Cicatrix
by Swindled_Ink

Summary

Seven times Fran talks about how he got a scar and the one time he didn't have to. Fran Centric with protective Varia.

Notes

I didn't include Mammon/Viper as they are with the Arcobaleno at the current time. I also have created an AU where Fran is Xanxus' primary mist and Mammon his secondary.
The weekend the Varia were not working was supposed to be as all other weekends were; bonding as a family by doing an outdoor activity from the random activity box. Last week it was ice skating, the week before that was rock climbing. This week they were supposed to be going hiking, but it was put on hold due to the overwhelming heat. It would have been good if skating was picked this week, Fran mused wistfully by the window. The heat wouldn't have been terrible if the air conditioning wasn't broken. The mist user was broken by a shout from outside, "VOI! Where's the brat?"

Fran rolled his eyes and teleported to the veranda by the pool. "What is it, sword sempai" he asked irately.

"Don't be so rude Fran-chan." Lussuria scolded from where he was lying by the pool.

"Join us by the pool, trash. It's still bonding day, whether we go out or not." Xanxus said from next to Squalo.

Fran huffed but sat between Levi and Lussuria to please his boss. It was cooler out here, Fran admitted, and it was nice to be beside the people he bonded with. What's Froggy doing without his hat." Belphegor asked menacingly.

"It's too hot for that Prince of Nothing." Fran shot at the self-proclaimed prince.

Belphegor growled but didn't move from where he was, "You're lucky I'm too hot to kill you right now Froggy."

"Quiet, both of you!" Levi growled menacingly.

Fran shot a glare at the annoying prince but followed his sempai's threat. It was still hot, although part of the reason may be because he hasn't taken off his jacket. Fran rolled on his side, looking to have a cat nap, when Lussuria singled him out. "Why are you wearing so many layers darling? You're going to get a heatstroke with all that on Fran-chan."

The rest of the Varia turned to scrutinise the uncomfortable, sweating illusionist in training. Fran turned defensive, "I'm not that hot sempai, Bel-sempai on the other hand..."

Remarkably, the bloodthirsty prince didn't take offence but looked rather concerned. "You're pretty flushed Froggy, there's no harm in taking your jacket off is there. Kekeke."

"Just take the damn jacket off trash." Xanxus snarled, concern belying his anger.

Fran got up to leave before anyone got the bright idea of forcing his clothing off, but Levi grabbed his gloved hand to stop him. Before he could stop himself, Fran hissed in pain and snatched his hand back to cradle it gently to his chest. By now, the rest of the Varia were worried and got up to see what had hurt the young illusionist. "That's it Fran, take your gloves off right now!" Squalo shouted in concern.

"No!" Fran yelled back defiantly, "I'm going back inside to sleep."

Xanxus grabbed his mist around the waist and forced him to sit on the couch, unwilling to let Fran escape. Fran went limp in his Sky's hands, scared tears unwillingly trailing down his pale face. "Oh sweetie." Lussuria cooed as he sat beside the silently crying teenager.
"What's wrong with your hand Fran, don't you dare try to lie to me." Xanxus asked firmly.

Fran looked down at his gloved hands, "Nothing Boss, just leave me alone."

"Like hell we would you little brat." Levi denied as he grabbed one of Fran's hands. He slipped the glove off the teen and had to take a step back at what he saw.

On the teenage mist's hand was a massive, faded burn scar, easy to see against the pale skin it tainted. "When did this happen Froggy?!" Belphegor shouted in anger, nobody hurt his kouhai and got away with it.

Fran looked down at his unveiled hand in fear and disgust, more tears flowing out his eyes. He didn't protest as the other glove was slipped off, revealing a similar scar. Lussuria sat down next to Fran to give the silent teen a hug. Seeing the others wouldn't let him go without an answer, Fran steeled himself to speak. "My mother did this."

Xanxus curled his lip in disgust, "Why?"

Fran curled into Lussuria as the others watched on, "She was mad at me, I didn't make her tea correctly for breakfast so she-" Fran cut himself off.

The bond all the Varia shared flared to life as they comforted the upset mist. "Sorry." Fran whispered tearfully. A reassuring squeeze on his shoulder from Squalo made him continue the story. "Because I had messed up, she grabbed the boiling water and poured it on my hands. She made me remake the tea to her liking before sending me to my room for the rest of the day."

Xanxus was furious, he had thought that the baby mist had lived under his Grandmother's care, a thought the rest of the Varia shared. "How old were you Fran?" Squalo asked piercingly.

Fran took a second to think and bathe in the protective flames that were coming from the bond. "It was before she started smoking so I was about three."

Tensions skyrocketed as the Varia heard the disturbing news that THEIR baby mist had been abused by his disgusting caretaker when he was supposed to be treasured. Fran, misinterpreting their anger, shrunk back in fear. Lussuria was the first to notice and hugged him gently, "We're not mad at you sweetheart, your mother should have never done something like that to you darling."

The Varia reigned in their flames and gathered closer to their illusionist. A brief, but comfortable cuddle pile was formed before Xanxus stood up. "Inside, all of you. It's nearly time for lunch and the air conditioning should be fixed soon."

With fleeting glances at the sky and mist, the rest of the elements quietly trailed inside, leaving the two to talk alone. "You know we won't do anything like that to you don't you, mist brat?" Xanxus asked.

"I know, you're flames don't lie to me." Fran answered quietly.

With that line of thought shut down, the sky and mist joined the elements for lunch.
"Fran! Bel! Get out of there right now, it's rigged!" Came Squalo's voice through to earpiece the mist and storm were wearing.

Their eyes widened in shock and with few precious minutes to spare, they gathered the needed papers and began running down the hallway. "Teleport us out of here Froggy." Belphegor yelled as they went up the stairs.

Fran took a moment to stare at him blankly, "Were you not listening when I said, 'It looks like I won't be able to shift if anything happens because of the flame suppressors inside the walls' Idiot prince." Belphegor grit his teeth at the insult but continued to take the stairs two at a time.

"Captain, I'm afraid we won't make it out in time if you want us to come out normally. I would suggest letting Bel-sempai blow through the first non-suppressed wall we find."

Belphegor looked excited as Xanxus confirmed that they could do that with a muttered, "Don't destroy the entire house this time trash."

"This way Froggy, shishishi." Belphegor said with a grin as he led his uncute kouhai out the stairwell.

They hurriedly passed by ornate looking doors and blue painted walls before pausing at a small gap where a window had previously resided. Quickly bringing up the blueprints in his mind, Fran realised that while the famiglia had replaced the window with the wall, they hadn't bothered with reinforcing that part. "Shishishi, ready Froggy?" The prince asked, readying his storm flames.

Not waiting for an answer, the destructive flames exploded outwards, creating a hole large enough for the two to climb through. They had just clambered onto the window sill when a massive explosion went off behind them and the force pushed the two off the ledge and towards the ground. Thankfully, Fran managed to use his mist flames to construct a platform to land on instead of the hard, unforgiving ground. Debris rained down on the two elements and while most of it was disintegrated by storm flames, pieces still managed to slice through the barrier.

Fran hissed as a particularly large piece of metal whipped past, giving him a deep cut on his face. His mist flames shifted agitatedly before dumping both the storm and mist on the ground near Xanxus and Squalo. "About time trash, next time be here on time." Xanxus ordered.

Fran muttered under his breath, "It was Bel-sempai's fault for not listening to me at the beginning."

"VOI! What happened to your face, mist brat?" Squalo asked in concern.

Under the frog hood Bel forced Fran to wear, there was a deep gash that was gushing bright crimson blood all over the left side of his face. Xanxus took one look at the steadily bleeding mist and started to bark orders out, "Baby trash, sit down before you fall. Sword trash, go and find the
emergency kit in the car and Knife trash will you stop laughing for one second!"

The self-proclaimed prince who had been giggling since he saw his kouhai's blood, quietened at the order of his commanding sky. Squalo found the emergency kit in a compartment in the boot and dashed back to where his injured subordinate was sitting. "Ow, sempai." Fran said blankly as the blood was wiped away.

Fran stared out into the forest surrounding the quartet as his Captain set about cleaning and disinfecting the wound. "Take off the hood so I can see your head better." Squalo instructed.

With a sigh, the illusionist tugged off the heavy frog hat and placed it beside him as the swordsman tilted his head to get a better look at the gash. By some miracle it had stopped pouring out blood, only oozing when pressure was placed around it. The skin around the area was becoming an irritated red from all the attention but there was nothing the white-haired rain could do about it. "It's going to need stitches Boss." Squalo reported to the silently watching man. "Do you want me to do them now or for Luss to do them back at the manor?"

"Do them now, I don't want blood staining the car seats." Xanxus decided.

Belphegor laughed, "Shishishi, can I stab the peasant with the knife?"

Squalo levelled a stare at the storm, "For the last time, a needle is not a knife. We aren't aiming to stab poor Fran in the head either."

Belphegor pouted before turning his attention to the unusually silent teenager. "You might with the way he's shaking right now."

Squalo glanced up at his patient before concluding, "He's lost a fair amount of blood, Fran has probably gone into shock. Would you mind Xanxus?"

The sky snorted, "Very well trash." And wrapped his flames around the minutely trembling Fran, mimicking a hug.

Seeing as Fran ceased shaking, Squalo threaded the needle and started to stitch up the weeping wound. "Tell me about the marks on your head Fran, where did you get those?" Squalo asked.

Ever since Fran had told them about his mother, the rest of the Varia worked on a plan to get the teen to open about the experiences he had under her care. The teenager stiffened under the diligently working rain. "You know already, my mother." He replied, unwilling to talk about it.

Belphegor exhaled slowly, "We know that uncute kouhai. What we want to know is why she hurt you this time."

Not needing much prompting this time, Fran began recounting the story behind the marks. "Mum came back from work, completely drunk and started screaming at me..."

/Flashback/

"You damn brat! If you hadn't been born, Aristide would still be here!" The woman screamed at her covering child. She walked towards the corner where the boy was shaking, stumbling drunkenly. "If you weren't such a freak he wouldn't have left me."

The teal haired child was crying silently at his mother's words. "Mum, I'm sorry. Please, I won't make you mad anymore." Fran sobbed hysterically.
His mother noticed a broken beer bottle on a cluttered table beside her and grabbed it. She started cackling, "Once you're dead, Aristide will come back to me and take me away from here."

She advanced on the petrified Fran, step by step. She raised the bottle and smashed it down on the scared boy's head. Fran managed to turn his face away, but couldn't move out of the path of the improvised weapon. The bottle struck the side of his head, cutting into his fragile skin, leaving the side of his head bleeding. "I'm sorry!" Fran wailed out, too scared and in pain to move.

The woman, for how could Fran call her his mother, turned away from the cowering child and went to go to bed. "Don't you dare move out of that corner child. You better be dead by tomorrow morning." The vile woman hissed.

Young Fran bowed his head and curled up to try and sleep. "I'm sorry mother..." he whispered.

After all, it was his fault that his father disappeared and left his mother. He deserved this. This was his punishment for being a freak.

/Flashback/

Fran was dragged out of his storytelling by a hug from Squalo. Wiping away a few stray tears, he looked into his Captain's upset face. "You wanted to hear it idiot-captain." Fran muttered, unsure what to do with the odd acting rain.

Belphegor was watching the two with a solemn face and Xanxus was nearby blowing things up in his rage. Squalo grabbed the illusionist's face and made him look into his eyes, "I swear to you Fran that I won't EVER do anything like that to you. No matter how annoying or idiotic you are at times. You understand me?"

"Crystal, baka-captain." Fran said, overwhelmed by the strength of his captain's words.

Seeing the truth in his subordinate's eyes, he nodded in satisfaction. "Good, now let's go home. Boss! Stop blowing shit up and let's head back home."

If Fran got an extra bowl of ice-cream for dessert that night, well, no one brought it up.
The third scar

It had been three years since Fran took over the mist guardian position, and he had adjusted to the Varia lifestyle like a fish to water. He did have his moments though, such as the time he lost control of his flames and destroyed the entire West wing, or the time he didn't mention he was sick and collapsed during training. Despite the various incidents, the illusionist had come to trust his newfound family, which was he was currently looking this man in the eye and refusing to speak.

"Willing to speak now, little illusionist?" The tall male asked, leaning over the chained mist. "I haven't even started the hard stuff yet and you're already crying."

Fran gathered the remaining saliva in his mouth and spat on his captor's trousers, "Go to hell bastardo."

The torture expert narrowed his eyes in anger, "Very well, I gave you a choice you pathetic excuse for a mist. You've proven you're a big boy, so you can take the hard stuff."

"Vaffanculo!" Fran shouted as the man exited the large room, shutting the door behind him.

The lights that were previously blinding were suddenly turned off, making Fran shut his eyes to stop the nausea that spread through his body. He had no way of knowing how long he had been kept here in this disgusting room, considering he had been sedated during his capture. The mist leant his head back against the wall tiredly. Somewhere out there was his famiglia, he knew they were looking for him, they had to! Crippling doubt crept into Fran's mind. Do they know I'm missing? He thought miserably. Are they somewhere out there right now looking for me?

Drip. Drip. Drip. Water started to drip onto the illusionist's bare head and a peek upwards showed a small drain pipe that was slowly leaking. He was underground. A glance around him showed there were no cameras watching him, but there may be microphones, so Fran stayed quiet as he celebrated. If he could get the thrice damned cuffs off, he could open the grate and hopefully exit through the drain.

If there was one thing that his Master taught him, getting bonds off him was one of the first. Fran secretly thinks it's because Master doesn't want to see anybody tied down like he was. Something like flame-suppressing cuffs wasn't going to stop him from escaping. He had, assumedly, been patted down earlier but the small piece of wire was still hidden in the seam of his pants. Fran quickly unravelled the thread and managed to get the thin wire out of its hiding place when the door banged open dramatically. Looking up in surprise, the broad figure of the man was back again with a black bag that undoubtedly held a few nice-looking tools. "Oh, it's just you." Fran stared blankly, looking to rile up the man while he hid the wire.

"Who else did you expect you little merda. Your precious famiglia? Hate to break it to you, but they won't be here for a long, long time." He snarled aggressively.

"Mind telling me your name then, since we're going to buddies soon?" Fran queried. "I don't want to refer to you as 'you there' forever."

The illusionist got a harsh slap to the face for his query. "If you must know, my name is Fulvio." The man, Fulvio, said conversationally. "What do you think we should start with today, little mist?"

"How about the date." Fran deadpanned.
Fulvio chuckled sinisterly, "How about we start with gagging your pretty little mouth."

A dirty, black gag was pulled out of the duffel and tied tightly, attempting to make his prisoner's lips bleed from the force. The next was another pair of handcuffs that were used to restrain his legs. Fran watched in slight terror as tool after tool was pulled from the inconspicuous looking bag, scalpels, syringes, brass knuckles and all sorts were placed on the table. A large knife was selected from the table and Fulvio advanced on the helpless mist.

The knife was extremely sharp, cutting open his coat and shirt like butter. Fran shut his eyes, not willing to let his captor see the terror in his eyes. He whimpered slightly as something sharp trailed along his collarbone gently, tracing a path only Fulvio knew. The next second, a scalpel dug into his flesh and Fran screamed. There was something coating the metal, making the pain feel sharper, making him focus on it more. Fulvio laughed as Fran convulsed in agony under his hand, at every trace of a knife, a stab of the scalpel, a bruising kick from steel capped boots.

The mist was barely conscious when Fulvio finally stopped, it could have been a mere ten minutes or agonizing hours. The only constant that went through his mind was pain and the escape plan that was forming in his mind. Fulvio's boots clacked as he walked away from the bloody, bruised mess that was Fran. "When I come back mist, I expect you to answer all the questions I ask you." Fulvio sneered, leaving Fran heavily restrained and gagged.

Fran cried out as he moved his bruised arm to grab at the metal, pulling it out from his pocket and inserting it into the cuffs restraining his arms. It didn't take long to get the first pair of restraints off him and he grasped the gag and ripped it out of his mouth, not caring that he tore the edges of his lips open more. The second set of handcuffs were harder but still were opened quickly considering how injured he was. His flames were coming back to him now that the suppressors were off him, but he had obviously taken too long as Fulvio walked back in and saw him unshackled.

"You little merda!" Fulvio shouted, turning an impressive shade of red. Fran didn't have a chance to move as Fulvio grabbed a knife from his person at hurtled it at him. The illusionist choked on his breath as the knife imbedded itself an inch away from his belly button. Becoming unfrozen, Fran gathered his returning flames and used them to force open the grate above him and took off at a fast army crawl through the drain.

Fulvio's shriek of rage echoed off the walls, but it became apparent that he had no flames when he didn't attempt to go after him. Fran paused for a moment and took time to break off the handle of the knife. He wasn't anywhere near an expert in first aid and didn't want to risk injuring himself further by pulling the serrated blade out.

It took a while of walking though disgusting smelling water when he reached the end of the long drain. Fran staggered out of the opening, blood loss setting in, and flared his flames as much as he could to signal to the Varia. There was a creek nearby with a small clearing, looking sparkling clean compared to where he had been previously, and he headed over there to wait for his famiglia. Fran rested his back against the tree, exhausted, and attempted to stay awake.

He found himself drifting despite his efforts and only caught glimpses of the world outside his mind. His body registered hands touching him, it wasn't until they wandered near his stab wound that he moaned weakly, making the hands pause. "Fran, FRAN!" Someone was shouting at him.

Fran coughed weakly, something warm spattering over his lips, making the person above him swear. He opened his eyes a sliver and giggled deliriously, "A cavity fungus has come to save me!" A ringing sounded near his ears and his mind went blank.

/Time skip/
Fran brushed against his newly healed skin as he tugged off his shirt. Taking a moment to look at it, Fran remembered how relieved his famiglia were when he woke up after they found him. They told him that Levi had found him, crackling with lightning and pissed at how bad he looked. Levi told him how Fran had responded to his name being called, laughing about a cavity fungus saving him before passing out.

He didn't need Lussuria to tell him anything, he knew it was bad when the sun's hands shook like that. The way Belphegor didn't attempt to stab him for a month of the incident, let Fran know how guilty his friend was feeling. Squalo was one of the worst, he alternated between being the soothing rain to the fragile mist and the incredibly guilty captain who avoided his subordinate like the plague.

Eventually, once Fran could speak again, the illusionist explained what exactly happened in that horrible, dark room and what the stab wound was from. It turned out whatever Fulvio coated his blades in made his mist flames violently reject the metal left in his body, warping the blade and making it unrecognisable. Fran wondered if the reaction was meant to happen, it was a good way to get rid of a murder weapon or evidence.

Right now, Fran was content in hopping in his soft, warm bed and sleeping. Tomorrow, he would get up and begin to start training again. He couldn't wait to once again join his famiglia.
The fourth scar

Chapter Notes

Sorry I couldn't update sooner, I was extremely busy with my courses and didn't have any time to write. I finished this monster of a chapter at two in the morning for you guys. Can I get a kudos for that? I hope you enjoy this!

Fran is running. Trees fly past him in a blur and their branches reach out to cut his face. He can't stop, not with *them* behind him. They weren't far away, gaining on him, despite how fast he was running. Fran didn't dare to look behind him, knowing their terrifying forms were laughing at his attempt to escape them.

Fran could almost see the edge of the forest, knowing he would escape if he could reach there spurred him on. He was close, *so very close*, when something grabbed him around the ankle, dragging him backwards with horrifying force. Fran sobbed, futilely trying to dig his fingers into the dirt. Bone chilling cackles started from behind him, growing louder each minute. Fran started to beg, "Please, oh god, anything but this!"

Raspy laughter answered his pleas and he was flipped onto his back, forced to look at the beings who caught him. Their black cloaks fluttered in the non-existent wind, in the middle of them was the Vendice arcobaleno. Bermuda leaned down close to him, chains whipping wildly, and whispered into his ear, "There's nowhere to run now illusionist."

Fran cried out in pain as Bermuda's chains wrapped around his neck, immobilising him. The chains burned, they always did, and a part of Fran's mind always wondered, why? Was it because of the night flames that burned so fiercely or was it a material in the chains. The chains, *collar*, tighten and Fran is left gasping for air, on his knees before his enemy. Tears pool into his eyes as Bermuda smirks, his comrades behind him silently watching. The chains completely cut off his airway and the last thing Fran hears before he collapses is Bermuda speaking malevolently.

"Fran, mist of the Varia. I will hunt you down as my prey, and when I find you, you will suffer by my hand in agony."

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Fran jolted upwards, tears pouring down his face and his breath came in stuttered gasps. He grabbed at his neck, slightly raised skin was felt under his fingertips, and breathed out slowly. Fran lay back on his bed attempting to quell the rising panic that was engulfing his chest. The room was pitch black and even though he *knew* the Vindice weren't surrounding him, it wasn't helping his anxiety. A flick of his wrist and will created a light floating above his ceiling, and Fran sighed gently.

It wasn't often this dream came about but when it did, Fran could never get back to sleep. Hopefully it was somewhat close to morning, otherwise it would be a long night of silence that he didn't think he could handle right now. Fran searched for his phone to see the time, it took a few minutes to discover it hiding under the covers. He switched it on and muttered a quiet curse as the numbers *1:16* glowed in his face.
It would be another five hours until anyone in the house would wake up. Considering it was a Friday, that meant Squalo would be up first, not an ideal person to talk to about his nightmare. *Memory*, a traitorous part of Fran's mind murmured to him. The illusionist sighed and placed his no longer active phone on the bedside table. Shuffling out of bed, Fran decided very quickly that it would be prudent to have a shower and change before attempting anything else. The spot he had been laying was drenched in sweat and his pyjamas were beginning to itch from the drying sweat.

A quick, warm shower later and Fran was dressed in some new clothes and sitting on his bed. Since the others weren't going to be up for a while, he had decided to wear a long sleeve shirt. This was rather unusual as Fran made sure to never reveal his neck to others because of the marks around his neck. Not out of shame, panic most definitely, but he didn't want the others to blame themselves for not being there to protect him.

Fran, seeing as it was nearing two, decided to head down to the first level of the mansion to get a drink from the kitchen. Thankfully, his room was quite close to the stairs, and he only had to brush past Levi and Lussuria's rooms to reach them. Knowing the mansion like the back of his hand was useful since he could use this knowledge to avoid any creaky floorboards like a pro.

Gazing into the fridge, Fran grabbed the apple juice carton and poured it into his glass. Picking it up, he walked into what you could call the living room. It had champagne painted walls and brown couches that gathered near the television. Fran never knew why this was the colour scheme since it didn't really match the rest of the house, but it did create a rather comfortable air. Perhaps that was why.

The lights were on, although dimmed significantly, and Fran gazed out the window opposite the couch he was sitting on. It was pitch black outside, making Fran feel rather jumpy as it reminded him of the *(Forest. Terror. Run.)* well, *that*. He knew he had PTSD because of what happened that day, but he couldn't say anything. Couldn't get help. Because the Varia would undoubtedly find out, leading to them knowing how it was created and he couldn't do that to them. Before Fran knew, the glass was drained of juice and he had nodded off on the sofa.

This had never happened before since Fran would never be able to sleep for fear of the dreams *(Memories)* starting again. What the illusionist didn't know is that the juice had been soaked in rain flames by Squalo when he noticed that his subordinate wasn't getting enough sleep. Since only Fran drank the juice, and only during the night, it was a foolproof way of getting the mist to sleep longer.

**XXXXXX**

Fran's brain was muddled when he woke up the first time. He felt calm, still tired to boot, and whined when the noise around him went up a notch. The noise suddenly hushed at the sound of his voice before breaking out into whispers. Without opening his sleep crusted eyes, Fran flared his mist flames. A cold hand touched his bare cheek, activating sun flames and making him feel warm inside. Satisfied the people around him weren't going to harm him, he rolled onto his side and went back to sleep.

The second time Fran woke up, it was less muddled than previously, but still just as calm. Squalo's flames, Fran hazily realised, were still a low burning in his stomach. From what he could recall before, the noise was substantially less, much to his relief. The combined rain and sun flames in his system made him feel rather out of it, and Fran didn't want to be bombarded with noise from his famiglia- they were perhaps the loudest group he knew! And why were they in his room anyway, normally they would yell at him to get up. His flames shifted minutely, as Fran tried to recall what happened last night. *The dream. Couch. Black night sky.*
Fran bolted upwards in hastily formed adrenaline but couldn't move anywhere as he was pushed back down by a pale hand. "You're awake, took you a while sweetie." Lussuria said as he sat down beside the still disoriented mist. "It's nearly three, you've been sleeping the whole day."

Fran yelped, "What! Why didn't you wake me up?"

Lussuria frowned gently, "You ingested quite a high amount of rain flames that kept you asleep until lunch. You did wake up around twelve, but you went back to sleep rather quickly. You're a very heavy sleeper you know."

Fran grimaced at all the lost time before twisting his hands in his shirt, a nervous habit he hadn't managed to shake. He froze and looked down in panic. He was wearing a shirt that didn't cover his neck, meaning they saw. Fran choked, air rapidly descending in a swoosh. How could he be stupid enough to fall asleep on the goddamn couch. Now they had seen, and they would know and-

Fran lost all awareness of his surroundings. The walls loomed in front of his eyes, making him shut his eyes tightly. Oh god, he couldn't breathe. His heart was being squeezed, beating so fast he was surprised he wasn't having a heart attack. Fran felt sick and before he could move, started to vomit. There wasn't much in his stomach, only the apple juice making a reappearance. But the stomach acid burned his tightened throat, and he just couldn't stop dry heaving.

Muffled sobs somehow made their way out of his throat. There were arms around him, rocking him tenderly, but it didn't help. He could feel his part of the bond quivering and shaking distantly but not even his sky's flames sent through the bond helped. His saviour came in the form of brilliant blue flames, engulfing his entire body, making him go limp in the arms holding him. Fran felt woozy, whether that was because of the flames or cut of oxygen was up for debate.

The boneless illusionist soon became aware of the noises that were happening around him, specifically the words Lussuria and Squalo were directing towards him. "You're alright sweetheart, we've got you." Lussuria comforted him.

Squalo made a noise of agreement, focusing on the effect his flames were having. Fran pitifully groaned, his fingers were tingling uncomfortably, and his limbs felt heavy. "Hey Fran, I need you to nod if you can understand us, alright?" Squalo said gently as to not spook the teen.

Fran dipped his head to show he understood. "That's good. Lussuria is going to clean you up, okay?" Another nod. "When you come back, you're going to eat some soup and crackers and relax." Fran nods. "If at any time you feel like you're going to panic, alert one of us alright?" He hums in agreement.

Seeing that Fran understood what was happening, Lussuria cradled the shaking mist and got off the dirtied couch. Fran wrapped his hands around the sun's neck as they walked upstairs into his room. "Darling, I need you to tell me whether you want me in here when you get changed." Lussuria told Fran as he put him down on his bed.

The shaking teen cleared his throat, "No."

Lussuria tilted his head in acceptance and stood by the door while Fran struggled into fresh clothes for the second time that day. "Ready." Fran croaked.

Lussuria turned around and looked the illusionist over. He approved the hastily formed outfit of sweatpants and a hoodie that, regretfully, hid his neck. "Alright sweetie, let's head back to Squ-chan yeah."
Fran let himself be scooped up by Lussuria, a clear sign that he really wasn't feeling well. It didn't take long for Fran to be laid out on top of Lussuria on one of the other couches. Squalo wandered in with the promised soup and crackers, pausing to watch the sun and mist silently interact. Fran was limp in Lussuria's arms, not moving as the sun soothingly stroked his hand up and down Fran's thigh. With a sigh, the rain walked over to the two on the sofa and placed the bowl of soup down on the coffee table. "Eat this." Squalo commanded, handing the weak mist a saltine cracker.

When Fran had eaten all five crackers, Squalo broke the tense silence. "I'm going to take a guess and say that this afternoon's reaction was because of the scars on your neck." Fran didn't answer, averting his eyes away from Squalo's in shame. "I want you to tell me how you got them, now."

Since Fran looked like he needed more prompting, Lussuria spoke up. "When did you get them, why and by who. That's all we need to know darling."

Fran looked down at his shaking fingers and took a deep breath, "They were before I met you guys. I needed to break somebody out of Vendicare." The other two elements looked pale at the obvious conclusion that was formed. "I didn't have a choice, they would have sold me to the Estraneo if I didn't go." They looked furious now. "I didn't very far before they surrounded me, Bermuda was there. He used his chains and grabbed me by the neck and they burned." Fran's voice cracked. "He knew why I was there, I think that's the only reason why they let me go..."

There was more to the story, but for now the two guardians wouldn't pry. Lussuria nudged Fran into a sitting position so he could sip at the soup handed to him. The bowl shook slightly but Fran was calming down, the warmth from the soup was comforting, not to mention the flames added. At this point, he was going to get drunk off all the flame he's been submitted to today. Even though he knew Xanxus and the rest of the Varia was going to know about this, Fran lay back on Lussuria with a full stomach and drifted into a peaceful slumber.
The fifth scar

Chapter Summary

Kudos helps to motivate me. Comments do as well~

The Varia were worried, with good reason too; Their baby mist had not yet come back from his scouting mission in Austria. They sent him out nearly two months ago, so it was understandable they were wary. If Byakuran and the Millefiore caught him, they were ridiculously outmatched and wouldn't be able to rescue him even with external forces. Squall had been forced to go to Budapest to join up with Vongola's rain and Xanxus and Levi had been needed at Vongola HQ for some reason. The sound of an unidentifiable motorcycle coming up their driveway made the two currently at Varia HQ rush outside, ready to fight any intruder that was foolish enough to come into their territory.

The motorbike rolled into view revealing its rider; It was a male, tall and lithe and quite thin. Belphegor was the first to quell his flames and rush forward, "Froggy! Where have you been, we were getting worried."

The storm pulled off the identified mist's helmet and peered into his eyes, "Lussie, come here. I don't think he's feeling very well."

"There's no need to waste your flames Luss-sempai, I am merely tired from my journey." Fran said monotonously.

Tired was an understatement; His eyes were swamped by deep black circles that came from very little sleep, his face was a pasty white and, overall had a drained aura surrounding him. "Leave the bike here, we can move it later. Bel sweetie, can you go tell Xanxus that Fran's back." Lussuria gently commanded as he looked over the exhausted mist.

Belphegor didn't bother protesting and quickly walked into the house to grab his phone and tell his boss the good news. Lussuria frowned as Fran didn't move to get off the bike, "Are you injured anywhere Fran-chan?"

Fran shook his head gently, "I am uninjured; however, I may need some assistance to the nearest chair." Lussuria gave him an alarmed look. "I am simply worn out Luss-sempai, that is all."

"Can you walk, or do you want me to carry you?" Lussuria questioned. Perhaps, the sun thought, it would have been better to just pick him up. He will undoubtedly choose to walk.

Fran made up his mind quickly, "I should just need some support, there won't be a need to carry me."

Lussuria sighed inaudibly, he was right as usual. He helped Fran slide off the motorbike and started to walk to the house with Fran's left arm tossed around his neck. It was rather obvious Fran limping and Lussuria resolved to look at in when they got inside. Fran sucked in a breath when they walked up the stairs as he had to put pressure on his left leg. The sun guardian sat Fran down on the three-seater couch and called for Belphegor.
"Shishishi, right here Lussie. What is it you need from the prince?" Bel cackled as he walked behind the sofa.

"Get me one of the large ice packs and some painkillers." Lussuria said as he looked more thoroughly at the exhausted mist.

Fran spoke up before Belphegor could leave the room, "If you could get me a glass of water and something small to eat I would be very thankful Bel-sempai."

"Anything else?" The storm asked in the doorframe. "No? Good."

Fran managed a laugh at his sempai's actions, making Lussuria smile. "How have things been back here? Is it only you two manning the fort right now?" Fran asked curiously.

Lussuria cleared his throat, "Squalo is in Budapest right now with the rain from Vongola. I believe they were eliminating a few squadrons near one of our research bases. Xanxus and Levi are currently at Vongola Headquarters, they were needed regarding co-ordinating new strike teams."

Fran nodded, relieved that his famiglia were not injured or, god forbid, dead. "As for how things have been, hmm. It's been a bit tense since Reborn went off radar, but it's probably Reborn being himself. There haven't been any other attacks on the mansion here either which is nice. Last time was terrible."

"So sorry to interrupt, but the prince is back." Belphegor said, making Fran jump as he hadn't seen the storm.

Lussuria moved to put the icepack on Fran's leg but stopped when the mist threw a hand out. Seeing Lussuria's questioning looked Fran explained, "The pants are too thick for the cold to touch my skin, I need to take them off. It's probably good to let my legs breathe fresh air too."

Belphegor helped take the belt off when Fran started struggling, "My uncute kouhai, please stay still while the prince assists you."

Lussuria watched, icepack in hand, as the Storm helped pull the tight pants off the young adult. The storm halted his tugging when he heard Fran hiss in pain, and looked up at the mist. "It's really nothing sempai, just keep going please."

"Your femur." Belphegor repeated blankly, looking at the raised scar tissue.

"Open fracture of my femur. It's why I was so late."

"Your femur." Belphegor repeated blankly, looking at the raised scar tissue.

Lussuria chimed in, "You do realise dear, that the femur is one of the hardest bones to break in your body."

Fran winced at the sun guardians tone, "I would rather not repeat the story a second time, so can you wait until everybody arrives please?"

Belphegor growled and walked out of the room, fists wreathed in pulsing, red storm flames. Lussuria and Fran watched the pissed off storm walk out of the room, wincing when they heard the faint sound of explosions. Lussuria turned back to Fran, "Hold the ice pack on your leg and take this."

Fran obediently dry-swallowed the offered painkillers and looked longingly at the refreshments on
the table beside him. "Food now?" He asked hopefully. Lussuria rolled his eyes and handed his baby mist the ham and cheese sandwich. "Thank you, sempai!" Fran said as he dug into the delicious looking sandwich.

Belphegor walked into the room looking more relaxed and sat down next to the full mist. He dragged the younger adult onto his lap when he saw him nodding off. Bel cursed at Lussuria when he noticed he was looking at them. "Bel!" Fran mumbled, "Sleeping time." And drifted off into Morpheus' realm.

XXXXXXXX

A nudge on his shoulder made Fran shoot up, not entirely aware of his surroundings, and light his hands with his flames. Blinking the sleep from his eyes, he saw three wary Varia members looking at him. A twist of his Will dissipated his Indigo flames and he lay his head back down on Bel-sempai. Fran yawned as he greedily took in the sight of his sky and rain for the first time in weeks. "Boss-sempai, Captain. Nice to see you again ne?" Fran said sleepily.

"What made you so late?" Xanxus questioned.

"Straight to the point as always sempai." Fran stated. "This was the reason of my problems getting here." He gestured at the rather long scar.

"What Xanxus means, is where did you get it." Squalo translated.

Fran frowned and started to explain, "The reason Byakuran hasn't been bothering you guys is because he's been chasing me across Austria. I had completed the mission and was in a hideout when the Millefiore and Byakuran himself burst in." Various growls came from the protective guardians when they heard the name Byakuran. "Yeah, I didn't have any time to do anything when Byakuran slammed his fist into my leg. Boom, instant break. It was just by luck it was open. I managed to get away by shifting and was on the run ever since."

During the story telling, Squalo ended up on the sofa with him, Lussuria draped over his shoulders behind him and Xanxus sat opposite of him. Flames were dancing on everybody's fingertips and through the bond, seeping into the claimed mist. "You guys are going to make me flame-drunk again, can you stop."

"No." They all chorused, intent on making sure he was re-marked with their flames.

Fran sighed in exasperation, "Can you tell me where Levi-sempai is then?"

"Vongola. They need him for some more testing." Xanxus answered.

"Ah, well if we're going to make me drunk can we go to bed instead of staying on the couch?" Fran asked, already slurring his words minutely.

Belphegor gently carried him bridal-style into Xanxus' room since it had the biggest bed, and set him down carefully. That night, the elements watched over the mist, each of them touching some part of him as they fell asleep one by one.
The sixth scar

Chapter Summary

Thank you everyone for all the Kudos! It brightens my day. Sorry about not posting sooner, end of year work is hard...

"How the *fuck* did they find out." Xanxus snarled as he dodged a spray of bullets.

Fran joined him by the massive rock, "I believe I saw one of our spies talking to the guards Sempai." He didn't flinch as Xanxus colourfully swore in Italian. "If it makes you feel better, they killed him before raising the alarm."

Xanxus' eyes gleamed in satisfaction, "Alright trash, get ready to run over there." He pointed to a steep ravine and smirked when his subordinate gave him an incredulous look. "There's a passageway there that I saw on a map, the scum doesn't know about it."

Fran surged forward as Xanxus stood up and shot potent Wrath flames at the guards. Fran was at the edge of the ravine when pain erupted from his shoulder and an unseen force propelled him down the slope. Xanxus wasn't here yet and Fran took the time to look at his shoulder, a small bullet hole that was leaking blood was the source of the pain. *Fuck*. Xanxus did not need this on top of the current situation.

Fran grit his teeth and pressure bandaged his right shoulder, leaving the bullet in there currently. A quick flare of mist flames and Fran was ready to go again, just in time too and Xanxus slipped out of the shadows near him.

"Follow me, I've given the guards the idea we went the other way." Xanxus said, brushing past his mist.

XXXXXX

Fran muttered a curse as rudimentary tweezers entered his shoulder. He had managed to find a first aid kit in the hotel they were staying in and had dug out the needed equipment. He had thoroughly sterilized the tweezers and wound before searching for the imbedded bullet. "Grazie Dio." Fran breathed as he got a good hold on the bullet. Carefully, Fran pulled the bullet out of his shoulder, wincing as it made the blood flow worse. He set the bloody tweezers and bullet down on the bathroom counter and grabbed the gauze.

Fran doused the pad in iodine and swiped it across the wound, barely minding the dull sting. When the blood was wiped away, he placed the gauze in the bin and picked up the complimentary sewing kit he had found. Steadily, Fran threaded the needle in and out of his skin, wincing at the pull on his pulsing skin. Tying off the knot, he cut the excess thread and wrapped non-stick bandages around his shoulder to cover the stitches.

The patch work would have to do as Xanxus knocked on the bathroom door, "Are you done yet trash? I want to have a shower before we leave."

Fran quickly put everything back in its proper place and opened the door to the bathroom, "I'm
Xanxus gave him a weird look as he brushed passed him, but didn't say anything about his lack of noise. "We're leaving in half an hour. I want your stuff pack in ten." Fran gave him a nod and once Xanxus shut the door, grabbed his shoulder in pain as he went to pack his bag.

XXXXXX

It's been a week since Fran and Xanxus were on the retrieval mission and Fran's shoulder was still very tender. The wound had healed up well considering the circumstances, but it was still a baby pink colour. Every time the illusionist raised his arm, he tugged on the healing scar, sending shooting pain through his arm. It was a problem as the rest of the Varia were slowly being clued into the problem.

Belphegor had seen the problem first. He was watching Fran make breakfast and had seen his kouhai wince when he picked up the heavy pan. The prince kept a close eye on Fran for the rest of the day and each time Fran had to lift something heavy with his right arm, his face contorted in pain. Bel kept his observations to himself for the time being, it could simply be a pulled muscle from training.

Levi-A-Than saw Fran moving oddly next. He was sparring with Squalo when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Fran's hand fly to his shoulder. There was no time to contemplate it further as Squalo lunged at him, but he resolved to talk to Fran later. Levi managed to pull Fran aside for a talk after the spar finished but was brushed off by the illusive mist. "Don't worry so much Sempai. It's just a minor sprain."

Lussuria caught Fran in the Infirmary, as he had gone down to restock supplies. He watched in the doorway as Fran rummaged through the medicine cabinet. "What are you looking for Fran-chan?" He asked, taking pity on the searching mist.

Lussuria's eyes narrowed as the illusionist looked guiltily at him and racked his brains for anything Fran may have done recently. "Luss-Sempai!" Fran squeaked. "I was just looking for some aspirin, I forgot to get a new packet for my room."

The sun accepted the answer, "Silly Fran-chan. We don't keep it in here anymore, remember? Everyone was coming in to grab some, so we moved it into the kitchen cabinet." He watched as embarrassed realisation flittered across Fran's face.

"Yes, apologies Luss-Sempai. See you at dinner." Fran said, and shifted out of the room.

Xanxus and Squalo were discussing the upcoming Varia mission when three members tumbled into the room without knocking. Squalo stared in amusement as they hurriedly scrambled to their feet and tried to explain themselves to the Boss. Xanxus grew tired of them all speaking over each other and shot a bullet into the ceiling to make them shut up. "Would one of you explain what exactly you are all doing in here?" He said in a calm tone. "One at a time, Lussuria you go first."

Lussuria shifted under the scrutiny of his Sky but stood straight when speaking, "I encountered Fran in the Infirmary, he was looking for some aspirin. I wouldn't have come to you about this, but he looked rather.. guilty I guess you could say. Like he was hiding something. I saw these two in front of the door and one of them pushed me into here."

Squalo's amusement faded as he heard Fran was searching for painkillers. "Levi, is your story the same?" He asked.
"Sort of captain. He was grabbing his shoulder when you and I were sparring, I thought he had twisted a muscle wrong." Levi said awkwardly.

Xanxus sat back in his chair, "What makes you say, 'you thought'?

Belphegor took a step forward, "Shishishi, Froggy was having trouble since this morning."

"I see, obviously Fran has injured himself again and didn't want us to know. I'll confront him at dinner." Xanxus said, annoyed his subordinate was still doing this.

The three Varia members inclined their heads in deference to their Sky and exited the room. When they were gone, Xanxus leant forward and put his elbows on the desk. "What am I going to do with you, silly mist."

The Varia were seated at dinner and making small talk when slowly, the chatter quietened. Fran looked up in surprise and came face to face with five Varia members staring at him. Xanxus started talking, voice deceptively mild. "I hear from the others that you were injured today trash."

Fran stiffened, "It was simply a sprain Boss-Sempai. I iced it and took some painkillers and it hasn't bothered me for the rest of the day."

"I see." Fran mentally sighed. "Just to make sure, stand up and raise your arms above your head. You shouldn't have any problems if you aren't injured anymore." Xanxus stated as he watched Fran freeze.

The members were watching their mist with eagle eyes as Fran slid out of his chair and stood behind it. Fran bit his lip and they caught the nervous body language immediately. He put his hands above his head and started shrieking in his head at the pain. Fran held his arms up, not letting them shake and stood there, staring Xanxus in the eye. "You can lower them now, there obviously isn't an issue." Xanxus stated.

Fran breathed out, "I did tell you sempai." He didn't catch the curl of Xanxus' lip as he looked down at his plate.

Without warning, his injured shoulder was squeezed, and he cried out in pain. The hand was snatched back quickly, and Fran curled into a ball in his seat, whimpering as unrelenting pain pulsed throughout his body. "Damnit Fran, didn't we talk about this!" Squalo shouted as he pulled the mist's chair out to get a better look at him. "Lussuria, come and heal him."

Lussuria pulled off Fran's jacket and cut his shirt off, not listening to Fran's half-hearted protests. He sucked in a sharp breath as he saw what Fran was hiding from him, "Where the hell did you get a bullet wound from!"

"What!" Belphegor snarled as he tried to look at the shirtless Fran, "The prince will slaughter them!"

Fran sat in his chair, utterly miserable, as the people around him erupted in fury. "It's really not that bad." Lussuria glared at him. "There's nothing you can do for it." Fran amended.

"Well at least that part is true." Lussuria muttered as he deftly moved his hands over the fresh scar. "Levi-Chan, grab me an icepack and more aspirin for Fran please."

Xanxus leant against the table beside Fran, "Why can't you ever tell me about this stuff Fran? Am I
"No, Sempai!" Fran denied vehemently. "It's just, I don't want to worry you. Everybody worries a lot and put off things they like to help me get better when I can do it myself."

The Varia looked stunned at the answer Fran gave them. Everything he said was something that should happen for sick people. Then again, he hadn't had very good role models in the past. "Fran, I know you had a bad time with your mother but it's not like that here. We expect you to come to us when you're injured or sick. It's not a sign of weakness, and although it makes us upset, it makes us happy that you trust us enough to come to us when you're like that." The rest of the guardians nodded at their Sky's words.

Fran looked down, tears automatically pooling in his eyes as he listened to his Boss, family, tell him that he was that important. "I promise." Fran murmured, as Levi pressed the icepack to his shoulder.

"Thank you, Fran." Levi said to him. "The next time you get hurt, come to us immediately and not wait a few days, alright?"

Fran attempted a wobbly smile, "Yeah."
Chapter Summary

Help me by leaving a comment and dropping a kudos.

It was around the eighth completed pile of paperwork, when somebody knocked on Xanxus’ door. “Come in!” Xanxus shouted as he signed yet another piece of paper. The door slowly creaked open and a head full of teal hair peeked inside. “Fran” Xanxus said in surprise, “Come in, what did you need?”

Fran walked into the room cautiously and stood in front of Xanxus, making him brush a few piles of the paperwork out of the way. “Remember what we talked about a few months ago?” Fran asked, fidgeting quietly.

Xanxus was immediately on edge, “Of course, are you injured?”

“Oh, no. I just feel a bit off.” Fran said, embarrassment colouring his voice.

Xanxus became aware of the way Fran was swaying, “I think it’s in your best interest to sit down.” He said, and he stood up in alarm as Fran turned a few shades whiter.

“I just came to tell you that I might have a minor- “Fran paused in his sentence and before Xanxus could do anything, his eyes rolled up in his head and he collapsed onto the ground.

“Fran!” Xanxus shouted in distress. He ran around the desk and crouched next to his unconscious Mist to check his pulse. It was strong but too fast for someone who was simply unconscious.

“Damn it, you little brat. Let’s get you to the Infirmary then.”

Xanxus scooped Fran up into his arms and walked towards the Infirmary, bond-calling his guardians as he went. He frowned as he noticed Fran shivering, despite being in the thick Varia coat. Lussuria was already waiting in the doorway when he walked in. “How long has it been since he passed out?” Lussuria asked, professionalism leaking into his voice.

“You think I had time to look at a clock when I grabbed him?” Xanxus questioned, sarcasm littering his tone.

Lussuria sighed, “No, it would have been useful though. I would assume around five minutes. Did he say anything beforehand?”

“He said he felt weird and that he might have a minor something. I believe he was going to say fever though, judging by the shivering and hot forehead.” Xanxus recalled, placing his precious burden on one of the beds.

Lussuria began to take off the heavy Varia coat, “I’ll look over him, you can go and calm down the others.” He amended his sentence after Xanxus deadpanned, “Keep them quiet at the very least, and out of the way.”

Xanxus went to do damage control and Lussuria turned back to the disturbingly still Fran. He noted down what he saw as he took off his baby mist’s shirt. *High temperature, laboured breathing.*
chills and sweating. The skinny jeans were tugged off and he changed the teen into lightweight sweats. Lussuria took a step back and opened various drawers to grab a thermometer and stethoscope. The thermometer was unceremoniously shoved into Fran’s mouth and he held it there with on hand as he listened to his patient’s lungs. The thermometer beeped, Lussuria grabbed it and winced at the numbers displayed on the screen, 40.3°.

Lussuria calmly whirled around and walked over to the worried guardians, “He has a high fever, a result from the flu he recently got rid of.” They breathed sighs of relief and looked to him for instructions. “Bel-Chan, I need you to grab the IV kit and start it up. Somebody put a pitcher of water in the fridge for when Fran wakes up.” Levi rushed off. “Squalo, if you could gather a bunch of flannels and if you could get a bucket of water, Xanxus.”

Belphegor had already gotten the IV in when Lussuria returned to Fran and was starting the drip. He walked around the Storm and picked up antibiotics to help with the flu symptoms. Lussuria passed it to Bel with strict orders to give Fran 300mg of it and grabbed a flannel from Squalo. Once Fran had been cared for the guardians all sat around the bed their mist was lying on, occasionally re-wetting a flannel.

They looked at Fran when he started to mumble, relief shooting through their veins. That was quickly replaced with horror when the illusionist started thrashing around on the bed to escape an invisible foe and cry out every so often in fear.

XXXXXX

Fran was being a good boy and sitting in his room quietly when the front door banged open. “Fran!” His mother yelled. He was a good boy and came out of his room to go to his mother who was yet again walking funny.

“You called, mum.” Fran said as he walked into the drunk woman’s view.

The woman’s eyes narrowed as she stared at him, “Did you stay inside your room all day?”

“Yes, mama. I didn’t make any noise either.” He said quietly.

His mother backhanded the four-year-old, “I didn’t ask you if you made any noise. Don’t presume anything you freak.”

“Yes mama.” Fran said monotonously, not daring to touch his bruising cheek.

The woman smirked triumphantly at teaching the child to respect her. She walked into the kitchen and went to grab something to eat when she froze, “Freak.”

“Yes mama?”

“Why, are there crumbs on the counter?” She asked, voice deceptively calm.

Fran cringed backwards at the tone, “When you had toast this morning, I didn’t have any time to clean the mess up before I was sent to my room.”

“Are you calling my food a mess!” His mother shouted, fury thick in her voice. She advanced on the trembling child threateningly, “Well? I think you need another lesson in respect if you’re going to give me this attitude.”

Fran began to cry, “Mama, please. I promise I won’t! I’ll be a good boy!”
The woman ignored the pleas as she roughly dragged the crying boy into the kitchen, searching for something to hurt him with. Her eyes landed on a recently sharpened kitchen knife. She turned to the terrified child, “Stay!” and took the knife off the magnetic hook with a loud shing. Fran stilled as his mother stalked towards him with the gleaming knife, she stopped in front of him and lifted the knife bring it down on his face.

Fran hadn’t ceased wailing and writhing on the bed, unresponsive to the copious amount of rain flames Squalo was hurling around. He suddenly stopped, muscles locked in place, and let out the most heartbroken word they had heard, “Please.” His body went limp in the guardian’s hold and they hesitantly released his previously thrashing limbs. Fran’s eyes fluttered open to reveal fever glazed eyes that landed on Lussuría’s face. “Water.” He coughed out hoarsely.

Belphegor rushed to grab a cup for the pitch of water after tenderly brushing his kouhai’s sweaty bangs out of his face. “Do you understand me Fran?” Lussuria asked, doctor mode activated.

“Yeah,” Fran said as he tried to hold the cup of water Belphegor handed him. His hand was shaking too much to hold it properly so Squalo reached over to steady it as he drank greedily.

“Am I in the ‘firmary?” Fran asked faintly as he finished the cool water.

Levi smiled reassuringly, “We’re here with you.”

Fran’s neck lolled in the Sun’s direction, “Can I sleep now?”

“Yeah sweetie, you can sleep now.” Lussuria cooed at the sick mist. Fran didn’t need anymore prompting and shut his eyes tiredly, breathing evening out quickly.

The knife came down on his face and caught him under his left eye, leaving a deep, bleeding cut in its wake. “We need to be symmetrical!” Fran’s mother said insanely as she left a matching cut underneath his right eye. “Now go back to your room, freak.”

Fran ran to his room and curled up in a ball sobbing when he shut the door. His face stung horribly, and the dark red blood made his tears turn an eerie red. “Why can’t you love me mama?” He cried into the dark, “Why can’t you be like the nice mums on TV?”

The scene changes.

A thirteen-year-old Fran walked into the tattoo parlour that was underneath an innocent looking dance studio. The guard looked at him suspiciously, but let him in after seeing his determination. The tattoo artist turned around from where he was arranging ink colours, “Welcome to Snake’s tattoos. What can I do for you today?”

“I want something covered up. Can you do it?” Fran asked, injecting scepticism in his words.

The tattoo artist nicknamed Snake laughed, “Of course I can. What type of cover-up?”

“I want these highlighted in ink.” Fran said as he pulled off the face mask to reveal two identical scars that curved underneath his eyes. “Can you do it?”

Snake walked over to the teenager to get a closer look at the scars and whistled, “Girlfriend troubles?” Seeing Fran’s glare, he hastily backtracked, “They’re quite deep, but I suppose I can.”
Fran sat down on the chair underneath the professional looking lights, “I want them in a navy blue.”

“No problems, you got money? The whole thing will cost fifty bucks.” Snake informed his customer as he brought out the requested ink colour.

“I’ll pay after you do this. A hundred if you get it done within twenty minutes.” Fran bargained.

The artist didn’t look up from where he was sterilizing the needles, “Cutting it close on the time-frame. What do you take me for bro, I’m a professional. If anybody can do it within twenty minutes, it’s me.”

Fran sat back in the chair and closed his eyes as the bright lights were switched on. The needle buzzed loudly as Snake leant in close to trace the scars.

**Time skip**

“What do you think?” Snake asked as he held a mirror in front of Fran’s face.

Two curved, navy blue lines protruded from the corners of his eyes and Fran nodded in satisfaction, “Here’s the money. Don’t mention me to anybody.”

“Of course.” Snake said as he looked greedily at the money.

Fran turned on his heel and walked back up the stairs and into the dance studio. Warm sunlight touched his face and with a rarely seen smile, Fran walked out of the dance studio/ tattoo parlour.

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When Fran woke up coherently, the Varia shared a look over his head; They weren’t to tell Fran what he was saying in his sleep. They watched with soft faces as Levi helped Fran drink another glass of water, and talked to him about meaningless things. Fran recovered a day later and still had no idea that he had been dreaming out loud, the Varia counted this a success and moved on, but never forgot.
And the one time

Chapter Summary

The last chapter is here! Yay! Thank you everybody who gave me a kudos and commented. It really makes my day when somebody does this. To new readers that have just discovered this; Please, please, please leave me a kudos and tell me what you think about this. Keep an eye out for an Skull version of this appearing in the future. Also, I have created an account on FF.net under MyBrokenInsanity if anybody wanted to know.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Fran had first arrived at the Varia, he was alone. Sure, there were the other Varia members and (Since Xanxus wasn’t there) various recruits but it wasn’t like they wanted to entertain a bored teenager. Fran often found himself in either the massive gym or lost in the expansive library that held so much knowledge. He would come and go silently for the Varia meals but wouldn’t generally interact with other people outside that.

Fran wasn’t uniformed though, and he knew that his name was making it through the gossip circles. Whispers and glances followed his form in the halls, all guessing just why they had taken in the petite mist. One rumour was that he had slept with the upper echelon to get in.

Idiots, the lot of them. But it wasn’t like he could tell that to anyone, nobody was going to listen to him, even the Rain squad that was supposed to be level-headed and more logical than the other squads. Whatever, it wasn’t like he needed friends or acquaintances anyway…

“You come here often dear?” A cheery voice asked behind Fran.

He whirled around in surprise before bowing in respect. In front of him was the Varia Sun guardian, with shockingly green hair and a bright smile on his face. Realising that he was waiting for an answer, Fran stuttered, “I like the peace that the Library grants.”

“Hmm, it’s definitely quieter in here than out there,” Lussuria gestured at the hallway. “Are you the new recruit Mammon brought in then?”

Fran looked at the ground, “Yes, is there anything you need?”

“Oh no, I just wondered why you looked familiar,” Lussuria assured Fran.

“If that’s the case, I believe that I am needed somewhere, have a good day Sun Commander,” Fran said as he walked towards the hallway. He breathed a sigh of relief as he didn’t get called back into the massive library, and started the trek to his room. It was surprising that the talented Sun didn’t pick up on the bruises, but they had been careful not to mark his face or any other visible areas.

Fran quickly walked into his room and flopped onto the lumpy mattress. He let out a sigh, it hadn’t uncomfortable the first week he had been here, but the comfy mattress had been replaced with this pitiful excuse for a bed. Fran knew that the other recruits had done it, but didn’t have any proof.
The best he could do was hide personal belongings and just deal with it.

The illusionist was brought out of his musings when the door to his small room was kicked in with a smash. Varia-issued boots clicked quietly as two of his tormentors walked into his room with smirks adorning their faces, “What do we have here, Dominic?”

The red-haired male looked down on the small mist, “A pathetic piece of trash I reckon. We going to rough him up today, Niccolo?”

Niccolo, the taller of the two bullies, chuckled sinisterly in response, “Not too hard though, I heard that Alfio was looking for him. That doesn’t mean that we can’t beat the trash up though, so what are you waiting for.”

With Niccolo’s permission granted, the Storm walked towards Fran and picked him up by the collar of his shirt. Fran went limp in his hold, not even flinching as his cheek was punched harshly. He lay in place as Dominic let loose punch after punch on his body, sure to leave spectacularly green bruises in wake. After what felt like an eternity, Niccolo put a stop to the beating, “I was just getting into it, are you sure I can’t do just a bit more.”

“No, Dominic,” Niccolo said sharply, “I don’t want any of our superiors catching wind of this anytime soon.”

The lightning spun on his heel and exited the room at a leisurely amble, but not before spitting on Fran to let him know his place. Dominic glanced unhappily at the small illusionist before following Niccolo out of the room and down the corridor.

Fran groaned as he slowly sat up and leant against his bed frame, his hands found their way to his tender stomach and gently massaged the bruising flesh. He staggered up onto sore legs and hurriedly attempted to fix his uniform, regretfully, his Varia jacket ripped in some parts, but it couldn’t be helped.

Fran gave his damaged door a rueful glance and peeked out of his room to see if he was going to be harassed in the hallway, however the path was clear. His door creaked as he closed and locked it, and he headed into the maze of hallways to get to the Mist commanders office that currently belonged to Alfio. Although the Niccolo would lie to him, he sensed a small amount of truth in the words, and didn’t want to keep the commander waiting any longer than necessary.

Navigating by this point was easy, and with a few turns and only one wrong way, Fran was standing in front of the Mist commander’s door. He ignored the curious, lingering mists and knocked quietly on the door. There was a brief murmured conversation before the door swung open and he was pulled in as the door slammed shut behind him. Commander Alfio placed Fran back on the ground and ushered him into one of the office chairs that was placed next to the easily identifiable person in the room.

“This will be your escort for the mission Commander Belphegor. Will you be happy with just him and Matteo?” the relatively wary Commander asked.

The Storm Commander sat back in his chair and gave his signature laugh, “Shishishi, the peasants better be able to catch up with the Prince.” Fran and the (rain?) Matteo quivered under the Storm’s penetrating stare, although Fran exaggerated slightly. “Whatever. You peasants,” Belphegor directed towards the two officers, “Meet the Prince in the garage in half an hour, don’t make me late!”

All three in the office stood as Commander Belphegor swished out of the Mist Commander’s office.
and relaxed once he was out of sight. Commander Alfio looked at the mist under his command, “Please come back in one piece, I would hate to lose such a talented illusionist.”

“Of course, Commander,” Fran intoned as he inclined his head towards Alfio, “Will you be needing me for anything else sir?”

Commander Alfio shook his head, “Just promise me you’ll be careful around Commander Belphegor.”

Fran saluted and slid into the hallway, “As you wish, Commander Alfio.”

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Fran rushed into the garage, hair being blown in all different direction, as he skidded to a stop beside Matteo. It was nice, Fran thought, that I didn’t get paired with someone who hates me. A small glare from the Rain beside him made him rethink that thought. At least he doesn’t physically hurt me anyways… Fran sweat dropped.

Matteo broke the awkward silence that descended with a question, “Is it true that you use your body to get up the ranks?”

“Where the hell did you hear that!” Fran growled in irritation.

Matteo looked at Fran, “Well I guess it either is and you’re acting protective about it or the rumour’s false.”

“Of course, it’s fake you stronzo!” Fran shouted at the smirking Rain.

The clacking of boots and a familiar haunting laugh made them aware of the presence of the Storm Officer and they both stood to attention as Belphegor walked past them and towards the issued car for their mission. “Shishishi, you peasants ready?” The Storm Officer asked mockingly.

“Of course, Commander,” Fran intoned, smiling inwardly at the interruption.

Matteo huffed as he wouldn’t get a full answer from Fran and followed the Storm Officer hurriedly, he didn’t want to get on the bad side of the bloodthirsty Storm. “Catch peasant,” Belphegor said as he tossed the mission file to Fran.

Fran caught the thin file mid-air and continued walking while reading at the same time. The first page was just the bare minimum and held no real details, so Fran flipped to the second – and last-page in the thin folder. They were to escort Belphegor as he captured and interrogated a renegade Varia member that had stolen some confidential information for an unknown reason. Fran finished the small file as they reached the car and was forced into the backseat as Matteo pushed him out of the way. The Illusionist glared silently at the antagonistic Rain before handing the mission folder to him and went to stare out the window.

“Shishishi, don’t be sick in the car peasants,” Belphegor warned as he turned the ignition and shifted the car into drive. Tires squealed noisily against the floor as the Storm slammed his foot on the pedal and cackled madly as the car shot forward and out into the sunlight.

Fran groped for his seatbelt and held onto the handle bar that was known as the oh shit! handle and prayed he would survive the hour-long journey ahead of them. The large car swerved sharply, at least two times over the speed limit, and narrowly avoided colliding with a transport truck. Dear lord, Fran prayed in his head, let me survive this Hell. He opened his eyes, (when had he shut them?) and quietly snickered at the situation the other Varia agent found himself in.
Matteo had also grabbed onto the handle, but he had also wrapped the seatbelt around himself twice and was bracing his feet under the dashboard. Luckily, it didn’t seem like he was going to be sick anytime soon, he looked far too pale and not green enough.

The Storm Officer’s eerie laugh echoed around the car as he ignored every rule of driving and swerved in and out of lines to get to his destination faster. Fran gripped the plush leather in a white knuckled grip as they shot through a set of red lights and almost hit several cars as the car sped up even faster. *Mother of god, how much faster could the cursed car go?* Fran thought hysterically as he caught a glimpse of the speed they were going.

Finally, finally, they were at their destination said the GPS in a cheery tone, unaware of the craziness that had happened in the short *(too short)* journey. *Never again,* Fran thought vehemently as he fell out of the vehicle.

“Shishishi,” Belphegor cackled creepily as he advanced towards the hidden entrance of the Varia’s Interrogation base.

Matteo recovered quickly and hurried after the mission leader, and violently shoved Fran as he passed by. Fran growled and clenched his fists in an attempt to not lash out, though his flames had taken on a sharper tinge. “What is your problem asshole?” Fran asked confrontationally.

Matteo smirked and glanced at the Storm to make sure he would be overheard, “Just making sure you know your place, scum. Besides, we all know you’ve been whoring yourself out to the higher ups.”

Enraged mist flames lashed out at the impertinent Rain before Fran could reign them in, and Matteo stumbled back. Before another move could be made, by either side, Storm flames cut through the barrage of Mist and slammed into both agents at full force. “Enough,” Belphegor ordered in an uncharacteristic display of seriousness, “If either of you have a problem with one another, resolve it back at base. I will not have idiots accompanying me.”

“Understood Captain, my apologies,” Fran said contritely as the self-proclaimed prince stared at him.

Matteo stood beside him and apologised as well, it was clear though that he didn’t mean what he said as he glared at the remorseful Mist. Belphegor stared suspiciously at the two agents before spinning on his heel and continued to walk towards the entrance. “One word out of either of you and you might find yourself in a painful situation, let’s go.”

The three Varia members quickly made their way to the Interrogation base and were hurriedly pulled through security, made faster with the Storm Captain in their midst. A harried looking brunette made her way towards the trio, her heels clicking on the floor quietly, “Captain Belphegor, thank you for coming sir.”

Belphegor nodded and motioned for the two agents to follow him as he walked beside the brunette. “May I have your name?” He asked as he fell into his Captain persona.

The tall brunette blushed, “Apologies Captain. My name is Chiari Moretti.”

Belphegor and the newly introduced Chiari made their way towards block E where all the information on renegade members was held. They were taken to a normal sized conference room that already was set up and had information scattered everywhere as well as a map. “I hope this is to your liking Captain Belphegor. If there is anything you need, please ask. Otherwise, I wish you all the best in capturing him.”
“Grazie Chiari,” Belphegor murmured as he looked over the map intently.

Fran stood beside the Varia Guardian and looked over the map as well. Red dots were sporadically placed in random spots on the map as representations of sightings. In between the red pins were blue for Varia bases and green for possible hide-outs the renegade was handling. “What do you need me to do Captain?” Fran asked as he catalogued where all the pins were placed.

“Look over the profile we have of the renegade and tell me where you think he might be in accordance to the pins,” Belphegor said commandingly, “Matteo.” The Rain looked at the Captain. “Bring me some black coffee, one cream and two sugars.”

Matteo made to protest but shut his mouth and stormed out of the room after giving Fran a dark glare. Fran was beginning to look over the information when Belphegor broke the silence in the room, “Why does the Rain hate you so much?”

Fran shot the Captain a look of surprise before schooling his mask back into neutrality, “It is nothing Captain, at least on my side anyways.”

“That is not the answer I was looking for, exaggerate for me,” Belphegor said as he made notes on a blank piece of paper.

Fran blew out a breath, “There is some unpleasant rumours going around at the moment, they are focused on me.”

“Why?” Belphegor asked, the blank sheet of paper rapidly being coloured in ink.

Fran shrugged his shoulders in confusion, “I assume that it is because of the way I was inducted into the Varia, Captain.”

Belphegor made a sound of remembrance, “You were brought in by Mammy, weren’t you? Yes, I could imagine it would fuel such comments.”

Fran didn’t have a chance to respond before Matteo burst into the room with the requested coffee and an additional one in his hand. The Rain placed Belphegor’s cup on the table and sat in a chair to watch Fran as he refocused on the papers in his hands. “Next time, Rain, I expect you to walk in much more quietly than you just did, am I clear?” Belphegor nearly snarled at the agent, feeling unusually protective of the petite looking Mist.

“Yes sir,” Matteo quailed under the scathing glare of the Storm Captain.

Belphegor turned his attention to the unfazed looking Mist, “Has anything caught your eye?”

Fran took a moment to review a paragraph before nodding, “Do you want me to recite it now, Captain?”

Belphegor nodded and sat on the table, sipping at his coffee as he watched Fran make his way to the map. Fran asked one more question, “How much information do you want right now sir?”

Belphegor raised an eyebrow, “As much as you’ve gathered.”

Fran nodded in acquiesce and began talking about the information. “As you know, we have been asked to find, capture and interrogate the renegade Varia member Stefano Amante. He took on a solo mission and never returned, the only reason we know he is alive is the fact he returned his identification and of course, the murders.”
Fran wheeled over a large whiteboard and began pinning up photos of the crime scenes and victims. “Stefano first attacked a low-levelled agent that was part of our non-flame user group CANDLE. The victim’s name was Allegra Fausti, she was returning to HQ when she was confronted by Stefano and shot in the head at close range.”

Fran pinned up a picture beside the first victim, “This is Luciano Pecora, or rather, what is left of him.” A gruesome-looking corpse was lying stomach first with brain matter scattered around the body. “By now, a small investigation team had been formed to look into our first victim’s death. Three days later, they stumbled upon Pecora’s body. “Amante must have been wary that we were already on to him and instead of boldly confronting Pecora, he took our agent by surprise and killed him the same as our first victim.”

Fran walked over to another picture that had two solemn looking men staring at the camera. “These two people were his next two victims, and also the last two victims so far. They too, are not flame users and were working under CANDLE. The one on the left with blonde hair is Salvatore Davide and his partner was Corrado De Luca. You may know them as the Assassin Gemelli [Twin killers]. The two were very successful and skilled agents. They were killed just one day ago.”

“Are you going to get on with it or not?” Matteo sneered as Fran paused to relook information and take a breath.

“Of course,” Fran rolled his eyes as he returned to setting up his information. He finished pinning up the last of photos and turned to look at the photograph of the renegade agent. “As we already know, Amante shows incredible skills wielding guns and was progressing quickly through his training before he left. Obviously, all murders were killed with a gun, but it is confusing that Amante chose to get so close to the victims instead of doing a long-range kill instead.”

Fran brought a map of the area where the murders occurred and placed it on an empty spot at the conference table. “These are where the murders occurred,” Fran stated, and he circled the areas in red, “You can see that they are not in any particular pattern at the moment, however I can attribute this to the fact that all of our victims took different routes back to base. With a few adjustments to the map I could pinpoint the location that Amante is most likely to be.”

Fran began to make a big circle around the murder sites, “Using the circle theory and assuming he is striking from home and not travelling he is most likely in this area. You can see that each site from the centre of the circle is almost approximately twenty miles from the centre which is our base. This means that he is waiting for agents to get within that range before he strikes. Amante doesn’t have a vehicle to use so that’s why he’s sticking to a short range of attack. We know that all Varia agents are taught how to hijack a vehicle therefore he is in an area where either vehicle are non-existent or kept under too tight a watch.”

The map was scrutinised before Fran continued his long explanation, “Since he is making a move at night, this restricts his zone of opportunity in order to not look suspicious or stand out.” Another red circle was added onto the map. “The murders are at the borders of this circle, so we are down to a smaller area…”

Fran looked at the map closely before marking two different areas with a blue pen, “Either of these two places could be where Amante set up a hideout, or perhaps he moved places.” The first blue mark was on the north side of a small town known for dealing with shady business. The second blue area was south-west on the map and was on the borders of the first location.

Belphegor slowly clapped, “You will definitely be getting a recommendation from me agent. This is impressive work.”
Fran conspicuously flushed, “Thank you Captain.”

Matteo looked at the ceiling in frustration before speaking in a moody tone, “Will we be checking the areas out now Captain?”

Belphegor gazed at the angered Rain, “Hold your tongue, brat. Fran, which area is most likely out of the two to be his base?”

The Mist carefully scrutinised the two locations, “I would say location B Captain, although I can’t say for sure. Amante should be living in a small abandoned home though, close to main roads I would guess but far enough that neighbours don’t suspect anything.”

Belphegor nodded, “Let’s go then, make sure you’re ready for anything.” The Storm Captain exited the room, leaving behind his emptied coffee cup, and Fran rushed after him as Matteo slowly trailed behind sulkily. Fran quickly caught up to the mission leader and fell into step slightly behind him.

“Mammon chose you because of your skill with illusions, did they not?” Belphegor asked conversationally as they turned a corner.

Fran looked at Belphegor’s shoulders as he replied, “Yes, Captain. I was told I would become a great illusionist akin to themselves one day. I don’t mean to brag.”

The Storm studied the agent beside him carefully, “I suppose I can see what Mammon can, though I am no Mist. You will be a great asset to the Varia in the future.”

“Thank you, Captain,” Fran murmured as they walked up to where Chiari was talking to some personnel.

The personnel quietened as Belphegor advanced towards them and Chiari turned around the see the cause of their silence, “Ah, Captain Belphegor. Is there anything you need?”

“My team and I are going to investigate a possible lead in the case, I would ask that you don’t disturb the room we are working in while I am away,” Belphegor requested firmly as he waited for the trailing Rain to catch up.

Chiari nodded in understanding, “Anything else Captain? Is there a certain time we should expect you or send out reinforcements if you do not check in?”

Belphegor glanced at the clock above him, “If we are not back by nine then send word to the main base and ask them to send out Lussuria and another guardian. Tell them that we have not communicated with you when it was expected, and we have probably run into trouble.”

“Of course, Captain,” Chiari acquiesced and looked at her watch, “I hope to see you in four hours then.”

Belphegor began to walk away and motioned for the two agents under his command to follow him, “Did you hear all of that Fran?”

“Yes Captain,” Fran said obediently.

“If I am unable to send word that we are in trouble, if I am incapacitated or occupied, I want you to do what I told Chiari,” Belphegor told Fran as they walked quickly to the car.

Fran nodded but hesitated, “Matteo has experience and superiority over me Captain. Why do you
“I trust you a lot more than I do that Rain,” Belphegor admitted as he unlocked the car. Matteo was forced into the back of the car, as Fran got shotgun unwittingly as he followed Belphegor. “Matteo, navigate for me.”

With those last words before they moved, Fran clung to the emergency handle and shut his eyes as they rocketed out of the parking lot and towards their destination.

Belphegor calmly exited the car and locked it behind him as Fran attempted to not vomit on the dirt below him. The Mist took a few deep breaths of fresh air before straightening up and looking around him. Belphegor had stopped in an empty parking lot next to an empty gas station that had not been used for a long time, according to the rust that the building had acquired over the years.

“There was a road a kilometre back that I want to look at first,” Belphegor said as he finished putting his weapons on his body, “We’ll split up on that street and investigate the houses separately. If you find anything, tell me over communications and we’ll regroup at the beginning of the street unless I say otherwise.”

The trio trekked back down the road they came from in an unshakeable silence, each agent checking and rechecking their weapons and reviewing the rather simple plan in their head. In the span of ten minutes, all three arrived at the street Belphegor was interested in and made a mental note of their surroundings.

“Matteo, go to the end of the street and make your way back, Fran you take the right side of the street and I will take the left.” Belphegor said as he walked past the street’s sign Viale Prosperare [Prosper Boulevard].

Fran walked down the street and looked around at his surroundings, the sky was beginning to darken but is was still easy to see the area around him. It was a rundown neighbourhood where nearly every front garden was so overgrown you could barely see the front door of each house. It appeared that not many houses were occupied in the street – A good area for the renegade to hide out – but the ones that being lived in were stood out against the abandoned houses. For one, the occupied houses had the grass cut to make a pathway to the front door and all visible windows had security screens and curtains drawn against each one.

Fran hopped the fence of the fifth house he was looking at and managed to break into the kitchen. The house larger than it looked on the outside despite being only one story, and Fran had finished searching the master bedroom when the earpiece crackled as somebody reported. “Captain Belphegor, I believe I may have found the house we’re looking for.” Matteo’s voice crackled through the earpiece.

Fran perked up and quickly exited the house and made his way onto the street again. “Where are you?” Belphegor asked hurriedly on the comm system as he too made his way out of the house he was searching. “Number forty-three, it’s on the left side of the street. What do you want me to do?” Matteo answered the mission leader.

Fran spotted the Storm heading out onto the street and made his way over to the Captain. “Stay out of sight and near the street, Fran and I will be there soon.” Belphegor said in the comms as he saw Fran jog towards him.

“Yes Captain,” Matteo said into the earpiece and turned to find a space to hide.
Belphegor started a slow sprint as Fran raced beside him, “Remember your training, and you’ll be fine, okay?”

“Yes Captain,” Fran answered as he searched for the house Matteo described, “There!”

Both the Varia members slowed to a stop and eyed up the nondescript house that was on the partly abandoned boulevard. “Stay close,” Belphegor ordered as he lowered into a crouch and headed for the bushes that were at the side of the house.

No fence was erected around the two-storey house and Fran and Belphegor managed to get lose to the side of the house before stopping and looking for the Rain. “Matteo, we’re here, where are you?” Belphegor said into the earpiece and frowned as only static greeted him. “Matteo, respond!”

Fran, who had been inconspicuously looking around paled as he saw what looked like a finger poke out from one of the nearby bushes, “Captain?”

Belphegor turned his head towards the other agent as he heard the quiver in his voice, “What?”

“I think I found Matteo,” Fran mumbled. The Mist steeled his nerves and moved to the bush where there was indeed a finger lying out of the thick leaves. With only a small tremble in his hands, he reached out and grabbed the still hand lying in the bush. With a strong pull, Fran tugged the body out into the open, and muffled his sound of horror at what he saw.

Lying still in the darkening sky was Matteo. Instead of all the other victims though, he wasn’t shot at close range which meant, “There’s a sniper, Captain!”

“Get down.” Belphegor hissed as he rushed for some form of cover in the nearby bushes.

Fran hastily wedged himself into an alcove in the wall and looked around frantically to see where the sniper was shooting from. He was close to hyperventilating before Belphegor whispered through the thick bushes, “I need you to contact the base and do what I said before. The code is F1r4M3.”

The earpiece was hastily taken out of his ear with his shaking hands as he inputted the code into the small device. “Connecting…” The device bleeped quietly, and Fran slid down the wall to get into a smaller target. His head snapped to the bushes as Belphegor made low rustling noises moving, “Captain, where are you going?”

“Stay there and explain the situation. I’m going to find Amante,” Belphegor ordered as he cautiously crept out of the bushes. He disappeared before Fran could put up a form of protest.

“Authorisation code needed!” The device in Fran’s hand beeped. “Agent three-three-one emergency,” Fran muttered into the earpiece as he looked around for better cover.

“Who is this?” Came a wary voice through the small earpiece. Fran hurriedly put the communication device back in his ear. “My name is Agent Fran, I was sent on an escort mission with Agent Matteo to watch Captain Belphegor,” Fran began to crawl to the back of the house, following the decrepit wall.

“How did you get this code?”

Fran bit his lip, “Captain Belphegor gave it to me. He said to tell you that Lussuria and another guardian must be sent to our location immediately, asap.”

There were indistinguishable whispers on the other side of the line as Fran talked to the cautious
“Reinforcements will be dispatched soon. What exactly is the problem?” A different voice asked over the comms, still male though.

“You don’t understand, Captain Belphegor very specifically requested that Lussuria and another guardian were to come to our location if we were in trouble,” Fran said exasperatedly.

“What is the problem?” The male repeated, unwilling to back down.

Fran sighed, “We were ordered to capture the renegade Stefano Amante. We found where he is laying low, but he’s set up a sniper post and already killed Agent Matteo.”

There was a small pause over the earpiece before it crackled back to life, “Your request will be granted Agent Fran, they will rendezvous with you in approximately fifteen minutes. Keep your earpiece on, we can track you through that.”

“Acknowledge base,” Fran replied as he darted around the corner of the house and onto the rotting wood veranda.

Gunfire cracked through the air, followed by muted shots back, meaning Belphegor had found Amante and was in direct combat with him. Fran looked through the dark blue horizon to see whether he could find the area they were fighting, when a stray bullet pelted into the wall beside him. Instincts kicking in, Fran ducked down and pulled out a plain silver ring. He slipped the unadorned ring on his left middle finger and directed a portion of his flames into the ring.

When Fran flared his flames from the safety of shelter, it was obvious that Amante and Belphegor were fighting on the house adjacent to him, flame signatures blazing in the otherwise quiet neighbourhood. The sky had turned navy blue by the time Fran had weaved in and out bushes to get to the other house and the quickly dying light made it hard for Fran to find footholds to use to get up the side of the house.

Thankfully, it was only one story, but it was a well-cared for house and didn’t have many marks to use as holds. Fran finally made it to the top of the roof by using a small amount of Mist flames to make a platform that ascended upwards. Another bullet flew by Fran as he stepped onto the roof and into the chaos that was occurring.

“Captain!” Fran cried as the Storm was shot in what looked to be his shoulder but could have also been his chest.

Amante whirled around to face Fran after hearing his cry, unintentionally showing the large amount of damage that Belphegor had given him. “Another agent to slaughter hmm? You sure act like lambs you know?” The renegade member cooed as he eyed up the uninjured Mist.

Lightening flames exploded outwards as Amante charged towards Fran and ferociously crackled against a hastily formed barrier. “Looks like you’ve got some bite to you after all,” Stefano remarked as he pulled back and watched Fran run over to the fallen leader.

Belphegor groaned as his ruined Varia jacket was tugged off his right side to reveal a bullet wound that was an obvious entry and exit hole. Fran eyed the Storm with worry as he peeled back the shirt to reveal a massive black and purple bruise that signified internal bleeding. Fran winced, that was undoubtedly the cause of Belphegor going into shock, no bullet wound would keep him down for so long otherwise. “Stay still,” Fran said quietly, “Lussuria is on his way and should be here in a matter of minutes now.”

“That’s good,” Belphegor commented as he spat out a wad of blood, “He’s going to have a fun time
“Enough chit-chat,” Amante sneered as he stalked towards the duo. He aimed his gun and shot at Fran, the bullet nicking Fran’s neck.

Fran hissed but obeyed and stepped away from the injured Storm. He fluttered his eyes as he brought more mist flames to hum underneath his skin, and when he readjusted his sight his eyes flashed indigo. “I’ve got this Captain,” Fran reassured him and began to twist his surroundings into illusions.

No matter how strong an element is, they must have incredible mental strength to beat a talented illusionist. The sky around the two battling elements darkened to ash grey and fires randomly started in different places. Thick flakes of ash began to fall from the sky and the air began to heat up to an almost unbearable level.

Stefano spun in a circle to take in the drastically detailed illusion, a poor choice considering that was what dragged you deeper into the Mist’s playground. A flame demon, structured similarly to a balrog (Fran was a big fan of Lotr), was crafted and sent to fight Amante. The lightening paled and tried to kill the being with a slash of flames.

Fran laughed mockingly as Amante continued to fall deeper and deeper into his illusions. It was incredibly taxing to use his mist flames so much, but it was necessary to incapacitate the renegade agent until help arrived. Fran was not as foolish to think that he could hold Amante for much longer.

More balrog-like demons appeared in the Mist flame landscape with a twist of Will. Fran was so focused on his task that he didn’t sense reinforcements arriving until someone put their hand on his shoulder. He sucked in a startled breath and whirled around to confront them but abruptly paused when he saw that it was Varia’s second in command, Squalo.

“Captain Squalo,” Fran hurriedly saluted but did not drop the illusion he forged.

The white-haired shark’s eyes bore into him before looking satisfied at what he saw, “Drop the illusion after I deal with the filth.”

He barely waited for Fran’s acknowledgement and lunged at Amante with a terror-inspiring grin. The unaware renegade was quickly and cleanly taken out by a vicious chop to his neck that would knock him out for a few hours at the least. Fran kept pouring flames into the elaborate illusion and only stopped them once he saw Squalo’s sword connect with the back of Amante’s neck. His ears began to ring, and his vision wavered dramatically. The last thing Fran saw was the Rain Captain whirling around to see him fall to the roof.

Squalo turned back to the rookie mist just in time to see the teen’s eyes roll back in his head and fall to the floor with a dull thump.

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Fran’s slowly awakened and revealed tired teal eyes as he blinked at the bright white ceiling. He let out a low groan as he felt his drained Mist flames for the first time since he collapsed. Fran turned his head to the right and nearly had a heart attack as he saw the leader of the Varia sleeping in a chair next to him.

Embarrassingly, his hand was caught in an iron grip and no matter how hard Fran tried he couldn’t
get Xanxus to release his hand. Fran took a deep breathe in and his lungs betrayed him by making
him have a coughing fit. When he had settled down again, the heart monitor he was attached to
beeped faster, Xanxus was wide awake and staring at him with an unusual emotion.

“Commander Xanxus,” Fran acknowledged as he spluttered over another breath.

Xanxus frowned, “Relax, you’re one of mine now. There’s no need for such formalities.”

“Sir?” Fran questioned as he stared almost blankly at the Varia Sky.

Xanxus smirked, “You haven’t noticed yet? We harmonized when you brought back here for
treatment.”

Fran went into another coughing fit as he realised what emotion was on the proud Sky’s face-
Possessiveness. “We harmonized?!” Fran shrieked, mortifyingly high.

Xanxus had no time to answer the shocked Mist as Lussuria quickly walked into view and frowned
at him. “Did I not very clearly say to you that you weren’t to scare the poor darling?” Lussuria
scolded as he ran a diagnostic over Fran with his flames.

Fran shivered as the Sun flames (MineMineMineMineMine) swept through him and knew then that he really
had harmonized with the Xanxus, and therefore the other upper echelon of the Varia. Lussuria
seemed to be satisfied with the results and looked at his Sky, “If you could leave for a moment, it
would be greatly appreciated.” Seeing as the rebellious Sky was going to live up to his name
Lussuria added, “Doctor’s orders. Go get some coffee and food as well as the others before coming
back here.”

Xanxus glanced lingeringly at the Mist lying on the bed but conceded to the Sun and left the
Infirmary to go to the kitchen. Lussuria smiled at Fran and sat down in the seat his Sky was
previously sleeping in, “Hello sweetheart. I’m sure you know my name and I know yours, so we
can get that out of the way. I wanted to discuss something with you before the rest of the guardians
come back, is that okay?”

Fran nodded numbly at the perky Sun. “That’s good darling. There’s no easy way to break this to
you but we found out about things that were going on under our noses. Bullying and undue
harassment for one.”

“It’s not what you think,” Fran tried to wave off the actions of his tormentors.

Lussuria gave him a sad look and tapped Fran’s right ankle, “What’s that scar from then? If it’s not
from a certain someone’s Rain flames, then what?”


“As you know, you harmonized with Xanxus and through that bond you also harmonized with the
rest of us,” Lussuria explained patiently to the defiant Mist.

Fran blinked, “So when you asked Commander Xanxus to get the others you meant…” Fran trailed
off in shock.

“Of course! I sent them to get some sleep since they were all down here for so long,” Lussuria
exclaimed.

“What about Captain Belphegor?” Fran asked as he remembered the Storm’s serious injuries.
Lussuria hastened to assure Fran, “That won’t keep him down for long, especially with my flames healing him as we speak.”

Fran was about to ask where the Storm Captain was when said person jogged sluggishly through the meticulous doors of the Infirmary. Belphegor slowed to a walk once he saw Lussuria though and almost timidly walked over to the glaring Sun. “It wasn’t like I ran very fast Lussie,” Belphegor hastened to defend himself before the wrath of the Sun could fall upon him.

“I’ll be the judge of that,” Lussuria sniffed and prodded Belphegor’s abdomen from all different places.

“It’s nice to see you awake newbie,” Belphegor told Fran as Lussuria touched his almost healed wound. “Xanxus and the others won’t be too far away, in fact, here they are now,” Belphegor exclaimed as the group of guardians burdened with food and drinks ambled after Xanxus.

Various greetings were given to the newly harmonized Mist as the other guardians found places to put their packages down.

Later, in the early morning of Fran’s second day in the Infirmary, all of the guardians were sleeping around the Mist’s bed as their flames intermingled and engulfed the new indigo flames amongst them.

Chapter End Notes

Wow. I really didn’t expect this chapter to be so large... Thanks for reading through this story, don't forget to leave a kudos on comment on the way out. At least leave a kudos :)

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