop the gun, then."

[Speaker curses under breath. The gun drops with a clatter when it's tossed aside]

[Hero laughs and shoves Listener to the ground before dashing forward and cracking his fist against the Speaker's face]

[Sound of punches being thrown. Speaker grunts in pain]

[Sound of Listener crawling away and grabbing the gun]

[Sound of a car door being ripped from its hinges and slammed down.]

[Sound of a wet crunch followed by the agonized cry of the speaker]

[The hero laughs] "I always did kick your ass. But god have you been a pain in mine. I think we should end it here, Victor."

[Sound of car door being raised again] "You had your chance."

[Sound of Listener firing the gun]

[The Hero drops dead, the car door falling with a clatter]

[Sound of footsteps running as Listener dashes over to the Speaker]

[Speaker coughs with a groan] Shit, Scowls...I don't know what to say. But thank you.

[Listener helps Speaker to their feet]

It's...It's ok. Asshole shattered my leg...but I'll have backup here in a minute. But so will he...We have to get out of the area.

[Sound of shuffling feet and pained breaths and grunts]

That...alley. Over there.

[Speaker groans as he settles down to the ground, back pressed against the alley wall]

[Sound of Listener crouching by him and gripping his shoulder]

Heh...it's kind of funny. Your leg heals and mine gets shattered. Same leg, too. I guess that's fair...

Right, you don't have anything to write with. I left in such a rush that I forgot pretty much everything but a gun.

Scowls, I'm...I'm so sorry. If I had been there, you wouldn't have been taken. You wouldn't have had to even see him. I was never angry with you, I just...I never told anyone about—Mmph!

[Sound of Listener kissing Speaker]

So does that mean I'm forgiven?

[Listener shakes their head]

What? Oh, is it going to take more kisses?

[Sound of Listener kissing Speaker again]

[Speaker laughs softly]

I can live with that.

Hm? Why're you pointing toward his direction and me...oh. Right. The hero is my brother, yes. We were both adopted. Even as a kid, he was always...well, disturbed. Our mother tried her best to help him, but he was too...wrong. I always knew he'd be a problem later on. I'm not sad to see him gone. But I wish things could have been different—

[Hiss of pain] Damn, that really hurts. I'll be ok, Scowls. My support team will find us, I have a tracker in my belt.

When we get back, I'm going to treat you to the best damn dinner of your life.

[Soft laugh] I'm ok. We'll be ok, Scowls.