

Scene1

CLEARSCREEN -

SFX_ALARM -

BG_ROBBERYONE -

It's him again.

No evidence for that, yet, but there's no-one else it could be. You just know.

You've gained a sort of sixth sense. There might be many robberies in one night, but you know exactly which one it is. You're pulled to him.

Don't even know his name. That's all he is to you.

Him.

Boutiques, jewellers, perfumeries. Always the mid-range ones.

He only takes two items per robbery. No more, no less.

And he never, ever, leaves anything identifiable.

/Him/.

You've certainly tried pinning something. A loose thread of fabric. Strands of hair. Fingerprints. Nothing. He leaves nothing for you to pursue, only blaring alarms and shattered glass in his wake.

You've even seen him, face to intricately-embroidered mask.

Taunting you, completely silent. A cheeky little wave as he flees to prey on his next victim.

Always just out of your reach. Always wondering who the bastard actually is.

That alarm's been going on so long you've drowned it out.

The reports are done. You've gone as far as your job will allow.

Like every other time, nothing else is left for you here. Your goodbye to the owners is an apology and "It's our highest priority."

GOTO:Scene2 - You leave the scene, empty-handed.

###

Scene2

BG_CLEAR -

U! - Another bust, detective?

The voice jolts you awake.

BG_OFFICE MUS_OFFICE - You blink twice, bleary-eyed, and dislodge a piece of paper stuck to your cheek. After rubbing away a tear, you look at the familiar face standing opposite your desk.

It's the chief, and your former partner, Elias.

Another blink turns him into a blur; a vague notion of a tall man with pale skin. Hair he is adamant is chestnut, and you never really understood why 'brown' doesn't satisfy him.

Another blink, and you scan the contents of your desk. Loose leaves of reports are scattered around, the one you used as a pillow half-finished.

Steam no longer rises from your coffee. You'd barely sipped the thing.

Elias approaches the desk, places his own coffee by your hand, and takes the cold cup for himself.

CHOICE1:[Thank him]:Scene2c1 E! - You've been asleep for an hour. Seems like you need it.

E! - Figured it was best not to wake you. This case has you in a frenzy at the best of times.

REMOVE:[Thank him] - You take the coffee and sip, glaring at him.

E! - Don't give me looks like that, detective.

Q! - As if anyone else wouldn't be in a frenzy working on this.

GOTO:Scene2p1 E! - I do suppose that's true.

###

Scene2c1

Q! - Thank you.

E! - No worries, detective.

You pull the coffee towards you and take a sip. The instant it reaches your lips, you flinch.

He always made it too hot. No matter what you told him about the flavour being ruined.

Before you can say that, never a step behind, Elias cuts in.

E! - The higher temperature makes it brew quicker.

Q! - I wasn't even going to ask that.

E! - You were. I know you were.

Elias takes a long draw from his cup, barely concealing a smirk behind it.

Him being correct is one of the worst feelings in the world. You try to suppress it with another drink.

It burns the roof of your mouth.

GOTO:Scene2p1 E! - There's no point even being surprised when it's him, is there? Down to the exact time, just like you said.

###

Scene2p1

CHOICE1:[Lie]:Scene2p1c1 CHOICE2:[Tell the truth]:Scene2p1c2 CHOICE3:[Stretch the truth]:Scene2p1c3 E! - I mean, what, how long have you been chasing him?

E! - Must have been...

REMOVE:[Lie] REMOVE:[Tell the truth] REMOVE:[Stretch the truth] E! - Six months, now I think.

Q! - Sounds about right.

E! - Hard to believe. Feels far longer than that. It's like you've been obsessed with him as long as I've known you.

Q! - I've known you for years. Don't be dramatic.

E! - All you ever talk about, besides your...

GOTO:Scene2p2 - He exhales sharply.

###

Scene2p1c1

Q! - Oh, only a month. Maybe two. I wouldn't stay on something that long without something to show, would I?

E! - Yet, you don't. We both know it's been longer than that.

Q! - Give me a break, here.

CHOICE1:[Rebuke]:Scene2p1c1c1 E! - I know it's a sore spot.

GOTO:Scene2p2 - You decide to let that slide, for now.

###

Scene2p1c1c1

Q! - No it isn't.

GOTO:Scene2p2 E! - Of course it's not, detective.

###

Scene2p1c2

Q! - About six months, give or take.

E! - Feels far longer than that. It's like you've been complaining about him for as long as I've known you.

Q! - Could get the case file, if you don't believe me.

GOTO:Scene2p2 E! - I do. Time is a tricky bastard, is all.

###

Scene2p1c3

Q! - A year, at the least! Possibly more. It feels like a decade to me!

Q! - Centuries. Aeons! Chasing this one, single man!

E! - It's incredible spending all that time listening to poets has had no effect on you.

Q! - What are you saying?

GOTO:Scene2p2 E! - You need to keep your dayjob, is what I'm saying.

###

Scene2p2

E! - I do find your dedication to this admirable. If not a little concerning.

E! - So, I suppose...

The corner of his mouth twists. As if the phrase is acid on his tongue.

CHOICE1:[Name]:Scene2p2c1 E! - Keep up the good work, detective.

E! - I do mean that. You know I don't give out compliments lightly.

Another twist of the mouth. You can almost see your name between his teeth.

E! - I guess I'm proud of your resolve, detective.

GOTO:Scene2p3 Q! - What good's resolve when I've got nothing to show for it?

###

Scene2p2c1

Q! - You /can/ call me Quincey, Elias.

Q! - Quinn, even. We know each other well enough for that.

Elias grips his cup, knuckles slowly turning white.

E! - I will say the same thing as the other times you asked this, detective.

E! - I like to keep a distinction between working relationships and personal ones.

CHOICE1:[Ask why]:Scene2p2c1c1 - Elias takes a sip, not breaking eye contact.

Almost daring you to say something.

GOTO:Scene2p2c1p1 - You know better than to try.

###

Scene2p2c1c1

GOTO:Scene2p2c1p1 - Just as you open your mouth, Elias ploughs over you.

###

Scene2p2c1p1

E! - To the point, and as I said, you've been doing good work.

GOTO:Scene2p3 Q! - Good work for nothing.

###

Scene2p3

E! - Not quite nothing, surely? You've got a pattern down to the point you can predict his next move on a whim.

Q! - And no idea who he actually is. What good does that do me?

Q! - I know when he strikes, where he hits, what he's after. And every single time I miss him by a hair.

Q! - Do you know how many times I've tried to make a case to everyone else, Elias? How I'd be able to catch the bastard if I had a bit of help?

Q! - But no. He takes so little they see him as nothing more than a petty pickpocket. Hardly worth anything more than one or two on his tail.

Q! - Bastard. Absolute bastard...

Elias nods, his face still stoic.

E! - Keeping him in your mind is doing you no favours. You'll have plenty of time to think of him when I'm out of your hair.

CHOICE1:[The usual]:Scene2p3c1 **CHOICE2:**[Nothing special]:Scene2p3c2 **E!** - Have you got any plans for tonight?

E! - I might be heading out to Osark's, myself. Weather depending; I only go for the gardens.

REMOVE:[The usual] **REMOVE:**[Nothing special] **CHOICE1:**[Think about it]:Scene2p3c3

CHOICE2:[Night off]:Scene2p3c4 **E!** - You can tag along too, if you want.

GOTO:Scene2p4 **E!** - Unless...

###

Scene2p3c1

Q! - Just going to the usual spots, you know?

GOTO:Scene2p4 **E!** - Right, the usual.

###

Scene2p3c2

Q! - Eh, nothing special.

GOTO:Scene2p4 **E!** - Oh? Has it stopped feeling special?

###

Scene2p3c3

Q! - I'll think about it. Get back to you.

GOTO:Scene2p4 **E!** - I see. Reluctant to go to your favourite spot.

###

Scene2p3c4

Q! - Nah. I'm taking the night off.

GOTO:Scene2p4 **E!** - The "night off", you say?

###

Scene2p4

CHOICE1:[Yes]:Scene2p4c1 **CHOICE2:**[No]:Scene2p4c2 **E!** - Are you going to see your /friend/ again?

E! - Detective?

E! - Your silence speaks volumes, you know.

Elias drums his fingers on the cup.

E! - ...Quinn?

REMOVE:[Yes] **REMOVE:**[No] **E!** - Oh, I won't stop you. Not like I could.

GOTO:Scene2p5 **E!** - If anything, trying would just make you more stubborn.

###

Scene2p4c1

Q! - Of course I am.

E! - Finally come round to admitting it?

Q! - I never denied anything.

E! - Oh, technically. Not quite saying anything.

E! - Never explaining why you stayed there long after the show was over. Why you seldom left through the front entrance.

CHOICE1:[Deny]:Scene2p4c1c1 **E!** - You went red in the face a few times.

E! - You're going red right now.

GOTO:Scene2p5 E! - I'm only teasing. I'll leave you alone.

###

Scene2p4c1c1

Q! - I don't do that.

GOTO:Scene2p5 E! - Your cheeks say otherwise.

###

Scene2p4c2

Q! - I'm not.

Elias stares at you.

GOTO:Scene2p5 **Q!** - Look, I—

###

Scene2p5

E! - Well, detective...

His face sinks.

E! - Good luck.

Elias walks out, leaving you with a final, severe look. The door clicks gently as it closes.

That conversation was pointless. The whole thing was a thinly-veiled assault, Elias trying to back you into a corner and admit it.

GOTO:Scene3 - Where else would you be going?

###

Scene3

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

BG_WALKING MUS_CITY -

The sun's just dipped below the horizon.

All the city is bathed in a soft orange glow. Autumnal breeze whips against your coat.

Not strong enough to be unpleasant, but enough to make you wrap it closer to your chest.

You don't go out after work often. Only on certain nights, and to certain spots.

There were old favourites, but that's all they are now. Old.

Something new has gripped you.

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

Poetry was never something you 'got'.

You, truthfully, still don't quite get it.

When you tell people you go to poetry readings so frequently, they're usually impressed.

They think of you as a man of culture and prestige.

But some launch into tirades of their favourites and rambling about sonnets. "Up-and-coming stars" that are here to "change things forever."

You nod politely, and let them talk to themselves. Those kinds of people love the sound of their own voices, you've found.

There's only one poet you truly care about.

CLEARSCREEN -

You thought the night would be uneventful, when Elias invited you out. He insisted on it; something novel for a change.

You're always up for a new experience, but you entered that building knowing you'd hate it. Why wouldn't you?

You don't /get/ poetry. A new string of words wouldn't suddenly make it click.

Droning on and on, clapping at nothing, someone else enters, on and on...

Until, green carnation tucked in his pocket, he took the stage.

His name is Flynn.

You don't know his surname. It's a quirk of his; he only performs under that name alone.
Prying for it feels like you'd ruin the mystique.

In one line, he had you captivated.

So close to the stage his beauty was heavenly. His blonde hair shining like the sun.

Constellations of freckles bejewelled on his skin.

You hung onto every word. Open-eyed and eager for the next. Fully at the mercy to where his verse would take you.

He had this certain cadence. A warmth to his voice. You just knew no-one else could deliver this like he did.

And then, you had to know more about him.

CLEARSCREEN -

BG_POEM MUS_POEM - The night is well underway.

The last act, someone you give no more than a passing glance, is revelling in the audience's reception.

It's not a standing ovation, but they're enthusiastic, and their performer is taking it in with glee. Clearly, they're someone new to this.

Rather than join the crowd's modest applause, you're instead scanning the curtains, hunting for a certain silhouette.

After working out his reputation, what venues he's at, and patterning out when he's usually booked, you have a system for finding out the exact time Flynn's on stage.

It's a matter of convenience. Why would you waste your night on people you don't care for?

The audience has quietened down, returning to a usual level of conversation and merriment.

Someone laughs grandly at his friend's quip.

He's up next, as you predicted, and you see familiar curls of gold through a slit in the curtains.

His hand snakes out, and pushes them aside just slightly.

CHOICE1:[Whistle]:Scene3c1 - Flynn glances around the crowd. You know he's seen bigger, and seems mostly unphased by it.

He tells you he does that not out of nerves, but to see what kind of reception he'll be getting.

Apparently, you can glean a lot from an audience just from how they look.

You believe him. You know how well that's served you in the past.

Apparently, something in the crowd has caught his eye. He stares at it for a few seconds.

Looking at where he's looking, you see a couple in full embrace, completely oblivious to the night around them. A scowl grows on his face.

As quick as he arrived, his hand retreats, leaving a small gap in the curtains.

REMOVE:[Whistle] - Flynn disappears, the gap filled with other performers crossing back and forth.

You got his attention before the show last time. There's no reason not to spice it up.

MUS_CLEAR - A man strides out to the front, and the chatter dies down. He squints at the cards in his hand.

An introduction. You've heard this one a few times, and he doesn't even think to change it up a little.

"Rising star Flynn." He's been 'rising' for as long as you've known him. Surely, rising for half a year would qualify you for some kind of stardom.

But the audience revels in it. They break into a grand applause, some of them recognising the name. This one, you do join in.

Flynn clears his throat, demanding their silence, and the audience complies.

CHOICE1:[Whistle]:Scene3c2 - He begins the read of his poem. It's a new one.

After a certain point, you stopped listening to these. They're technically sound, or something. You're not quite sure.

Why would you focus on that when Flynn is right there? Admiring the way he dominates that stage, despite standing completely still.

How does the light always manage to catch him so perfectly? Every beam illuminates his best features. Sharp collarbone. That jawline. Slender, yet sturdy hands.

His sweet, sultry tones wash over you...

REMOVE:[Whistle quietly] - You don't know how long it's been. You've just enjoyed whatever it was.

The audience loved it. Cheers and hoots fill the room, some obviously trying to fish for his attention.

But even amongst all that, Flynn's eyes drift towards you.

They drift to you on muscle memory. At every venue he performs, you have one spot you always stand, just for this purpose.

He mouths something to you, completely unintelligible. Perhaps it was spoken, drowned out entirely in the applause.

But, it doesn't matter. You've seen each other more than enough to know what it means.

GOTO:Scene3p1 - It's an invitation.

###

Scene3c1

Flynn shoots up immediately.

He knows that whistle. You've perfected it to a precise C#. A delightful joy lights up his eyes, even before they land on you.

They know exactly where to go. You have one spot you always stand for each venue he performs.

He mouths something to you, completely unintelligible. But, you've seen each other more than enough to know what it means.

GOTO:Scene3p1 - It's an invitation.

###

Scene3c2

Mid-line, Flynn's eyes swivel to meet yours.

He's a master at work, and doesn't stop his delivery. Everyone's so fixated on him, they didn't even notice your stunt.

Again no-one noticing, he smirks at you. You've seen each other that many times that you know what it means.

GOTO:Scene3p1 - It's an invitation.

###

Scene3p1

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

You're sure the poem was striking satire, or a wonderful commentary of the state of society, or something or the other.

But now you're here for your intended purpose.

BG_BACKSTAGE - Backstage, several performers wander around; others are members of staff.

Some of them know you already. Those who know even more wink at you.

The night is still ongoing, which is perfect. Just enough noise for privacy, and all the attention is on everything but you.

As you have your spot in the crowd, Flynn, of course, has his own to find.

This venue is a maze of curtains back here, so easy to lose yourself in. Several have already made homes with pillows and gossip.

In dramatic flourish, you yank back the one belonging to him.

You've progressed beyond the need for salutations. Flynn almost jumps to a stand, and gently holds your arm.

CHOICE1:[Me too]:Scene3p1c1 **CHOICE2:**[Been a while]:Scene3p1c2 **F!** - I missed you so much.

F! - It's been a long day, too. Nothing I did could make me relax.

REMOVE:[Me too] **CHOICE2:**[Why]:Scene3p1c3 **F!** - I was so nervous on stage. I didn't think I'd do well.

F! - Don't have much to say, Quinn?

GOTO:Scene3p2 **Q!** - Do I need to?

###

Scene3p1c1

Q! - Me too, Flynn.

You gaze at each other, unsure of how much time passes.

GOTO:Scene3p2 **Q!** - ...I'm not sure what else to say.

###

Scene3p1c2

Q! - It feels like it's been years since I've seen you.

F! - Aren't I supposed to be the dramatic one! It hasn't been that long.

Q! - Feels like it, besides. I swear there's been less nights running.

F! - I'm always amazed how attentive you are.

GOTO:Scene3p2 **Q!** - Comes with the job, really.

###

Scene3p1c3

GOTO:Scene3p2 **Q!** - Why would you be nervous? You do well everytime.

###

Scene3p2

F! - Oh, you...

CHOICE1:[Metre]:Scene3p2c1 **CHOICE2:**[Rhyme]:Scene3p2c2 **F!** - Did you enjoy the poem?

F! - It was a little experimental, I admit. I wasn't sure how well it would land with that crowd.

F! - Although, I think they would have liked anything I did. Seemed to have a few fans in there.

F! - That has been getting to me, though. I'm not sure if my recent stuff is good, or I'm just reading to people who will like it no matter what.

CHOICE3:[Good]:Scene3p2c3 **F!** - What do you think, Quinn?

REMOVE:[Metre] **REMOVE:**[Rhyme] **REMOVE:**[Good] - He smiles, bashfully.

F! - I know, that's silly to ask. You just like everything I do.

Q! - Your work captivates me, Flynn. You know I don't know how to explain all the technical parts.

GOTO:Scene3p3 **Q!** - I can't put into words why, it just...

###

Scene3p2c1

Q! - The metre, it was...

You never really learnt what that was. You've just heard other people talk about it.

GOTO:Scene3p3 **Q!** - Good?

###

Scene3p2c2

Q! - I loved your use of rhyme. You really have a way with it.

F! - The fact I didn't use any?

You stammer. You could have sworn you heard something rhyme, at some point.

GOTO:Scene3p3 Q! - Yes. That's what I meant.

###

Scene3p2c3

Q! - I think it's good.

F! - I know that! I meant everyone else.

GOTO:Scene3p3 Q! - Well, you had to get fans from being good, right? Why else would they like it?

###

Scene3p3

Flynn giggles. Almost anything you do or say can make him laugh.

F! - I still remember the look on your face when you saw me for the first time.

F! - And "I never liked poetry," you said?

CHOICE1:[Hold him]:Scene3p3c1 - He moves closer, right hand drifting up to your shoulder. Letting him explore is always a treat. It almost dances along your arm, finding a spot to rest near your collarbone.

He looks at you, expectantly.

REMOVE:[Hold him] - You look back at him, raising a playful eyebrow. Flynn never liked taking the lead, but obliges.

It's nice when he does.

GOTO:Scene3p4 - He pulls you closer, arms around your back, and presses into your chest.

###

Scene3p3c1

Not to be outdone, you place both your hands on his shoulders, and pull him closer.

GOTO:Scene3p4 - His hands retreat immediately, instead finding themselves pressed lightly against your chest.

###

Scene3p4

Flynn turns his head up to yours.

His eyes have always enchanted you. A pale green; jade.

You bask for a moment. His heat against yours makes you feel—

F! - I have to go.

Suddenly, Flynn pulls away.

Q! - What? Already?

F! - I know. I had some extra stuff come up tonight. I don't want to leave either.

F! - We had to spend some time together even if it was short. I'm sorry.

You find yourself too confused to protest.

F! - I'll make it up to you. We can meet during the day tomorrow; I'm available.

Q! - Tomorrow?

F! - Tomorrow. I promise. Meet me in King's Park.

You want to say more, but before you can even think what to say he's pulling the curtain aside.

All he left was a trace of a finger down your arm.

GOTO:Scene4 - He's gone. His silhouette dissolves into the drapes. Whatever shadows dance behind it aren't his.

###

Scene4

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR -

You leave unsatisfied.

BG_WALKINGNIGHT MUS_CITYNIGHT - That's never happened before. What could he possibly be doing at this time?

10:53p.m., according to your pocket watch. You close the lid and return it to your waistcoat, and tighten your coat again.

Nearly eleven o'clock... Unless he has somewhere to be in the morning?

You really should have asked him. He's not one to keep secrets. Half the time he tells you things unprompted.

But the speed he left, as well...

The light of gas lamps guides you home. That's a novelty, since they're usually off after a certain time.

MUS_ALARM - Occasionally, you kick a loose rock on the ground, listening to it bounce across the cobblestone.

Now you're listening to an alarm. Who's getting robbed now?

It's no concern to you, just a curiosity. You don't work nights. Not any of the ones he isn't about to strike.

Just faintly, you hear the shatter of glass.

They're close. That does concern you, if they're armed.

It sounds like it's coming from one street over.

You could swear, if this is the part of town you think it is, according to the pattern...

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR SFX_ALARM -

BG_ROBBERYTWO - This shouldn't be happening.

The pattern is infallible. Every six nights, roughly 9 o'clock. On nights like this, with the temperature cool but skies clear, he always seems to come at twenty minutes to the hour.

But it shouldn't be this night. It can't be him.

And yet, there you see it. Two bottles of perfume missing from the stand. The only thing he left is shattered glass.

Nothing to identify who it was.

You stare at the scene for what feels like hours, before two people approach you, claiming to be the owners.

In fact, you know them. They've been robbed by him before.

You're off-duty, you tell them, and give them directions for help.

GOTO:Scene5 - With some shouts at your back, you leave the scene, empty-handed.

###

Scene5

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR -

E! - Now it has my attention, detective.

BG_OFFICE MUS_OFFICE **Q!** - Don't patronise me.

E! - I wasn't. I was simply stating a fact.

E! - You had him down to the hour. Minute, on occasion. Months and months of an unshakable routine and now the pattern's been broken.

E! - It has my attention. It has the attention of others, too.

Q! - Well isn't that a joke?

Q! - I spend how much time on this, a perfect net to trap him in, and you all want to listen to me when it suddenly goes up in smoke?

Q! - I'm back to square one. All that work, gone. No idea where he could be next.

Q! - You know, if I just knew who he was—

Elias places a hand down on your desk, leaning over.

E! - I think it's time for you to take a break, detective.

CHOICE1:[What are we]:Scene5c1 **E!** - Do you have any other things you can be working on in the meantime?

E! - There's other cases you could chip into. I'm sure they need some assistance.

Elias drums his fingers on the desk.

E! - Is there something you want to say, detective?

He drums them again, off rhythm.

E! - Could there be any personal issues on your mind?

GOTO:Scene5p1 **Q!** - Issues, Elias? You want to talk about personal issues?

###

Scene5c1

Q! - What are we, EI?

Elias pauses.

E! - I'm not sure what you mean by that. You're a detective, and I'm your boss.

Q! - You know that's not what I mean.

You don't say anything else. Both of you have an entire conversation in silence.

E! - Our relationship is strictly a working one. Any history we have is irrelevant.

Q! - Is it?

GOTO:Scene5p1 - Elias commits to the silence, but you shatter it.

###

Scene5p1

Q! - You're still not over Flynn.

The accusation hangs between you in the air. You can almost see it move him, in a slight twitch of his eye.

Then, he composes himself.

E! - This isn't the time to be bringing up petty conflicts, detective. If you have no other work, then I suppose you can continue with this.

E! - Just as you say, you're back to square one. Focus on that.

Q! - So that's how we're going to fix it? Ignoring what you're doing? I think that's what we need to focus on.

CHOICE1:[Jealousy]:Scene5p1c1 **E!** - Problems? Detective, I haven't seen a single issue manifest itself.

CHOICE2:[Resources]:Scene5p1c2 **E!** - If anything, this case has been progressing nothing but smoothly.

E! - More than smoothly, even. As I've said, I'm impressed with what you've accomplished, here.

It takes everything to not laugh into his face.

REMOVE:[Jealousy] **REMOVE:[Resources]** **Q!** - Impressed, Elias? Really? You're going to keep saying that?

Q! - You know what would really show you're impressed? Letting me pursue who I want.

GOTO:Scene5p2 **Q!** - Instead of all the games you're trying to play. Saying things to other people. Spreading rumours. Trying to roadblock my work in revenge.

###

Scene5p1c1

Q! - You're the problem. You're jealous.

Q! - Ever since I gave him a little bit of attention, you couldn't stand it. Even more since we broke up.

Q! - So, you've been trying to make moves behind my back. Offhanded comments to other people.

GOTO:Scene5p2 Q! - It worked, I'll admit. For a little, until I realised what game you were trying to play.

###

Scene5p1c2

Q! - You know what would make it run even smoother, Elias? Just a little, just a fraction more resources I could put to use.

Q! - I've made my case many times. Mapped out exactly what I'd need and why. I've even had some of the commissioners agree with me.

GOTO:Scene5p2 Q! - So tell me, then, why do you keep blocking all my attempts to get more? What game are you playing, Elias?

###

Scene5p2

Elias leans further over your desk, but you're not intimidated.

Q! - You can't stop me seeing Flynn. You know that. This is the only way you can get back at me.

His mouth tightens. Every move he makes is calculated with a tactician's precision, that to an untrained eye looks effortless.

To be countered, exposed, is the worst possible thing that could happen to him.

E! - I'll leave you to your work, detective.

He storms out. Professionally, in a manner to everyone else might look like he's been called for an important meeting, or rushing to an emergency.

You, like always, know better. You always know better with Elias.

...

You let your head slump to the desk, and close your eyes.

Wonderful. Not only is this case becoming even more of a thorn, you've got a storm on the horizon with your boss.

Your /boss/. Calling him that still feels wrong.

That's all going to come to head, and then...

A walk. That's what you need.

GOTO:Scene6 - Yes. You need to stop thinking about this. You've been thinking too much.

###

Scene6

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -
BG_PARK MUS_CITY -

King's Park isn't busy, miraculously.

It's one of the central points of greenery in the city. On any normal day, it could hold hundreds of picnic-goers and even several boats in its lake.

You used to walk here more often, actually, before—

F! - Quinn?

His voice takes you by surprise. Suddenly, all the problems you had seem a little frivolous. You completely forgot about your plans to meet. And now you think, you never agreed to a time.

A lucky coincidence you caught each other.

You try to think of what to say, but the look on Flynn's face catches you off guard.

You probably have a look on yours, too. Never ever good at a poker face. Not like...

CHOICE1:[Work]:Scene6c1 **CHOICE2:[Friends]:Scene6c2** **F!** - Is there something wrong, Quinn?

Q! - Well...

F! - Yeah?

You swallow, then scratch your arm.

GOTO:Scene6p1 **Q!** - It's not important. It's just personal stuff.

####

Scene6c1

GOTO:Scene6p1 **Q!** - Just something at work. Confidential.

####

Scene6c2

GOTO:Scene6p1 **Q!** - Friends. Nothing serious.

####

Scene6p1

F! - Oh, dear. That's never fun.

Q! - It has been getting me down, honestly.

Flynn's concern starts to fade, instead replaced by a sly smile.

F! - I think I could make it a little better.

CHOICE1:[Not here]:Scene6p1c1 - Flynn moves closer to you. He puts both hands to your cheeks, caressing your left.

CHOICE2:[Kiss]:Scene6p1c2 - The other combs back through your hair, finding your nape.

REMOVE:[Not here] - This is bold for him. You have to see where this is going.

Now, he's tentative, as if he didn't expect to get this far.

He must be waiting on you to act.

REMOVE:[Kiss] - You won't give him the satisfaction. If he wants to take the lead, he needs to grab it.

He's unsure what to do next, and you put one hand on the small of his back to encourage him.

Flynn moves his head closer.

His lips are less than a finger's width from yours, begging to be kissed.

You wait for Flynn to seize the moment, and for him to lean in just a little closer...

GOTO:Scene6p2 - Then, he doesn't.

####

Scene6p1c1

Q! - We can't do this here.

F! - Why? Who says we can't?

Q! - What do you mean 'who says'?! Who knows who could be watching?

Q! - Reputation, Flynn. I know scandal probably benefits /you/, but—

He grips your lapels, and thrusts himself onto you.

And for a second, you lose yourself to the moment. Nothing matters but the soft touch of his lips.

Your sensibilities rush back. You pull away, gasping.

GOTO:Scene6p2 **Q!** - Flynn!

####

Scene6p1c2

Seizing the moment, you push forward to meet him.
You wonder why he's so surprised. Clearly, this is what he was fishing for.
Flynn pulls away, and gasps.

GOTO:Scene6p2 F! - Quinn...

###

Scene6p2

He grabs your hand, pulling you off the dirt path. You stumble into a run as you follow him, blindly.

Before you can ask what he's doing, you find yourself behind a tall row of hedges.

He stops before a small gap in the row. You're unsure if it was formed naturally, or if others walked into it before you.

BG_HEDGE MUS_CITYNIGHT - Flynn pushes his way through and brings both of you down to the floor, crunching twigs in his wake.

A canopy of leaves surrounds you, the world suddenly quieter, and the sun muted behind greenery.

Was that Flynn's plan the whole time? Did he find this spot before finding you?

Light dapples across his face, catching his hair like threads of silk.

CHOICE1:[Jump to it]:Scene6p2c1 F! - And now we have privacy.

He looks at you, expectantly.

Why can he never take the lead himself?

Even the times he does, you still have to be the one who reacts first.

Or perhaps, he likes this. You don't need to jump to it, maybe...

REMOVE:[Jump to it] - The buildup needs to be gradual. You'll enjoy it far more.

Entertaining him like this is almost torturous, but Flynn finally starts to make a move.

He has to know what this does to you, moving at that pace, putting his head closer and closer to yours.

GOTO:Scene6p3 - Then, slowly, he starts to kiss you.

###

Scene6p2c1

You're far too impatient to wait.

GOTO:Scene6p3 - In one motion, you pull Flynn towards you and immediately set your tongue in his mouth.

###

Scene6p3

It starts nearly lethargic, inexperienced. Flynn almost seems nervous to enjoy it.

You lead a little more, showing what he can do with his tongue. He mirrors it, like apprentice learning from master.

He starts to grow more enthusiastic. Understanding it, exploring in ways you haven't shown him.

Now he's going faster. You match his pace, closing your eyes.

You're entirely lost in how he tastes. How he smells. Of course you've kissed, but nothing to this intensity.

CHOICE1:[Go further]:Scene6p3c1 - You've both been desperate for this, you realise.

No thoughts enter your head but Flynn. Gorgeous, gorgeous Flynn.

You count every blessing you have that you have this.

Not stopping his kiss, Flynn starts to move closer, shifting himself upwards.

He straddles your hips, and puts both hands around your back.

REMOVE:[Go further] - This is new for him.

He pushes himself deeper onto you, forcing you even further down to the ground.

GOTO:Scene6p4 - His weight is a gentle comfort, still lost in that kiss, feeling his hands start to explore up and down your spine...

###

Scene6p3c1

Still kissing, you rip open his shirt, buttons popping off under the force.

He tries gasping, but you silence him with another move of your tongue.

You immediately set to work. You hunt his body, caressing and twirling your fingers along the parts you know are his most sensitive.

Flynn shudders under your hands.

GOTO:Scene6p4 - You don't relent. You caress further, finding his ribs, his adonis belt, your other hand traces down his spine...

###

Scene6p4

You part to breathe again.

Sweat has started to pour through your shirt. You loosen the first two buttons, and flick a bead off your eyebrow.

Q! - I think...

You exhale, deeply.

Q! - We need to go somewhere more suitable.

Flynn laughs. It breaks the spell he's cast over you, and you start to laugh with him.

F! - Oh God, where? In the middle of the day?

Q! - I was hoping you'd have some ideas.

F! - We could make our way back to mine, but...

Suddenly, his smile starts to fade.

CHOICE1:[Ask]:Scene6p4c1 CHOICE2:[Understand]:Scene6p4c2 F! - The people I live with, I don't think they'll like you around.

F! - It's not a personal thing. I promise.

F! - Just, you know...

He pushes a hair off his cheek, and sighs.

GOTO:Scene6p5 MUS_CLEAR F! - You're a cop, Quinn.

###

Scene6p4c1

Q! - Why won't they?

GOTO:Scene6p5 MUS_CLEAR F! - You're a cop, Quinn.

###

Scene6p4c2

Q! - I get it. My neighbours hate when someone they don't know is around.

F! - That's not quite what I meant.

GOTO:Scene6p5 MUS_CLEAR F! - You're a cop, Quinn.

###

Scene6p5

The accusation makes you pause.

Q! - I mean, well, I'm technically a detective.

F! - They won't care about the semantics.

CHOICE1:[Kiss again]:Scene6p5c1 F! - And that's not the point. The point is...

Flynn shuffles on the spot, moving one leg over the other. Leaves rustle under him.

He stares at you.

GOTO:Scene6p6 - You've had your fun. It's better to cut your losses now.

###

Scene6p5c1

You kiss him again. Initially, he rejects, but his tongue once more finds a home in your mouth.

Your hand caressing something, you try savouring the moment...

GOTO:Scene6p6 - You part once more. It didn't feel as good as before

###

Scene6p6

MUS_CITYNIGHT **Q!** - I do, er, need to get back.

CHOICE1:[Stay]:Scene6p6c1 CHOICE2:[Leave]:Scene6p7 Q! - But...

It would be a shame to leave on a sour end, wouldn't it?

You look to Flynn again, trying to bring yourself back to forgetting everything else.

Even here, where the shade tries to hide them, you can still lose yourself in those beautiful jade eyes.

You can't quite tell if he wants you to stay or not. His face is unreadable.

F! - If you have to go, we can always meet another time, can't we?

F! - It's not like you have any trouble finding me.

GOTO:Scene6p7 - He's very right about that.

###

Scene6p6c1

You lean in for another round, but a set of footsteps through the grass makes you stop.

GOTO:Scene6p7 - Why did you even try that? The trouble this could attract is astronomical.

###

Scene6p7

Q! - No, I can't stay any longer. I have work to get done.

You peck his cheek as a thank you and goodbye, and run a hand through his hair.

Q! - Your next reading. I'll catch you there.

F! - Will you?

You suppress a laugh. As if there should be any doubt in your skills.

GOTO:Scene7 Q! - You know I will.

###

Scene7

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

You really should be spending the night off, but something's ticking in your head.

Elias being correct drives you mad. He's completely right about you needing to stop.

But you can't. Even when you take a break, or put your mind to something else, it drifts back to this damn case.

The only thing that works to distract you is Flynn, but you can never find him when you need to.

You're walking around again. You told yourself it was just to clear your head, but that's not true at all.

There's a hunch you want to test.

Because that avenue, the one to your immediate right, is one where there should be...

MUS_ALARM - An alarm.

Yes. Yes!

CLEARSCREEN MUS_CLEAR SFX_ALARM -

BG_ROBBERYTHREE - At this time, this day, and this exact shop. 10:52p.m. One minute earlier, because the sky's overcast.

It's a new pattern, yes, only /shifted/. It's crackable.

You observe the scene from a distance, but even from here you see his marks all over it.

What was it this time? Two watches? How unexpected.

Another robbery just last night? Someone else? Oh, how terrible.

It's all falling into place. You can feel your brain putting the jigsaw together.

If you mapped the shops, and what he took, assuming this new pattern of time, his next would be...

GOTO:Scene8 - You leave the scene, no longer empty-handed.

###

Scene8

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR -

BG_OFFICE MUS_OFFICE - You scribble furiously on page after page.

The entire night swept by. Dawn broke hours ago, and you haven't slept at all.

Your coffee is cold again, but you don't even need it. All you need is this cocktail of mania and spite.

New patterns, new ways to catch him. You can feel the effort of months finally falling into place.

Your eyes well up, demanding you to rest, but you just blink it away. Nothing can stop you.

The door clicks open, and Elias walks in.

CHOICE1:[Hey]:Scene8c1 CHOICE2:[Last night]:Scene8c2 - Your pen slows to a crawl. He does not speak.

You drum your fingers, maybe to incite him to say something.

Elias walks over to the window. With a pinky finger, he pulls aside the sheers slightly.

He watches the street outside.

GOTO:Scene8p1 - Silence falls between you.

###

Scene8c1

Q! - Hey.

E! - Hello.

GOTO:Scene8p1 - Silence falls between you.

###

Scene8c2

Q! - Saw the robbery, last night.

He glances at you for less than a second.

Q! - Got a lead from it. I'm starting to make progress.

E! - Good, detective.

GOTO:Scene8p1 - Silence falls between you.

###

Scene8p1

Silence.

Silence...

Elias coughs, once.

CHOICE1:[Enough]:Scene8p2c1 - Silence.

You shift in your seat, and begin flipping through some papers.

That one's done, this one's done...

Elias is staring at you.
When your eyes meet, he immediately turns to the window.
You return to the paper. There has to be something you can occupy yourself with.
Nothing can stop you, nothing can stop you...

...

GOTO:Scene8p3 - You slam your hands down on the desk, and jump to a stand.

###

Scene8p2c1

GOTO:Scene8p3 - You slam your hands down on the desk, and jump to a stand.

###

Scene8p3

Q! - We need to stop this.

E! - Stop what? Nothing's happened.

Q! - Trying to pretend that everything's okay won't help.

E! - It will help perfectly well if you keep yourself focused on your job, rather than some petty squabbles.

Q! - Petty squabble? Is that all this was to you?

Elias makes a slow, deliberate turn to you.

E! - A petty squabble, detective, and nothing more.

You stride out from behind your desk, and move to face him.

Q! - You were one of the best I ever had, Elias!

Q! - I loved you, I did, but you were the one who—

Elias snatches your collar and yanks you towards him. The force of his pull almost makes you choke.

He presses his forehead into yours.

E! - We're coworkers. We're professionals. Nothing more, and nothing less.

CHOICE1:[Yes]:Scene8p3c1 CHOICE2:[No]:Scene8p3c2 E! - Do you have any objections to that, Quinn?

E! - Any at all?

His lip curls.

CHOICE3:[Kiss him]:Scene8p3c3 E! - I would have expected something. A little defiance.

That's just like you.

Elias stares you down. He hasn't blinked this entire time.

REMOVE:[Yes] REMOVE:[No] REMOVE:[Kiss him] - His grip relaxes, and his eyes soften.

GOTO:Scene8p4 E! - Good. That's good.

###

Scene8p3c1

Q! - Many, actually.

E! - If you still have feelings for me, maybe you should have thought of that before messing around with prettyboy poets.

Q! - You're the one who broke it off.

GOTO:Scene8p4 E! - My point very much stands, you fool.

###

Scene8p3c2

Q! - You shake your head. As much as you can with his pinning it in place.

GOTO:Scene8p4 E! - Good. Now you understand.

###

Scene8p3c3

You push forward, and meet his lips just as he tries speaking again.

He still has an iron grip on you, and you use it to move deeper.

Elias, tentatively, draws himself away. His eyes grow wide.

You've never seen him blush before.

You've never seen him lost for words, either.

He clears his throat.

E! - That wasn't acceptable, detective.

Q! - It got the point across, didn't it?

GOTO:Scene8p4 E! - There's no point to be made.

###

Scene8p4

He didn't say that with his usual conviction. A faultline is cracking through his face.

Q! - What, that you couldn't stand that I found another man in this city attractive?

E! - That's not what the break was about—

Q! - Then what was it?

His grip loosens on your collar.

Q! - You were the best I had, Elias. Do you really think I'd throw that away for nothing?

Q! - I put everything I could into it. Everything I could feasibly do for us.

Q! - And you kept giving me less and less. Becoming more withdrawn every day. That affection I loved you for, gone.

Q! - "Climbing the ladder." More hours. Less and less time with me and everyone around you. More on this stupid job.

Q! - I was starved, Elias. Flynn fed me.

Q! - How was I in the wrong?

He doesn't speak, but you see his Adam's apple quiver.

Q! - Tell me, Elias.

Q! - I tried putting the effort in. You refused to take it.

Q! - Then, when I finally had enough, that's the moment you started caring again.

Q! - None of this was my fault.

He lets go of your collar fully, slowly taking his hands away.

As your foreheads part, you stare at each other.

His eyes are a deep blue, like the ocean at midnight. You were always terrified to get lost in them.

Elias rushes to the door, taking nothing with him.

He doesn't close it behind him, leaving it slightly ajar. His footsteps, running, fade down the corridor.

Silence returns.

You exhale, realising you've been holding your breath this whole time.

It's a hollow victory, if that.

You said what you wanted to say, but now what? You still work together. There's always tomorrow to deal with.

Maybe you'll get fired. He has that power, technically.

Just thinking that, a smirk grows on your face.

Q! - Yes, fire me, Elias.

GOTO:Scene9 Q! - Fire me after I pull this off.

###

Scene9

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

You're ready.

BG_STORE MUS_CITYNIGHT - You broke in yourself through the back, but you're sure the jewellers won't mind. Especially if you're successful.

It's been two hours since you've been camped behind the front counter, watching the day dissolve to dark.

Far too early for him to actually arrive, but you're not taking any chances now.

...You did fall asleep for a brief moment earlier.

It's one of the worst things you could have done; there's that little voice saying you've already missed him.

But you got here just as the sun was setting. No-one would be foolish enough to strike during the day.

And, you'd wake up if he did arrive, even if he left without stealing something. You'd have to. A clock on the wall says you have three minutes left. You compare it with your own watch, and confirm it.

Perhaps less. Cloud cover seems to be incoming, looking through the bay window. Now the moon's hidden behind one, and—

No. Hidden behind a man.

Your heart races as you see a familiar shape, the moon illuminating just enough to see his figure, but never who he is.

All black, just like usual. Wearing... /something/ that disguises his form perfectly.

Everything he does makes it impossible to track him. A fire ignites in your throat.

He's drawn a knife. Silk flutters around wherever he pulled it from, and quickly settles back to formless nothing.

Is it silk? Who cares.

This, is something you've never seen before. He's using the knife's edge to chip at the edge between timber frame and glass.

So carefully, he dislodges the glass in the windowpane, not a crack or chip in it as he places it to the side.

Now there's a hole just big enough for himself, and he climbs through.

With a turn of his head, you can see his stupid embroidered mask.

Why is it embroidered? Why? He wants to be unseen, clearly, yet wears that?

You shake yourself back to your senses. Now's not the time for this.

On you right now is a pistol. The gun immediately puts you at an advantage, but someone being armed isn't something to scoff at.

CHOICE1:[Get him]:Scene9p1 - He looks around, almost experimentally, like he hasn't robbed this place thrice before.

He places a thumb under one glove, pulling it taught to adjust it.

The snap as it springs back to his palm makes you jump.

And as you jump, the floorboard squeaks.

He pauses. You hide yourself fully behind the counter.

Now you can only rely on sound.

His footsteps; he's right in front of the desk.

You're holding your breath desperately.

Silence.

Silence...

Then, a rustling of metal against metal. Immediately followed by footsteps walking away.

You move around, to see him at the bay again, his loot in hand.

He sizes up the hole he made in the window. Is he making his way out?

No. This is where he makes the scene. He enters entirely silent, and leaves with a fanfare of shattered glass.

He lazily spins his knife, making mock jabs at the window with the pommel, as if deciding which would make the prettiest rain of glass.

Incredible. He has every skill to do this in complete secrecy, maybe even with no-one knowing, and decides not to.

He's been doing it just to taunt you.

GOTO:Scene9p1 - This is it. Before he alerts the neighbourhood. You can take this on your own.

###

Scene9p1

You jump out from behind the counter, and shout.

CHOICE1:[Gun]:Scene9p1c1 CHOICE2:[Baton]:Scene9p1c1 CHOICE3:[Fists]:Scene9p1c1

- He staggers back, entirely taken off guard.

GOTO:Scene9p2 - But he recovers quickly, and before you can act charges at you.

###

Scene9p1c1

GOTO:Scene9p2 - But he recovers quickly, and before you can act charges at you.

###

Scene9p2

Remembering the knife, you dodge to the side. He misses you entirely.

You're fueled entirely by adrenaline. Only observing your body, not controlling it. Both your fists raised; light on your feet.

Then, you take account of him. He's fumbling with the knife, looking down, trying to find his next move on the spot.

He's not a fighter at all.

You rush him with a punch to the stomach.

He recoils, stumbling back. A high-pitched yelp.

Wasting no time, you seize the moment and shove him to the floor. It's almost trivial how easy you go down together.

Your legs pin his torso. One hand on the shoulder, the other on the wrist with the knife.

Then you shift to pin him fully. He tries every which way to squirm out from under you.

And then, slowly, realises he can't move, and stops struggling.

You've caught the criminal.

/Him/.

You still don't quite believe it, and take full account of the man under you.

It's him. In the flesh.

It's /him/.

CHOICE1:[Enough]:Scene9p2c1 - Months, /months/ of your life lead to this moment.

You take account of him fully. The bastard who's put you in a frenzy for so long.

He really did a good job with the outfit. It actually is silk.

Conceals him to the night perfectly. Light enough to be silent, but enough to keep a chill off.

Although now, you can feel him starting to sweat.

And that mask. That stupid mask.

Look at the needlework on it. All black. You could only see how intricate it really is up close.

You lean closer to see more. The threads, the delicate shimmer, and...

Beads? Beads?!

It's stolen from somewhere, isn't it? It has to be. There's no way he fashioned it legitimately.

GOTO:Scene9p3 - This has gone on long enough. It's time to end it.

###

Scene9p2c1

GOTO:Scene9p3 - Anticipation is gnawing at you. You're ending this now.

###

Scene9p3

You rip off his mask, tearing the straps that held it in place.

CHOICE1:[Flynn]:Scene9p3c1 - And you pause, staring into jade-coloured eyes.

They stare back at you.

GOTO:Scene9p4 - Flynn swallows, and raises his head slightly off the floor.

###

Scene9p3c1

Q! - You?

Flynn doesn't answer. He doesn't need to.

His hood slips off to reveal familiar curls. He tries looking at everything except for you.

Then, there's nothing else left.

GOTO:Scene9p4 - Flynn swallows, and raises his head slightly off the floor.

###

Scene9p4

CHOICE1:[Accuse]:Scene9p4c1 CHOICE2:[Mixup]:Scene9p4c2 F! - Hi, Quinn.

F! - You know, I'm not entirely sure where to begin. I'd have to explain a lot to you, and...

F! - Do you want to do the questions? You know, with your job, and all.

F! - No? You want me to say something?

GOTO:Scene9p5 F! - Alright. I suppose I can take it from here.

###

Scene9p4c1

Q! - It was you the whole time?!

GOTO:Scene9p5 F! - Well, what does it look like?

###

Scene9p4c2

Q! - Alright. That's fine. I don't know how you got mixed up in this, but that's fine.

F! - Quinn?

Q! - It's fine. It's absolutely fine. I'll find who put you up to this.

F! - Quinn.

You hesitate.

GOTO:Scene9p5 - There's no use lying to yourself.

###

Scene9p5

He sighs, and lets his head fall back to the floor.

F! - You're probably wondering, you know, what I'm doing here.

Q! - I'm not wondering at all.

CHOICE1:[Fun]:Scene9p5c1 CHOICE2:[Boredom]:Scene9p5c2 F! - No, really. Why am I doing this, Quinn?

F! - Really? You can't think of anything?

F! - ...Quinn?

GOTO:Scene9p6 Q! - No. I can't think of a reason.

###

Scene9p5c1

GOTO:Scene9p6 Q! - For kicks? I can't think of anything else.

###

Scene9p5c2

GOTO:Scene9p6 Q! - You're bored? I don't know.

###

Scene9p6

Flynn laughs. It resonates through your legs.

F! - You really are a cop, Quinn.

Q! - What does that mean?

F! - You notice everything, don't you? Those nights getting cancelled? Venues closing?

F! - More robberies every week? Less money being spent? The city grinding to a halt?

CHOICE1:[Happens]:Scene9p6c1 F! - Haven't put a single thought to why, have you?

F! - Go on, try thinking about it.

F! - I know how hard that must be for you. Trying to solve a mystery.

CHOICE2:[Money]:Scene9p6c2 F! - Why would I, being /so/ popular, need to do this?

F! - ...You're really going to sit there and have me explain this? You're that disconnected?

GOTO:Scene9p7 F! - I can't believe I thought better of you.

###

Scene9p6c1

Q! - Things like that happen.

F! - And that's all, Quinn?

Q! - What? They do.

GOTO:Scene9p7 - He blinks.

###

Scene9p6c2

Q! - You wanted more money?

F! - That's a good choice of words.

Q! - Why? That's all I can think of.

GOTO:Scene9p7 F! - I /want/ more? Like it's some kind of hobby?

###

Scene9p7

F! - It feels hollow having to say it everytime, to people who will never get it. Blind to a wheel they're turning.

F! - Poetry's all I can do. I've tried. Even before you started stripping away everything else.

F! - Then you get a little notoriety, making the most on your street, and suddenly you're everyone's provider. You can't let them grow cold; hungry.

F! - We're battling a breaking dam with panhandles and pennies.

F! - And now we have to steal pennies from you. You're lucky I do it politely.

A lump is forming in your throat.

Q! - This isn't—

CHOICE1:[Fair?]:Scene9p7c1 CHOICE2:[Just?]:Scene9p7c1

CHOICE3:[Right?]:Scene9p7c1 F! - What? Isn't what?

Q! - Er...

F! - Tell me, please.

GOTO:Scene9p8 F! - Not like it matters, does it? I can't get through to you. You can't get through to me.

###

Scene9p7c1

F! - No, I know what you're about to say. Do you know how much I've heard that?

GOTO:Scene9p8 F! - I don't care what you think is good or bad. I don't care anymore.

###

Scene9p8

F! - I do what I have to do. That's it.

F! - But...

Q! - But what?

F! - Well, that's how it started. It's still why I do it.

F! - Then /you/ entered the picture.

F! - I thought you were just another person to chase me. Someone to play with. Maybe I'd get a gift or two out of it.

F! - Then you became /obsessive/, Quinn.

F! - It was only a few weeks before I realised you were the one trying to stop this. The absolute passion you described my robberies in.

F! - If you weren't talking about me, you were talking about me. Going out every day, knowing that...

A small, guilty smile creeps across his face.

CHOICE1:[Fake]:Scene9p8c1 F! - You wanted me in every way, Quinn.

F! - It turned into a cat and mouse chase. I haven't felt like this in years.

It feels like something's inside your heart, ripping it apart from the inside.

Then, it bursts, a heavy frisson gnawing its way through your chest.

Q! - Why would you do this?

REMOVE:[Fake] F! - I don't think you're in much position to judge me.

Q! - I can judge thieves well enough.

GOTO:Scene9p9 F! - No, no. Your fling, Quinn. Everything you tried with me.

###

Scene9p8c1

Q! - This whole thing was a game to you?

Flynn makes a point to avoid your gaze.

Q! - You strung me along? None of this was real?

GOTO:Scene9p9 F! - Quinn, look. You say that like it was real for you.

###

Scene9p9

F! - A little infatuation? Trying to make your old partner jealous?

Q! - You...

Q! - Why would you bring Elias into this?!

Q! - And— He's the one who started it! It's not my fault.

F! - Oh, please. You're as bad as each other.

F! - I was only matching your silly game. Love was never a factor.

Q! - What are you talking about? I...

You start pronouncing the 'L', and get stuck. It won't leave your mouth.

F! - I'm not stupid, Quinn. I knew you were never there for the poems. You don't even listen to them.

CHOICE1:[Both]:Scene9p9c1 F! - Superficial. You hardly know anything about me.

F! - You're only there because I'm pretty. I get enough people telling me that every day.

F! - Were you trying to convince yourself that you were there for the art? Instead of me?

GOTO:Scene9p10 - A knot twists in your stomach.

###

Scene9p9c1

Q! - I was there for both you and your poems—

F! - Don't lie to me.

Q! - But—

F! - Don't, Quinn. You were just like the rest.

GOTO:Scene9p10 - A knot twists in your stomach.

###

Scene9p10

Q! - This whole thing was fake. All of it...

Q! - I don't know what to think of you anymore.

He only shrugs.

F! - I did feel...

He shuffles a little. Only a little, under your weight.

CHOICE1:[Love]:Scene9p10c1 **F!** - It was a game. Just a game, but...

His face softens. He looks like the Flynn you held to your chest.

F! - It was fun. It's always fun.

F! - There might have been other things, fleeting stuff, which couldn't have been...

GOTO:Scene9p11 - Flynn closes his eyes.

###

Scene9p10c1

Q! - Do you love me, Flynn?

He stares at you, longingly.

GOTO:Scene9p11 - Flynn closes his eyes.

###

Scene9p11

F! - I'm sorry, Quinn.

He shifts under you. A jerk upwards, deliberate.

You look at him quizzically. He doesn't do anything else, nor does he speak.

A warm, feverish feeling is spreading across your stomach.

It's quite nice, actually.

Still, Flynn doesn't react. You're close to asking why he apologised.

That warmth continues to spread, and now begins to concern you.

You put a hand to your stomach, and it feels wet.

A knife rests there.

CHOICE1:[Shout]:Scene9p11c1 **CHOICE2:[Pull it out]:Scene9p11c1** **CHOICE3:[Fight back]:Scene9p11c1** - Blood has soaked your hand.

GOTO:Scene9p12 - Before you can do anything, Flynn pushes up, shoving the knife in deeper.

###

Scene9p11c1

GOTO:Scene9p12 - Before you can do anything, Flynn pushes up, shoving the knife in deeper.

###

Scene9p12

Pain strikes through your abdomen.

All you can do is scream. Flynn knocks you off his chest, shoving you to the ground.

CHOICE1:[Why]:Scene9p12c1 **CHOICE2:[Gun]:Scene9p12c2** - He jumps to his feet, dashing over to the bay window. You push yourself as much as you can off the ground. Flynn takes account of himself. He knows he can take his time. Checking his gloves, adjusting them again. Some of your blood is on his left. His loot is retrieved off the ground, and he examines it for a short while. Satisfied, he places it in a pocket you can't see.

GOTO:Scene9p13 - He looks at the knife.

###

Scene9p12c1

GOTO:Scene9p13 - You try crying out, demanding a reason why. The only thing you make is a pained wail.

###

Scene9p12c2

The gun isn't there.

GOTO:Scene9p13 - You grab for it desperately, over and over. As if doing that would make it magically appear.

###

Scene9p13

Another surge of pain up your abdomen.

With an elbow, he thrusts into the window, shattering the glass with a perfect cacophony.

Shards of glass decorate the floor, completing the crime scene.

CHOICE1:[Move]:Scene9p13c1 **CHOICE2:[Stay]:Scene9p13c2** - Only then, after all of this, the alarm goes off.

Before leaving you here, Flynn looks back.

There's a sadness in those eyes. Those stupid jade eyes. A pity.

Is it a pity at you? At him? At everything that brought you to this point?

GOTO:Scene9p14 - Then, he shrugs.

###

Scene9p13c1

GOTO:Scene9p14 - You try to move, but glass surrounds you like a minefield. Anywhere you could place your hand promises a thousand cuts in the palm.

###

Scene9p13c2

GOTO:Scene9p14 - You hold yourself steady, as best you can. It takes every effort to keep yourself up, but your strength is fading fast.

###

Scene9p14

Flynn escapes through the window, no trace he was ever here.

Besides the knife, still lodged in your stomach.

Specks of light dance in front of your eyes.

Your arms shake, and give out under you.

The warmth spreads up to your chest, and your eyelids fail on you.

CLEARSCREEN BG_CLEAR MUS_CLEAR -

/Detective was found 11:16 post meridiem, unconscious, stab wound in the abdomen./
/Believed to be investigating, or intervening in, a robbery that took place at the location./
/Incident took place 10:53 post meridiem. Believed to have been undertaken by suspect; currently unconfirmed./

/Suspect took one necklace and one brooch. Window was found shattered, presumably to enter. Also of note: detective's gun was found behind the store counter./

/No sign of the suspect has been found./

/After significant blood loss, detective is unavailable for comment. He is under medical care, still pending for questioning, and is currently the only lead available./

You close the notepad, rescrew the head of the fountain pen, and sigh.

E! - Damn you, Quinn.

== END ==