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### The Promise

By: Valerie M. Orozco Diaz

Nathan sat on a metal bench inside his barred box. He was careful not to move too much as not to rip open his stitches. He found it hard to believe how easily Luke betrayed him at the museum leaving him for dead by stabbing him.

Nathan let out a tired sigh. *That bastard must pay!* *But I'm stuck in here while Monsieur Beaux is out there and still too alive for my liking.* He ruffles his shaggy black hair in frustration of what he should do when the answer comes through the door. A woman wearing a gray pantsuit opened the door and walked to Nathan's cell.

He lifted his gaze towards her, a small smile spread across his face when he asked, "Are you taking me to the big house?"

She shook her head and pulled out a set of keys from her pants pocket. Finding the right one, she lifted the key into the hole, unlocking the cell door. His eyes widen, and he stood up.

"You are going to help us catch Luke and Beaux," she said and opened the cell door for Nathan to walk out. Nathan raised a brow and crossed his arms.

"Thank you for doing me the favor of opening the cell for me," Nathan said and stepped out of his cell. "And Thanks for patching me up, but now I had to leave and a kill a French man," Nathan said and walked past her only for her to grab him.

"You are not going anywhere," she said.

Nathan snorts and pulls his arm back.

"And who is going to stop me, you?" Nathan said with a smirk while walking towards the door on the right side of the hallway.

She narrowed her eyes at him and easily tackles Nathan to the ground. He let out a pained groan. "Ouch! Woman! This is not the way to treat an injured person," Nathan said.

"No, this how I treat a prisoner that doesn't listen," she said and pushed him harder onto the ground when he tried to move.

"You will re-open my wound!" Nathan said.

"Then stop struggling! And be a good little thief," she said.

Nathan turned his head to the side to glance at her from the corner of his dark brown eyes. "I don't work for free and even less help the police who have done nothing for me," Nathan said.

"What is going on here, Detective Olivia?" asked a man dressed in casual clothing as if trying to blend in when walking through the streets. The badge hanging from his neck gave him away. She huffed in annoyance and glared down at a grinning Nathan. "He's not collaborating," Olivia said.

The man walked towards them and squats, "So let me see if I understand you don't work for free or for the police. However, I'm an FBI agent and is not the same as the police," he said.

"You all are the same to me," Nathan said.

The man shook his head and stood up. He motioned with his head for Detective Olivia to get up. She dragged Nathan up with her.

"You will still help us. Don't you want to see Beaux behind bars?" he asked.

Nathan shook his head and said, "I want him dead just like he wanted me."

"I see, but it's a matter of what you want more," he said a knowing grin on his face at the glare on Nathan's face.

Nathan shook his confusion away, "You want to make a deal?" Nathan asked.

He nodded and said, "You help us, and you will get your freedom,"

"Blake!" Olivia said.

Blake hushed her with a smile, "I know what I'm doing," he said, and she shook her head.

"He is a criminal," Olivia said.

"I could leave whenever I wanted if I were not injured," Nathan said.

"Ah if you help us I will make sure you will not get injured again," Blake said.

Nathan gave them a dry laugh and said, "Well I think I'll take you up on that deal, but when we find Beaux I'll be the one to kill him."

Blake only smiled, "Of course, Olivia," he said, and she pulled out a sedative injection and injected Nathan with it. His mouth parted to say something in protest, but his eyes shut down fast along with the rest of his body.

"Do you think it will work, Blake?" Olivia asked, "Because we could use something else or find another way inside the black-market auction."

Blake picked up Nathan's sleeping form, "Oh yes, he has the looks and because that place is under tight security. Which means someone must be inside to undo the security and having an item to sell will give us a free pass to get in through the back."

Detective Olivia lips part to say something only to close them when Blake gave her a sharp look. "This place doesn't have anything of value that would work so dressing him up in short notice is the last option we have left," he said with a Cheshire grin on his handsome face.

Blake exits with Nathan on his shoulders, and Olivia soon follows him out.

#

Nathan's eyes fluttered open and only saw darkness; he tried to move his hands.

*Great, this what I get for agreeing to help. Tied up and blindfolded,* Nathan thought and continued to move to undo the ropes. Blake glanced down at Nathan when he felt him moving next to him, so he removed the blindfold.

"Stay still. We are in an auction house, and merchandise should not move," Blake said.

Nathan's eyes widen, head snapped in Blake's direction.

"Wait, What?! Hmm-" Blake's hand flew to cover Nathan's mouth.

"I need you to be quiet and pretend to be a doll to give me time to search around to unlock the doors and shut off the electricity running through the door knobs," Blake whispered to Nathan. Nathan nodded, and Blake removed his hand from Nathan's mouth, Nathan looked down at himself his eyes almost popped out of his eye sockets at the pink Lolita dress he had on.

"You got to be kidding me!" Nathan stressed. "Just be lucky that you have a slim body and not that much hair at all that helps you pass off as a girl," Blake fixed the pink hat on Nathan's head who tried to bite him in retaliation.

Nathan glared at him, "Now be good stay here while I search around." Blake said and left. Nathan opened his mouth to protest, but quickly shut it when he heard someone exit a room. An auctioneer walked past but stopped when he caught sight of a very still Nathan.

"How hard is for people to follow directions," the auctioneer said to himself as he waved over a man, "Take the item to stage B." he ordered the man nodded and proceeded to pick him. *No, I don't want to be sold off!*

The people in the audience had their faces covered, but Nathan could feel the many stares boring into him and soft whispers of the audience.

"Now then let us start the bidding at \$16,000 for the doll, which looks real from where I'm standing," the auctioneer said giving a hum of approval in Nathan direction.

*Happy place, happy place,* Nathan thought in attempts to block out their words.

"\$16,700 for the doll!" another person from the audience said.

"This doll its worth more than \$16,700," the auctioneer said.

"\$19,000 for the doll," someone from the audience said.

*I'm worth more than that! Where are those damn police officers? I don't want to get sold,* Nathan whined in his head as he physically tried not to tremble, worried and scared of what would happen to him.

His inner pleas were answered when a cavalry of Boston police officers burst in, "Everyone on the ground now!" Detective Olivia said. The guest panicked moving around and dropped to the ground, "Hey you!" Olivia called out to Luke who ran behind the stage.

Nathan wiggled in place to loosen the rope on his wrist then proceed to untie his ankles. Nathan made his way backstage, "Damn police using me as bait!" grumbled almost missing Luke putting some paintings in a box. Nathan gulped, his gaze roamed around still it landed on some ropes on top of box.

*He had to pay* Nathan thought as he grabbed the rope, walking toward an unsuspecting Luke.

He pulled the rope tightly before he wrapped it around Luke's neck. Luke's hands flew to his neck to attempt to remove the ropes that were choking him. "Stop..." he said, but Nathan furrowed in anger and pulled tighter on the ropes.

"I knew he would leave," Detective Olivia said with Blake next to him as they searched for Luke. Blake's eyes widened when he caught sight of Nathan choking the life out of Luke.

"Nathan! Stop!" Blake ran to them and pulled the ropes out Nathan's hands. Luke flew forward coughing and inhaled the needed air into his lungs. "You are not supposed to kill him!" Blake said, and Nathan glared at Blake.

"He deserved it and much more," Nathan growled out. Blake shook his head and nodded to Olivia to handcuff Luke. "I'm he does but we need to find Beaux, and we can't do that if he is dead," Blake said with crossed arms. Nathan snorts, "You could have simply asked me because if you police people have forgotten, I use to work for him."

Blake blinks, *huh, I should have interrogated him first instead of assuming he was a low-level grunt.* Blake nodded, "Where?" Nathan continued to glare at Blake even when he



said, "New York City, in a penthouse at 150 West 56th Street Ph." Nathan smiled before he added, "It is heavily guarded."

*It will not be easy to get in, but Beaux has a Lolita girl fetish according to our research,* Blake's eyes landed on Nathan's face dropped, "Well, sweetheart looks like you will be spending more time with us." Blake gave Nathan a slap on the back. Nathan eye twitched and moved away from Blake.

"You got to be kidding me. I gave you the information you needed. So, I'm not needed to more and I didn't agree to cross-dress!" Nathan said. Blake shrugged, "Well is not like you have a choice and I suggest you cooperate. Otherwise, I would need to add attempt of murder to your file, and you will be in a cell for the rest of your life,"

Nathan's glared at Blake, but his face didn't hold anger that Nathan wanted to appear on his face. Instead, it only trembled and his gaze wavered as if Blake's words pained him. Nathan turned around and walked back to the stage.

*One day, I'll get it back! My freedom to make my own decisions,* Nathan thought.

"Blake?" Olivia asked and placed a hand on his shoulder. Blake shook his head to snap out of his trance, *was he trying not to cry?* He wondered and took a deep breath to collect himself.

"Is this necessary?" Nathan asked and lifted the handcuff that connected him to Blake.

"Sadly, is protocol but lucky for you. We are riding in first class," Blake said and pulled out their tickets from inside his suit jacket. A few people glanced their way but kept to themselves. The airport was not that pack with many people. "I see. You want us to ride first class because there will not be that many people for me to use as a hostage and make my escape," Nathan said.

"Plus, it will be empty," Blake nodded and thanked the woman who checked their tickets before they walked through the jetway. *Depending on how this whole thing goes I might need to start planning what I should do after. Continuing to be a thief will be risky because I have made a few enemies while working for Monsieur Beaux,* Nathan thought.

"You are awfully silent. Are you planning something?" Blake asked from beside him. Nathan blinked he didn't realize that he walked into the plane that was ready to depart from the Boston, airport. Until Blake spoke.

"It's none of your business," Nathan a scowled before he focused his attention on the handcuff.

Blake leaned back in his chair, "You can take them off if you want to." Nathan blinked up at him, *is he pulling my leg*

here? Nathan thought. He examined the handcuff for the second time and gave it a light pull only for it to open.

"You didn't lock it," Nathan said.

"Why bother? You would have escaped if it was," Blake said. Nathan grumbled aware that he was right; his hands went straight to the armrest as the plane took off the runway. "Are you scared of flying?" Blake nodded towards how tightly Nathan gripped the armrest. That his knuckles turned white from how tightly he held it.

"No, so leave me alone," Nathan said. He released his grip on the armrest and attempted to relax in his seat. *Who does he think he is fooling?* Blake thought. "Why don't you tell me something about you? Since we have an hour before we reach New York City," Blake said and waved a flight attendant over to ask for some water. The two of them were the only ones in first class to avoid any problems.

*If only I had a parachute to jump off,* Nathan thought and sighed. He allowed a smile to appear on his face when he said, "I'm sure you did your research on me, so don't bother,"

"I did, but there are things that even my files don't explain," Blake said. Nathan gave him a dry laugh, "Aww poor you," Nathan turned away from Blake and watched the clouds pass by; *I only want Monsieur Beaux to pay for trying to get rid of me,* Nathan thought. Blake eyed Nathan in attempts to figure out

something out, *how exactly does a simple food stealing brat become an art thief?* Blake thought and shook his head, *what's going with me? I should be focusing on how to capture Beaux not worry about him!*

#

"Quelle!" Monsieur Beaux yelled into the phone; his eyes blazed in anger that made one of the maids leave the living room. Monsieur Beaux sat on a white couch in his living room. "How could you have allowed the police to get inside the auction house?!" Monsieur Beaux asked. The man on the other side gulped nervously. That glad he wasn't telling the boss the information in person.

"We are not sure yet, Monsieur Beaux. We are considering it, but the police took everything, even the paintings that were stolen by Luke and Nathan," the man said. His jaw trembled at the low, dangerous growl that escaped Monsieur Beaux.

"Then what are you waiting for! Find out how they did that and get me Luke on the line," Monsieur Beaux bit out each word fill with venom. *Nobody, underestimates me without suffering the consequences!*

The man hesitated to answer for second, "Umm Luke is not here..." he pulled the phone away from his ear in case

Monsieur Beaux said something bad or yelled at him. However, Monsieur Beaux simply said, "Explain."

The man gulped and said, "He was arrested,"

Monsieur Beaux took a deep breath to calm himself for a moment, "Then get someone else to get new paintings and find out how they got in." Monsieur Beaux then ended the call; *I can't believe this. Luke is in jail, and my other best thief is dead!*

#

"We just arrived at JFK airport in New York City. Thank You for taking Delta airlines," the pilot said through the intercom. Blake waited as everyone on the plane got off before he attempted to wake up Nathan.

"Wake up," Blake said and gave Nathan's shoulders a shake only for Nathan to snuggle closer to the window. Blake sighs, *this was not in my job description*, he thought as he unbuckled Nathan and picked him up bride-style. *Why is it warm?* Nathan wondered and opened his eyes only to come face to face with someone's chest.

"Well and I thought I had to give you a kiss to wake up," Blake said with a chuckle. Nathan could feel the rumble of his chest. A light blush dusted his cheeks in the realization that he was being carried.

"Let me go!" Nathan struggled in Blake's hold who had to stop and put him down.

"You should have woken me," Nathan said.

"I tried, but it didn't work," Blake said.

Nathan grumbled under his breath and strode away from Blake who quickly grabbed him before he could get far to who knows where.

"Where are you going?" Blake asked.

"To get my revenge since he is here and possibly get far away from you," Nathan said.

Blake shook his head, "Not tonight. Tomorrow we will go to the New York City Police and put a plan into action," Blake took Nathan's arm in a tight grip. Blake pulled Nathan with him toward the taxi. That waited outside the almost deserted airport since few people traveled at night. Blake pushed him roughly inside before he got in himself and told the cab driver an address.

"What up with police and being rough?"

"I doubt you broke an arm, princess. So, deal with it," Blake said. The rest of the ride was a silent affair still they reached a townhouse. "Where are we?" Nathan asked and followed Blake out of the taxi which he paid for before they got out.

"My home," Blake walked up the steps to unlock the brown front door. "Shouldn't you take me to the police and put me in a cell or something?" Nathan asked unsure of what Blake's planned to do to him.

Blake sighs, "I can arrange that if you want to sleep in a cell that badly. Or I can put you in my small yard and handcuffed you to something," Blake said with crossed arms as he waited for Nathan to make a decision.

*Like hell, I'm sleeping outside like a damn dog!*

Nathan thought as he climbed the steps and walked past a smirking Blake. Nathan's eyes roamed around the inside that was decorated like something out of a magazine.

"My sister did the furnishing," Blake explained after he closed the front door.

"I didn't ask," Nathan said.

"Yeah, but you were thinking about it by the way you looked around," Blake said and shed his jacket while he walked further inside, down the hallway with a staircase to his right. Nathan was not far behind him, his hands behind his back.

"You know I can kill you," Nathan said.

"You're a thief, not a killer. Plus, how far can you get with that injury?" Blake gave his chest a light pat. Nathan stiffened, eyes closed at the sudden sting of pain that ran through him.

"Bastard," Nathan grumbled.

Blake's smiled and pushed Nathan down onto the sofa, "Is that really the way you want to talk to me. Since I'm the one who will change your bandages," Blake said and left the living room to get the first aid kit from the bathroom on the second floor. The room had a welcoming feel to it with its warm colors and dark furnisher, but it did nothing to calm Nathan.

Nathan placed his hand on his chest where he was stabbed, it was near his heart, but Luke barely missed it. *Why even bother? He might do the same thing and get rid of me when all of this is over as if I was trash.* His hand unconsciously tightened on his chest only to be ripped away by Blake.

"You are re-opening your injury!" Blake stressed. Nathan glanced down at his gray shirt that now had a red blood stain, "I-" Nathan tried to say. Blake shook his head and released his hold on Nathan's hand.

"I don't break my promises, so I'll get you your freedom back. So, you don't have to die in the process," Blake said and proceeded to remove Nathan's shirt.

Nathan's mind was a mess, and it felt like one almost as if he started to lose himself back to how he back in the streets. *I want him dead, so everything would be over it that too much to ask for? Monsieur Beaux in a body bag?*



Blake was not sure on what he could say to put Nathan at ease. And the silence slowly became unbearable for Blake. "Your right. I don't understand your desire to kill Beaux. Maybe because I have not experienced having my freedom taken away as you,"

Nathan lifted his eyes. Blake continued, "Or lived in the streets because nobody cared. Which is what led to your doubt on people and those who work in law, but I swear to you wouldn't be thrown away. So, will you cooperate with us because you are one of the few people that know the layout of Beaux penthouse."

Nathan searched Blake's gaze for any lies but found none. His shoulders slumped in defeat as he stared into Blake's determined eyes. *Maybe I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and attempt to trust him.* Nathan nodded which brought a relief smile onto Blake's face.

#

Nathan sighs for the third time that morning. "What's wrong?" Blake asked. Nathan tapped his pen on layout he drew of Monsieur Beaux's penthouse and the building. "That is unless I am a mouse, it will not be easy to sneak in," Blake hummed and looked up when the door to the meeting room opened.

"Agent Novak, a word," the police chief said. Blake stood up and followed him outside. The police chief made sure

that the door closed when Blake exited it so that Nathan wouldn't hear them.

"Have you lost it," he said. Blake raised an eyebrow, "Meaning?" the police chief shook his head and wiped sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief.

"Why do we have to work with a thief? He's not trustworthy," he said. Blake crossed his arms, "If you excuse my bluntness, Mr. Wiggins. You don't have no one else that know the building and is not afraid of going inside," Mr. Wiggins gulped and glanced away from Blake's sharp gaze.

"So, unless you have another plan," Mr. Wiggins shook his head, "you will have to work with him." Mr. Wiggins nodded. Blake opened the door to the meeting room which had a long table and chairs occupied by other officers who listened to Nathan's explanation of the security of the building and its layout. At that moment, he did not appear to be a thief but one of them. Blake couldn't stop the pride that sored within him when he saw that. *It's never too late for change, huh.*

#

Nathan took a few deep breaths, "Everything is set over here, Nathan. You can proceed," Blake said to Nathan through an ear piece. "Yeah," Nathan closed his eyes, *I should honestly do something about my slim appearance and grow more hair as to avoid having to once again dress up. However, this*

*time it had to be me because I simply have the body shape that Monsieur Beaux likes.*

Nathan nodded to the doorman who opened the glass door for him. The inside was the same as he remembered from the first time he crossed those doors. Everything was clean, elegant that only important people had the privilege to walk in. The furnisher without a doubt was a specific brand, and it would fetch a high price.

However, Nathan couldn't allow himself to be distracted by the money he could make from the items in the lobby. His gaze focused on the elevator in front of him. None of the people behind the welcome desk on his left stopped him. Nathan glanced at them from the corner of his eye while he waited for the elevator to reach the first floor.

*So, they are aware of seeing girls dressed in Lolita style clothes,* Nathan thought and walked into the elevator. "We managed to put the cameras in a loop and got some officers under cover as staff members," Blake said. Nathan while he pushed the top button for the penthouse. "But there are guards at the back entrance, roaming the halls," Nathan said.

"Don't worry we got that cover along with having armed people keeping an eye on Beaux. So, you only have to worry about is getting past the guards that stand guard in front of his door." Nathan's eyes widened, and he shook his head.

"Don't dare shoot the windows—" Nathan said only for the air piece connection with Blake to be cut off. *Crap! Forgot about the communication interfere device that Monsieur Beaux should stop any communications that are not started by him.*

#

Blake slams his headset down on the table, startled the two men in front of him. "Why was the connection interrupted?" he demanded. The thin-haired man to his left said, "Beaux has something that interfered with our communications." Blake pinched the top of his nose.

"How long will it take you, men, to shut it off?" The two men shared a worried look before the one on Blake's right said, "We can't because it is an independent device meaning that the only way to shut it down is doing it physically..." Blake's jaw tightened, and he opened the doors of the van, *Nathan don't do anything stupid.*

#

Nathan's shoulders slumped, *I can do this*, he thought just when the elevator gave off a ding sound when it reached the penthouse floor. He walked out of the elevator with a small smile on his face. Two overly muscular men stood on either side of the door, black shades on their blank faces as if they were statues.

Nathan relaxed his face, so he doesn't stand out or showed them how nervous he was. One of the men turned his head slightly toward Nathan, gave a small nod before he opened the door for him. Nathan walked into the penthouse, and the door closed behind him as if his escaped was sealed.

Nathan only walked two steps into the living room only to stop due to Monsieur Beaux voice. "Well aren't you a beauty," Monsieur Beaux said.

Nathan's smile twitched when he said a soft thank you that had the opposite effect of what Nathan wanted. Monsieur Beaux made his way towards Nathan; his gaze undressed him of the light blue dress he had on. Nathan lowered his gaze to attempt to keep himself composed because of his desire to try and do something to him.

Monsieur Beaux licked his lips in approval, "You are even better than the last one I asked for," Monsieur Beaux said and eyed Nathan carefully. "There is something familiar about you." Nathan forced a smile on his face, "That can't be this is my first time. Why don't we have a drink first?" Nathan asked.

Monsieur Beaux shook his head, one of his arm wrapped around Nathan's waist. "I'll rather have fun with you," he said and pulled Nathan roughly to him. "Oh, umm I don't think-" Monsieur Beaux shook his head a smirk on his face as he lowered closer to Nathan. *Oh, no is he going to kiss me,* Nathan started

to panic he tried to wiggle out of Monsieur Beaux gasp only for him to tighten his hold on Nathan.

"I do like them feisty," Monsieur Beaux leaned forward. Nathan turned his head to the side to avoid said kiss. Monsieur Beaux growled his patience non-existing at the moment. That he only wanted to let out steam, so he took hold of Nathan's chin to keep him in place.

*Oh, no you are not* Beaux thought and resumed his attempt to kiss Nathan who then took it upon himself to stop him. Nathan kneed Monsieur Beaux in the groin so he would let him go. Monsieur Beaux fell on his knees, doubling over from the pain. "Bitch..." Monsieur Beaux said and glared at Nathan who had a smirk on his face.

"Oh, you deserve that and even more for what you have done," Nathan said in his normal voice instead of the soft, girl sounding voice he used at the beginning. Monsieur Beaux eyes widened before he laughed. Nathan frowned, "What's so funny?!" Monsieur Beaux looked up at him.

"You are sneaky to avoid death somehow, but you gave away information to the police, and that's something I will not forgive," Monsieur Beaux stood up, "I should have kept a closer eye on street rats like you." Nathan's anger boiled over, and he jumped on him only for Beaux to kick him to the side.

Beaux laughed, pulled out a gun, "Now I'll make sure a rat like you stays dead," Nathan closed his eyes and prepared himself for the shot. Blake stormed out of the elevator and fired his gun at the two guards. Beaux glanced at the front door due to the sound multiple gun fires, and it was kicked open by Blake.

"Beaux lower your gun," Blake ordered. Beaux smirked moved his gun from Nathan to Blake, "I don't take well to being ordered," Beaux said and fired his gun at the same time Blake did.

Nathan's eyes snapped open; sweat ran down the side of his face as he stared up at the ceiling of the dark room. *A dream?* Nathan wondered taking calming breaths. Soft mumbles came from beside him as the arm around his waist pulled him closer. A smile appeared on his face; *he truly did keep his promise.*