

Sarah and Rahim made their way through the nerve center of the Conference building, the server room, cooling units, everything connected by multiple pipes and cables. The fact that there had to be a direct connection had narrowed down the focus of their search.

Sarah knew the inner workings and the location of everything behind the installations, but even she needed to compare her memory of its layout with the schematics on her iPad. In addition, her mind was more and more preoccupied with the worries about Jordy. Until some hours ago, the possible destruction of the Lincoln had been the biggest threat she could imagine: it was the one thing she thought would hurt and destroy her most in the world. But now, that prospective had being put behind the thought that her son was in danger. There were so many things she still wanted to tell him, to show him! She had promised him a visit at the next Comic Con! There were so many people she had pushed aside lately; she needed to talk to them. Without noticing it, she had stopped.

“Did you find something?” Rahim asked.

She shook her head and just needed to vent her worries. “What if they hurt my son?!”

“Whoever they are, they have no contact with us. It would be stupid to risk a hostage when you still might need him to negotiate.”

The words drove her to the breaking point. “You don’t care, do you?! Other people are nothing but worthless trash for you!” She shouted. “You use them, just as you used a woman as shield when you were caught!”

Rahim spun around, grabbed her and pushed her against the wall. “You don’t know anything!” His steel glaze made her freeze. “I’ve loved Farrah! She was the only little bit of love in my life! I wanted her to be safe! But she didn’t want to leave! She just didn’t want to leave!”

His voice cracked and he let go off her. In his former life he had been able to master his emotions quite well even in straining situations. Obviously that skill had eroded down to nothing in his time in prison. Like a lot of other things...

“Tell me about your son! Does he play Baseball and read Mickey Mouse?”

Remaining silent, she retreated a few steps. She neither wanted to talk or listen to him. She didn’t even want to see him standing there! *If I only could get a hold of one of his guns... I’ll kill him. I just kill him. It’s simple. I only need to pull trigger and he will be dead...*

“I have a son as well ... I last saw him ... eight years ago. He is in an orphanage in Baghdad, I was told.”

“Do you expect me to feel sorry for you?!”

Now it was Rahim who avoided the answer. “We have to find the second timer.” He said, as he turned away and walked further. Sarah followed him keeping her distance.

Shortly after, they reached the server room with its complex ventilating system. The place measured approximately 16 square feet. At first sight, it didn’t reveal anything suspicious. Rahim kneeled down and swiped his hand beneath the server racks. Empty space.

“Can you see anything up there?” He pointed to the cable casings and the ventilation grids in the ceiling.”

“Hard to say from here. I-” A distant sound interrupted her. “What was that?”

Rahim went back to the door and peered outside. It was silent. However, that sound had not been something that should have been in a cordoned off, empty building... Leffler maybe? Or some police commandos?

He didn’t notice Sarah’s quick movement. Grasping the sudden opportunity, her fingers closed around the cool metal of the weapon stored in his belt. Suddenly, she wasn’t tired anymore at all. Her heart raced. A loaded gun. In her hands! When she jumped back and pushed a chair away in doing so, Rahim’s head snapped around.

He stared in the barrel of agent Leffler’s USP, held by shaky hands. Clear shock settled in his features. He spread his arms to the side.

“For years I’ve wanted to kill you!” she whispered. “For Chris! For all the other victims!!!”

He stared at her, unable to say anything. He had longed so much to die during the past years – but not now, not now, when he was so close to redemption! Not with that new burden on his conscience! Desperately, he searched for words, looking into the dark hole of the barrel of the gun. “I am ... the only one ... who can disable these bombs.”